



FORUM



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ETAI Mission Statement

ETAI (English Teachers' Association of Israel) is a grassroots, voluntary organization concerned with the professional development of its close to 1000 members. The membership list includes English teachers from all sectors and at all levels of education – elementary, junior high and secondary school, college and university.

ETAI offers professional support, information, forums for discussion and practical suggestions and resources to help English teachers deepen their expertise and grow in their careers through its local events, regional and national conferences and its journal *The ETAI Forum*.

The main driving force behind all the organization's activities is to encourage teachers to seek the appropriate avenues to keep up-to-date with the latest research in the field, materials, methodologies, technology, essential for their lives as English language teachers.

It is our job as a teachers' association to supply a variety of arenas to foster professionalism. These include organizing events throughout the country, keeping in touch with the English Inspectorate and the Ministry of Education and maintaining our connections with international English teachers' organizations as an affiliate of TESOL and an associate of IATEFL.

ETAI Membership Dues

Members	175 NIS
Full-time students*	120 NIS
New immigrants / New teachers	120 NIS
Retirees	120 NIS / 100 NIS**
Overseas members	250 NIS

*must present a valid student ID card

**a special reduction given to retirees who bring in a new member

New member / Membership renewal form can be downloaded from the ETAI site: <http://www.etni.org.il/etai/dues.html>.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

We've adopted a rather ambitious slogan this year, borrowed from the summer conference feedback:

'ETAI is getting better and better!'

Now what we need to do is justify it!

So I started thinking: what does 'better' mean, in practical, operational terms, for English teachers?

First, it doesn't necessarily mean change. Many people tend to assume that 'change' is necessarily good: but it isn't. A lot of things we've been doing in the classroom for years are excellent and we don't need to change them just for the sake of doing something new – we can all think of examples. Sometimes 'better' means actually carrying on doing the same thing, basically, with confidence in the rightness of our approach, but trying to do it more efficiently with more effective outcomes.

Sometimes it means 'tweaking' what we do: taking our procedures and making them more effective by introducing minor additions or alterations that can make all the difference.

Sometimes it does mean real change: a new book or text, a new way of doing things we came across at an ETAI conference, a new Ministry requirement, a new idea we thought up on our own, something we got from the Forum.

But whether something is in fact 'better' or not at the end of the day is the crucial question. And it is a question which can only be answered by you, the classroom teacher. I believe strongly that professionalism means that we have the right to decide – having weighed all the pros and cons and looked critically at our own experience – what is better, or best, for our students' learning. Nobody else, however 'expert' or authoritative, can deny this right.

And it is this kind of professionalism that ETAI is committed to developing and supporting: the skills, ideas, thinking and understanding that enable us, the English teachers to take decisions, teach the best we possibly can – while enjoying the privilege of being part of the supportive community that ETAI has become.

Penny Ur
ETAI Chairperson

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

This year's theme for ETAI is "Diversity in the Classroom." Our classrooms are becoming more and more diverse. We teach pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds. We struggle to accommodate the needs of pupils with varied learning styles. And as the population of each class becomes more diverse with each passing year, so does the adversity we encounter. But we not only persevere, we also grow and develop as we help our pupils grow and develop.

ETAI contributes to our professional development in the face of diversity and adversity. We meet with our colleagues at conferences to share ideas. The diversity of the program for this year's Winter Conference in Beer Sheva insures that everyone will find stimulating, thought-provoking and practical presentations to attend. This issue of the Forum also offers a diverse selection of articles. Sandra Briggs, past president of TESOL, reminds us of the importance of learning strategies. Sarah Cove shows us how songs and chants add spice to our lessons. Penny Ur tells us about English teaching around the world. A profile of Dr. Riva Levenchuk is our featured article about a leading English language educator. David Young has treated us to another book review. Miri Yochana sends us to useful sites once again in her Netsurfing column. This issue introduces a new regular feature to the Forum: reproducible materials. The British Council is contributing a reproducible activity to each issue of the forum. In addition, you can find more photocopiable material by Phyllis Oded. You are invited to share your original material here as well! And we haven't forgotten literature. Ellen Spolsky and Debbie Lifshitz present their views on thinking skills, while Leslie Cohen provides practical ideas for teaching about the Holocaust through literature. Michelle Kinbursky's article about vocabulary leaves us ready to hear more about vocabulary from Batia Laufer, who will be giving a plenary session at the winter conference.

In line with the theme of diversity, the next issue of the Forum will be a special edition focusing on learning disabilities and differences. It will feature articles by Dr. Tsafi Timor, Peggy Barzilay, Sharon Azaria, Robert Lederman and others. Please consider sharing your expertise and submitting an article to the upcoming issue. Guidelines for submission are outlined in the "Call for Articles." - on page 40.

We hope that you will enjoy this issue of the ETAI Forum, which is now beginning its **twentieth** year of publication! Thanks to all past and present contributors who have made this achievement possible.

Michele Ben and Amanda Caplan, ETAI Forum Co-editors

ALL THE LATEST (ETAI) NEWS FIT TO PRINT

Marna Snyder (*etaioffice@gmail.com*)

It's been a long time since our last issue of the ETAI Forum, and indeed, everyone has been busy with the beginning of the academic year, as well as the holidays. When I recently asked someone who often submits articles for the Forum whether she's written anything for this issue, her response was, "No time to write, no time to think!"

At ETAI, we have a hard act to follow after last year's abundance of activities offered nationwide: no less than nine mini-conferences, from Maalot to Eilat, as well as five workshops presented in tandem with the British Council on the use of film in the classroom. All in all, hundreds of teachers attended these events, enjoyed them, and benefited from them. We got rave reviews, and those of you who participated know what I mean!

Nothing succeeds like success, so we've decided to continue this winning trend, and have planned at least as many mini-conferences for the coming year. Here is the list of projected venues:

Hazor – December 14th
 Maghar – January 20th
 Ramat Gan – December or January
 Kfar Saba – Sometime in January
 Bet Yerach – February 3rd
 Rishon LeZion – February 22nd
 Jerusalem – Sometime in March
 Nazareth Elite – May 17th
 Holon – To be announced
 Eilat – To be announced

Perhaps your reaction when you read this list was, "But why can't we hold a mini-conference where I live?" The answer to this is, "Of course you can!" All you need is some initiative, plus a friend or two to help you plan the event. Fran Sokel (*sokel5@013.net*) is our coordinator for most of the mini-conferences, and she'll be happy to share her expertise with you. It goes without saying that I'll also be here in the ETAI office to assist you, and Penny Ur is always glad to lend a hand. In short, wherever ETAI members want to hold a mini-conference, they can certainly have a go at it!

Other ETAI news: We've said fond farewells to several longstanding Executive Board members: Dr. Susan Holzman, who served as ETAI Chair from 2002-2007; Tessa Shrem, who was our Treasurer in recent years; Dr. Riva Levenchuk, who hosted many memorable winter conferences in Beer Sheva (see the interview with her in this issue); and Dr. Sharon Azaria, who served on the Board for several years, and was well-known for her "Give, Get and Gain" presentations at the summer conferences.

Nava Horovitz is now serving as ETAI's Vice Chair, and her creative ideas are always a great boon to the organization. Two new board members have come on deck: Fran Sokel and Eleanor Satlow, who was on the Jerusalem Conference Committee this past year. With their help, we look forward to a fruitful year in 2008-9, and hope to see you at many of our events!

ROLL OUT THOSE LAZY, HAZY, CRAZY DAYS OF SUMMER...

Marna Snyder (*etaioffice@gmail.com*)

So went the lyrics of a popular song in the days of barbershop quartets and Panama straw hats. This summer ETA I rolled out the red carpet for hundreds of participants at the Annual National Conference held July 15-16th in Jerusalem at the Bayit Vegan Guest House.

And what a conference it was! The theme, "Perspectives", was taken up by fifty guest speakers, eleven of whom were new to the ranks. And what did they speak about? HOTS and LOTS, wikis, vocabulary games, motivation, reading strategies, stress reduction, spoon feeding, negotiating skills, English Day, Ofek Hadash, accents, children's rights, dictation, and many other topics relevant to the teaching of English.

(If some of these terms are unfamiliar, then it's time to hit the conference circuit...)

The plenary speakers were Sandra J. Briggs, past president of TESOL, who came all the way from the west coast of the U.S., and our own Penny Ur, who had just returned from a sabbatical in Vienna. The keynote speakers were Bernard Spolsky (educational linguistics), Joan Leegant (creative writing) and Rick Rosenberg (tools for communication). There were also two presenters from Yad Vashem – Jackie Metzger and Orit Margaliot. Robert Lederman returned to ETA I after an absence of several years, to give a presentation on sight and reading problems.

This year there was a pre-conference event, designated for non-native speakers of English, the day before the conference. The turnout was excellent. Helen Sykes and Leo Selivan (British Council) both gave presentations that day, and during the next two days. Joe Barnett also spoke at the pre-conference event.

For the first time, the English Teachers' Awards Ceremony for 2008, presented by Dr. Judy Steiner, took place during the conference. Another first was a very well-received evening program featuring a film with Hilary Swank, "Freedom Writers", which dealt with educational dilemmas.

As always, a comprehensive display of books and educational materials was open throughout both days of the conference. Twenty-six companies from all over the country (and one from Holland) were on-hand to share their wares with the participants.

So what did people have to say about the conference? Here are a few responses:

"It's my first time and I'm already looking forward [to] the next ETA I conference."

"I learned new things even though I've been teaching for the past 26 years."

"I only wish I could be in three parallel sessions! They are all so good!"

"The first day was incredible – I didn't have a free moment... I walked away with new friends, new ways of thinking about the teaching..."

"I think that the place chosen this year was an excellent choice. Thank you!"

And thanks to all those who shared their precious summer moments to make this conference such a big success!



SO YOU CAN'T CARRY A TUNE IN A BUCKET? No Reason Not to Use Songs in Class!

Sarah Cove (*sarahc@upp.co.il*)

Is your lesson opening rote and boring? Songs and chants are just the ticket to cure this. Do you want the pupils to practice pronunciation? Asking them to read a line or two from a text around the room can lead to lack of attention by those pupils not actually reading. How about using a chant to encourage correct pronunciation? The pupils just can't get used to a new grammar structure? They know the rule, but they never use it? Use a chant to drill the correct structure. The pupils are restless in the middle of the lesson and you need to get their attention back? Use a chant. You are passing out worksheets to a class of 42? Singing helps prevent disruption. These are just some of the reasons that songs and chants are a very useful classroom activity. There are many others.

Why use songs and chants?

Here are a number of points that provide the answer!

- ♪ **Songs and chants are fun** – Most people like to sing even if they can't carry a tune in a bucket (like me!). But if the cassette or CD is played louder than your voice, the pupils can follow along. Besides, a lot of the kids don't sing well either. This is for fun, not a concert.
- ♪ **Songs and chants cater to different learning styles and intelligences** – Most of our lessons are still frontal and visually oriented. Using songs and chants adds an aural dimension for auditory learners and stimulates pupils with a strong musical intelligence.
- ♪ **Songs and chants teach natural language** – There is a huge number of authentic English-language songs available from a wide variety of sources. Authentic songs use authentic language, which is what we want our pupils to learn and practice.
- ♪ **Songs and chants improve spoken language** – Spoken language is improved by speaking. The more we speak, the easier it becomes. I was frustrated while trying to speak when I first learned Hebrew, but now speaking comes more easily than when I first arrived. "Practice makes perfect."
- ♪ **Songs and chants teach colloquial English** – Authentic, colloquial English appears in

modern songs and raps. Be sure to check out the lyrics of all songs the pupils bring you to teach them. "Cool" and "rad" are very colloquial terms and can be introduced in the classroom, however, there is other less acceptable vocabulary in many modern songs.

- ♪ **Songs and chants teach vocabulary naturally** – Along with practicing pronunciation, songs and chants practice vocabulary. The more the pupils repeat the words, the more they will remember. Furthermore, songs and chants can introduce vocabulary beyond the textbook.
- ♪ **Songs and chants make remembering easier** – Many native English speakers learned Hebrew in Hebrew school by learning the prayers. These are all sung and are more easily remembered as a result. How many of you can still recall all the lyrics to songs that were popular when you were young – as well as how old you were, where you were and who you were with when you first heard a particular song – even though you haven't heard the song in many, many years? Songs evoke strong emotional connections in us.
- ♪ **Songs and chants may, but don't have to, reinforce language of the topic you are teaching** – When we choose or write songs or chants that are thematically connected to the topic we are teaching, it makes the subject more vibrant and alive.
- ♪ **Most people enjoy singing** – How many people sing in the shower because no one can hear it? These are people who enjoy singing but do not feel confident about the quality of their voice. But even if you cannot sing well, you can still speak. Turn songs into chants and raps. The kids will still have a great time and you will still accomplish your goals.

Elements that make good songs and chants

- ♪ **Songs and chants should have lots of repetition** – After all, we want the pupils to learn something from the song.

Vocabulary and Pronunciation

The following are some chants for practicing vocabulary. While chanting, the pupils can hold up various flash cards or pictures to show understanding of the words.

1st, 2nd Grades – Colors

Red, green, yellow and blue
These are colors for me and you
Purple, orange, black and brown
Lovely colors all around.

3rd Grade – The Clock

Silly Billy, Silly Billy
Why do you come so late?
You're always here at 9 o'clock
But school starts at 8!

Silly Billy, Silly Billy
Soon you will be free.
Put your books in your bag
We're going home at 3.

4th Grade – Days of the Week

Sunday, Monday – clap-clap – clap – clap
Tuesday, Wednesday – clap-clap – clap – clap
Thursday, Friday – clap-clap – clap – clap
Sat – ur – day – clap – clap

5th Grade – Professions

These are professions
Take a look.
Reporter, baker, astronaut, cook
Librarian, fireman, author, write a book.
Secretary, pilot, gardener, movie star
Technician, doctor, teacher, fix a car.

5th Grade – Opposites

What is it? What is it?
What is the opposite?
The opposite of big is small.
The opposite of short is tall.
The opposite of happy is sad.
The opposite of good is bad.
What is it? What is it?
What is the opposite?
The opposite of day is night.
The opposite of black is white.
The opposite of young is old.
The opposite of hot is cold.
What is it? What is it?
What is the opposite?
The opposite of left is right.
The opposite of day is night.
The opposite of up is down.
The opposite of square is round.

6th Grade – Champions

Headlines! Headlines!
See the Champions
Blue ribbon award winners
Gold star prize winners
Olympic star trophy winners
See the Champions.

7th Grade

It's a celebration
 And you're invited
 Let's have a party
 Just for fun
 Dress up in a costume
 A scary ghost or a witch
 Which will it be?
 It's a surprise – wait and see!

8th Grade

Agree – disagree
 Argue – point of view
 All I want is some communication
 Can't we have a conversation?
 Mother! Open your eyes!
 All you do is criticize!
 Your advice is "Follow the rule!"
 That will make me so uncool!
 I know exactly how you feel!
 Mother please! Will you get real?

Grammar and Chunking

In elementary school, grammar is best taught by emphasizing correct structure and de-emphasizing the rules. Grammar structures lend themselves easily to chants. The following are some of my ideas.

Going to – as Future

Going to a pet shop
 Going to buy a pet.
 Going to a pet shop
 A fish is what I'll get. Yes, a fish is what I'll get.
 (continue substituting other pets and sticking pictures on the board)

Present simple

What do you do?
 What do you do?
 What do you do every morning?
 I always get up at seven o'clock.
 I always eat my breakfast.
 I always pack my school bag.
 And I never miss the bus.
 What do you do?
 What do you do?
 What do you do every afternoon?
 Sometimes I do my homework.
 Sometimes I clean my room.
 Sometimes I do what my mother says.
 And I never make a fuss.
 What do you do?
 What do you do?
 What do you do every evening?
 I always eat my dinner.
 I often watch TV.
 I sometimes play with my brother.
 And I never have time free.

Modals

You can!
 I could?
 I might.
 You should!
 Must I?
 You absolutely have to!!
 I might not.
 You shouldn't
 I don't have to.
 You mustn't!

Past simple

Where did she go?
 She went to town.
 Why did she go?
 Because she wanted to.
 What did she do?
 She went shopping.
 What did she buy?
 She bought a shirt, a skirt, some jeans and a hat.
 She bought a shirt, a skirt, some jeans and a hat?
 Yes, and now she has no money!

Suggested Websites:

www.poems4teachers.com
 www.songs4teachers.com
<http://www.songsforteaching.com/>
 www.azlyrics.com
<http://www.creative-native.com/lyrics>
 www.summer.com
<http://www.tropicalglen.com/>
<http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/music.htm>

Sources for Songs:

Susie Miller has a wide selection of cassettes and CDs of authentic songs imported from overseas as well as her translations of Hebrew songs.

Carolyn Graham has a variety of books and cassettes with jazz chants for various purposes (including Grammar Jazz Chants). I have adapted some of her chants to my own purposes.

Sarah Cove came to Israel in 1984. She taught mainly in elementary schools, but also in Jr. and Sr. High. She has been a teacher counselor for about 15 years and has given numerous courses on a wide variety of topics. She is currently retired from the Ministry of Education, but still has her fingers in a number of EFL related projects.

THE VALUE OF PROJECT WORK

Aviva Shapiro (shapiroaviva@gmail.com)

Lately, you don't hear much talk about projects although they are still a part of our curriculum and definitely required for our matriculation exam. So, are projects still being done? Of course they are. However, I know that many teachers must be convinced that doing a project in class, where it should be done, is a worthwhile endeavour. There are still misconceptions about how projects should be done and about their value in teaching English.

I hope to persuade those non-believers that engaging in project work is extremely valuable to both the teacher and the students. Last April, I took a batch of my 10th and 11th graders projects to a talk I gave in NYC at the TESOL conference. Not only were my students amazed and thrilled that their work was being shown to English teachers in America, but the teachers who attended my talk were eager to see the work and were impressed by what they saw and heard.

What follows is a discussion of the rationale behind doing projects, ways to teach our students to work on projects and of the benefits for all involved.

A project is "a task requiring considerable and concerted effort."

Both the teacher and the student need to make a great effort to produce the final project. So why bother?

Projects:

- allow the use of authentic activities that motivate learners
- encourage cooperative work

- involve both teacher and student in collaboration
- encourage language interaction
- allow the natural use of language
- generate authentic dialogue
- allow both advanced and less advanced pupils to work together in order to achieve success
- allow for pupils of all levels of English to learn together
- encourage and teach independent learning and self assessment
- encourage creativity
- allow pupils to demonstrate what they have learned

Let's examine each reason individually. From my experience, most students are much more motivated to learn when they choose what they will be learning about. In choosing the topic of the project, the teacher might decide on an umbrella topic but the students take it from there. For example, in my 11th grade class the umbrella topic was Children's Rights but the students chose a sub-topic, such as child abuse or child labour. The pupils then searched for information as active learners. Research shows that doing is learning.

The ability to work cooperatively is a skill all our pupils need. Our students rarely have a chance to work with someone else, from dividing the work load to collaborating with someone else. Furthermore, the teacher and the pupils work together to decide on certain

criteria, perhaps the grading rubric or the deadlines of each section, and consult about different problems they may encounter. The teacher guides, helping the pupils throughout the work process.

During the entire process the students read authentic material, discuss it with their partner using English naturally. The mother tongue is often used by the students, but there is still a certain amount of natural English language use as the students work together trying to understand what they are reading and as they work together writing in English.

Authentic dialogue between teacher and pupils takes place in consultations throughout the project. This authentic use of English for a specific purpose is one of our goals as English teachers. Whether the teacher is explaining to the student something which is not clear, or advising him or her on ways to work more effectively, there is a dialogue being carried out and the pupil has a genuine reason to listen to spoken English.

One of the most important reasons for doing a project is that it is a great way to work with a heterogeneous class. The stronger students can work at one level while the less advanced pupils work at a different level. The teacher is available to help the less advanced pupils while the more advanced students don't feel as if they are being held back. In addition, sometimes a stronger student "adopts" a weaker pupil and then the weaker pupil gets help from a peer.

The most significant reason for working on projects is that the students learn how to be independent learners. The teacher needs to guide the pupils to the point where they are able to work mostly on their own; this means that teacher needs to let go. In addition to preparing them for life, the teacher is also making pupils take responsibility for their actions. Furthermore, as they work and when they finish, they need to learn to assess themselves; they learn to find and correct mistakes, which is an exceptionally important skill.

The last two reasons for teaching pupils how to do projects are that projects encourage creativity and allow pupils to demonstrate what they can do. Whether it is the way they present the project to the class, as a power point presentation or a game, for example, the project is their own, original work. The students are really proud of their final product and put a great deal of effort into making it look aesthetic.

With the worth of projects explained, I'd like to expand on a few more ideas which connect projects to an new issues of the day: teaching higher order thinking skills. Pupils engaged in project work are developing their

higher order thinking skills. To do a project correctly, a pupil has to engage in a myriad of thinking activities from organizing material, amalgamating and rewriting the material to summing up what s/he has learned.

Pupils doing projects have to use different and difficult thinking skills such as synthesis, organizing, analysis since they must find the material from different sources and then re-write in their own words. They also engage in comparing and contrasting, and many other activities which employ higher order thinking skills.

The project done correctly prepares the students for the matriculation exam in that the students improve their writing skills, develop their reading strategies and also improve their grammar used in their writing. Also, in presenting the project to the class, pupils practice speaking and improve their communication skills.

So when teachers claim that there isn't time to allow the kids to work on the projects in school because then they will lose valuable time otherwise used to practice modules, I disagree. The time spent on doing a project is time well spent in active learning. The pupils, if they are really reading, writing, and attempting to correct their own work after the teachers have pointed out their mistakes are, are progressing in all areas of English. Furthermore, and maybe most importantly, they are enjoying themselves while they are learning.

Students who enjoy themselves and learn to be independent learners who know how to take responsibility, gain more by writing a project or research paper than by sitting passively in class pretending to listen. This is a significant achievement.

At first it is difficult for the teacher because the teacher must let go and not control everything that is going on in the classroom. This takes organization. The pupils need specific skills to begin project work. These skills, such as summarizing information, using a dictionary and locating appropriate information, empower our students. It is crucial for the teacher to prepare all the guidelines for project work as a booklet or online pages and review the information with the students. At least two lessons need to be dedicated to this so that the students all know what is expected of them. The teacher needs to emphasize that part of the final grade is based on the process of project work. I make a chart with all the students' names and after each lesson I tick off how each student worked: Very Good, Good, Needs Improvement. This helps keep me on task and grade them fairly. They learn that even if the final product doesn't come out as they would have liked, they do get a good grade for engaging in the active process. Furthermore, I check each section, chapter or part of the project before the pupils continue working.

This way the students learn how to stay on task, meet deadlines and understand that I really am interested in the learning process and not JUST the final product.

Finally, of course, the students receive the rubrics according to which they are evaluated and graded. This further encourages them to work well in order to achieve the final goal.

We have found that by doing two projects, one in 10th grade and one in 11th grade, the students learn the skills in 10th grade and then refine them in 11th grade. The first year the project is less demanding but still gives them the skills they need. The following year, all the students feel more confident.

Certain students do find project work more challenging than others, especially the LD and ADHD students. However, with careful planning, patience and close guidance these students too can do a project. The project doesn't have to be 20 pages long. It can be short and still encompass the basic required elements. Since the project reflects the student's learning process, there might be less written work at the end, but there is more learning as they progress. They are proud of their accomplishment and they will have improved their English.

Project work is not a waste of time. It is a way to accomplish our goal of improving our pupils' English and it's a way to make learning English an enjoyable journey. Research projects take the kids out of the structured classroom and into the real world. They engage the pupils in using English and make them understand the importance of learning English as a second language.

Here is what a few of my students have had to say:

The project improved my English because I participated in the writing and I used all the grammar points I know and if I did something wrong I saw it in my drafts and learned from it for the next time.

Roni

The project was educational and interesting. I learned from the project a lot. I learned how to work better on the computer, how to work better with a partner, how to answer questions better and of course about child abuse.

Tom

In this project I learned many new things about ... English and ... In English I expanded my vocabulary, improved my writing and reading and learned about the history of poems and songs.

Naama

During the time we did the project I really improved my English because I had to find the translations of lots of words. I learned about myself that I can handle big projects and finish them on time!

Yossi

I improved my English because I practiced the language while I did the work.

Dana

As the years have gone by my students have shown me how valuable doing projects in class are. I am convinced that this is one of the best ways to teach English. When the time comes for the students' oral exam, most of the kids feel at ease talking about their projects and quite enjoy those few minutes portraying their knowledge and accomplishments.

For more information about how to organize yourself and for ideas on how to work with your students, feel free to contact me.

Aviva Lana Shapiro is a teacher and coordinator at the Beit Yerach Comprehensive High School in the Jordan Valley. . She is also a REED (Rural English Education Department) counsellor in the North. She has a BSc from the University of Maryland, USA and an MBA from Leicester University, England. She is the mother of five and lives in a "Yishuv Kehilati" near the Kinneret.

DR. RIVA LEVENCHUK
FROM VILNA TO DIMONA, BEER SHEVA AND BEYOND!

Michele Ben (*mggben@gmail.com*)



Imagine beginning your English teaching career in a cosmopolitan eastern European city and then moving to Israel to work in a small development town in the middle of the Negev desert. It's the early 1970's and few people have a telephone, fewer have a television and most people travel by bus. You must adjust to a new culture, a new home, a new language all while pursuing your career in teaching English as a foreign language. This is what Dr. Riva Levenchuk experienced when she made "aliyah" in 1972. "I began teaching in Vilna, Lithuania, in 1967, when I was still a student.

In 1972 we made "aliyah" and I started teaching in Dimona. A year later I moved to the Ofakim Comprehensive High School where I worked as an English teacher, home teacher and coordinator of English for 15 years," Riva said. Within a few years, Riva added to her work-load and became a counselor for the Ministry of Education and started teaching courses in EFL Methodology at the In-Service Teacher Training Department of Ben Gurion University. Then, twenty seven years ago Riva was offered a teaching position at the Kaye Academic College of Education. Working in Ofakim was very important to her, so Riva stayed on there but left her other positions to concentrate on building the English Department with her colleague, Connie Reisner. The English Department in Kaye College grew as more experienced and dedicated teachers joined. They worked under Riva's leadership as she served as department head for ten years and as head of the EAP (English for Academic Purposes) division in the college. She taught written and oral proficiency courses, methodology of EFL and mentored English majors as their Pedagogical Advisor.

Riva has recently retired from teaching, although she continues to work as Head of the Foreign Affairs Department at the College which entails collaborating with educational academic institutions on an international level, organizing faculty and student exchange programs with institutions abroad, hosting college guests from

abroad, promoting cultural and educational programs in co-operation with foreign Embassies, promoting educational projects and finding financial resources to support them, identifying financial resources in order to provide scholarships for needy students. Riva also edits the Annual College Magazine.

Riva never considered pursuing a career other than teaching. She explains, "As a young child I always respected and looked up to my teachers and I dreamt of the day when I too would become a teacher. Over the years I have never regretted my decision to work with children and young people as a teacher. Teaching has given me a sense of fulfillment in being able to contribute not only to the knowledge, but also to the personalities of my students. When I see my students in the field utilizing the tools I have helped to give them, I feel a great sense of satisfaction. Teaching student teachers has given me a unique opportunity to influence the next generation."

Riva's efforts to impact the lives of future generations go beyond the classroom. One way to improve lives is through mutual understanding. To pursue that aim, Riva has been an active member of the Associated School Project of UNESCO for many years and a member of the Steering Committee of the UNESCO International Conferences. She explains, "One of the main aims (of the project) is to promote multiculturalism at the college. In order to further this goal, I was involved in projects concerning exchange of art exhibitions with countries from abroad, collaboration with other academic institutions abroad for the purpose of research, organization of international meetings, conferences which served as the platform for the exchange of ideas. In fact, in 2007 she received the UNESCO Lifetime Achievement Award for "exceptional contribution to the Associated Schools Project of UNESCO in promoting International Cooperation and Multiculturalism." Riva has been involved in other endeavors requiring international cooperation as well. She was a member of the Organizing Committee of the 5th International Conference of Education and a member of the Academic and the Editorial Board for a number of ATEE (Association of Teacher Education in Europe) Conferences in addition to presenting at a number of International conferences in different countries.

However, one of the most exciting and fulfilling projects promoting cross-cultural understanding in which Riva participated was organizing some trips to England for English majors at Kaye College. "Trips of such kind to England are very important since they expose students to the English culture, education, and traditions. The students gain much more confidence and knowledge to better function as teachers in the English classroom. These trips were an unforgettable and very exciting experience for our students," Riva elaborates.

Helping her students gain confidence as English teachers is a primary goal of Riva's as an educator. This is rooted in her own experience in becoming a professional English language educator. Riva notes, "Being a non-native speaker helped me to be more sensitive to the problems of my Israeli students, not only to sympathize with the difficulties, but to pin point specific problems they experienced in learning a foreign language so different from their own. On the other hand I had to work hard to perfect my own English so that others would not look at me as a second class teacher, and I myself would have the self-confidence needed as an English teacher in a college classroom." She explains that what she most enjoys in teaching is, "To see the success of my students, to see them making progress, to see the English majors develop their awareness about teaching and about themselves as teachers and find their own natural and most effective teaching style. I focus on giving my students, future teachers, the tools to function in a multicultural environment, to develop in them the skills of professionalism and leadership."

Nurturing professionalism in teachers is of prime importance to Riva, therefore, she became involved in ETAI from its inception as a founding member. "I thought it was a wonderful platform for professional

development, for sharing ideas and meeting colleagues, Riva comments and adds, "ETAI has enriched my teaching; it has become a wonderful umbrella of belonging, a source of information, ideas and insights into teaching." Riva was ETAI Conference Convener in the South for about 15 years.

In 2007 she was honored by ETAI and received the ETAI Lifetime Achievement Award for "outstanding contribution to the English teaching profession and for longstanding dedicated involvement in ETAI on behalf of the English teachers of the Negev".

Now, after 41 years teaching, Riva finally has time to spend with her family. Both her sons are highly educated professionals, and her husband who has also retired, was the Chief Building Engineer in Shikun Ovdim. Riva can now enjoy pursuing her hobbies of listening to music and reading. And Riva is also able to take pleasure in the time she spends with her three grandchildren, showering them with the attention that was invested in her students. Riva sums up her career as an educator saying, "I learned to accept my students as human beings with love and affection, to be more patient, understanding and supportive. I hope that I managed to transfer these values to my students. My students realized that they are educators first and then they are teachers."

Michele Ben teaches at Ginsburg HaOren Six-year Comprehensive School in Yavneh, mainly in the JHS. She worked as a remedial reading teacher in Hebrew for 15 years before retraining ten years ago as an English teacher. Michele holds a BA in Special Education from Hebrew University, an MA in education from U.N.N. and a certificate in translation from Bar-Ilan.

Just around the corner ...
ETAI Winter Conference
 December 28, 2008

See page 43
 for details

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT)

Sandra J. Briggs (sjbtf@earthlink.net)

TESOL Past President 2008 – 2009

Learning strategies are powerful.

They help language learners become independent learners.

They help language learners make the most of the English they have.

Learning strategies are not a new idea in language teaching, but I have found them very important in my teaching. In this article I share my experience with and perspective on using learning strategies in the ELT classroom. I hope that by reading this article, whether the information is new to you or a review, you will understand learning strategies better, how to use them yourself and how to train your students to use them.

First, we need a good definition of learning strategies. My favorite is from Rebecca Oxford (Oxford1990):

Learning strategies are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning. Strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative confidence. Appropriate language learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence.

Notice the emphasis on the students in her definition: the students take the steps. They take the steps to make their own language learning and use better. Language strategies are tools that the students can use. What do they use them for? For active, self-directed involvement in language and language learning. Why are they important? Because they result in communicative competence, improved efficiency in learning and in greater self-confidence in learning and using language.

One of my own important learning strategies is: Use key examples. When I learn a concept, I learn a good definition and I have one or two key examples that help me remember the concept. My example here is about Jun Liu, TESOL President 2006 – 2007. In his outstanding presidential plenary at the 2007 TESOL Convention, he told wonderful stories about how he learned English and became an ELT professional first in his own country, China, and later in the United States. The strategies involved in this example are: memorize, take risks, and learn from your mistakes.

When Jun Liu came to the United States, he was already an experienced ELT teacher, and he was eager to use his

considerable English with native speakers. One morning at the university where he was studying, a woman greeted him in the hall. She said, “Good morning. What a lovely day!”

In China, people often recite poetry when greeting each other so Jun, who has always used memorization, which is a very popular learning strategy in China, thought of a poem that he knew about a lovely day and in answer to the woman he quoted lines from William Wordsworth’s “Composed Upon Westminster Bridge.” The woman was speechless. She smiled at him and hurried away. Jun was surprised at her reaction. What had he done wrong? Memorizing and using poetry had served him well in China. He had taken a risk and spoken to the woman in the hall with more than “good morning.” That hadn’t gone well. So Jun learned from his mistake. He discovered that in the United States, when someone says, “Good morning. What a lovely day,” you are expected to answer something like “Good morning. Yes, it is.” Because Jun is such a good learning strategy user, he didn’t make that mistake again.

Learning strategies are usually categorized into two or three groups. Direct strategies are memory, cognitive, compensation, and study skills. The learner uses these directly on the language. Indirect strategies are divided into two groups. The first is metacognitive strategies, which learners use when they think about language and organize their learning. The second is social / affective strategies, which learners use when they are thinking about how they feel about their language learning and when they are working with other people to learn. Examples of these strategies are found in the “Learning Strategies Laundry List” on the next page.

LEARNING STRATEGIES LAUNDRY LIST

Prepared by Sandy Briggs

In preparation for writing *Grammar: Strategies & Practice*: July 1992

Revised for teacher training: June 2002 and April 2007

This list draws on Oxford (1990), Rubin (1982), O'Malley (1990) and my own ideas.

DIRECT STRATEGIES (memory, cognitive, compensation, and study skills)

1. Find examples of the rules.
2. Have a key example.
3. Change rules to work for you.
4. Close books and materials and explain something to yourself.
5. Mark up sentences.
6. Use grammar as a tool.
7. Remember that English is a word order language.
8. Use your primary language: Make comparisons to your primary language. Translate. Use cognates.
9. Classify.
10. Make predictions.
11. Take notes.
12. Summarize.
13. Draw a picture.
14. Make a mental picture. An absurd or especially funny picture is very good!
15. Make a formula.
16. Make a chart or table.
17. Make a list of different ways to say something.
18. Make flash cards.
19. Make a two-columned list and practice with it.
20. Find examples in a dictionary.
21. Put key vocabulary or grammar in a dialogue.
22. Memorize.
23. Edit your own writing for one point at a time.
24. Learn from your mistakes.
25. Contrast two ways of saying something: How are they different?
26. Talk to yourself. Ask yourself questions.
27. Practice with dialogues.
28. Use resources.
29. Talk or write without consciously thinking about grammar or spelling or other language details.
30. Learn when it is important to pay attention to grammar, spelling, and other language details.
31. Brainstorm.
32. Use telegraphic speech: Eliminate what anyone can put back.
33. Substitute one way of saying something with

another: Use circumlocution. Adjust or approximate the message. Coin a new word. Use a synonym.

34. Put something in a context.
35. Recombine learned elements to make new and longer sequences of language.
36. Scan for key vocabulary or grammar.
37. Skim for main ideas.
38. Repeat to remember.
39. Review well.
40. Highlight.
41. Figure out the key elements for making a lexical or grammatical choice.
42. Make a semantic map.
43. Use mime and gesture.
44. Use parts of speech.
45. Don't look for explanations if there aren't any.
46. Learn some phrases and sentences as wholes.
47. Learn formalized routines.
48. Play with language. Use games, rhyming, and alliteration.
49. Connect vocabulary and idioms with grammar. Learn words that are associated with certain grammatical constructions.
50. Paraphrase.
51. Be aware of variation.
52. Learn to make intelligent guesses.

METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES (thinking about and organizing learning)

1. Use what you know.
2. Evaluate how you are doing.
3. Monitor how you are producing language. Record and listen to yourself speaking in English.
4. Find places to practice.
5. Pay attention: Direct your attention to the point at hand.
6. Take charge of your own language learning.
7. Set up goals and objectives.
8. Use a checklist.

SOCIAL / AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES (Thinking about how you feel and working with others)

1. Explain vocabulary or grammar or other language points to another person.
2. Ask questions of other people.
3. Cooperate with others on a task.
4. Keep a language journal.
5. Reward yourself.
6. Listen to your body.
7. Encourage yourself.
8. Make positive statements.

9. Take risks.
10. Discuss your feelings with another person.
11. Become aware of others' feelings.
12. Learn to live with uncertainty.

Learning strategies can be taught directly to students. They can learn to try different strategies and choose those that work for them. For three years a graduate student did research on learning strategies in my beginning ELT class. He wanted to see if the learning strategies that worked so well for Rebecca Oxford with her university language learners would work with secondary students just beginning to learn English.

What he learned from this research has been very important for me and I hope that it will be for you too:

All students use some strategies. Students who learn well use a variety of learning strategies and when one strategy doesn't work, they try another.

Beginning students need learning strategies as much, if not more, than intermediate and advanced students.

Teachers can teach learning strategies and students can learn them.

His work in my class showed me that I should use direct instruction of learning strategies even for very beginning students, that helping students feel comfortable with a wide range of strategies was important, and that it was worth our time to do this because it was possible to teach them so that students could learn and use them.

You are teaching your students a process. You are showing them how taking charge of their own learning and analyzing how they learn and thinking about what strategies they should use in different situations will help them be good language users.

I start a little at a time. I pick a strategy that seems good for something my students and I are working on. I go to my sources to see what they say. I talk to my colleagues about the strategy and what they would do. I prepare to teach the strategy by writing it out in steps. I think about how we could practice it. Then I try it in class. I make a deal with my students. They must all try the strategies that we work on as a group. They must all practice them. But eventually they get to decide which strategies work for them and discontinue use of those that don't.

Many of the strategies become part of the routine in my class. For example, the metacognitive strategy: think about how you will do an assignment before you start working with it. It seems obvious to most teachers, but not to many students. When I give an assignment, I say: If I were a student in this class, I would... and then I

go on to explain how I would do the assignment. They always listen and are more involved when I present the assignment in this way. Often, they offer other ways that they would use to do the assignment and the class discusses all of the ways offered. Learning strategies have become a very important tool in my classes and students routinely use a variety of learning strategies.

At the beginning of this article, I wrote three strong statements about learning strategies:

- They are powerful.
- They help language learners become independent learners.
- They help language learners make the most of the English they have.

I hope that this short article will help you teach learning strategies in your classroom and use them in your own learning.

Resources on Learning Strategies

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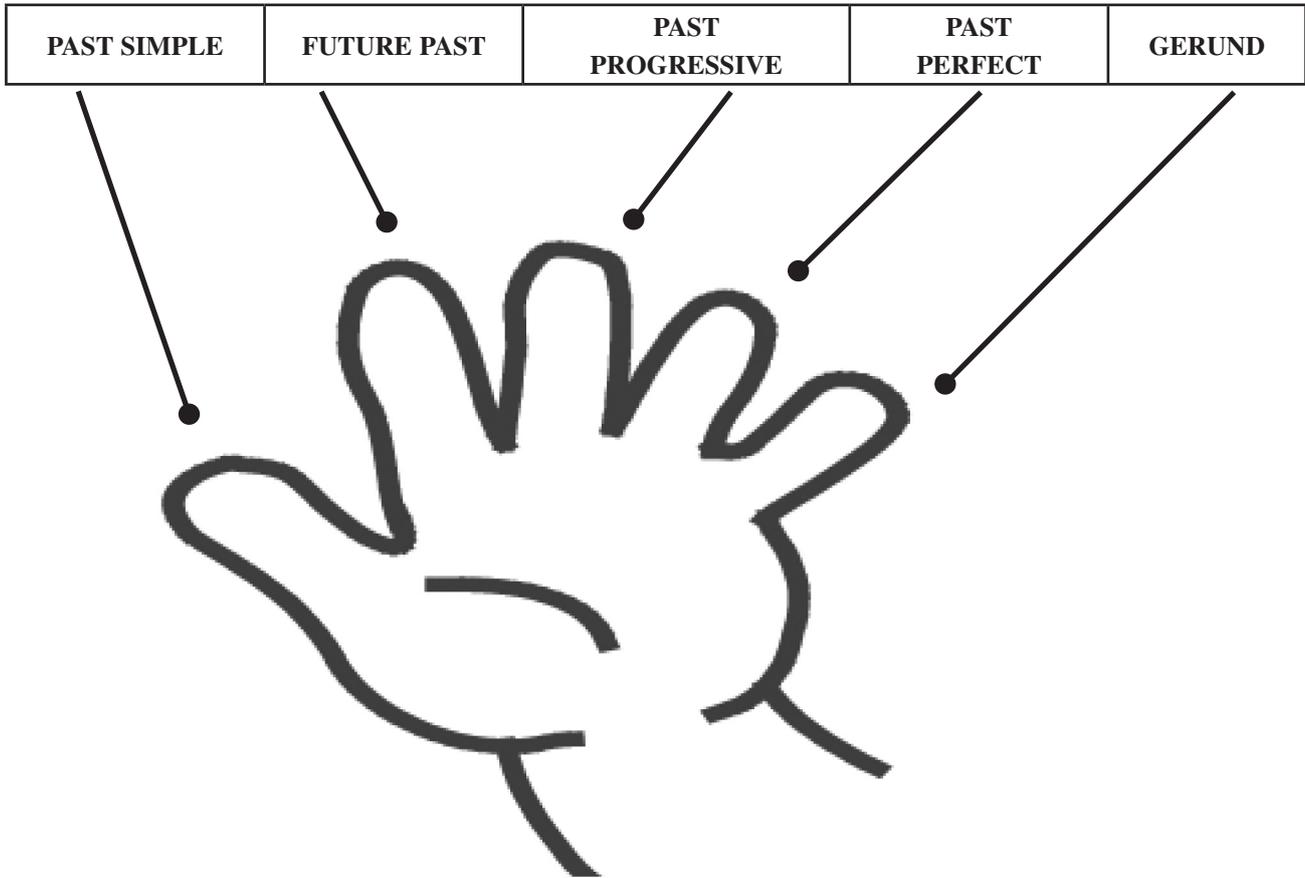
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Sandra J. Briggs is an ELT consultant based in San Francisco, California in the United States. She has been an ELT instructor, curriculum developer, teacher trainer, program coordinator, and author. She is very active in Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Inc. and is currently TESOL Past President.

REMEMBERING THE TENSES:

WHEN WRITING A COMPOSITION ABOUT A STORY / POEM YOU HAVE READ.

Phyllis Oded (*phylliso@015.net.il*)

Past simple followed by another verb in the **Past Simple**:

He **opened** his schoolbag and took out his English books.

Past simple followed by **Future Past**:

He **said** that he **would take** the dog out for a walk in a little while.

Past simple followed by **Past Progressive**:

He **fell asleep** while he **was listening** to some music.

Past simple followed by **Past Perfect**:

He left the classroom after the dismissal bell **had rung**.

He **told** me that he **had** already **done** all his homework.

Past simple followed by **a gerund**:

He **left** after **saying** good-bye to his friends.

* Also necessary: the Third Conditional:

If he had been there at the time, he would have spoken to them about it.

My name is Phyllis Oded I have been teaching English in Israel since 1967. Officially I am 'on pension' but still teach. I LOVE TEACHING. I am now teaching at Alliance High School in Ramat Aviv.

Job description: I teach young people about the world IN ENGLISH

NAME CLASS DATE

Fold the paper along the line, lengthwise. Fill in the missing information next to the numbers. Then copy the words onto the other side, according to the numbers. Read aloud. Enjoy!

- 1. language
- 2. plural noun
- 3. number
- 4. & 5. two days of the week
- 6. verb in base form
- 7. name of a city in Israel
- 8. noun with wheels
- 9. plural noun

- 10. name of person
- 11. your phone number

WANT AD

Do you speak ¹ ?
 Wanted: ² who do!
 Salary: \$ ³ per month.
 Workdays: ⁴ through ⁵
 Must also be able to ⁶ fast.
 Must be someone living in ⁷
 Must know -how to drive a ⁸
 Also must be married with ⁹
 Interested?
 Then contact ¹⁰
 at ¹¹

NOW: Write a letter of application for this job. 80+ words. Use and underline connectors.
Continue on the back, if necessary.

Dear Sir:

.....

.....

Food by Julie Bray

When I was at school, our teacher told the class: 'You are what you eat.' My friends and I would laugh and call each other 'hamburger' and 'biscuits'. Our teacher was trying to show us the importance of eating the right food to stay healthy.

This was a few decades ago when there were big campaigns to make British people healthier. We decided to throw out our chip pan, which we had used until then to make chips every day for dinner. We replaced our chips with boiled potatoes. We also started using semi-skimmed milk instead of whole milk in our cups of tea and bowls of cornflakes. At first I felt like I was eating my cornflakes in water and my potatoes had no taste at all. But after a while I started to prefer healthier food because I felt stronger and I didn't get sick so often.

Japanese people are reputed to be the healthiest in the world because of the food they eat. The healthiest Japanese people eat rice and fish and vegetables every day. They drink green tea or water when they're thirsty, and snack on dried fish, fruit or ginkgo nuts. The traditional Japanese diet is famous for helping you to live a longer and healthier life.

So we have proof that you become what you eat. Can you tell what your friends eat just by looking at them? When you know the effects of different types of food, you can use your knowledge well and eat what you want to become.

Food has an impact on our physical and emotional health. Have you ever heard any of the following advice?

- Lettuce or milk can make you sleepy.
- To stop feeling sleepy you should eat peanuts or dried fish.
- To keep your teeth clean you should eat apples often.
- Garlic helps you not to catch a cold.

Everyone has their own advice to give, which they have read about or have been told by older relatives. Some of these pieces of advice seem to contradict each other.

- Eating chocolate makes you fat and gives you spots.
- Chocolate contains the essential minerals iron and magnesium.

What we need to figure out is what type of chocolate to eat to get the benefits and how much of it to eat. We can do this by reading the list of ingredients on the chocolate bar wrapper. Exactly how much real chocolate is in there? And how much of that do we need to eat to get the benefits of the minerals it contains?

Future restaurants might be named after the physical or emotional state they hope to create. Their menus will list the benefits of each dish and drink. Some restaurants have already started this concept, and list the nutritional content of their dishes on the menus.

Let's take the restaurant Winners as an example. Their menu would list dishes specifically designed to help you win sports competitions. There would be Night-before vegetable lasagne, a pasta dish with extra layers of spinach pasta for slow-burning energy, rich tomato sauce full of vitamin C and soft, easy-to-digest vegetables. All this would be topped with a little fresh cheese – just enough to help you get a good night's sleep, but not enough to give you nightmares.

Or you could choose the Go-faster salad, which is a large bowl of mixed raw vegetables in a light salad dressing, giving you energy without making you gain weight. The vegetables are carefully chosen to include plenty of natural vitamins and minerals.

What kind of dishes do you think would be on the menu at the Clever Café (which sells food that's good for your brain)?

So what's going to happen to hamburgers and biscuits? Will the concept of eating food because it's tasty go out of fashion? Of course not. Junk food is also changing. If ice-cream is not good for children, can't we give them fat-free, sugar-free tofu ice cream? Unhealthy food is going out of fashion, so brands are changing. We are told not to drink cola because of the sugar and caffeine content so cola companies are making sugar-free and caffeine-free drinks. We are told dried fruit is a healthier snack than biscuits so some biscuit companies are making biscuits with added vitamins. Snacks might soon be changing their names to Skinglow and Chocomineral. So in the future you might be able to eat your way to your idea of perfection.

Vocabulary

Five words/phrases from the text:

- semi-skimmed milk: milk with some of the fat removed to make it healthier
- snack on: to eat small amounts of food between meals
- wrapper: the covering (usually made of paper or plastic) used to protect something
- salad dressing: oil, vinegar, salt and other ingredients mixed together to eat with salad
- -free (sugar-free, fat-free, caffeine-free): a suffix that means 'without'

Exercise one

Vocabulary gap fill. Now use the five words/phrases to fill the gaps in the sentences below:

The doctor recommended⁽¹⁾ instead of full fat milk to reduce my cholesterol.

Teenagers these days⁽²⁾ chocolate and crisps.

If you want to know what these sweets contain, read the⁽³⁾

You can't smoke here, it's a smoke⁽⁴⁾ zone.

Waiter, can you bring me some⁽⁵⁾ please?

Exercise two

Comprehension: answer the five questions using information from the article:

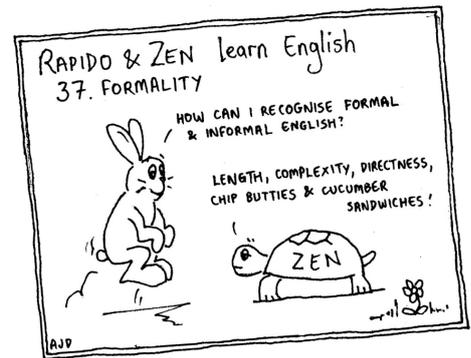
- 1 Why are Japanese people so healthy?
- 2 How is chocolate bad for you? And how is it good for you?
- 3 What can we find out by reading a chocolate wrapper?
- 4 What is the food at Winners good for?
- 5 How are cola companies making their drinks healthier?

Word search

S	N	G	I	A	P	M	A	C	X	O	O	H
K	B	B	H	E	A	L	T	H	I	E	S	T
D	W	Z	U	J	A	O	V	S	G	S	E	D
R	A	S	E	H	S	I	D	C	X	L	G	S
B	E	N	E	F	I	T	S	P	V	A	I	N
B	A	K	S	Y	U	O	V	K	S	R	R	I
V	E	G	E	T	A	B	L	E	S	E	E	M
J	E	B	L	G	J	P	Y	Z	X	N	P	A
X	Z	F	U	I	A	S	A	O	P	I	P	T
Y	O	Z	S	X	Y	Q	O	W	D	M	A	I
N	U	T	R	I	T	I	O	N	A	L	R	V
P	Q	C	V	W	B	R	A	N	D	S	W	T
Z	E	T	X	J	L	Z	U	Y	Z	O	W	I

See if you can find these words in the grid. They can be horizontal, vertical, diagonal and backwards.

- B_NE_ITS
- MI_ERA_S
- BRANDS**
- NU_RI_IO_AL
- CA_PA_G_S
- VEG_TA_LES
- D_S_ES
- V_T_MI_S
- HEA_T_I_ST
- _RA_PER



English and culture

'To write or even speak English is not a science but an art. There are no reliable words. Whoever writes English is involved in a struggle that never lets up even for a sentence.' This quote came from George Orwell, the British author and social commentator. His most famous book was *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Do you think using language is more about science and accuracy, or art and creativity?

Answers

Vocabulary

- 1 Japanese people are so healthy because they have a healthy diet. They eat rice, fish and vegetables every day, drink green tea or water and snack on fruit.
- 2 Chocolate makes you fat and gives you spots.
- 3 wrapper
- 4 free
- 5 salad dressing

Comprehension

- 1 The food at Winners helps you win sports competitions
- 2 exactly how much chocolate it contains
- 3 By reading a chocolate wrapper we can find out it contains iron and magnesium
- 4 Cola companies are making their drinks healthier by making their drinks caffeine-free or sugar-free
- 5 Teenagers these days eat chocolate and crisps.

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TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST THROUGH LITERATURE

Leslie Cohen (*leslie_c@keh.co.il*)

For many reasons, Holocaust education should be one of the Israeli educational system's top priorities. As the years pass anti-Semitism has not diminished, but rather, it is flourishing in communities throughout the world, and knowledge will enable Israeli youth to combat it. Also, the number of Holocaust survivors is falling fast. They are no longer here to give first hand accounts to pupils, so it is increasingly necessary to bring secondhand sources into the teaching process. Thus, the importance of Holocaust biographies cannot be overrated.

Many Israeli high school students travel to Poland to see concentration camps. The preparation for this emotionally-charged experience includes appropriate reading and guided study. After the visit, high school youths should be encouraged to increase their knowledge about the Holocaust by further reading.

Historical documents, biography, and literature facilitate teaching about the Holocaust through secondhand sources from various vantage points. Each source plays a distinctive and unique role, and each one appeals to a different kind of learner. The value of teaching about the Holocaust through biography is the personalization of events, which helps the reader absorb and integrate historical data into his or her individual frame of reference.

The biography, *Trapped Inside the Story*, (Cohen, 2007) offers the reader a wealth of historical data – from statistics to maps, to the interior design of homes in Poland. It focuses on the life of a Jewish family of five, only one of whom survived. The events that took place are presented dramatically from the perspective of Sonya Hebenstreit, who was twelve years old when she lost first her mother, then her father, next her baby brother, and finally her younger sister – all within a six month period.

Perhaps the most commonly asked questions about the Holocaust is: “How was it that people knew about Hitler's intentions to wipe out the Jews, and yet nobody did anything to prevent it?” and “Why didn't the Jews do anything to protect themselves?” *Trapped Inside the Story* deals with this question by portraying Sonya's experience as a child growing up during the 1930's. The historical situation is highlighted as Sonya listens to her parents' conversations about Hitler and watched as her neighborhood changes. The combination of slow and faulty news dissemination and the disbelief of the general population in Hitler's reported speeches are viewed from the child's perspective. The life style of the

Jews of Lvov portrayed in the book illustrates how the situation deteriorated and spiraled out of control. The contrast between the two-room apartment where Sonya lived – with its one radio and its newspapers providing all of the news that could be obtained- with today's life style and variety of news media, allows the reader to appreciate how relatively uninformed the population was. Furthermore, the background level of anti-Semitism in Polish society and the lack of security of the Jews in the Diaspora before the creation of the State of Israel provide further insight into the attitudes of Jews toward the Nazi regime.

Many Holocaust biographies deal with this and other historical issues. What distinguishes *Trapped Inside the Story* from other Holocaust biographies is its special use of storytelling. While both of Sonya's parents worked, Sonya spent many of her waking hours with the live-in housekeeper, Zoshka, who was a colorful character and loved to sing songs and tell stories to the children. She spoke to the children in Ukrainian, so Sonya grew up trilingual; she spoke Yiddish with her parents, Polish in the streets, and Ukrainian with Zoshka. Sonya especially loved the fairy tales that Zoshka would recite in rhyme and spent hours repeating the rhymes to herself. When she learned to read, Sonya joined a paying library and was determined to read every fairy tale that she could find. Her school didn't have a library, nor were there public libraries in Poland. The influence of the fairy tales on Sonya was extremely powerful. Thus, the book includes many Ukrainian and Polish folk tales and rhymes that were popular in Lvov, Poland (now Ukraine) during the 1930s.

Trapped Inside the Story begins with a fairy tale to create a setting in which horror is accepted by the reader. Sonya then tells about her childhood, emphasizing the friendly environment of her neighborhood, as well as her love of learning – and especially of fairy tales. The reader is drawn into Sonya's intimate world of family, friends and fairy tales, sharing the shock and disbelief that Sonya experiences as her world disintegrates.

Timelines given throughout the book tie Sonya's personal experience to the overall historical picture: her family's flight into the bomb shelter when the German war planes attacked Lvov, her father's forced labor and resultant fatal illness, her mother's disappearance, her baby brother's starvation, and her sister's capture by the Germans in a round-up are all results of Hitler's military campaign. Thus the connection between Sonya's personal experiences and historical events is demonstrated.

As Sonya turned thirteen, she found herself alone, penniless and friendless. The Lvov neighborhood in which she had grown up was slowly transformed into a ghetto where Jews were forced to wear armbands with the Star of David and to work for the German war effort, in order to remain in their homes. Those who failed to comply with these directives were deported and never seen again. Whole families were taken away in the middle of the night; the apartment building in which the Hebenstreit family lived slowly emptied out. This was the fate of most of the 110,000 Jews who lived in Lvov before the Holocaust. The gradual and steady transformation of Sonya's neighborhood into a nightmare is portrayed through Sonya's eyes, as her life turns into a horrific fairy tale. Sonya's identification with fairy tale characters was a vital element in her survival.

In some ways, the narrative of *Trapped Inside the Story* resembles that of a fairy tale. For example, the familiar neighborhood characters who are introduced in the opening chapter of the book are friendly figures who created a feeling of trust in Sonya during the years in which she was growing up. Their failure to meet her expectations of help and their lack of sympathy for Sonya during the war years parallels the terrifying elements of abandonment and betrayal that characterize horrific fairy tales. This enables the reader to understand how Sonya feels that she has stepped out of her life and into a nightmarish fantasy world after losing every member of her family in just six months.

Sonya's experiences in the ghetto of Lvov and her escape to rural Poland are depicted as if they were adventure scenarios in a fairy tale, for that is how Sonya herself experienced them. In the absence of trustworthy adults, Sonya conducted imaginary conversations with her favorite fairy tale characters, turning to them for companionship and asking them for advice. Given the circumstances, this was a survival strategy and helped save Sonya's life.

Trapped Inside the Story contains many literary and social elements that can be discussed in class. The Reading Guide (appendix) gives teachers tools for conducting in-class discussions; the questions can also be assigned as written work. Areas covered include:

1. The differences between the lifestyle of Poland in the 1930s and of our society today, and how those differences made it possible for Nazism to succeed
2. The importance of fantasy in a child's life and of literature in an adult's life, and how learning to read affects a person's life
3. Trust and betrayal in relationships
4. Anti-Semitism in Europe prior to the establishment of the State of Israel compared with anti-Semitism today; how the creation of the State of Israel has affected the development of anti-Semitism
5. How relationships between people change as government changes
6. The effects of hunger, loneliness, fear, cold, and other hardships
7. The ethics of lying and stealing during times of crisis or war; the ethics of converting to Christianity during the Holocaust
8. The role of luck in survival during the Holocaust
9. Putting oneself in the shoes of the character: what might you have done in Sonya's place?
10. The lessons that can be learned from reading Holocaust biographies.

To conclude, *Trapped Inside the Story* offers a reading experience that can be evaluated on several different levels. It can be viewed as simply a biography, with specific meaning and reference to Sonya's life. But it can also be viewed as a literary work, with many elements that can be discussed outside the context of Sonya's experience. As well as being a significant part of Holocaust education, it can also be used in high school or college classes to generate discussion and written work. The reading guide offers teachers a complete teaching strategy for using the book in the classroom. The questions are also examples of the types of questions that can be used with other books of this genre.

Work cited:

Cohen, L. (2007). *Trapped Inside the Story*. San Diego, CA: Level 4 Press.

Appendix:

Reading Group Guide for *Trapped Inside the Story*

Part One: Broken Pieces of Childhood

1. Why do you think the first chapter was called "Broken Pieces of Childhood"? When you recall your own childhood, can you always remember how old you were when certain things happened to you? Do you usually remember fragments of events and / or conversations?
2. Why does the biography open with a fairy tale? Do you think this is an effective way to start the book?
3. Ivasyk – the hero in the opening fairy tale – becomes Sonya's childhood hero. What is it about Ivasyk that Sonya admires so much? And what disturbs her about him?

4. Why do you think the biography is written as if it were an autobiography? How does this affect your reading of it?
5. Which, if any, of the people in Sonya's family or neighborhood seemed most interesting or significant to you? What kind of role would you expect him / her to play in Sonya's life?
6. Is there a particular incident in Sonya's childhood that stands out in your mind and seems especially interesting or important?
7. Does Sonya come across as a normal, ordinary, believable girl?
8. Can you picture Sonya's neighborhood and her apartment? Can you imagine living in Lvov during the Great Depression?

Part Two: School Days

1. How did going to school and learning to read change Sonya's life? Do you remember how learning to read affected your own childhood?
2. Which people or events stand out as being most significant in Sonya's school life?
3. How was Sonya affected by the characters in fairy tales, films and stories? Did you have a favorite fairy tale or a beloved character in a story when you were a child? How did that character affect your fantasy life?
4. How did Sonya's relationship with Zoshka change, after Sonya learned how to read? Do you think this is a natural part of growing up? Or, do you think that other circumstances played a part in this change?
5. What aspects of anti-semitism in Polish society became clear to you from reading about Sonya's experiences in school?

Part Three: The Russian Occupation

1. How does Sonya's relationship with Zoshka and her family change in this part of the biography? Does knowing something about the history of the Ukrainians in Poland help you to understand them, as individuals?
2. How do the relationships between people change, as the government changes? Does any specific incident stand out in your mind as being especially significant?
3. What do you think Sonya's parents should have done? (i.e. – migrated to Russia, or stayed in Lvov).

Part Four: The German Occupation

1. There are many different people and many different situations in this part of the biography, and things change very fast. Did you find the story confusing and hard to follow? Is there a single theme that ties all of these incidents together?
2. Did Zoshka act as you would have expected her to? What do you think she should have done, under the circumstances? What people and things influenced her?
3. How does Sonya's relationship with her mother change during this part of the story?
4. How does Sonya's relationship with her sister, Rosa, change during this part of the story?
5. Do you think that Sonya's family was typical of other Jewish families? What do you think other Jewish families in Lvov did, during the German occupation? Why didn't they all leave Lvov, before the Germans occupied it (or immediately afterward)? What choices did they have?

Part Five: Alone in the Ghetto

1. How was Sonya affected by: her hunger, her loneliness, her fear, and the cold?
2. What did you think of Jijo and Jijova's treatment of Sonya? Do you think their behavior was anti-semitic, or were they caught in the trap of the German occupation? What else could they have done?
3. What do you think happened to the Weinberg family?
4. Do you think that Sonya's fantasy life was a healthy reaction to her circumstances, or was it just a flight from reality?

Part Six: Living with the Freieiters

1. Sonya became very close with the Freieiters only after her whole family was gone. Why didn't the Freieiters get in touch with her sooner? What do you imagine was happening in their lives during the German occupation?
2. How did living with the Freieiter family affect Sonya?
3. What did Sonya's trading on the black market involve? Do you think that her conscience should have bothered her more, or less, or not at all?
4. Who and / or what helped Sonya create a believable (false) identity?

Part Seven: A New Name

1. What do you think motivated Vitzmanova to help Sonya?
2. Do you think that Vitzmanova's friend, Zofia, realized that Sonya was Jewish?
3. What do you think motivated Alexei Shum and his wife, Maria, to help Sonya and the other Jews?

Part Eight: Rural Poland

1. Did you feel there was a significant difference between Sonya's life in the ghetto and her life in the countryside? If so, what was different? If not, how was it the same?
2. What do you think Sonya should have done the night the partisans came to the ranch? Why?
3. What do you think the Brzuskiewicz family would have done, had they found out that Sonya was Jewish?
4. Do you think that it was right for Sonya to "convert" to Christianity?

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Questions for the Whole Book

1. Recall one incident that shows:
Sonya's bravery
her fear
her will to survive
her ability to learn from her experiences
2. Explain Zossia's behavior. Do you think she was anti-Semitic? Why or why not?
3. What was the role of fantasy in Sonya's survival?
4. What theme or themes recur throughout the biography?

What was the role of luck in Sonya's survival? How much of her survival was due to her own actions?

What, if any, similarities does Sonya's story have to events in the contemporary world?

Are there any lessons that we can learn from the biography, and apply to our own lives?

PEDAGOGY IS BRAIN SCIENCE!!

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If we are effective teachers, it is because we encourage our students' minds to grow. To do this well, we need to know how brains develop, and how we can work with those natural processes. We need the best learning theories available. The latest work in developmental neurobiology and cognitive science, sped along by new brain imaging technology, has changed the way we understand our brains. Contrary to what was once imagined, our new pictures of the brain show a densely interwoven web of connections among neurons. Real time thinking, we now can see, is the making of connections. It is non-linear, it is heavily context-dependent, and is idiosyncratic. Pedagogy must also, therefore, be reconfigured. My aim today is to outline the basis of the new cognitively responsible pedagogy.¹

Our brains, it seems, do not learn by progressing through a logically ordered hierarchy of clearly differentiated skills. Admit it – you had a hunch your brain wasn't exactly an engine of cool reason, didn't you? School learning, of course, is something different. It must be

orderly. Teachers do have to decide what to teach first, what next, and have to set an example of clear thinking and arguing for students. So, for the sake of argument, let's try to separate two things which are closely related: 1) an understanding of how people think and learn, and 2) the classroom decisions about the teaching of literature that follow from that understanding.

The good news is that the new brain theories are much better than the old at explaining the importance of literature in a curriculum designed to encourage flexible and creative thinking. Lovers of literature now have a cognitive vocabulary to describe what we have always intuited: reading literature isn't just ornamental or escapist. When we enter a fictional world, it seems, we are not passive spectators. We automatically bring into play all our powers of inference and analogy in order to create an interpretation that is satisfying in our own world. Given the chance (if not intimidated by the school setting, and this is a big "if") readers will exploit all texts to help them think creatively about issues in their

own lives. Working to make sense of fictive narratives in artfully structured language, readers actually team up with authors in creating worlds.

Right from the start, understanding a poem or a short story is not like reading a newspaper article. Readers of literary texts find that they need to make sense not only of the story, but also of the form – of the text’s very oddness. They have to give meaning to its “mistakes” and improbabilities. Example: why in the world would anyone say “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall.”? The new sciences tell us that this exercise of making sense of counterfactual situations and of the artificial forms of sound and language (music and poetry), are important ways of training ourselves to cope with our world. By encouraging complex and nuanced judgment, tolerance of ambiguity, and the recognition that problems have multiple solutions, they train us in unconventional meaning-making, in thinking as Wizards rather than as Muggles. It is, thus, a wonderful time to be re-introducing literature into the English curriculum and to be bringing teachers up to speed on its place in our lives.

Brains: You probably remember learning that brains and nervous systems are made of nerve cells called neurons. Neurons communicate with each other over synapses, which are the tiny gaps between neurons, passing along information about states of the body (emotions, say) and also information taken in by vision, hearing, touch, etc. But what most of us will not have learned in school is that the communication between neurons is not linear and unidirectional, as is the flow of electrons through a wire, or of a telephone message through a cable. Every neuron receives as many as 10,000 excitatory and inhibitory messages simultaneously, some of them stronger, some weaker. If one signal says “pass this message on!” another says “DON’T go in direction A – try direction B!” This view of the brain is called “connectionist” because its major structural feature is massive connectivity – massive potential for receiving and sending messages among many different systems at once. The words on a page may evoke scenes, sounds, and emotions, hopes, and predictions, all at the same time.

Knowing is, thus, a bodily state. Knowing anything of any complexity is a rich physical, electro-chemical set of connections. Pulling your hand from a flame, knowing that two times two is four, and knowing how to bend into an arriving tennis ball so as to slam it back are all things you know because your body has constructed a particular chain of neurons out of your personal experiences in the world. Understanding a story is not different: it is

instantiated in a network of connected neurons. Patterns of connectivity and their strength change throughout life in response to experience. Learning – and forgetting – are changes in synaptic connectivity. To learn is to make new connections, or to strengthen those already in place. The neuronal connections by which you understand the plot of a story, like those that control your muscles, all need to be exercised.

A newborn’s head is well-stocked with neurons. By birth many are already arranged in functional networks or systems, so that the baby can respond to tactile, olfactory, auditory and visual information. Of course a lot of the connecting work lies ahead, and the baby gets right to it. Brains are evolved to seek knowledge instinctively, and are always at work, always turned on, always generating new connections and testing them (see Changeux, 2004). Learning is a result of the activity of testing possibilities. The learner repeats and thus strengthens successful connections. Does a smile evoke a response from Dad? Do it again! Does moving my arm this way get my thumb to my mouth? Do it again! If not, try another way. A randomly generated connection is, on this view, a hypothesis, and it is either confirmed by being useful or disconfirmed if not. Failure prompts another try. Notice, no one has to tell the infant “You did it wrong!” The brain and the neural system are self-correcting.

Newborns have been shown to pay attention selectively, to remember patterns, to evaluate and have preferences, to interpret facial expressions, and within a few weeks, also to predict outcomes (Bateson and Martin, 1999). Many processes work simultaneously, as required by local and momentarily changing needs. The processes of categorization, inference, and prediction that allow the above mentioned brain processes are hardly “higher order thinking skills.” There is little more basic than the making of comparisons and the recognition of contrasts and of analogies, all of which are needed for the recognition of category membership. As our bodies including our brains mature, we use these same inborn processes to make richer and stronger connections, and children of course continue to do so in school. The philosopher of science, Karl Popper, described all learning – in the playground or laboratory – as a process of testing and rejecting hypotheses. The idea, he said, is to make the mistakes as fast as you can.

Schools: If we can get the school system to work in sync with, instead of against the evolved and innate ways in which humans learn, students in classrooms will be active in making hypotheses about texts and will be able to correct themselves, confirming or disconfirming

their own hypotheses. Literary texts provide just those challenges needed to train the active learners the new curriculum aims to produce. Sadly, even though active learning is entirely natural, it needs to be reintroduced into a school system that has, for so long, thwarted students' natural abilities.

English Class: How can we get the theory to work there? Although, in theory, readers don't need to be told that their job is to construct a satisfying representation from the clues the author offers, most students (and many teachers as well) are intimidated by literary texts. When they meet something they can't readily understand, instead of trying to connect the unfamiliar to what they already know, their experiences have led them to expect that someone else will reveal the answer. Teachers, thus, have to make clear that given the brains we have, understanding is connecting. We must *connect aspects of the new to what's already in our heads, that is, to our own experiences and interests*. Students may of course decide that the best connection is to "what the teachers want." Connections made in this way, however, defeat, rather than further the goal of encouraging creative thinking. Creative thinking isn't as easy as writing down what the teacher says, and it's slower and lumpier. Students will need to be reassured that a coherent and satisfying interpretation of a difficult text will emerge only in pieces. They needn't be ashamed of the small fragments of understanding that they produce at first.

Since we now understand that the study of literature will be of little value to the students if they skip these slow and somewhat incoherent early stages of connecting imaginative texts to their own lives and minds, teachers need to encourage the emergence of tentative, unstructured interpretation in an unthreatening situation. I usually ask students to begin by volunteering single words or phrases that have occurred to them while reading, and I scribble them on the board. Later, I ask them to try to articulate how or why those fragments emerged, and to try to connect them to other fragmentary perceptions and emotions that the text, or their peers have evoked.² Even as you help a student move toward a satisfying interpretation, it is important to make clear that the teacher couldn't possibly know the "right" answer for each individual, that there couldn't be a single right answer.

Students will, of course, naturally agree amongst themselves about some aspects of the text, since a) they all have human minds, and b) they share large swathes of cultural context. Students may agree, for example, on the motivations of characters, because we all normally

make inferences about fictional characters' actions using the same brain processes they use for encounters with people in real life. Since the motives, intentions, and beliefs of others are not transparent, our default way of navigating our social environment is by assuming that others have minds like our own, and that their outward behavior gives evidence of what we can't see. Cognitive scientists call our ability to make inferences about other people's minds "mind-reading," or Theory of Mind, or ToM. ToM normally appears in children between the ages of 3 and 4 (see Zunshine for a discussion of literary implications of ToM), based on the brain processes mentioned above that have developed earlier. Seeing someone fill a glass at the sink, we assume thirst, although we might be wrong: the intention might be to water a windowsill plant.

Teachers: The role of the teacher, on this view, (from the caretakers of infants to university professors) is, first, to provide a rich and complex environment in which the brain can do what it is evolved to do – make connections that produce and test hypotheses. The story, the poem, the piece of imaginative literature provided by the teacher is, on this view, an important part of that environment. It affords the opportunity for brains to interact with an imaginative object at an unusual level of complexity. Literature's imaginative forms and unforeseen patterns and plots provoke new hypotheses about how the world works and give scope for their testing. As part of the process of testing their hypotheses, students might be encouraged to try their hand at creating their own imaginative texts. They might be asked, for example, to write a letter to or from one of the protagonists of a story, or to describe a scene the author has alluded to but hasn't depicted. Imagine that Eveline has gone to Buenos Aires. Write her first letter home.

Engaging in the construction of possibilities on the basis of imaginative texts keeps brains from becoming rigid. In an important book for teachers, the developmental psychologist, Paul L. Harris, collects many kinds of empirical evidence about children's play. Perhaps the most important finding of this work is that "an imagined encounter can drive the emotional system in much the same way as an actual encounter... Nevertheless, [even] young children can distinguish between an actual and an imaginary situation. Indeed, older children – like adults – can exploit this distinction to regulate their emotional reaction to a piece of fiction." (pp.186-87).

The key word is *exploit*. Since play uses the same brain systems for reality and for fantasy, and yet distinguishes, brains automatically know how to engage

with imaginative literature, and exploit it as practice for (for example), comparison and categorization, inference and prediction, in situations of unusual complexity. It helps the brain increase its capacity for spontaneity and creative thinking in unexpected situations. One of a teacher's most important jobs, then, is to keep the schoolroom saturated with new challenges, allowing the students to take them up according to their own interests. The evolutionary success of the human brain is grounded in the possibilities of parallel, multi-level, and multi-directional processing. It allows us to take advantage of whatever information happens to be available first, and to integrate it with newer and older information in any order, as it comes in. And because human thinking is not linear, not hierarchical, (now don't tell me you're surprised at this), not predominantly logical, there are many possible entry points at which a learner can start his or her own journey, and many points at which the journey may be interrupted and redirected. This is good news for teachers, because it means that the brain knows how to use information no matter what order it appears in. We do not have to control the order in which an individual learner becomes interested in any particular aspect of a text.

Objections! But by now you are fidgeting and unhappy: Of course we have to teach students to order their thoughts logically, you say. And you are of course right. Here we move to the second important role of school and teaching, and this is the point at which we guide the growing minds of our students from successful but necessarily idiosyncratic cognitive behavior to the kinds of metacognition that school success requires. Although we need not teach processes that are already up and running, we do want to teach our students to be logical about what they're already thinking about, what they're already interested in.

Metacognition is indeed "higher order thinking": thinking about thinking. Metacognitive skills are already working by the time children come to school; they can, when asked, answer questions about their own thinking. But as they grow, they need to develop the public language used for negotiating within the complex world of ideas and discourse outside their own heads. Only when we can articulate what we think about thinking can we compare our own ideas with those of others, and thereby join the larger cultural conversation around us. Students already compare, infer, predict, etc., and unconsciously generalize from earlier experience, but schooling disciplines discourse. They need practice expressing their experience, and ordering their discourse logically. They need our help in learning to use language effectively, allowing them as individuals to enter a

community that may need to revise old patterns to meet new challenges.

Here again, at this second stage, the literature curriculum meets the expectations of the Ministry's aims for reform. The first stage has encouraged individual creativity. Once students have engaged with a poem or a story on their own terms (not on the teacher's terms), they are ready to practice making their new knowledge publicly negotiable. It is at this second stage that we give students the words to describe their interpretive experiences, so that they can compare their thoughts with others, orally or in writing, and also so that they can repeat those processes later with different texts. Many of the terms listed as thinking skills by the English Inspectorate are among those we now want to introduce. There is no reason we shouldn't teach the terms themselves in Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, and in any other languages the students understand.³ There are also many terms needed for talking about imaginative literature that are not included in his list, and will have to be added, such as the distinctions between story, plot, and subplot, between metaphor and simile, among motif, symbol, and image.

Conclusions: Let us remember that the best kind of learning comes from self-initiated action. The more of themselves that students have put into their encounters with literary texts, the more robust their new knowledge will be. The more they feel that they have constructed their understanding, the more they will value it, and the more they will be prepared to work at sharing it with others. We help them make use of their already in place brain processes by providing enriched environments – for example, by asking open ended questions. We don't help them in their encounter with texts by asking questions to which we already know the only acceptable answers. We don't help by suggesting readings of our own which they will naturally evaluate as authoritative. They must have the time and the encouragement in which to generate their own hypotheses, and to listen to their peers' hypotheses too. Once they have had an imaginative and probably also an emotional interaction with the text they will be in a position to appreciate the new vocabulary we want them to use in order to discuss what they have learned.

In summary, then, we want first to stimulate our students through classroom exercises to become active in the processes of interpretation. We must be sure to provide sufficient time, however, for learners do their own work, and to let them articulate what they've done without censorship, until they can feel secure in their own understanding. It is only then that we can step in

to help them articulate their actions as constructors of meaning into a publicly negotiable interpretation or understanding. Rushing too quickly to this last stage endangers all the gains in the practices of flexibility, creativity, and the tolerance of ambiguity that the play of the first stages affords.

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¹ The goals of the reform program currently being implemented in Israeli schools are consistent with these theories. The methods of implementation, however, have been confused by a reliance on Benjamin Bloom's outdated speculative taxonomy which, even with its revisions, is now clearly inadequate.

² The sample questions suggested on the Ministry's Thinking Skills chart are helpful at this later stage, but with the understanding, of course, that there is no necessarily best order in which to raise these questions.

³ Teachers should be aware that there is a large amount of semantic overlap among terms, and thus try not to insist on rigid distinctions, between, for example, comparing and analogizing, or contrasting and categorizing.

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BRAIN RESEARCH, PEDAGOGY AND TEACHING ENGLISH

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Brain research is one of the most exciting fields for teachers: the more we know about how the brain functions, the more we can attune pedagogy and learning to maximize and exploit its capacities. At the same time, nuts-and-bolts education research continues to impact our teaching. Brain research does not supplant research in education; it does significantly supplement it. Our pedagogical thinking should be grounded in and infused with the research results in both areas.

Brains can have up to one quadrillion (the digit 1 followed by 15 zeros) synaptic connections. This, according to David Sousa (2006), allows the brain to process sensory data, "to store decades of memories... to learn languages and to combine information in a way that no other individual on this planet has ever thought of before." However, certain neural networks, if not activated or used within a critical period, can atrophy completely. For example, "if even a perfect brain does not receive visual stimuli by the age of two, the child will be forever blind." (Sousa, p.24). Other windows in the brain remain more plastic and we can continue learning during our entire life-time. Still, a late start can mean that our mastery of or skill level in that subject "will probably not be as high as other people who had earlier

exposure or stronger stimuli in these areas" (Sousa, p.24). Our brains are hard-wired (predisposed, pre-set) for music and numbers. Few of us however, become Mozart or Einstein, and we all know people who cannot carry a tune or who are challenged by anything beyond 7th grade arithmetic. The fact that our brains have the capacity to do something does not mean that every brain automatically performs at mastery level. "Can" may not automatically translate to "does".

The contention that the brain does not learn "by progressing through a logically ordered hierarchy of early differentiated skills" (Spolsky, 2008) is not, in fact, always correct. We necessarily learn to sit before we learn to crawl and we necessarily learn to crawl **before** we learn to walk. Although crawling may be a developmental stage specific to Western culture, all babies need to learn to coordinate the use of the muscles in their arms and legs before walking. Similarly, brain research suggests that our brains are hard-wired for language learning. Here too, there is a clear logical progression from incoherent sounds, to phonetic approximation; and from phonetic approximation to clearly pronounced words and from there to articulated phrases and sentences. We have all encountered two-year

olds who talk a blue streak and others who barely utter a word, or who have difficulty producing certain sounds. When learning an additional language, we almost always understand more than we can correctly produce. We may understand the instructor perfectly and yet have difficulty responding on the same level. It seems that one of the greatest difficulties in acquiring any language is those pesky little words called prepositions. Learning is indeed hierarchical.

The confusion arises from equating “learning” with “storage of information and knowledge” in the brain. While learning is logical and hierarchical, the “how” and “where” the content is **stored** in the brain is another story entirely: 1) Paul Broca, a French surgeon in the 19th century, found that people who suffered damage to the left frontal lobe of the brain, suffered language difficulties known as aphasia (losing the ability to speak). 2) Not long after, Carl Wernike, a German neurologist, discovered another kind of language problem of people who suffered damage to left temporal lobe in the brain. They “could speak fluently, but what they said was meaningless. The inferences, then, were that Broca’s area (in the left **frontal** lobe) processed vocabulary, grammar and probably syntax of one’s native language, while Wernike’s area (in the left **temporal** lobe) was the site of native sense and meaning” (Sousa, p.178). Not surprisingly, modern brain research has revealed additional processes involved in storing and producing language. Spoken sentences use not only Broca’s and Wernike’s areas but several other neural networks found in the left hemisphere of the brain: “Nouns are processed through one set of patterns verbs are processed by separate neural networks. The more complex the sentence structure, the more areas that are activated...” (Sousa, p.180). So while the word “more” may be an early acquisition in Broca’s area of the native-speaker tot, the ability to articulate a request like Oliver Twist’s: “Please, Sir, may I have some more?”, demands the use of Broca’s area, Wernike’s area, neural networks for verbs and so on. So we learn in a logical progression, but the storage follows a different system, one which we do not yet well understand. What we have not discussed is how information, language-based or other, moves from the “learning” stage to the “storage” state. Yet, how new information becomes encoded in the brain is crucial for understanding the difference between learning and storing what was learned.

David Sousa has elaborated on Robert Stahl’s 1985 Information Processing Model and this is the model presented here. Sousa’s goal is to represent the research of neurosciences for educational practitioners. The model explains the stages of the process from raw

sensory data to long-term storage, and offers metaphors for the different stages.

The environment constantly barrages the brain with sensory data (sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste) but if the brain paid equal attention to all incoming data, the brain would quickly blow a fuse. Therefore some data is screened out almost immediately – we are often not even conscious of having been exposed to them. The remaining data moves to the Short Term Memory (which is a temporary memory) which includes the “immediate memory” and the “working memory”. (Gazzaniga et al., 2002, Squire and Kandel, 1999).

Sousa represents the immediate memory as a clipboard that holds information for a short period of time before we decide what to do with it. The clipboard holds data for about 30 seconds (with individual variations) and functions consciously (e.g. like remembering the florist’s phone number long enough to put in an order) or unconsciously (e.g. whether the siren we heard needs to be attended to or not), “the individual’s experience determines its importance. If the item is of little or no importance, within this time frame, it drops out of the system” (Sousa, p.42-43).

Information deemed important enough by the clipboard immediate memory passes to the Working Memory, which to recall, is also a temporary memory. Sousa represents the working memory as a work-table where we can spread out (within the limited capacity of the table) and build, analyze, and restructure ideas for eventual storage elsewhere. Information in the working memory demands our attention. “It is a place where **conscious**, rather than subconscious, processing occurs” (p.43). The limitations of the working memory concern both the quantity of information we can process at one time and the length of time we can attend and focus on the information (specifically when motivation is low). These limitations are age specific:

	Number of items	Low motivation attention and focus: in minutes	High motivation attention and focus
Pre-adolescents	3-7 Average: 5	5-10	
Adolescents	5-9; Average 7	10-20	45 minutes

Sousa suggests keeping the number of items, for students in any given lesson, within the “appropriate capacity” and to package lessons into 15-20 minute components.

For the student, the “save” or “delete” options for new information in the working memory is determined by two questions:

Does this make sense? In view of my past experience does this fit into what I know about the world? If it doesn't, teachers will hear: “I don't understand”.

Does it have meaning? Is this relevant to me? If it doesn't seem relevant, teachers will hear: “Why do I have to know this?” “When will I use this?” (Sousa, p.48)

If the information makes sense and more importantly, has meaning, it will be encoded and sent to one or more long-term storage areas in the brain (as we described earlier with the example of native-language). Tellingly, “the encoding process takes time and usually occurs during deep sleep (idem).” Research has shown that the greatest loss of information is during the first 18-24 hours. So, if students cannot recall yesterday's lesson, it most probably means that the information never made it to long-term memory. Sousa represents the long-term memory areas as file-cabinets, which store information in some kind of coded system. But we must remember that different parts of any memory are stored in different areas of the brain and are reassembled when the memory is recalled. Long-term memory, according to Sousa, is the **process** of storing and retrieving information. Long-term storage refers to the areas in the brain where information turned memory is kept.

So let's say that particular sensory-data information has made it through the clip-board immediate memory, has been attended to in the work-table working memory, makes sense and is relevant, and has been stored and filed in various areas in the file-cabinet long term memory. Will I now be able to **use** this information in various ways? In other words, having learned something can I transfer the learning to other areas?

Professor Shlomo Kaniel (2006) cites some surprising problems of transfer.

- Carpentry apprentices having learned concepts such as parallel lines and right angles (90°), could not discern the application of these concepts to other disciplines which use them.
- High school students had difficulty transferring skills from algebra to physics.
- Elementary school children failed to transfer what they had learned about the stages of problem solving in science, to problem solving in every day life.

And my favorite: a Brazilian study found that poor, school-age children who sell agricultural produce in the market can calculate prices at surprising speed. Researchers translated the **same** tasks to verbal arithmetic problems, such as those one finds in textbooks. They then asked the children to solve the problems. To their astonishment the children failed to solve most of the problems correctly. They could not transfer their market-place knowledge, to the classroom / text-book situation.

So, there is no automaticity in the transfer of knowledge from one discipline to the next, nor, often within the same discipline. We cannot depend on the students' past experiences in literature in L1 to teach literature in L2. It is sufficient for the language environment to be different (like algebra and physics) for transfer **not** to take place. What we can do is consciously elicit their previous L1 experiences in the L2 environment. For example, many students have read Harry Potter in Hebrew, so by tapping into that experience teachers can help ESL / EFL students to learn concepts such as antagonist, archenemy, hero, loyalty, friendship, betrayal and so forth in English. However, the fact that past life experiences permit us to predict present outcomes, in no way ensures the **conscious use** of “prediction” when discussing a given literary plot or discussing plots in general.

Reading literature in a foreign language demands the ability to first of all understand the language of the text. Batia Laufer (2005) has reported in this publication that if more than 5% of words is not understood in a text, the entire text can become incomprehensible. The first order of things then, is **understanding** the text. A teacher from France recently related that a class of predominantly French- born children of Arabic and African immigrants in 5th grade could not recall the final (redemptive) stage of a short story even after having worked on it in class (Meyer, 2008). The culture of the story was simply too foreign to them and they could not relate to it or fully understand it. So, understanding and being able to recall the details of a text are crucial, initial stages to being able to advance to the interpretation of that text. Cognitive psychologists call these levels convergent thinking, or lower order thinking. For example, the following question demands only recall of information:

- When was the Yalta Conference and who participated in it?

The question does not demand that anything be **done** with the information, but simply that it be recalled. Now compare that with the following two questions:

- What are the similarities and differences between *Gone with the Wind* and *Doctor Zhivago*?
- Discuss why the United Kingdom should or should not maintain the monarchy in the 21st century.

The second question demands not only organizing what one knows about the setting, plot and characters of the two books, but demands, in addition, an analysis of the similarities and differences between them. One would also need to recall information about literary genres and apply that information to the question (the novel as a literary genre, the epic as another genre). The third question demands understanding the role of the monarchy and the functions of the monarch, the economic aspects of maintaining royalty and the controversy that exists in England. Only then can one articulate an argument for or against the issue. If the first question demands using lower order thinking, the two other questions require the use of higher order thinking. Complex, higher order thinking is also called divergent thinking, because it can go to many different directions and lead us to considering new angles.

Even if we were to accept that the brain automatically knows how to predict, compare and contrast, inference and categorize, most students will not automatically use these skills in their school-work without being explicitly taught to do so. Part of the problem could be that these skills were originally survival skills and perhaps the transfer to school-disciplines is not automatic. Perhaps too, too many tasks in school do not demand the use of higher order thinking, and therefore students are unaccustomed to using them.

Benjamin Bloom developed his well-known taxonomy (1956) to help teachers and learners identify levels of complexity of human thought. The six levels he defined were revised by Lorin Andersen (2001) and a group of educators, in order to take into account new understandings based on recent research in neuro-science and cognitive psychology, as well as understandings derived from research in education. Whereas Bloom's original model was hierarchical and cumulative, the Andersen's group model, allows levels to overlap, and is consistent with "brain research showing that different brain areas are used to solve different types of problems" (Sousa, p. 253). For example, Parsons and Osherson (2001) found that problems which required deductive reasoning stimulated areas in the right hemisphere, while problems which required inductive reasoning stimulated areas in the left hemisphere. Jausovec and

Jausovec (2000) found that problems of logic and sequence are solved in one area of the brain, while open-ended problems with multiple answers are dealt with in other areas of the brain.

The use of the principles of Bloom's Taxonomy and Andersen's Revised Taxonomy for teaching literature in ESL / EFL context is a pioneering and innovative application of research to classroom pedagogy.

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ENGLISH TEACHING 'ROUND THE WORLD

Penny Ur (*pennyur@gmail.com*)

I've done rather more travelling than usual over the last six months.

I spent the second semester of last year on a half-sabbatical at Vienna University, teaching and studying, and enjoying the experience of living in central Europe.

I also attended the TESOL and IATEFL conferences in New York and Exeter in April. And, I lectured at Bergen (Norway) and Frankfurt (Germany) Universities in June and July. Then during the summer vacation spent a week working with Indian teacher-trainers in Chennai (India) and then participated in a teachers' conference in Colombia (Sri Lanka), followed by conferences in Łódź (Poland) and Moscow, and another in Rome in November.

I quite enjoy the travelling (except when, as on the Indian trip, it involved nine hours hanging around between flights...!); but the main satisfaction comes from meeting English teachers from different places and learning about how English teaching works in the various countries. In Sri Lanka, for example, there is a conflict between the very strongly felt Sri Lankan patriotism and a correspondingly strong desire to promote Sinhala (the main local language) as against the obvious need to know English for international communication and local job opportunities. There is also an ambivalent attitude towards Britain, still remaining from the colonial period. This results in a very complex situation which visitors need to be aware of!

Most obvious are the similarities. There seems to be a 'common language' between teachers of English all over the world – and I don't just mean English itself. The same things concern us all. One of these concerns, which I come across very frequently, is the mismatch between theory and practice. Teachers feel they are being told by the 'experts' to do things which they feel inappropriate or impractical; for example, not to do grammar exercises, or to use 'authentic' materials, or to spend all their time on communicative activities. They feel on the one hand that they ought to obey the high-prestige international speakers who are promoting these ideas, but on the other simply do not manage to do so in the classroom. The result is that they often carry on teaching as before, but feel guilty about it. And I encounter this 'syndrome' time and again, in all sorts of places. One of the main functions of people like me, I think, is to try to bridge this gap: learn about and discuss the research literature critically, and then try to assess

if / how it can be used to inform classroom teaching.

Another issue which seems to occupy many teachers around the world is the problem of whether to aim at 'native-speaker-level' competence for their students. If you ask teachers and students today, as I have done in Vienna, most of them say that this is indeed their aim. Given that the vast majority of English teachers in all these places are not themselves native speakers, this seems to be an impractical – and, I would claim, inappropriate – aim. Again, the result is constant frustration, from the inevitable failure to achieve native-speaker levels.

An additional similarity, which always strikes me, is the 'mafia' syndrome! English teachers in schools all over the world constitute a clear social and professional group: typically, they have their own table in the staff room, communicate between each other in English even if they share the same (local) L1, have their own 'in' jokes and often share materials and problems on a regular basis.

But there are, of course, differences. In India and Sri Lanka, English is used very widely, and a lot of people (though far from the majority!) are in fact native speakers: English is the language used at home. The further up the education system you go, the more likely English is to be the medium of instruction: at the universities it is exclusively so. You cannot get a good job in either of these countries without English, combined with one or more of the local languages. So English teaching is very likely to take place through the teaching of other subjects, and English proficiency is taken for granted as an essential skill, like basic arithmetic or computer literacy.

In Europe, however, although English is a high-prestige subject and needed for international communication, it is far from essential for local employment. The medium of instruction all the way up the education system is the local standard language (German, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, etc.), while English is in most places the preferred first foreign language to be taught, but not used on a daily basis or spoken in the home.

A lot of people speak English in Vienna – though outside the capital, I usually had to manage on my not-very-advanced German! And I gather the situation is similar in other European countries: people tend not to know much English outside the big cities. The standard of English of the students of English at the University is really excellent; probably, I have to admit, a bit better

than here. The reasons are possibly the similarity of German to English and the high prestige and salary of the teaching profession, which attract the top students.

An interesting difference between Israel and the European countries I have visited is the source of course books and other teaching materials. Outside Israel many, sometimes most, of the textbooks used in schools are published by British or American companies, in coordination with a local publisher; and the writers are often British or American authors, using local writers to adapt their ideas to the target population. So English teaching materials are a good example of what is called 'globalization'. In Israel, on the other hand, teaching materials are almost entirely written and published by local teachers and writers. We are the despair of international publishers, who cannot get a foot into the Israeli course book market!

There are some very interesting differences and similarities between the English-teaching scene in Israel

and that in other countries round the world, some of which I have summarized above. Bottom line: English teaching in Israel is nearer the European model, but perhaps a higher proportion of the population can (if pressed!) function in basic communicative English than in most European countries. And the general standard of teaching, as far as I can judge, is comparable to that of most other countries, in certain cases superior.

Penny Ur has thirty years' experience as an English teacher in primary and secondary schools in Israel. She teaches courses on the M.Ed. program in language teaching on Oranim, and also at Haifa University.

She has published a number of articles on the subject of foreign-language teaching, and several books with Cambridge University Press, including A Course in Language Teaching and Grammar Practice Activities.

YES! VOCABULARY GAMES IN THE CLASSROOM

Michelle Kinsbursky (*kins@macam.ac.il*)

I would like to take you on a journey, the journey I traveled which led me to using vocabulary games when teaching college students academic reading; and as you will see, can be good for any age learner.

I wear two hats in the English Department at the Ohalo Teacher Training College in Katzrin. I teach both EAP courses (English for Academic Purposes) and courses for pre-service English teachers – one of which is "Songs and Games in the English Classroom." Wearing this "second" hat is what helped me reach some of the discoveries about English reading instruction which I shared at this year's Summer ETAI Conference.

The Talmud teaches

Much I have learned from my teachers, more from my colleagues, but the most from my students.

Over the years it had become more and more clear to me that one of the greatest stumbling blocks for students in EAP courses who seek to fulfill their English exemption requirement was a lack of a sufficient vocabulary when attempting to understand and deal with academic texts.

This lack of a richer, higher level vocabulary came up time and again as a primary area of difficulty – even in texts of high interest; and for many of the students, the most basic vocabulary was missing.

The students themselves would say things like:

"If I just had the vocabulary, I would be able to read the text more easily."

"There are so many words I don't know, I give up before I even start."

Alan Maley, editor of the Resource Book for Teachers, states in the foreword to Morgan Rinvolucri's book, Vocabulary:

... as any learner of a foreign language knows only too well, words are essential, and the lack of them leads to feelings of insecurity.

I had diligently taught my students the use of context clues to aid in understanding words unknown to them, but found it was not a reliable method since many times there were no clues for unknown words or the students lacked so much vocabulary that the clues were of no use to them.

What the Research Says...

My feelings were confirmed in 2000 when I heard Elisheva Barkon's lecture at the Summer ETAI Conference on **Using Context to Infer Word Meaning**. She outlined six component skills and knowledge areas for reading taken from Laufer (1997) – one of which is called Vocabulary and Structural Knowledge.

Vocabulary Knowledge, she argued, is one of the best predictors of reading comprehension. Barkon stated that a Hebrew speaker with a strong English background comes to a text with a vocabulary size of about 3000 word families (in contrast to a native speaker of similar age who has a knowledge of about 18,000-20,000 word families – Nation, 1990).

It is estimated that such knowledge will enable 90 – 95% coverage of a text and will yield a minimum passing grade of 56% on a reading comprehension test. Each increase in 1,000 words would result in an increase of 7% on a reading comprehension test. This I found alarming for I was certain that most of my students did not even reach this lexical threshold.

Stressing the point, Barkon claimed that second language learners who possess 2000 word families understand only 80% of the text. Thus, 20% of the written text is not understandable – which means that 1 out of every 5 words is unknown. This supported what I myself had found – that many of my students lack so much vocabulary that trying to use context clues was an unsuccessful strategy for them.

McCarthy (1996) in his book, **Vocabulary**, discusses “nonexistent contextual clues”, “unusable contextual clues”, “misleading and partial clues”, and “suppressed clues” as factors that adversely affect the reader’s ability to guess accurately.

Even so... he argues that the most commonly used strategies for understanding vocabulary are “making guesses and inferences about new words.” But there are real differences between what strong and weak learners do.

McCarthy claims that guessing and inferring meaning is what the good learner does when having to deal with difficulty in reading... And we all know, that no matter what, the good learner will plunge ahead and get it... it’s the weaker and often the average learner that gets left behind!

Elisheva Barkon concluded her lecture by indicating that in teaching reading, students need to be instructed in good reading skills as well as be taught more words at a faster rate.

I began to de-emphasize using context clues for unknown words in texts and focused more on vocabulary development as a significant component for improving reading comprehension.

I did intensive work with vocabulary notebooks – but I found that most of my students (even with grade incentives) did not keep these conscientiously. Again, the good student did, the average and weaker student,

having so many other college demands, chose not to fulfill this requirement. They didn’t feel they gained enough for the time and effort it took – Israeli college students are very pragmatic!

This is where “my other hat” came in... little by little – very naturally – I began playing vocabulary games with my college students.

The Value of Game Playing...

I teach my pre service English teachers that games do not have to be the “frosting on the cake” of an English lesson. Games can in fact be an integral part of their teaching for all the following reasons...

- Gives practice in any / all language skills
- Adds variety
- Motivates
- Renews student energy
- Involves students in a stimulating / painless way
- Encourages student participation
- Changes the role of the teacher and the learner
- Provides opportunities to use language in a less formal way
- Uses language creatively
- Offers a diagnostic tool
- Makes learning more memorable

The list goes on and on...

Research indicates that **in order to learn vocabulary, words have to be recycled numerous times.** (I’ve heard anywhere from 6 to 25x !!!). Games are definitely an effective way to do this. In addition, the atmosphere in the classroom changes when games are added. In that EAP is a required course, it’s not one of these courses students run to joyfully! Games make it more inviting.

And not the least of its values... Using games in the lesson models an alternative way of teaching which fits right in with teacher training objectives for our pre-service teachers who are learning how to instruct in effective and creative ways to meet educational objectives and challenges.

Which Games?

All the classic games are easily adapted to meet vocabulary needs for the college learner – or for any age learner for that matter! I’ve included game ideas at the end of this article (See page 38) – these are just a few of the many possibilities.

What are some of the problems or issues?

• Time

Often teachers question if they have the time “to play” – but the gain is worth it. And the more frequently games are introduced into the lesson, the more adept the class

will be to fall into step with its rules and procedures without it taking too much time away from the rest of the lesson.

• Student's willingness

You may find that not all students are eager to play games, though it's not that common. But this you will have to determine with your own students. If students do not seem receptive, they may just need to be brought around – after it becomes a regular part of the lesson, the ice is broken and even the previously uncooperative will join in.

• Which words should be taught?

This of course is a very important question. The value of learning any given word has to do with frequency of use. Although there are something like 54,000 word families, 3,000 or so of high frequency words provide coverage of at least 95% of a text – that's a large number of words. There are various vocabulary lists / sites available. The site that I've become familiar with <http://www.lextutor.ca> and includes for my purposes an academic word list. When going into this site, you cut and paste your text into a vocabulary processor section and the site will do a statistical analysis of the frequency words and even lists the high frequency words.

But often, we know the words we want our students to learn. We know the curriculum and the kinds of words that are significant for developing better reading skills (eg. connectors) or the kind of vocabulary that will repeat itself in the texts that we read and therefore will

be worth their while to learn. In my case, words related to education and research will come up in many of the texts so I target these words.

In Closing

Remember learners at every age enjoy prizes. As an example, a few times in the semester we play BINGO when I like to recycle the vocabulary that has already been learned. I bring in a jar of gumballs for the winners (naturally everyone gets one at the end!). This of course is a big hit.

Well, the only thing left to be said, is I invite you try it and if you already use games on occasion, try using them regularly!

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Since receiving her Teaching Credential, Reading Specialist Credential and MA in Education from the University of California at Berkeley in the US, Michelle has been teaching learners of all ages. Michelle began teaching English when she came to Israel in 1984. For the last 12 years, she has been teaching EAP courses at various colleges in the north – Ohalo, Oranim, Tzemach, and Emek Yizrael. Ohalo College in Katzrin is her home base where she is also a teacher trainer in the English department.

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Games

TIC TAC TOE



Draw the tic tac toe cross bars on the board. Divide the class into X's and O's. In each space write a vocabulary word. Each team has to choose a square and then give the translation / synonym / short definition for the word in the space of their choosing. If they guess correctly, they capture the space. The team that captures 3 squares in a row is the winner!

Find Your Partner

Give out vocabulary cards to students – one has the vocabulary word the other has the translation or synonym or short definition. Students move around the room, asking each other: “Who has...” or “I have __. Do you have __?” in order to find their partner.

Bingo

From a list of vocabulary words, students fill up a Bingo card – choosing any vocabulary word they would like. Teacher / student reads out a translation / synonym / short definition of the vocabulary word. If that vocabulary word appears on their card, the student marks it off. When a student fills up a row – S he calls out “Bingo!”

PASS

Students, sitting in a circle, are given a vocabulary card. Each student says their vocabulary word and its translation / synonym / short definition. After everyone has had a turn, the students then pass their card to the person on their left and the recitation begins again. The fun of this is trying to say their word as fast as they can and everyone quickly passing the cards around.

WORD PUZZLES

- word search
- crisscross
- unscramble

www.puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com

Be Creative...

Use the subject of the text to give you game ideas

For example:

With a text called “Non-Verbal Communication”, I give the students a page with the signs for the letters that are used by the deaf. Students spell out in sign the vocabulary words. The rest of the class tries to guess the word signed – after which they translate the word, give the synonym or a definition of the word.

GAMES DAY

Usually the last week of the semester – a great way to get through those last lessons – I make a Games Day. I set up 4 or 5 centers around the room using the vocabulary from the texts we've read that semester.

A different game is set up at each center – board games, Tic Tac Toe, Lotto, Word puzzles, etc. Students are put into groups, give themselves a name and are given a fixed playing time for each center. When the lights go out, I blow a whistle, or a bell is sounded (!) they move on to the next center. This continues until the groups have made their way around all the centers. They love this!

MORE IDEAS?

...I would love to hear about other games that work in your class! Please write to me.

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS
by David Crystal

Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007

A BOOK REVIEW by David L. Young (*dlwhy04@yahoo.com*)

It was raining cats and dogs when I dived into Waterstone's bookshop in Durham City in the north of England last summer to save myself from drowning. This proved to be a serendipitous event, for in the 'English Language' section I found David Crystal's recent book, 'Words, Words Words.' At first I thought this would be a worthy tome on Hamlet and Polonius or, possibly, one on Eliza Doolittle and Professor Higgins. But I was wrong. It was all about David Crystal's life-long love affair with the English Language.

This started when David Crystal, now a 67-year-old professor, writer and editor of countless books on the English Language, was a young lad of four in his native town of Holyhead, North Wales. There in the school playground he heard his teacher refer to him and his friends as 'plant.' She was talking Welsh, although the young lad did not realise it then. Later, he found out that 'plant' meant children. Then, speaking to his Uncle Joe, our hero discovered that he had two names: David Crystal, and Dafydd Garreg Wen (David of the White Rock.) He then learnt that his mother's family was Irish and also, that the language used in church was Latin. Two more languages entered his language-pot. From now on, as they say, the study of language, or of words, words, words for David of the White Rock was history.

This very attractively produced book of 216 pages is Crystal's recent enthusiastic way of involving us in the English language which he loves and finds endlessly fascinating. While sharing these sentiments with him, we can see it is this same language which also provides us with our monthly salaries(!) His 'wordworld' is divided into five main sections, i.e. the Universe, the Origins, the Diversity, the Evolution and the Enjoyment of Words.

In these chapters, the author discusses various aspects of the language such as WORDSMITHERY (p.3), aka. lexicology, as well as the birth and death of words and phrases such as sputnik and Ground Zero. In this section he also quotes Walt Whitman: "Nothing is more spiritual than words," but then presents an opposing view by quoting Lord Byron: 'A word's enough to raise mankind to kill.'

In WORDSTARTS (p.43) Crystal studies the history of words and gives, as an example, the much overused word, nice. He shows how 'nice' entered the language

from Old French, meaning 'silly' or 'simple' before meaning 'foolish' and 'lascivious.' Shakespeare used it to mean 'particular' or 'precise' but since the days of Jane Austen, 'nice' has become a word signifying approval.

If Jane Austen were a nice, i.e. precise, writer, could the same be said of a member of a gang? Crystal says yes. In fact he admits that he is, and has been, a very active member of several gangs, WORDGANGS (p.113) that is. He tells us that he's been part of a linguistics gang whose members discussed syntax: he has also been a member of a theatre gang which used a completely different vocabulary in order to communicate. In addition, he has been a member of a business gang which discussed leveraging assets and exit strategies. In fact, we are all members of various 'wordgangs' and, as such, we use their specific vocabularies, or jargon, to communicate within the group.

Of course, being a member of a gang can be risky, especially when it is armed. Crystal then points out that all wordgang members are armed. With words. And words, like guns, can be loaded. He demonstrates this potentially dangerous situation in his chapter on WORDRISKS (p.127). For example, is a girl slender, thin or skinny? Is the pupil in your class frank, blunt or insolent? Should we use 'snarl' or 'purr' words as US writer S. I. Hayakawa calls them? Is Barak Obama a 'black,' Negro' or 'Afro-American' politician? Should we always be PC? Using words is a risky business. Crystal claims that "they can even kill – relationships and reputations."

In contrast to this dangerous aspect of the language, Part Five of this book – The Enjoyment of Words – reflects the author's own sense of fun in the wordplay and wordgames which are a major part of an English-speaking culture. Not only do we pun, make jokes and tell riddles, we also deliberately use malapropisms and can appreciate the clever use of language in advertising. As an example of this he quotes "I think, therefore, IBM". (p.176).

According to Crystal, however, words are not only a source of fun, but they can also be melodious and beautiful. He proves this by quoting an international survey devised by the British Council which showed that 'love,' 'peace' and 'sweetheart' were considered the three most appealing words. 'Peekaboo,' 'umbrella'

and 'kangaroo' occupied the last three places on their list of fifty words.

Poets, of course, have always been aware of the sound of words, e.g. the first line of Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale": 'My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains...' as have the writers of comic-books. This accounts for the popularity of 'splat!' 'whack!' and 'ker-doyng' and other instances of onomatopoeia. It also seems that words containing two or three syllables and which also include different consonants and one nasal sound, especially m as well as r and s have the best chance of moving into the Top Ten of Beautiful and Melodious Words. Examples of these 'wordmelodies' include 'mellifluous,' 'luminous' and 'lullaby.'

But this is not the only fun part of the book. It has been designed so that, throughout, the main body of the text is interspersed with light grey panels depicting certain aspects of the language such as 'Word-frequency,'

'Glamour in Grammar' (tell that one to your 10th graders!), 'Slanguage' and 'Dialect Humour.'

And if all of the above were not enough, Crystal informs us that through certain Internet sites and reference books which he quotes, we too can become 'Word detectives.' As such, we will learn about the histories and meanings of words and games, and, at the same time, will become involved with dictionaries. And for those who find even this amount of information insufficient, Crystal appeals to our own linguistic needs and devotes several pages to subjects such as how to estimate our own vocabularies; how to keep records of our children's language and how to study dialects. (That would be easier in Britain than here.)

Finally, Oxford University Press is to be congratulated on producing a book which contains much information in such an attractive and reader-friendly format. Highly recommended.

David L. Young loves the English language and, since he came to Israel in 1968, has taught it from Junior schools to University level, as well as to adults. Today he teaches at the Academy of Science & Arts, Jerusalem. He has edited a textbook, 'Communicating in English' and written two historical novels. His third one, 'Of Plots & Passions' has recently been published. He is currently writing a novel about Christopher Marlowe.



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We are interested in publishing references, but these should be included within the text. References should be written out in APA style. You can find this in the "OWL Handouts" put out by Purdue University – <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts.research>.

If you have a photo of yourself, or any other attractive visual material, like cartoons, we would be interested in receiving this.

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NETSURFING

Miri Yochanna (*miri.yochanna@gmail.com*)

Hello all,

Wow, the winter holidays are here again. That was SO FAST.

I hope you all are having a super year and that you and the students are enjoying the sites that have been recommended over the past few years.

As you must have realized by now, I'm always on the lookout for good sites. So here are a few of them. I hope you enjoy them as much as I do.

Don't forget: recommendations to: miri.yochanna@gmail.com

All recommended contributions will be acknowledged, so please don't hesitate to send me the URL of a favorite or particularly useful site!

Enjoy the conference and have a wonderful holiday season.

Miri

Name	Handouts Online
Address: http://www.handoutsonline.com / index.shtml	
Category	Resource
What's in the site?	<p>This site offers readymade worksheets, flashcards and teacher notes ready for downloading. The worksheets cover a variety of topics and themes, including grammar, reading, vocabulary and many others. It even includes a British English version.</p> <p>There are colorful flashcards, games, and even a newsletter with updated information. New worksheets, pages, ideas and materials are uploaded all the time so there is always something new.</p>
My personal favorite	<p>I loved the flashcards, they are so nicely done. But I really liked the worksheets, especially as they give so many ideas to work with. Some have pair work, some have vocabulary, and some have writing. There is always more than one thing on the page, so even if you don't use it exactly as it is, you have plenty there for two or three activities.</p>
Possible uses	<p>Simply flip through them, and choose the ones you want to bring into class to enrich a lesson. They cover so many topics.</p>

NOTE: I normally avoid sites where you have to pay, but there are 8 worksheets as sample downloads here. For the rest, there is a membership fee of \$22 US for the year, but the materials are good so it's actually a worthwhile buy.

Name	Pitara
Address: http://pitara.com/	
Category	On line in class and at home use
What's in the site?	What isn't in this site would be easier to say. There are stories, word games, activities, quizzes, trivia and a wealth of other stuff. There is a section with initial sound identification for the kids, word quizzes, world knowledge trivia type questions, tongue twisters, a kids' magazine, coloring pages, and so much more, I won't be able to list them all here. This site contains a huge variety of activities that are to be done online. The students / children would need a little direction but essentially it's easy to use and they would manage nicely. Basically there is something interesting for everyone, including you. You will need to really try out all the features as there are so many. So I highly recommend playing around with it. I guarantee you won't be disappointed by what's there
My personal favorite	I loved the section of activities, there is something called Word Play. There are a number of word games there and they offer a challenge to the best of the students. If they get the answer wrong, they are told immediately. Likewise if the answer is correct, they are also told. There are crossword puzzles, quizzes, and other games.
Possible uses	In class practice of reading, word reviews, games and practice. It could also be a chance to read together, to have the students work in pairs while at the computer. You would need to set up tasks for each section but it is most definitely something that you could incorporate into your lessons quite easily. Of course once you give this site to the children, you can ask them to play with it at home as well. It's really great.

NOTE: Recommended by Michele Ben

Name	GLOW: Grammar Lessons on the Web
Address: http://www.tillyer.net/GLOW/	
Category	Grammar study and practice
What's in the site?	Grammar. This website is divided into three levels, each of which contains a detailed table of contents regarding the grammar items that appear in that section. Each topic has detailed explanation of the grammatical point, practice sheets and an answer key. The practice sheets need to be printed out as this is not a dynamic site. The explanations are clear, detailed and very easy to use.
My personal favorite	I'm not a great grammar lover, I would much rather teach a good story or vocabulary through a chant, but grammar is a must. These explanations were easy to use and they provide the students with a new twist on what I would normally say. There are clear examples for each point and there is use of tables and colors to highlight specific points.
Possible uses	This could be extra explanation of the grammar that we all teach with more practice for your students. We are ALL always looking for more grammar practice, well here you are.

Miri Yochanna has been an EFL teacher and teacher trainer for almost 20 years. She is currently a teacher trainer at Seminar Hakibbutzim and she is also working at CET (Center for Educational Technology) heading up the English division of a new Item Bank Project. She has been developing various teaching materials for many years and has written a number of course books for elementary school and has edited several others.

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