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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	185 NIS
Full-time students*	130 NIS
New immigrants / New teachers	130 NIS
Retirees	130 NIS / 100 NIS**
Overseas members	200 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:
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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Not long ago I read a book called “When Teaching Gets Tough: Smart ways to reclaim your game” (Mendler, 2012). A suggestion I have seen repeatedly in various articles about teacher burn-out which also features in this book is to become part of a professional learning community. “Teachers share best practices with each other from their own experience and from knowledge gleaned from within and outside the school” (p.125). Our professional learning community is ETAI, and I am proud to be part of it. In ETAI all members have a chance to learn from each other and share with each other by attending events conferences and through the ETAI Forum. It is due to the dedication of all ETAI members, all volunteers, who attend events, write for the Forum, organize conferences and serve on the board, that ETAI is such a vibrant and successful teachers’ association. We should all give ourselves a pat on the back and bask in a bit of professional pride for being part of ETAI and our profession, since often in the educational system it’s hard to get that well-deserved pat on the back.

Unrelated to the above, but not to situations when teaching gets tough, I’d like to share a word that recently struck my fancy. The word is “omnishambles.” It’s the word of the year chosen by Oxford University Press’s UK headquarters and means “a thoroughly mismanaged situation notable for a chain of errors” (<http://www.dailywritingtips.com/the-word-of-the-year-for-2012/>). Successfully avoiding omnishambles in all endeavors is probably something we all strive for. So, I wish us all luck in avoiding omnishambles in both your professional and personal lives. And we certainly try to avoid it in ETAI!

And finally, I’d like to thank Renee and Maizie for taking over the editing of the Forum. We have great articles here for everyone. Please consider writing something for a future issue.

Michele Ben
ETAI Chair

Mendler, Allan N. (2012). *When Teaching Gets Tough: Smart ways to reclaim your game*. Alexandria, Va.: ASCD.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

ETAI is always growing and changing, and an almost completely new staff preparing the ETAI Forum is one of the latest changes. After enjoying, and benefiting from this great resource for English teaching for more than 30 years, I am happy to be able to contribute my part towards its future. When I accepted the job of editor, I had very little idea of what was involved – and it’s going to be an ongoing education. Thanks to Amanda, Michele, Karen, and Maizie for their generous help and guidance. Any mistakes or inconsistencies that result, are purely my responsibility and I hope you will bear with me until I get it right.

Working with me on the Forum are Geraldine Leifer and Maizie Avihayil. Geraldine, joins us after a successful career in a well-known lawyer’s office with expertise that is vital to publishing this journal, is doing copy-editing and proofreading. Maizie, an active and involved ETAI member and a full-time teacher, is working on the layout and proofreading. Working with Karen, our pleasant and efficient ETAI office secretary, is pure pleasure.

Last, but not least, we thank all those who have written and submitted the articles in this Forum issue. It took no more than a brief email to each author, requesting their contribution. Their response was to cheerfully and promptly take time from their busy schedules to share their knowledge and professional experience with us. Please consider taking an example from your colleagues and contributing your own articles to the ETAI Forum. Each of you has their own unique point of view, experience, methodology and style that can inspire and stimulate other teachers.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Renee Wahl
Editor
ETAI Forum

WOW! ETAI WINTER CONFERENCE 2012

Fruma Cohen (*fruma2000@hotmail.com*)

WOW!! That was an amazing ETAI Winter Conference in Haifa on Monday December 10th. Even though I have been attending summer conferences for more than 23 years, I had never before participated in a Hanuka conference. So for the first time I boarded the train and made my way to the Reali school (which in itself is worth a visit). I arrived in time for registration and the ever present book browsing and material exhibition.

After a cup of much needed hot coffee we began with a very nice selection of sessions given by, as always, teachers like you and me. I divided my time between two very worthwhile presentations. I walked away from each presentation with some useful ideas for activities that work in the classroom. We then continued to two plenary sessions. The first session was given by Dr. Elisheva Barkon, whose talk on vocabulary was very interesting. Dr. Barkon answered her questions about how many vocabulary items a learner needs in order to function and succeed in a language and how to identify those words and linguistic chunks. She also discussed some of the best instructional practices to teach those items. The second plenary was given by Dr. Judy Steiner, our Chief Inspector for English Language Education, whose

talk about the English curriculum was interesting. As Dr. Steiner showed us that the new curriculum is not new, just revised. To conclude, Dr. Steiner answered many questions from the audience. I found her answers to be very informative and practical.

From there we proceeded to the second set of sessions. This time I chose a session given by Amy Rich, here in Israel on a one year exchange program as a representative of the US State Department. Amy teaches English in the Bedouin area in the south and shared with us her feelings on the importance of critical thinking and how to incorporate critical thinking in the classroom. Her presentation was fascinating and opened our eyes to what she is experiencing in another culture.

The end of the day brought another plenary session, this one given by Penny Ur, who discussed practical teaching principles for teaching large and mixed-ability groups at various levels. The day concluded with closing remarks and a raffle with many winners. Unfortunately, I was not a winner of any raffle prizes. However, I certainly felt like a winner as this was a day of my Hanuka vacation well spent.

AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER EVENT – FILM: The Brooke Ellison Story

Fruma Cohen (*fruma2000@hotmail.com*)

On Isru Hag Sukkot (one of the best days of the school calendar – absolutely nothing to prepare for!) we were treated to a wonderful evening program in the American Cultural Center in Jerusalem. Leslye Orr, an American performer who is legally blind, is a performing artist. She opened the program with a very interesting talk about her life and her accomplishments. She is an author, a performer and a public speaker whose main interest is including handicapped children among the non-handicapped in school, in play, and at home.

Right now Leslye is traveling the world under U.S. government auspices and, being that Israel was one of the stops on her tour, we were privileged to hear her give a short performance of her original play. She also displayed the children's book which she wrote in rhyme about children accepting all kinds of children into their lives.

After an enthralling 50 minute presentation, the movie, *The Brooke Ellison Story*, was shown. I had wanted to see this movie ever since I began teaching the text in the 9th grade course book *Connections* (ECB), and I'm very glad that I was given this opportunity. The movie is based on the true life story of Brooke Ellison, an 11 year

old Long Island girl, who was a dancer. She appeared to have everything a young girl could want, including and especially, a happy family home. However, her life was literally shattered to pieces when she was struck by a car on the way home from school one day. After extensive surgeries and time in rehab, Brooke was determined to recover and continue her schooling. Her devoted mother accompanied her to junior high, high school, as well as to Harvard, and this is the main focus of the movie. I would say that everyone in the room was shedding tears during some parts (even my husband whom I dragged with me).

This movie was the last that Christopher Reeve directed and, for obvious reasons, he must have felt a certain kinship with the main character. I want to thank the organizers of this very worthwhile event. I hope there will be more like it in the future.

Fruma Cohen has been teaching English in Israel for 21 years, the first five in Beit Sefer Shaked on Kibbutz Sde Eliyahu and the past 16 in MOR in Modi'in, where she was also English Department Co-Ordinator for many years. At present she is also a counselor for the Jerusalem Region.

IN MEMORY OF PEGGY BARZILAY – TEACHER, MENTOR, FRIEND

Jean Vermel (*jean@macam.ac.il*)

Peggy Barzilay died an untimely death on Oct. 19, 2012. She was only 71 years old and she loved life, with all its challenges. I first met Peggy when I started teaching in Beit Berl College in 1979, and she immediately became a loyal friend. Peggy worked as a teacher educator in Beit Berl for almost three decades, and was an enthusiastic and dedicated teacher whose students benefited from her extensive knowledge, especially in the field of reading skills. She was well-liked by her students, one of whom, Talya wrote, “Peggy was my teacher at Beit Berl, and she was a very sweet and kind woman.”

Over the years, she worked on her doctorate in *Changes in Metalinguistic Ability in Primary (English) Language Attrition due to Submersion in a Hebrew-Speaking Environment*. After receiving her Ph.D., she continued her studies and specialized in another aspect of teaching: working with children with reading disabilities. She took courses in Israel and abroad, and soon became a pioneer in this field in Israel. She wrote a textbook with Esther Cantor and Sharon Levy, *READY, STEADY, READ* and *Read 1* and *Read 2*, with teachers’ guides for those working with these children. Assisting children with such disabilities appealed to her quiet and kind nature

and offered challenges she was able to meet.

Every student in the English Department in Beit Berl took Peggy’s courses in Writing Proficiency and Phonetics. Ofra Inbar, former Head of the English Department, remembers Peggy as a good-natured and cooperative faculty member and an excellent teacher. “She was very thorough and conscientious in her work. Her students admired and appreciated her. She always expected the most from them and did everything in her capacity to professionalize them. She set up an extremely successful track of studies, a Remedial Reading Program, the first of such to be offered in a teacher education college.”

Whenever ETAI summer conferences came around, Peggy was always there, with a presentation about how to work with dyslexic and weak readers. She wrote many articles for the ETAI Forum, offering sound advice and pedagogical guidance.

Lola Katz, a colleague of ours at Beit Berl College, summed up our feelings for Peggy, “Her sudden passing was a shock to all who knew her and she will be sadly missed.”

Editors’ note: Peggy wrote two articles for the special LD issue of the Forum, Spring 2009. We recommend reading them again.

CONCERNING THE CLASSROOM

A SMILE GOES A LONG WAY

Sarena (Leba) Lieder (*sarenalieder@yahoo.com*)

A smile goes a long way just like a timely compliment or an acknowledgment of a good deed. When was the last time you complimented a student on how they looked? When was the last time you actually took a moment and really looked at who they are rather than what they handed in?

Knowing when to smile and give encouragement can make a great difference in a student’s attitude.

I am sure you would like to avoid a situation in which you wished you had responded more positively to a student, but missed the opportunity. It’s never too late, though. Your smile can make a difference.

As a teacher, I know that positive comments, feedback and acknowledgment are important. I have had the

privilege of teaching a group of eleven students in the eighth and ninth grade, some of whom were special education children. I taught this class once a week between 8:30 and 10:30. I was their English teacher and the sole source of any English that they would be taught that year. There was one boy, Scott (name changed), who would walk sluggishly into class every week at 9:20 and be busy on his iPhone for the rest of the lesson. As long as he was quiet, he thought he was fine and I wouldn’t see him. He figured I was like most of the “other teachers”. Boy, was he wrong!!!

In one of our lesson, the students were asked to write a few sentences about the last book they had read. Scott mumbled that he couldn’t do the task because he had not read a book for many years. I smiled and asked him

whether he had seen a movie that he wanted to write about. He said that he had just watched a great movie called "Red Dog" and could he do the work on his iPhone? I said, "Great". One hour later, he handed me his phone and I read all about the movie. His work lacked periods and capital letters and was a bit hard to read but he took the phone and began to read it to me aloud. I was so excited by his excitement that in the middle I said that I needed to see the movie. The next week, Scott came in at 8:35 with the movie.

I watched the movie at home and had a bit of a hard time with the Australian accent but came to school eager to talk to Scott about it. Who do you think was in the classroom even before I got there? Scott, of course! He was very surprised that I had watched the movie. He was amazed that a teacher had taken the time to listen to him and watch a movie he liked.

A little attention- a little personal attention - went a long way. Is Scott reading books? No. But he is coming to class knowing that someone believes in him? Is there going to be a movie about him showing how, because a teacher believed in him, he passed school with flying colors? Probably not, but he can come to school with a smile on his face once a week because there is one teacher there who believes that he can do it and that's me.

My smile and personal attention to Scott went a long way... imagine what yours would do for your students.

I often hear parents describing their children as lazy and saying they are going to become "bums" etc. When I hear this, my heart breaks for each and every child. I know those children aren't actually in the room when their parents say these words, but children are more perceptive than we give them credit for. They know how their parents feel. Why try to improve when their parents have already condemned them? In the child's eyes, there's no need to try - for whom?

On the other hand, if the children felt that their parents truly believed in them, they would succeed. Parents need to realize that children will make mistakes and will also be lazy at times. There will be many times they will fall before they can walk, but they will not only walk one day, they will run as well.

Believe in your child. Believe in your student. Not just with words but in your heart. Truly believe in them and your smile and love will communicate this. It will not only have them standing up and taking small steps... but, in the end, in spite of getting low grades, and not wanting to attend school, they will run to the finish line - not necessarily first but they will finish. And it all started from you. Your smile went a long way!!

Leba Lieder- MA in Education, BA in English. Teacher-Dovrie Anglit -7th- 10th graders- Ulpanat Tzvia in Herzelia and Yeshivat Bnei Akiva in Raanana. Also recently teaching in Bazra and Tel Mond elementary-Dovrie Anglit.



It's a date



**ETAI Spring Conference
Monday March 18th, 2013
at the Herzog School, Kfar Saba
See you there!**

WHY USE GAMES TO TEACH ENGLISH?

Ashley Zucker, Creative English (*info@creative-english.com*)

The more I teach English, the more passionate I feel about what I am doing. We English teachers have an awesome responsibility to help our students understand a language which will be of vital importance to them for the rest of their lives. In today’s world English is essential whether in the field of work, communication or leisure.

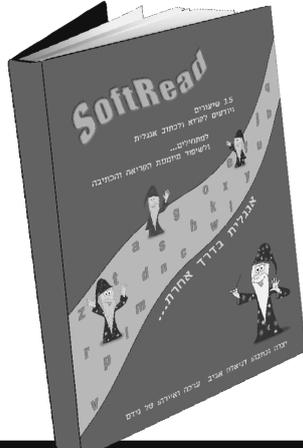
What does all this have to do with games in the classroom?

In my opinion, everything that helps students to learn and enjoy learning should be used in teaching. From elementary school onwards the learning experience should be positive. I heard one principal recently say that his staff all enjoy coming to school to work. I was tempted to ask him whether this was true for the majority of the pupils in the school.

My question is this: Can we teachers introduce an element of fun into the English classroom and why is this so important? If we first think of the advantages of games, this may encourage us to incorporate them into our lessons. Many pupils have learning difficulties. We can take some of the pressure off them by giving them opportunities to succeed and feel good about themselves. Games do just that. They are a great leveler. Shy children forget their shyness because the focus of attention is not on them when it is their turn to play but on winning the game itself. Everybody enjoys playing games. If you

don’t believe me just look at the short video clip on our website showing people of all ages – young children, teenagers and adults – playing our games. Games introduce a social dimension into our lives which is often lost in these days of TV, Facebook and I-phones. Games also help pupils of all ages to practise language –whether reading, writing, speaking or listening in an enjoyable way.

Of course using games in the classroom requires careful planning. The games need to be appropriate to the age and ability level of the class and the teacher needs to be familiar with the rules of the game or games. If you have the opportunity of working with pupils in small groups, I suggest that you start using games in the groups and only later, when you feel confident in using them, introduce them into the full classroom situation. If the pupils find them hard they may say “This is boring”! If they enjoy them they will start clamouring for more. Then you can use short games’ sessions at the end of lessons as a reward for co-operation in the classroom. I think if I had understood all this nearly 20 years ago when I started teaching in junior high school it would have revolutionized my teaching. Just think of those lessons every teacher dreads: the last lesson of the day, when everyone is exhausted and just wants to go home. MAKE IT FUN!!



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FROM JAZZ CHANTS TO DEF POETRY*: ORAL PRESENTATION OLD AND NEW

(Adapted from presentations at recent ETAI conferences)

Barry Silverberg (*barsil@netvision.net.il*)

Are we neglecting oral skills? Are we so busy busting our noodles feeding grades into moodles, filling in oodles of forms, coping with the thousand natural HOTS that our job is heir to --that we have eased up on speaking da language? Remember -- The L in EFL means language, and language means speaking.

It's September. Coming back refreshed from a sabbatical, I have just met my two new eighth grade groups, the weakest kids in the school. Despite learning English for five years, they are still unable to produce a sentence like: "My father's name is Alex." Higher level classes aren't much better. When I poke my nose into their classrooms, I am greeted by a chorus of "Speak Hebrew!" I'm not blaming my fellow teachers; our school has a highly competent English team.

"But," you say, "Oral performance on the Bagrut is worth a lot -- 20% of the final Bagrut grade. Are teachers giving oral skills the respect they deserve?" I'm not sure. By the twelfth grade, many students will have developed their oral skills outside the classroom. As for the proficiency needed for the oral Bagrut -- most testers I've seen, give grades of at least an 80 on the oral test. As a result, teachers don't spend much time teaching or practicing oral skills.

If you feel, like I do, that you would like to do more work on oral skills with your classes, here are some readily accessible materials that deal with oral production and presentation. These are by no means comprehensive, extensive or expensive, but they work for me:

1) Jazz Chants

In my first year of teaching a colleague played a jazz chant for me and life has never been the same! It goes like this:

"Baby's Sleeping"

A: I said, "Ssh, ssh, baby's sleeping," I said,
"Ssh, ssh, baby's sleeping."

I said, "Hush, hush, baby's sleeping."

B: "What did you say? What did you say?"

A: I said, "Please be quiet, baby's sleeping."

I said, "Please be quiet, baby's sleeping."

B: "What did you say? What did you say?"

A: I said, "Shut up, shut up, baby's sleeping."

I said, "Shut up, shut up, baby's sleeping."

Baby: "Waaaa!"

B: Not anymore

Carolyn Graham's original *Jazz Chants* and the follow ups like *Jazz Chants for Children* can work for many levels, especially beginners. The chants are hip, funny, and catchy. They immediately invite students to start speaking in the natural rhythms of English.

To access the written chants you can, of course, order Graham's books, but you can also Google "jazz chants". One result: <http://yanko.lib.ru/books/lit/engl/jazz-chants.htm> has Russian writing. If you click on it, you will get the words (in English) for many chants. Some of my favorites are *Personal Question*, *Panic on Being Late*, *Easy Solutions*, *Late Again* and *Warning*. Also be sure to watch Graham's YouTube video in which she teaches how to create and perform jazz chants. Here's an example of a chant that can power an entire lesson. It gets the pupils to use the advanced form "I'd rather not..." and they learn to ask a lot of questions accurately.

Personal Questions

Where were you born?

I'd rather not say.

Where are you from?

I'd rather not say.

How tall are you?

How old are you?

How much do you weigh?

I'd rather not say.

How much rent do you pay:

I'd rather not say.

How much do you make?

I'd rather not say.

Why aren't you married?

I'd rather not say.

Why don't you have **children**?

I'd rather not say.

Where **were** you last night?

Why **weren't** you home?

Did you stay out late?

Did you come home alone?

Did you have a good time?

Did you see a good play?

Did you go to a concert?

I'd rather not say.

Suggestions for follow-up activities

- Pupils are given a list of questions, and sort them into personal/non-personal questions.
- Pupils are encouraged to make up their own questions, some personal, some not.
- They ask each other questions, and choose whether to answer or avoid the questions. This is a good way to enhance the traditional ‘getting to know you’ activity.

A few years later, Carolyn Graham came out with another book of chants: *Jazz Chants for Children*. This one is hard to find on the internet, although I did find the index of chants at:

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/jazz-chants-for-children-rhythms-of-american-english-through-chants-songs-and-poems/oclc/4211289>.

My favorites include: *Stop that Noise!*, *I love to say I won't*, *When I was one*, and *I found a Cow*. More recently, Graham has published new books that incorporate some of the old ones: *Jazz chants Old and New*, and *Children's Jazz Chants, Old and New*. Maybe by the time you read this, all of the material will be internet-accessible. Meanwhile, if not, it's worth buying the books! I also advise just Googling the expression “jazz chants” which will yield an abundance of sites and ideas.

You can watch Carolyn Graham herself, teaching how to use the chants, as well as children all over the world gleefully chanting. There are also contributions from many teachers who have written chants of their own.

2) Mr. Monday and other songs for teaching language structures.

Around the time when *Jazz Chants* came out, Longmans hired or assembled a professional band, and released *Mr. Monday and other songs for Teaching English* by the Solid British Hat Band. The title song is in the present simple tense:

Mr. Monday

He gets up at eight o'clock

On cold clear winter days

He eats his food at half past eight

And clears the pots away

While more advanced students found these chants boring 30 years ago, I find they work well, even with weak college students. The lyrics are clear and crisp, and the harmonies inviting. If I do a song once, they keep asking me to repeat it.

For years, nobody could use *Mr. Monday*, since the last recording of a recording of a recording had faded away in some kibbutz school English classroom. I wrote to Amazon but they had no idea what I was talking about. Then, a copy surfaced on CD: Two albums by the Solid British Hat Band. Bootleg copies were available and I put the lyrics up on ETNI (Google “ETNI Barry Songs”).

However, I recently found some of the songs, on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w-i2S9xUr8>. At the time of writing, at least three songs are available: *Mr. Monday*, *Present Progressive*, and *Going to*. (Don't get this *Mr. Monday* confused with Trance and DJs of the same name.) Maybe someday I'll find the American counterpart to *Mr. Monday*, entitled *Hard to Learn that English as a Second Language Blues*.

3) Crayola Kids: Plays for kids in English:

Sample play:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXPwrmxSutY>

Sample book:

[http://openlibrary.org/books/OL9576407M/Trojan_Horse_\(Crayola_Kids_Adventures\)](http://openlibrary.org/books/OL9576407M/Trojan_Horse_(Crayola_Kids_Adventures))

Crayola Kids has a series of short, tongue-in-cheek plays for 12-15 year olds, based on classical themes: *The Trojan Horse*, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, etc. You can see the plays on YouTube, and if you are interested, you can order the books through Amazon. The YouTube version is much longer than the books and includes songs and dances.

4) Ten Two

Performing plays, or at least short scenes from plays, is a wonderful way to learn the language, but it is difficult to find suitable material. Two years ago I discovered the playwright Lindsay Price, who has written some lovely short plays. The collection is called *Ten/Two*, and each play focuses on a different situation. <https://www.theatrefolk.com/products/ten-two>. This site includes sample pages and a sample video. Look at the excerpt from *The Big Lie* which is about a student and a teacher!

5) Music and songs

One of the main goals of English language teachers is to make sure pupils acquire new vocabulary. We are always on the look-out for ways to help them remember new words. Assuming that learning new words with the help of music progresses faster and thus is retained longer than just learning vocabulary by itself, I did some searching for songs that were constructed specifically to teach vocabulary. My tireless searching took me to the

wonderful world of *Flocabulary*, an amazing site which is unknown to most teachers in Israel.

Flocabulary teaches vocabulary at many levels through rap songs and hip hop. Here is one of the first *Flocabulary* songs: Click here for Rationale and lyrics, and the song itself, <http://flocabulary.com/1-transformation>, where you will find one small part of a series of songs to teach vocabulary at all (American) grade levels. This particular one is geared to grade 3. What grade could you use it for? <http://flocabulary.com/5-were-going-to-ride/> **

Flocabulary also presents current events, albeit from an angle quite different than ours. See <http://flocabulary.com/subjects/the-week-in-rap>.

Flocabulary has expanded tremendously since I first encountered it, and now covers several works of Shakespeare and other classics, creative writing and mathematics. From the little I have seen, I recommend *Huck Finn*, *Macbeth*, *The Odyssey*, and *Discovering America*. I downloaded these last year. They come with lyrics, and some of them have lesson plans and exercises. Several songs that I downloaded as free samples now require registration.

Here is part of a math rap, which is just fine for teaching numbers to our weaker or younger pupils: <http://flocabulary.com/i-ate-8/>

I ate seven apples, yum, yum,
I wanted one more, so I ate one.
How many apples did I eat?
Wait, hold up: I ate eight!
I ate six bowls of oatmeal,
Then I ate two more bowls of oatmeal.
How many bowls did I eat?
Wait, hold up: I ate eight!

Flocabulary isn't for everybody; after all our pupils are not urban Americans, but if your pupils like hip hop – try it!

7) Def Poetry

From *Flocabulary* I surfed to a more distant land. Terms like “Def poetry” “Jam”, “Slam Poetry competitions”, “Brave new voices”, “Spoken Word” came to light. It was a land of young poets performing intensely personal material to an audience. Some of it is relevant enough to bring to class, like Lamont Carey’s, I can’t read, Thinkin’ about You (no name listed) and Thank You by Taylor, a gifted nerd who wants to write a poem for ‘the smart kids.’ These poets and their work can inspire our students by reminding them of the passion that poetry comes from.

This material was presented in a talk at the summer ETAI convention. Reviewing my presentation and adapting it for publication in the ETAI Forum has had a strong effect on me. I’m using Jazz chants in almost every lesson, and will soon be adding *Young Voices* and *Spoken Word* material to my classroom repertoire. To inspire you to use jazz chants in your teaching, and to show you how easy it is to create your own, here are some of my chants I have written to amuse my very weakest students and help them learn the months. Enjoy!

Chant for September:

Am I late? Am I late?
What’s the date? What’s the date?
I remember! I remember!
It’s September!
Today is(whatever the day is...).

Chant for October:

Succot is over, holidays – over,
September is over, It’s October! \
Good bye summer! Hello fall,
Let’s Learn Lots! (LOL!)

* *Def Poetry*, also known as *Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry* or *Def Poetry Jam*, which was co-founded by Bruce George, Danny Simmons and Deborah Pointer, is an HBO television series produced by hip-hop music entrepreneur Russell Simmons. The series presents performances by established spoken word poets, as well as up-and-coming ones. Well-known actors and musicians will often surprise the audience by showing up to recite their own original poems.

** Some of the links require that you sign up but you can usually get a trial version that will let you see what they are all about.

Barry Silverberg, Matmid School, Kiriyat Shmona

Barry lives and teaches remedial pupils in Kiriat Shmona and gifted children at Tel Hai College. This is his 60th year on the planet. He overspends his time hunting Bagrut Bloopers and designing T-shirts that say “I’m Six’y and I know it” and “Angry Beards.” This will be his eighth appearance in the forum but who’s counting?

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A MOVING CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

Bari Nirenberg (bnirenberg@gmail.com)

Inspired by a presentation of the British Council at the spring ETAI conference in Beer Sheva, I decided to begin the school year with a project on the Paralympics in my 10th and 11th grade gifted classes. The 2012 Paralympic Games took place in London from August 29th until September 9th.

On August 27th, the first day of school, I began the lesson by showing two sets of pictures of five athletes (all pictures were from the British Council PowerPoint presentation on the Paralympics). After showing the first set, in which the pupils could not see that the athletes were disabled, I asked them what words they would use to describe the people in the pictures and what they had in common. They used words like “determined”, “dedicated”, “winner”, “strong”, “fast”, etc. In the second set of pictures, the pupils could see the various disabilities of the athletes. I asked them if they were surprised and how these pictures changed the way that they looked at the athletes. They were, of course, very surprised and also very impressed. Most of the pupils told me that now they knew that these athletes were even more determined and dedicated than they had originally thought.

Next, I wrote on the board the “manifesto” that I had found on the Samsung Paralympics site, leaving blank lines wherever it said “sport”:

“It doesn’t care where you’re from, if you’re a man or a woman, tall, thin, big or short. Sport doesn’t care how you got here, how much money you make, what you believe in or not. It doesn’t care if you have two legs, one leg or wheels. Sport only cares that you’re here to take part and give your all to win.”

I asked the pupils to try to fill in all the blank spaces with the same word. It took them a couple of minutes, but eventually they came up with the word “sport”. This was followed by an explanation of the “manifesto” and their feelings about it. At this point I asked them if they had ever heard of the Paralympics and what they knew about them. A few of them had never even heard of the Paralympic Games and most of them knew only very little about them.

The pupils were then given a short introductory text with very basic facts about the Paralympics and instructions for their project. In groups of three or four, they had to do the following:

1. Choose a sport in the Paralympic Games and provide:
 - a. a description of the sport
 - b. the history of the sport
 - c. an explanation of classification (how the athletes are put into different categories depending on their disabilities and which categories there are in their chosen sport)
2. Choose two athletes from their chosen sport (at least one had to be a current athlete competing in this year’s Paralympic Games) and provide:
 - a. a short biography of the athlete
 - b. an explanation of his/her disability
 - c. a summary of the athlete’s history in their chosen sport
 - d. a summary of the athlete’s achievements

(Groups of three were asked to research just one athlete.)

3. Follow their chosen sport in this year’s Paralympic Games and write a summary of the results.
4. Create a poster inviting the public to a medal event for their chosen sport, including at least one picture plus the date and venue.

As an activity to summarize the introductory lesson, I asked the pupils to view the video clips on the Samsung Paralympics site at <http://www.samsung.com/uk/london2012/everyones-olympic-games/paralympics/take-part.html>.

The pupils brought material from home (or brought their smart phones and read online) and worked on the project in class for eight lessons. They worked enthusiastically and repeatedly commented on what an interesting topic I had chosen for their project. Every day, one of the pupils would excitedly tell me about some athlete’s achievements of the previous day or about how many medals Israel had already won. Many of them watched parts of the games on either Channel 1 or one of the sports channels. I was amazed at how emotionally involved my pupils became in the project.

About a week after they had finished summarizing and preparing the written work, oral presentations began. The first pupils to present were a group of three girls in the 10th grade. Their project was on wheelchair tennis and they had chosen Noam Gershony as their athlete. When

they chose the sport and the athlete at the end of August, they had no idea, of course, that he would bring home a gold medal. They got more and more excited after each of Gershony's victories and at one point, one of the girls even told me that she was "in love" with him!

Their oral presentation started with background information on the sport and on Noam Gershony. They called Gershony an Israeli hero, not only because of his achievements on the tennis court, but also because of what he had sacrificed for his country. Then, they showed a PowerPoint presentation of Gershony. The first was a picture of him as a pilot before his accident in 2006. Later pictures showed him in a wheelchair, both on and off the tennis course. The song that they chose to accompany the pictures was "Blackbird" by the Beatles:

"Blackbird singing in the dead of night,
Take these broken wings and learn to fly;

All your life,

You were only waiting for this moment to arise."

I later asked them why they had chosen this song and they said that originally, they had wanted another Beatles song, but then they had remembered the words to this one and they thought that they were very fitting. After teaching gifted children for several years, I shouldn't be surprised by the connections that they're capable of making, but I was. I don't think they could have found a more suitable song.

After the PowerPoint presentation, they showed a video clip from Channel 1 of Gershony being awarded his gold medal as the Israeli flag ascended to the Hatikva. Through most of the medal ceremony, which was shown in its entirety, you could see Gershony, head in hands, sobbing.

The girls summed up their presentation by telling the class how inspired they had been by Noam Gershony and how he proved to them that people can do anything they put their minds to.

I am certain that there were quite a few teary-eyed pupils in the classroom during this presentation (and there was one teary-eyed teacher). It was, by far, the most moving presentation I've ever seen given by pupils.

I would summarize this project as a total success. I had hoped that the pupils would find the work interesting and that they would learn something new and hopefully be inspired, but what actually happened exceeded these expectations. Many of the pupils became personally involved in the project. They talked about it in class and outside, even with their families. One of the girls who participated in the project on wheelchair tennis discovered over Shabbat supper that one of her relatives

had served in the army with Noam Gershony and knows him personally. In fact, the girls plan to contact him. They had hoped to interview him, but at the time that they were doing the project, he was in Las Vegas and therefore unavailable. The pupils gained a deeper understanding of will-power and determination and about how it's possible to overcome any obstacle. This message is, in my opinion, particularly important for gifted pupils, who often give up on things that they don't think they're talented enough to excel in.

The lesson that I learned as a teacher is that when the topic is interesting, relevant and current, pupils will eagerly learn about it. This is something that I think we all know in theory, but don't always put into practice. Creating teaching material that captures your pupils' attention is definitely one of the keys to both effective learning and also to good classroom management.

She has been teaching at Makif Alef in Beer Sheva for 24 years. In those years, she has taught all levels, but she currently teaches English to gifted students in 8th through 11th grade and translation in 12th grade. She is a regional English counselor for the Southern district and a national literature counselor. She also teaches the online course literature and HOTS and she is a senior Bagrut examiner.

INSPIRATION THROUGH EXCELLENCE

Elana Boteach Salomon (elana.salomon@britishcouncil.org.il)

When I created a lesson plan on the Paralympics for my job interview at the British Council, I had no inkling that it would be adopted as a flagship workshop that would reach over 5000 learners in schools across Israel. Looking back, I am proud to have reached out to so many teachers and pupils with the Inspiration through Excellence workshop, which I find such an exhilarating subject.

Do you have a topic that excites you? Why not create a lesson that shares your passion with your pupils? There are a number of elements of the workshop that can be adapted for use in all lessons. The following are my suggestions for creating a lesson plan that integrates technology and engages learners of all ages.

- **Include images**

The Inspiration through Excellence workshop opens with five images of athletes. What the pupils don't know is that the pictures of the Paralympic athletes are cropped so that their disabilities are "out of the picture". I ask the students to describe the pictures. Most use words like athletic, strong, determined, etc. Then I switch the slide to the "full picture" and get their impressions. Would they have described the picture the same way?

It's easy to take this idea and apply it to other topics. Teachers can show pupils part of a picture and have them guess what it is, ask them to describe the picture or ask them to write what they think will happen next.

Be sure that you choose an image on www.flickr.com from Creative Commons. From the Flickr home page, click on "Search" and then "Advanced Search". Look for the option at the bottom of the page that says "Creative Commons". Another option is to search the eltpics' photostream (www.flickr.com/photos/eltpics/). These are pictures (all licensed as Creative Commons) uploaded by other teachers for educational use. Choosing a Creative Commons picture and attributing it correctly, models good online behaviour for pupils. How often do teachers get frustrated when pupils copy and paste text from the Internet? Taking a copyrighted picture and not attributing it amounts to the same thing – a violation of copyright.

- **Incorporate video**

Another part of Inspiration through Excellence includes showing learners a video on the history of the Paralympics (<http://youtu.be/w6VbjFZ6yBs>) and asking them to write down the sports and cities that they see in the video. Videos are a great way to bring current events into the classroom; incorporating videos, exposes learners to the world and shows them different types of people, places and perspectives. During or after viewing, learners can answer yes/no questions, categorise lexical

items or count how many times they hear something.

- **Allow for pair-work and group-work**

Both of the activities above – describing pictures, filling in a table while watching a video – can be done by the pupils in pairs or in groups. The pupils learn from each other and enjoy completing the tasks with their peers. It may be a little noisier but it's worth it if they're communicating and motivating one another.

- **Practise skimming and scanning**

Reading a text and answering questions can often take a whole lesson. Why not have the pupils practise their skimming and scanning skills to find information? In Inspiration through Excellence, pupils are given a short text on the Paralympics and asked to circle the numbers and underline the capital letters in the text. Pupils then compete to find answers as quickly as possible to questions on PowerPoint slides. I use a timer and give pupils 30 seconds to find the right answer. Pupils love the challenge of finding the information before the time runs out. This activity is easy to duplicate with a text on any topic, especially one with many names and dates.

- **Adapt online material**

The last part of the workshop includes a game called Oscar's Games Challenge (<http://tinyurl.com/8w62gu7>). The language of the game is a bit difficult for pupils, but they love jumping over and rolling under obstacles. Therefore, I created an accompanying worksheet that was adapted to their level. It includes questions about what Oscar is wearing, what he jumps over or rolls under, places in London that he passes, etc. If you see something online related to your lesson but the level isn't exactly suitable, it doesn't mean you can't use it. Allow your pupils to benefit from it by adapting it.

- **Share, share, share!**

I have received constructive feedback and gained many insights from presenting this workshop at ETAI conferences and in schools. If you create a lesson that garners positive responses, share it!

If you would like a copy of the PowerPoint for "Inspiration through Excellence", please e-mail me at elana.salomon@britishcouncil.org.il.



Elana Boteach Salomon is an EFL teacher, teacher trainer and materials developer at the British Council. She holds an MA in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from Tel Aviv University and is a certified teacher with several years of experience in the Israeli school system.

IN SEARCH OF LESSONS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Gunther Volk (gunther.volk@gmail.com)

1. No-one forgets a good teacher

Teaching, at the end of the day, is all about making a difference. An 84-year-old friend of mine, Doris Black, lives in a residential home in North London. During a recent conversation, she told me that she had been on an outing to the Victoria & Albert Museum when a woman, only seven years her junior, came up to her and said: “You were my French teacher at the Hasmonian School for Girls in Golders Green in 1949. You taught us a poem that I still remember to this day, and it is because of you that I developed a love of French and French culture.”

This encounter between a former pupil telling her former teacher that she had made a difference in her life more than 60 years after the event, proves that there is truth in the saying that “no-one forgets a good teacher”. Without a doubt this is an achievement worthy of mention in the *Guinness Book of Records*.

After Penny Ur invited me to give the plenary talk at the 2011 ETAI Winter Conference at Wizo Nahalal High School, I asked Doris to share the secret that had made her such a successful teacher.

“I don’t really know,” she said. “All I remember is that I loved my subject and my students and,” she added, “as far as my teaching was concerned, I just taught the way I assumed French ought to be taught, since I did not have any training.”

“Did you have to fill in any forms? Did you have to apply any HOTS or LOTS to your lessons,” I asked somewhat cheekily. “No,” she said, “no LOTS, no HOTS, no forms, no paperwork. I just concentrated on my teaching.”

2. Prerequisites for teaching lessons that make a difference in the EFL classroom

Admittedly, the Hasmonian School for Girls in Golders Green of 1949 is a far cry from the schools where most of us teach today. In extreme cases, what we experience on a daily basis is more akin to the trials and tribulations Francis Gilbert describes so hauntingly in his book *I’m a Teacher, Get Me out of Here!*

As committed professionals, however, it is not in our character to walk away from challenges. Instead we reflect on what needs to be done in EFL lessons to make them as motivating, meaningful and memorable as possible – in short, for them to make a difference.

How can this be achieved? In his article *In Search of a Good Lesson* Luke Prodromou suggests an interesting ‘staircase model’ which he devised to assess the quality

of lessons. His concept divides the prerequisites for teaching a ‘good lesson’ into three steps: technique, craft and art.

The most basic level of ‘technique’ comprises teaching skills such as a good command of English, the ability to explain, present and practise grammatical structures as well as the aptitude to help students develop the four skills. At the intermediate level referred to as ‘craft’, teachers are expected to be “aware and responsive to learners’ needs, adapt textbooks, produce materials, and apply a range of methods.” For the third prerequisite, called “art”, teachers take EFL to a new dimension – “teaching as education” – above and beyond dealing with technicalities such as vocabulary and grammar.

If foreign language teaching reaches the art level and is elevated to the provision of a humane education, our lessons will impact the way our students think and behave. Thus, if we are lucky, the youngsters we teach will not only learn English but will also be equipped to make a difference in the lives of others.

This ‘educational’ dimension of EFL teaching can best be realized with the help of texts that challenge our students’ sense of justice and fairness by exploring issues involving injustice, controversial legal decisions or the behaviour of the bystander in the face of anti-social behaviour.

3. Making a difference with the help of carefully chosen texts

The two texts chosen for my plenary talk, the poem *Kinderscene* by the German poet Edwin Bormann and the short play *Little Old Lady* by the Anglo-Jewish playwright Arnold Wesker, both deal with an issue called ‘the bystander phenomenon’.

I became sensitive to the phenomenon of the ‘bystander effect’ very early in my life. When I was eight years old my mother asked me what I had been doing during the afternoon. I told her that I had been out playing with friends on the banks of a stream, when suddenly one of the boys in the group fell into the water and looked a sorry sight. A couple of my playmates picked up empty cans that had been washed up on the bank, filled them with water and poured the murky liquid over the boy’s head. There were peals of laughter at the sight of the little boy crying and looking increasingly bedraggled.

I assured my mother that I had not joined in, but that was not good enough for her. “Did you stop the others from what they were doing?” I had not, and my mother

expressed great disappointment in me. She explained that being a bystander was just as bad as actually taking part in the bullying. It's a lesson that has stayed with me to this very day.

Surprisingly, we are most susceptible to remaining silent or inactive when we are in a crowd. According to Mark Levine, a social psychologist at Lancaster University, crowds "have been blamed for antisocial behaviour through mechanisms that include peer pressure, mass hysteria and a diffusion of responsibility – the idea that 'someone else' will do something, so I don't have to." Hence the bystander effect, which he defines as a "phenomenon whereby people who would help a stranger in distress if they were alone, fail to do so in the presence of others."

4. Kinderscene – a poem for a lesson on Yom Hashoah

Kinderscene is a short poem by the German poet Edwin Bormann. It dates back to 1893, a time when Germany was gripped by one of its periodic spates of anti-Semitism. The poem has all the right ingredients for it to have a lasting impact on our students. Both the setting and the characters are familiar to youngsters, a planned birthday party, friends from school; a teacher and a mother.

The action centres around the birthday party to which Käthchen, the birthday girl, has invited all her little friends except one - Rebecca Silberstein. Käthchen is adamant that she does not want Rebecca to be present because she is Jewish. Käthchen has learned from her teacher at school that the Jews killed Jesus. The speaker's mother, on the other hand, counsels caution and reminds the speaker that Silbersteins did not have anything to do with the murder. In the final stanza the poet repeats the mother's warning and expresses the hope that it would be good for the world if people stopped blaming Jews for Jesus' murder.

The character constellation in the poem is such that it lends itself to being linked with a famous quotation by the renowned Hebrew University historian, Yehuda Bauer: "Thou shalt not be a perpetrator; thou shalt not be a victim; and thou shalt never, but never, be a bystander."

It is fairly clear-cut for students to apply the different terminologies in the quotation to the characters in the poem. Käthchen is identified as a perpetrator/collaborator who is under the influence of her teacher, who can also be labelled as a perpetrator/instigator. Obviously Rebecca is the victim while the speaker's mother distinguishes herself by not being a bystander. Like the poet's voice in the last stanza, she too can be described as a warning conscience.

Having analyzed the roles of the different characters in the poem the lesson can be directed to the level of 'education as art'. In this realm the lesson has an effect on our students' sense of justice and subsequently on their own ethical behaviour. A key question to set this evaluative phase in motion might be: "Is there any link between the poem and Edmund Burke's adage 'All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing?'"

Students have no difficulty expressing the concept that evil triumphs when a little girl called Rebecca is ostracized for being Jewish. They also observe that there are 'good men' who could have prevented this act of ostracism from happening by saying: "If Rebecca is not invited, we won't come either!" However, the little girls, with their sweet sounding diminutive names, are probably swayed by their teacher's bias and do not have the guts to boycott the birthday party. Being too young and immature may very well be an excuse to get the six girls off the hook. No such leniency, however, should be meted out to our students, who have learned that one can't escape culpability by being bystanders.

Lessons, as we all know, can make a difference for good or bad. The behaviour of the teacher in *Kinderscene*, for example, is to the detriment of his students. He poisons their minds by perpetuating century-old prejudices against Jews. Contrast him with a teacher called Mr. Whitson in that thought-provoking short story *Best Teacher I Ever Had*. He turns his students into questioning, inquisitive human beings who have the courage to speak their own minds and to contradict others if they think they are wrong. This is what "teaching lessons with a difference" is all about!

5. The short play Little Old Lady

Little Old Lady by the Anglo-Jewish playwright Arnold Wesker, also deals with the bystander phenomenon. The play is set in the carriage of a moving London underground train. Two youngsters called Sammy and Trish are keeping themselves entertained by playing a silly question and answer game. Trish asks the questions: "What's the capital of Spain? What's the capital of Denmark?" to which Sammy has only one answer: "Dunno."

Enter the little old lady. She sits down next to the youngsters and after a short while joins in and starts giving the names of the capital cities Sammy can't recall or has never even heard of. Surprised at Sammy's lack of knowledge she exclaims: "Don't they teach you these things at school?" to which Trish responds: "Got no time to teach us. Too busy getting us through exams."

After this short moment of comic relief the atmosphere changes dramatically when the train stops and a thuggish man enters and begins to smoke right next to a no-smoking sign. The little old lady challenges him to put out his cigarette. When he refuses she asks the others in the carriage to join in with her protest but each and every one of them has an excuse for not becoming involved. The tension increases further when the bully shows signs of lighting another cigarette. When the little old lady threatens to pull the chain to stop the train, the bully intimidates her and everyone in the carriage is on tenterhooks to see if she will carry out her threat.

However anti-social and threatening the bully's behaviour may be, in this instance it is open to debate whether the situation in the play really warrants an intervention by those who are looking on. Take the character Jason, for instance. Even though in the eyes of the little old lady he is "the only one here who's [the bully's] size", Jason warns the others not to become involved because he thinks the bully is "unpredictable and dangerous". There is also the "Harassed Woman", a mother, whose intricate arrangements for the day will go haywire if the train is delayed. She pleads with the little old lady not to pull the chain:

"Why are you making trouble? What's in a cigarette? One cigarette in a whole carriage. ... No one else is smoking and no one else is complaining. You frightened from the smoke of one cigarette? Open the windows ... – only don't pull that chain or you'll upset everyone's life. For one man! One anti-social man and a lousy cigarette."

In the light of this opposition, can a pulling of the chain by the little old lady really be justified? Since the answer is debatable this can be put to excellent use in class with the help of a so-called dilemma discussion. In this student-centred activity, the class is divided into small groups. Each group is asked to deal with a number of tasks that take the students from identifying the dilemma to offering a solution. Besides developing listening and verbal skills, the exchange of ideas also encourages reasoning and critical thinking, and if the ensuing plenary discussion gets heated, so much the better!

It is my hope to inspire others to make a difference by using our opportunity as educated elders to teach English to developing minds. Let's not be bystanders to education without meaning.

- i Gilbert, Francis (2004). *I'm a Teacher. Get Me out of Here!* London: Short Books.
- ii Prodromou Luke (2002), *In Search of a Good Lesson*. English Teaching Professional, Issue 22, January, 5 – 8.
- iii *ibid.* 8.
- iv Please see my article "Contemporary Holocaust Plays in Advanced EFL Classes", http://www.etni.org.il/etnirag/issue2/gunther_volk.htm
- v <http://www.etai.org.il/handouts.html> (Kinderscene and materials; Little Old Lady and materials)
- vi "The kindness of crowds", *The Economist*, 29 February 2009. <http://www.economist.com/node/13176759>
- vii *ibid.*
- viii See Elon, Amos (2002). *The Pity of It All. A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch 1743 – 1933*. New York: Picador. 212-220.
- ix From a speech by Professor Yehuda Bauer, Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, 26 January 2000.
- x Ratcliffe, Susan (1994). *The Little Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. Oxford: OUP 1994.
"It is necessary only for the good man to do nothing for evil to triumph." Edmund Burke 1729 – 97: attributed (in a number of forms) to Burke, but not found in his writings." 144.
- xi Owen, David. "Best Teacher I Ever Had" in: Raz, Nancy (1992). *Inside Stories*. Ra'anana: Eric Cohen Books.
- xii Wesker, Arnold. "Little Old Lady" in: Terson, Peter (Ed.)(1988). *New Plays 1. Contemporary One-Act Plays For Young People*. Oxford: OUP.
- xiii Please see my ETAI conference handout for additional speaking and writing activities.

Gunther Volk is a teacher of English who has taught in the US, Germany and Israel. At present he works as a teacher trainer at Rottweil Teacher Training College in Southwestern Germany. A regular presenter at ETAI conferences, he has offered workshops and talks on a variety of topics such as "Boosting Speaking and Writing Skills through Moral Dilemmas", "Teaching the Holocaust through Anglo-Jewish Drama and Film" and "Countering Anti-Semitism and Holocaust Denial through Sir Ronald Harwood's Play The Handyman". Though he lives and works in Germany his heart is in Israel and he is back here whenever time permits.

USING GOOGLE TOOLS TO OPEN YOUR CLASSROOM TO THE WORLD

Presented at the 2012 Summer Etai Conference, Jerusalem, Israel

Adele Raemer (*araemer@gmail.com*)

I love gadgets. Always have - Kitchen gadgets, car gadgets, classroom gadgets, computer gadgets. You name them, I'm a sucker for trying them out. I love the ingenuity that goes into them. I admire (and envy) the people that are behind all these whizzy things that are invented to make our lives easier (or- just cooler? ;-). I guess that is why I like computers so much, in general. I enjoy the challenge of seeking out ways to incorporate them into my life and daily practices (including in the classroom).

I have been in the classroom for over 30 years. I never would have thought that after all that time, I would manage to find new challenges to excite and inspire me. But, I have. With the introduction of the interactive white board (IWB) onto the scene, wifi and constant connectivity of my school and my students, I keep finding new ideas and adventures to throw me out of my daily equilibrium and challenge me to conquer them and make them mine (actually – they keep finding me).

Aside from the fact that I love these challenges, I am well aware that my students are very different from students of the past, in as much as they are growing up in the digital age. Whatever they do when they leave school, they will be citizens of a much more digital society than we were when we stepped out of our cocoons and into the world of grown-ups. Regardless of where they go - be it the army, or work, or study, they will need to be digitally fluent; they will need to know how to deal with the psychedelic rate at which digitalization is causing users to learn and relearn and relearn again, what they previously knew how to do, (even knew how to do WELL)

And so, as a teacher, I feel that my job is not only to teach them English, but also to try to prepare them to face this new world order which awaits them. As they say, we must train our students to deal with a future that we cannot, ourselves, imagine.

In light of this awareness, when I was accepted to participate in the first ever Google Teachers' Academy (GTA) in Israel, I was thrilled. Fifty lucky souls (classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, technology specialists, librarians, administrators, professional trainers, and other education professionals among them) were hosted for an intensive two days at the Tel Aviv Google offices. We were exposed to (no - literally bombarded with) innovative products, technologies and instructional strategies for education.

In my talk at the summer 2012 ETAI , I attempted to give participants a taste of what we experienced in those two days. As I learned in the Academy, I told participants that the best way to get anything out of such an experience, is to make note of the names of the tools I was about to present, in the very limited time I had at my disposal. I especially encouraged them to make note of those tools that set off a spark in their minds for something they could envision doing with that tool, in their class, or even for administrative purposes. That was what worked for me, anyway. You need to start out small. Choose a class with which you feel comfortable experimenting. Proficiency comes through doing - through the trial and error of playing around with different tools. Don't get me wrong. Not all of my students loved it. In fact, I had (and still have) the impression that some of them were taking up a collection to encourage my early retirement (or take out a contract on my life). But I think they are getting used to it. And the possibilities are so promising, that I really believe it is worth the effort (and the risk).

Among the tools I presented at the conference were:

- Googledocs and Forms (can be used for online quizzes, collaboration on documents, working on groups for projects, gathering data, etc.)
- Google Sites (make a site for your class, have your students make their own sites for project work, etc.)
- Google Earth and Google Maps (have your students make a virtual tour, or map out the lifetime travels of a famous person they are researching)
- YouTube (Make clips of different activities in English, prepare online mini-lectures for your students to watch and learn from for homework)
- Google Calendar (Use it for yourself – can be synched on smartphones- share due dates with your classes, set meetings with colleagues and parents)
- Google Plus (for Hangouts) (Have virtual lessons or one-on-one tutoring sessions)
- Search Stories (students tell a “story” using key words – they add music and come up with a short clip that uses the Google search engine, which they can then be asked to talk about)

We also looked at other non-Google, Web 2 tools:

- Voki – Students record themselves, pick an appropriate avatar and background – one of my tasks this year was to recite a poem using this tool.

- Prezi It's the next generation replacing PowerPoint – it zooms!
- QR Barcode Reader - If you have students with smartphones, make a barcode out of pictures, words – make a scavenger hunt! They do not ALL have to have a smartphone – enough to have a few in the class- and they are becoming more and more common.
- Screenr - Record yourself and/or anything on the computer screen – make short webcasts and assign as homework. Or – let the students use it to make presentations using powerpoint or whatever they want to show on the screen.
- Flipsnack - takes any PDF file and makes it into a book that flips the pages. Have your students write a book, including graphics, just show them the tool – they'll find what to do with it!

As I told my participants – this is only the tip of the iceberg. Every day new innovations are coming out. Once you start, you see that there is no end to the tools that are exponentially filling our realm of education, and can be used to teach, to inspire, to enable and to excite our students in their learning processes. The possibilities for all students are astounding.

Even more exciting, is the fact that we gain useful tools for differentiating our teaching so we can reach more students. The tools that are out there, now allow us to address different learning styles as well as learning challenges – to reach our students who have serious learning disabilities in ways we could only have dreamt of a few years ago.

Now, I am very lucky, and have lots of technological options in my school and teacher-training environments. But even those of you who do NOT work at venues that are technologically equipped, can start to learn about and take advantage of these tools. Not having an IWB (Interactive White Board) in your classroom, or even a computer and projector, is no reason to sit back and let the parade pass you by. Most students have access to computers and internet these days, and before we know it, there will ONLY be Smartphones. Instead of fighting with our students to turn them off, we will need to learn how to have them turned ON, for learning.

The best thing about all this is that it is FREE! ALL of the tools I introduced are free to download and use. With the wonders of YouTube, you can find recorded tutorials explaining how to use most of these tools. Technical explanations as well as methodological ideas can be found by searching the Internet. All you need is the name of the tool. The ideas will flow! In one of Kevin Costner's movies, they said, "Build it and they will come." Well, it's being built all the time. All a teacher needs to do now, is to venture out there and play.

Biodata:

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DIGITAL LITERACIES & THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Gavin Dudeney

Editor's Preface

The following is a text version combining the contents of several presentations made by Gavin Dudeney at the British Council Pre-Conference Workshop and the ETAI International Conference, held in the summer of 2012. Due to the length of the article, it will be presented in the Forum in two parts – the first part in this issue, and the second part in our next Forum issue.

In the first part of the article, Gavin discusses his experiences and conclusions reached from his work with EFL pupils in Spain, where he uses digital technologies in his teaching. He briefly describes the digital habits of his pupils and compares the digital literacy of pupils and educators.

*The digital literacies discussed in this first section of the article include **working with images and working with video**. Don't worry! You won't be reading about how to set up programs or need a technician to explain things to you. Gavin gives brief and practical descriptions of how you can enhance your present classroom practices with digital tools and then sends you to the specific websites that describe these tools in more detail. We're sure you will find this article fascinating and will be looking forward to reading the second part which will deal with **audio and lexical tools**.*

Introduction

In this article I look at technology access and the changing face of today's learners. I consider the concept of new digital literacies before moving on to examine how these can be addressed through the use of new technologies whilst not significantly impacting on the current pedagogical or methodological approaches favoured by the average classroom teacher.

Technology Today

Young people in Spain (where I have spent most of my professional life) today have more access to technology than ever before: from gaming machines to mobile phones, fast Internet access at home and on the move and, increasingly, at school as new initiatives bring interactive whiteboards, electronic content, netbooks and other technological tools into their learning.

In terms of leisure, a 2009 study by the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) and the Fundació Catalana de l'Esplai concluded that almost 97% of Spanish adolescents between the ages of twelve and eighteen

had had some access to the Internet, with nearly 54% of those users having taught themselves the basics, and a mere 16% having received some training at school. Other noteworthy statistics from the on-going study include almost 95% use of email as a form of communication (though Messenger remains the preferred communication tool for most) and a preference for mobile phones as a primary source of communication between social groups.

This study supports data from other countries in terms of primary uses of technology, which are mostly confined to the synchronous, social side of real-time communications with friends, online (and offline) gaming and the use of media such as music and movies online, with very few engaging in productive activities such as keeping blogs or the like, though photo blogs continue to prove popular among adolescents. This lack of the use of 'participatory' technological tools is worth noting (see 'Today's learner' below) having, as it does, real implications for any introduction of technology in the classroom.

What is apparent in most studies on youth technology use is that they are more connected than ever before: connected to each other outside of class time, primarily through synchronous tools such as Microsoft Messenger and the ubiquitous mobile phone, but also (for those who use the Net to help with their learning: nearly 70% of the users in the study) to other sources of information and learning which can impact on how they view what they do and learn in class.

Although advances in educational uses of ICT are now more commonplace within the Spanish school system, there is still some way to go in terms of implementation of infrastructure, development of suitable electronic content and teacher training. This last factor is crucial in terms of teacher use of technology in the classroom, and breaking down the 'digital literacy divide' between teachers and today's learner.

Today's learners

Much has been made in recent years of the perceived digital divide in terms of technological knowledge between what Prensky popularised as the 'digital natives' (those born into a world with widespread access to technology) and 'digital immigrants' (those born before such access became commonplace in much of the developed world).

¹ Estudio sobre el Uso de las Tecnologías Digitales en el Ocio de los Jóvenes. Retrieved December 8, 2009 from: <http://tinyurl.com/yfwqp9w>

Whilst Prensky himself has since moved on from these (recently) polemical terms to a more knowledge-based view of the changes occurring in society, much stock is still placed in the supposed difference in levels of skill and experience between young people and their elders, and this difference is equally widely deemed to be leading to a significant mismatch between what learners expect from their school and college experience, and what they actually receive .

The so-called ‘Net generation’, it is argued, are highly-skilled and regular users of technologies such as blogs, wikis and podcasts, spend most of their time online and are rarely parted from their games machines or mobile phones. Whilst it is certainly true that most young people in Spain today have extensive access to various types of technologies (see above) there is still quite a gap in what they do with these technologies and what educators in the ‘immigrant’ fold might otherwise imagine.

In fact, many commissioned reports across the globe reflect what might be called a purely social use of technologies. One such report carried out for the Channel 4 television station in the UK concluded:

“However, the research explodes this myth by showing that young people’s immersion in these devices and the time spent on them is not due to an obsession with the technology per se, but largely due to the gadgets’ ability to facilitate communication and to enhance young people’s enjoyment of traditional pursuits. For most, the focus of their passion is not so much the device itself, but more about how it can help them connect, relax or have fun. The technology itself is “invisible” to the young consumer.”

This gives some credence to Prensky’s assertion that ‘digital natives’ tend to speak of technology in the form of verbs (whereas educators generally tend to use nouns)

and also fits in with Bax’s notion of ‘normalisation,’ where technology only realises its potential when it ceases to be noteworthy or ‘special’ within any given context.

However, this level of comfort with certain technologies, this ‘invisibility’ does not necessarily carry over into any tangible or positive benefits in terms of their learning. As Sansone notes, ‘natives’ are too often described as ‘tech savvy’ when what we really mean is that they are ‘tech comfy’: that is they are comfortable with technology, but not necessarily in a good position to put it to work in service of their knowledge and learning. He argues that perhaps a part of a new educator’s role may be to assist in the transformation from practical, social use of technology to a more rigorous, pedagogical use.

Given the kind of data revealed in reports such as the OTX one (above), it is difficult to see how an educator’s view of technologies in teaching will work towards bridging the gap between the ‘natives’ and the ‘immigrants.’ ELT exponents well-versed in the use of technologies regularly assume that the ubiquity of technologies in their learners’ lives will lead to a ready acceptance, say, of the use of blogs and wikis for reading and writing, podcasts for audio practice and other such approaches, whereas these may simply be written off as insufficiently ‘social’ or ‘entertaining’ by their intended audience.

As the OTX report concludes:

“Traditional activities such as hanging out with friends, listening to music, and seeing boy / girlfriends dominate the top three favourite pastimes of young people, while “digital” behaviours such as creating user generated content have a much lower penetration than commonly perceived (only 16% of young people have written a blog and less than a quarter (21%) have filmed and uploaded a clip to a site like YouTube).”

¹ For more on informal learning and connectivism, see Siemens, G., *Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age*. (2005) *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, 2(1). Retrieved December 8, 2009 from: <http://tinyurl.com/6e5fd>

³ Prensky, M., *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*. On the Horizon, 9(5), 1-6. Retrieved December 8, 2009 from: <http://tinyurl.com/ypgvf>

⁴ Prensky, M., H. *Sapiens Digital: From Digital Immigrants and Digital Native to Digital Wisdom*. *Innovate* 5 (3). Retrieved December 7, 2009 from: <http://tinyurl.com/yj7mo4l>

⁵ For a critique of this view, see Bennett, S., Maton, K. and Kervin, L. (2008). The ‘digital natives’ debate: A critical review of the evidence. *British Journal of Educational Technology* 39 (5): 775-786. Draft version retrieved December 7, 2009 from: <http://tinyurl.com/dbd5j7>

⁶ Tapscott, D., (1999). *Educating the Net Generation*. *Educational Leadership*, 56(5), 6-11. Retrieved December 8, 2009 from: <http://tinyurl.com/yaxb4jl>

⁷ A Beta Life - Youth. Research report by OTX Research, commissioned by Channel 4 (2009). Retrieved December 7, 2009 from: <http://tinyurl.com/yza799c>

⁸ Prensky, M., *Are you Lecturing about Nouns or Facilitating Learning with Verbs?* Retrieved December 7, 2009 from: <http://tinyurl.com/6axob3>

⁹ Bax, S., *CALL—Past, Present and Future*. *System*31 (2003) 13–28. Retrieved December 7, 2009 from: <http://tinyurl.com/yk6v6u6>

¹⁰ Sansone, M., *Hey Teachers! Your ‘Digital Natives’ Still Need You*. Retrieved 7 December, 2009, from: <http://tinyurl.com/4m3dlq>

Whilst these kinds of tools certainly can work in classroom contexts, it is often in the face of considerable resistance on the part of younger learners. In these circumstances, teachers can engage in more successful and constructive technology-driven instruction through the integration of more traditional tools and techniques in their standard repertoire, and it is these that we will be concentrating on in the 'practice' section of this article (below).

More advanced techniques such as the use of blogs, wikis and other social-constructivist media along with the use of synchronous tools such as voice and text chat, video-conferencing and the like may be introduced at a later date, when teachers have reached a comfort level with such tools, and learners have seen stimulating and attractive examples with which they can identify. The bibliography section of this article references several works that will be of use.

Digital Literacies

Traditionally, literacy has referred to the basic skills of reading and writing, occasionally coupled with basic numeracy and referred to as the '3 rs' (reading, writing and arithmetic). With the proliferation of digital media, however, commentators have come to consider a wider range of skills as figuring in a new definition of 'digital literacy.' Pegrum explores these new literacies in some detail, highlighting, *inter alia*:

- Print and texting literacies. Whilst print literacy is a familiar typology, texting literacy remains the domain of regular mobile phone users and is much maligned in educational circles for the purported detrimental effect it is having on literacy. In fact, as Crystal points out, "typically less than 10 percent of the words in text messages are actually abbreviated in any way."
- Personal, participatory and intercultural literacies. These literacies come to the forefront in social networking spaces and other online media where personalisation occurs. They may include blogs and wikis, as well as social networks such as Facebook. In such spaces users not only write about themselves and their lives, but also participate in wide social groupings which transcend more closed groupings in terms of ethnicity, religion, geography, etc.
- Search and information literacies. In many ways, these are two of the most important literacies for any learner to acquire - the ability not only to find information amongst the mass of sites and sources afforded by technologies, but also to evaluate that information according to a set of criteria relevant to its intended purpose.

- Remix literacy. This form of literacy refers to the modern trend of 'remixing' pictures, videos and other media, to often striking effect. This may refer, for example, to the trend for making 'literal versions' of music videos (<http://tinyurl.com/l397zp>), through remixing music videos for political or satirical ends (<http://preview.tinyurl.com/yffhgnb>) to the doctoring of digital images such as that afforded by sites such as Photofunia (see 'Practice' section below). In each instance, a recognition of the 'remix' that has taken place is crucial to an understanding of the media being viewed.

Practice

I move on now to look at how the theory relates to practice in terms of classroom work. It is certainly not my intention to suggest that teachers make an immediate switch from current practices and instantly implement a wide range of technologies in their classrooms, combining computers, interactive whiteboards, mobile phones and computer games to entertain and pander to the perceived needs of a new generation of learners. Instead, in this section, I look at how teachers can begin to engage with these digital literacies whilst not significantly changing their current working practices and pedagogical approach.

The practice section is broken up into the following areas:

- working with images
- working with video
- working with audio
- working with words

For each section there is a short introduction and overview and a sample class or activity, followed by further resources for teachers to explore after reading the article itself. For most of the tools and resources you will notice that the suggested activities and applications fit quite comfortably into the day-to-day practice of the average classroom teacher and make no significant demands on their methodological knowledge.

Working with images

Images have formed a staple part of most classrooms for decades. Traditionally they are used as vocabulary teaching and practice aids, prompts for speaking or writing activities, or - if brought by learners - as aids in more personalised activities such as 'show & tell.'

More recently, however, images have undergone a certain re-examination in the light of the digital revolution and

¹¹ Pegrum, M. (2009) *From Blogs to Bombs: The Future of Digital Technologies in Education*, UWA Publishing

¹² Crystal, D., *On the Myth of Texting*, Retrieved December 7, 2009 from: <http://tinyurl.com/yhwb5dj>

the ready availability of millions of them online. This, coupled with the digital literacies question, seems to be resulting in new approaches to the use of images in the classroom. As Goldstein notes:

“Today’s learners are image-oriented, more visually literate; they are able to access and manipulate digital images as never before. So, in a sense we owe it to them to make the image an integral part of our teaching practice, to work with images in their own right and encourage a critical and creative reading of them.”

In many cases teachers will have built up quite a stock of photos and flashcards, but these may not appeal to the more tech-comfy learners of today, and so it is advisable to make use of online sources of graphic material that may impact more positively on their acceptance in class.

Sample class

Our sample class is a creative speaking activity, building on the ‘remix’ literacy (see above). In this activity teachers present a set of images from their lives before they became teachers and invite learners to piece the story together by putting the images in order and deciding what happened in the story:

The images are, of course, invented and designed to provoke strong reactions in the learners as they try to invent a creative story that encapsulates the events depicted. Again, this is not so much a large departure from traditional teaching techniques and approaches, but a visually attractive way of introducing an activity, which - it is hoped - will capture the imagination and energy of the class.

Until recently, putting together a visual such as this would have involved a sophisticated level of graphic design skill, but sites such as Photofunia (<http://tinyurl.com/59qmg4>) make the preparation of this kind of images as simple as uploading a digital photo of ourselves and choosing the effects we wish to apply to it.

The impact of such images cannot be underestimated in a classroom scenario, though - like most ‘tricks of the trade’ - tools such as these should not be over-used. In this sample activity we have clear opportunities for speaking and creative writing, as well as the construction of ‘personalised fictions’ by the learners, with follow-up activities both written and spoken.

Photofunia is one of a number of sites where photos can be ‘retouched’ to make ‘alternate realities’. Other sites allow for collages of images, image books, cartoon-style strips with speech bubbles and other such creative

possibilities. These can all be used in a variety of ways to bring some creative language practice to the classroom.

Image sites

- **Flickr** - <http://tinyurl.com/d3uum>
- **Photofunia** - <http://tinyurl.com/59qmg4>
- **EffMyPic** - <http://tinyurl.com/q5wmk7>
- **StumblePics** - <http://tinyurl.com/yje26ow>
- **LIFE Photo Archive** - <http://tinyurl.com/69z8ke>
- **Bubblr** - <http://tinyurl.com/lhp8gt>
- **Bookr** - <http://tinyurl.com/63wgrp>
- **YouTellYou** - <http://tinyurl.com/yahh5um>



Working with video

When working with video in the classroom, teachers naturally tend to focus either on materials specifically prepared for language learners, or on feature length films, both of which can be problematic. Whilst dedicated ELT materials may indeed provide examples of target language in context, they are usually non-authentic in terms of their setting, dialogue and plot, and subsequently of little intrinsic interest to today’s viewers.

By contrast, feature films are, perhaps, too long (particularly if some learners are not interested in the film itself) and often interrupted by the teacher, to work on vocabulary, structures or other content. Whilst this approach ‘exploits’ the film itself for classroom use, it’s an unnatural and far from enjoyable way of watching a film.

It makes sense, then to choose shorter authentic film clips which will be of interest to our learners, and which we can exploit on a linguistic level suitable to the class. Again, as with most of these tools and approaches, it is the motivational aspect of the materials that will play a part in the successful implementation of the technology. One of the best sources of short video materials is YouTube

(<http://tinyurl.com/9zza6>), with a typical video lasting around four minutes. However, even short videos such as these can form the basis of an interesting, motivating and fruitful class.

Sample class

In our sample class we are taking a video that features absolutely no dialogue at all, making it suitable for all levels depending on the task designed to go with the viewing material. Our video is 'Where the Hell is Matt?' (2008) and can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/nd7s4u>. The video features Matt doing a comical dance in various countries around the world.

The video, therefore, is exploitable on a variety of levels, from beginner country names (or languages and nationalities) through low-intermediate activities involving past tenses ("have you ever been to...?" "when you went to... did you...?") to upper intermediate conditionals ("if I went to... I'd ...") and beyond. The only trick for the teacher is to show the video without revealing the names of the countries, which appear at the bottom of the screen (easily achieved by moving the video player software window down until the names are no longer visible).

Clearly this is an almost ideal video sample, being short, visually interesting and cheerful. Many follow-up activities can be incorporated, including writing activities such as 'mystery postcards' where learners send each other postcards without naming the place they are visiting, but including enough clues so that people can identify it, to interviews with Matt (you will find plenty more information about him here: <http://tinyurl.com/6ffwcc>), and even more complex multimedia practice with the creation of audio or video interviews, etc.

Again, however, there is no real challenge to the teacher's current practice or approach, with the video material simply providing a stimulating media wrap-around to the content the teacher is practising or revising. For more on YouTube video in the classroom, visit Jamie Keddie's LessonStream site (see video sites below).

Learners can also benefit greatly in their speaking and listening practice from producing their own videos. This can be done using any of the inexpensive video cameras currently on the market (such as the versatile and extremely easy-to-use Flip cameras - <http://tinyurl.com/yhshz52>) and can help pronunciation, presentation skills and other areas such as creative writing, interviewing and more. For more on using video cameras in class, see Tom Barrett's '43 Interesting Ways.'

As with audio recording devices and software (see below), learners have the opportunity to revisit and refine their work, as well as edit it and produce polished final versions. Creating such 'digital artifacts' can also help with the preparation of an electronic language portfolio that learners may use in the future to demonstrate their language proficiency to potential employers, colleges and others.

Video sites

- **YouTube** - <http://tinyurl.com/9zza6>
- **LessonStream** - <http://tinyurl.com/2v14s45>
- **Viral Video Chart** - <http://tinyurl.com/ctvbws>
- **MixTube** - <http://tinyurl.com/kw9csy>
- **Google Video** - <http://tinyurl.com/6ek8l>
- **ScreenJelly** - <http://tinyurl.com/mjxerf>

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¹⁴ For an alternative viewpoint on non-authentic video in the ELT classroom, see Viney, P., Non-Authentic Video for ELT. Retrieved December 7, 2009, from <http://tinyurl.com/ku59mn>

¹⁵ Barrett, T., 43 Interesting Ways to use your Pocket Video Camera in Class. Retrieved January 10, 2010 from <http://tinyurl.com/l3mos3>

TECHNOLOGY AT HOME – LIVE LESSONS IN THE CLASSROOM

Kara Aharon (aharonmk@zahav.net.il)

“What - you don’t need a projector?” asked the surprised ETAI conference convener as she was making sure the classroom was ready for my presentation. “No thanks, I’m doing a live demonstration.”

I have nothing against technology – we actually get along quite well. I keep my calendar, lesson plans, shopping list and articles, like this one, on my computer and sync them via Internet to my smartphone. I run a digital recording studio, buy and sell over the Internet and manage my own website.

So, why do I try to avoid technology in the classroom, even at a school with a computer and smart board in every room? Well, the one thing I don’t like about technology is: IT DOESN’T ALWAYS WORK. There are enough surprises waiting for me when I walk into a room full of children. I don’t want to worry about whether the Internet, smart board and speakers are working. I don’t want to discover that the hard drive is being repaired. Even when I do plan a digital lesson, I always prepare a back-up - songs on a CD, printed pictures, etc. – and more often than not, I need it.

But how, you ask, can I deprive my pupils of the thrill of seeing pictures move across a screen, or the excitement of watching a computer respond to their commands? Relax, I’m not depriving them of anything – these activities aren’t particularly exciting for today’s children, who get plenty of technology at home. They don’t need me or any other teacher to teach them how to play a game on the Internet or watch a clip on YouTube. What they do need are teachers who will look them in the eye, activate them, respond to them and make sure they really understand. If we see ourselves as more than babysitters, we need to offer activities that they can’t do at home.

To illustrate what kind of activity I mean, here is an example: Last year I taught the familiar song “Five Little Monkeys” to my first grade classes. The song features 5 monkeys jumping on a bed, falling off and their mother having to call the doctor. The teacher who had taught the classes in previous years advised me about wonderful clips I could find on the Internet and how the pupils would love watching them. I showed the pupils a clip and most of them watched. Then I took out a toy stethoscope for the doctor and a dress for the mother and we acted out the song. Everyone got involved and asked to do it again and again – and they all learned the words. For the rest of the year, every time I taught a story or song the immediate reaction was “Hatzaga! Hatzaga! (Skit! Skit!)”

In my fourth and fifth grade classes, I taught the song, “Don’t Laugh at Me”. The pupils also enjoyed the clip, but it wasn’t until we began discussing how each part should be played, and acting it out, that they really understood the meaning.

The Internet has many websites where pictures pop up accompanied by the words in English, or where children fill in answers and subsequently check their work (sometimes they check even before they answer)! Let children do this at home, or perhaps at the end of class. But if you want them to relate to and remember what they’re learning in class, I suggest the following:

- Bring in real objects that they can see and touch, or let them find the objects in the classroom.
- Find colors and count objects around them instead of doing it on a screen.
- Encourage them to concentrate on understanding what they read and write, rather than simply following instructions and copying patterns.
- Have them talk to you and each other instead of listening to computerized voices. Yelling at a computer doesn’t qualify as communication!

Much has been said about this generation’s lack of communication skills, blaming the extended periods of time children spend in front of computer screens rather than interacting with people. If we remind ourselves that English is a spoken language and should be taught as such, what better place to practice communication skills than in the live English classroom?

Kara Aharon, aharonmk@zahav.net.il, a professional musician and a native English speaker, combines both in English enrichment programs for all ages. She has released 5 CDs of songs for EFL teaching.

RED RIDING HOOD AND ALL THE REST: TEACHING LITERATURE IN HIGH SCHOOL

Lyn Barzilai (*barzilai@research.haifa.ac.il*)

Teaching literature in high school: a pleasure or a pain? Students who need rules and structure are often intimidated by literature – its seeming opacity, its inferences and its lack of directness. Other students love the freedom of roaming through a text and discovering ideas. Teachers fall into these two categories as well. For those teachers and students who depend on structure, to provide a sense of stability in the learning process, the following guidelines may help to anchor the study of a literary text, related to the new literature program and the teaching of different literary analysis skills.

First of all, work through any difficult vocabulary in the text with students before reading the text itself. This ensures that students are not preoccupied in trying to figure out the meaning of words and phrases and thus may miss other important elements in the text. Knowing the vocabulary beforehand allows students to focus on *content*.

Next, introduce the content by trying one of these suggestions:

- Ask pupils to relate a personal experience that is similar to the experience of one of the character in the story.
- Present a 'thinking exercise' that connects to the theme (for example, the Beethoven-Hitler ethical dilemma exercise to introduce the theme of prejudice in *Mr. Know-All*).¹

Your next step will be to read the text out loud to the class. Students will benefit from hearing the words correctly pronounced and the sentences spoken by someone who knows the story or poem and can introduce tone and inflection into the reading. All students should have their own copy of the text in front of them while the teacher reads.

After reading and discussing, set follow-up work in the form of group discussions (“What would *you* have done in this kind of situation?”) or simulations; a composition on the issue/theme dealt with in the story; a letter to one of the characters telling him/her what you thought of their actions/decisions; a diary entry for one of the characters; a different ending. Another useful activity to help pupils grasp the material is to have them make a **concept map** to organize what they have learned from the story or poem. A typical concept map for stories looks like this:

TYPICAL CONCEPT MAP FOR STORIES

Concept	Explanation	Examples from the story Little Red Riding Hood
Setting	time and place: when and where	time: fairy-tale time – “Once upon a time...”; break in ordinary routine (grandmother is ill) (place): forest, grandmother’s house (forest is dark, mysterious, disorienting, full of risks)
Characters	who	Red Riding Hood, mother, grandmother, wolf, hunter (minor). How come the parents are absent? Mother disappears after the beginning of the story, father never appears.
Plot	what <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • problem/conflict/dilemma • rising action • crisis/climax • falling action • resolution 	Problem: Get food to grandma without being harmed. Rising action: Red disobeys mother, talks to wolf, meets wolf disguised as grandmother. Becomes suspicious and afraid. Crisis: Wolf jumps out at Red to eat her; Red screams. Resolution: Hunter kills wolf; grandma pops out.

¹ <http://www.truthorfiction.com/rumors/b/beethovenabort.htm>

TYPICAL CONCEPT MAP FOR STORIES (cont'd)

Point of view	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective narrator • 1st person narrator • 3rd person narrator who knows everything. 	<p>Knowing what will happen (wolf goes on ahead and eats grandma) increases the tension, reader involvement in story, anticipation of events.</p> <p>(Red) would provide us with more emotional details, allow us to identify further with Red</p>
Theme	<p>Why. (Not directly stated in the story; students must infer)</p>	<p>Don't disobey parents / Beware of strangers etc. are NOT themes. They are morals.</p> <p>Themes could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with the familiar made unexpected. • Learning to fend for oneself, be independent: a story of transition from childhood to adulthood. This explains the absence of parents and the significance of the forest as a place of danger and obstacles which must be dealt with on one's own.

Concept map for poems:

- **Setting** (where applicable);
- **Speaker** (parallel to character in stories);
- **Person addressed in the poem;**
- **Situation and development** (parallel to plot in short stories);
- **Tone** (attitude of speaker to the subject-matter; parallel to point of view in short stories);
- **Use of language:** associations, imagery (sensory information), figures of speech (metaphor, personification, symbol) to imply theme.

The concept map allows for the incorporation of the major HOTS skills that students are required to learn and apply in the new literature programme. These may be divided as follows (although this is by no means an exhaustive list):

1. **Setting:** applying previous knowledge / making connections / sequencing, identifying parts and whole.
2. **Characters:** classifying / comparing and contrasting / evaluating / uncovering motives / distinguishing different perspectives.
3. **Plot:** cause and effect / generating possibilities / making connections / predicting / problem-solving / sequencing.
4. **Point of View:** distinguishing different perspectives / comparing and contrasting.

5. **Theme:** explaining patterns / inferring / generating possibilities.

Let's take several texts from the list of options offered for the new literature programme and apply some of the aforementioned ideas. For example, when discussing the setting in *Mr. Know-All* by Somerset Maugham, the teacher may ask students to **apply their previous knowledge** of journeys – in this case, a ship – in order to better understand the confinements of space, both physical and social, that passengers encounter at sea. This heightens the emotional tension in the story, for there is no escape from Mr. Know-All.

As for the characters, **comparing and contrasting** the narrator at the beginning and at the end of the story reveals his innate snobbishness and his subsequent re-evaluation of Mr. Kelada. Students may **evaluate** Mr. Kelada on the basis of his decision to protect Mrs. Ramsay: was this morally right or wrong? **Uncovering the motives** of Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Kelada when they place the bet will provide insight into the character of each. The bet itself creates several possibilities of exploration: **predicting** what Mr. Kelada will say when he realizes the pearls are real; discussing the **cause and effect** of Mr. Kelada's decision to protect Mrs. Ramsay; **making connections** between Mr. Kelada's decision and the narrator's partial change of heart towards him. Once the theme of prejudice has been introduced, the class may **generate possibilities** by engaging in a debate over its effect on society.

Similarly, in *A Summer's Reading* by Bernard Malamud, the concept map enables the application of different HOTS. Discussing the setting allows students to **make connections** between the poor immigrant neighbourhood and the status of both George and Mr. Cattanzara. These two characters can be effectively **compared and contrasted** according to their similar backgrounds and lack of opportunities, but their different attitudes to furthering their education. This will lead to **different perspectives** in their point of view. At the end of the story, when George takes 100 books out of the library, the students can **predict** whether or not he is going to take his reading seriously. Mr. Cattanzara's remark, "Don't do what I did" will challenge students to **infer** what he actually did and thus to better grasp the importance of education for new immigrants.

As for poetry, *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost offers the application of many HOTS. The setting of the poem in a "yellow wood" **makes a connection** with autumn and therefore suggests that the speaker is already mature. The two paths present a problem for the speaker - which path to take? - and the reader shares his **problem-solving** strategy of taking the less-travelled road. This leads to a discussion of the **cause and effect** of such a decision. The question of **different perspectives** is raised in the choice to take the "less-travelled road" and may spark off a discussion of the kind of character who would choose the path that the majority does not take - a poet perhaps? Finally, following up a reading and discussion of "The Road Not Taken" with a story such as Langston Hughes' *Thank You Ma'am*, whose main character also chooses the "less-travelled road" in dealing with the boy who tries to steal her purse by choosing to educate him

rather than turn him in, **generates different possibilities** of looking at the choices we make and how this reflects on our character.

In brief, working with a concept map, whether for a story or a poem, provides a clear structure within which to explore the literary significance of the text and its implications for the reader, either teacher or student. Literary texts have been reinstated firmly in the upper school curriculum through the new, literature module F. Hopefully, for those teachers who neglected literature in the past because they thought it was "too difficult" or "not relevant," engaging in literary texts with their students in order to prepare for the Bagrut Module in literature will uncover unexpected pleasure and enrich our teaching of English with new possibilities.

The French theorist Jean Baudrillard, writing in the late 20th century about the rise of virtual communication and cyber-reality, claimed that the modern era of media-controlled technology has made us shallow and trite in our communication, favouring clichéd e-messages and catchy slogans whose symbols are two-dimensional, bland and desensitized to real feeling and thought. The reading and discussion of the literary text immerses us in language used in creative and figurative ways, and so restores symbolic depth to our thinking and understanding.

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¹ Baudrillard, Jean "The Ecstasy of Communication." *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Ed. Hal Foster. Trans. John Johnson. Washington: Bay Press, 1983.

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TEAM TEACHING LITERATURE

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A few years ago, the English Department of the Ministry of Education decided to test literature through a Bagrut examination or a literature log. This decision has affected the English teaching community throughout the country. We took special in-service, literature training courses either face-to-face or online. The courses involved a tremendous amount of work and study. But we English teachers seem to be "gluttons for punishment". Despite the criticisms, the lack of appropriate remuneration and the time-consuming

preparation and work, we began the program. The literature test or the log replaced the former D Module and F Module.

I was in the original pilot program. I had already taught three, 5 point literature classes using the log option. I knew how much work was involved and how many hours of preparation and then marking each teacher would need to devote to this option. Therefore, when our team met during the summer of 2010, we were all

very concerned because my colleagues knew what I had gone through.

We decided to study three poems during the tenth grade. The poems would be appropriate for both 4 pointers and 5 pointers. Instead of each teacher preparing three poems, we chose to prepare one poem each which would be taught by one of the tenth grade teachers to all the classes. We decided to begin after the holidays and expected to finish before Purim. The poems we chose to teach were: *Richard Cory*, *As I Grew Older* and *The Road Not Taken*.

It is important to note that we have a small school. There are three tracks in the tenth grade: 5 pointers, strong 4 pointers and weak 4 pointers. The teacher for each poem would go into each of the classes for the 4-6 lessons it would take to teach and then test their poem. While the “Poem” teacher was in a class other than her own, another class teacher taught the “Poem” teacher’s class.

We had three 1 hour lessons per week. One lesson was the poem. One lesson was devoted to the poem, another to textbook work, and the third to a project that was done in the computer room. Since we take an “umbrella” topic for the entire tenth grade, each of us was very familiar with the project material. (That year it was “Endangered Environments and Species”).

The students quickly learned the logistics of this activity. For example, my class (the 5 pointers) had projects on Monday, lesson 8. Then they learned literature (the poem) for lesson 9. On Wednesday they had textbook work. This rotation system was true for the other two groups as well. (See Weekly Schedule

below.)

The main advantage was that each teacher prepared only one poem. She had support and help from all of us, as we worked together closely. We got to know the students from all the classes and they accepted the different “Poem” teachers easily. It was also good to see how the students of the three classes worked on their projects. And we became familiar with textbooks we may not have known previously.

The disadvantages were that some of us felt a little disconnected from our own class during the time we were teaching our poem to the other classes. Also, each teacher graded all the work (including the summary test) on the poem she had taught, for all three classes. It turned out that each of us wrote two summary tests: one for the 5 pointers and one for the 4 pointers. It was a lot of work but it was on only one poem. When we finished the program, we had well-written material for three poems that could be used for future classes. And we had finished the poem requirements for the literature program.

A team teaching project like this involves a great deal of trust and team work. We were blessed to have a group of excellent teachers. All of us had completed the literature training course and all are hard workers, creative, willing to experiment and dedicated to giving the students an excellent learning experience. We learned a great deal from this year’s work and gained a tremendous amount of experience. The students enjoyed the work and did well. I personally enjoyed working with all of the teachers and the students. I think this is an idea worth trying in other schools as well.

Weekly Schedule

CLASS	CLASS A 5 POINTERS	CLASS B STRONG 4 POINTERS	CLASS C WEAK 4 POINTERS
Monday Lesson 8 15:20-16:15	Projects	Class Work (textbook)	Literature
Monday Lesson 9 16:25-17:20	Literature	Projects	Class Work (textbook)
Wednesday Lesson 9 16:25-17:20	Class Work (textbook)	Literature	Projects

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SETTING THE HOTS ON FIRE

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“Ben’s students spoke of his intensity – the way he got so interested and involved in a topic that they couldn’t help but be interested also.” The Wave, Morton Rhue

Literature can be exciting, interesting and educational. English teachers in Israel are presently required to teach literature and higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in high school English lessons. If teachers think the literature is engaging, the feeling is contagious, the students will feel it too. Students feel the passion of the teachers. Students become excited by excited teachers.

Students use HOTS to interpret and analyze various stories and poems in class and on the Bagrut exam. They also apply these skills to the rest of their lives. Research has shown that explicitly teaching HOTS does have a quantitative positive influence on students beyond the scope of the lessons in which they are taught (Cotton, 1991).

Literature enables teachers to introduce discussion topics that are interesting and relevant to their students’ lives. In his paper on teaching values, Stephen Ellenwood explains that teaching the process of analyzing literature teaches students the processes to follow to make moral decisions (Ellenwood, 2006). It is easier to discuss a character’s actions, thoughts, feelings and choices than it is for high school students to discuss their own actions, thoughts, feelings and choices with their teachers and peers. For example, in the short story, “A Summer’s Reading” by Bernard Malamud, students encounter the character George, a high school drop-out, who struggles with his ambitions and his distaste for authority. Although his circumstances may be extreme they do spotlight some of the same feelings and dilemmas our students face.

It has been established that teaching literature makes broad scale connections and enhances academic achievement (Cotton, 1991). When students feel that there is some extra value for themselves inherent in the lessons, they will be more cooperative and involved. So, how do we get started? The Ministry of Education’s program requires the inclusion of seven key components when teaching each piece of literature.

1. Pre-Reading Activity
2. Basic Understanding
3. Analysis and Interpretation
4. Bridging Text and Context
5. Post-Reading Activity
6. Reflection
7. Summative Assessment (Teachers’ Handbook, p10)

Each of these components is important. In this paper, pre-reading is highlighted as the illustrative example of these components. There are common characteristics among all the components. The focus within this discussion uses pre-reading activities because when pre-reading is done well, students are eager and ready to read the piece of literature and work on related tasks.

Students and teachers can feel tentative about studying poetry. In an analysis of curriculum in New Zealand Helen O’Neill found a “negative attitude of many of those students towards poetry” (O’Neill, 2006). She goes on to detail the negative cycle of teaching only to the tests, which leads to uninteresting lessons and uninterested students. O’Neill concludes that the cycle can be broken with enthusiastic teaching. One needs a very strong pre-reading activity before starting to teach a poem. The following is an example of a pre-reading activity for the poem *Introduction to Poetry* by Billy Collins.

Example of a pre-reading activity: WHAT IS POETRY?

Start a lesson with a brainstorming session. This activity has three goals. First, it gives the teacher an idea of what students already know. Second, it creates an opportunity to guide them to some key concepts. Third, it allows the students to talk and explore the topic without the pressure of right or wrong answers. In a brainstorming session it is important to emphasize that there are no wrong answers, especially with poetry. One characteristic of poetry is that it is more open to interpretation than other forms of communication.

There is certainly a poem to support and to contradict every possible definition of poetry. For instance: rhyme. There are numerous poems with specific rhyme schemes – in fact, “rhyme” and “rhyme scheme” are two of the key literary terms to be taught. There are also numerous poems with no rhyme scheme at all. So, having a debate among the students as to whether a poem needs to rhyme or not is a great way to learn the definition of rhyme.

The other pair of literary terms they need to know before beginning to study the poem itself are metaphor and simile. When asked, students will answer the question “What is poetry?” with ideas from their experiences in their native language and in music. It is likely that

students will offer some explanations of what poetry is that will fit as definitions for metaphor or simile. But just having a definition is not enough. They need to develop a sense of metaphor. This leads the class into a metaphor activity. Try putting this simile (or any metaphor) on the board:

*Reading poetry is like eating hot peppers;
it sets my mouth on fire.*

Now, ask the students if this line shows whether the poet likes reading poetry or not, and why. In answering this question they will have to use their knowledge of eating hot peppers in order to draw conclusions about the poet's intended meaning. This process is called inferring. It is no coincidence that inferring is one of the HOTS.

The next step is to have the students write their own similes about reading or studying poetry. Instruct them to follow this pattern: studying poetry is like something else; explain. Once they have done this and shared their similes with the class you have the basis for a discussion on how poets themselves think and feel. Following this activity, when students read or hear the poem itself they will be excited to find the metaphors and similes.

The value of a pre-reading activity is in generating the kind of curiosity which drives the students to search for metaphors, both in the poem taught and in the world around them. In the above example each student had the chance to think about what poetry is and to express thoughts and feelings about it. Even if the students write that studying poetry is like going to the dentist, composing this simile gives them a basis to understand and discuss the poem.

One of the underlying aims of the Ministry's literature program is to teach students how to think and interact with the world around them. By teaching them the skill of inferring, not only will they be able to interpret poetic metaphors, they will also be more aware and able to interpret their friends' actions, their parents' warnings and their teachers' subtle hints about what will be on the exam.

Pre-reading is not only about teaching the literary terms and the thinking skills; it is also about setting the mood for the story. In many stories the setting plays an important role. For instance, "The Rules of the Game" by Amy Tan is set in Chinatown. This setting emphasizes and exemplifies the cultural differences between Waverly and her mother. For this story a pre-reading activity might be to explore different cultural neighborhoods all over the world. Ask students if they have ever travelled to Little Italy, Greek Town or Spanish Harlem in any city in the world. Show pictures of Chinatowns in different cities. What do they have in common? Why do

immigrants try to recreate their former homes in their new countries? How are they similar and how are they different? In Israel, where so many of the students are immigrants, or have parents or grandparents who were immigrants, lively discussions will spring from personal stories. Each of these stories is an opportunity for a student to speak in English about something personally important. Immigration stories are also more touching to other students.

At the end of this pre-reading activity, after the students have shared personal immigration stories, the class is ready to read Waverly's story. In the course of the earlier discussions a side note of language mix-ups by immigrants may come up. Be sure to encourage this discussion as it will make Waverly's mother more comprehensible. Do not, however, use the students' own language learning mistakes as examples to explain how her mother uses her Chinese grammar in English. Keeping the dialect impersonal will keep the students from feeling self-conscious about their own language levels. Although we can use the stories to teach language and grammar points, the discussion of the story is not the place to do so.

It is nearly impossible to convince students that they do not know everything there is to know about life. But it is possible to teach them literature because they do not already think that they know it. All literature is a reflection of life. Just as Hamlet directs the players, "to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature," we as teachers use the veiled realities in literature to teach higher order thinking skills to our students. A study of medical students learning to analyze literature found that after the course these students were measurably more thoughtful and empathetic to patients (Shapiro, 2004). The literature is a vehicle to teach HOTS. Students will not only use these skills in school, they will be able to apply these skills in their own lives.

The seven key components are the scaffolding for teaching literature. All seven are important, even though this article has only given examples of pre-reading. Perhaps other articles will detail examples of the other components. Likewise, the higher-order thinking skills are tools for students to use not only in analyzing literature, but also in other areas of their lives, as the question, "In what other areas can you apply this skill?" poses. These thinking skills are tools for every aspect of life.

Our passion to help our students engage in the world around them is contagious and beneficial. "A student is not a vessel to be filled, but a flame to be kindled." (Plutarch)

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REGARDING READING**FUN WITH PHONICS – A MULTI-SENSORY APPROACH**

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Ever since Howard Gardner outlined his theory on multiple intelligences in the early eighties, we teachers have understood that everyone has different abilities and strengths and, in turn, different ways of learning. We would all nod our heads in resounding agreement that we must therefore use different methods of teaching in order to cater to the diverse learning styles and multiple intelligences of our students. Yet, despite the wonderfully simple and obvious logic behind this theory, many teachers stick to one method of teaching phonics.

It appears easier and safer to follow a program of phonics in a textbook than to go off in a new direction. There are always going to be children (and teachers) who enjoy the routine nature of textbooks, where each phoneme is taught in the same way with repetitive gap fills and phoneme-to-picture matching activities. Indeed there is nothing wrong with this, as many children acquire a good, basic phonemic knowledge in this way. But many do not.

By relying solely on the textbook method, we are not only doing an injustice to Mr. Gardner and his followers,

but to our young pupils themselves, many of whom need to talk, to move and to have a tactile and kinesthetic experience of phonics in order to instill them into their memories. Furthermore, we are denying our pupils the chance to really develop the phonemic awareness they will need in order to allow them to hear, identify and manipulate phonemes which they will need in order to help them read more complicated words at a later stage.

Here are some practical tips on how to get off the beaten track, inspire and motivate your learners, deepen their phonemic awareness and inject some fun into learning how to read.

Get creative

Spice up the way you introduce new letter sounds. This doesn't mean that you should drop the textbook, but supplement it with some enjoyable, creative activities to really help children experience initial letter sounds in a multi-sensory way.

One idea is to create a sound bag. Pre-teach some new vocabulary and get the children to bring in some items

from home that begin with the letter being studied. A child is much more likely to remember the letter 'b' if they have a visual representation as a reminder. So get them to bring a book, a bottle, a brush or a banana from home. They will also learn some new vocabulary along the way. Keep the items in the classroom and review the phoneme and corresponding items on a regular basis.



Students bring in items from home to sort and create a sound collage.

Be artistic and spend the time doing some art around each phoneme as this is both fun and memorable for young children. You can make the letters out of play dough or create a visual alphabet where each letter sound is represented by one item which the children make themselves. Making a paper snake in the shape of an 's' is a great way for children to learn a new word, remember the 'sss' sound and have a visual representation of the letter itself. If the children are more proficient, you can make a collage of items that begin with one sound.



Children really enjoy making things. It gives them a personal investment in the work and a visual representation by which to remember a letter sound.

Inspire confidence

For kinesthetic learners, actions speak louder than letters, so it often helps to assign an action to each phoneme. Jolly Phonics is a program of synthetic phonics that has actions for each of the 42 letter sounds. The short 'a' sound for example, is introduced with the action of wiggling young fingers above your elbow as if there were ants crawling up the arm while repetitively making the sound 'a, a, a...'. This multi-sensory method motivates children and often, if they can't remember the sound that corresponds to a letter, they are able to recall it once you show them the action.

Once the students are familiar with the sounds, give them an opportunity to identify them not just at the beginning of words, but at the end of words too. For example, ask the students, "Where do you hear the 'sh' sound – at the beginning or the end of the words?" Then list some words: 'shop', 'fish' etc. You can always mix two of the sound bags (see above) and ask students to separate

items into different sound piles. The more different ways you expose children to each phoneme and give them the opportunity to experience it, the more likely they are to remember it and thus feel confident and motivated to take part in further reading activities.

Make it fun

Reviewing and revising sounds doesn't need to come in the form of a worksheet. Get children actively involved in listening by playing games. Stick up phonemes on the walls around the classroom, and then get students to run to the phoneme that corresponds with the word you say. Students that can't sit still (every class has them!) need to be given an opportunity to get up and move around. Try putting three hoops on the floor and assign each hoop a phoneme. As students jump in, they make the sound of the phoneme. Alternatively, give them a CVC word such as 'hat' and ask them to step into each hoop and break it up into its component sounds; h-a-t, as they step into each hoop. It's a great way to get students to segment and identify sounds in words.

A simple idea adopted by many synthetic phonics programs is the use of letter fans. Letter fans are made up of around 5 or 6 letters, individually attached with a split pin that students can manipulate to make words. The possibilities for games are endless. Call out a word and see who can hold up the first letter of that word. Put together the letters s, a, t, p, i, n in a fan and you can ask the students to arrange their fans to display a whole range of words; (at, it, sat, pat, pit, tin, pin, etc.)

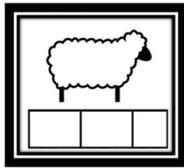


Sound it out

Birch explicitly stated, "If the ESL and EFL instruction that ELLs receive has a strong oral/aural focus, they too will master the discrimination of English sounds. For accurate listening comprehension and reading, the base of the learner's knowledge must contain an inventory of English sounds." Take the time, therefore, to give your students a chance to really review and practice hearing and distinguishing between phonemes. Just as it is important to be able to blend phonemes together, learning to segment words into their phonemes or sound units will really help children with spelling, pronunciation and reading more complex words. For example; a student needs to know that 'ship' is 'sh-i-p' or 'quick' is 'qu-i-ck'

A great way to practice segmenting is to use phoneme frames. These are a great visual tool for allowing students to see how a word is broken up into phonemic units.

Many phoneme frames are readily available online and can be laminated and used again and again.



This phoneme frame shows that the word 'sheep' consists of three phonemes: 'sh', 'ee' and 'p'.

Many synthetic phonics programs use flashcards with sound buttons. The sound buttons appear underneath each phoneme of the word and are another visual way to help children see how words are made up of phonemic blends. Get the children to press each button and make the corresponding sound. Alternatively, get the children to add in the sound buttons themselves as they segment each word into its phonemic units. To make it a bit more kinesthetic, you can ask the children to clap or stamp as each sound button is added.



Sound buttons underneath each phoneme help children to segment the word and read each phoneme separately.

Empower young readers

Learning phonics is far more complex than just learning the sounds. It is about identifying them, distinguishing between them, segmenting them and blending them together in different ways. As Anderson advocates,

“Beginning level readers should be exposed to a strong bottom-up component. This is perhaps the greatest weakness in the development of many reading syllabi. Little or no attention is given to the explicit instruction of bottom-up reading...With a strong foundation in bottom-up skills, beginning level readers will become more proficient readers more quickly.”

Phonics is complex, and like everything in EFL, full of exceptions. By taking the time to give our students a fun, achievable and multi-sensory way of experiencing and learning phonics we are not just delivering phonetic knowledge, but ensuring that children enjoy themselves and have the chance to develop and really master a phonemic awareness.

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For more information about Jolly Phonics, visit www.jollylearning.co.uk

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TEACHING ALL STUDENTS HOW TO FIND THE MAIN IDEA IN A TEXT

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1. Introduction

It goes without saying that the *main idea* is the most important information in an expository text.¹ In fact, it is the most general statement made by the writer, who then proceeds to elaborate on it and to provide more detailed or specific information, such as explanations, examples, etc., to support it (see: Giora's 1988 and Widdowson's 1984 seminal papers on the information structure of the text).

Furthermore, the title of the text is the *topic* of the text (or, simply put, what the text is about);² the *main idea* (often referred to as the *topic sentence*) is what the writer has to say, or argue, about the topic.³ This is usually information which the reader does not know, or information which is in contrast with what the reader does know. Hence, the main idea, or the *writer's argument* or *view* (also referred to in the literature as the *new information*) often begins with a cohesive device denoting contrast, such as "But", "However", or "Yet". What precedes it (a sentence or more) relates to what the reader knows or believes in, that is, the *common* or *prevalent view*, or the present state of affairs (referred to in the literature as the *old information*), and often begins with phrases such as "It has long been known that",⁴ "Over the last thirty years",⁵ "Today, many people",⁶ etc.

It is true, then, as Barzilay (2005) argues, that the main idea may function "as a brief summary" of the text. However, this is unfortunately not the case, as she argues (2005:8) that

Most students can be helped to find the main idea of a text by teaching them about topic sentences or thesis statements. As long as they are told what topic sentences are and a short discussion of the *topic* and *controlling idea* of a topic sentence is given, they should manage rather well on their own.

Research has indicated that finding the main idea and summarizing the text are difficult for most students, even for good readers. My own research (e.g. Segev-Miller, 2008a, 2008b) has indicated that these tasks are difficult even for college students, both undergraduate and graduate, and for experienced teachers of English as well as of other school subjects.

Also, the instruction suggested by Bazilay to help "weak readers" to identify the main idea in a text, albeit appropriate and necessary in my opinion for L1, would require these students to invest too much time and mental effort in the process. These resources could be conserved by teaching the students, both good and poor readers, a rather simple strategy.

2. Locating the main idea

In fact, it is a strategy they are familiar with – *scanning* – which they are often encouraged to use in order to locate specific information in the text, such as names or dates. This strategy could be put to better use in order to locate the main idea in the text, provided the text meets the requirements of textual coherence. That is, provided the text meets the requirements of textual coherence. One of these requirements is the explicit presentation of old and new information at the very beginning of the text (referred to in the literature as the *advance organizer*. For a definition see: Harris & Hodges, 1995), and the explicit use of a means of transition between them, such as "But", as explained earlier.

To illustrate the use of this strategy, I have selected texts, or rather extracts, from the recent 2012 summer English Matriculation exams. In the following two extracts, (1) and (2), it should not take the students more than a few seconds to scan for the "But" or the "However" respectively, and thus locate the sentence containing the main idea, or the new information.

¹ This article will not relate to narrative text and other genres.

² This means that the title should be a short noun phrase. However, too often titles do not meet this requirement, and are formulated as sentences similar to long newspaper headlines for the purpose of intriguing the readers, but as a result do not make it clear what the text is in fact about.

³ More accurately, the main idea is syntactically a sentence, made up of a subject (the topic) and a predicate (what the writer has to say about it).

⁴ Bagrut, summer 2012, Module E.

⁵ Bagrut, summer 2012, Module G.

⁶ Bagrut, Moed B 2012, Module C.

(1) Seeing with your ears

It has long been known that some animals, such as bats and dolphins, have a very special method of getting information about their surroundings: they make clicking sounds and wait for the echoes that come back from the objects around them. In this way they learn about the size, shape, and position of those objects. But this ability, known as echolocation, is not limited to animals: apparently, humans too can learn to get around with the help of sound rather than sight [Module E].

(2) The future of zoos

Over the last thirty years, American zoos have been initiating reforms in the hope of increasing the well-being of their animals. The small concrete cages of the past have mostly been replaced by large spaces that enable animals to move around freely, and efforts have been made to provide better nutrition and veterinary care. However, some zoo directors and other professionals believe that far more fundamental changes might be needed [Module G].

The next step, of course, would be to process (i.e., to read and try to understand) the sentence, and then to go back to the preceding sentences containing the old information, and contrast the two, in order to see what is new about the new information. However, sometimes, especially if the main idea is preceded by very little text (e.g., one or two sentences rather than a paragraph or two), it may be a better idea, after scanning for the word of contrast, to start reading from the very beginning of the text, that is, from the old information, and only then to contrast the two.

This is still not the same as what most readers usually do: Starting to read from the beginning of the text, word by word, sentence by sentence, without a plan and without knowing where the main idea is located. This is one reason why poor readers often report they feel “lost”, or “drowning in words”, etc.⁷ and give up. This kind of reading has been metaphorically referred to as reading “like an ant”, whereas reading in the way suggested here, that is reading flexibly back and forth, has been referred to as reading “like a kangaroo” (Vega & Frilock, 1989),⁸ which is one of the major characteristics of good readers, and which I refer to in my classes as smart reading.

The next extract poses a difficulty: The means of transition is introduced in the middle of a sentence, rather than in a more prominent position, i.e. at the beginning of a sentence with a capital letter, and would therefore take more time to locate. This could easily be revised by breaking up the sentence into two, and beginning the second sentence with a “But”.⁹

(3) Swap – Don’t shop

Today, many Americans have less money than before because of economic difficulties. People are looking for ways to get things they need without spending money. One popular way of doing this is swapping (...). Swapping, or exchanging one thing for another, has been done throughout history, but modern technology has made it much easier (...). [Moed B, Module C].

A word of contrast is the most common means of transition from old information to new information (according to a recent survey,¹⁰ about 80% of academic texts in education journals use it), but there are other means of transition, such as “Now”, “Nowadays”, or a combination of one of these with a word of contrast, as in the following extract:¹¹

(4) A new problem: Too many cyclists in the city

For people who live in the city, there are many advantages to riding a bicycle to school or to work instead of driving a car. The use of bicycles reduces the number of cars, leading to fewer traffic jams, more parking places, and less pollution.

Nowadays, however, it seems that there are too many cyclists in some cities (...). But, according to the Copenhagen Cyclists’ Organization (CCO), there is not enough room in these lanes for the growing number of cyclists (...). [Module C].

Extract (4) looks coherent, but the use of an additional word of contrast, “But”, later on in the second paragraph renders it less so, although the contents of the sentences following these two means of transition are almost identical. The difference between them is in their level of abstractness: The sentence following “Nowadays, however” is more general (which is exactly what we expect of the main idea), whereas the sentence following “but” contains more detailed information (which is what we do not expect). Again, the text could be easily revised

⁷ These and other metaphors were used by the subjects in my students’ research papers to describe their reading processes.

⁸ See reference in Hebrew.

⁹ And see: Article refuting the argument that one cannot start a sentence with “But” at <http://home.pct.edu/~evavra/kiss/Essay/Essay001.htm>

¹⁰ Segev-Miller (2012).

¹¹ For other means of transition see: <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr>, and Segev-Miller (in preparation)

to make it more coherent by deleting the “But,” thus preventing confusion on the part of the readers.

The last extract poses a more serious difficulty:

(5) The smell of a sale

[Paragraph a] The smell of fresh bread spreads throughout the supermarket even when the ovens are empty (...).

[Paragraph b] Smells have been found to elicit emotional responses, and consequently, to affect behavior (...).

[Paragraph c] Scent marketing, however, is far from an exact science, and indeed, many attempts to exploit the influence of smell have been dismal failures (...).

[Paragraph d] Scent makers, however, point out that the industry long ago disconnected the use of chemicals that might irritate the skin or the respiratory system (...). [Moed B, Module G].

This text poses a more serious difficulty not only because the word of contrast, “However,” is introduced twice, as in the previous extract (at the beginning of paragraphs c and d, which raises the question: Which of these is the main idea?), but also because these are introduced only half-way through the text, after two rather long paragraphs (a and b, 7 and 9 lines, respectively). That is, they are too far removed from the beginning of the text. Since the main idea is the most general sentence in the text, and thus serves as the reference point for all of the other sentences in the text which follow it and which elaborate on it, this means that the reader has no idea until at least half-way through the text what the main idea is. In addition, there is comparatively very little elaboration on the main idea, whatever it is.

3. Instructional implications and suggestions

The major instructional implication of the preceding discussion is that all students, both good and weak, should be offered explicit instruction in how to locate and process the main idea. My research (Segev-Miller, 2004a) has indicated that students who have been provided with explicit instruction of the information structure of the text and other requirements of textual coherence are not only able to process a coherent text easily, but also are able to cope with incoherent texts and even to rewrite them successfully.¹²

Moreover, both textbook writers and test writers should take heed of the textual requirements of coherence, such as the structure of the information in the text, especially at the beginning of the text (i.e. the advance organizer), in order to make the text optimally coherent and easier to process.

Textbook writers (and teachers) should also be careful in their use of terminology. One example is the term *main idea*, which is sometimes mistakenly replaced by the plural *main ideas*. A text has only one main idea (the *macroproposition*), which appears in the advance organizer. The other ideas (the *micropropositions*) appear in the paragraphs following the advance organizer,¹³ one usually at the very beginning of each paragraph.¹⁴ That is, each paragraph may have its own idea, but it is not the main idea of the text. Taken together (i.e. generalized), these micropropositions constitute the macroproposition (again, see: Giora, 1988).

Another example is the term *topic*, which I found was used in one textbook in the sense of a *topic sentence* (i.e. a main idea), and caused confusion on the part of the students. The question: “What is the topic of the text?” would, as explained earlier, refer the readers to the title. But the definition given in that textbook was: “A paragraph usually tells about one idea or event. The idea¹⁵ or event is called the topic and is usually introduced at the beginning of the paragraph,” and then the question asked was: “Look at the paragraph (...). Which sentence do you think gives the topic of the paragraph?”

Another instructional implication pertains to the comprehension questions following the text: On one hand, hardly any of the questions in the 2012 summer matriculation exams selected here explicitly require the readers to identify the main idea of the text, and on the other hand, the readers are asked too many questions focusing on details. These questions, at the so-called micro level of the text (i.e., questions focusing on information at the level of the word or sentence), prevent the readers from making the conceptual connections between the different parts of the text required for the construction of the macro representation, or meaning, of the text, nor do they encourage readers to make connections between information in the text and their prior knowledge. That

¹² They should also be helped to transfer this knowledge to their writing.

¹³ The advance organizer in comparatively short texts is usually one paragraph long, but sometimes two or even three. In long texts (e.g. journal articles), the main idea may appear much later, but is also easy to locate with the use of a different strategy (see: Segev-Miller, in preparation).

¹⁴ Some paragraphs may not have an idea of their own (these are called *graphic paragraphs*). They usually begin with a cohesive device, such as “For example”, and should be considered an elaboration on the idea presented in the previous paragraph.

¹⁵ Underlining not in original.

is, these questions do not require the readers to transform the information in the text, but rather to reproduce it. However, information or knowledge transforming has long been perceived as a prerequisite for significant learning (Berieter & Scradamalia, 1987; Segev-Miller, 2004b).¹⁶

I have already suggested elsewhere (Segev-Miller, 2003) that students be encouraged to ask their own questions while reading (a strategy which again is characteristic of good readers), as well as be taught *generic questions*, that is, questions which are not text dependent but can rather be asked about any text. Some of these questions relate to the information structure of the text and focus the readers on the important information.

It may also be about time for instruction and assessment to focus on tasks other than questions, such as summarizing a single text (Anderson, 2000),¹⁷ which is “a useful tool for understanding and studying texts” (Brown, Campione & Day, 1982:17), and the best indication of comprehension of a text (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978). However since, on one hand, research has indicated that summarizing is a difficult task for most students, involving higher-order strategies such as selecting, organizing, and connecting, but since, on the other hand, summarizing is still a task frequently assigned at school in all subjects, students should be offered explicit instruction in the performance of the task. This requirement is bound to have a bearing on teacher training programs as well.

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¹⁶ See reference in Hebrew.

¹⁷ The next step would be writing an integrated summary of several texts on the same topic, a task which is no less relevant and indeed, is ecologically more valid, as knowledge is usually acquired from more than one source (and see: Segev-Miller, 2007 for the strategies involved in the performance of this task).

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Try to keep the language non-sexist and use they instead of he/she.

If you include references, they 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/owl/resource/560/01/>.

Cite page numbers in the body of the article if you use a direct quotation.

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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