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# Report from the YL SIG Coordinator

## Sandie Mourão

I wrote my first coordinator's note in the Spring issue of 2003, so this will be my **seventh** contribution. It seems like yesterday when I took on the role of coordinator, first with Andy Jackson, and more recently on my own. Time flies!

Seven is a truly talented number! The YL SIG is IATEFL's fourteenth SIG alphabetically, and it's celebrating its 21st birthday this year – both numbers are divisible by 7! The YL SIG offers its members seven benefits... CATS; a members' only website; a members' only discussion list; occasional free publications; free access to YL SIG online for individual associate members and WMS members; a virtual YL research base and the opportunity to network with professionals worldwide.

IATEFL YL SIG members get good value for their membership, and the YL SIG tries hard to make membership easier for those who find it difficult to pay the £40 yearly subscription. WMS members get free access to YL SIG online: our discussion list and members' only website areas. That's a wonderful bonus! If you belong to an association that is an *IATEFL Associate* you get YL SIG online for one year. However no matter how good we think the YL SIG is, our membership numbers are dropping, dropping and dropping. Recent membership figures came through showing huge drops in numbers, especially in members who chose the YL SIG as an extra SIG, at an extra cost, and in institutional membership. Times are hard and we need to make savings, but it is so sad to see this reflected in our membership figure .

This drop in member numbers means we get less money to run the SIG, to produce CATS, publish extra publications and provide other benefits for our members. You should all have received the 2005 PCE proceedings '*Teachers and children: research in our classrooms*'. It cost the SIG over a thousand pounds to print this publication and post it to members: and even though we got some sponsorship it didn't cover all the costs. Our next PCE will also be made into a conference publication but it will be an online document, sadly, we cannot afford to produce a paper version again.

Last Autumn Hans Mol, our new membership officer , designed a survey for YL SIG members in an attempt at gaining a better view of how the YL SIG can better serve its members. As is the way with surveys, a small percentage of people complete them and in this case 16% of our membership responded. Hans has very kindly analysed the results and we hope to act on what he has found over the next year or so. Sounds like we move slowly, but change is slow - and we are a democratic committee! Gordon Lewis's new role as *Business development manager* will hopefully help us make changes come about more speedily.

In the Autumn I also put out a call for proposals to join the YL SIG committee, and I have since emailed those of you with email contacts about the committee changes which will be taking place in April. I would like to thank those of you who endorsed our new committee make up and also thank those of you who sent in encouraging messages! Our committee looks exceedingly healthy and will look like this in Harrogate:

Co-ordinator: Wendy Arnold (Hong Kong) & Niki Joseph (Portugal)

Finance and membership Officer: Hans Mol (Australia)

Website Manager: Chris Etchells (UK)

Web resources editor: Hans Mol (Australia)

Classroom research database manager – Jason Renshaw (Korea)

Publication Editors: Carol Read (Spain) Kay Bentley (UK)

Event co-ordinators: Karen Widl (Austria) & Rosemary Mitchell-Schuitevoerder (UK)

Discussion List Moderator: Position still to be filled at the time of writing

Business development: Gordon Lewis (USA)

What a strong team! I'd like to say a huge thank you to Niki and Karen for volunteering to take up their new responsibilities. If you'd like to know a bit about the team do check out the following link:

<http://www.countryschool.com/whoswho.htm#Sandie> , where there are committee faces and mini bios.

Sadly, this is Carol Read's last issue of CATS as she has decided that her 'other' life needs a bit more attention! She's devoted eight (that's 7 + 1!) years of her time to the YL SIG committee. She will be missed – her input has always brought with it her wisdom and understanding of working with children and teachers. Carol has done great things with CATS and her shoes will be difficult to fill! I know I speak for YL SIG members when I say a very HUGE thank you for all the time and energy she has devoted to the SIG.

**Thanks Carol!**

As ever, I'd also like to thank the committee for all their hard work - This is my last coordinator's note for CATS, as I will be taking on the role of SIG Representative in Harrogate. Thank you all for your support during the time I have been coordinator. The YL SIG will always play an active role in my life and I know it will continue to support its members in the coming years. Do tell your friends and colleagues about the YL SIG, we need to increase our membership to continue providing support. Share what's good with others!

Best wishes,

**Sandie Mourão**

**YL SIG Coordinator (outgoing)**



## **FAREWELL AND THANKS TO SANDIE ...**

Sandie became Co-ordinator of IATEFL Young Learners SIG (YL SIG) in 2003, having previously served as Discussion List Moderator. She threw herself into the job with characteristic energy and hard work. She has a certain no-nonsense 'Britishness' and this, warmed by the sun of rural Portugal where she has chosen to build her home and her family, is a winning combination. As a successful author and an expert in her field of teaching English to very young learners Sandie has a long lists of friends and professional contacts that she has been able to call upon for the benefit of the YLSIG. Knowing where she wants to go, and with the determination to get there, Sandie has been able to get things done. People warm to her bubbly personality and her generous, personal communicative style. Sandie has a very quick mind: occasionally, when speaking in public, her words do not keep up with her thoughts and we are treated to one of her trademark blushes which only endear her more to her audience. A particular strength is her ability to draw together the disparate strands of a discussion and summarise them back to the participants with amazing clarity. These qualities have been invaluable in coordinating discussions among YLSIG committee members, both by email and in face-to-face discussions. A lot of the work of Co-ordinator goes on behind the scenes and Sandie has also liaised sensitively between the Young Learners SIG and IATEFL as a whole. An example of this is the way she steered the YL SIG's concern to include people with limited means by establishing a biennial low income event and free access to the YLSIG for members of IATEFL's Wider Membership Scheme. Sandie is moving 'onwards and upwards' in IATEFL, taking on the role of Joint SIG Coordinator, representing the 14 different SIGs in IATEFL. Our loss will be IATEFL's gain. We have been very fortunate in her leadership and wish her success and happiness in her new post.

**Chris Etchells on behalf of the YL SIG Committee**

# Editorial

## Carol Read

During all the years of being joint editor, I don't think I've ever edited an issue of **CATS** with quite so many repetitions of the same word. No prizes for guessing what this is! It leaps out from every page, not just the word itself but all the lively and varied interpretations of what it means, why it is important and how to go about it in the everyday classroom reality of young learners and their teachers, either in theory or in practice, or both.

The articles speak for themselves:

- **Robert Fisher** stresses the importance of creative thinking skills for successful learning and suggests classroom activities to encourage creativity with words, objects and pictures.
- **Lynne Cameron** explores what creativity means and gives examples of creativity in children learning English.
- **Jane Revell** explores the importance of engaging minds, bodies and hearts for effective and successful learning.
- **Janet Enever** interviews best-selling children's author and illustrator, Nick Sharratt, about books, children and creativity.
- **Andrew Wright** shares a personal view of things that help him to be creative and provides practical ideas for classroom activities.
- **Judy Garton-Sprenger** and **Philip Prowse** offer suggestions for creative activities with teenagers at elementary and pre-intermediate levels.
- **Simon Smith** suggests three creative familiarisation activities to use on in-service teacher education courses for young learner teachers.
- **Gail Ellis** and **Carol Read** explore how a primary teacher education task using metaphor can lead to creative insights on planning lessons.

In the rest of **CATS**, we continue our two new features: *Looking at a Learner* in which **Nayr Ibrahim** describes the creative blossoming of a 9-year-old young learner at the British Council in Paris, and *Focus on a World-wide YL SIG* in which **Alison Miyake** introduces us to the Teaching Children SIG in Japan. Book reviews by **Niki Joseph** and **Jason Renshaw** keep us up to date with two recent publications on Multiple Intelligences and developing writing skills. **Lynne Cameron** summarises a recent YL SIG e-discussion on the topic of creativity which she facilitated and, last but not least, **Sandie Mourão** provides us with a brief history of volunteers who have helped to keep the YL SIG going over the years and made it into what it is today.

The idea for the cover of this issue was inspired by a creative thinking activity on coffee cups in Robert Fisher's book *Teaching Children to Think* (see page 7 for reference). Many thanks for the illustrations to **Eleanor Watts** who provided the artistic talent to put the idea into practice.

After seven years as joint editor of **CATS**, this is my last issue. I'd like to thank all the people I've worked with during this time – particularly my co-editors, **Eleanor Watts** in the early days and, more recently, **Kay Bentley**, for being such great colleagues, the whole YL SIG committee, for always being so enthusiastic and supportive, and all the **contributors** over the years who've given so generously of their time in writing articles and sharing their ideas. A very special thanks also to **Miguel Ariño**, who has helped me out with this issue on the technical side of things for the second time, and without whom the pdf version, now downloadable from the members section of the YL SIG website, might never have existed.

I very much hope that you enjoy this issue of **CATS** and, if you feel creatively inspired, please do get in touch and let us know your views!



carolread@readmatthews.com

# Meet the YL SIG Committee...

## coming in and going out



**Sandie Mourao, Portugal**  
*(outgoing)*  
**Coordinator**



**Wendy Arnold, Hong Kong**  
*Changing role from*  
Discussion List Moderator  
*to* **Joint Coordinator**



**Niki Joseph, Portugal**  
*(incoming)*  
**Joint Coordinator**



**Chris Etchells, UK**  
**Website Manager**



**Jason Renshaw, Korea**  
**Classroom Research Database**  
**Manager**



**Gordon Lewis, UK**  
*Changing role from*  
Joint Events Coordinator *to*  
**Business Development**



**Carol Read, Spain**  
*(outgoing)*  
**Joint Publication Editor**



**Hans Mol, Australia**  
**Finance and Membership Officer**  
**& Web Resources Editor**



**Kay Bentley, UK**  
**Joint Publication Editor**



**Rosemary Mitchell-Schuitevoerder, UK**  
**Joint Events Coordinator**



**Karen Widl, Austria**  
*(incoming)*  
**Joint Events Coordinator**

# Expanding Minds: developing creative thinking in young learners

Robert Fisher

## Introduction

Creative thinking skills are essential for success in learning and success in life. Creative thinking involves a range of skills that can be promoted across the curriculum. There is potential for creative thinking in all fields of human activity, and in all lessons. This article offers strategies that can be adapted to enrich teaching in a range of subject areas. It aims show ways to develop children's capacity for original ideas and creative achievement.

## Benefits of creativity

Promoting creative thinking is a powerful way of engaging children with their learning. Children who are encouraged to think creatively show increased levels of motivation and self esteem. Creativity prepares them with the flexible skills they will need to face an uncertain future. Employers want people who are adaptable, innovative, can solve problems and communicate well with others. Developing the capacity to be creative can enrich their lives and help them to contribute to a better society.

## What is creativity?

Creativity is not just about the arts, or particular types of individual. We all have the capacity for creative thinking – for generating and extending ideas, suggesting hypotheses, applying imagination and looking for alternative innovative outcomes in any activity. Creativity means generating outcomes that are original and of value. Originality may be in relation to one's previous experience, to a group or it may be uniquely original. Creative thinking is also about judgement – our ability to judge the value of ideas and outputs.

## What hinders creativity?

Creative children need creative teachers, but there are many blocks to creativity. One block may be defensive teaching. There is little chance for creativity where pupils work for long periods of time with low demand and little active input, or where outcomes are controlled and prescribed, or complex topics taught in superficial ways. Creativity thrives where there is time to explore, experiment and play with ideas. Children need the right conditions for creativity to flourish.

## What classroom activities promote creativity?

Creative thinking is shown when children generate ideas, show imagination and originality, and can judge the value of what they have done. What promotes creativity is a questioning classroom, where teachers and pupils value diversity, ask unusual and challenging questions; make new connections; represent ideas in different ways – visually, physically and verbally; try fresh approaches and solutions

to problems; and critically evaluate new ideas and actions.

Here are some classroom activities to encourage creativity with words, objects and pictures.

### 1. The 'Connect' game

Creativity begins with generating ideas, speculating and creating new associations. As a warm-up or focusing activity play 'Connect'. Ask a student to suggest a word. You say a word that is related to that word e.g. if the word is 'football' you might say 'goal'. The next child then says a word connected with the previous word e.g. 'goal', 'net' and so on. Players take turns. They are allowed thinking time, but can be challenged by any other player to explain the connection between their word and the previous word.

(For a harder version of this game see 'Random Words' in Fisher, R. Games for Thinking)

### 2. Mystery objects

Creativity involves developing ideas through suggesting hypotheses ('What if ...?') and applying imagination. This activity encourages children to develop ideas that are original and have a purpose, which is to improve or add value to something. It encourages children to ask themselves the creative question: 'How can this be improved?'

Show a box that contains an unfamiliar or interesting 'mystery object' (or a picture of an object). Without showing or saying what it is, describe the object's appearance (or ask a child to). Ask children to try to visualize what is described, to hypothesise what it might be and then ask questions to try to identify the object. The child who identifies the object must also describe it. Show the object and ask children to reflect on the description given and their ability to visualize it. Discuss what it was made for, and its possible uses. Ask for suggestions of how it might be improved. Encourage creative suggestions.

Here are some questions for stimulating creative ideas about any topic, grouped under the mnemonic CREATE:

**C**ombine: *Can you add something else to it? Can you combine purposes, ideas?*

**R**earrange: *Can parts of it be moved or changed?*

**E**liminate: *What could you remove or replace – in part or whole? Can it be simplified?*

**A**dapt: *Can it be adapted? What else is this like? What ideas does it suggest?*

**T**ry another use: *Can it be put to other uses – or given a new use if you changed one part?*

**E**xtend: *What could be added - words, pictures, symbols, functions, decoration, logos?*

Children could select or be given one object to study with a partner

1. They think up as many uses as they can for the object.
2. Their ideas are listed and shared with a larger group.
3. They think of ways to change and improve the design or function of one object (using the CREATE questions above)
4. The group assesses what they think is the most original idea.
5. They draw this new object and prepare a presentation to describe or 'sell' it to others.

Children can be invited to assess the value of their own and others' ideas. Questions might include:

- Were any good improvements suggested? Which were the best?
- Did they find it more creative to work on their own, with a partner or a group? Why?
- Is it important to try to improve things? What should be improved? Why?

### 3. Drawing games

Creativity involves expanding existing knowledge. This is done through building on existing ideas or thinking of new ideas. Creative thinking will involve both visual and verbal thinking, children thinking by themselves and with others.

#### Squiggles

Play a drawing game such as 'Squiggles'. Make a squiggle shape on the board (a squiggle is a small mark such as a curve or wavy line). Show how this can be added to make a complete drawing of something. Draw identical squiggles on two halves of the board and invite two children to make them starting points for their own quick drawings. Discuss the creative aspects of each drawing. Children work in pairs at the activity, then display pairs of drawings. Other children must guess what each completed drawing shows.

#### What might the shape be?

Draw a simple shape on the board and ask the children what it might possibly be. Collect their ideas and add some of your own. Ask what might be added to the shape to make it something else – what could we do to change or add to it? Invite children to sketch their own picture of something new by adding to the given shape. Discuss their range of ideas.

#### Circle stories

1. Give children a worksheet of circle shapes. Ask them to draw as many different things as they can by adding details to each circle e.g. face, sun, watch, cobweb etc. Give a strict time limit.
2. In pairs ask children to compare their collection of circle drawings.
3. Children choose and cut out six of their circle drawings. They think of as many connections as they can between each drawing e.g. 'The face is smiling because the watch says it is lunchtime and at this time the spider is weaving a web ...'
4. The children individually, in pairs or small groups create a story incorporating in it as many of the subjects of their circle drawings as possible.

5. They draft these stories, adding details to make them as interesting as possible, using the circle drawings as illustrations.
6. The stories are presented and discussed.

(See Fisher R. *Games for Thinking* for more drawing games to encourage creativity).

### Teaching strategies to support creative thinking across the curriculum

Any lesson can develop creative thinking if it involves pupils generating and extending ideas, suggesting hypotheses, applying imagination and finding new or innovative outcomes. Try to include opportunities for creativity in the lessons you teach. Look for evidence of pupils':

- using imagination
- generating questions, ideas and outcomes
- experimenting with alternatives
- being original
- expanding on what they know or say
- exercising their judgement

The following are some strategies can be applied to a wide range of curriculum areas:

#### Use imagination

Think of new ideas, speculate on what might be possible and apply imagination to improve outcomes.

Question cues:

- *What might happen if ... (if not)?*
- *Can you imagine ...*
- *Suggest an improvement on ...*

#### Generate more ideas

Generate many responses, encourage thinking of alternatives and the asking of questions.

Question cues:

- *How many kinds of ... can you think of?*
- *List all ... that could be used for ...?*
- *What questions could you could ask?*

#### Experiment with alternatives

Be willing to change one's initial ideas, see things another way, experiment with alternative approaches.

Question cues:

- *How else might you ...?*
- *Think of fi e ways of/questions to ask about/ reasons for ....*
- *List ten things you could do with ... (a shape, picture, object, photo, story etc.)*

#### Be original

Think of novel ideas, unique solutions, and design original plans

Question cues:

- *Design a game for ...*
- *Invent a way to ...*
- *Think of a way to improve ... (an object, game, story, plan etc.)*

## Expand on what you do and know

Elaborate on what you know, build on a given situation, make it more interesting.

Question cues:

- *What might we add ...* (e.g. to a word, phrase, sentence, story, picture, design)
- *What might we change ...* (e.g. to make it different, more interesting)
- *What is another way to ...* (eg solve problem, investigate a mystery)

## Exercise your judgement

Assess what we have thought/done, evaluate the process and judge the outcome.

Question cues:

- *What criteria should we use to judge whether ...?*
- *What is good/could be improved/is interesting about ....*
- *What could/should you/we do next ...?*

Creativity cannot be left to chance, it must be valued, encouraged and expected - and seen as essential to all teaching and learning. So get creative – and enjoy it!

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**Robert Fisher** is a teacher, writer and researcher on teaching thinking, learning and creativity. He was awarded a PhD for research on philosophy with children and is a Professor of Education at Brunel University. He has published more than twenty books on education.

Website: [www.teachingthinking.net](http://www.teachingthinking.net)



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# Creativity in the language classroom

Lynne Cameron

Creativity is currently a topic of interest in language teaching and beyond (e.g. Carter, 2004; Pope, 2004). In UK education, the 'creativity' encouraged in classrooms in the 70s and early 80s was followed by a tightening and enforcing of the curriculum and school inspection in the late 80s and 90s. This process has succeeded in raising achievement, but there is a feeling that it is again time to loosen up our ideas and think about creativity in learning. Among others, the writer Philip Pullman has argued strongly that the English curriculum stifles creativity by restricting pupils to reading particular texts (often only parts of texts) and to writing in particular forms. In this article, I examine what we might mean by 'creativity' and give some examples of creativity in the learning of English.

## 1 Creativity, knowledge and expertise

First, we step back from language and look at an arena that has always been associated with creativity: art, and in particular, painting. For an artist, creativity is the use of art **to express your own meanings**, to "paint your truth".

A range of artistic **resources** are available to express meaning, including different media, colours, shapes, and composition. Over years of practice and training, an artist builds up **expertise** – from repeated use of the resources of art, you come to know what is possible with the materials and develop the skills to make things happen with them. The best artists also bring the rather mysterious gift of 'talent', which seems to include a neurological tendency to see the world particularly vividly.

Art does not happen in a socio-cultural vacuum, and artists develop their knowledge and skills through encounters with the work of other artists, living and dead. At the same time, the value placed on art by a society influences the opportunities available to become an artist and to become commercially successful.

- **Creativity is personal, technical, and socio-cultural.**

In **the process of creating** a particular painting, the artist's skills interact with the meanings that the artist wants to express. Rather than knowing before beginning what the finished picture will look like, the artist will come to the task with sketches and ideas. But it is in the doing of the picture, that it takes shape – for example, the way the paint goes from the brush to the paper at one point may influence the texture of the painting; the effect of colour in one part may influence the use of colour in some other part of the picture.

- **The creative process is dynamic and adaptive.**

'Happy accidents' may occur in the process of painting as an action produces an unexpected result that the

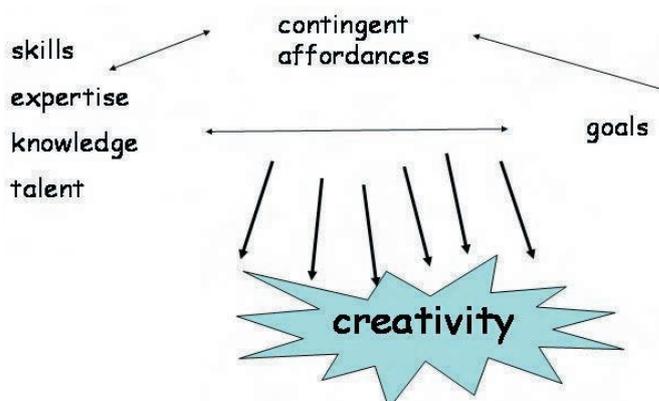
artist uses productively. For example, a drip of paint may look like a tear drop and inspire a previously unthought idea, or a new juxtaposition of colours may be unexpectedly striking. The creative artist will:

- notice the opportunity
  - seize the opportunity, rather than let it pass
  - exploit the opportunity to express something new or in a new way.
- These opportunities that happen in the process of creating are called **contingent affordances**.

I suggest that all acts of creativity make use of, or create, contingent affordances.

Think of another type of creative situation – a football match. The creative football player makes use of contingent affordances in a match. He is the player who notices opportunities and has the skills and expertise to take advantage of them.

- **Returning to the language classroom, I want to argue that learners and teachers can apply their expertise to make use of contingent affordances, and that this is the basis of creativity in the language classroom.**

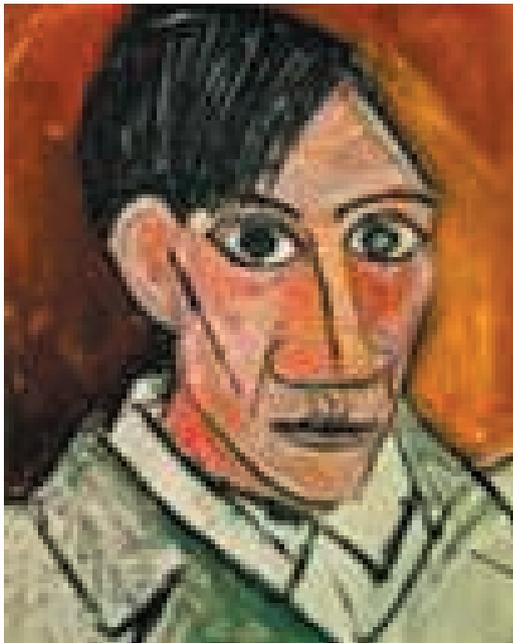


## 2 Sources of contingent affordances

Contingent affordances are opportunities that arise in the course of activity. I suggest that there are (at least) four sources of contingent affordances:

- similarities
- differences
- gaps
- juxtapositions.

To explain these ideas, I will use the following picture, painted by Picasso:



## 2.1 Similarities

Similarities may be of various types including:

**resemblances** – one thing looks like another or acts in a similar way. Notice how many of the lines in the picture are at a **similar** angle: the lines of the nose, cheek and chin are parallel to the lines of the shirt collar, and on the man's right side, the shirt collar is parallel to the coat collar. Picasso has deliberately emphasised the similarity, for example, in making the left side of the man's forehead parallel to his right cheek bone. The lack of reality is traded for emphasis.

**allusions** – something acts to remind us of something else. This might be an explicit allusion or just a reminder or a suggestion – behind the man's right shoulder is a bright patch in the dark background which suggests a window or door.

**associations** – there is no concrete connection but one is made nevertheless. For example, we might remember the place where we first saw this picture and the people we were with at the time.

## 2.2 Differences

Partly because of the emphasised similarities, the contrasts or differences become stronger: the round shapes of the eyes and the nose strike the observer because they are different from the straight lines all around them. The difference in dark and light between the two sides of the painting create the effect of light and shade.

## 2.3 Gaps

Absences – what is not happening or is not present – may offer opportunities for creativity. Artists use this in the idea of 'negative spaces', the empty spaces around a shape. These gaps also have shapes, and sometimes focusing on the negative spaces can help the artist better create the shape. In the Picasso painting, the negative spaces at the sides of the man's head are very strong; part of the force of the picture comes from how

he fills the frame right to the top.

Gaps in the opposing team's coverage of the football field are a crucial affordance for the creative footballer. He looks for a gap through which the ball can be sent.

## 2.4 Juxtapositions

Juxtaposition is the placing of things next to each other. At several places in the picture, Picasso has created impact through placing different things side by side: the red on the man's neck is more striking because it is next to the greenish-white of the shirt; at the edge of his nose, a round line meets a straight line, emphasising both. There is some poignancy created by the juxtaposition of textures in the bottom left of the picture where the rough coat is next to the soft shirt, and the materials are next to the human texture of the man's skin.

## 3 Creative use of language

I now show how contingent affordances and creativity show themselves in children's language use.

### 3.1 Saying what you mean as a beginner in a foreign language

The first example comes from data collected in a class of 8 year old beginners in Japan by Yumi Ohashi (2005). The teacher is introducing a singing activity and pupil P1 uses Japanese to comment on this idea (English translation in italics). When the teacher asks "Are you ready?", the pupils respond in chorus using a phrase they clearly know well: "Yes, we are". However, two pupils (P2 and P3) respond differently – and using their limited English creatively:

T: let's sing Doh Re Mi. OK?  
 P1: really, do we have to do it every time?  
 ...  
 T: are you ready?  
 PP: [loudly] yes we are  
 P2: **yes we no**  
 P3: **no it isn't**  
 T: good (Ohashi, 2005)

P2 tries to express a negative form of the phrase yes we are, using the negative marker *no* instead of *aren't*. P3 expresses the same meaning in a different way. He picks a formulaic phrase – *no it isn't* - that he may have learnt in other contexts, e.g. *is it red? no it isn't*.

Both pupils are being creative in finding ways to express disagreement through their language knowledge, even though it is very restricted. P2 uses similarity, whereas P3 uses difference or contrast.

There is something playful about this exchange too – they both try to say this in English rather than using their shared native language. It is as if they want to stay in the classroom 'game' by using English, but want to show they might still have their own opinion about singing. Very simple language hides complex processes of meaning and expressing ideas.

### 3.2 Inferring meaning

Inferring meaning from what other people say and do is the basic creative leap across the gap between oneself and another person that underpins all language use. We

are often only aware of this process at work when it goes wrong! An example of this from Korean classroom was given in Cameron (2003a).

The teacher introduced the phrases *I like* and *I don't like* with the vocabulary of food. Children practised questions and answers like *Do you like pizza? Yes, I do. Do you like bananas? No, I don't.* A few weeks later, the phrases were re-used, but this time with the names of the children's friends: *Do you like Su Won?* Some of the children were surprised and quite horrified at this question... they had inferred the meaning as relating to food and taste, so could not see how it might fit with their friends! The children's misunderstanding shows us something of their understanding – how they inferred some of the meaning of *like* from the food words juxtaposed with *like* in the examples the teacher gave first

Students in classrooms are always inferring meaning, and will use all the clues that the teacher or textbook provides. To fill the gap between the words and their meaning, students will use information from similarities, differences and juxtapositions.

### 3.3 Subversion

Subversion is making one act look like another, without being found out. It requires noticing similarities across a gap between what is happening and what you want to happen.

In an example from Cameron (2001), an 11 year old Norwegian boy subverts the task given by the teacher to describe an arctic animal, and in the process, creates a good learning opportunity for himself. The starting point for the task was to write down the name of an animal on the board. The first student wrote

fox                      reindeer

and was then asked to speak about the arctic fox. He struggled to produce some simple phrases, needing a lot of help from the teacher:

*it's a fox  
little and white  
on TV yes*

The boy in question wrote on the board *budgie* and then proceeded to talk about his own pet budgerigar, using more complex language than other pupils had managed:

*she can have many colours  
it's a bird  
and she talks a lot*

*I read in a book and it's ...it says it's a little parrot  
but I don't know where they come from*

What is important about this language is not just its complexity but that it the boy is working at the edge of his competence, pushing himself to express his own meanings. Like a footballer reaching for a difficult ball or kicking a difficult shot, he strains his resources to meet the challenge that he has set himself by subverting the task.

Classrooms tend to resist subversion since the whole activity of schooling rests on students sharing acceptance of the power of the teacher to organise events.

However, the examples show that there are positive forms of subversion in which children show us how they can go beyond the task. Effective teaching might make use of this to stretch learners.

### 3.4 Reminders

A special kind of similarity is where something in the real world reminds you of something not present but in your memory.

The most common reminder for young learners would probably be the sound of English and the sound of an L1 word. Ohashi's Japanese learners commented on English words that sounded like words in English and in Japanese:

for example --> 4 *apple*  
cucumber --> *cucum babah* (old woman)

There is no connection at the level of meaning here, just of surface form. If meaning were added, these kinds of nonsense but amusing reminders could help in memorising vocabulary.

There is not space here to show the many other ways in which similarities, differences, gaps and juxtapositions contribute to contingent affordances and to creativity. It is hoped, however, that these examples will prompt readers to notice children's creativity in their daily classroom activities – and their own creative potential as teachers.

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# Head , Hands and Hearts!

Jane Revell

We all know by now that mind and body – HEAD and HANDS - are connected. Theories of Accelerated Learning and Neuro-Linguistic Programming have been emphasising their interdependence over the years and Eastern philosophies have been saying so for centuries.

## Negative and positive thinking

We know, for example, that when our mind is not OK, when we are thinking 'negatively' and are distressed or anxious for long periods of time, that our body responds negatively: those are the times when we tend to get run down physically, are often bothered by various aches and pains and are sometimes ill. We also know that when our head is OK, when we are thinking 'positively' and are happy and at peace with ourselves, that our body responds positively: those are the times we tend to be in top physical condition and able to achieve lots of things.

The whole idea of self-fulfilling prophecies fits in here: how we think about something (another person, a place, an event, a classroom activity ... and, most crucially, *ourselves*) influences how we behave and therefore what happens as a result.

We know that this works in reverse too. If our body is not OK, then our mind follows suit. If we sit for long stretches of time without moving, our mind slows down as well as our body. If we get up and move around, then the boost to our circulation sends more oxygen to our brain and our thinking improves.

## Application to the learning environment

Many of us have already applied these ideas to the learning environment. We help young learners to learn and perform to the best of their ability by encouraging them to think positively and to feel good about themselves. We have also introduced more and more physical activities into the classroom, either as a kinaesthetic part of the activity itself or else by 'punctuating' an otherwise static lesson with brief stretches or physical exercises. And those of us who practise Brain Gym ® know that when learners do certain movements and exercises with different parts of their body, they can get their brain to work even better. A good idea any time, and especially just before a test!

## The emotional side of things

So what about HEART?!

'Tell me and I forget. Involve me and I remember.'

We learn and remember best what we learn with emotion, what we take to heart.

Think back to your own school days for a moment. What are your strongest memories of those days? What events come to mind? Which teachers? Which subjects?

Most of you will probably recall events that sparked off strong emotions in you. The teachers you remember best will be the ones you really liked - who were enthusiastic or who made you laugh or with whom you

had a special relationship, and also the ones you really disliked - perhaps because they frightened you or bullied you in some way. (I have both sorts of memories.) And of course, your feelings about the teacher are likely to have affected your feelings about the subject and coloured what you subsequently learnt ..... or didn't learn.

This is all down to a naturally-occurring biochemical reaction in our body. Whenever we have an experience which is emotionally charged, our body produces hormones such as adrenaline and noradrenaline. These hormones (which are the hormones produced as part of the stress-response mechanism) seem to strengthen the memory's storage capacity by leaving very vivid images in the brain.

So how can we engender emotion-arousing experiences (preferably positive ones!) in the classroom? Well, you're probably doing so already, if you're using songs and stories. These are both potentially exciting – and therefore memorable - for young learners, but – and it's a big 'but' - a lot depends on both the material you use and the way you exploit it.

Choose your songs and stories with care, not just for their linguistic input but, more crucially, for their degree of interest and motivational impact for your age group. Obviously you can't expect your learners to cope with a text which is way beyond their L2 competence, but it's surprising how much effort they will make to grasp a song or story they really like, even though it contains a fair amount of unknown grammar or vocabulary.

As for how you use your material, it's easy to overdo it and turn the experience from a magical moment into a boring question and answer session or a heavy piece of grammar practice, and kill it stone dead. We need to be careful to balance enjoyment (heart) and exploitation (head).

An additional problem for us is that today's youngsters are exposed to lots of sophisticated and highly exciting songs and stories, mainly on screens of one sort or another. If we can't (or don't want to) offer that in the classroom, then we need to make sure that what we do is emotionally engaging in other ways, at the same time as providing a vehicle for language learning.

Interestingly, physical movement often provokes an emotional response - excitement and/or laughter - so one way is to ask for a physical response instead of - or as well as - a verbal response. With songs, this might take the form of 'action' songs, where certain words are accompanied or replaced by movement or mime. With stories, this could be a sort of TPR (total physical response) or acting out. At a very simple level, it could be asking the students to stand up or put their hand up every time they hear a certain word repeated in the story.

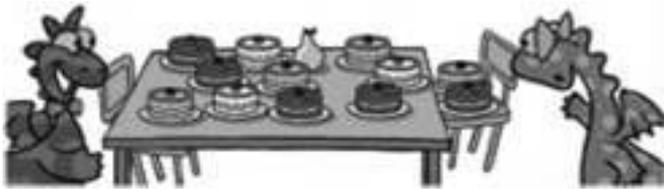
Another way of engendering emotion-arousing experiences in the classroom, of course, is to use games. Nothing new there. But what might be a new idea is the (very old) idea of using drills in a game-like way. Game-drills.

## Game -drills

A game-drill is a very simple way of doing a repetition drill to make it thought-provoking (head), physical (hands) and adrenaline-producing (heart). Now I know drills are not cool these days: every time I ask a group of teachers 'How many of you use repetition drills?' I get a very lukewarm response. But I think learners (and not just highly auditory learners) can benefit a lot from drills – I certainly have in my own language-learning past. And drills don't have to be boring and mechanical.

All you need is a picture to make statements about, using a particular structure. Any picture will do, as long as everybody can see it clearly: a small picture in their course book or a large picture held up or projected. Any structure will do, as long as it ties in with your picture.

Here's my picture. The structure we're practising is *There's...* and *There are...*



Here's what I do. I make true or false statements about the picture.

If what I say is *true*, then the students must immediately nod their heads, say 'Yes!' and repeat the statement.

If what I say is *false*, then the students must immediately shake their heads and say 'No! That's not true!'

Even though this particular drill forces the students to count, it's important to insist on a reasonably fast response to get the adrenaline flying (though it's a good idea to give them some time to look at the picture before you start.). I also insist on a wholehearted response

rather than a tentative one and get them to practise this. What happens when they get it wrong sometimes (as they inevitably do)? Everyone bursts out laughing.

The drill for the picture above would go something like this (and because it's lots of fun, it could go on for a whole lot longer than indicated here):

T: There are ten cakes on the table.  
Ss: (nodding) Yes! There are ten cakes on the table.  
T: There are two cakes on the chair.  
Ss: (nodding) Yes! There are two cakes on the chair.  
T: There's a pear on the chair.  
Ss: (shaking..) No! That's not true.  
T: There are five pink cakes.  
Ss: (shaking..) No! That's not true..... (and so on.)

In case you're wondering why the students aren't asked to correct the false statements instead of just to say 'No! That's not true!' well they are sometimes. But in this instance there are several ways of correcting, so it could all get a bit ragged, as well as slow the pace down considerably. I find too that students enjoy shouting out 'No! That's not true!' and do so with great gusto! After all, it's not often that they get to say such things in the classroom!

Our mind is reflective, our body is active and our emotions are affective. These three things together make for learning which is highly effective. Head, hands and heart.

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# Picturebooks and creativity: an interview with Nick Sharratt

## Janet Enever



*Janet Enever talks with best-selling children's author and illustrator, Nick Sharratt, about books, children and creativity.*

**JE:** Can I ask you to explain where you start when you're creating a new book?

**NS:** Well, there are two ways that I start a book. One is, if I'm given a problem to solve by a publisher, which might be something like a specific theme, a novelty device or an unusual format to exploit. For example, I was given a book made of tracing paper and asked, what can you come up with from this? Instantly, the semi-opaque quality of the paper got me very excited and I thought "fog" - and that was my starting point. Sometimes I'm given a specific requirement and I find it really helps me.

For example, with the book *Shark in the Park* I was told it had to be a Big Book, it had to have a novelty aspect, an educational aspect, a rhyming text and be aimed at 4-5 year olds. This was great. It really stimulated me and I came up with 'Shark in the Park' which fulfilled all those criteria and is also, I think, quite a successful little story in itself.

**JE:** *It's a superb title, I really like it.*

**NS:** When I go into schools the children always say triumphantly and unprompted, "It rhymes!" So, that's a good start. The rhyming is very important and, in this case, the title *Shark in the Park* came before the actual story. I'd wanted to do something about sharks because when I ask children what jobs they'd like to do one day, there's always one child who wants to be a marine biologist and they're all very keen on sharks.

Sometimes I'm given problems to solve, which is great for me. I find it tougher, though ultimately very satisfying, to come up with my own ideas from scratch. I'll have general themes in my head like 'pirates' or 'treasure' but no sure ways about how to exploit them until I've tried out different approaches, rejecting them one by one until I find the perfect idea. In fact, treasure is one of those ideas floating in my brain at the moment. It's been stored away for a couple of years now, but I still haven't come up with a way to really exploit it yet.

The stimulus for the treasure theme was going into schools and reading a book called *Mrs Pirate*. Whenever we get to the page with the treasure, there's always an intake of breath - the children just *adore* treasure and I keep noticing this. Here's the story:

"When Mrs Pirate goes shopping... she buys an apple pie and a patch for her eye, a bar of soap and a telescope," and so on. Then "she buys some knickers and a vest and an old treasure chest". Whenever I'm working with this book, children are always thrilled by the treasure and really interested in it. I usually draw the pictures on a flip pad as it's a really small book and they're always keen that I draw the chest properly, with a lock and a key. This idea is definitely on my list of things that I want to get out of my system.

**JE:** *Do you have in mind any sense of designing particular books for particular age groups when you write?*

**NS:** No, I don't really. I guess what I'm looking for with my picture books is that they will work with quite a wide age group. I use the books I've mentioned with children, right up to age 11. I think they enjoy them at a different level. For example, *Shark in the Park* works as a rhyming story; every time he thinks he sees a shark, it turns out to be something benign. Hopefully, that kind of surprise works. You don't know what it's going to be, then, the final picture is an image that amuses them (a man with an 'Elvis style' quiff of hair which points upwards - resembling the fin of a shark). They like the Elvis Presley picture. They're 'in' on the joke of the quiff. Hopefully, there's a slightly more grown-up sense of humour that goes through the books if you want it, which helps to interest older children. It's there even in the 'Read Me' books which were originally marketed as Toddler Books for Sainsbury's supermarkets. But, I've actually had a lot of feedback from schools. One school in particular,

in Leeds - I go goosebumpy in thinking about it - but they got so much work out of it. They were 6-7 year olds with quite a lot of reading problems, and they did a most fantastic assembly using all these stories. They made up their own versions, continuing the really simple rhymes, as in the book *Smart Aunties* with, for example, "Aunty Molly had a broolly". The children acted this out and added their own aunties and really pushed the story. So, it was fantastic! In fact, I think that using adult characters was quite good for extending the age range of the books a bit.

**JE:** *I'd like to ask about creativity. Have you had any unexpected responses from children?*

**NS:** The example I gave before of the assembly - that's the most exciting thing - when it goes beyond what I'd expected. It kind of ties in with my definition of creativity with a book. It's when it triggers something else and it can be anything. It can be just daydreaming or musing on the lives of the characters outside of the story, which is something I do a lot of the time, or it can be much more specific and ambitious than that such as making up your own rhyming stories and creating your own flap books, which I see a lot when I go into schools.

**JE:** *With a lot of your books you seem to work collaboratively with someone. How does that process work?*

**NS:** Well, it tends to be that I just get sent texts and am left to get on with it very freely. The writer usually knows my work already, so they know they're not going to get any pastel shades and - well, the black line is very important. I've almost never done a book without it. I really am hooked on drawing a black line. It goes back to how I drew as a child. I was a great user of black felt-tipped pens, always drawing with a black felt-tipped pen and then colouring in the drawing, and it kind of ties in with doing cartoons and comic strips. Also, the (19)60's graphic images which I really loved as a child - the very clean, bold images that tended to have a black line to them.

**JE:** *So you work by doing line drawings in pen first?*

**NS:** I do pencil 'roughs' and I just keep on re-drawing the roughs, re-drawing, re-drawing until I get a pretty finished rough which I send to the publisher. It's the line that I'm hooked on - the process I love most is doing the line drawings. Working on it and getting to my final rough. Then, when it comes to the artwork, I like drawing the black line. Colouring is not my favourite thing.

**JE:** *I'm astonished at that. There's so much colour in your work, I assumed that would be the overriding element for you.*

**NS:** It doesn't give me the same satisfaction as thinking about getting the character and drawing the line. It's also quite arduous getting the colours to balance throughout the book. When I'm drawing I feel I'm having more fun, when it's just me and a pencil, but when it comes to the colour, there are so many other decisions that have got to be taken into account, that it can become quite complex. The thing about the drawing is that sometimes you go back to the joy of drawing as a child. You're thinking: "Oh, I wonder what this character will be having

for tea or what kind of house they live in". It's that really nice strand of creativity, whereas when I'm colouring, I'm being very objective and just thinking this grey has got to be light enough to work with the blue. It is creative, but there's not the same kind of fantasy element. As a child I loved Heath Robinson's drawings. The lines are all just *right*. It tells you precisely, you can decipher it completely. It's very direct, just using the black line - its so, so expressive.

**JE:** *Are you conscious of any elements of your work that seem to particularly appeal to boys?*

**NS:** I try to make my books appeal to both sexes. I do think about that because a lot of the characters are girl characters, like Daisy in *Eat your Peas* is a female character. I've just been working on a "Daisy" book called *Hello, Six and a Half* in which Daisy becomes a spy. In fact, I've had to think a lot about how to make it balanced. She gets involved in James Bond type things. Recently, I've been trying to make some decisions about objects that I'm using on the end papers (the inside front and back covers). In the story she uses a hairdryer as a zap gun, a perfume bottle as invisible ink, a hairbrush as a secret telephone. When you know the story, they all make sense, but I thought, I can't use these on the end papers because it makes it look too feminine; on the other hand, I can't use the helicopter and some of the other James Bond images because then it'll look too masculine. So, in the end, I've just used a repeat silhouette of Daisy that seems to have the right neutrality. That seemed to be mid-way! Similarly with colour, it really does boil down to the pink and blue thing a lot. I love pink and I use it a lot, but I do get discouraged by publishers from using too much on covers, although, *Ketchup on your Cornflakes?* has a bright pink cover, and has been very successful with both sexes. As far as I'm aware, it's never put off boys from reading it. It's now going to have a blue cover in a new edition, so it'll be interesting to see if it suddenly makes a noticeable difference. But I think that what balances my use of pink here is the strong black line. The black line is something which maybe makes it less feminine. I think that using the black line helps my illustrations work for boys. There's definitely a sort of nod to comics and action strips as well, also in the lettering. I nearly always do the lettering on the covers and I think that ties in with comic strips too. A lot of my work is described as 'cartoony' which I don't mind. I think 'cartoon' is okay with boys, it doesn't put them off.

**JE:** *What about your choice of storyline - the risk-taking in your language seems to provoke so many possibilities - do you see this as a part of your style?*

**NS:** You mean, the sort of anarchy?

**JE:** Yes, in a sense.

**NS:** Well, I suppose with the flap books I've done, for example, *A Cheese and Tomato Spider* and *Don't Put Your Finger In the Jelly, Nelly!*, the key is the potential anarchy. I loved doing a book called *Once upon a Time*, where you mix up the elements of the pictures so the princess can dream about marrying a prince, if you like, or she can dream about marrying a clown,

a computer, a duck, a caravan etc.. I suppose I really like the books where you can be completely crazy if you want to - anarchic - where you're in control of it and you can do what you like with it. With the book, *Pirate Pete* for example, the child I'd love to share it with would be the one who took a picture from one page and put it at the front - to mix the whole thing up completely! That's what you're supposed to do, to take all the objects and really mix them up. The risk-taking books are risky in the sense that the children might not actually 'get it'. The risk is that they will just understand it conventionally. But, in my experience, they seem to be quickly 'in' on the joke and that seems to give them a certain pleasure in that they're in control of it and can play around with it. With these books you don't even have to read them from the front of the book only. You can work from the back to the front if you want- there's no restriction at all and that helps create a feeling of being in control.

**JE:** *Time (and space!) seems to be disappearing. So, one final question. Can I ask what creativity means to you? Can you possibly sum it up?*

**NS:** For me, I think it's when a book is a catalyst for the child thinking and discovering other things beyond the straightforward reading of the book, where the child's imagination or curiosity is really worked.

**JE:** *Thank you Nick for talking about your work so - creatively!*

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# Being creative: things I find useful

Andrew Wright

## Why is creativity important?

Creativity is a fundamental means of survival as well as a bringer of joy.

Some teachers and students can only really harness all their brain power if they are invited to be creative.

## My definition of creativity

Making something new or a new version of something. 'Something' might be how you respond to a situation in class or how you manage to do many things at the same time or when you see the funny side of something and tell someone else. Of course, it is also when you devise activities and make materials.

Everybody is creative but the concept is often used to divide people into those that are creative and those that are not. This is plain wrong.

Education must cultivate not stifle the creativity which lies within all of us.

## Aim of this article

In this short article, I will concentrate on what I find helps me to be more creative and will hope that it might be of some interest and even of use to other colleagues. Inspiration will not figure in any of the ideas below. I can't, sensibly, tell myself, Be inspired! There are more practical ideas available.

## Making new connections

I suppose, making new connections is what creativity is!

Wandering and wondering without clear goals is more important than linear thinking if you want to make new connections and to discover new things.

There are times when I do not want to be clear about what I want except to be open to experiencing something that I have not experienced before.

Sometimes right/wrong assumptions and 'proper' ways of doing things prevent you from seeing things freshly.

Some examples of making new connections in classroom activities are:

- Brainstorm associations as an individual or as a class and do not introduce the idea of right and wrong as you do so. You can always put things through the right wrong sieve later.
- Imaginative descriptions based on finding a large variety of connections between two pictures chosen at random.
- Chain association in which one student says a word and the next student says a word which he or she associates with the first word.

- Opposites and reversals. Describe many aspects of an everyday object eg a book. Then agree on the opposite of each aspect (it has pages/it has no pages) Then conceive of a new object inspired by these reversals.

## Being silly

'Don't be silly!' is a phrase normally used by people in authority who are irritated by behaviour which is inconvenient to them. However, a willingness to 'be silly' is a key characteristic of creative people. What is silly for one generation is often normal in the next.

I find so many things in my daily life which require me to be sensible and to do the expected thing but actually I would benefit by being silly much more often.

Some examples of 'being silly' in classroom activities are:

- Instead of teaching and practicing prepositions related to 'book on the table' choose silly examples, 'cow on the table', etc. Either by imagination or represented by sketches...done by the students not by you.
- Take a traditional sentence pattern table and make as many silly combinations as you can.
- Retelling a story with silly changes...Little Red Riding Hood who is so greedy that she ate the cakes intended for Grandma before she ever arrived.
- Comparing and contrasting things, for example, a pencil and an elephant
- Why have you got a monkey in your bag? An opportunity for silly answers.
- Questions about a statement. The moon is made of green cheese. Does it smell? What sort of green? etc. (*Five Minute Activities* page 65)

## Redefining

Cezanne said, 'Go back to nature.' Constable said, 'I try to forget that I have even seen a picture before.'

Push assumptions to one side. Take a fresh look. Carefully examine the situation. A fresh description might lead to a fresh answer.

Some examples of activities related to redefining ideas and materials development are:

- Thinking about 'learning' instead of thinking about 'teaching'. 'Classroom' can be 'room'. 'Teacher' can be 'helper'. 'Student' can be 'person'. 'Teacher training' can be 'teacher development'. What effect do these changes have on the way we perceive our work?

- Writing my books: When I wrote *Spell binders* (OUP) I first of all thought of how useful it would be if my little story books could be easily dramatised and what do the children need in order to dramatise the story well. Having defined the needs in detail it seemed obvious how to design the pages. For example, knowing that children often do not put enough expression into the drama I have used faces with expressions on them instead of the names of the speakers. (*Spellbinders*, Oxford University Press) In this way the children are guided how to say their lines with feeling.
- Dictation: My favourite example of the potential of redefining a concept is manifested in the book, *Dictation* by Paul Davis and Mario Rinvolucris and published by Cambridge University Press. The authors defined dictation as students receiving a text and writing it down. They then challenged the assumptions about what that means in practice:

Who chooses the text? Could be the teacher or the student.

The text? Could be single words or discreet sentences or longer texts.

Who communicates the text: the teacher or another student?

How is the text communicated: spoken or written, spoken and written, in short sections or as a continuously spoken text, loudly or muttered?

How do the students write it down: as it is delivered or do they place it in a different sequence or location? Do they write all of it or a selection?

Based on this redefining of the traditional activity of dictation they came up with 120 communicative activities for their brilliant book.

## Particularising

One of the hallmarks of creative work is the feeling that it is both universal and highly particular at the same time. It is a little bit like the previous idea but not quite.

An example of particularising in classroom activities is:

- From the early stages encourage the students to create characters, places and situations in stories which are highly specific. For example, for beginners ask: Is the frog, little, very little or very, very little? For more advanced students: Is she slim or thin? How does she sit when she is in the café with her friends?

## Not getting too precious

When I was at art school I wanted to do my best and felt that each picture I was working on was going to be special. And I felt I had no excuse for not making it into a masterpiece. This made me feel so nervous and so self-critical that I could hardly get myself to paint at all in case I didn't produce a masterpiece.

An example of not getting too precious in a classroom activity is:

- Instead of writing a complete short story the students can write 3 alternative first paragraphs

and ask 10 other students to read all 3 and put them in order of interest.

## Responding positively to a restricted context

The notion that artists must be free is a relatively new idea. Artists from the beginning of time have been employed by other people and have been asked to work within narrow restrictions of form, content, style, location, etc. Piero della Francesca was told which blue to use in his pictures and Mozart was told to have a new and amusing composition ready by Sunday. Furthermore, any medium you use has its restrictions. (If you have a black pencil then you can't show colour)

Restrictions of content, medium, time, length, etc. can often give a creative stimulus to the students (and indeed their teachers)

I have always felt stimulated and even liberated by restrictions.

Two examples of classroom activities which impose restriction are:

- Expanding texts starting with a single word: Go. Go to bed. Go to bed....
- Show 3 pictures, each for only a few seconds and ask the students to write for exactly 4 minutes about each to make a story.

## Working in an ambiance of creativity

*'Flowers are red, young man,*

*Green leaves are green,*

*There's no need to see flowers any other way*

*Than the way they've always been seen.'*

This is a verse from a poem posted by Malgosia Tetiurka on the YL SIG discussion list from a poem entitled, *What colour are flowers?* (Writer's name not given)

It is a big help if you can work with people who think and feel that making new things is important. They respond to your ideas and feelings much more strongly than to the accuracy or conventionality of the forms you have used. You are a key person in creating a creative ambiance. Make it clear that there are times when you love the students to take risks and to be as creative as possible and that this is far more important than accuracy at those times. It is also important to share, and encourage others to share creative work.

## Using all the arts

We learn and use our mother tongue in conjunction with so many other media and yet we learn and use a foreign language in isolation in the classroom to a much greater extent.

Use all the arts. This principle can be applied from the first day of language learning and most of the examples below are given for beginner/elementary students. Obviously, for more advanced students the full richness of orchestration can take place.

Some examples of using all the arts are:

### Vocal arts:

- 1 Say a phrase or word in different ways. 'I love you'. 'Hello'. 'Goodbye'.
- 2 Tell a story only with the word 'seven'.

### Musical arts:

- 1 Singing a song or reciting a rhyme or poem.
- 2 Play with the sound of words together, for example, words for food and building up a communal chant poem. Bread and cheese. Bread and cheese. Soup!

### Visual arts:

- 1 Draw a picture and adding a title. For example, My grandma's dog.
- 2 Make a book.

### Dramatic arts:

- 1 A puppet or mask play with minimum phrases.

### Body arts

- 1 Mime

### Poetic arts:

- 1 A poem of five lines each with the same sentence beginning. I like...I don't like...I used to like...but now I like...

### Three dimensional arts:

- 1 Matchbox with word cards in it.
- 2 Fold paper, for example, A fortune teller.

## Knowing when right and wrong are relevant

We must have clearly signalled times when right and wrong have little or no place in an activity if we are to encourage students and ourselves to be creative.

My publishers never comment on my spelling, punctuation, syntax and grammar in my first draft! Furthermore, they never publish a text just because it is perfect in these respects. At the same time they do not want any errors to be found in the text. There is a time and a place for right and wrong in 'real' writing contexts but often not in school contexts. Worrying about right and wrong or conventional acceptability can kill creativity.

My son told me, at the age of eleven, 'There is something you learn at school, the less you do the less mistakes you can make.'

You can apply this to the classroom if, for example, you consider setting two pieces of homework for writing a story. You respond to the first homework in terms of your ability to understand it and whether it is well told and has a fresh quality. You ask the students to spend a second homework improving the text according to your suggestions and then going over one part of it (or the whole lot) and trying to make the text formally accurate.

## Seeing your cup as half full

Is your cup half full or half empty?

Responding positively to life around you is a great encouragement to creativity. It is deflating and/or

irritating to be faced with negativity all the time, however reasonable.

Two examples of how you can apply this to the classroom are:

- Rejoice in achievement and welcome 'failure' as a useful stimulus and guide.
- Rejoice in the advantages of a large class rather than a small class (more interesting dramatized choral work, more examples of individual responses, more experiences to draw on). If you have a class of children who are not great achievers you can rejoice more justifiably in small steps made.

## Further reading

- I am publishing a fuller version of this article on creativity in *HLT, Humanising Language Teaching*. If you want to see this fuller article please see <http://www.hltmag.com.uk>

Alternatively, see my own website: [www.teachertraining.hu](http://www.teachertraining.hu) for this longer article and for other related articles.

- For a range of short activities see: Ur P. & Wright A. (1992) *Five Minute Activities* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- For ideas for the use of stories see: Wright A. (1995) *Storytelling with Children* Oxford: Oxford University Press and Wright A. (1997) *Creating Stories with Children* Oxford: Oxford University Press
- For the wonderful example of creative activities arrived at by creativity see: Davis P. & Rinvolucri M. (1990) *Dictation* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

**Andrew Wright** is an author, illustrator, storyteller and teacher trainer. He has published 'Creating Stories with Children' with Oxford University Press, '1000 Pictures for Teachers to Copy' with Longman and his most recent publication is the third edition of 'Games for Language Learning' published by Cambridge University Press.



Andrew Wright in creative mode

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From left to right: Judy Garton-Sprenger, Carl Robinson, Dulcie Booth, Philip Prowse



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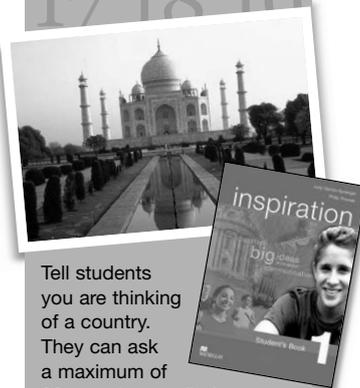
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Judy Garton-Sprenger and Philip Prowse

## 20 Questions



Tell students you are thinking of a country. They can ask a maximum of 20 questions to find out what country it is but you can only answer yes or no. Brainstorm possible question, eg, *Is it big/small? Is it hot in July? Can you go skiing there? Can you travel there by car? Is it in Europe? Do they speak Spanish? Etc.* Play the game once with the class and then students continue in pairs/small groups.

Inspiration 1 Teacher's Book

5 favourite...

### Projects

- ▶▶ Mystery File (Inspiration 3)
- ▶▶ World Records File (Inspiration 1)
- ▶▶ Extreme Places File (Inspiration 2)
- ▶▶ World Weather File (Inspiration 1)
- ▶▶ London Top 10 File (Inspiration 2)



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# Creativity and Teenagers

## Judy Garton-Sprenger & Philip Prowse

You don't have to sign up to any particular view of learning styles to be aware that different learners learn differently, and that the same learners learn in different ways in different situations. There is a place in the language class for rote learning (yes!), and for spelling rules (oh, yes!), for mechanical practice (yes!!) and, of course, for texts and dialogues, exercises and questions.

But a vital part of the classroom mix is creativity. The dictionary tells us that the verb 'create' means 'form out of nothing' or 'bring into being by force of the imagination'. This gives us a clue to the importance of creative activities where learners think and do things in English for the first time (perhaps ever!). Teenagers wishing to assert their individuality are likely to be motivated by activities which encourage them to make personal responses and generate imaginative output according to their particular talents. Such activities provide the opportunity for creative use of English in enjoyable, stimulating and, above all, original ways, whether it is to solve a problem, interpret a text in a new way or make a new meaning.

We offer the following activities as examples which can be adapted to your own teaching situation. They were created for 13–16-year-olds at elementary and pre-intermediate levels.

### Brainteasers

These provoke thought, discussion and laughter, with students concentrating on finding solutions to the problem rather than worrying about how to express themselves. And they can find more brainteasers on the Web or make up their own.

- 1 Picture of woman looking at photo of young man.  
Woman: I have no brothers or sisters, but this man's mother is my father's daughter.  
*Who is the man in the photo?*
- 2 A man and a woman are standing on the same piece of newspaper. But they can't touch each other. *Why not?*
- 3 Mary's mother, Mrs Jones, has four children. The oldest, a boy, is called North. The next oldest, a girl, is called South. The third child, a boy, is called East. The youngest child is another girl. *What's her name?*
- 4 A doctor and a boy are fishing. The boy is the doctor's son, but the doctor isn't the boy's father. *Who is the doctor?*
- 5 Jenny likes pizzas but she doesn't like pasta. She likes eggs but she doesn't like ham. She likes butter but she doesn't like bread. She likes peppers but she doesn't like olives. She loves coffee!  
*What kind of things does Jenny like?*

- 6 It's faster than the speed of light.  
It's darker than the darkest night.  
When something is free, you pay it.  
When you have a shower, you wear it.  
When you lose, you win it.  
When you're silent, you say it.  
Poor people have it.  
Rich people need it.  
If you eat it, you'll die.  
*What is it?*

Answers 1 The woman's son. 2 There's a door between them. 3 Mary. 4 The boy's mother. 5 She likes things with double letters. 6 Nothing.

### Poems

These frames enable students to write their own poetry!

#### Good/Bad poem

I'm good at dancing.  
I'm good at rap.  
I'm good at sleeping,  
But I'm bad at writing letters!

I'm good at \_\_\_\_\_.  
I'm good at \_\_\_\_\_.  
I'm good at \_\_\_\_\_.  
But I'm bad at \_\_\_\_\_!

#### Things I've done ...

I've ...  
**A**nswered lots of questions  
**B**een to Brazil  
**C**limbed a lot of hills  
**D**one my homework and  
**E**aten a lot of meals  
**F**ound a friend  
**G**iven her a present  
**H**ad a haircut and  
**I**roned my jacket  
**J**ust sung a song  
**K**ept a notebook  
**L**ost some money  
**M**ade some mistakes  
**O**ften been happy  
**P**layed lots of games  
**Q**uickly and slowly  
**R**ead a hundred books and  
**S**een fifty fil  
**T**ried to play tennis and  
**U**sually lost  
**V**isited London  
**W**hat a lot to see!  
**X** is too difficul  
**Y**ou know and so is  
**Z**

Now write your own A–Z poem beginning  
Things I've done ...  
I've  
A...

Students also enjoy limericks, and can write their own if given the framework: a limerick is a five-line poem in which the first two lines rhyme with the fifth line and the shorter third and fourth lines rhyme with each other.

A young kangaroo in Australia  
Said 'I'm a terrible failure!  
I can't jump at all  
'Cause my legs are too small –  
I'm the worst kangaroo in Australia!

There was a young woman called Mabel  
Who wanted to dance on the table  
'Don't know if I should  
I would if I could  
But I'm not sure if I'm able'

## Stories

All teenagers can write stories, as long as they are provided with a clearly defined framework on which they can build and develop their own ideas. Here is a highly structured model:

**Write a news story about two people in an amazing rescue. Use these questions to help you.**

- Who are the people and how old are they? Where are they from?
- Where were they and what were they doing when they got into trouble?
- What happened to them? Did they get lost or have an accident? Was someone injured?
- Who did they contact to ask for help? How did they make contact?
- What happened when help arrived? How were the people rescued?
- What did they say after the rescue?

**Choose a headline for your story, and read or show it to other students in the class. Which rescue story is the most amazing?**

For some lovely suggestions of ways to motivate students to explore creative writing, go to

[www.bbc.co.uk/blast/writing/story\\_starter.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blast/writing/story_starter.shtml)

## Sketches

Watching, acting out, recording and perhaps rewriting drama is always challenging and rewarding. Students can also create their own sketches, photograph them with a digital camera, and then display the prints with speech bubbles by the characters.

## Sign Language

OFFICER Excuse me, sir. What are you doing?  
MAN I'm taking photographs.  
OFFICER Yes, I know. But you can't do that.  
MAN Yes, I can. I'm very good at taking photos  
OFFICER No, sir, I mean you aren't allowed to do that.  
MAN It's not against the law to take pictures.

OFFICER Not usually, sir, but you can't take pictures here.  
MAN Why not?  
OFFICER Look at the sign – it says: Police No Entry.  
MAN Oh, that's OK. I'm not a police officer.  
OFFICER Exactly. That's why you shouldn't be here.  
MAN No, that's why you shouldn't be here.  
OFFICER I beg your pardon?  
MAN You're a police officer, so you shouldn't be here.  
OFFICER Are you trying to be funny?  
MAN Certainly not! The sign says that police mustn't come in here.  
OFFICER No, it doesn't!  
MAN You don't have to shout.  
OFFICER Sir, that is a police sign. It says no one can come in here.  
MAN No one?  
OFFICER That's right.  
MAN Then you're breaking the law. You'd better leave before I take a photo of you!

## Games and puzzles

Played in pairs or groups, games like these generate creative thought as well as laughter and fun.

### Word Race

**Work in pairs and name:**

- 1 One kind of food that is yellow.
- 2 Two words for meals.
- 3 Two things you can do at the gym.
- 4 Three sports ending in *-ball*.
- 5 Three days of the week with six letters.
- 6 Three words ending with the sound /ʃ/.
- 7 Four prepositions of time.
- 8 Four months of the year ending with the letter *y*.
- 9 Four leisure activities.
- 10 Four kinds of food beginning with the letter *c*.
- 11 Five colours.
- 12 Five school subjects.
- 13 Five numbers beginning with the letter *f*.
- 14 Five letters which rhyme with *B*.
- 15 Five names of clothes.

### What Is It?

Work in small groups. Take turns to choose an imaginary object. Don't say what it is! Pick up your object and use it. You can mime and make noises, but don't say anything. The rest of the group try to guess what your object is.

- A It looks like a box.
- B It can't be a computer.
- C It must be a TV!

### Where Am I?

**Imagine you're somewhere outside the classroom. You could be in a town, in the country, by water...**

**Think about these questions and make notes.**

### What time of day is it?

What's the weather like? Do you feel hot, warm, cold, wet?

What can you see around you?  
 Are there any people or animals? What are they doing?  
 What sounds can you hear?  
 What can you smell?  
 How do you feel – happy, relaxed ...?

**Now describe your experience to other students. Can they guess where you are?**

'It's the afternoon, it's a beautiful day, and I feel quite warm. I can see hundreds of people all around me, and we're all watching animals running. I can hear people cheering and clapping and I can smell the grass. I feel excited!'

### Celebrity memories

**Work in small groups. Imagine that you met a famous person who is dead! Imagine what happened, what you did and what you said. Ask and answer questions about the celebrities.**

Who did you meet and where?

What was he/she wearing?

What did he/she say?

Crossword puzzles can be also be creative communication activities, where students make up clues to define their words:

#### STUDENT A

**Student B has the missing words from this crossword. You have Student B's missing words. Don't say the words! Take turns to ask each other for clues and try to complete the crossword.**

- A What's 1 down?
- B It's the opposite of cheap.
- B What's 1 across?
- A It's a big grey animal.

1 E	L	E	2 P	H	A	3 N	T		4 M
									O
5 P	I	A	N	O		6 R			N
									K
		7 L		8 P		9 H	A	T	E
10		A		L					Y
		R		A		12		13	
11 V	E	G	E	T	A	R	I	A	N
		E		E					

#### STUDENT B

**Student A has the missing words from this crossword. You have Student A's missing words. Don't say the words! Take turns to ask each other for clues and try to complete the crossword.**

- A What's 1 down?
- B It's the opposite of *cheap*.

- B What's 1 across?
- A It's a big grey animal.

1 E			2 P			3 N			4
X			I			O			
5 P			N			6 R	A	I	N
E			K			T			
N		7		8		9 H			
10 S	M	A	L	L					
I						12 D		13 C	
11 V						R		A	
E						Y		T	

These crosswords are easy to devise and students can make them up too. A very useful website source for both teachers and students to make their own puzzles, including crosswords and word searches, is: <http://puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com/>

We hope that you will want to use activities like these to balance the classroom offering and satisfy the widest range of students. You will find many more in our own books and in those recommended in the bibliography.

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**Judy Garton-Sprenger and Philip Prowse** are the authors of *Inspiration and Shine*, both courses for teenagers (Macmillan), and many other coursebooks, readers and articles. *Inspiration 2* was Highly Commended in the 2005 Duke of Edinburgh English-Speaking Union English Language Book Awards.

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# Looking at a young learner

Nayr Ibrahim

This article aims to show how a series of interrelated activities, culminating in a creative writing project, inspire a self-conscious young learner to stretch the boundaries of her limited post-beginner knowledge of English. Anchored in a framework of solid language learning objectives at word, sentence and text level, the primary aim of these activities was to develop pronunciation skills and to demonstrate the link between isolated sounds and the process of communication. However, these activities led to new learning opportunities by encouraging the child to manipulate the language creatively in order to produce a personal outcome in the shape of an illustrated cartoon strip. Ultimately, this adventure has increased the child's self-confidence, developed autonomous learning skills and enhanced the language learning experience.

## The young learner

For the sake of the article I will call this young learner Louise. Louise is a French nine-year-old child, who started learning English a year ago at the British Council and at her regular French school simultaneously. At first, this child was a reserved, well-behaved perfectionist who took very few risks. Although always attentive, on task and neat, she only participated partially in classroom activities. For the most part, she took refuge in a prison of silent insecurity. This silence was a sign of fear of inaccuracy and imperfection, and a need for an extended time period in which to assimilate and digest the weekly linguistic input. Furthermore, it protected her from the unwelcome audience of her classmates and represented a strong dependence on the teacher as the all-knowing guide. However, this silence was misleading because when called upon to react to the teacher's questions, her answers revealed that she had accumulated a substantial amount of passive lexical and grammatical knowledge.

Pronunciation was another reason for her reticence to speak on a more regular basis. At the beginning, the sounds of this new language carved many a confused furrow on Louise's young brow. At the production stage some of these foreign sounds were difficult to articulate and led to incomprehensibility. Consequently, regular pronunciation work, aimed at raising awareness of, focussing on and drilling sounds, identified as problematic for this particular group of French speakers, was introduced throughout the first year of study. These activities were accompanied and enhanced by visual aids, gestures and actions, songs and chants, tongue twisters and games. These isolated phonemes/words were then integrated into communicative speaking and writing tasks. This ensemble gave Louise a solid springboard on which to improve her intelligibility, develop her self-confidence and feel more at ease with speaking.

## The Activities

The following is an example of a series of pronunciation activities with the focus on the phonemes /ɔ:/ and /ɒ/, which sprung from the unit on Shops and Shopping:

- Once the lexical and functional elements were presented, the two phonemes were isolated using visual support in a discriminating and categorising whole class exercise.
- Further reinforcement was provided in a differentiating listening task followed by extensive drilling.
- In order to demonstrate that pronunciation is an integral part of oral communication, these words were used in a shopping role play, where children had to add the words/items to their respective /ɔ:/ and /ɒ/ shopping baskets. This encouraged Louise to produce the functional language of interacting with a shopkeeper as well as consider the difference between the two sounds.
- Louise then further investigated these phonemes by finding other words in her course book and adding them to her shopping baskets.
- As French children are introduced to linguistic metalanguage at an early age when learning their mother tongue, Louise was encouraged to reflect on their respective word classes – nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, question words, verbs – thus preparing the sentence level work for the ultimate writing activity.
- This magical cauldron of isolated words served as a trigger for a creative writing task involving the cartoon strip.

Louise was aware of the procedure to follow as this activity had been done the previous year, when children worked on the /ʌ/ and /æ/ phonemes. It was a teacher-led whole class event, with a high degree of scaffolding. The teacher acted as scribe, guiding these beginners to using words with the selected phonemes already in their lexical repertoire. The teacher also controlled sentence structure, which was simple and included the verb *to be*, *can* and *have got*. It was a collective creative project with each child contributing at least one word, sentence, idea or sequence of events. The children then illustrated the 8-scene cartoon strip, which added an element of artistic individualism. Due to a boy/girl ratio of 10 to 6 the topic of the cartoon revolved around football and the elation and disappointment of the fans.

## The outcome

This year the writing stage of the activity was handed over to the children, working in pairs. This allowed for the development of original settings and story lines and the girls escaped the football scenario to explore more creative options. After the introductory teacher-directed

stages as outlined above, Louise and her partner were asked to write an 8-part story using the isolated words they had added to their shopping baskets. Their initial reaction of doubt at their ability to compose a cohesive text was replaced by a flurry of creativity as words became sentences and meaning was created. As these post-beginners tackled independent creative writing, teacher support was reduced to monitoring, asking leading questions, providing unknown vocabulary if esteemed essential and praising their every effort. The first draft was then completed individually as a homework exercise and corrected with Louise in class. At the correction stage, Louise was prompted to reflect on: variety in verb use, correct use of verb form and avoiding the temptation to translate directly from French.

Louise's cartoon strip (see next page) reveals that the creativity factor superseded the inclusion of the /C:/and /D/ words, which is restricted to the characters (frog, tortoise and dog), the setting (the forest) and other story specific words (stops, what, lost). Her story reflects a simple narrative structure with the shopping context as the trigger for the main event. It has a beginning, middle and end and includes a problem, and a resolution in the shape of a squirrel. When asked how she came up with words and expressions such as "approach", "lost" and

"For a moment" Louise simply shrugged her shoulders and admitted to looking them up in her dictionary at home. Louise proudly read out her story, which is now displayed in the reception area for others to enjoy.

## Conclusion

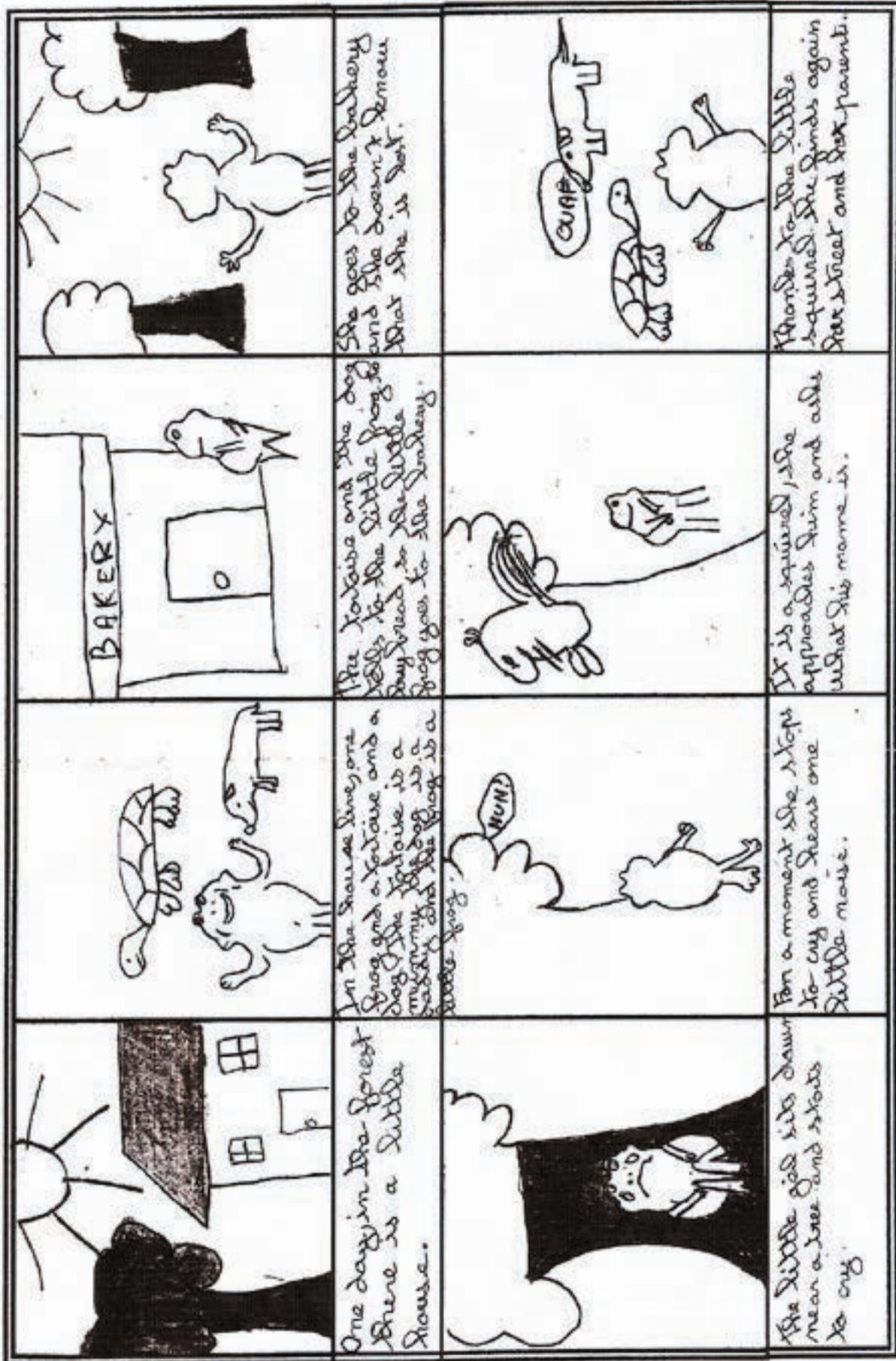
Although Louise will never shout out an answer spontaneously, her hand now shoots up as a sign of keenness to participate in all activities. Louise was given the opportunity to explore her knowledge of the English language differently and freely and discovered that she could manipulate the language meaningfully. This key to freedom and creativity has opened up the gates of her prison of silence and showed her the pleasure and power of communication.

*Nayr Ibrahim is a Senior Teacher at the Young Learner's Centre at the British Council in Paris. She has been teaching EFL and Bilingual students for the past seven years and has also co-authored a course book for the primary schools in France.*



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2006

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 24 <sup>th</sup> -26 <sup>th</sup> March | <p><b><u>IATEFL YL SIG and PIB/IFU, Vienna</u></b><br/> <b>"Interact – Integrating Drama and Storytelling in ELT"</b><br/>         IFU/PIB-Wien<br/>         Grenzackerstr. 18,<br/>         A-1100 Vienna, Austria<br/>         ifu@pib-wien.ac.at or fax 0043 1 60118-4500<br/>         gordon_lewis@kaplan.com</p> |
| 4th - 6th April                          | <p><b><u>Using Real Books with Children</u></b><br/> <b><u>Learning English</u></b><br/>         University of York</p>   |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> April                    | <p><b><u>YL SIG Pre- Conference Event (PCE)</u></b><br/> <b>"Young learners and the CLIL continuum"</b><br/>         International Centre, Harrogate, UK</p>  |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> April | <p><b><u>40<sup>th</sup> Interational IATEFL conference</u></b><br/>         International Centre, Harrogate, UK</p>  |



# Creative familiarisation activities on young learner teachers' courses

Simon Smith

I would like to describe three familiarisation activities I sometimes use on short intensive young learner teacher in-service courses. I will then comment on the opportunities I feel they provide for teachers to be creative, and will conclude with a brief consideration of what these activities can offer the young learner teacher trainer. For reasons of space I will not attempt to define the term *creativity*, and will consider the terms *activity* and *task* to be synonyms.

## Activity 1: Getting to know the trainer

### Materials needed

Objects connected with the trainer in some way. I try to prepare a mix of documents, pictures and objects.

### Procedure

1. Divide teachers into groups
2. Write on the board *We know...We think.....We wonder*
3. Tell teachers that they will look at objects related to your life and that each group should use the objects as a basis for writing three sentences under each heading respectively. So if objects include a birth certificate, a football season ticket, and jar of Marmite, example sentences might be *We know you were born in 1958, We think you like football. We wonder what Marmite is.*
4. Hand out objects to each group, who discuss, and make notes under the categories. Deal with questions as you monitor.
5. After a few minutes ask groups to swap objects and repeat step 4.
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 until each group has had the chance to see all the objects.
7. Get feedback from the groups in plenary, and deal with any questions that arise.
8. Discuss ways of adapting this activity to teachers' own classrooms.

## Activity 2: Getting to know each other

### Materials needed

Dice, counters, and copies of the example board game below. This idea is adapted from the *Values Topics Board Game* in Klippel (1984). (See page 28)

### Procedure

1. Teachers throw the dice and move their counter forward accordingly. They tell others in their group about the topic they land on. If a teacher lands on a 'free question' square, others can each ask them a question. A teacher can refuse to answer

a question if they feel it is too personal, or if they have no experience of the topic referred to on their square.

2. After an agreed time limit, find out in plenary what teachers learned about each other.
3. Discuss ways of adjusting the activity to suit teachers' own contexts

## Activity 3: Getting to know the course building

### Materials

A pen and piece of paper for each group of teachers.

### Procedure

1. Briefly show teachers around the building they will be working in for the duration of the course.
2. Now that teachers have some idea of what's in the building, divide them into groups, and assign sections of the alphabet to each group.
3. Set a time limit, and ask teachers to find examples of things in the building beginning with their designated letters.
4. Get feedback in plenary or jigsaw groups, and deal with any questions that arise
5. Discuss ways of adapting this activity to a young learner context.

## What opportunities do these activities offer for teachers to be creative?

In activity 1 participants often ask questions about the meaning of objects or documents they see. They may be intrigued for example, by documents such as marriage certificate, driving licences, or Criminal Record Bureau disclosure checks. Questions about the function and content of some documents and the significance of some objects tends to follow, as do comparisons with similar documents or objects in teachers' own countries. I have found that similar opportunities arise from activities 2 and 3, as participants may want to compare professional development opportunities available in their own contexts, or to ask about books, people or facilities seen during a tour of the building. In sum, the slightly open-ended nature of all three activities provides opportunities for teachers to make sense (Donaldson 1978) from input. In addition, the challenge of content, language and the task and the support available from peers and the trainer tends to mean that teachers can find out and learn as much as they want to. This feature of the activities links to Lynne Cameron's highlighting of

## Activity 2 - Getting to know each other

<b>A book which helped you to develop</b>	<b>An essential tool in your job</b>	<b>Three qualities needed in your job</b>	<b>Free question (Others each ask you)</b>	<b>Three reasons you had for coming on this course</b>
<b>A colleague you respect</b>	<b>A person who has helped you to develop professionally</b>	<b>Your office/ staffroom</b>	<b>An area of skills or knowledge you would like to develop</b>	<b>Free question (Others each ask you)</b>
<b>One of the best features of your job</b>	<b>A role you play/have played in someone else's development</b>	<b>A good course for teachers you have attended</b>	<b>Free question (Others each ask you)</b>	<b>An aspect of your work you dislike</b>
<b>A major educational change in your country in the last five years</b>	<b>How you plan to share information/ ideas from this course with colleagues when you go back to work</b>	<b>Free question (Others each ask you)</b>	<b>Something you know about this course</b>	<b>Your previous job</b>
<b>A strategy you have for managing your time at work</b>	<b>Free question (Others each ask you)</b>	<b>A professional skill/strength you think you have</b>	<b>The job you hope to be doing in five years' time</b>	<b>One way you use to develop your own knowledge or skills.</b>

creativity coming about through learners noticing gaps in their own understanding in her article in this issue of **CATS**.

In the same article, Cameron also mentions subversion as a feature of creativity, and I would say that all three activities provide potential for teachers to be creative in this way. The sentence stems allow teachers to respond in ways not directly connected to the objects themselves. Some teachers, for example, complete the stems with phrases such as We wonder what you're not showing us, or We think we know why we are doing this. In activity 3, many teachers find imaginative or subversive solutions to difficult letters such as Q, X and Z

In activity 2, scope for subversion is more limited, but choices teachers can make in the way they do the activity allow for a degree of creativity, I feel. They need to decide, for example, where they will start on the board (e.g. top or bottom right or left hand corners), which direction they will move the counters in, whether they will all start from the same place or, for example, continue from the place the previous thrower of the dice finished at. They also have a choice of whether to go for depth or spread in their discussion. Some groups like to spend a long time on each question, and may move into areas not directly related to the question, such as teachers' pay, teachers' status, and so on. Some groups, on the contrary, like to keep a brisk pace. Other groups will tend to vary their pace according to the level of interest they perceive in the question. In activity 3, teachers are faced with choices about learning strategies they will use. Discussion of these choices is often explicit. Groups may agree to allocate different letters to different group members for example, or to work together on each letter. Alternatively, they may walk around the building individually or in pairs and pool their findings as a group later on.

## How can using creative familiarisation activities help the trainer?

The first obvious benefit is that the activities themselves mirror to some extent the kinds of activities many teachers might use with their own young learner classes. Teachers usually want to make comments and ask questions about the value of these activities. In this sense, the activities lend themselves well to discussion of theories underpinning young learner learning and development. Discussion often centres around aspects of learning such as opportunities for children to make sense of language, the need for support and challenge in class, ownership of language, learning strategies, and learning styles. The specific context of the activities just experienced tends to provide a shared frame of reference for this discussion. Ramani (1987) is one of many writers

who argue persuasively for the value of starting from practical experience as a way of developing a personal theory of teaching and learning.

Secondly, teachers' responses during the activities and after them can help the trainer to find out about their values, attitudes and beliefs. If a number of teachers comment that different finishing times in activities like this tends to create discipline problems, for instance, the trainer may perhaps use this information to fine-tune course design.

Thirdly, there is a practical consideration. While the activities provide discussion material for teachers and diagnostic information for the trainer they are also relatively simple for the trainer to prepare. In Grant's words(1987), these familiarisation activities have a high surrender value in that the effort put in to preparing them tends to justify the results achieved.

## Summary

I have described three familiarisation activities used at the start of short methodology courses for teachers of English to young learners. I have highlighted the chances they provide for teachers to create their own meaning, to interpret their task creatively and to make choices in organising their work. I have also commented that in my experience the activities often provide the trainer with useful discussion material, information about teachers' values and beliefs, and a good return on preparation time.

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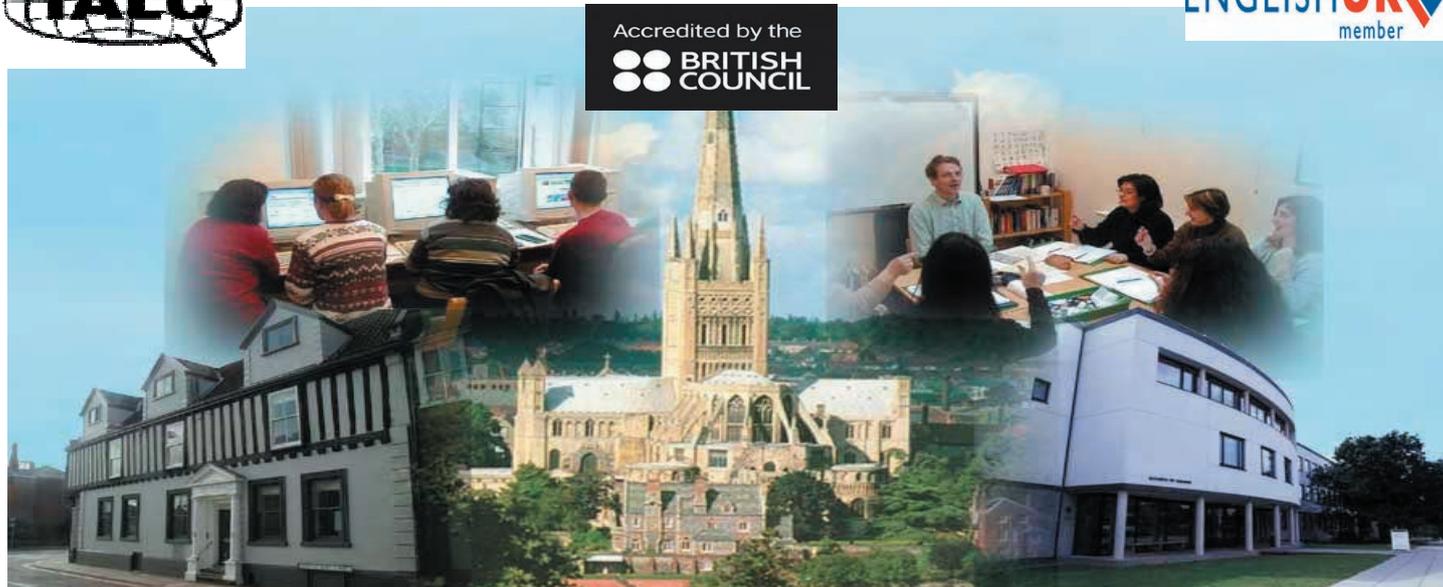
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# Creative recipes for planning lessons

Gail Ellis & Carol Read

This article explores the way in which a creative task in primary teacher education can provide an opportunity for enjoyable and reflective discussion of planning lessons and establishing optimal conditions for effective teaching and learning. The task aims to encourage participants to think creatively and make imaginative use of metaphor in order to take them beyond prescribed pedagogical constructs of what a 'good lesson' might be.

## Background and context of the Primary Teacher Training Course (PTTC)

The PTTC is an intensive, one week course designed for primary language teachers in France which we have run jointly at the British Council in Paris since 1994. The aim of the course is to develop practical classroom skills in teaching English to children in primary schools. It is designed to give experienced teachers an opportunity to learn new ideas and explore current issues in English Language Teaching to young learners. For teachers starting out or with less experience, it is designed to develop confidence and competence in working with children.

## A creativity loop

At the outset of the course, through discussion of how children learn using the 'C-wheel' (Read 1998), creativity is identified as a key ingredient in establishing a positive learning environment in which children with different multiple intelligence profiles are likely to learn best.

Throughout the course, participants are encouraged to identify ways of building on the creative potential that children bring to class and to integrate language development with a wide range of thinking skills in order to make learning memorable, personalised and enjoyable as well as to build on individual strengths. At the same time, as a kind of 'loop input' (Woodward 2003), many of the teacher education tasks on the course are designed to stimulate creative thinking in order to convey the value of this in teachers' own professional development and enhance their learning in a similar way. One such task we have developed recently builds on participants' elaboration of metaphor as a tool for discussing key issues in planning lessons.

## Metaphor in teacher education

Metaphor – in other words, when we use a word or a phrase that means one thing to refer to another - is something that we use constantly in our everyday lives. In a teacher education context, metaphor can be a powerful vehicle for surfacing beliefs, exploring opinions and shaping ideas related to particular aspects of teaching and learning. Through the use of metaphor, discussion takes place at one remove from the issue itself and this often leads to less constraint in participating and expressing personal views. Similarly, through the free association of ideas and extended, often humorous, development of a metaphor, fresh perspectives on a topic or new insights may readily occur.

The use of metaphor in teacher education, and in relation to lesson planning in particular, is not new. Ur (1996) describes a group task in which participants are invited to explore given metaphors for a lesson, such as for example, a football game, climbing a mountain or consulting the doctor, and relate these to different concepts of a lesson which they seem to embody. Similarly, Thornbury (1999) describes an informal experiment in which students were invited to choose metaphors for good lessons from performance genres such as a symphony, a film, a poem or a dance and uses these to draw out features of lessons as aesthetic experiences, focussing in particular on plot, theme, rhythm, flow and the sense of an ending. Woodward (2001) regularly returns to an extensively developed metaphor of a garden and gardening at the end of chapters in order to summarise key features and processes in lesson planning which are described in terms of, for example, the influence of the weather, the soil, the size of garden, the type of plants and the choice of gardening tools. By using a metaphorical construct, the discussion of teaching and learning processes in lessons is immediately made less abstract and more accessible, as well as inviting

The 'C' wheel



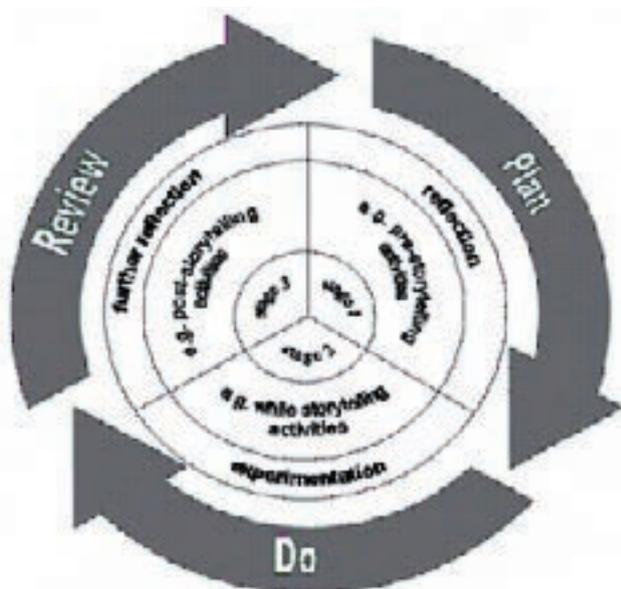
further elaboration and ideas (what about the weeds, the use of chemicals, how much to water, the layout of paths etc).

## Problems of a lesson planning session

On the Paris PTTC there is no practical teaching component or classroom observation. This means that lesson planning cannot be applied to a real, timed context and can only be done in a hypothetical way. Furthermore, in everyday life, lesson planning is usually an individual activity shaped by the teacher's personal background, experience, beliefs and preferences as well as by their personality and relationship with a real group of children. With only a single session on lesson planning available on the course, there is also a lack of time. We have found this makes it both frustrating and unsatisfactory to use, for example, a group-based task where the final outcome is a written up lesson plan.

## A structured approach

Our main objective in the session is to convey the value of a structured approach to lesson planning by providing a framework for organising teaching stages and tasks, which will support and encourage effective learning. In order to do this, we use the 'Plan, Do, Review' model (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2002) which can flexibly cater for individual teacher preferences and educational and cultural expectations, by accommodating different approaches to language teaching whether it be conventional PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) procedures or a strong form of the task-based approach.



Our own sessions throughout the course are also based on this model so that participants are involved in experiencing the plan-do-review cycle as learners. This means that they can recognise the value of explicit and systematic staging in which they are prepared for, experiment and review and reflect on what they have done and how they have done it. This is another form of 'loop input' (Woodward, op cit) which runs through the course.

A good lesson needs a variety and balance of ingredients in terms of such things as activity types, materials and content, interaction patterns, development of language skills, tempo and pace, level of pupil responsibility, classroom arrangement and challenge. In June 2003, Robert Fisher, the invited guest lecturer for the PTTC that year, gave a talk entitled, Creative Minds. He had asked some 11 year-olds to use the metaphor of a recipe to reflect on the ingredients for a happy class and showed the following recipe from David (Fisher 2005: 152):

## Happy Class recipe

### My recipe for a Happy Class

#### Ingredients

- 1 pinch of sharing
- 1/2 cup of confidence
- 1tbsp of enjoyment
- 6 tsp of cheerfulness
- 5oz of communication
- 1/2 kg of good looks
- 250g of co-operation
- 10g of behaviour
- 1kg of discipline
- 1 really nice teacher (grated)
- 500ml of kindness

#### Method

- Mix the confidence, communication and co-operation together in a large bowl.
- Add the enjoyment, the cheerfulness and the good looks to the mixture.
- Beat together the behaviour, the discipline and add to the mixture.
- Bake the cake at 200 c in a round tin 15cm deep and 45cm in diameter for 1 week.
- Once the cake is baked, take it out of the oven and sprinkle the teacher on top.
- The cake makes 10 helpings.

#### David, aged 11

We were immediately struck by the insights of an eleven-year-old child into what constitutes a happy class and the weighting given to the different ingredients. Interestingly, David focuses very much on the characteristics, attitudes and values of a teacher of young learners (sharing, confidence, cheerfulness, co-operation, kindness) and aspects of classroom management (communication, behaviour, discipline). He recommends a whole kilo of discipline, for example, and in order for everyone to have equal attention from the teacher, he or she is 'grated' and spread over the whole dish.

## Application of the recipe metaphor

As a result of thinking about David's cake, we recognised the potential of applying the recipe metaphor to our lesson planning session as a way of enabling participants to capture the essence of a good lesson in

the same way that David had captured the essence of a happy class. Given that the lesson planning session was on the last day of the course, it also seemed to provide an ideal opportunity to review many of the main general learning points which had been made. We therefore designed a task in which groups were asked to create their own recipes for a good lesson. We structured this by first asking participants to write their own definitions of a good lesson and comparing these with published ones such as Rivers (1981) and Ur (op cit). This was then followed by discussion of the plan-do-review framework (already familiar to participants from previous sessions) and possible formats for writing and recording lesson plans which in turn led into the group recipe-writing task.

## Writing the recipes

The task generated a great deal of fervent discussion, particularly in relation to the choice of ingredients and quantities, and recipes for a wide range of dishes were produced. These included 'appétitifs' such as 'Successful

Lesson Punch', starters such as 'Satisfaction paté en croute', main courses such as 'Lesson Stew,' salads such as 'Wonder Learning Salad' and desserts such as 'Scrumptious Lesson Pie.'

The task proved to be both creative and enjoyable in providing a stimulating context in which different views and beliefs could be discussed in an atmosphere of mutual respect and mixed together to produce a tangible final outcome. After writing the recipes (which in some cases, such as the 'Lesson trifle', also included illustrations) these were circulated and discussed in plenary, giving participants a chance to explain and justify their choice of ingredients, quantities and methods. It was interesting that, during this post-task discussion, explicit links naturally emerged between the processes of planning lessons and teacher education sessions, with participants drawing parallels in the role of the learner (irrespective of whether adult or child) in each context. After the course, the recipes were collated into a 'recipe book' and sent to participants as a memento.

## Interpretation of the metaphors

Below are some selected examples of 'ingredients' from some of the recipes and their interpretations as revealed during the post-task discussion.

<b>Ingredient metaphors</b>	<b>Post-task discussion/interpretations</b>
<b>one lesson plan – marinated overnight</b>	reflects the need for careful, advance planning to ensure that everything goes as well as possible
<b>one cup of natural enthusiasm</b>	reflects the importance of the teacher's attitude and the crucial influence this has on children's response
<b>a ladle of smiles</b>	reflects the importance of the affective factor in the classroom and the need to create an encouraging and supportive learning environment
<b>time management jelly</b>	one participant explained that this was 'jelly' as time management was something she felt very 'wobbly' about in her own teaching.
<b>five drops of concentrated concentration</b>	reflects the importance of creating a stimulating and structured environment in which children learn how to focus and concentrate
<b>hundreds and thousands of humour</b>	reflects that learning needs to be enjoyable, with a light touch of laughter and fun
<b>a bunch of stimuli</b>	reflects the need to create a variety of ways to interest, challenge and engage children in learning
<b>a good handful of plenary</b>	reflects the importance of whole class work e.g. setting aims at the beginning of lessons, reviewing lessons at the end and giving children opportunities to share the outcomes of their work
<b>one fresh teacher, chilled</b>	reflects the importance of being relaxed and keeping cool at difficult times; alternatively, reflects being a figure of authority who makes it clear what is acceptable behaviour and can maintain discipline and an orderly learning environment
<b>one cube of content bouillon</b>	reflects the importance of including real content which goes beyond the mundane, utilitarian level of only basic dialogues and daily activities
<b>a comforting custard of mutual respect, trust and security</b>	reflects the importance of creating a non-threatening learning environment, respecting diversity, treating pupils consistently and fairly, demonstrating and promoting positive values, attitudes and behaviour and acknowledging influence as a role model
<b>a bowl of patience seeds</b>	reflects the importance of the need for patience – an important characteristic of a teacher of children
<b>spices (energy, discipline, respect, smiles)</b>	reflects four features which help to enhance and bring out the best in any lesson plan

## Conclusion

The group recipe-writing task provided an enjoyable, reflective discussion and finale to the course. The use of metaphors in the recipes facilitated discussion of aspects of planning that went beyond prescribed pedagogical constructs and enabled participants to explore aspects of 'good lessons', such as the creation of appropriate affective conditions, which cannot be easily reflected in a lesson plan. The task also accommodated a variety of personal views and preferences in a harmonious way.

From a teacher education perspective, the participants' recipes provided a vehicle for us as trainers to reflect and evaluate whether our intended messages during the course had been effectively conveyed and assimilated. The inclusion and emphasis on aspects such as 'one cube of content bouillon', a 'comforting custard of mutual respect, trust and security', a 'bowl of patience seeds' and 'spices (energy, discipline, respect, smiles)' gave ample creative evidence of participants' awareness of how to plan for and establish optimal conditions for effective teaching and learning with children.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Professor Robert Fisher who kindly gave us permission to use David's 'Happy Class recipe' as the basis for the teacher education task on lesson planning and this article. We would also like to thank all the participants on the Paris PTTC courses from 2003-5 for throwing themselves into the task with such enthusiasm and for the extracts from their recipes which are reproduced here.

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*Both Gail and Carol have published widely in the field of young learners.*

# IATEFL Young Learners SIG WEBSITES

Did you know that the YL SIG has two websites, including one with content exclusively for members?

Check them out at

<http://www.iatefl-ylsig.or> (resources)

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/younglearners/join> (discussions)

# Book Reviews

## Multiple Intelligences in Secondary Education

Mario Rinvolutri and Herbert Puchta

Helbling Languages, 2005

[www.heblinglanguages.com](http://www.heblinglanguages.com)

### Reviewed by Niki Joseph

This resource book is published by Helbling Languages and the authors are Herbert Puchta and Mario Rinvolutri. Many readers will already be familiar with their innovative teaching materials.

On the back cover we read that '*One of the secrets of teaching a foreign language successfully lies in balancing routine classroom work with innovative and creative activities and techniques*'. **Multiple intelligences in EFL** addresses the topic by essentially taking Howard Gardner's theories and providing some exercises for secondary and adult students in the ELT classroom.

It begins with a very clear and accessible overview and discussion of the frames of MI and clear examples of what they are. This is useful and necessary to understand the rest of the book. For me, section 3 was the most useful – What has this got to do with my teaching? Most readers will have attended sessions on MI at some point and/or read articles. However, this section, immediately gives a very clear example of teaching a linguistic area multi-intelligently. The authors take the area of punctuation – which for most students is fairly uninteresting and for teachers involves lots of reading up the night before! The example illustrates this linguistic area beautifully. Students are given a passage and told to work out a percussion system for the punctuation. Musical, kinaesthetic and interpersonal intelligences are appealed to and thus making it much easier for all to see that the punctuation is '*more than random salt and pepper on the page*' (page 17) I tried this activity out with a group of teenagers – aged 15 – 17 and it was a lovely way for me to make the point that English doesn't have as many commas as their own language and that full stops are used far more often.

This book is for secondary and adult learners. However, the MI theories are applicable across all age groups. Many primary books already weave these aspects into their courses – mainly perhaps, kinaesthetic, musical, linguistic and logical-mathematical. So these activities as such are not really suitable for low level young children. But this, I think, is the point – that as teachers of older/adult learners we tend to focus solely on the language/task and not the whole learner and their

different intelligences and ways of learning and remembering.

The introduction does also point out that reactions to the activities will be different to the one that you anticipated. The authors do not see this as an obstacle but rather as a challenge. 'These intriguing differences in the way the human brain works can become stimuli for discussions for individual thinking process, and learning from each other'.

The book is divided into 5 sections - Genral MI Exercises, Teaching from your coursebook, Looking out, Looking In, Self-Management and the quick reference guide at the back.

**Section 1** – general MI Exercises is recommended for gaining a better idea of how the intelligences work. *The intelligences on holiday* is one that is recommended in which students are dictated questions about their holidays ranging from *Where were you? To what kind of light was there? What new sounds do you remember hearing?*

These questions are clearly addressing spatial and musical intelligence and I think that most students would be able to answer them. I'm not so sure about a final question though – Were there any moments when you felt really in harmony with the sky and the land and the place itself? Teachers need to know whether students in their setting would feel comfortable and therefore able to answer questions like these.

Teachers using this book will also need to be clear about their aims. The activities don't include linguistic aims as such – i.e. there is no 'present perfect' practice here. But nor should the book just be seen fluency activities. The activities and exercises can easily be integrated with any course. Personally, I feel that some activities will simply not work with students **unless** they have been prepared beforehand.

Thus perhaps the best section to begin with is the 'Teaching from your coursebook'. (**Section 2**). The example given above of punctuation is from that section.

**Section 3** - Looking Out – focuses on interpersonal intelligences and there's a nice one about ambiguity in language. **Section 4** –Looking In. This part offers exercises for the students who '*sigh a little when asked , yet again, to work in pairs*'. (page 23) **Section 5** Self Management is for once the groups have warmed up to these kinds of activities and so know what they are all about.

I really liked the Teachers quick reference guide at the back - where in a double spread you can easily

find, for example, a kinaesthetic activity for your lower intermediate group.

An activity that took me back to my primary days is this one. Students have to use their spatial intelligence to work out phrases and words. Do you remember it??!

YY UR  
YY UB  
I C U R  
YY 4 Me!

*See solution on page 37*

To sum up then this is a welcome book to add to the resource bookshelf and perhaps the beginning of a more systematic approach to addressing MI with learners.

*Niki Joseph lives in Portugal where she runs her own language school and is a teacher, trainer and Cambridge ESOL examiner. She is shortly to become Joint Coordinator of the YL SIG.*



## Writing with Children

Reilly J. & Reilly V.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005

### Reviewed by Jason Renshaw

In their introduction to *Writing with Children*, the authors point out that “no one has produced a continuum of the developmental stages of writing for children learning English as a foreign or second language” and that “there is no theoretical model to follow at this time.” In writing this book, they have made very good headway on at least presenting a potential developmental continuum that can be referred to for the purposes of designing a principled and child-friendly writing curriculum for young EFL/ESL learners. The overall objective of the book is stated as being to “help teachers to guide children through the stages of writing to become confident independent writers.” In my opinion that aim is achieved, assisted with a very succinct student level system that is mindful of learners’ experience with writing in their first language and an approach encompassing six writing stages (pre-writing, letters, words, sentences, texts and poetry).

The bank of resources begins with the **pre-writing** level and introduces simple activities organized under the categories of “developing matching, categorizing, and observational skills”, “developing observational skills and memory”, and “from gross to fine motor skills.” Experienced YL teachers will find many of these activities familiar, but what is valuable here is that the explanations and variations provide clear links to how the activities promote future writing skills, and how they can be upgraded to apply them for letter and/or word recognition.

At the **letter** level, the authors first emphasize some

basic considerations for physically writing letters. It is, of course, unsurprising to see the activities in this section focus on areas such as “teaching the alphabet”, “writing the alphabet” and “alphabet recall.” For those unfamiliar with entry-level phonics reading and writing instruction, the activities and philosophy in this section would make an excellent starting point. If you have already taught phonics before, you may find some useful methods to add to your existing stock of classroom activities.

Heading into the **word** level activity bank, we find some important initial discussion about “word attack skills.” Quite appropriately (I feel), before launching into the activities for this level, they stress the importance of setting up a “literate” classroom, especially in terms of creating an appropriate physical environment in which young learners can be encouraged to develop their reading and writing. Word level writing activities are then launched under the categories “from reading to writing”, “making words memorable”, “onset and rime activities”, and “rhyming activities”.

**Sentence** level writing activities are first discussed in terms of the support children need as they write, how to make writing personal, and a pre-writing strategy the authors call “talking for writing”. These three issues appear to guide or underlie the activities that follow. In my experience, sentence level writing activities are already very well (perhaps even too well) addressed in the majority of young learner textbooks available on the market. However, if you feel that these approaches are too repetitive or one-dimensional, this section of the resource book will give you some valuable and creative alternatives to explore.

Moving into the fifth stage, **text** level writing activities are defined under “styles of writing”, in which the authors preview a range of genres including narration/stories, descriptions, letters, instructions, informational writing, research reports and persuasive writing. While the descriptions and guidelines for activities in this section are detailed and extensive, this is where I think the book pulled up a little short. The authors do note the importance of paragraphing main ideas in the introduction for this section, but most of the activities themselves do not emphasize this important consideration for text-level writing. More importantly, however, the bank of activities in this section appears brief. I would have liked to see some activities for writing emails in the “letters” section (rather than just “a greetings mat” and “post-it memos”), as it opens enormous opportunities for real-life communicative writing for children becoming increasingly familiar and comfortable with computers and technology. I also feel that text-level composition is more accessible to young learners than many are willing to admit, an impression that is echoed by the authors at the start of the book but not entirely followed up or promoted in this section of the resources. For teachers concentrating on the early and middle

young learner sectors, this is probably not an issue. However, teachers of late young learner ages getting ready for the transition to secondary schooling may well echo my sentiments here.

Then comes **poetry**. I think a good case is made when the authors answer their own question “why write poetry?” – not just in terms of learning to use features like alliteration, rhyme, metaphor, imagery, etc., but more practically when they point out that not all children find it easy to write prose and the shorter length of poems makes drafting and reviewing quicker and easier (to some extent). To be honest, I had not been a big advocate of poetry writing in my young learner classes, but the authors nabbed and converted me by the time I’d read through to “lantern poems”! This section of the book is really fantastic – if (like me) you had not considered poetry writing an option for your classes, please do take a look at these activities. They are amazing and I can’t wait to try out several of them! I also very much liked the ideas for “publication” presented at the start of this section.

As a teacher and curriculum designer for young learners and teens in an East Asian context, where I have seen writing priorities go from nearly non-existent to almost all-encompassing over the past

three years in particular, I picked up this new resource book for teachers with eager fingers. The authors did not disappoint me. Thumbing through this disciplined, extremely well thought-out and presented bank of writing resources, I found several of my concerns about writing with children addressed and extended into new areas. While I personally feel that text level writing activities were not pursued as well as they might have been, overall I can safely say that this is an excellent and long-awaited resource book for an increasingly important area of EFL instruction to children.

**Jason Renshaw** is Academic Coordinator at Ewha Changwon, South Korea. He is the Korea TESOL YL-SIG Coordinator and a member of the IATEFL YL SIG Committee. He has been teaching young learners and teenagers for the past seven years and maintains his own commercial resource site for teachers: [www.englishraven.com](http://www.englishraven.com).  
Email: [englishraven2003@yahoo.com.au](mailto:englishraven2003@yahoo.com.au)



**Solution:** (Too wise you are/too wise you be/ see you are too wise for me)

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## IATEFL Young Learners SIG e-discussion list Topics and fielders for 2006

**Date: 20-27<sup>th</sup> January, 2006**  
**Topic no. 3 - vocabulary**

**Shelagh Rixon** is a Senior Lecturer in the Centre for English Language Teacher Education [CELTE] the University of Warwick, where she co-ordinates the MA programme in the Teaching of English to Young Learners. She has worked at Warwick since 1991, after spending the previous 16 years in the British Council holding posts in London and Italy.

Shelagh's first degree was in Classics at Cambridge, but she managed pretty swiftly to 'convert' to ELT by taking a PCGE in TESOL from the University College of North Wales in Bangor. She also holds an MSc in Applied Linguistics from Edinburgh.

She is the author of materials for children and of a number of background books including 'Young Learners of English: some research perspectives', Longman [1999] and 'Teaching English to Young Learners', Modern English Publishing [2006]



**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> Feb – 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2006**  
**Topic no. 4 – The relationship among action, talk and texts in learning and teaching**

**Professor Gordon Wells** has been a member of the Department of Education at the University of California at Santa Cruz since July 2000. Before that, he was at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, where he was in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, with cross-appointments to the Centre for Teacher Development and the Centre for Applied Cognitive Science.

Prior to moving to Canada in 1984, he was Director of the longitudinal study of language development, "Language at Home and at School", at the University of Bristol, England. In that study, a representative sample of children from age 1 to age 10 was followed, recording naturally-occurring samples of interaction at home and at school. This study convinced him that, in addition to an innate predisposition to learn language, children need a rich and varied experience of conversation with others in order to learn how meaning is made and experience construed in the language of their own particular community. In principle, he believes the same holds for learning in school, although guidance and instruction that is both more systematic and more explicit is needed to help children master the registers and genres of written language in which meaning is made in the academic disciplines. The findings and conclusions from this study were published in *Language development in the pre-school years* (Cambridge U.P., 1985) and *The meaning makers* (Heinemann, 1986).

For details on how to join our discussions visit:  
<http://www.iatefl-ylsig.org> (resources)  
or  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/younglearners/join>  
You will need to join the yahoo group to be on the distribution list.

**DON'T FORGET!**  
Discussion no. 5: May 06  
(exact dates to be confirmed)  
**Dennis Newson**  
**Down with grammar!**

# Summary of YL SIG e-discussion on 'Creativity and teaching young learners'

The e-discussion, which took place in 2005 was led by **Lynne Cameron** who has also kindly provided this summary of the main points.

The e-discussion was supported with preparatory reading of a paper by **Lynne Cameron** available on:

<http://www.education.leeds.ac.uk/research/uploads/27.doc>

A shorter version of this paper can be found on page 9 of this issue of **CATS**.

Contributors to the discussion included Wendy Arnold (list moderator), Patricia B., Dilek Canavar, Helen Doron, Livia Faragó, Dennis Newson, Susan Hillyard, Ozbek Inan, Benniti Jen, Megan Roderick, Danae Seamann, Alexander Sokol, Sally Sonnex, Malgosia Tetiurka, Andrew Wright and Arnold Mühren.

## 1 What is creativity and what is it not?

### Acts of creativity include:

- understanding old things in new ways
- and understanding new things in old ways
- taking risks and experimenting
- reaching into the imagination
- subverting the teacher's intentions or activity
- thinking as well as talking.

### Creativity is

- purposeful
- relevant
- brave
- ordinary and everyday
- quiet as well as noisy
- (self) disciplined
- hard work
- open-ended
- sometimes spontaneous
- specific

### Creativity is not

- shoddy
- lazy
- easy.

## 2 Why is creativity difficult in schools?

Both children and teachers have creativity and imagination that they should be able to bring to the English language classroom but there are problems in fostering creativity:

- Children and teachers may have learnt that it is safer not to take risks.
- Passing examinations may be the key priority and that requires conformity not creativity.
- The school system may restrict and not allow

teachers to be creative.

- Parents, often paying for lessons, may not value creativity, because they did not experience it in their own education and because they want to be sure of good results. They are not willing to take risks with their children's learning.
- Although 'western' models of education may be highly valued, creativity does not often seem to be a part of those models (a paradox?).
- Teachers' experiences and views of language learning may not include creativity and risk taking.

## 3 What creativity can look like in the YL classroom

### For students:

#### Subversions of classroom activities

- answering questions in unexpected ways: e.g. in surveys and in teacher-led talk - *X doesn't walk on the moon.*
- pushing the limits of convention e.g. *my pet is a snake*
- and (we should remember) it is also creative to avoid risks by 'playing safe'.

#### Noticing unexpected connections

- *alphabet letters on the classroom wall form the initials of a large bank*

#### Making up words that you need

- *hand socks for gloves*

### For teachers:

#### Going with the flow

- Noticing and using students' unexpected or subversive contributions, e.g. a story about pets leads to talk about fantastic pets, then writing and drawing about them.

#### Going for quality not quantity

- using a limited set of materials but with lots of different activities

#### Leaving space for thinking and imagination

- not overwhelming students with materials and activities
- activities that do not have predictable outcomes e.g. *consequences*
- have students close their eyes and visualise while listening
- making drama scripts from stories and then acting them out with improvisation

## Surprising students

- subvert familiar activities e.g. *talking about 'my family' from the perspective of a camel or a penguin.*
- use metaphor, e.g. *I feel tired – like a boat washed up from the sea*
- interrupting students practising prepared talks

## Structuring opportunities for creative responses

- give a precise situation e.g. *write about what you hear when you shut your eyes in the playground.*

Teachers' creativity draws on expertise that comes from teaching many different types of students over the years and on ideas from outside the classroom.

Teachers can encourage creativity whether they have flamboyant, extrovert personalities or quieter, more reflective styles.

## 4 The discipline of creativity

### 4.1 The relationship between creativity, accuracy and memorizing

The goal of learning a language is to be able to use the language. On the way to that goal, there is vocabulary to be learnt and grammar to be mastered. Sometimes, the communicative goal gets hidden behind the high wall of examinations that need to be passed. Sometimes, the examination 'wall' is so high that the communicative goal disappears completely from view – for teachers, for parents, for learners.

If accuracy and correctness become the only measures of children's use of language, children learn that they must avoid mistakes and they stop taking risks. Using a language communicatively requires children to be confident to take risks with what they know:

- If we want to encourage creativity, we need to show children that we value it.
- There should be activities where risks are encouraged and lack of accuracy is not penalised if children take risks and stretch their language skills to the edge of their capabilities.
- It is important that children know what they are allowed and expected to do in any activity.

One of the outcomes of people's (understandable) reluctance to take risks is that memorizing becomes the favourite strategy for passing exams - children memorize lists of words, scripts for speaking tests, whole lessons or course book units:

- Memorizing in itself is not a bad thing! In fact, it is a very valuable strategy in language learning – anyone who is good at a foreign language has learnt many things by heart.
- **Memorizing without understanding** is a bad thing

because what is memorized is just a sequence of sounds or shapes, not English. It is likely to be a waste of time and effort. It does not help communication.

- Only memorizing is a bad thing because children learn that there is no space for imagination and creativity in language learning.
- Effective learning may come from memorizing **combined with** creativity – using what is known to communicate, through taking risks, experimenting and pushing language skills to the limit

### 4.2 Discipline, structure and creativity

Classrooms are not suitable places for children to do what they like; they are places for children to learn and to be excited by learning new knowledge and skills. They are also places where children can learn self-discipline and about their own creative potential.

Creative use of language often happens in structured situations – for example, the formal structure of poetry supports the creativity of poets, and a clearly structured classroom task can support imaginative responses from children.

#### Creativity is likely to develop in classroom activities with

- clear structures, goals and expectations
- encouragement and praise for bravery and risk taking
- guided self-evaluation by the learners of their participation.

Teachers who feel restricted by course book or curriculum could instead see these structures as a framework for creativity, just as the poet uses the framework of the poem structure (or the oyster inside its shell uses the grain of sand to build a pearl!).

#### In conclusion, adding creativity into the structure of the language classroom seems to offer:

- more interesting lessons for students and teachers
- more effective language learning
- and, in particular, increased confidence in speaking English.

### Correction

The editors apologise for the inaccurate captions below the Brain Gym™ photographs in CATS Autumn 05. They should have read:

Page 7: Ronnie doing a Cross Crawl.

Page 8 Karen about to do a Lazy 8,

Adam sitting down doing a Hook-Up



# YL SIGS Worldwide: Japan

[www.tcsigjalt.org](http://www.tcsigjalt.org)



## YL Teaching in Japan:

An announcement on the national news network, NHK, that English will become a formal subject in Japanese elementary schools starting in 2007 created a stir recently, but turned out to be rumour. The Ministry has been experimenting with model English schools for several years requiring extensive reporting on curriculum development and student progress. It is considered likely that English will become part of the elementary curriculum, the question is when. Outside the model schools, many public elementary schools have been experimenting with English and other foreign languages through the *sogokushujikan* (period of general studies: approximately 125 hours over the school year to be used for student-directed learning about computers, the needs of the elderly and handicapped and "international understanding" among other topics). The biggest problems elementary schools here face is a lack of curriculum guidelines and lack of adequate training for Japanese homeroom teachers, who are not English specialists.

## Teaching Children SIG and JALT

Teaching Children SIG is hoping to step into the breach by organizing several one-day mini-conferences around Japan. Our biggest event each year is our JALT Junior Conference at the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)'s National Conference where we celebrated the SIG's 10th anniversary this year (JALT was 30 years old last year). This year was the fourth JALT Junior, a mini-conference consisting of about 50 presentations geared towards kids' teachers over 2 days.

Increasing interest = increasing membership

Our membership has doubled over the past two years to approximately 200 currently. We are the third largest SIG in JALT after College and University Educators and Bilingualism.

## Conference information

Our next conference will be held November 2-5 2006 in Kitakyushu City, Japan and will include the PAC Conference for the second time in Japan. Only a one hour flight from many parts of Asia, we hope to meet many from IATEFL's network in Asia and beyond. The Call for Presentation Proposals is on our website and the closing date is April 28, 2006 (see <http://jalt.org/> for more info).

Please do submit a proposal and share your ideas and experience with us here in Japan!

## Our Newsletter is bilingual

Our newsletter is in Japanese and English to help Japanese elementary school teachers and team teachers work together on lesson planning and ideas generation. Recent themes include Poetry, Change, Numbers, Animals, Family and Occupations and there is a special column with ideas for What Can I Do Monday? We also have a website and hope to put up more of our newsletter back issues here in future. Please take a look at [www.tcsigjalt.org](http://www.tcsigjalt.org) Hope to meet some of you someday soon!

**Alison Miyake**

**Teaching Children SIG Coordinator**

**Japan Association of Language Teaching (JALT)**

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# A history of volunteers 1985 - 2006

Sandie Mourão

The YL SIG was founded 21 years ago as the Young Learner Group (YLG). Alongside Teacher Development, Computers and Business English, it was one of the first Special Interest Groups to come into existence. The acronym YLG prevailed until the newsletter of October 1989.

The idea of having Special Interest Groups in IATEFL was put forward by Opal Dunn in 1983/1984 to Peter Strevens, the first elected chair, after Dr WR Lee, the founder of IATEFL. In 1984, at the Annual IATEFL Conference, Andrew Wright collected a list of 32 signatures of colleagues interested in the idea of a Young Learner Group (YLG). Together Opal and Andrew launched the YLG at the 1985 IATEFL Annual Conference. Opal Dunn was the first chair with support from Edie Garvie, Leonora Fröhlich-Ward and Andrew Wright. At the 1986 Annual IATEFL Conference in Brighton, the YL Group officially recruited members and held their first meeting.

I'm not exactly sure who the first official coordinator / secretary was, whether it was Opal Dunn or Andrew Wright, neither can confirm! But by the May 1987 YL Group newsletter, Gordon Slaven writes, "Andrew Wright, co-founder and secretary of the group for the past two years, resigned his position ...". One thing I am sure, we have both Opal and Andrew to thank for planting the YL SIG sapling all those years ago. Both remain active members to this day, as does Leonora Fröhlich-Ward, one of our first newsletter editors.

The YLG committee began with three members. At the 1990 Annual IATEFL Conference in Dublin, a caretaker committee of six members was created. However, five years later the YL SIG was being run by just two committee members, who battled alone for about twelve months – I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Melanie Williams and Wendy Superfine for their energy and enthusiasm that year! At this moment in time, we boast a committee of ten!

After scanning early newsletters, I have discovered that the YLG was keen to set up national and regional correspondents, whose role it was to describe what was happening in their particular countries or areas, and be a link between IATEFL YLG and local YL practitioners. In May 1988, it was reported that the YLG, in collaboration with the British Council, had produced the first YL bibliography.

John Clark, co-author of *Stepping Stones*, beavered away for the SIG as newsletter editor, for several years as from 1988 and his co-author, Julie Ashworth, designed the YL SIG logo, which was used from 1988 till 1996. Many household names have volunteered their help in past YL SIG committees. I've already mentioned Andrew Wright, Opal Dunn, Leonora Fröhlich-Ward and Edie Garvie. Later Jayne Moon, then Annie Hughes, led the SIG, with appearances by Jackie Holderness and Shelagh Rixon. Wendy Superfine, Melanie Williams and Carol Read are also names we associate with YL literature and respected professionals in our field.

Our longest standing committee member is Chris Etchells, who joined in 1998 as Web Manager, tackled being SIG Coordinator for a couple of years and continues as Web Manager today - what a star he is! Long standing committee members include Wendy Superfine, who joined in 1994 and left in 2001, taking on the roles of coordinator, newsletter editor and events coordinator, and Carol Read, who joined in 1998 and is stepping down in 2006. Carol has worked as Newsletter Editor since 2000 helping to make **CATS** the respected publication it is today.

Each and every volunteer, be they 'famous' or not, has worked to ensure that the YL SIG provides for its members: regular publications sharing up to date information about working with young learners, the possibility of meeting fellow professionals at conferences worldwide, and a forum for sharing ideas. It really is thanks to all the volunteers involved and their hard work that the YL SIG is what it is today. I would like to toast those volunteers I have discovered were part of the YL SIG history. THANK YOU for bringing us here, for enabling the YL SIG to come of age, and may future volunteers take us even further!

*Andrew Wright, Opal Dunn, Leonora Fröhlich-Ward, Edie Garvie, Rosalyn Hurst, Gordon Slaven, Jackie Holderness, Ann Alexander, Jaynee Moon, John Clark, Julie Ashworth, Sarah Thorpe, Sue Bale, Annie Hughes, Shelagh Rixon, Lois Arthur, Mel Williams, Wendy Superfine, Caroline Laidlaw, Marina Stros, Helen Dunford, Lynette Murphy O'Dwyer, Denise Clenton, Sarah Burwood, Chris Etchells, Eleanor Watts, Helen Paul, Carol Read, Janet Olearski, Andy Jackson, Debbie Candy (née Smith), Sandie Mourão, Gordon Lewis, Beatriz Lupiano, Wendy Arnold, Kay Bentley, Rosemary Mitchell-Schuitevoerder, Jason Renshaw, Hans Mol, Niki Joseph, Karen Widl.*

A detailed description of who was involved, when and how, can be seen on the YL SIG website.

I have tried to acknowledge all those involved in bringing the YL SIG to where it is today, and would like to thank Andy Jackson, Andrew Wright, Opal Dunn, Leonora Fröhlich-Ward and Jaynee Moon for their input in my search. Each memory has added an extra piece to the puzzle and being sent old newsletters has helped enormously.

I know that anyone who joins a SIG committee gets as much out of it as they put in. I am very proud to have my name included in the list of volunteers. It has been a truly wonderful experience belonging to the YL SIG and its committee, and I have learned much, professionally and personally.

**Sandie Mourão** lives and works in Portugal and has been YL SIG Coordinator since 2003. In April 2006, she will take up a new role in IATEFL as Joint SIG Coordinator.



# Young Learner SIG Pre-Conference Event

## Harrogate – Saturday 8th April 2006

### Young Learners and the CLIL Continuum

**Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)** is an umbrella term for a continuum of language learning experiences ranging from content-based foreign language learning to immersion and bilingual education. With threads of common methodologies these language-learning practices take place in different contexts and produce different results.

The YL SIG has brought a selection of CLIL practices together, hoping to provide examples along the continuum, with the possibility of sharing both knowledge and experience in a methodology, which is gathering momentum worldwide. We have arranged a day packed full of interesting presentations and two plenaries. Join us for a real CLIL experience!

#### Opening Plenary

Teresa Reilly - British Council (Spain)

The opposite end of the CLIL continuum: Achievements & Challenges in a Ministry of Education Bilingual Project in Spain.

#### Talks

Keith Kelly (UK)

Investigating the language demands of English-medium secondary Science

Jean Brewster (Hong Kong)

Opportunities, challenges and constraints in using investigations to promote CLIL

Loes Coleman (The Netherlands)

CLIL behind the dykes: the Dutch bilingual model

Gisela Ehlers (Germany) & Heini-Marja Järvinen (Finland)

The Storyline Approach - opportunities for content oriented learning in the language classroom

#### Workshops

Brigitte Achermann, Kathy Stauffer-Zahner & Keith Sprague (Switzerland)

CLIL and task-based learning at upper primary (10 -13 year olds)

Silvana Rampone (Italy) & Gunta Krigere (Latvia)

CLIL for young learners: a European Comenius 1 project

#### Closing Plenary

John Clegg - Freelance (UK)

Education in English as a second language: a world of practices

For abstracts and further speaker details please visit <http://www.iatefl-yhsig.or>

# YOUNG LEARNERS SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP



## Committee Members

The Young Learners Special Interest Group was initiated in 1985 and has now evolved into a flourishing world-wide network of teachers of children and teenagers up to 17 years.

### Aims

- To provide information on recent developments in the education of young learners in the field of English as a foreign language.
- To help teachers and teacher trainers circulate ideas, news etc. and to meet the greater demand for communication in the fast expanding world of teaching EFL to young learners.

### What do we offer?

**Children and Teenagers (CATS)** This is a bi-annual publication concerned with teaching EFL/ESL to children and teenagers. It includes:

- practical ideas for teachers of young learners,
- articles on methodology and theory,
- details of future events such as conferences and seminars,
- reports of recent events
- book reviews.

**Other publications** Joint SIG publications are available from the IATEFL office. These are the proceedings of joint seminars and conferences which have been held recently.

**Conferences and seminars** The SIG organises a Young Learner 'track' at the annual IATEFL conference and other UK and international events which are often organised in conjunction with other SIG groups. The SIG 'track' covers topics which include infant, primary and secondary practice as well as teacher training issues.

**Internet discussion list** A lively forum to exchange ideas, discuss key issues and keep fully up to date with everything that's happening in the world of YL English language teaching.

### To find out more about the YL SIG and IATEFL please contact:

IATEFL,  
Darwin College  
University of Kent  
Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NY, UK  
Tel: +44 (0) 1227 824430  
Email: [generalenquiries@iatefl.or](mailto:generalenquiries@iatefl.or)  
IATEFL Website: <http://www.iatefl.or>  
YL SIG Website: <http://www.countryschool.com/younglearners.htm>

### SIG Co-ordinators

*Outgoing: Sandie Mourão, Portugal*

*Incoming: Wendy Arnold, Hong Kong*

*Niki Joseph, Portugal*

### YL Web Site Manager

*Christopher Etchells, UK*

### Finance and Membership & Web resources editor:

*Hans Mol, Australia*

### Business Development

*Gordon Lewis, USA*

### Events Coordinators

*Rosemary Mitchell-Schuitevoerder, UK*

*Karin Widl, Austria*

### Publication Editors

*Outgoing: Carol Read, Spain*

*Kay Bentley, Netherlands*

### Discussion List Moderator

*Wendy Arnold, Hong Kong*

### Classroom research database manager

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**CATS** is published twice a year.

We welcome contributions or suggestions for future issues on any aspects of teaching English to Young Learners up to 17 years.

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- how to manage professional development in the field of TEYL
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MA in TEYL Graduate

*For further information contact:*

The MA Programme Administrator, EFL Unit,  
University of York, York, YO10 5DD, UK.

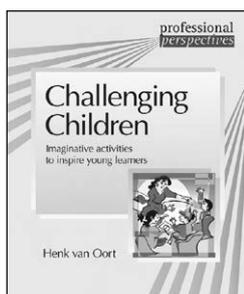
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