

# YOUNG LEARNERS AND TEENAGERS

C&TS: Children And Teenagers

THE PUBLICATION OF THE YOUNG LEARNER AND TEENAGER SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP



Autumn 2009

Issue 2/09

Technology Enhanced Language Learning

**Maria Sarilaksana** – Using Webquests with Young Learners

**Chris Etchells** – Should I be Friends with my Students?

**Graham Stanley** – Social Networking and Teenagers

**Joe Siegel** – Spoken Discourse Analysis in Children's EFL

**Helen Emery** – From Chinese to English: Children's Reading Problems and some Practical Solutions

**Anna Chan & Shirley Chan** – Promoting Assessment for Learning through Readers' Theatre

£4.00 for YLT members

ISSN



Young Learners & Teenagers  
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

## *From the Editor*

### Dear C&TS readers,

Welcome to the 2009, second issue of C&TS in which we bring you a selection of great articles - the main focus being on using technology in the language classroom. We ran an issue on ICT a couple of years ago, and due to popular demand, decided that as this is such a fast developing area within language teaching that to devote most of this issue to revisit the topic would be very welcome I hope you agree. So, in this issue you will find selected articles that relate to technology today, and some articles that are related to other important areas of language learning.

Before introducing you to the contributors and their articles, there are a couple of other introductions I'd like to make. Firstly, you may have noticed that as well as the change to the SIG name (which was officially renamed YLT (Young Learners and Teenagers) at the IATEFL conference in Cardiff earlier this year), we also have a new logo for the newsletter - C&TS. We hope you will agree that this renaming will clarify that this SIG really does include everyone involved with teaching/training language learners from our very youngest learners to our oldest secondary students.

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And, secondly, on behalf of the YLT SIG Committee and YLT SIG members, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Janet Crossley. Janet has recently joined our team and will be working alongside Janice Bland and myself on the Editorial. In the short time in the role Janet has already been a huge asset on the current publication. Nothing like being thrown in the deep end! Thank you, Janet. You will find some biodata about Janet on page 5.

Technology seems to be fast becoming more and more fundamental in many language classrooms. With so many materials out there to check out and adapt for classroom use and forums to connect with others across the world, the question may often be raised 'but where do I start?' Navigating our way through the plethora of websites - and links within websites to even more fabulous resources - is a challenge for even probably the most ICT literate of us all. And, not only is it a question of finding the best resources for our needs, but also of knowing which sites are 'safe' enough to use with our students, especially where educators themselves may be learning alongside their students. The articles selected for this publication take a look at using some sites as well as issues to be aware of when using the web with YLTs.

One of my favourite activities using the net is doing a webquest. A good webquest can be fabulously motivating and purposeful for students, and also allow integration with other subjects in the curriculum. Maria Sarilaksana's article looks at just this and I think she must cover just about everything you need to know about using webquests with you class. So if you haven't done so already... have a read and get on the quest trail!

Another area of technology that is fast developing in our language classrooms is that of networking. Many classes are rapidly linking up with students in different countries through Facebook, Twitter, Second Life and many others. In both Graham Stanley's article and Chris Etchells' article, while discussing how these forums provide a fabulous means of accessing immediate communication, they also outline some issues that need to be addressed before launching into their use with students within the YLT age-range.

Veering away from technology, Joe Siegel's article discusses the value of conducting action research in the language classroom in order to raise our own awareness of whether what we think are teaching and what the students agree.

Anna Chan and Shirley Chan's article reports on a piece of action research they conducted in which they looked into different ways of assessing students. In particular they look at the effects of using a 'reader's theatre' as a content, and how sharing assessment criteria and involving students in their own assessment may be a more effective means of assessing students of all abilities.

And finally, for everyone that works with students who whose first language is written in a script totally different to their own, then Helen Emery's highly informative article on the teaching of reading to Chinese children may provide you with some gems of advice.

Enjoy!

**Kerry**

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YLT SIG retains the right to make any of the contributions in this issue available in electronic form for the benefit of its members.

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**The theme for C&TS Spring 2010 will be:**

### **MUSIC AND SONGS IN THE ELT CLASSROOM**

**(For the next issue, please send all letters and article proposals to either myself or Janet)**

## Introducing a new Publications Editor... Janet Crossley

I was born in Newfoundland, Canada, and grew up in Toronto where my parents enrolled me in the French immersion programme. After years of mixed snatches in French and English, we moved to Winchester, Hampshire, where the educational experiment had given me limited English skills and a confused cultural identity! However, I went on study a BA and MA in English Literature at the University of London and a CELTA at IH, London.

My career with young learners began in the Savoie Alps where I organised ski school and evening entertainment. I enjoyed assisting secondary schoolchildren with their translation and, of course, snowboarding through the fresh morning powder! At the season end, I came back to London to teach English at a private language school in Bayswater for two years, where I became involved in welfare, resource management and training.

Since then, I've taught extroverted 5-year-old Italian kids in Salerno and summer school teens in the UK. I have met young learners with such energy and enthusiasm for language games and running dictation that I am convinced they are the best age range to educate (you can see my book review on "Blended Learning" on page 29).

I accepted the role as Publications Co-Editor in May. My job at a national exam board involves editing web pages for GCSE and A-levels. I am always happy to discuss articles for submission. Please email me at: [crossleyjanet@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:crossleyjanet@yahoo.co.uk)

At home, you can find me curled up with my cat in front of a good action flick. I also like to watch the Guildford "Heat" play basketball and write stories.



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## Young Learners & Teenagers SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

**IATEFL Young Learners and Teenagers Special Interest Group (YLT SIG) has evolved into a flourishing worldwide network, supporting and informing some 400 ELT members worldwide. Our members are individual teachers and trainers, as well as institutions (institutional members) such as colleges and universities where teacher education takes place. We also cater for approximately 500 online members and reach thousands of teachers worldwide through our events.**

YLT SIG aims to support its members by providing information on recent developments in English Language education for children and teenagers, aged from 3 to 17, and by organising networking opportunities for its members. The YLT SIG is led by a committee of volunteers who arrange discussions, organise conferences, produce publications and maintain the YLT SIG web site.

### What membership offers

- A bi-annual publication, C&TS (Children & Teenagers) to keep you informed and up to date, packed with practical ideas for teaching young learners together with the latest theories and book reviews.
- *IATEFL Voices*, IATEFL's own newsletter, published six times a year, to keep you informed about the wider picture.
- Occasional other publications.
- Preferential rates for IATEFL-organised conferences and seminars and the opportunity to meet face-to-face with experts in the field.
- A comprehensive web site with a regularly updated web resources section and downloadable newsletter articles and discussion list summaries for members.
- An active e-mail discussion list to help keep you networked and informed and offering an opportunity to enhance your institutions and your own professional profile.

# The YLT SIG Committee Members

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- Vacancy

**To find out more about the YLT SIG and IATEFL please contact the websites:**

[www.yltsig.org](http://www.yltsig.org) (YLT SIG website)

[www.iatefl.org](http://www.iatefl.org) (IATEFL website)



Young Learners & Teenagers  
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

## Co-ordinators' Report 2009

Dear all,

By the time you read this the summer holidays will be a distant memory and you will be back at school (in the Northern Hemisphere) for the beginning of the academic year! Why does it always feel as if you hit the ground at 150 mph? Here is a picture of your YLT SIG committee working hard for you, taken at our meeting in Cardiff earlier in the year.



(L-R Chris Etchells, Harry Kuchah, Hans Hol, Gordon Lewis, Wendy Arnold, Kerry Powell and Janice Bland. Absent: Niki Joseph, Caroline Linse and Dennis Newson)

We had a wonderful line up of speakers at our pre-conference event 'Proof of the Pudding', which included Vanessa and Fatima Tenorio, together with Karmen Pizorn.



Adrian Tennant (also IATEFL membership secretary) seen here with Hans Mol.



Jo Bertrand and Nicky Francis taking the theme literally!



Dennis Newson of the committee with Livia Farago (President of IATEFL Hungary)



Chris Etchells between Naomi Moir and Sarah Philips

Also presenting were Shelley Vernon and Anton Prochazka. This fabulous day is like the distant past now and Niki Joseph is beavering away for our next PCE in Harrogate 2010. Events outside of the UK are also being planned, so look out for details coming to you via e-newsletters or individual postings. Keep connected by joining our discussion list as it is the easiest way to circulate up-to-date information.

Bye for now,  
Wendy Arnold and Hans Mol (Joint Co-ordinators)

# Using Webquests with Young Learners (ages 11-18)

**Maria Sarilaksana**

**The prospect of using the internet to complete a task in class is often welcomed by students and dreaded by teachers. This article will hopefully allay fears by giving guidance and useful tips on how to create and incorporate these dynamic resources into your classes.**

## Why use webquests?

There are a number of reasons why webquests are great tools for language learning:

### 1. Motivation

Students love webquests and that's half the battle with young learners! Young Learners love using computers, especially with the recent increase in social networking. This heightens their interest which increases motivation and also confidence. They can be used even with low levels where confidence is often most needed to progress.

### 2. Learner autonomy

An essential skill for all learners of English, webquests allow the students to work more independently from the teacher than usual, therefore encouraging independent learning and giving the students a taste of self study.

### 3. Integrated skills

Working with a partner and other groups involves collaboration. Collaboration is a great opportunity to maximize the students' authentic language production. The students also have the chance to interact with the website and, regardless of the main language focus; there is always some element of integrated skills.

### 4. Authenticity

Webquests give the students access to authentic and up-to-date English resources.

## What to consider when choosing or creating a webquest

Your considerations when choosing or creating a webquest should be the same as those you consider when planning a lesson, i.e. your learners' ages, levels, needs and interests. Where project work is concerned, you may want to ask the students themselves what they are interested in, and having a say in the course content tends to go down very well. Teenagers often respond well to taking part in the decision making as it feels less like the traditional teacher/student relationship and moves them into a more responsible role.

The next step is to think about the aims and objectives of the lesson. The good old TEFL phrase, 'By the end of this lesson the students will.....' springs to mind. Think about how you want the students to use the webquest.

I have divided webquests into three main purposes:

### 1. Project-based

Students research a topic, perhaps as an introduction to a project or as part of a task based lesson.

### 2. Focus on vocabulary/ grammar/language expressions in context

Students answer questions on a website which contains the target language.

### 3. Focus on integrated skills

Students communicate with their partner and use online information to complete a task.

## Incorporating a webquest into a lesson

The webquest you intend to do should reflect its place in the lesson according to its purpose (or stage aim).

### Project-based

This could begin with a brainstorm and a prediction activity, perhaps in pairs or groups before looking at the webquest. This type of webquest should take ideally no more than 30mins including pre-tasks and feedback (any longer and

the students will have too much information to take in). For example, a colleague of mine created a webquest about recycling which involved a brainstorm of materials which can be recycled and then asked the students to find out ways (from the website) of recycling in schools and what materials are most often recycled. The rest of the lesson should then enable the students to reflect on and apply the information they have gathered in some way, for example, how they could increase recycling at their school. This maximizes the quality of what the students take from the lesson. This type of webquest can also easily be set as homework in preparation for the following class.

### **Focus on vocabulary/grammar/language expressions in context**

This type of webquest is the most challenging to engineer since you will be looking at authentic material. Some language points do lend themselves easily though, for example, a number of my colleagues and I have used the Guinness World Records website ([www.guinness-worldrecords.com](http://www.guinness-worldrecords.com)) for superlatives and teen problem pages for language on giving advice.

### **Focus on integrated skills**

An integrated skills webquest is where the students interact before, during and/or after the webquest, usually to discuss and select the information they require to complete the task. For example, I adapted a shopping webquest to incorporate an interview beforehand about their partners' preferences. Then I added a question which involves a little navigation of the website in order to familiarise themselves. The final task was to work with in pairs and choose appropriate birthday presents for their partner with a limit of £100. Personalising a task like this also enhances student involvement and motivation. Another example could be selecting information on a town in order to produce a leaflet.

### **Finding an appropriate website or adapting a webquest**

Creating a webquest takes time. You need to find an appropriate website which contains your target information, explore it and then write a series of appropriate tasks and questions. There is an abundance of websites online so if you decide to do it this way, think of big names, big

organisations and companies. Their websites are usually quite clear and there are also a number of website aimed at children where the language may be more graded.

Due to the preparation time needed, most teachers find it easier to use and adapt ready made webquests. The free webquests online are usually quite comprehensive which leaves room for the teacher to replace or take out whatever is necessary depending on the students' needs.

Here are a few places where you can find webquests:

[www.longman.com/totalenglish](http://www.longman.com/totalenglish)  
[www.longman.com/cuttingedge](http://www.longman.com/cuttingedge)  
[www.theconsultants-e.com/webquests/](http://www.theconsultants-e.com/webquests/)  
[www.onestopenglish.com](http://www.onestopenglish.com) - type 'webquests' into the site search box  
[www.webframework.net](http://www.webframework.net)  
[www.npg.org.uk/webquests/](http://www.npg.org.uk/webquests/) - these webquests are for use online

There are a number of ways of adapting webquests to suit higher or lower levels:

Higher level classes could write the questions for the webquest themselves, which are then passed to another group who have to find the answers. This can incorporate reflection stages, e.g. 'How do you feel about...?' and 'What do you think...?' and can also up the ante for higher levels. If there is a more challenging area of the website, new questions could be added to incorporate it.

For lower levels you can pre-teach more problematic language, give them multiple choice answers or write simpler questions.

Don't forget that the time you put into this is time saved for another teacher in the future. Keep a record of the webquests you create or adapt and make them available to your colleagues.

### **Potential problems and solutions**

The practicalities of using a webquest in class should be addressed because with any piece of technology the key to success is preparation. These things might seem obvious but they can save you a lot of potential stress!

### 1. Do the webquest

Websites are sometimes updated regularly and this is your opportunity to check that the information (and the website!) is still there. You will also find out how long it will take the students and how difficult it is.

### 2. Hardware and software

You don't need to be an expert but you need to check that your computers or laptops can connect to the internet and that they aren't too slow. Ask your colleagues what types of problems they have had, if any. Perhaps they can give you some useful tips or tell you about any idiosyncrasies the computers may have!

### 3. Demonstrate the activity

Although students are familiar with using the internet these days, it is still important to demonstrate the website and activity. Websites can vary greatly and this will save you time and effort in troubleshooting later. It's also a good idea to allocate time to demonstrating how to use the laptops the first time they use them. If you have an IWB, great! If not, try and gather them round one or two computers.

### 4. Website addresses

Website addresses can be quite long, especially if you are directing them to a particular part of the website. So that the students don't end up at the wrong website you could try one of the following:

1. Prepare the computers so that they are already on the website.
2. Put a link in a Word document so that the students simply have to click the link.

### Conclusion

Internet use among young learners is increasing every day and webquests are a great way of exploiting the internet for language learning. If you've been thinking about injecting a little

enthusiasm into your teenage students then give them a go!

*Maria Sarilaksana has been in TEFL for six years. She has a DELTA qualification and currently works at the British Council in Milan. She is very interested in ICT and over the last year she has focused on developing and giving training in this area.*

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*maria.sarilaksana@britishcouncil.it*

### Online Shopping!

1. Imagine it's your partner's birthday next week. You need to find out as much as possible about their hobbies, personality, style preferences and anything else you can think of. Write some questions here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Ask your partner your questions and get as much information as you can. Make notes.

3. Go to [www.marksandspencer.com](http://www.marksandspencer.com)  
Name six of the departments e.g. *Women*.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Click on **Offers**. What is the **Deal of the day**?

5. You have £100 to spend. Using your notes, browse the website and choose a birthday present/presents for your partner. Give reasons for your choice.

6. Tell your partner what you decided to get for them and why.

**Table 1: Guinness World Records:**

**Recycling Waste**

A) Go to [www.recycling-guide.org.uk](http://www.recycling-guide.org.uk) and click on **How to recycle in schools**.

- 1) How can you recycle paper in schools?
- 2) Which type of metal usually needs recycling in schools?
- 3) How can you make compost and what do you think it is used for?

B) Look at **How to recycle different materials** and click on **Recycling computers**.

- 1) Why is there a growing computer waste mountain?
- 2) Why is it important to recycle computer equipment?
- 3) What are the disposal options for computers?

C) Go to **Home** and click on **How different materials are recycled**.

**Student A**

Click on **Do you want to know how aluminium is recycled?**

Before you read, match the words and definitions below:

<b>Molten</b>	used to colour things
<b>Ink</b>	an adjective to describe very hot liquid metal
<b>Roll out</b>	to make something flat

Make notes on the process and then describe it to your partner.

**Student B**

Click on **How to recycle glass**.

Before you read, match the words and definitions below:

<b>Impurity</b>	a thing similar to dirt
<b>Crush</b>	to turn something into liquid by heating it
<b>Melt</b>	to break into very small pieces

Make notes on the process and then describe it to your partner.

**Guinness World Records**

Go to [www.guinnessworldrecords.com](http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com).

Make notes on the following records (**see Table 1 below**), and add three more from the website. When you finish compare with your partner and tell them about things you found out.

	Who?	What?	Where?	When?
<b>The loudest burp</b>				
<b>The longest hair</b>				
<b>The tallest man</b>				
<b>The most expensive guitar</b>				
1.				
2.				
3.				

# Should I be Friends with My Pupils?

Chris Etchells

**Human communication is increasingly conducted electronically. Most of us and many of our child and teenage students use email. In addition a growing number of our students under 18 are using social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace. Many ELT professionals are using these professionally and personally too. More recently, electronic 'chatter' sites such as Twitter provide another means of communication. In addition, mobile phone and computer technology is converging: it is now possible, for example, to update a Facebook page or send a 'tweet' (an update on Twitter) using a mobile phone.**

As a result of this sharp rise in electronic communication it is quite likely that we will at some stage encounter our students online. Some of us for example may already have received 'friendship requests' from our students in forums like Facebook – hence the title of this article.

## **To what extent is it appropriate or desirable for us to interact with our students electronically?**

In trying to answer this question I refer extensively to Facebook as it is the electronic social forum that I know best. I refer in this article to 'electronic' as opposed to 'real life' communications and I trust that most people will know what I mean by this distinction. But for many children (and some adults) electronic communication is so important a part of day-to-day life as to be considered part of their 'real life'. Aware of this blurring of distinction I therefore also seek to answer the question as to how far 'friendship' with our pupils is acceptable in a more general sense. I hope that my conclusions will provide some guidelines for our communication with children both electronically and in what for the time being we will continue to call 'real life'.

First it may be helpful to establish our current views. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements with regard to young learners and teenagers?

- It's OK to be friends with my pupils in real life and online.
- It's OK to be friends with my pupils in real life, but not online.

And how about these statements?

- My students are already interested in online social networking. As a teacher I can't ignore this, any more than I would ignore their interest in music. I should look for ways to use it in my teaching and to enhance my relationship with my pupils.
- I want my class/school to be a social community. Social networking sites like Facebook provide an opportunity for this.

## **What is Facebook?**

Individuals, who are supposed to be over 13, create a profile account. At the time of writing (September '09) this will typically contain:

- A 'head and shoulders' photo of the account holder (this is called a 'profile photo').
- Photo albums, possibly videos.
- Profile photos of your Facebook Friends (see: 'Facebook Friends' below)
- A 'news feed' area showing your recent activity. This might include, for example: 'You are now friends with (name of friend).'
- A 'status bar' in which you can type a short sentence about what you've been doing recently, for example "Chris Etchells is writing an article about Facebook."

Having created your account, when you log on to Facebook you are taken to your home page. This is similar to your profile page with the difference that it lets you know what your friends (and not just you) are doing. So you will see some of your friends' recently updated 'status' messages and recently changed profile pictures, other photos in which one of your friends has been 'tagged', messages by your friends to others of your friends, etc.

There is also a pop-up 'chat' window that will tell you how many of your friends are online and via which you can exchange instant messages. All friends' names are hyperlinked. Clicking on any name will take you to that person's page where you can typically view photos of them in their own and other people's photo albums. You can also see profile photos of mutual friends and your friend's friends and read your friend's newsfeed. You cannot however view a profile page of your friend's friend unless you have agreed to become a Facebook friend with that person.

Clearly the 'home page' is designed to get you communicating with your friends. This is further encouraged through 'applications'. For example a 'Calendar' application will tell you and your friends when each other's birthday is approaching and ask you if you wish to send a virtual greeting card or gift. The home page also encourages you to expand your circle of friends: for example there is a box titled 'suggestions' that shows photos of 'friends of friends' who you might wish to add to your circle of Facebook Friends. In addition to personal pages, Facebook also provides the facility to create a public or private 'group'. Membership can be limited to a particular class or school or any other group.

### What is a friend?

This may sound like a silly question – surely we all know what we mean by a friend? But actually the answer is important in addressing the subject of this article: Should I be friends with my pupils? According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, a 'friend' is 'a person who shares the same feelings of natural liking and understanding, the same interests, etc, but

is not a member of the same family.' I'd quibble with that: I think that a member of our family can also be a friend – "She's not just my mum; she's my friend."

In addition, we obviously vary in the depth of friendship we feel for different people. A 'good' or 'close' friend is someone I trust and whose company I enjoy. I would want to spend time with such a person and share confidences, for example about work, about other people and about myself. At the other end of the scale, I may enjoy the company of a dinner party guest; I would consider my guest to be a friend by virtue of having been invited. But the level of intimacy may be much less than that shared with a 'good' friend.

Another characteristic of friendship is our willingness to go out of our way to help someone: 'A friend in need is a friend indeed.' But we might also help people who are not our friends. So the precise meaning of 'friend' is not clear. What I think we can say is that friendship always involves **socialising**. Whether electronic or in the real world, friends will choose to spend time together because they enjoy each other's company.

### Facebook friends

According to some recent research (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/scienceandtechnology/science/sciencenews/3306173/Facebook-study-reveals-users-'trophy-friends'.html>), most users of Facebook have many more Facebook friends than 'true' or 'close' friends. Facebook friends might be people they were at school with but have lost touch with; people they met on holiday; various members of extended family; even people they have never met, for example friends of friends. Many Facebook friends are more like the old-fashioned idea of 'acquaintances' – people we happen to have met – potential friends, perhaps, rather than 'real' friends, though the extent to which this is true will vary from person to person. It's important to understand this. Being 'friends' in Facebook (and in much online communication) is not necessarily the same as being 'friends' in 'real life'.

## Being friendly

**We can make a further important distinction between 'being a friend' and 'being friendly'. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines 'friendly' as 'acting or ready to act as a friend.' I don't agree. To me, being friendly means acting in a pleasant and positive manner towards someone without necessarily wanting or intending to become a friend.**

### Should I be friends with my pupils?

It might be helpful to look at some official UK advice on this matter. This is contained in a document called 'Guidance for Safe Working Practice for the Protection of Children and Adults in Education Settings (<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/irsc-guidance-for-safe-working-practice.pdf>) produced by The UK Department for Education and Skills (now known as Department for Children, Schools & Families) in February 2005.

On 'Social Contact' the document states:

Staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with pupils for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Even if a young person seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of staff should exercise her/his professional judgement in making a response and be aware that such social contact could be misconstrued.

Staff should not give their personal details such as home/mobile phone number; home or e-mail address to pupils unless the need to do so is agreed with senior management.

This means that adults should:

- always approve any planned social contact with senior colleagues, for example when it is part of a reward scheme or pastoral care programme
- advise senior management of any regular social contact they have with a pupil which may give rise to concern
- report and record any situation which they feel might compromise the school or their own professional standing.

The above document was written mainly for an 'offline' context. In November 2007 it was updated to 'Guidance for Safer Working

Practices for Adults who work with Children and Young People'

(<http://www.teachingpersonnel.com/assets/pdf/SafeWorkingPracticeGuidance.pdf>):

### Communication with Children and Young People (including the Use of Technology)

Communication between children and adults, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites and blogs. Adults should not share any personal information with a child or young person. They should not request, or respond to, any personal information from the child/young person, other than that which might be appropriate as part of their professional role. Adults should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.

Adults should also be circumspect in their communications with children so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming. They should not give their personal contact details to children and young people including e-mail, home or mobile telephone numbers, unless the need to do so is agreed with senior management and parents/carers. E-mail or text communications between an adult and a child/young person outside agreed protocols may lead to disciplinary and/or criminal investigations. This also includes communications through internet based websites.

This means that adults should:

- not give their personal contact details to children or young people, including their mobile telephone number
- only use equipment e.g. mobile phones, provided by organisation to communicate with children, making sure that parents have given permission for this form of communication to be used
- only make contact with children for professional reasons and in accordance with any organisation policy
- recognise that text messaging is rarely an appropriate response to a child in a crisis situation or at risk of harm. It should only be used as a last resort when other forms of communication are not possible
- not use internet or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to a child/young person.

This advice may come as rather scary news to teachers who regularly or even sometimes converse with their students electronically. Teachers who count their pupils among their Facebook Friends will probably be panicking. But before we go further we should note a few things in relation to the above advice:

1. The advice refers to mainstream British education and aims to protect adults against the possibility of allegation in an increasingly litigious society, as well as protecting students against the possibility of 'grooming' (the act of gaining the trust of a child so that sexual abuse can take place). Some people might consider the advice to err on the side of caution. A lack of trust between adults and children may appear to be implicit, particularly to people living in countries where the relationship between adults and children is less formal than in Britain.
2. The advice was written before the huge rise in electronic communication by both adults and children. It does not fully take into account the changed situation in which many people spend a large part of their time engaged in electronic social communication. It is not surprising that adults and children occasionally encounter each other on line, just as they may occasionally encounter each other in the streets and parks of their city. A code of conduct is required for such encounters.

Professional educators and institutions are increasingly setting up their own forums where adults and children communicate electronically. It is not unusual for teachers to set up class 'Wikis' (a collection of web pages designed to enable anyone with access to contribute or modify content) or similar, with students contributing and communicating both at school and at home. These may be very worthwhile educationally but there may also be a blurring of the distinction between school and home, between public and private, that we need to take account of.

3. Institutions, class teachers, etc, may set up social forums (as distinct from educational projects like Wikis) to encourage community feeling among their students. For example, several UK language schools run Facebook

sites for their students to stay in contact between courses. There may be good commercial reasons for this. Again a code of conduct is needed.

4. Students from a particular class or school may spontaneously set up their own social forums. When I was researching the possibility of a Facebook forum for students attending English Country Schools I was surprised to find a thriving group already in existence, set up by an enterprising former student and complete with official logo copied from our web site. In situations like this the organisation needs to decide whether it wishes to be 'officially' involved or not. Some considerations are:
  - a. Is the site open or closed? Who decides membership?
  - b. What image of the school is the site projecting to its members and possibly to the public? Would the school feel happy, for example, if some students were publicly using bad language?
  - c. Given the potential for cyber bullying and predatory behaviour by adults, does the school have a duty to monitor activity in a forum that bears its name?

In this particular case we decided to set up our own 'official' forum with cooperation from the 'unofficial' site making it clear which was which. Interestingly, shortly after the official site was established a parent contacted us to say that a bully would be attending our summer school that year. Since the alleged bully was a user of our official forum we decided to publish our Child Protection Policy to the site, with particular reference to bullying. In the event no bullying took place: we may have forestalled it by reaching and informing our students in the electronic space in which they were congregating.

5. The previous paragraph raises the difficult question as to whether adults (for example teachers) and children should share membership of the same Facebook group. Official UK advice (see above) suggests an emphatic 'no'. But in a world where our lives are increasingly led online, are we really

saying that we wish to set up 'no go' areas where children (under 18 years) may congregate and adults may not go? Any parent with experience of unsupervised children's parties will tell you why this might not be a good idea. If we trust our teachers to interact with pupils in a friendly and professional manner in the real world, why should we not also trust them to interact in a friendly and professional manner online? Children sometimes seek advice from adults they know and trust and it seems a pity to deny them this possibility just because the communication is electronic.

I predict that adults and children will increasingly interact online and that this is likely to be increasingly fuzzy in terms of public / private and levels of formality. As I hope I have shown, we need some guidelines to govern this and I'd like to propose the following:

### **Facebook guidelines**

1. If schools or classes set up social networking forums on sites like Facebook for children under 18 they should be closed groups. I know of at least one school that allows anyone to join its Facebook group, presumably hoping that it might recruit new students through 'friends of friends'. I think this is dangerous. It is like allowing the public to wander around the school and grounds. Except that in cyberspace it much easier for badly motivated adults to pretend to be a member of their target group.
2. Schools may prefer not to allow adults and children to share the same Facebook group, other than those adults necessary to monitor and administer the group.
3. If however schools allow staff and pupils to share the same electronic forum they must put in place clear guidelines covering their interaction (see below).
4. Adults who have a personal account on Facebook and who also administer, monitor or take part in a Facebook group containing children should create a separate 'professional' account that they use for educational purposes. The professional

account should as far as possible be devoid of personal information. Adults must not initiate or agree to 'Friendship' requests from children using their personal account as this will result in an adult's personal photos, correspondence with friends, status updates, etc, being available to children.

Regarding electronic communications with children in general I suggest the following:

1. Never initiate electronic contact with a child unless for clear pedagogical purposes which have been sanctioned by your employer.
2. Find ways of setting up and maintaining separate 'personal' and 'professional' electronic profiles.
3. Advise children on appropriate ways of addressing and communicating with staff online. They may have become accustomed to an informal tone with their friends. For example it is no more appropriate to finish a message to a teacher with 'hugs and kisses' online than to do this offline.
4. If you converse with a child electronically, keep your tone friendly, professional and neutral: see 'Safe communications' below.
5. Avoid situations that involve the exchange of personal information, personal photos, virtual gifts or the use of any application that suggests or encourages the sharing of personal feelings.
6. If a child seeks to develop an inappropriate personal relationship with you electronically, do nothing to encourage this; tell your employer and if possible keep a copy of relevant communications.
7. If a child confides sensitive information to you electronically, such as details of bullying or other abuse, react as you would in real life and following your institution's guidelines. Record the details and if possible keep a copy of relevant communications.

## Safe communications

I'd like to add the following on the subject of safe communication with children, taken from the Child Protection Policy for English Country Schools:

The content and formality of communication between staff and children will vary according to the situation, both in the real world and on line. For example, a child chatting with a member of staff on the edge of a football field, or in an electronic community forum, might talk about family, holidays, etc. This would be normal and natural. A child might confide in a member of staff about particular personal issues, for example bullying. Or an adolescent might want to talk about sexual orientation. We would want the adult to listen and respond in a professional and helpful manner, noting however the need to record and communicate – in complete confidence - any sensitive incidents to the employer.

In general, the motivation for social communication should come from the child. The adult should be cautious about sharing personal information and should try to limit communication to listening and, if appropriate, clarifying whatever it is the child wishes to communicate. Staff should maintain friendly relationships with children while avoiding exclusivity or over familiarity. No adult must single out a child for special attention or favour in pursuit of personal gratification. Any attempt or appearance of doing so will lead to disciplinary procedures with potentially serious consequences.

I hope that the previous paragraph provides a template for staff/pupil interaction on line and in the real world. To return now to the questions I posed at the beginning of this article, I conclude: It's not OK to be friends with my pupils in real life or on line in as much as that involves socialising and the exchange of personal information; it's OK to be friendly with my pupils in real life and on line, providing particular communication guidelines are followed.

I'm aware that the subject of this article is contentious. I have approached it on the basis of my own experience in a particular educational and cultural situation. My conclusions might be

regarded as lacking in trust, or showing too much trust, depending on your point of view.

I would be very interested to hear what others think. If you'd like to comment, please email me on [etchells@countrieschools.co.uk](mailto:etchells@countrieschools.co.uk) or raise the subject on the IATEFL YLTSIG discussion list at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/younglearners/>

I look forward to hearing from you.

*Chris Etchells is Director of English Country Schools, a residential summer schools organisation for children and teenagers. He is a committee member (website manager) of IATEFL Young Learners and Teenagers Special Interest Group.*

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# YLT SIG Discussion Group

January – October 2009

Dennis Newson

**As I write – 12th October 2009 - there are 646 registered members of the YLTSIG list according to Yahoo! Groups statistics. That figure is somewhat misleading since some of those registrations are of people who (legitimately) enrol from more than one address. Still, it must mean that there are well over 600 list members – an impressive number.**

**But how do members behave in fielded discussions? A program I use called PGOOffline gives the following figures for the past 10 months, from January 1st to October 12th.**

**Table 1: Number of discussion posts from 1 January to 12 October 2009**

From	First post	Last post	Posts	%
Wendy Arnold	Jan 04, 2009 11:00	Oct 11, 2009 9:09	225	21.51
Dennis Newson	Jan 03, 2009 9:40	Oct 12, 2009 6:55	188	17.97
Anon	Jul 21, 2009 12:53	Sep 27, 2009 7:50	55	5.26
Anon	Feb 04, 2009 10:08	Oct 11, 2009 7:59	40	3.82
Anon	Apr 20, 2009 3:23	Sep 21, 2009 10:42	34	3.25
Anon	Jan 01, 2009 11:23	Oct 09, 2009 11:41	26	2.49
Anon	Apr 20, 2009 6:12	Aug 23, 2009 9:22	25	2.39
Helen Davies	Apr 20, 2009 10:42	Oct 06, 2009 8:45	25	2.39
Keith Kelly	Apr 18, 2009	Apr 24, 2009	21	2.01
Helen Emery	Apr 20, 2009 12:33	Oct 09, 2009 10:21	18	1.72
Simon Greenall	Apr 15, 2009 9:07	Oct 11, 2009 1:08	18	1.72

[NB: You can access any of the information in this article from the YLT SIG Discussion Groups at Yahoo! using your membership login.] These STASI-like figures (The STASI was the East German secret police) show that over a 10-month period Wendy and I were the big posters, with just 25 other members of the over 600 contributing – not so impressive. (I've changed the names of several contributors to Anon and left, identified, only those people whom I am fairly confident will not instruct their

solicitors to write to me for naming them in public).

On the other hand, with reference to what used to be politically-incorrectly named 'lurkers' and whom Andrew Wright suggests be known as 'readers', when the Dogme list was faced with possible closure a few years ago one member wrote in protest, "I read four newspapers a day, but I don't write to any of them." And I've noticed that my step-son, who was just visiting us from Prague, and who never answers any of my messages, clearly reads them all and remembers their contents. As with learning, people have different individual styles of using electronic discussion lists, it seems.

So I've come to the conclusion and have written elsewhere, that I should try to stop double-guessing what our membership may want and am convinced, and the YLTSIG committee are convinced, that it is appropriate and proper that a SIG of the size and stature of YLTSIG should arrange fielded discussions and YLTSIG Online sessions, open both up to the general public and not become obsessed (though never indifferent to) with the difficult to assess needs and wishes of the list as a whole. We guess, ideally, you tell us if we have got it wrong.

PG OFFLINE records the following as the top ten subjects for 2009 – with a comparison with the same period a year ago:

**Table 2: Top ten discussion subjects from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 to present**

#	Subject	Replies
1	Teaching tolerance through English (1)	52
2	Using TEFL to teach tolerance	32
3	Assessment	26
4	Assessing CLIL	24
5	Teaching tolerance through English (2)	19
6	Authors and money	16
7	Autonomous learning for YLs learning vocabulary	13
8	How do you measure +1?	10
9	Request for information on order/progression in learning tenses	9

10 Children's literature 8

	for EFL
Andrew Wright	Storytelling

**Table 3: Top ten discussion subjects from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008**

#	Subject	Replies
1	Assessment - the how and why (and the why not)	45
2	Core competencies - teaching thinking	36
3	Fielded discussion - YL teacher development Jan 08	35
4	TEFL in China	34
5	TEFL China - ultimate communicative methodology - CLIL or graphic organisers?	23
6	Reading and speaking	22
7	Welcome to teaching teenagers	21
8	Digital natives, digital immigrants	20
9	Research tells us that...	20
10	A dramatic lesson	19

Our formal sessions this year both YLSIG Online and fielded discussions have included:

Speaker(s)	Subject
Michael Coghlan	Introduction to the <i>Illuminate</i> platform
Rita Zeinstejer	Web 2.0: Honing social skills
Barbara Dieu	Social media for young learners
Keith Kelly, John Clegg & Jean Brewster	CLIL Revisited
Carla Arena	Cyber surfing with digital youth
Janice Bland	Children's literature
Helen Emery	Problems and practices of teaching reading and spelling to children whose L1 and L2 have different writing systems
Adrian Tennant	Assessment
Moira Hunter	Who teaches who?
Gergo Santha & Lisa Harshbarger	TEFL for teaching tolerance
Simon Greenall	Writing and publishing

Recordings of the online sessions can be found at:

**Michael Coghlan:** <http://tinyurl.com/cn7rs3>

**Rita Zeinstejer:** <http://tinyurl.com/dfh7k4>

**Barbara Dieu:**  
<http://home.learningtimes.net/learningtimes?go=1828788>

**Carla Arena:**  
<http://brazilbridges.pbworks.com/Cybersurfing-with-Young-Learners>

**Moira Hunter:**  
<https://sas.illuminate.com/p.jnlp?psid=2009-08-01.0625.M.7AE801FFB697DA460D4BF25AA8C21B.vcr>

Spontaneous discussions have included:

- Autism and Storytelling
- Stephen Krashen's + 1 concept
- What does TPRS mean?
- Authors and money

### And 2010?

Negotiations are in progress for presenters and fielders for another series of YLTSIG Online presentations and a series of fielded discussions. Details will be published in due course on the YLTSIG website and in the Yahoo! Groups list.

**Dennis Newson**  
**Moderator Discussions IATEFL YLTSIG list**

### List of Tables:

Table 1: Number of discussion posts from 1 January to 12 October 2009

Table 2: Top Ten Discussion Subjects from 1 January 2009 to Present

Table 3: Top Ten Discussion Subjects from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2008

Source: PGOOffline, 12 October 2009.

# Social Networking and Teenagers

Graham Stanley

**Social networking on the internet has seen phenomenal growth this year, with sites such as Facebook quickly becoming the most visited sites on the web. They usually consist of a collection of tools (instant messaging, email, groups, games and other applications), but the key to their success is probably the ease with which these sites allow people to connect with other people and to tell us (via status updates) what our friends are doing. This makes it very easy to keep in touch with a large number of people, wherever they are in the world. All very good, but, what about using social networks as a teaching tool? This article takes a broad look at what's out there and aims to give you a few ideas of how you can use social networks with teenagers.**

## What's first?

One way to make use of a popular social network such as Facebook is for you to make friends with your learners to create a stronger community feeling in and outside of class. Connecting to learners this way allows you to get to know them (and for them to get to know you and their classmates) better and gives them lots of opportunities to use English informally.

So, if you haven't done so already, join a social network and get to work. If you do this, you'll soon find out all about what they are doing with their time, the sports they play, interests, likes and dislikes. And of course, this is all information you can bring into class to personalise lessons. You can also encourage them to do quizzes and play games and use other applications in English – a lot of these are fun ways for them to develop their reading skills.

If you do decide to do this, however, you should be aware of a few things before you jump in.

## Be aware

There are, of course, several issues to contend with. One of these is choice of network. Although Facebook has made an impact all over the connected world (it is currently the third most visited site on the web), it would be a mistake to assume that it is the most popular social network in all countries. Orkut ([www.orkut.com](http://www.orkut.com)), for example, is far more popular in Brazil; Skyrock ([www.skyrock.com](http://www.skyrock.com)) is the one in France, and there are parts of Spain where Tuenti ([www.tuenti.com](http://www.tuenti.com)) is still used more than Facebook. So, it's best to find out from your learners what's most popular. Why is this important? Well, there's no point in trying to network with your learners on Facebook if they are committed users of another social network. The key to this use of social networking is to go where the people are, not to try and bring the people to you.

Another issue is privacy. It goes without saying that social networks like Facebook let you live a very public life online. People can post photographs and write comments on your profile page that can be seen by all of your contacts. You need to be certain you are happy with your teenage learners finding out a lot about you and what you do outside of class too (if you also use the social network to connect to friends and family too, of course). With Facebook, there's also no closing the classroom door and leaving it behind – you may be contacted by your learners through the instant messaging tools anytime you go online. It's worth considering if you are happy about this. If you are OK about it, then you can also give advice to your learners about what they do and don't post to their profile – a delicate role for a teacher to play here, but one that is often necessary.

You also have to deal with potential cyber-bullying. If there are problems online with learners who are connected through your class on a social network and you encouraged them to do so, then it is your responsibility to help

moderate if things get out of hand. As cyber-bullying is becoming more and more frequent, it is worth stating very early on to the class what you will and won't tolerate – there are also lots of sites that now provide materials for teachers to use in class to help broach this issue with learners. One such site is [www.kidscape.org.uk/cyberbullying/index.asp](http://www.kidscape.org.uk/cyberbullying/index.asp)

I'm sure you'll agree that Facebook and other public social networks are definitely not for every teacher and classroom situation. You are in the best situation to know or find out whether it's an option for you and if your learners are happy with the public nature of these social networks. This is also the case with young learners if you want to get down to some serious work online. Connecting with learners on existing social networks is fine if the idea is to promote informal learning and to help everyone get to know each other better. Otherwise, you should consider building your own or joining a specialised social network.

### DIY social networking

There are many alternatives if you are not happy with the idea of using public social networks. There are other ways of getting the same features that these sites offer without the inconveniences. Using Ning ([www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com)), for example, is a great way of doing this. It offers you many of the features of social networking sites (groups, forums, photo and video-sharing, etc) and can be kept completely private. It's also very easy to start a social network and to maintain it. Ning is also a great place to search for ways of connecting to groups of English learners in other countries. There are many active, existing groups of EFL learners. Just search in Ning and you'll find them.

You can also set up your own Ning to use with your class or school. It's an easy thing to do and completely free. Then you can decide who can or cannot join. It's a great option for project work with classes in other countries or for competitions in one particular school. It'll be harder to motivate the learners to use it out of class, but not impossible if you work on making it interesting to them and keep drawing their

attention to it and to what people are saying there when you are in class.

### 3D social networks

I also recommend you take a look at the 3D social network Second Life ([www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com)). Not usually considered a social network, this popular 3D virtual world has a similar set of tools (instant messaging, groups, etc) to 2D social networks. Although it has dropped out of sight in the popular press, educationally, its use has been increasing exponentially and there are now thriving communities of language learners.

For example, The British Council's *Learn English Second Life for Teens* project has over 1800 learners registered, from 16 countries. There are opportunities for learners to meet and chat with each other and *language learning quests* (types of educational games) for them to do on their own or with other learners. Get in touch with me and I can give you more information and tell you how you can get your learners involved.

*Graham Stanley spends half of his working life as a teacher of English at the British Council Young Learner Centre in Barcelona, Spain and the other half as Project Manager of the British Council's Learn English Second Life project. This involves managing a 3D self-access centre for 13-17 year-olds for the British Council and working with partners of the EU-funded AVALON project ([avalon-project.ning.com](http://avalon-project.ning.com)), which aims to develop best practice through language learning scenarios for adults in Second Life.*

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# Spoken Discourse Analysis in Children's EFL Lessons: Interaction Revealed

Joe Siegel

**Richards & Lockhart describe a troubling trend in EFL teaching: "Much of what happens in teaching is unknown to the teacher. Teachers are often unaware of the kind of teaching they do or how they handle many of the moment-to-moment decisions that arise" (Richards & Lockhart, 1996, p.3).**

If this is the case, teachers need to be better equipped with awareness-raising tools. Action research in the form of classroom language analysis is one possible remedy for such situations. By analysing classroom language, objective data on teacher and learner output can be accessed. Classroom discourse analysis can be a powerful tool in raising awareness about what actually happens during instruction.

The research discussed in this paper seeks to investigate the benefits of conducting spoken discourse analysis on children's EFL lessons in Japan. It will be demonstrated that through lesson recording, transcription and analysis, teachers can identify when they might be either limiting or facilitating communication. With this knowledge, pedagogic adjustments can be implemented with a goal of maximizing communicative potential.

The self-monitoring potential of spoken discourse analysis is crucial to young learners' lessons because these learners may be reluctant to challenge teachers' pedagogic style and patterning; therefore, the responsibility for understanding and examining the relationship between teacher and learner output lies with teachers. Spoken discourse analysis is a type of action research that can be conducted by teachers on their own lessons; in addition, teacher trainers may find the inclusion of such

self-monitoring techniques advantageous in teacher-development programs.

## Discourse Analysis (DA) model

One of the most widely recognised DA models was developed by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975). The model consists of a rank-scale in which structural units at one level combine to form the level above. There are five units: *lesson*, *transaction*, *exchange*, *move* and *act*. The current study focuses on the units *exchange*, *move* and *act*, which are the most specifically defined. Much information can be gained from their analysis in the classroom.

An *exchange* is made up of a typical Initiation-Response-Follow-up (IRF) sequence. *Moves* comprise different options within the IRF structure and *acts* combine to form *moves*. For a more detailed description of Sinclair & Coulthard's model, see Coulthard & Sinclair (1992). See Figure 1 for a sample.

**Figure 1: Sample analysis using Sinclair & Coulthard's DA model**

Initiation	Response	Follow-up
<b>Opening move (elicit)</b> T: What do you think is in the refrigerator? (el)	<b>Answering</b> S: Um, um, vegetables. (rep)	
<b>Opening move (elicit)</b> T: Oh, what's your favorite vegetable? (el)	<b>Answering</b> S: Tomatoes. (rep)	
<b>Opening move (elicit)</b> T: Did you eat any vegetables today? (el)	<b>Answering</b> S: Um, yes. (rep)	
<b>Opening move (elicit)</b> T: Which ones? (el)	<b>Answering</b> S: Spinach. (rep)	<b>Follow-up</b> T: Oh, wow! (ack) I love spinach. (com)
<b>Opening move (elicit)</b> T: Do you like spinach? (el)	<b>Answering</b> S: Mmmm. No. (rep)	<b>Follow-up</b> T: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. (ack)

**Terms (from Sinclair & Coulthard 1992, p.18-21):**

**Elicitation (el):** Realised by a question. Its function is to request a linguistic response.

**Reply (rep):** Realised by a statement, question or moodless item and non-verbal surrogates such as nods. Its function is to provide a linguistic response which is appropriate to the elicitation.

**Acknowledge (ack):** Realised by 'yes', 'OK', 'cor', 'mm', 'wow', and certain non-verbal gestures and expressions. Its function is simply to show that the initiation has been understood

**Comment (com):** Realised by a statement or tag question. Its function is to exemplify, expand, justify, provide additional information.

Proponents tend to praise the simplicity and descriptive capabilities of this DA model. Willis (1992) points out that when a system is "rigorously defined" (p.112), it is possible to consistently compare data across various settings and genres. Moreover, McCarthy (1991) states this "relatively simple and powerful model...is very useful for analysing patterns of interaction where talk is relatively tightly structured" (p.12), like many language classrooms.

### Data collection

This study focused exclusively on DA in private one-on-one children's lessons. The goal of the lesson is fluency in spoken English. This data is based on a transcription of 17 minutes from one 50-minute lesson. The student (S) was a seven-year-old Japanese girl. According to her mother, S has listened to English CDs since she was very young, and the two also study together with English picture books. Due to S's advanced comprehension relative to her age, lessons are conducted entirely in English. Once the lesson segment was transcribed, I labelled the data using the DA model described above.

### Discussion and findings

After conducting this analysis, it is clear the model is beneficial for understanding classroom communication between teachers and young EFL learners and can be a catalyst for change.

As Thornbury (1996) states: "The assumption is that awareness is a prerequisite for change" (p. 281). Burns (in Thornbury, 1996) points out that "teachers need to be encouraged to gain greater understanding of the interactional processes of their classrooms" (p. 281). The DA model is one vehicle to aid teachers of young EFL learners in achieving this knowledge, and its usefulness is evident in several ways.

### Teacher output

The process of DA allows teachers to notice how, when and where they are or may be enabling or disabling students. It helps teachers better monitor and understand "[their] use of language as a pedagogic tool" (Mercer, 2001, p. 255). It can be employed, for example, to identify an imbalance between the number of student and teacher turns. In addition, bad habits and "ritualised behaviours" (Thornbury, 1996, p. 282), once identified, can be addressed.

Importantly, DA provides useful information about the teacher's use of *Follow-up moves*. These *moves* are crucial because they reveal whether a display question (DQ) or a referential question (RQ) was asked. Display questions are questions teachers already know the answer to and which are meant to display linguistic structures, while referential questions are those to which teachers do not know the answers and which facilitate more authentic communication (Richards & Lockhart, 1996, p. 187). Teachers may want to avoid overuse of display questions in favour of referential questions, which offer learners more natural interactive opportunities.

Also regarding *Follow-up moves*, Wells (in Hardman & Mroz, 1999) states: "the third move can be used to extend the students' answer" (p. 285) and provides teachers opportunities to incorporate and build on student input rather than rigidly adhering to pre-determined plans. Through this DA, such instances were recognized, and I believe use of DA will help teachers monitor their use of *Follow-up moves*. These *moves* have tremendous impact on the nature of lessons and, when used appropriately, greatly increase the authenticity and real-world communication that is sometimes lacking in the patterning of traditional children's lessons.

## Student output

Analysis of student output, guided by DA, is also advantageous. At the level of *move*, teachers can discern who is operating the Initiations, Responses and Follow-ups. If an imbalance is found, steps can be taken to include more student Initiations and Follow-ups. These *moves* are traditionally operated by teachers; however, students need to be given practice creating these *moves*, as they are integral parts of natural conversation.

Additionally, DA can be used to show which classroom activities successfully produce communicative interaction. Although Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) point out that the DA model was not meant to handle learner-to-learner interaction, de Boer (unpublished) addresses ways DA might be built upon to include such interaction, which is a modernising improvement, one that may help teachers measure pedagogical and interpersonal value of activities.

Finally, it can assist identification of items that are noticeably missing from student output; for example, if students are unable to make appropriate Follow-ups, which are “often noticeably absent from the learner’s natural conversational discourse” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 122), teachers will be aware that such language should be introduced.

## Pedagogical implications

Observations made during this study have direct pedagogical implications for this classroom context. This study showed some satisfying aspects of the lesson:

- The teacher (T) often withholds evaluation, making the communication appear “natural”
- S is able to exercise some power and control through Initiations and Follow-ups
- T’s wait time seems appropriate; as S is given time to respond to opening *moves* without T adding additional utterances.

Also revealed were areas that call for improvement in future lessons. One such shortcoming is S’s sole use of DQs in Initiations.

The teacher may incorporate activities that include more information gaps and negotiation of meaning to encourage more RQs. In addition, S’s inability to use a variety of Follow-ups is noteworthy. Language and practice to advance her abilities in this area may be introduced.

Furthermore, S’s moves often consist of single *acts*, so T intends to introduce activities to help her extend her contributions to include more items; for example, T could model utterances with an *inform* and a *comment*, after which S could provide a similar contribution, preferably substituting her own ideas in those slots instead of repetition.

The transcription and analysis within this DA model were stimuli that brought about these observations. As McCarthy (1991) observes, DA “can highlight problem areas [but] cannot give simple solutions to the problems” (p. 26). While solutions are indeed the teacher’s responsibility, DA provides a framework for indicating areas in need of improvement.

## Conclusion

Though a time-consuming process due to transcription and analysis, periodic use of spoken DA can help teachers monitor output and improve lesson quality. Teachers and teacher trainers involved with young learners will benefit from the insight provided by discourse analysis.

Overall, Sinclair & Coulthard’s DA model has been found to be a practical tool for revealing and describing interaction in this children’s EFL lesson. Through its focus on output, important discursive factors, such as amount and quality of teacher and student contributions and the use of Follow-ups, can be identified. Recognition of these contributions and their constituent parts may lead to pedagogic enhancements. In summary, DA reminds teachers to consider the ramifications of moment-to-moment, potentially spontaneous, decisions they make at different rank-levels, which affect the lesson as a whole.

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# Book Reviews

## ***Reflective Language Teaching: From Research to Practice***

**Thomas S. C. Farrell**  
**Continuum 2007 pp. viii + 202**  
**ISBN 978-0-8264-9658-4**

It is easy for us, language teachers, to feel confident in our own teaching style after we accumulate a certain amount of experience, and follow it blindly due to our busy teaching load. Without taking the initiative in reflecting on our teaching, however, we run the risk of becoming 'dinosaurs', because "experience alone is insufficient for professional growth, but that experience coupled with reflection can be a powerful impetus for teacher development" (Richards, 1991, p. 8).

In his book, *Reflective Language Teaching: From Research to Practice*, Thomas S. C. Farrell reminds us of the significance of 'T' in TESOL and reflective practice in the second language classroom, by sharing his own wealth of experience of teaching and researching as a teacher-scholar.

This book has a well thought-out organisation so that the readers can learn what reflective teaching is and how to practice it naturally and gradually as they read. Firstly, the readers can obtain general knowledge of each topic related to reflective practice by reading what current research says. Secondly, they can deepen their knowledge of the topic by reading summaries of relevant case studies carried out by Farrell and language teachers.

Finally, they can reflect on their own teaching by being given ample opportunity to answer to various reflection questions on the basis of the knowledge obtained by this stage, which I believe is Farrell's ultimate goal. As a result, this

book will provide both experienced language teachers and teachers who are new to the profession with new avenues to improve everyday language teaching.

The layout of the fourteen chapters is accessible, with each chapter combining both theoretical perspectives and practical applications. Each chapter opens with a 'Chapter Outline,' which clearly signposts what the focus of the chapter is. It consists of *Introduction, What the research says, Case study, Case study reflection, From research to practice, Reflection, Conclusion, Chapter scenario*, and second *Reflection* (except Chapter 1). This simple but effective layout makes it possible for experienced language teachers, who are familiar with reflective practice, to concentrate on one particular chapter of interest. Alternatively, by reading this book from cover to cover, novice language teachers could gain the systematic knowledge of what reflective practice is and how it is achieved, and reflect on their own teaching, without being overwhelmed.

Chapter 1 begins with an overview of reflective teaching and outlines the origins, definitions, types, levels and benefits of reflective teaching. Farrell then introduces reflective teaching for language teachers, and stresses its importance as follows: "Reflective language teaching, as it is discussed in this book, is a bottom-up approach to teacher professional development that is based on the belief that experienced and novice language teachers can improve their understanding of their own teaching by consciously and systematically reflecting on their teaching experiences" (p. 9). This bottom-up approach is maintained consistently in the chapters that follow.

Chapters 2 through 7 address how language teachers can reflect on their teaching, focusing on *Self-reflection, Teachers' beliefs and practices, Teachers' narratives, Teachers' language proficiency, Teachers' metaphors and maxims*, and *Classroom communication* respectively, whereas the remaining six chapters (8 through 13) explore concrete tools to reflect with, which are *Action research, Teaching journals, Teacher development*

groups, Classroom observations, Critical friendships and Concept mapping. Through these chapters, it is assumed that the readers cannot help thinking about their own teaching settings, and a profusion of ideas of how they could reflect in their classrooms should emerge.

In Chapter 14, *Professional development through reflective language teaching*, Farrell concludes this final chapter by delivering an encouraging message to language teachers in the classroom: “teachers, not methods or expert opinions, make a difference as they explore the nature of their own decision-making and classroom practices” (pp. 175-176). It goes without saying that it is important for language teachers to learn from research. However, Farrell reminds us that it is not enough, and language teachers should regard research as a catalyst for change in their own teaching in the classroom.

All in all, this book is recommendable for language teachers, who want to start reflecting on their teaching, or who want to confirm whether their way of reflection is adequate. I, as a language teacher, would like all language teachers in the classroom to read this book, recognize or re-recognize the importance of reflection, and start or continue to improve their teaching.

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Richards, Jack. C. (1991) Towards reflective teaching. *The Teacher Trainer*, 5(3), 4-8.

**Bairbre Ní Oisín, ESOL Teacher at St. Michael's International School, Kobe, Japan**

## Henry V

**Classic Comics**  
**Mary Shelly**  
**Adapted for ELT by Brigit Viney**  
**Heinle Cengage Learning**

The appeal of this book, adapted by Brigit Viney for ELT, is that it is novel. I have never seen such an adaptation of a classic play in this format before.

There are many positive features to commend the book. Firstly, it undeniably presented in a very attractive way: the paper used is glossy. Undeniably, the cartoons are well drawn; with the right amount of text to accompany each 'box' This means that the drawing explains the dialogue well; too much text and the reader would be confused. The presentation of the characters at the beginning is welcome, although I do think there is so many that if the reader were to be used in class, slow and careful explanation would have to be made about their interactions.

Moreover, the Act and Scene divisions enable convenient references points to be made, in terms of being able to pick up the book, where one stopped. The CDs are also useful, in that instead of the students reading out aloud, they can listen to the story, with or without the text.

My biggest criticism of the book is the absence of comprehension questions. Normally, a reader has many of these in order to check and test comprehension. They are vital in this regard; otherwise the teacher has to think of them, this is time-consuming. With help, the language seems manageable at an Intermediate Level; certainly not below. I would certainly be interested in piloting it in the classroom.

**Martyn Coulter is an EFL teacher and examiner based in East Sussex.**

## ***Blended Learning: Using technology in and beyond the language classroom***

**Pete Sharma & Barney Barrett**  
**Macmillan 2008**  
**ISBN 978-0-230-02083-2**

It is an unsettling image of modernity: the progress of mankind represented by a bent form frowning indelibly over a computer screen..! For some of us, “blended learning” is traditionally a combination of face-to-face (F2F) teaching and computer-mediated communication (CMC) safely relegated to the world of Business English. Students work and study online simultaneously because success – for their employers – is measured in speed (Donna, 2000, p. 4).

However, in their book, *Blended Learning: Using technology in and beyond the language classroom*, Pete Sharma and Barney Barrett illustrate that an element of CMC is engaging and appropriate across a range of ages and levels. The authors’ ideas about mixing ‘authentic’ materials with web-based tasks are relevant to any teacher who wants to foreground the support and facility of technology to their learners. The book also introduces an exciting model of learning which welcomes and includes YLT students/teachers, rather than suggesting certain groups are too young or ‘digital immigrants’.

Each chapter is neatly divided into an explanation of the devices/materials and their uses, how to find them, opportunities and issues, practical activities and case studies. I was particularly impressed by the summary of *Interactive Whiteboards* (IWB) in Chapter 6 and *Creating and Using Your Own Materials* in Chapter 9. In them, the authors present lesson ideas that even newly-initiated EFL teachers could attempt. I also found the flow diagrams of webpage operations, IWB screenshots and annotated features of audio programs good for understanding what these programs actually look like when you start to prepare your materials.

*Blended Learning* encourages students to create their own podcasts, wikis and webquests because autonomy lies with learners. Teacher Resource Bank activities prompt exploration of technology and completion of answers: all within a single page. Tasks invite groupwork and pairwork because they demand a range of skills. For example, the “summer course project using digital camcorders” in Chapter 7 and the “London visit webquest” would appeal to summer school collaborators: editors, media fans and performers alike. It invites students to emerge as ‘digital natives’ that modern English language acquisition increasingly requires.

Sharma and Barrett are honest about the pros and cons of modern electronic devices and the book has the feel of a guide, rather than an edifying list. I recommend the book to all EFL professionals who want further practical understanding of emerging technologies. You can also use the Evaluation sheet to decide if web-based material is pedagogically sound.

The only disappointing note to add is that the book’s accompanying webpage ([www.blendedlearning.com](http://www.blendedlearning.com), is not available. It would be useful to view regular updates, as the authors assert: “the web can be used as a virtual resource bank and library. There are purpose-made materials for topics, grammar points, vocabulary development, and skills development... there is so much material that the first consideration is the best places to find what you want.” *Blended Learning* presents technology as ubiquitous and I’m sure their webpage will active again by the time this article goes to print. But in the meantime, I guess it’s assuring that we can all suffer from the crooked back/frustrated brow syndrome at times!

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# YLT SIG Discussion Group summary

## Children's Literature in Language Education

Janice Bland, 01.06.09 – 05.06.09

The motivational power of picture books may help initiate the habit of extensive pleasure reading – which many consider decisive for language acquisition and intercultural competence as well as untold further educational goals. The sooner children learn to bond with books the better: children are highly motivated by stories and powerful pictures. So much of a child's time is consumed with L2 classes, we can't afford to ignore wider educational goals, can we? And, in any case, content-based teaching and implicit language learning is surely the more effective strategy with younger learners.

Primary EFL curricula often acknowledge the breaking down of cultural barriers as an aspect of early language teaching. If Young Learners are to make the very best use of their capacities, surely the linguistic aim of beginning functional competence should not be allowed to eclipse potential educational and intercultural goals.

With regard to graded readers for adolescent language learners, too often a simplification of the language goes hand in hand with a simplified and Eurocentric or Americentric perspective. The humanistic discourse of literary texts, particularly English-language literatures, could provide a lead-in to speech communities from around the world. However I think it's unfair to require adolescents to read meanings into texts taken from the adult semiotic domain.

Perhaps the children should start testing the teachers: Explain the rules of *quidditch*! Define a *muggle*! What do you know about the life-style of vegetarian vampires? In the light of the reader-response approach, literary texts do not have absolute meanings and are not autonomous artefacts. Meanings can only be activated by the reader. The reader is an author whose authority/ justification lies in the text.

Consequently, the reader must have the appropriate schemata to understand the text as well as appropriate linguistic competence. Why give the teacher (or study guide the teacher employs) the authorial, authoritative and (in assessment of advanced L2 learners and their interpretation of literature) even authoritarian position? My work involves motivating student teachers to become readers - I think that's a good place to start. Should it become *compulsory* for all on-going secondary school teachers to read Harry Potter, to learn something about the text world that fascinates so many adolescents? But then we've already given up on *motivation* and turned to *coercion*, haven't we?

We needn't be afraid to use the word literature any more. Where does literature begin and where does it end? The Canon may still be studied in English Lit departments at traditional UK universities, but elsewhere the canon has opened up. In a literature course at some German universities students also look at film (after all drama in performance has long been considered literature), oral literature like fairy tales, and literary texts with a strong visual component like graphic novels and picture books.

Dennis Newson joined in the discussion with: "A related general point – in schools and universities in Germany (and elsewhere?) poems, novels and stories are to be analysed, not enjoyed. Enjoyment does not collocate with literature. Enjoyment is unscientific, unacademic. Tell stories? Heavens! May I please see your bibliography?"

This is changing gradually! John McCrae introduced the phrase literature with a small "L". Many teachers DO use a "hands on" approach to literature – encouraging kids to write letters to favourite characters in their books – telling the unwritten story of a minor character – hotseating characters so they continue their arguments outside the book etc. The Reader Response Theory – that meaning is made in the interaction of each individual reader with a literary text – is slowly, slowly becoming accepted.

In my literature classes in Hildesheim we discuss mostly texts that students CAN read in future with their own kids at school. Even star author Salman Rushdie has written a book for children: *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. It's perfectly possible to discuss many children's and young adult books as serious literature. Also picture books should be discussed as often complex literature in teacher education. As all of my students are future teachers, this is what we try to do.

Kids are more motivated by talking about the *story*, than questions that require them to display language ("What colour is her hood?" pointing at Little Red Riding Hood – how many colour-blind EFL teachers ARE there in the world?) The provision of books (and I mean exciting, colourful, motivating books, not second-hand textbooks) is crucial. I was recently discussing with my MEd students, who had just finished teaching in a primary school, the lack of school libraries in my part of Germany, and asked them to have a look at the provision of books at a local Hauptschule.

This is the type of school that 10-year-olds are sent to after finishing primary school when they are considered to be low achievers. The head teacher was present and asked (I can still hardly believe this) whether a Hauptschule needs a library, implying they don't read anyway. *Of course* they don't read, they are exactly the kids who DON'T have books at home. Even when the teachers are doing their utmost in the Hauptschule, they are all locked into a system which *steals* self-esteem from young people.

*Motivation is key.* I've watched many EFL lessons with picture books in the primary school, and find that complex picture books work best. By this I mean when the children have to *infer* and discuss meanings, e.g. when there are NO or few words, so children have to supply words/ideas/read meanings into the books: *No, David* (David Shannon); *Good Night, Gorilla* (Peggy Rathmann); and *The Snowman* (Raymond Briggs) are good examples. Or when the pictures and words tell slightly different stories, so again kids are *motivated* to talk about the meanings they read *into* the texts. Noisy

children become quieter – also "low achievers" like to know the teacher trusts that they can *think*...

Secondary school can also make use of picture books – I've seen really rough kids become silent and thoughtful when reading the picture book *ZOO* (Anthony Browne). The text was too difficult for them (low achievers again) so the teacher simplified it a little. Of course that is allowed! We are talking about getting children *motivated* to look at books! Kids love pictures, movies, graphic novels (have you observed the young people in the graphic novel section of bookshops?) Of course 90% of graphic novels are rubbish – but 90% of anything is rubbish – so we go for the 10% – anything to get kids into books!

Studies on L2 acquisition among young learners are thin on the ground, but they do point to a need for L2 *novices* to learn implicitly – content-based, not structure-based. Of course all learners are different, but there is no proof that extensive reading is *less* effective than traditional methods – and it has so many advantages – such as broadening horizons. I would try to argue this way with the authorities you're dealing with. And the ground work for extensive reading starts, if not at home, then in the primary and lower secondary school!

Extensive reading has to start with pleasure. "Reading is caught, not taught", I'm not referring to functional literacy (decoding words) but pleasure in finding out the secrets of the book! "Our identity is partly shaped by the recognition or its absence, often by the mis-recognition of others" (Charles Taylor) For this reason I've long been pleading for the publication in Germany of Turkish stories, e.g. Nasreddin Hodja, with Turkish illustrations – English is a lingua franca and I think we should be going beyond the English-speaking world in choosing our literary texts. However most primary teachers (who buy the books) are German, even if many of their pupils are Turkish, so the publishers haven't yet responded (in Germany).

Similar arguments hold for care in choosing texts with a varied representation of gender. For secondary schools I'd like to recommend Jane Yolen's *Mightier than the Sword* (world folktales for strong boys) and Alison Lurie's *Clever*

*Gretchen and other Forgotten Folktales*. And how about reading *Daddy's Roommate* (Michael Willhoite) – a picture book about a boy whose father lives with another man. I know many parents and cultures (and head teachers) would have a problem with this – but that's why we should discuss it, isn't it? Is it RIGHT that children who are brought up in a household with two mums or two dads feel freakish – because their books don't show this kind of family? The new buzzword is *diversity* (perhaps going beyond *multiculturalism*).

Boys are usually as fascinated by great picture books and great storytelling as girls. It's later we seem to lose many boys as readers... That's why when discussing storytelling with my students, I always ask them to involve the *book* as well, so the kids get a positive connection to books in the primary school (often after the oral telling). I'm sure many of you know Michael Rosen's picture book *We're going on a bear hunt*, with wonderful illustrations by Helen Oxenbury. Using the literary text as well as storytelling will allow us to broaden the lessons a little... when Rosen and Oxenbury created this book, they added one final double spread (a *picture* - therefore not to be seen in Rosen's wonderful youtube telling). The bear wanders back alone along the beach, shut out by the family.

For the first time we don't see the cheerful family. All at once the bear is the focaliser, and suggests loneliness and dejection. One double spread may seem a small gesture, but in fact there are only twelve full-colour double spreads in the picture book altogether, so it's not insignificant. It creates a vacuum that wants filling, and can promote not only an interesting discussion, but even a completely new personal perspective, or *schema refreshment*. Why did the family want to hunt the bear? Do bears, other animals, other living creatures have rights? Is it possible to see human beings as anything other than the centre of all life? This is the chance of a first glimpse at the subject of anthropocentrism. I know around the world there are many different curricula for EFL classes... In Germany *education goals* are written into the curriculum – and for this we need serious literature – but still written with a small "L"! (The schools also need books...)

*Schema refreshment*, it was Guy Cook who introduced this phrase. Much literature is *supposed* to shock us, to give us a new Schema, or understanding of a particular area. *No. David!* is supposed to shock the reader – what a naughty boy! But how delightful for boys reading *No, David!* to discover that his mother, despite all his naughtiness, still loves him!

It's great to use limericks (and nursery rhymes for younger kids) for excellent pronunciation sessions. English is a wonderfully rhythmical language:

There was a young man from Calcutta  
Who had a most terrible stutter,  
He said: Pass the h... ham,  
And the j... j... j...jam,  
And the b...b...b...b...b...b...butter.

Look at the nursery rhyme below – and it's easy to see that limericks grew out of the popular nursery rhymes:

"There was an old woman who lived in a shoe,  
She had so many children she didn't know what to do.  
She gave them some broth,  
Without any bread, She whipped them all soundly and sent them to bed!"

And it's *all right* to use nursery rhymes with older kids (good introduction to poetry) – they weren't originally made up for children at all (any more than fairy tales were). Mums and dads used to sing any rhyme that came into their heads to quieten their children – even what they had been singing in the pub the night before!

Andrew Wright commented that we have to be careful with nursery rhymes, many are insulting and hurtful. Most of the time I agree that that is the best policy. However, even when we are trying hard to be sensitive, we can still make mistakes with implicit ideologies that we scarcely even notice. Let's take the example of the prize-winning *Slave Dancer* (Paula Fox). It's a gripping story told in fairly easy words, far easier than most young adult novels, it's aimed at younger teen readers. It leaves young (and older) readers in tears of rage and horror at the evil of the slave trade.

BUT, even this note-worthy book is insulting. The slaves (who all tragically perish but one) never have a voice on the ship. They are like the

princesses in fairy tales in one way – they have to wait passively for rescue – the story is told from the perspective of a white boy. I still think we should read *Slave Dancer*, but help our students notice these things, known as "reading against the text" or "resisting reading". We could also use resisting reading to point out injustices in traditional rhymes, such as:

"My mother said, I never should  
Play with the gypsies in the wood..."

Quite a few excellently-crafted books for young readers use a lot of repetition – which is a literary device! The beginning of Ted Hughes *The Iron Man* (fairly easy, for secondary) – uses repetition as the Iron Man goes  
CRRRAAAASSSSSSH! CRASH! CRASH!  
CRASH! down the cliff to the rocks below. An anecdote on Extensive Reading, and how it is NOT meant to be: My daughter is earning pocket money for her gap year by helping children who are struggling with their school English. Today a 14-year-old boy (one who failed his school exams and so had to repeat the whole school year) showed her the book he is reading in school. It's an *ancient* simplified version of John Le Carré's *Call for the Dead*, a thriller set in a past adult world that even most native-speaker contemporary 14-year-olds couldn't possibly understand. Of course he can't understand it. He's read *The Giggler Treatment* (Roddy Doyle) with my daughter and loved it.

Michael Morpurgo's *Animal Tales* were a GREAT success. These books written for native-speaker kids were not simplified, but very well written and great stories! There are good arguments for sometimes using graded readers – but for kids they should be simplified *children's* stories – or GOOD, well-written, well-researched original stories – how else can children enter the world of the book?

Sandie Mourão pointed out the pivotal role of *illustrations* in children's literature. I agree whole-heartedly. Morag Styles, referring to the National Literacy Strategy (England and Wales, 1998) wrote:

"There is ... a serious gap at the centre of the NLS – hardly a mention of visual literacy which, with all the new technologies children are expected to master, will surely be one of the dominant literacies of the twenty-first century. We fail to value the reading of pictures, films, television, CD ROM, performance texts and cartoon strips at our peril."

Children in the EFL class can and should read pictures (pictures are also often called "text").

The reasons for "reading pictures" in EFL classes are:

1. The children are at no disadvantage over the teacher
2. We are often unconsciously influenced by pictures and should learn about this in school (adverts, gender issues, cultural differences etc.)
3. Picture books help children bond with books at an early age – excellent preparation for reading for pleasure in the secondary school.
4. Pictures generate genuine interaction (talking happily about BOOKS!)
5. Pictures are "windows on other worlds" (Margaret Meek).

And as a number of us – probably all of us in this discussion – have pointed out, it's crucial to take children (and their stories) seriously. Children deserve no less than high quality picture books as well as oral storytelling, rhymes that have stood the test of time, great contemporary poetry, the best graphic novels (*Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi is a treasure! The original version is in French – but when most of the story is in the pictures, I'm not sure it matters to read it in translation...), excellently-written young adult novels etc. etc.

There are poor quality picture books, and rubbishy young adult novels. There are terrible graded readers for both primary and secondary that will kill all joy in reading. However, due to the growing understanding of the importance of reading in language acquisition, new graded readers are being published all the time – and some are very good.

BUT, many teachers go on using old, badly simplified and unsuitable readers. In Germany, there are nowhere near enough funds to get the books the teachers and children need. This is still, to my mind, a major problem.

*Janice Bland, Publications Co-Editor*



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# From Chinese to English: Children's reading problems and some practical solutions

Helen Emery

## The problems facing young second language learners

When children learn to read in their first language, they acquire various skills and techniques for decoding written words. This in itself is a difficult task, but the problem is often made more acute by the introduction of a second language writing system (an orthography) which is radically different. Young children may not have fully mastered reading and spelling skills in their L1 when they are asked to start reading in the L2. At this stage, they may not be able to say very much in the L2 anyway – the problem is compounded as you can see. First of all I will identify some of the many problems that children face in learning to read in English as a second language, and then I will outline methods of teaching reading that have proved most successful, together with some tips and suggestions – based on my experiences of training overseas teachers.

## Environmental problems

There are many problems affecting children's acquisition of L2 reading skills. Schools may have few resources and classrooms may be overcrowded – children get little attention from the teacher and not much practice in using the second language. There is often no money for books, and books may not be available locally – they may have to be imported at great cost. Many societies lack a reading culture, there are no public libraries and reading isn't seen as a useful way to spend time. There may be poor

examples of written English in the form of misspelled shop

signs and advertisements, which help to reinforce wrong word forms in children's minds. Teachers in the schools may lack confidence in their own L2 reading skills, and try to avoid reading to children as much as possible. And finally, the parents may not be able to help with homework as they can't read English themselves.

## Language-related problems

Children learning a second language face a multitude of language-related problems as well. As already mentioned, the second language may have a different alphabet, script and orthography. As such, it will be necessary for children to learn different skills to be able to read in the second language. This point is particularly relevant to Chinese children as their L1 has a logographic script: this means that characters (or logographs) are recognised visually, and have to be memorised according to their shape. When they come to read English, they learn that the 26 letters of the alphabet have different sounds and can be combined to represent hundreds of thousands of different words. If they come across a new word in Chinese, they won't be able to read it, but if they see a new word in English, they will be able to decode it: sound it out letter by letter. They may not know it's meaning at this point, but by pronouncing it, they have at least acquired some knowledge of this new word. At first it will be difficult for children to appreciate that they may have to use different skills to read in their L1 and L2. This is where parents and the class teacher can step in to provide support.

As well as orthography-related problems, children may well struggle with the second language anyway – their L1 may have very different sounds to English, and this will lead to pronunciation difficulties. All in all, we can see that learning to read and spell in a second language is a daunting task for young children. It is therefore very important that teachers and parents support children as much as possible.

## How do we read words in English?

In the previous section I briefly mentioned differences in reading English and Chinese. In this section, I want to investigate what it means to be able to process words in English, in more detail. In English, there are three ways to read a word:

- By decoding (sounding out letter by letter) – via the phonological route;
- By whole word recognition – the lexical or orthographic route;
- By analogy to a known word, eg: if you know **house**, you will be able to read **mouse** (or an unknown word such as **jouse**) by substituting the *onset* and using a known *rime*.

## What are the stages of acquisition of these reading skills?

It is commonly accepted that children starting to read in English firstly learn to recognise a few select words through logographic principles: in the same way that readers of Chinese would recognise words in their language. At this stage, a child has no knowledge of letter sounds, he merely associates word shapes with their pronunciation and meaning. He will probably learn 20 or 30 different words in this way – these will be high frequency items, such as his name. At the same time he is learning to recognise whole words in this way, it is hoped that his parents or the teacher will be drawing attention to letter sounds. At this stage spelling leads reading. Early spellings will be phonetic in nature, often including key consonants but omitting many of the vowels. E.g.: LFT for *elephant*. As the child progresses with his phonetic readings, he will start to develop orthographic word recognition skills: frequently encountered words will be committed to memory and will be recognised visually. He is now on the way to becoming a skilled reader.

## Do children learning to read in English as a second language go through these same stages?

Although most research into children's reading development has been carried out with L1

readers, the principles are the same for L1 and L2. However, if the child's L1 uses the same alphabet as English, he will probably have acquired the basic decoding skills before he learns the second language. This naturally gives children a head start as they are already familiar with reading principles. It can lead to problems though. If a child has little knowledge of the English language and doesn't understand the words he is reading, he may be able to decode the text pretty well, but the result will be what we call "barking at print". It is painful to listen to a child struggling to read a story where every word is pronounced slowly – read letter by letter, often with mispronunciations. Comprehension of the story will be low: if the child is asked questions about the story later – or the pictures in the book, often he will not be able to answer any of them.

## How can teachers help with these problems?

### Early reading:

Many teachers ask: should we teach the alphabet first? There are various schools of thought on this. Many children will already know the English alphabet before they start school as mothers (and fathers!) will have introduced them to the letters and sounds via magnetic plastic letters stuck to the fridge door, or the '*alphabet song*'. Some children may be able to spell simple words, and their names. However, if a teacher starts a class from scratch – not one child knows the English alphabet, what should she do?

It is important for the teaching to reinforce the natural acquisition order of reading skills, and as a result, many teachers begin with *Look and Say*. *Look and Say* methods teach children to recognise a few key words as wholes: this approach supports the logographic stage. This method of teaching reading centres around the use of flash cards with words written on them. The theory is that by showing children the word-cards frequently, they will learn to recognise words by sight, thus building up a valuable sight word lexicon.

One of the best teachers I have ever seen used this technique with her children – and stuck the flash cards to the classroom walls after each

lesson. She divided the walls up into different semantic groups: family members on one, food and drinks on another, houses and furniture, animals, transport... words connected to each different topic were stored together. The children remembered the location of the different groups on the walls, and when they couldn't remember a word or its spelling, their eyes would search the walls till they found it. Reitsma (1983) found that children had learned to read a word by sight after four or five exposures. Sticking the flashcards to the classroom walls will therefore help them to achieve this aim faster than if the cards are just put away in a folder at the end of the lesson.

The popular *Ladybird* reading books utilise *look and say* (or *sight word reading*) techniques. These reading books use a few high frequency words which are repeated often, and through constant exposure children will learn to recognise them by sight. Many teachers use *Big Books* as well: these are large sized books that can be used for shared reading, with pictures and text big enough to be seen by all children in the class. The teacher usually stands (or sits) at the front of the class with the book propped up against the board, or on a specially designed easel. She reads the story aloud, pointing to words as she goes. Sometimes the children read the story with the teacher – sometimes they just look and listen. Caution has to be used in this approach though as if the same books are used frequently, children will memorise the story and “read the words off the ceiling as they stare blankly upwards” (as an experienced primary school teacher once told me!). Obviously this will lead to boredom and low motivation in learning English.

Wragg, Wragg, Haynes and Chamberlain (1998) found in their study of 35 primary teachers in England, that the *look and say* technique was used by many teachers, but not exclusively, and its use was limited to Reception and Year 1 classes. As a personal observation, in my years of working in the field of education overseas, I have come across several instances where teachers used *look and say* exclusively to teach reading. No other methods were used, and as a result, many children struggled to read. It is very important that children are encouraged to develop phonic decoding skills as well, so that

they will learn the skills necessary to read words they have not come across before.

### Phonics teaching methods:

*Synthetic* and *analytic phonics* are methods of teaching children word attack skills so that they are able to decode words they may not have seen before – or at least may not have seen frequently enough to be able to read by sight. NB: At this stage, it is important to distinguish between early sight word reading skills (referred to as *logographic reading*) where children have not yet learned that letters have sounds, and the more sophisticated *orthographic reading* skills which are the end-point of skilled reading and are the product of repeated exposures to words (Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky and Seidenberg, 2001).

In Britain, synthetic phonics is popular at the moment, as this method starts by teaching letters and sounds and builds this up into whole word reading. Children learn word attack skills that they can apply to a multitude of new words. If a child reads words regularly through this practice of decoding, he will learn to recognise the words visually – a much faster process, known as orthographic recognition (Frith, 1985).

There are many materials available on the internet for teaching phonics: advice on which letter-sound combination to teach first, which to teach later; teaching tips on how to present these to children; how long to teach phonics in one stretch (it can be boring if done excessively) and what books and materials are available for teaching children. One of the oldest and most popular is *Jolly Phonics*, and the readers that accompany this programme. It should be noted though that phonics teaching only works with regularly spelled words; irregular words will have to be taught to children by sight word reading techniques. There are thought to be no more than 500 irregularly spelled words in English, but as some of these are very high frequency (e.g.: *give* and *have*) we can see that it is important for children to learn both sight word reading and decoding techniques. Teaching one method or the other simply won't work with a language like English.

## Promoting extensive reading:

Extensive reading is any reading that is done either for pleasure or not explicitly for the purposes of teaching reading. This might involve children reading story books, simple poetry (such as limericks), or reading about topics such as the Ancient Egyptians in a children's encyclopaedia for a class project (the reading can be done inside or outside the class).

Extensive reading can even involve them in reading in the English lesson – but the focus will be on reading whole texts for 'global meaning', not on individual words. The aims of extensive reading are two-fold:

1. Repeated exposures to various words will help children to recognise them faster, and thus become skilled readers.
2. Extensive reading, it is hoped, will also foster enjoyment and children will learn to love books and reading. According to Day and Bamford (1998) an extensive reading approach "aims to get students reading in the second language and liking it." This in itself can be a difficult task in some cultures where reading is not highly valued and books are not widely available. In situations like this, it is important that the reading environment is stress-free, and if possible quiet and relaxing as well.

## The Reading Room

Some schools I have visited have been lucky to have an additional classroom which had been turned into a Reading Room. Each class is timetabled to use the Reading Room once a week, and it is a place where children can read – or be read to, which is peaceful and relaxing. The reading room should be stocked with books and magazines, but no chairs other than the teacher's. Children can choose a book to read by themselves, or for paired reading – or the teacher may choose to read a story aloud to the class. Children sit on the floor, which should be well-carpeted.

The main difference between a reading room and the school library is that books cannot be borrowed – they can only be read during the reading period. As such, shorter books such as graded readers lend themselves to this type of room. A log can be kept of each child's reading,

listing the books he's read, a simple book report on each, maybe a drawing of some event from the story, and a comment on what he thought of the book. In this way, the teacher can keep a record of which children are progressing in their reading, and which do not appear to be making progress and could perhaps do with some help.

## The role of parents in promoting extensive reading

Parental involvement and encouragement in aiding children's reading is vitally important, and the area where they can have most influence is in promoting the love of reading. If money (and bookshops!) are available, encourage children to buy books with pocket money by taking them to book shops to choose books for themselves. If money is short, the public library is a good place to visit – they usually have a children's section. In many countries you may be able to pick up second hand children's books from 'garage sales' or 'jumble sales'. When your child starts to get bored with his books, arrange a swop with another parent at his school. But just leaving children to read books on their own isn't enough – parents should try to find the time to read bedtime stories to children each evening. Help your children to learn to love books and reading from an early age. A student of mine from Saudi Arabia who is studying in the UK recently visited Waterstone's Bookshop and was amazed to see young children sitting quietly on the floor, reading books while their parents browsed the shop. He said he had never seen this kind of behaviour back home and wondered why British children loved reading so much! I guess the answer can be found in their parents' attitudes towards reading itself.

## Conclusion

Chomsky states that humans are "wired for language" and will acquire language naturally from an early age – the only condition necessary being 'input' at their level. However, Chomsky's belief relates to spoken language - learning to read is a more difficult process that has to be specifically taught. Learning to read in a second language – particularly one where the L1 and L2 have different orthographies, is more demanding still. Yet many people do succeed. If reading is

taught in the correct way, using research-led methods and interesting materials and books, then there is no reason why every child shouldn't succeed in becoming a good reader of English. This article has described some of the methods currently in use in L1 and L2 English speaking countries around the world. These methods have been tried and tested through classroom use as well as extensive research and found to work well. However, the teaching of reading is a controversial subject and still other theories abound.

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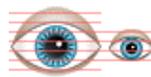
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## Web Watcher



### Editor's choice:

[www.teachnet-uk.org.uk/...L2Lwebquest/.../teacher\\_page.htm](http://www.teachnet-uk.org.uk/...L2Lwebquest/.../teacher_page.htm)

...although aimed at the UK National Curriculum, this website has lots of really great ideas and advice for those wishing to start using webquests in their classes.

### See also...

[www.linkingforlearning.com/webquests/index.html](http://www.linkingforlearning.com/webquests/index.html)

[www.teachersfirst.com/webquest.htm](http://www.teachersfirst.com/webquest.htm)

<http://webquest.org/>

For further great website links don't hesitate to visit the YL SIG website at:

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

# Promoting Assessment for Learning through Readers' Theatre

**Anna Chan and Shirley Chan**

The international literature has shown that well-focused assessment for learning carries considerable potential for improving student outcomes (Black & William, 1998; Black et al., 2003). This article reports the findings of an innovative attempt which aimed to promote assessment for learning practices, namely sharing assessment criteria, providing quality feedback and conducting self and peer-assessment, in a primary English classroom. Analysis of the results indicates that readers' theatre provides a meaningful and relaxing context for assessment to take place naturally. Even weak and passive students can benefit from self and peer-assessment when they are carefully guided to use assessment criteria to evaluate their performance.

## Introduction

Assessment for learning plays an important role in the teaching and learning process. However, teachers in Hong Kong tend to view assessment as a technical device for assessment of learning. A critical review of literature highlights the importance of incorporating assessment for learning strategies to improve learning and teaching through identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses and providing quality feedback (Black & William, 1998; Black et al., 2003; CDC, 2004).

To change teachers' traditional perception of assessment requires a considerable amount of in-service training which helps teachers to revisit and reflect critically on their own beliefs about assessment and to further develop their strategies for integrating assessment into the teaching and learning process. To support teachers of English in integrating assessment for learning activities into the primary English curriculum, as advocated in the English Language Education KLA Curriculum Guide (P1-P6) (2004) in Hong Kong, a specially designed 8-week block-release professional

development programme on "Assessment for Learning" (AfL), commissioned by the Education Bureau of Hong Kong, was first introduced in 2005 by the Hong Kong Institute of Education.

The particular aim of this programme is to provide opportunities for participants to develop a critical awareness of the value and significance of promoting assessment for learning in their own schools. To bridge any possible theory/practice gap, participants are required to carry out a small-scale school-based learning project which engages them in the process of collecting and interpreting empirical classroom data and reflecting on the findings. Action learning can be defined as a process in which a group of people come together to help each other to learn from their experience (Dick, 1997). This highlights the feature of experiential learning or learning from experience. Individuals learn from experience through reflection and action – reconsidering past events, making sense of actions and finding new ways of acting. People start to learn from each other only when they discover that no-one knows the answer, but all are obliged to find it (Revans, 1997).

It is a continuous process of learning and reflecting that happens as we work on real issues, with the intention of getting things done. It involves a collaborative process which takes into consideration the social context and assists people in taking an active stance towards life beyond the passive. Such procedures subsequently enable the teacher participants to engage more closely with, and form a better informed perspective of, the change process in terms of planning, decision making and implementation by drawing more fully on theories, principles and school-related contextual factors. Finally, they submit a reflective case report on assessment for learning as implemented in their own schools.

Given the broad scope of assessment for learning in the in-service programme, this article limits itself to a particular instance, focusing on how far assessment for learning may be achieved through the implementation of readers' theatre in a primary English classroom. In doing so, it draws on the data furnished by an end-of-course case report from a teacher participant who is also the vice-principal at the time of study.

## Readers' Theatre

Readers' theatre helps pupils understand and appreciate language arts. It is a key tool for creating interest and developing skills in reading aloud. Readers are encouraged to use their voices, facial expressions, gestures and body movement to portray characters and convey the meanings of the stories (Shepard, 2004). As readers' theatre involves rehearsals and performance, it creates an opportunity for pupils to explore a text and become familiar with it. It "enables reading aloud with intent and purpose" (Black & Stave, 2007:5). It "orchestrates the essential elements of fluency instruction while providing the motivational incentive for students who would rather move about than sit at a desk and reread passages" (Peebles, 2007).

### Sharing success criteria and promoting self and peer-assessment

For a successful performance, pupils must know what they have to do to be successful. Sharing clearly defined assessment criteria helps pupils to know exactly what is expected of them and remain objective during the self and peer assessment (Brualdi, 1998). Self assessment "has the advantage of enhancing intrinsic motivation for learning, and helping pupils learn how to learn" (CDC, 2004:198). It requires pupils "to reflect and think critically about their own actions and talk" (Black & Stave, 2007:177). It helps pupils develop the responsibility and ownership of their learning and provides the teacher with valuable feedback. Peer assessment is useful in the learning process for pupils to give feedback and learn from each other. Peer assessment "enhances interaction among learners and enables them to have a better understanding of each other's point of view" (CDC, 2004:199). It can be used prior to self assessment and has been found to improve the motivation of pupils to work more carefully (Black et al, 2003:50).

## The Study

### *Objectives of the Action Learning Project*

1. To arouse pupils' interest and build up their confidence in speaking English;
2. To promote active and co-operative learning through the introduction of reader's theatre;
3. To enhance pupils' speaking skills in reading aloud;
4. To investigate the effectiveness of AfL strategies including sharing of success criteria, self and peer assessment in evaluating pupils' oral performance.

### *Subject background*

20 pupils from a remedial class of Primary 5 participated in this study. Compared with other classmates in the same year group, they are the weakest in the English subject. They appear to be passive with short attention span in the class. In terms of the oral proficiency, they are reluctant to communicate in English and experience difficulty in reading aloud texts fluently and pronouncing words correctly.

### *Data collection*

The findings of this triangulated study were compiled from several sources: teacher's observation, peer observation, students' self and peer-assessment, student evaluation questionnaire and student interviews. During the teaching process, anecdotal records of students' oral performance (Appendix 1) through observation were kept so as to help the teacher identify students' strengths and weaknesses and provide constructive feedback. The principal and colleagues were also invited to observe the try-out lessons and completed the observation form (Appendix 2) to give objective feedback on pupils' performance and constructive advice on the teaching strategies. Self and peer assessment forms (Appendix 3 & 4) were designed to investigate how far students could assess their own performance and their peers. At the end of the tryout, pupils were asked to complete the evaluation form to evaluate the overall learning experiences (Appendix 5). Fourteen pupils were also interviewed to obtain their qualitative feedback of the tryout (Appendix 6).

**Four 45-minute lessons were involved to carry out the investigation:**

Lesson 1: Presentation and teaching of Reader's Theatre

The teacher introduced reader's theatre to her pupils by showing a video clip of teachers' performance to demonstrate the skills involved. Then the script of 'Oliver Twist' was taught. Pupils formed into groups of five and roles were assigned. They practised reading the script aloud with feelings, facial expressions and eye contact.

Lesson 2: Sharing of success criteria and introduction of assessment form

The teacher made use of the video clip again as a sample to share the success criteria and introduced the skills of assessing a performance. Pupils practised the rating system by using a sample peer- assessment form while watching the teachers' performance to develop a shared understanding of the success criteria in the form

Lesson 3: Rehearsal, 'Show Time' and Peer assessment

The teacher reminded pupils of the skills involved in staging a readers' theatre production and the success criteria. Then pupils were introduced to peer assessment. During the rehearsal, the teacher walked around and gave immediate feedback to them. During the 'Show Time', pupils from another group were asked to assess the performance of their classmate who acted the same character in the performance. To facilitate self assessment, pupils' performance was videotaped.

Lesson 4: Self assessment

The teacher highlighted the assessment criteria in the self assessment form before pupils watched the playback of their own performance. After completing the self assessment form, pupils were guided to examine the feedback obtained from the teacher, their peers and self assessment.

**Findings**

**Observation by the teacher:**

Pupils became excited when the teacher showed them the video clip of the teachers' performance. They were highly motivated and became more attentive during the process of sharing success criteria as they had the intention to learn. They were eager to learn the script and the techniques of staging a production. They enjoyed the rehearsal and had fun during the performance. They were actively engaged and cooperated well in the activities. They paid special attention in using their voice and body language to portray the characters and convey the meanings of the story. Many of them spoke loudly and had eye contact with the audience. Two of the girls who were usually very shy and quiet made their greatest effort in projecting their voice that impressed their friends for their improvement. Although some of them were still struggling with long sentences and the pronunciation of some difficult words, they tried to seek help from their group mates and attempted to figure out the sounds using their knowledge of phonics. They were serious and tried their best in playing their roles and acting out.

Most of them were excited while watching the playback of their own performance in Lesson 4. They behaved cautiously when engaging in self and peer assessment. They showed confidence in expressing their ideas and giving feedback to their peers.

**Feedback from pupils:**

The results of the pupils' evaluation forms and student interviews (Appendix 5 & 6) were very promising. 90% of the pupils liked doing readers' theatre because it was fun (Q.1 - Appendix 5; Q.1 - Appendix 6). In order to get familiar with the text so that they could speak fluently, most of them reported that they had rehearsed four times before the actual performance (Q.4 - Appendix 6). Some of the girls even memorised their lines and could read without looking at the script. 95% of them liked working with their friends and they learnt to compromise and resolve problems (Q.2 - Appendix 5).

Over 90% of the pupils said that self and peer-assessment helped them identify their strengths and weaknesses in speaking, and most important of all, they could learn from each other

and make further improvement (Q.5 & Q.7 - Appendix 5). Most of them liked assessing their peers more than themselves because they found it easier and the judgement could be more objective. Most of the pupils felt excited and happy during the performance with only a few of them were nervous (Q. 6 - Appendix 6). It was really rewarding to know that all of the pupils (100%) claimed that they were more confident in speaking English after the lessons (Q.8 - Appendix 5).

### **Feedback from observers:**

Very positive comments to the pupils' performance were received from the teacher observers. Most of them were pleased to find that pupils understood the assessment criteria and tried their best to fulfil them. They agreed that pupils were interested in doing readers' theatre. They put effort in speaking clearly and loudly and tried to use some props to make the performance more interesting (Appendix 4). The teacher observers were impressed by the tremendous change of pupils' oral performance and their readiness and potential in taking up a more active role in the assessment. For instance, a teacher observer wrote, "They were very serious in rehearsing and performing... Many of them tried very hard to write down something in words [in peer assessment]... Though the time for teaching is limited, the result of the lesson is fruitful. Pupils tried to perform, to do the self and peer assessment according to the assessment criteria." (Appendix 4)

### **Discussion**

Based on the analysis of the findings from different sources, the following three themes were identified.

#### **1. Pedagogical value of readers' theatre**

Readers' theatre provided a relaxed and enjoyable context for pupils to practise their speaking skills and work collaboratively. According to Latrobe et al (1991:4), "Reluctant or shy young people who fear speaking in front of others may participate willingly in group activities where they are not the sole focus of attention." Before the tryout, this group of pupils was considered as passive and lack of confidence. However, with the opportunity to work collaboratively given, the pupils were no

longer assessed in isolation. They helped each other by signalling their turns and making good use of the props in producing dramatic effect. The understanding and interpretation of the text were co-constructed throughout rehearsals with a real audience in their minds. This explained why they appeared to be confident and excited when formally assessed.

#### **2. Sharing of learning goals and success criteria**

The sharing of the learning goals and success criteria at the beginning of the lessons enabled students to have a clear direction to work on. Such criteria were no longer the property of the teacher. The pupils could make use of the criteria to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and were empowered to monitor their own learning by working towards the targets. This explained why they could pay special attention to their voice, read loudly, clearly and accurately, and reread the text many times to foster fluency. They were able to polish their techniques of staging readers' theatre because they were informed of the success criteria. Therefore, effective learning was made possible and their performance was better than before.

#### **3. Self and peer-assessment**

During the learning process, pupils evaluated their friends' work as well as making self-reflection. They said that it was easier to accept feedback from their peers in such as relaxing environment. However, they felt that they were not yet objective as some of the pupils assessed their peers by impression instead of referring to the success criteria. For self assessment, some pupils found it difficult to make objective judgment of their own work. This is understandable as self assessment is indeed a cognitive demanding activity which requires us to distance ourselves before a more reliable and impartial judgment can be made. The teacher has already tactfully introduced peer assessment before self assessment so as to help students get familiar with the assessment criteria by applying them in the peer assessment. This helped, to a certain extent, to clarify the meanings of the assessment criteria and establish a shared interpretation of them.

### **Conclusions and implications**

Although this is the first time the teacher tried to integrate assessment into the teaching of readers' theatre, the experience was promising and significant. Her pupils have already gained a rewarding learning experience in sharing of success criteria, self and peer assessment. Although it is impossible to generalize the findings based on data gathered from a small sample in a single context, several implications can be drawn, which may be applicable to similar contexts. First, sharing of learning goals and success criteria was proved to be useful in motivating pupils to take an active role in learning. It could be better if pupils were involved in formulating the success criteria so that they could have a stronger sense of ownership and would strive more earnestly to achieve them (Ma, 2006, 90).

Second, to bring improvement in self and peer assessment, simple demonstration of how to apply the assessment criteria is needed. The use of technology to record sample performances for open discussion and reflections is highly encouraged. As in the study, students benefited from observing the performance of their teachers and then the replay of their own performance for critical discussion and evaluation. Pupils can also be asked reflect on any differences between the results in self assessment and peer assessment (Yan & Li, 2006, 70). The triangulation of the comments from different sources trains students to be critical of the learning and assessment process.

Finally, the study has suggested that these AfL strategies were beneficial to students' learning. Further integration of these strategies in other learning contexts such as storytelling, role-play, drama, shared reading or process writing is needed. When pupils are used to take up a more active role in their learning, they will become more self-directed, responsible and critical of their learning in the long run.

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## Appendix 1: Teacher's Observation Record

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> February 2008 Class: 5 Group: 1

	Carrie	Joyce	Yan Wing	Daisy	Lily
<b>Understanding of the story</b>					
She understood the story and the personality of the character.					
<b>Voice</b>					
She spoke clearly.					
She spoke loudly.					
<b>Fluency</b>					
She spoke smoothly with appropriate rhythm and pauses.					
<b>Pronunciation</b>					
She pronounced the words correctly.					
<b>Intonation and stress</b>					
She spoke with intonation and stress.					
<b>Use of body and space</b>					
She used body language and space to convey meaning.					
<b>Eye contact</b>					
She had eye contact with the audience.					
<b>Participation</b>					
She participated actively.					
<b>Co-operation</b>					
She co-operated with her group members.					

## Appendix 2: Lesson Observation Form

Date: 28th February 2008      Time: 2:05-3:45pm  
 Subject: English                      Topic: Readers' Theatre  
 Teacher: Ms Chan                      Class: 5  
 Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Observation Items</b>	<b>Observations / Comments</b>
1	Did the teacher remind students the assessment criteria?	<i>Yes, very detailed and clear.</i>
2	Did the students' performance show their understanding of the assessment criteria?	<i>Yes, I think most of the girls understood the assessment criteria and tried very hard to fulfil them.</i>
3	Were the students interested in doing readers' theatre?	<i>Yes, they enjoyed this activity. They were very serious in rehearsing and performing.</i>
5	Did the teacher give quality feedback to the students?	<i>Yes, she gave comments to most of the girls' performance for what they did well or places needed to be improved.</i>
6	Were the students able to do the self and peer assessment?	<i>Yes, most of them did and I saw many of them tried very hard to write down something in words.</i>
7	Did the teacher achieve the teaching objectives?	<i>Yes, she made every girl did a very good preparation, concentrated in the lessons and performed well with their characters.</i>
8	Other comments	<i>Though the time for teaching is limited, result of the lessons is fruitful. Pupils tried to perform, to do the self and peer assessment according to the assessment criteria.</i>

### Appendix 3: Self Assessment Form

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> February 2008

Class: 5

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Character(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick (✓) the appropriate boxes and add comments.

	☺☺☺ Excellent	☺☺ Good	☺ Satisfactor y	☹ Need improvement
<b>Speaking techniques</b>				
<b>Understanding of the story</b>				
I understood the story and the personality of the character.				
<b>Voice</b>				
I spoke clearly.				
I spoke loudly.				
<b>Fluency</b>				
I spoke smoothly with appropriate rhythm and pauses.				
<b>Pronunciation</b>				
I pronounced the words correctly.				
<b>Intonation and stress</b>				
I spoke with intonation and stress.				
<b>Use of body and space</b>				
I used body language and space to convey meaning.				
<b>Eye contact</b>				
I had eye contact with the audience.				
<b>Participation</b>				
I participated actively.				
<b>Co-operation</b>				
I co-operated with my group members.				

I think I did well because \_\_\_\_\_

The two areas I want to improve are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4: Peer Assessment Form

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> February 2008

Class: 5

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

friend's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Character(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick (✓) the appropriate boxes and add comments.

Speaking techniques	☺☺☺ Excellent	☺☺ Good	☺ Satisfactory	☹ Needs improvement
<b>Understanding of the story</b>				
She understood the story and the personality of the character.				
<b>Voice</b>				
She spoke clearly.				
She spoke loudly.				
<b>Fluency</b>				
She spoke smoothly with appropriate rhythm and pauses.				
<b>Pronunciation</b>				
She pronounced the words correctly.				
<b>Intonation and stress</b>				
She spoke with intonation and stress.				
<b>Use of body and space</b>				
She used body language and space to convey meaning.				
<b>Eye contact</b>				
She had eye contact with the audience.				
<b>Participation</b>				
She participated actively.				
<b>Co-operation</b>				
She co-operated with her group members.				

I think she did well because

---

Other comments:

---

## Appendix 5: Pupil's Evaluation Form

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2008    Class: 5    No. of pupils: 20

### What do you think of the lessons on readers' theatre?

Please tick (✓) the appropriate boxes and add comments.

	☺☺☺ very much	☺☺ quite	☺ a little	☹ not much
I liked doing readers' theatre	12 (60%)	6 (30%)	2 (10%)	
I liked working with my friends	10 (50%)	9 (45%)	1 (5%)	
The assessment criteria helped me to understand what to be assessed	3 (15%)	15 (75%)	2 (10%)	
I liked assessing myself	5 (25%)	13 (65%)		2 (10%)
Self assessment helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses in speaking	6 (30%)	12 (60%)	2 (10%)	
I liked assessing my friends	12 (60%)	7 (35%)	1 (5%)	
Peer assessment helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses in speaking	9 (45%)	10 (50%)	1 (5%)	
I became more confident in speaking English after the lessons	7 (35%)	13 (65%)		

Other comments or suggestions:

- I was interested in Reader's Theatre because it was fun.
- I think assessment can help us to find out our weaknesses. Then we can improve ourselves.
- I can learn many new words.
- I will speak clearly next time.
- Other friends were not very cooperative. They made me angry.
- I didn't enjoy it because I was bored.

## Appendix 6: Student Interviews

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> March 2008    Class: 5    No. of Attendants: 14

### 1. Were you interested in readers' theatre?

- Yes, I was interested in readers' theatre because it was fun. (12)
- Yes, I was interested in readers' theatre because I liked the story. (1)
- No, I was not interested in readers' theatre because I felt nervous. (1)

### 2. Which part of readers' theatre did you enjoy most? Why?

- I enjoyed the performance most because we could show our effort in rehearsals. (1)
- I enjoyed the performance most because there was a real audience. (2)
- I enjoyed the performance most because it was fun. (3)
- I enjoyed both the rehearsals and the performance. (2)
- I enjoyed the rehearsals most because I felt excited. (2)
- I enjoyed reading the script most because I can practise the speaking skills. (1)
- I didn't enjoy it because it was bored. (1)
- No answer (2)

### 3. What was the most difficult part of readers' theatre? Why?

- I felt nervous so I could not speak loudly. (2)
- The script was so long that I could not read it fluently. (1)
- I could not control the volume of my voice. (2)
- I did not know how to use body and space. (1)
- I did not know how to pronounce difficult words. (2)
- Many of us wanted to play the same role, so we quarrelled. (1)
- I think cooperation was the most difficult because we could not compromise. (3)
- Some members did not come for practice during recess. (1)
- I didn't find anything difficult. (1)

### 5. How did you feel during the rehearsal?

- Interesting. (4)
- Happy. (6)
- Nervous. (1)
- I couldn't help laughing. (1)
- Troublesome. (2)

### 7. Were you happy about your performance?

- Very happy. (3)
- Happy. (7)
- Okay. (1)
- I think we did well. (1)
- I hope we can do better. (1)
- Bad. (1)

### 9. Did you like peer and self assessment? Why?

- Yes, I felt happy. (4)
- Yes, because we were sincere. (1)
- Yes, I knew what to improve. (2)
- Yes, I could give feedback to my friends. (2)
- Yes, I could voice my opinions. (1)
- Yes, very fun. (1)
- No. If I gave my friends some negative feedback, she would feel unhappy. (1)
- No. It was troublesome. (2)

### 4. How many times did you practise before the performance?

- Three times. (2)
- Four times. (11)
- Five times. (1)

### 6. How did you feel during the performance?

- Excited. (1)
- Happy. (4)
- Very good. (4)
- Very nervous. (4)
- I read the script faster than usual. (1)

### 8. What did you learn in readers' theatre?

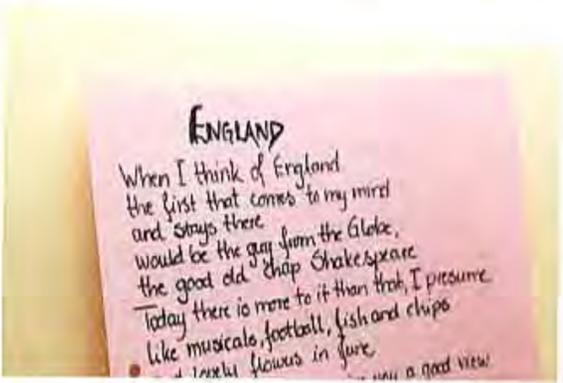
- Cooperation. (8)
- I read the script fluently. (1)
- We should not be nervous. (1)
- I learnt how to speak in front of the audience. (1)
- I learnt something I couldn't learn from books. (1)
- I learnt the pronunciation of the words. (1)
- I learnt some new words. (1)

### 10. How did peer and self assessment help you to have better learning?

- I knew I should not speak softly. (1)
- I should use more gestures. (1)
- I knew how to improve. (7)
- I knew my weaknesses. (2)
- I fully understood what I learnt. (1)
- I learnt from my mistakes. (1)
- It helped to enhance my English standard. (1)



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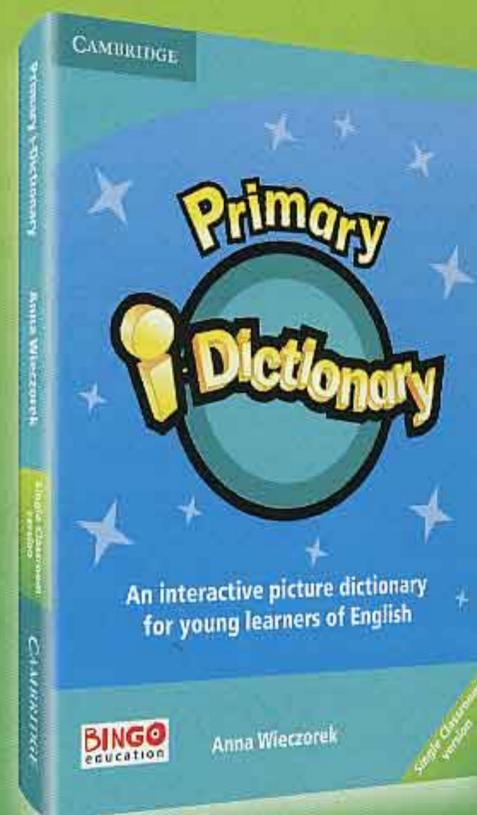
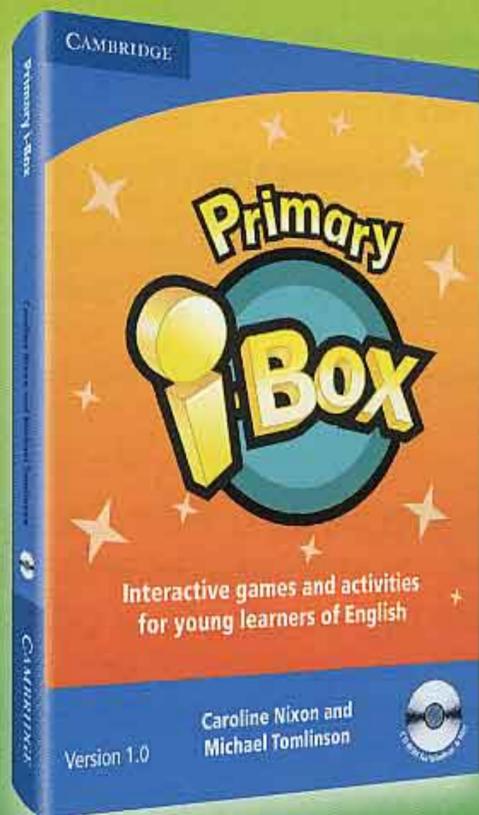
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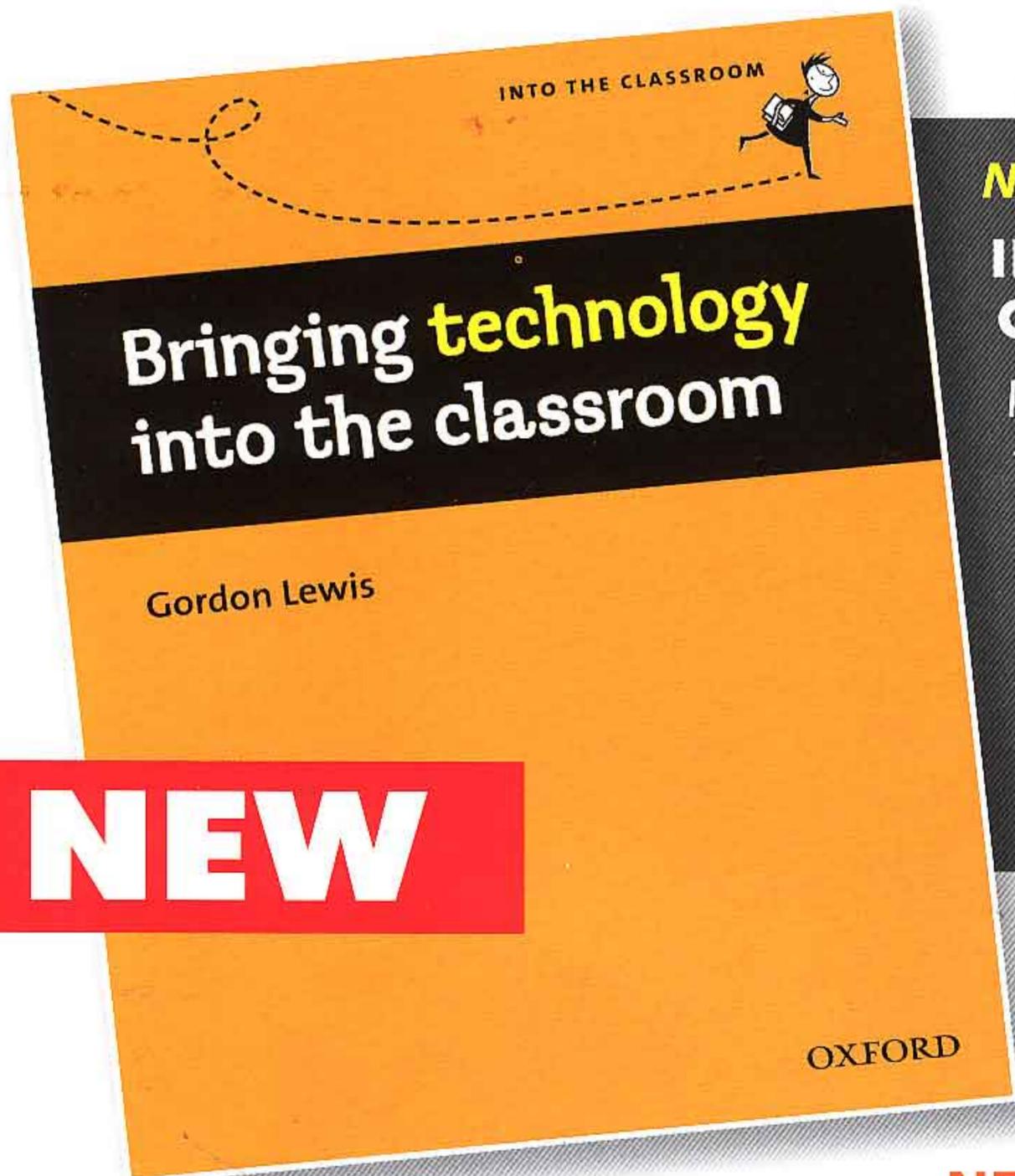
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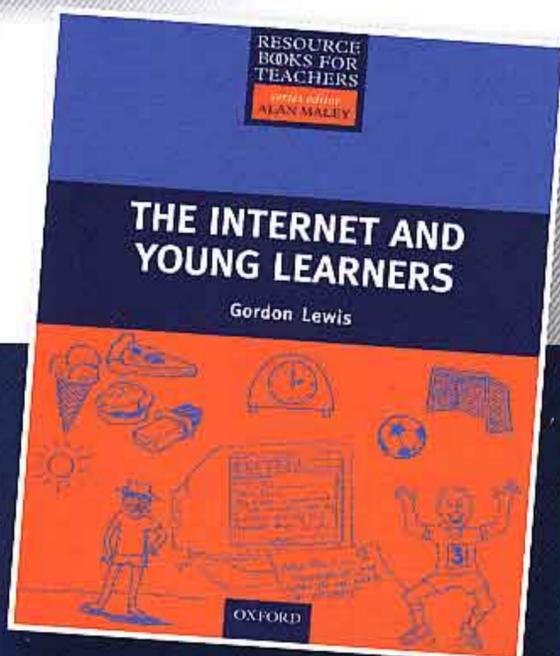
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