



# YOUNG LEARNERS AND TEENAGERS

C&TS: Children And Teenagers

THE PUBLICATION OF THE YOUNG LEARNER AND TEENAGER SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP



Winter 2010

Issue 2/10

The Future of ELT Publishing

**Claire Pye** – The Changing World of ELT Publishing

**Helen Emery** – Global Survey of EYL Teachers' Qualifications, Experience and Career Path Development

**Mario Rinvoluceri** – Differentiation – Do We Know Just How Different Students Are?

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Young Learners & Teenagers  
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

## *From the Editor*

Welcome to the last 2010 issue of C&TS, which we bring to you electronically – a fitting nod to new technology we discuss herein! May I take this opportunity to wish you season's greetings. I write from the snowy southern UK where we are preparing for further 'adverse weather' and a Christmas period home-bound... Hope your holiday is snug and warm.

This, my final, issue is about the future of EFL publishing and other related articles. We hear from a publisher within the walls of a large organisation itself and from those who are developing the next generation of EFL materials. It is a theme that has been touched on in the YLT SIG Discussion Groups list, where many contributors express exciting ideas about how they see digital and print resources developing. If you haven't already done so, get online and add to the debate!

Although brief, I have enjoyed being a member of the YLT SIG team as co-editor of three newsletters – it has been a great experience and I'm sure the publication will grow from stronger as we enter 2011. Thank you.

Happy New Year to all our readers!

**Janet**  
Co-Editor

### **Editorial Office**

Correspondence relating to this issue should be sent to Janet:

[crossleyjanet@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:crossleyjanet@yahoo.co.uk)

**A special thanks to Charles Goodger for allowing us to use his picture for the front cover of this issue.**

### **Disclaimer**

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**The theme for C&TS Spring 2011 will be:**

***Picturebooks, Comics and Graphic Novels in ELT***

**(For the next issue, please send all letters and article proposals to Janice)**

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## The YLT SIG Committee Members

### Joint coordinators:

- Hans Mol (Australia/Portugal)  
connexions@bigpond.com
- Helen Emery (UK)  
emeryhelen@hotmail.com

### Website Manager:

- Christopher Etchells (UK)  
etchells@countryschools.co.uk

### Publication Editors:

- Janice Bland (Germany)  
janice.bland@uni-hildesheim.de
- Janet Crossley  
crossleyjanet@yahoo.co.uk
- vacancy

### Discussion List Moderator:

- Dennis Newson (Germany)  
djn@dennisnewson.de

### Events Organisers:

- Wendy Arnold (UK)  
arnoldworld@gmail.com, ex officio
- Janice Bland (Germany)  
janice.bland@uni-hildesheim.de
- Niki Joseph (Portugal)  
niki.joseph@netcabo.pt
- Harry Kuchah (Cameroon)  
hkuchah@yahoo.com
- Caroline Linse (UK)  
clinse@lycos.com
- Hans Mol (Australia)  
connexions@bigpond.com

### Membership & Advertising:

- vacancy

### To find out more about YLT SIG and IATEFL please surf to:

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Young Learners & Teenagers  
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**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.



# YLT Sig and PronSig Joint Event Report

**Sunday 8th August, 2010  
University of Kent, Canterbury, UK**

Theme: Get them speaking properly!  
And young!

The first collaboration between PronSig and YLT Sig was a resounding success.

Despite the usual British Sunday train service challenges, a quality group of Pron and YLT interested colleagues met up on campus for a day of understanding the concerns of teaching pronunciation. The concerns sometimes come from both the teachers' own pronunciation skills and the impact they have on the learners.

Luckily we had Robin Walker on hand right at the beginning Plenary **PRONUNCIATION MATTERS** who assured and re-assured non-native speakers of English (and native speakers for that matter) that their version of English was fine ... and if they were concerned then there were ways and means of adjusting their own pronunciation but generally speaking comprehensibly was the crux. Part of the discussion touched upon selecting a 'model' of English.

Parallel sessions then took place, Paul Seligson with **PRONUNCIATION ACTIVITIES WITH YOUNG LEARNERS** and **EARLY LITERACY: BEGINNING SOUNDS** with Wendy Arnold. Paul has unique way of linking sounds to cognates (see Picture 1)! Fun was to be had with his blow up toys ... sorry cognates! Wendy worked on

teachers' own knowledge of sounds and how interference from L1 might impact on sounds in English with a knock-on effect on pronunciation and possibly spelling. However, the important aspect to recall was having a cognate (visual) to recall the closest sound to help decoding text and practising sounds which don't occur in L1. Sadly, Wendy didn't have such spectacular cognate ideas as Paul's!



**Robin Seligson's cognates**

Charles Goodger charmed all who attended his session **THE POWER OF ACTION SONGS**, and Robin focused on pronunciation in **TELLING TALES** session:



**Robin and his group**

This all took place in the morning! After a very short lunch, three more workshops followed. Kerry Powell asking **WHY SONGS**, Harry Kuchah **ORAL STORY TELLING AS A WAY TO IMPROVE PRONUNCIATION** and Susan Hillyard with **SOUNDS FUN!**

Kerry had powerful reasons why the use of songs was worth considering, Harry shared Cameroonian style story telling traditions and Susan's group were rowdy and fun.

Finally, a discussion was led by panellists, Robin Walker, Susan Hillyard, Paul Seligson and Wendy Arnold. The threads of the day were drawn together with a strong collaboration from the audience. All in all a grand day out!

**Wendy Arnold**  
YLT Sig Events Advisor

arnoldworld@gmail.com

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check online for  
reports about the  
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IATEFL Conference  
in Brighton 2011!**

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## **The Changing World of ELT Publishing**

**Claire Pye**

**What is ELT publishing? It is a huge industry with many players, large and small, from the big University presses to individual teachers publishing their own podcasts or lesson plans. As an employee of Macmillan Publishers, I will necessarily write from a big publisher's perspective. However, the opinions in this article are my own, unless otherwise quoted.**

This morning, as usual, I logged on to Twitter and Onestopblogs to catch up on the ELT blogosphere. Some bloggers were sharing their 'best websites' lists, others a lesson on the

latest international news story. But this week the debate is about 'Dogme ELT' or 'Teaching unplugged', a philosophy of teaching proposed by Luke Meddings and Scott Thornbury in their book *Teaching Unplugged* (Delta 2009), in which they advocate a materials-light, conversation-driven approach.

So are we to believe, as we might be forgiven for believing if we spend time reading Twitter or ELT blogs, that teachers are throwing away their coursebooks? That they are mining the rich resources of the internet to create engaging lesson plans or, in a Dogme approach, arriving at class with nothing more than a pen and notebook?

Some bloggers have suggested that publishers might feel threatened by this. But I think the picture is more complicated. Many factors herald big changes in ELT publishing. Here are a few:

## Technology

Advances in and access to technology are probably the biggest factors influencing decision-making in ELT publishing. We are at a crossroads and the future is difficult to predict. Which devices will be commonly used in tomorrow's classrooms? iPads, eReaders, mobile phones or other mobile devices? Laptops, PCs or Macs? Smartboards or projectors? Will classrooms be online or offline?

Last year in Cataluña, Spain, the government initiated the School 2.0 programme with its commitment to paperless classrooms. Publishers had to react quickly to provide digital resources via a central platform and payment system. The programme was facilitated by a deal with Vodafone to provide universal broadband access, the first of its kind in the world. It is a bold and decisive initiative and has laid down the gauntlet to publishers who must now enrich their digital content in order to remain competitive. The rules of the game have changed: it will no longer be enough merely to use technology as a medium of presentation; students will demand to be immersed in the content using the interactive tools they have grown up with.

In theory, then, technology provides tools to help teachers enhance the classroom experience. By integrating technology, it is often said, we can engage with younger students – or digital natives (Prensky 2001) – on their own terms. But is this the reality in classrooms throughout the world?

I recently asked Primary teachers on Onestopenglish how they use technology in their classrooms. Teachers from 44 countries responded and gave a picture of, at best, patchy

access to technology. Less than a third reported having Interactive Whiteboards, while almost half said they had no access to the internet in the classroom. So what digital resources do they use in class? Well, high up on their lists were downloaded worksheets, song CDs and the student or teacher CD-ROMs from their coursebooks. Not the wired classroom we might have expected from regular users of Onestopenglish.

We often talk about the endless possibilities of technology, but what about its limitations? Technology can be seen as socially divisive, with the world divided into the Haves – those who have access to technology – and the Have-nots – those who don't. Even in the UK, where most classrooms have interactive whiteboards and/or computers, a report by Futurelab suggests that there are still many obstacles to technology integration, such as teacher reluctance or inexperience, firewalls or other internet safety policies.

Of course, technology can also aid social inclusion. According to a Boston Consulting Group (bcg.com) report, internet access in China, Brazil, Russia, India and Indonesia will double by 2015 and will be mostly via mobile devices, such as mobile phones. But mLearning (mobile learning) is itself a can of worms. Will educational content be self-access or teacher-mediated? Will it be pedagogically appropriate for younger learners?

Despite promises of mLearning and eLearning revolutions, we still can't rely on the availability of technology or access to the internet. And until we reach even a tipping point in universal access, publishers will continue to distribute most ELT content through traditional channels: books and CDs.

## Early-start English

I recently attended a British Council seminar by Jayne Moon and Dr Janet Enever about the global trend towards 'early-start English'. In many countries across the world, government policy is leading the way in reducing the start age for English Language Learning (ELL). This trend has far-reaching implications for ELT publishing.

I was particularly interested in Dr Enever's finding in the ELLiE (Early Language Learning in Europe) study: "Policy across the seven countries indicates that the broadly preferred teacher model is of a primary class teacher with skills to teach the foreign language. [However], in most instances it will be some years before all primary teachers are able to achieve this standard." ([www.ellieresearch.eu](http://www.ellieresearch.eu))

We know that the majority of English teachers worldwide are non-native English speakers. In addition, primary school teachers are likely not to be ELT specialists. As demand for English-speaking primary teachers continues to grow, the need for all sorts of specialist training – in language, in teaching young learners – is in itself a huge challenge to the ELT industry.

As English Language Learners get younger, everyone involved in ELT publishing – coursebook, teacher training and exams writers, researchers, editors and teachers – will have to adjust the language level, methodology, pace, content and images of their published resources. The trend away from traditional EFL towards curriculum-focused content may pick up pace. And we will certainly need to better understand the way young learners interact with technology and their changing learning styles.

The jury is still out on whether early-start English will lead to greater proficiency in teenage and adulthood. If it does, will it mean fewer young adult and adult learners? This was one of David Graddol's predictions in *English Next* (2006), when he anticipated a peak and then steady decline in student numbers, a widening of student age and proficiency, and a massive increase in the number of non-native English teachers.

For publishers this means constantly adapting to changing needs locally as well as globally. Publishers are often accused of taking a one-size-fits-all approach to coursebook design but I would say the opposite is true. In a world where education policy, teacher training, private-sector ELT provision, technology investment, language proficiency and age vary hugely within as well as between countries, publishers have to tailor materials to local needs or face being pushed out by local publishers who, thanks in part to the availability of technology, are able to publish quickly and cheaply.

## The commercialisation of education

Traditional ELT publishers are not the only ones to have their eye on this complex and widening market. Parents, who understand the value of encouraging their children to learn English, are willing to buy games, books, apps and website subscriptions from other sources outside education. So here we have Disney, for example, announcing its intention to expand its English language training programme in China from 11 schools to 140 over the next five years. Imagine; Disney-themed schools all over China.



ELT publishers traditionally publish for teachers as mediators in education. In digital ELT – as in the case of Macmillan English Campus, one of the first virtual learning networks for English language learners – the focus has been on ‘blended learning’, where classroom teaching and computer-based learning go hand in hand. But there are plenty of providers popping up on the internet offering to harness the powers of ‘social networking’ and ‘global English’ to provide self-study, collaborative or distance learning opportunities. Witness LiveMocha. And don’t doubt its influence; the English Speaking Union thought its Active English course with Pearson Longman impressive enough to merit the 2009 President’s Award.

## Piracy

Illegal file-sharing and piracy will shape the publishing industry as it has the music industry. When I taught English in Colombia fifteen years ago, the shops outside the middle-class school where I worked churned out complete bound copies of children’s schoolbooks. Nowadays, there are whole websites dedicated to scanning and file-sharing coursebooks.

At the content level, editors must follow the letter of the law when it comes to using ‘authentic’ materials. Every image, text, audio file sent in by authors, who might have used them freely in their own teaching, must be licensed or ‘cleared for permissions’. Sometimes, it is just easier and cheaper to commission them from scratch.

These issues can have a positive effect on publishing. The Creative Commons, for example, is an attempt to make copyright clearer, although it is sometimes poorly understood. In ELT,

publishers will continue to improve the quality of their offerings – and even reduce the price – to make buying more attractive than copying. But they will also go to greater lengths to protect their content, as well as finding ways to charge for material that was formerly free.

The challenge for all of us is to listen – to students, teachers, authors, parents, schools and organisations – and to publish the best materials we can within parameters that are often not directly educational, such as budgets or, as I have mentioned, access to technology. It’s a road paved with compromises but, after over eleven years, I do still love it.

**Claire Pye**  
**Publisher**

**Macmillan English Campus**  
**4 Crinan Street**  
**London N1 9XW**

**Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4862**  
**Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4646**



**Claire taught English in Colombia for four years before moving into publishing digital and book products for the trade and education sectors. She has worked at Macmillan for seven years, publishing pre-school and primary courses and then Onestopenglish.**

**Tweet her @clairepye.**

# Global Survey of EYL Teachers' Qualifications, Experience and Career Path Development

**Helen Emery**

**Helen Emery, Shelagh Rixon and Wendy Arnold have been awarded a British Council research grant to investigate the training, qualifications and career structure of teachers of English to Young Learners from a global perspective.**

The research project will last for a year, from October 2010 till September 2011, and will involve an on-line survey as well as in depth interviews with classroom teachers and Head Teachers of EYL around the world. The aim of the project is to find out what it means to be a primary English teacher today: with the current trend for introducing English at ever younger ages around the world, it is becoming important to define the training needs, qualifications and career structure of teachers for this group of learners.

In some countries, English has been introduced suddenly, almost overnight and teachers haven't received sufficient training. In other countries, teachers may be trained in general TEFL – they may have completed training geared towards teaching English to adults, or

perhaps for an older age range than they currently teach.

How have teachers coped in such a situation? Has CPD (Continuing Professional Development) been readily available for them?

In some countries in-service training is readily available through workshops run by Teachers Associations and the Ministry of Education. Many countries are actively seeking to train their teachers in the most appropriate ways of teaching English at the primary school level. If you are a teacher of EYL, we want to hear about you and your career path development!

There have been several on-line surveys of late which used Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)), but for this project we want to explore using a new tool: Qualtrix ([www.qualtrix.com](http://www.qualtrix.com)) which is more detailed and will enable us to obtain more focussed results.

We hope that this new tool will enable us to make the survey different to others that have been used. The survey will be available on-line in November, and we will advise members how to participate in it through the YLT SIG discussion list.

We really hope that you will participate in this research study!

In the meantime, if you would like any further information on this project or how you can participate in it, please get in touch with me at:

**[emeryhelen@hotmail.com](mailto:emeryhelen@hotmail.com)**

## YLT SIG Publication C&TS: Will YOU be in the next issue?

Our Editorial team is always looking out for new contributors to write articles for C&TS. Whether you are a teacher, trainer, and researcher or in any other way linked to the language teaching and learning world, we would like to hear about your work.

Worried about putting pen to paper? Don't be. We accept proposals, ideas for articles as well as full manuscripts and, if you need advice in writing an article, do get in touch!

We also welcome your letters about YLT SIG and C&TS and any suggestions as to how we could improve our member benefits as well as welcoming suggestions for future issues of C&TS. So...don't be timid...we want to read about your learners!

### A brief synopsis of our Guidelines for Contributors

The YLT SIG is an international publication with subscribers in many different countries. Readers include Early Years, Primary and Secondary English language teachers, in state and private sectors, as well as teacher educators and managers. The articles cover a wide range of topics related to teaching English to children and teenagers.

When you submit an article, please ensure that it is in English and that it is around 1,500 words (unless this has been previously agreed with the Editor(s)). We sometimes accept shorter articles as well. Although we do like to have photos and graphics, please make sure that they are in a format that is easily transferable. The editorial will assume that all permissions would have been sought and granted for pictures of YLTs and any copyrighted images from websites or other publications.

For the complete guidelines, visit [iatefl.org](http://iatefl.org).

We look forward to hearing from you!

**The Editorial Team**

# Differentiation - Do We Know Just How Different Students Are?

**Mario Rinvolucri**

- Introduction
- Perceptual differences in listening and reading
- Temperamental differences (Steiner)
- Four ways of learning proposed by Antoine de la Garanderie
- Generalist versus detailist
- Student differentiation questions we might want to ask brain neurologists

## Introduction

In the first part of this article I want to show you how **inevitably and massively** different students are in their perceptions and make a plea for us not to use techniques which try to homogenize students and therefore deny their differences. In the second part of the article I want to share with you some of the differences already mapped out by major thinkers in education and psychology. Part three of the article speculates on what brain neurology may one day teach us about the roots of learner difference.

## Perceptual differences in listening and reading

Please think carefully about the sentence below and then carry on the text, creating the sentence that you see as following it.

**The woman went across to the window and looked out through it to the immense blue of the sea beyond.**

When doing this exercise in class students have come up with a wide variety of follow-on sentences; here are two or three examples:

She was bored and fed-up  
She could see his yacht sailing towards her.

What she saw reminded her of long ago....

The man behind her put a hand in her shoulder

The tornado was coming in one hour.....

This very simple exercise looks for DIFFERENCE in the students' perception as they listen to the original sentence. The exercise depends for its interest on perceptual difference.

There are however, many exercises that teachers take for granted as being reasonable that, on the contrary, look for sameness of perception. Suppose I ask the students a traditional comprehension question like "what *did the woman look through?*" I expect them to all say *the window*.

The traditional comprehension question relies on the students' attention being where the teacher thinks it should be and not where it actually is, which will be different in the case of each student.

If we are interested in differentiation then we should abandon comprehension questions, and instead ask questions that search out difference of perception, not sameness.

In all listening and reading, both in L1 and in L2, the following inner behaviours will occur:

a) **Deletion:** the listener/reader will fail to pay attention to some parts of the message and will have no memory trace of having heard or read these bits.

b) **Generalization:** the listener/reader will find themselves forming an overall impression from the bits of information as they come into his/her mind.

**Generalisation and deletion** are natural bed-fellows.

c) **Distortion:** this naturally happens as the external information meets the listener/reader's inner schemata and gets immediately interpreted in terms of those schemata.

Let me give you an example: I am listening to a snatch of language on the radio and hear three sentences before the voice makes clear that the person being talked about is Winston Churchill.

In the split second of this realization my inner schemata immediately come up with South African concentration camps, Gallipoli, the General Strike, and the war crimes of Dresden and Hiroshima. I rethink the first three sentences in terms of how they apply to this major war criminal.

This is what is meant by **distortion**, as the message I have created in my head is not that intended by the broadcaster. As you have read the last two paragraphs of this text the message being conveyed may have offended

your inner schemata, and in this case you are likely to have “**distorted**” my text in your head. For all I know, you might think of that drunken manic-depressive as a war hero.

d) **Elaboration:** the listener/reader will enormously add to any incoming text. If they are listening to a story they will often create a whole mental film of the narrative, some doing this in colour and some in black and white. As you read a political text you may be paying more attention to what you perceive the writer as **not** saying than to what they **are** saying.

(to read more about the above ideas go to any NLP text and read the section on the “Meta Model”.

A good book for this is *Introducing NLP*, Seymour and O’Connor, 1991)

To check out the above ideas do a little experiment with a group of upper intermediate or advanced students. Tell them a story and do this without script so you have direct contact with them. The story should last around 5 minutes and could either be a personal anecdote or a traditional story.

At the end of the telling request their permission to ask them a few slightly intrusive questions:

Here are a few possible ones:

*Was anyone thinking of other things as I told the story? Like what?*

*Did anyone partly listen and partly go off into other thoughts?*

*Did anyone have moments of “blank” during the listening?*

*I wonder who here imagined the story taking place in a specific country or part of the world?*

*Did any of you think about the sort of genre this story belongs to?*

*Was anybody focusing on the way I was telling the story?*

*Did anybody listen to my story with another story in mind? If so, which?*

*Did any of you wonder how the story would end? Did some of you imagine an ending before mine came?*

*How much were you thinking of the moral of the story?*

*Anybody know the season, the temperature and the weather in the story?*

*Did anybody hear any clear sounds as the story progressed?*

*Who got still pictures in their minds’ eye and who created a moving film?*

*Those of you who got pictures: were they out there in front of you or were you IN the space?*

*Did anybody imagine themselves as the protagonist of the story or another character?*

*What were the many others things you may have done internally during those five minutes?*

As you listen to your students’ fascinating answers you will hear a plethora of examples of deletion, generalization, distortion and elaboration.

As you listen to your students’ fascinating answers you may start wondering why you used to ask comprehension question about the original “dead” text rather than about the deleted, generalized, distorted and elaborated text in the students’ minds. The “differentiated” answers they give are so much more real and satisfying to both you and them than the “sameness” answers given to “normal” comprehension questions.



## Temperamental differences (Steiner)

Rudolph Steiner, who founded the Waldorf Schools, suggests that children often fall into four temperamental categories and those teachers need to take account of this when working with them.

You have the **sanguine** type who is very here-and-now and full of curiosity but who may think quite differently tomorrow. This child is like a very energetic butterfly darting here and there.

The **melancholic** temperament is inward turned, intra-personally intelligent and very much aware of the past. The type is often artistic and tends towards a sort of autumnal sadness.

In strong contrast to the melancholic is the **choleric** who tends to live through action and who is future-paced. This type's downside is anger and the waste of energy this involves. The person tends to wear his heels down on the outside.

Finally we have the **phlegmatic** who tends to wear his shoes out on the insides and who is very laid back and excellent at dealing with crises, which she takes calmly. For this temperament risk is necessary to stir them from their lethargy and so a phlegmatic commander-in-chief, like Wellington at Waterloo, can be the ideal leader.

Penelope Williams, a Pilgrims colleague, told me this story to illustrate the temperaments:

*The choleric is walking through the wood and finds a fallen tree trunk blocking the path. Being well equipped she pulls an axe out of her knapsack and chops the trunk in two, thus clearing the path.*

*The melancholic, seeing the tree across the path, sits down, weeps and says to her:*

*"there's always a tree across my path, whenever I go for a walk in the forest-there was yesterday, again"*

*The sanguine sees the tree and leaps onto it, dancing up and down shouting to herself: " what fun, I like trees across paths" She leaps down the other side and goes whooping along the path.*

*Here comes the phlegmatic:*

*"Hmmm.... Seems to be a tree across the path. I wonder what time it is...yes... time for lunch" She sits down with her back against the trunk and begins munching her sandwiches.*

I wonder which category/ies you feel you fall into?

How does this affect the way you like to/need to learn?

Does this categorization throw light on any student behaviours you have noticed?

How would the Steinerian/Middle Ages categorization outlined above affect your teaching of one-to-one students?

## De la Garanderie's four ways of learning

Antoine de la Garanderie suggests that there are four over-riding learning styles and that we all use all of them at different times, though some tend to suit us better than others.

**Way 1:** you perceive the new information through your ears or your eyes and as it comes in you categorise it according to the way you normally store things in your mind. So if you tend to separate EFL exercises you meet into "useful" "way-out" and "boring", you will pop a new activity you come across into the appropriate mental box.

**Way 2:** You perceive the new information through your ears or your eyes and you try to memorise it as it is, without altering it. If the new information is the map of Albania, you try to fix a picture of it in your mind's eye, as identically as possible. You probably learnt the alphabet this way, by committing it to auditory memory. This is the way of learning favoured by the great traditional educational systems of the world. This is the way Muslim children learn the Holy Koran (auditorily) and the way Chinese kids master the characters of Mandarin (primarily visually and secondarily kinaesthetically).

**Way 3:** you perceive the new information through your ears and your eyes and you immediately begin questioning what you are receiving. You go into adversarial mode and critically analyse what you are being told by the page or by the teacher. This is the state of mind of the "analyse de texte" so beloved of the French. It is the state of mind favoured by Oxbridge humanities teachers.

It is being pushed by the US State Department round the globe as part of their "soft war or terror"; they call it "critical thinking"

**Way 4:** you receive new information through your ears or eyes and you make no effort at all- you are very relaxed and somehow the next day you realise you have learnt something but you have no conscious idea how this has happened. This is probably our natural learning mode between minus 9 months and five years old, the period of our maximum learning progression.

I wonder how this resume of de la Garanderie's thinking strikes you? Does it make instinctive sense?

Which mode of learning have you mainly been in your eye has absorbed this article so far?

Have you noticed students who annoyed you by being in Way 4 rather often but who seem to be learning quite fast all the same?

Do you give students from learning-by-rote cultures enough of this kind of work for them to feel they are really being taught? How much do you yourself respect Way 2?

Do the fast pigeon-holders who are work in Way 1 annoy you? They do me, which shows how un-open I am to others' ways of learning.

Do you feel that learning Way 3, the sceptical, aggressive one we often prize in the West, is the naturally superior mode of learning?

How much does your current way of teaching help students to learn in all four modes?

## Generalist versus Detailist

There are some people who can only learn happily about an area by first achieving an over-view of it. Without the overview the details seem meaningless to them.

So, imagine I am teaching you Turkish grammar and know that you are normally in a generalist frame of mind. Before teaching you the two possible plural forms for nouns I need to introduce you to the general theory of vowel harmony because otherwise you will have no idea of which pluralizing ending to choose for a given noun.

However, supposing I know you are a detailist, a person can only see the wood by counting trees first, then I had better start by giving you some concrete examples of noun plurals in Turkish and have you induce the theory of vowel harmony for yourself. If you are a detailist you will be screaming to know what the two pluralizing endings are!!!\*

\* the two pluralizing ends for nouns in Turkish are LAR and LER

Different types of writing seem to have different “chunking rules”. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, is designed for generalists “In *the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*”. In the Western World news items go from general, in the headline, to detail in the subsequent paragraphs. Many novels, however, will start with a striking detail.

When you explain grammar do you privilege the detailists or the generalists in your class?

When you present a literary text do you tend to first focus the students on an overview?

How do you cope with students who are weak at dealing correctly with linguistic detail?

How early in your learning of a foreign language, do you find you need to know the phrase equivalent to “for example?” (This is a vital plea if you are a detailist!)

## Student differentiation questions we might want to ask brain neurologists

I could offer you many more “thinking frames” in the area of differentiation, frames taken from NLP, from Multiple Intelligences theory and from areas like the Enneagram and many more but my purpose in this last section is to ask questions that might lead to us beginning to get to know more about the brain neurology of language learning

What information can brain scientists give us about the way students self-correct when learning an L2? What role does the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) play in self-correction?

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) shows us that the ACC is very active when obsessive compulsives are checking if they left the gas on for the 15<sup>th</sup> time.

MRI also shows us that the ACC works sluggishly in people who have little sense of guilt, of doing wrong. What role does the ACC play in the self-correction of language mistakes? Do students self-correct in neurologically different ways?

What can the brain neurologists tell us about the very different ways 14 year-olds set about writing a composition in

L2? We can see clearly, at a psychological, behavioural level that the processes are very different in different students but what are the neurological correlates of these differences?

My own feeling is that we will begin to have a really strong mapping of learning differences when we can see and understand the brain processes that are an integral part of them.



**Mario Rinvoluceri has worked for Pilgrims since 1974, a period of 34 years or nearly half a career. He lives in Canterbury, Kent, UK. He is also the founding editor of Humanising Language Teaching (HLT), a webzine for EFL teachers which you can visit at [www.hltmag.co.uk](http://www.hltmag.co.uk).**

[mario.rinvoluceri@pilgrims.co.uk](mailto:mario.rinvoluceri@pilgrims.co.uk)

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## Reviews

### Fun Songs

Charles Goodger

[www.funsongs.co.uk](http://www.funsongs.co.uk)

### Susan Norman

When was the last time your students repeated a language exercise again and again in their free time just because they liked it? The chances are, not often – unless of course that ‘exercise’ was in the form of a song.

We sing because we enjoy singing, not because songs help us learn English and yet songs are possibly one of the most brain-friendly ways of learning. Songs are multi-sensory, and they appeal to both the right and the left hemispheres of the brain, as well as to our desire for pleasure (the greatest brain-friendly attribute there is).

And that is why nursery rhymes are so popular with children, and why we adults still remember the nursery rhymes we learnt when we were tiny – particularly the action songs, which are the ones we remember best of all.

Just think. What better language exercise could you ask for? The words are meaningful. The tune and rhythm help us remember the words. The actions help us remember the sequence and meaning of the words (and bring additional parts of the brain into play). Good pronunciation (sound, stress and intonation) is in-built. Repetition is guaranteed. And enjoyment is the key.

Wouldn't it therefore be wonderful if the songs we enjoy singing with our students corresponded to the curriculum, so that they could be incorporated into the body of our lessons rather than tagged on as a treat on the occasional Friday afternoon? Hang on a minute. Isn't that exactly what FunSongs has done?

The downloadable FunSong packages are excellent. Each one (21 available at the present count) gives you a song which you can download and play from your computer or copy onto CD – both teacher's guide version and the version for children; a song sheet of the words and several worksheets (all photocopiable); a video (the best way of learning the actions); plus teacher's notes giving detailed suggestions about

how to present and practise the information.

Each song teaches a key area of vocabulary (body, actions, seasons, numbers, time, colours, Easter, Christmas, nature, and many more) and there's an admirable focus throughout on ecology and cross-curricular work. In addition, each song focuses on one or more (depending on learnability) key areas of grammar – can, has got, past simple, imperative, present simple, present progressive, etc ... everything you'd expect.

But you can check it out for yourself by going to [www.funsongs.co.uk](http://www.funsongs.co.uk) and trying their free complete sample package. All you have to do is register (costs nothing, takes three minutes), and as soon as you get email confirmation of your registration, you just log in and click on the green download arrow on your personal details page. How hard can it be?

In addition, you'll get a download of Charles Goodger's 37-page booklet 'Music and Mime, Rhythm and Rhyme' which is well worth the read. What he says is relevant to almost any songs you might use in class, and if you're looking to use the FunSongs recordings, it provides a complete overview of the language content of the different packages as well as practical suggestions and help with the technical side of buying and downloading (honestly, even internet novices can cope with this – or just ask one of the children).

It took me about three minutes to find my way round the website where you can listen to a sample of each of the songs, get full information about each package, and follow links to some of the action song videos on YouTube. But in addition to the songs, there is

information about a whole programme of English weeks, teacher training events and FunSongs shows, which look great fun. And you can join the FunSongs facebook community for immediate contact with others using the songs.

I've been trying to think of some negatives to make this a more 'balanced' review, but the only things I can come up with are slight personal preferences which are just that – personal – and therefore won't be shared by everyone. It would be nice if the packages were free, but considering the amount of work that's clearly gone into this program that would be totally unreasonable. And in any case prices are very good. Each downloadable song package is very reasonably priced compared with ... well, compared with anything really. Or you can buy a FunSongs CD which contains 14 songs and a colour booklet of the words. Or there's a school licence price which is even better value for the whole set.

Oh yes, level. Well, it's aimed at primary school children, but I would happily use the songs with 'children of any age' in the first three years of learning – and possibly beyond. My (native speaker) grandchildren love them. What better recommendation could you ask for?

**Reviewed by Susan Norman whose most recent publications are primary courses 'Ginger' (levels 1&2) and 'Sunshine' (levels 1&2) for Cornelsen.**



# Putting Words to Work in the Young Learner Classroom

Richard O'Neill

**There is often a greater emphasis on vocabulary in young learner classrooms – lexis looms large, partly because these learners have so little to begin with. We also cannot assume children will work to assimilate the material at home on their own devices, so class time must be spent on this. This article looks at some ways we can help our learners absorb material by giving them opportunities to make multiple decisions with and about it.**

## Moving beyond identification

Teachers of young learners show marvellous inventiveness in vocabulary practice activities, but often these are variations on the same basic theme. We show pictures and re-elicite terms; say words and get students to run and touch, or slap, the items; have learners complete bingo cards; play pelmanism, go fish and hunt the flashcard... We sugar the pill in many ways, but the prescription often remains the same: learners repeatedly recall how to identify things in English.

Thornbury (2002) argues convincingly that, while identification activities are essential, there are other important ways we can help our learners get a grasp on words.

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Key points that emerge from research are the importance of:

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- selecting items relevant to learners
- providing opportunities for learners to retrieve lexis already in their possession
- increasing learners' grip on their existing resources by encouraging them to handle these in a variety of ways

## Choice words – selecting lexis

Everyone would agree we should choose material that is relevant and useful to our learners. But most vocabulary is usually selected for us – by the syllabus, by the textbook, by the exam learners are preparing for. We should remember, though, that the 'chunks' of language we introduce in class – as greetings, as incidental language and for class-management – also count as lexis.

Language for class-management, in particular, can provide many items with immediate relevance to the young learner. Instructions ('Touch the door,' 'Stand up,' 'Close/Open your eyes', etc.) need to be understood at least passively but, if everyone repeats the language while performing the actions, we can soon move to having children 'be teacher' and control activities. Being able to make choices with the language, and seeing their words have an impact on the world, deepens learners' ownership of that language, and is enormously motivating – a useful by-product being that learners, in effect, drill each other.

There are other items we can introduce are which immediately relevant to learners' situation in our classrooms. One successful item I've used is, 'I don't know!' Easy to teach, and plenty of opportunities for use. Young learners seem especially pleased that it allows a 'correct' response to questions they can't answer, and adopt it wholeheartedly – sometimes in unexpected ways.

I once observed an incident during pairwork where one learner seemed to have forgotten what time he got up in the morning. His partner responded, completely appropriately and with just the right tone of incredulity, "I don't know?" While she did not, strictly, 'use the correct form', she took possession of the language in a way totally unanticipated by me and conveyed her meaning perfectly – her utterance would have sounded completely fine coming from a native speaker.

Introducing material which allows young learners to make choices and control what occurs in lessons means items are likely to be taken up enthusiastically and 'owned'. The key is to be on the lookout for opportunities for this. If awarding blocks or other tokens as points, why just hand them out?

There are rich sets of lexical 'chunks' we can introduce to let learners decide how to receive the tokens – 'High catch or low catch?', 'All together, or one by one?' (Teacher throws the blocks all at the same time or in quick succession), 'Left hand or right hand?' In the same vein, when drilling, we can introduce items allowing learners to take control and make choices: high or low voice, quiet or soft, faster or slower.

## Retrieve, recycle and enrich

We use drilling when introducing new items, but it's also a chance to recycling previously taught ones. Lewis (1993, p128) suggests drilling adults by asking them to say items as if in the grips of some emotion. We can adapt this for young learners – ask them to choose whether to use an angry/happy/sad voice, etc. This makes drilling fun, and allows for more frequent and enthusiastic repetitions than otherwise. But just as important is the fact that we have enriched the activity by asking learners to retrieve linguistic resources they already possess and use these to control what happens.

'Animal voices' is variation on this. Here learners are asked to choose to repeat language 'like a rabbit/lion/crocodile', and so on, complete with actions. This introduces the chunk, '...like a...' and allows learners to add to this from their existing lexical store, sometimes with surprising results – they may know more than you realise. I recall two six-year old boys excitedly opting for 'like a white tiger' when they got the chance – an item new to me.

There are other simple activities which can encourage learners to retrieve their existing lexis and use it in new ways. One, requiring very little preparation, is to put learners in teams and give each team a letter. Teams race to find and note as many items around the school that begin with the letter they've been assigned. Tasks like this make learners work very hard on vocabulary without even noticing it. They have to recall the English term for as many items they come across as they can, then decide if these begin with the correct letter – so they are considering and making decisions on the items they reject as well as those that end up on their list.

## Sorting things out – doing things with words

Thornbury (2002) and Hedge (2000) both point to evidence that the more you 'put words to work' – the more tasks we get learners to perform with lexical items – the more we strengthen students' grip on that material and improve their chances of retaining it. Ranking and sorting activities are excellent ways of doing this. Young learners seem to especially enjoy these, and often there is the added benefit of improving familiarity with the written form.

A very simple, reusable sorting activity: make packs of word cards containing all the lexical sets covered as you progress through your syllabus – household vocabulary, sports, etc. Every so often, put students in teams and give them each a complete, shuffled pack of all the words covered so far, turned facedown. Have the teams race to turn the cards over one by one and run to place them in the appropriate categories, stationed around the classroom/school.

The ways learners can rank and sort lexis is limited only by our imagination, and the more we can come up with, the more the web of associations in learners' minds is enriched. With the lexical set of body parts, for instance, learners can sort items from lowest (toe) to highest (hair); into round items (eye, nostril) and long (arm, eyelash); into those you can touch with your nose (finger, knee) and those you can't (elbow, lip).

Adding an element of personalisation, students can decide how many of each is possessed by their team (16 eyes; 8 mouths...). Activities like this can also be used to draw attention to lexical form – for instance, learners can sort the

lexical set of 'people' into items ending in '-en' (men, children, women) from those ending in '-s' (boys, girls), or divide '-ing' sports (swimming) from others (football).

All sorting/ranking activities given so far involve teacher-provided items. This might be what is needed in some contexts (e.g. exam preparation), but it is possible to devise tasks which allow learners to draw on their own resources in providing items to work on. For instance, the activity described before, where learners hunt and list items around the classroom/school beginning with a particular letter, can be followed by learners ranking the items found from smallest to biggest, or sorting them into those that can/can't fit into their bags... and so on.

## From language to learners

Teachers of young learners know that vocabulary can be fun and very rewarding, for the teacher as well as students. It can also really bring it home to us (if we still need showing) that learners are the centre of our practice – that, in a very important sense, we are teachers of learners, not of language.

Our students, by and large, understand perfectly well the words we present to them, but it is after that presentation that the work really begins. To help learners improve their grasp on and familiarity with lexis, and improve their ability to make it their own, teachers have no choice but to focus, not merely on words taught, but on the motivations, linguistic resources, and characters of learners.

## References

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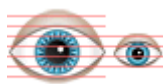
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**Richard O'Neill is a Materials Designer and teacher with eight years' experience in EFL classrooms in Japan. He holds an MA in Philosophy from the University of Sussex, and a Trinity College London Dip TESOL. Richard is currently interested in vocabulary acquisition and developing task-based approaches to teaching.**

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## Web Watcher



### ***Contributor's choices:***

As a change to usual protocol, I thought I would include a few of the choices by contributors to the YLT SIG discussion group here:

#### **Josie's Poems**

[www.josiespoems.webeden.co.uk](http://www.josiespoems.webeden.co.uk)

Josie Whitehead is a published poet who has just had 344 new poems chosen by teachers of West Yorkshire and which has been published in five

new books. She has made the above website at the request of local children, but has developed it into a website which will be of great use to teachers of English everywhere. Many of the poems are written with rhyme and rhythm, and lots of stories, and are available on this website for you to try with your classes. As you will know, rhyming and rhythmic poetry greatly aids the development of phonemic awareness, a key literacy tool, so these should be of great use to you in your classes. The poems range from simple rhyming poems for younger children, right through the various key stages, and adults love them also

#### **Ancient Civilizations**

We also developed a set of CLIL materials for the Basque Public School System on Ancient Civilizations (Egypt included) for 10-11 year olds. You can browse them at <http://www.gipuztik.net/ingelesa/8-12/Primary%206/P6U2%20Ancient%20Civilisations/index%20p6%20u2.htm>

There is also much more stuff. Main page is <http://www.gipuztik.net/ingelesa/index.htm>

Hi Kieran - there are also activities for children about Ancient Egypt on LearnEnglish Kids - some of these could be appropriate for 7 year olds: <http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/category/general-themes/ancient-egypt>

#### **Detectives**

A free detective mystery English coursebook was released yesterday.

For us, methodologically speaking, it seems to be the marriage of Extensive Reading

and current coursebook teaching formats. The idea is certainly interesting.

A lot depends on how hooked on the story the students become.

The creators see this coursebook as a direct shot at the ELT coursebook publishing industry. I would be interested in what other teachers think of it:

<http://www.abax.net/catalogue/fiction-in-action-whodunit-creative-commons-edition.html>

## Marine

I thought YL SIG members might be interested in the ESOLonline resource from NZ. There's a detailed set of materials and procedures for a lesson about marine animals (written by Jenni Beckford and Breda Matthews) here: <http://esolonline.tki.org.nz/ESOL-Online/What-do-I-need-to-know-and-do/Units-and-teaching-and-learning-sequences/Marine-Mammals-Reading-an-information-report-US17363> .. you access the materials by scrolling down the page .. on the left of the page, there are also links to more general documents about teaching English to younger learners, with curriculum exemplars etc.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the content on these pages.

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

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



Young Learners & Teenagers  
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

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IATEFL is the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language. Founded in the UK in 1967, it now has over 3,500 members in 100 different countries throughout the world.

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**(Editors)**

Medium	Space	2008/09
<b>CATS: Children And Teenagers</b>	<b>Full page</b>	<b>£200</b>
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## Call for Papers

### Starting, Stimulating and Sustaining English Language Teacher Education and Development

A conference for English Language Teacher Educators

Hyderabad, India  
22 - 24 January 2011

**Deadline for applications: 1 November 2010**

***Potential speakers are encouraged to submit proposals as soon as possible but no later than 1 November 2010***

**Acceptance of proposals: 15 November, 2010**

Organised by the British Council, EFL-U (The English and Foreign Language University), ELTAI (English Language Teachers Association India) and supported by IATEFL's Young Learner Teenagers Special Interest Group (YLT SIG) and Teacher Training and Education Special Interest Group (TTEd SIG)

Plenaries, workshops, panels and paper presentations will take place over Days 1, 2 and 3.

#### Target audience

The conference audience will consist of the following groups:

- State sector trainers and teacher educators from India and South Asia
- British Council, EFLU, ELTAI and YLT SIG and TTEd SIG specialists
- Teacher association members (regional and international)

#### Conference themes

Proposals are invited for presentations on the following themes:

1. Developing English language primary teachers
2. Teacher education in difficult and rural contexts
3. Curriculum and materials development for teacher education
4. The role of technology (radio, Edusat, mobiles, ICT) in teacher education
5. Distance teacher education
6. CPD for teachers and teacher educators
7. Challenges of evolving and implementing EL teacher education policy

Further information:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/india-english-teachersandtrainers-development.htm>  
[www.yltsig.com](http://www.yltsig.com) and <http://ttdsig.iatefl.org/>

#### Submitting proposals

Please submit your proposals to:

- International: Wendy Arnold, Conference Advisor on [arnoldworld@gmail.com](mailto:arnoldworld@gmail.com)

- National: Sam Prasanthkumar Manager State Partnerships, British Council on [sam.prasanthkumar@in.britishcouncil.org](mailto:sam.prasanthkumar@in.britishcouncil.org)

## Fees

	Indian speakers and delegates	International speakers and delegates
<b>Conference fee</b>	Rs 1000	£80
<b>Discount for ELTAI and IATEFL Members</b>	Rs 800	£75
<b>Early bird registration fee</b> (for all registrations received on or before 1 November 2010)	Rs 750	£60
<b>Early bird discount for ELTAI and IATEFL Members</b> (for all registrations received on or before 1 November 2010)	Rs 700	£55

Fee includes registration, conference pack, refreshments and lunch. Accommodation is not included but a list of accommodation will be available from 1 December 2010.

### Please note that:

1. We are unable to reimburse speakers for expenses. All speakers are required to register for the conference and pay the appropriate conference registration fee by demand draft - please refer to the registration form for more details.
2. All speakers are responsible for obtaining their own visas for India. Should your proposal be accepted, invitation letters will be organised.
3. All speakers and delegates will be issued with a certificate of participation.
4. The deadline for applications for speakers: 1 November 2010.
5. Deadline proposals accepted: 15 November 2010.
6. Deadline for speakers registration: 25 November 2010 (if registration is not received then proposal is not accepted)
7. The deadline for registrations for delegates: 10 January 2010.
8. Registrations for the conference will be accepted on a first come first served basis.