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The Native/Non-Native Conundrum Revisited
Another look at the way native- and non-native English-speaking teachers have been compared and contrasted

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“All my life I've looked at words as though I were seeing them for the first time.”

**Ernest Hemingway, Selected Letters**

“Using words to talk of words is like using a pencil to draw a picture of itself, on itself. Impossible. Confusing. Frustrating ... but there are other ways to understanding.”

**Patrick Rothfuss, The Name of the Wind**

“But words are things, and a small drop of ink, Falling, like dew, upon a thought produces That which makes thousands, perhaps millions think.”

**William Byron, Don Juan**

“Words can be like X-rays if you use them properly - they’ll go through anything. You read and you’re pierced.”

**Aldous Huxley, Brave New World**

“For last year's words belong to last year's language And next year's words await another voice.”

**T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets**

“A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”

**William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet**

“Les mots sont les passants mystérieux de l’âme.”

**Victor Hugo, Les Contemplations**

“I know nothing in the world that has as much power as a word. Sometimes I write one, and I look at it, until it begins to shine.”

**Emily Dickenson**

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.” “The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that's all.”

**Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass**
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Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

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(Front cover image: Pixabay; Back cover image: TESOL France)
Editorial

Welcome back to the Teaching Times and this autumn issue which I am sure will provide you with food for thought on a variety of subjects. We are very fortunate to have articles from all three plenary speakers at our 35th Annual International Colloquium, Diane Larsen-Freeman, Harry Kuchah and Péter Medyges. Contributions in this issue range from the purely academic (lexicogrammar and complexity theory; the nature of speech signal data and its processing in the brain) to the purely practical (using Google Docs in the classroom to foster writing skills; measuring students’ creativity through vocabulary brainstorming; using short stories and drama to encourage students to become keen readers). There’s also an account of a highly recommended teacher training course plus reports of workshops and activities from the regions.

The article by Péter Medyges on the differences between native- and non-native-speaking teachers of English and their respective merits and demerits is a timely reminder that an ability to speak a language as a result of a geographic accident of birth does not automatically make for a good teacher, and that the supposed superiority of the native speaker is a delusion. Harry Kuchah reminds us in his feature that language teaching does not have to take place in well-equipped classrooms with ample resources, and that learning will follow by harnessing whatever is available in the local community and devising instruction around it.

We also have a review of an application designed to teach French. This may be a surprise inclusion in an ELT magazine but it is often useful either to be on the receiving end of language instruction or to see how others have conceived of a language teaching tool. It enables us to evaluate the worth of the proposed activities and may even help us call into question our own implicitly or explicitly held teaching beliefs.

Bonne lecture!

Peter Strutt
Editor
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Postcard from the President

It's been ‘welcome back’ time recently, that moment in the year when we often return to a new cycle of work, hopefully refreshed from some down time over the summer. For many of us it’s also ‘scramble time’ as we cast around for new contracts and new opportunities – such is the nature of our business.

I spent some time with TESOL France members in Lyon this summer and I was amazed to discover that, thanks to our work at TESOL France, their rentrée is no longer a scramble, but more like a comfortable amble through the door. I’m referring, of course, to our Jobs List. I learnt that one couple have managed to finance an agreeable lifestyle in Lyon almost entirely owing to our Jobs List. They explained that every time they’ve spotted an ad on the list from the Lyon area they’ve contacted the client and although the first contract may be just small fry they find that inevitably this leads to more contracts at often better rates of pay.

So, let’s give ourselves a collective slap on the back and say ‘Well done’ because it works, it really does. Pooling our contacts, getting a national reputation, being ultra-organized, all of this pays off. Plus a special big ‘Thanks’ to Bethany Cagnol who has been nurturing the Jobs List for the last year, and vastly improving it.

Another aspect of the Jobs List that calls for an all-round cheer is our unflinching stand on the native/non-native issue.

We also have a review of an application designed to teach French. This may be a surprise inclusion in an ELT magazine but it is often useful either to be on the receiving end of language instruction or to see how others have conceived of a language teaching tool. It enables us to evaluate the worth of the proposed activities and may even help us call into question our own implicitly or explicitly held teaching beliefs.

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Jane Ryder. (Photo: Emily Fux).

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Bonne lecture!

Jane Ryder. (Photo: Shutterstock).
Arguably the two biggest (and not unrelated) changes in theories and effective practices in teaching vocabulary and grammar in recent years are, first, an appreciation of how much the subsystems of grammar and vocabulary are interdependent, and second, how the patterns created though their interdependence emerge from use. I treat the former briefly before going on to discuss the second change in light of Complexity Theory.

For most of us, the observations of scholars such as Pawley and Syder (1983), Sinclair (1991), and Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) drove home the point that grammar and vocabulary are intertwined. Their observations, complemented by the rise of, and findings from, corpus linguistics, have shifted perceptions in the field to the point where researchers are less likely to think in terms of grammatical rules generating acceptable sentence structures, but rather emerge from use. This position is aligned with that of cognitive grammar and Hopper’s (1988) emergent grammar, in which frequently occurring constructions become ‘sedimented’ patterns. The notion of Emergent Grammar is meant to suggest that structure, or regularity, comes out of discourse and is shaped by discourse in an ongoing process. ‘Grammar is, in this view, simply the name for certain categories of observed repetitions in discourse’ (Hopper, 1998, p. 156).

Because this shaping process of change is relentless, even adult grammars are not static, but instead have potential to change with experience (‘The 5 Graces Group’ in Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2009). While all this talk of change may prove unsettling to those who think of grammar as a static rule-governed system, notice that a dynamic, changing view can accommodate what is known to be true: not only that language changes over time, but also as it does, exceptions to its rules become commonplace. For instance, it is increasingly common these days to hear English speakers form comparatives of adjectives with the periphrastic ‘more’ rather than the ‘-er’ inflection, even for monosyllabic adjectives (e.g., Detergent X will get your clothes more white than detergent Y). From a Complexity Theory point of view, ‘… the act of playing the game has a way of changing the rules’ (Gleick, 1987, p. 24).

Complexity Theory sees language as a complex adaptive system (CAS; Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2009). In such a system, the patterns are not the product of rules, but rather emerge from use.

Such observations also suggest that since speakers’ grammars are constructed out of their experience with language, each speaker’s grammar is unique. This would lead us to expect diversity in grammaticality judgments, for example, which is what we do find. Of course, there is
sufficient overlap of speakers’ grammars so that speakers are mutually intelligible. In addition, speakers recognize that they have choices to make in how they enact their language resources. They co-adapt – they make adjustments in their language use to accommodate their interlocutors.

The implications for learning are great. The focus shifts from the acquisition of static decontextualized structures of linguistic form to the development of communicative competence through meaningful use. Learners draw on their language resources (including their knowledge of other languages) to meet their communicative needs. Furthermore, they are creative. They are not confined to using constructions that have already been realized in the existing system. They exploit the potential of the system to make new meaning.

Learners draw on their language resources (including their knowledge of other languages) to meet their communicative needs.

What are the implications of this view for teaching? Traditional approaches to teaching assume that language is a static, finite system and that practice leads in a linear way to increasing control of such a system. Practice is therefore basically rehearsal. However, a Complexity Theory-informed view challenges the idea that teaching a language involves the transmission of a closed system of knowledge. This view recognizes that different learners derive different benefits from the same practice activities (Larsen-Freeman, 2006). Language learning is not about conformity to uniformity (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). Teaching should enable learners to go beyond the input, indeed beyond any static mental grammar...to succeed at grammaring, the ability to use constructions for their own purposes. Doing so, however, requires a certain type of engagement, one that is transfer appropriate. Transfer-appropriate practice gives learners an opportunity to use language meaningfully, where the conditions of practice and the conditions of use are aligned (Lightbown, 2008; Segalowitz, 2003).

In conclusion, newer theories in teaching grammar and vocabulary regard language not as a single homogeneous system to be acquired. Rather, it is thought that stable lexicogrammatical patterns emerge and are learned from use. Such a view foregrounds the centrality of variation among different speakers and their developing awareness of the choice they have in how they use patterns within a social context (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008, p. 116). The same view also endorses the claim that ‘learning is construed as the development of increasing effective ways of dealing with the world and its meanings’ (van Lier, 2000, p. 246).

Diane Larson-Freeman

References


This is a revised version of an article originally published in February 2012 in the ‘AL Forum,’ the Newsletter of the Applied Linguistics Interest Section, TESOL International Association.

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L’anglais à travers la danse: A Cameroonian Experience

In this feature, Harry Kuchah shares his experiences of teaching English in an under-resourced secondary classroom in the North of Cameroon and shows how community participation leads to real-life language use.

Cameroon is situated in central Africa and is officially known as a bilingual country based on its colonial attachment to France and Britain and despite its more than 250 native languages and tribes. French and English are languages of instruction in both Francophone (French medium) and Anglophone (English medium) schools respectively. Bilingualism is enforced in schools as a factor of national unity and integration making French and English compulsory subjects in Anglophone and Francophone schools respectively. Amongst other things, the language curriculum requires teachers to develop communicative competence in the foreign language through learner-centred, interactive and participatory strategies which encourage real-life language use. These policy requirements unfortunately do not take into account the daily challenges that teachers and learners, especially in state schools face, such as: large multigrade classes, a lack of prescribed course books and other teaching and learning resources as well as the complete absence of technological facilities.

My early years in the profession were spent teaching English language classes ranging from 147 to 235 students in an extremely under-resourced context in the Far North Region of Cameroon. In all these classes, less than 10 per cent of my students could afford the prescribed textbook. They came from a predominantly French- and Fulfulde-speaking community and their main exposure to English was during lessons held three times a week for a total of five hours. Beyond the classroom, there was very little opportunity to interact with the few English-speaking people in the community, most of whom were civil servants and small traders who mostly interacted in pidgin English. Through a dialogic process which I have described elsewhere (Kuchah & Smith, 2011), my students and I agreed to move out of the overcrowded classroom and work in groups under trees and to look for materials in English from the community to make up for the absence of textbooks. These included various forms of written and audio resources such as newspaper cuttings, leaflets and flyers, radio news recordings and interviews with Anglophones living in the community. Sometimes we invited an Anglophone to share with us some aspect of their local culture. For example, a lady from the Mankon tribe, in the North West region of Cameroon talked to us about marriage in her village. She showed us pictures of her traditional wedding ceremony and talked about traditional dances. We were all interested in knowing about traditional dance from this part of the country so it was agreed that we would look for people to talk to us about this. To make this relevant to our learning objectives, we set specific aims as follows:

1. Each group assigned one or two members to find a North Westerner living in the community
2. Interview the person to find out:
   a. The name and brief history of their village
   b. The different traditional dances in their village
   c. Where and when the dance is performed
3. Learn to perform the dance in order to be able to teach other group members
4. Provide an English summary of the main message of the song if it is sung in a local language
5. Translate some words/expressions from the local language into English
6. Present the above information and perform the dance as a group to the rest of the class.
Case Study: Learning through traditional dance

One of my students, Amadou, had a neighbour from the North West called, Mr Talla. Amadou interviewed him about music from his village and learned the dance with his group members. Before presenting to the class, the group showed me what they had learnt. My role at this point was to help identify areas for improvement on their written text.

Amadou’s group led the first 30 minutes of our 2-hour session. They talked about the village, history and context of the Mankon Bottledance they had learned which is popular in the Ngiemba villages in the North West region. The song they had selected to perform was entitled “Married na Tie Heart” by Festus Wara and mostly sung in pidgin English. (A video of the song is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMViPZeSs68). Then a member of the group presented a summary of the song’s message: “In the song, the artist is advising married women not to abandon their husbands to go to look for other men who go after people’s wives. He advises them to enjoy their marriage by faithfulness to their husbands. Bachelor boys are not good for them, so they must be faithful.”

The dance:

Next, the group members performed the dance in class adding their own instructions and dance steps to those in the original song. Note the dancers’ movements to the instructions of the artist in the link above:

Get steady for foxtroll
Time halt up
Hook up
Foxtroll
Halt and break dancers
Break and shake body
Time halt up
Then danger break dancers
Corner brrrrreak
Inward break same time
Time halt up
And foxtroll
Left and right dancers

And in the second part of the song:

All we clap dancers
Second clap again
Advance lively
And both break backwards
Make you steps easy
Shake outwards
Shake inwards…etc

After the performance, the group presented some words and expressions in pidgin with their meanings in English to the class:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PIDGIN</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massa</td>
<td>Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garri boy</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kine kine enjoyment</td>
<td>All kinds of pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na weti</td>
<td>What is the matter?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I no be know</td>
<td>I did not know / I never knew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married na tie heart</td>
<td>Marriage is perseverance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I beg marry woman dem say make dem stay with their mass</td>
<td>I’m begging married women to be faithful to/stay with their husbands.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Follow-up activities included:

1. Discussion: Do you agree that women are more unfaithful than men?
2. Each member of Amadou’s group was assigned to another group to teach them the dance steps and add their own. A weekly 15 minutes of class time was dedicated to one or two groups on the basis of how many new instructions they needed to add to the original dance.

Conclusion:

There are certainly management issues with bringing dance into the classroom, but my students find it fun so most of the interaction can be done outside hours with the final product brought to class. In a low resource context, music and dance can serve as both input (e.g. for teaching the grammar of ‘giving instructions’ as here) and motivational strategy for language learning. Traditional dance helps learners connect with English speakers from other cultures and encourages community participation in education. Even when their informant is not Anglophone, the final presentation is delivered in English. Other language activities (debates, discussions, parallel writing, etc.) can also be generated after listening to the (translated) lyrics of a traditional song. Cameroonien languages are full of proverbs and wise sayings that can also be translated into English to enrich their expressions. The educational goal in Cameroon is to train citizens who are deeply rooted in their culture but at the same time be open to the rest of the world, and learning traditional dance in English class is one way of doing this.

Harry Kuchah

Reference

The Native/Non-Native Conundrum Revisited

In this article Péter Medgyes discusses the reasons why native English-speaking teachers were once considered preferable to teachers who had learnt the language the hard way and why this is no longer held to be the case.

Studying the issue

More than 20 years ago, I had a paper published on this subject in the ELT Journal (Medgyes 1992), quickly followed by a full-length book (Medgyes 1994). While writing those two pieces, I felt that I was opening a can of worms, however, not in my wildest dreams did I imagine that there would be so many worms in that can...

As I investigated the differences between native- and non-native English speaking teachers, (NESTs and non-NESTs), I advanced two sets of hypotheses. In the first, I claimed the following:

- NESTs and non-NESTs differ in terms of their language proficiency;
- NESTs and non-NESTs differ in terms of their teaching behaviour;
- the discrepancy in language proficiency explains most of the differences found in their teaching behaviour;
- NESTs and non-NESTs can be equally good teachers in their own right.

The second set focuses on the advantages of being a non-NEST who can:

- provide a better learner model than NESTs;
- teach language learning strategies more effectively;
- supply more information about the language;
- better anticipate and prevent difficulties;
- show more empathy to the needs and problems of students;
- benefit from the students’ mother tongue.

Due to lack of space, I will not elaborate on any of these assumptions here, suffice it to say, the empirical data obtained from several hundred native and non-native teachers validated most of my theories.

Opening a can of worms

I was attacked from various quarters. Linguists rejected the division between native and non-native teachers, stressing that the demarcation line between the two cannot be precisely drawn. Staunch supporters of the politically correct movement objected to the prefix ‘non’ in the term ‘non-native’, claiming that it is detrimental. Teacher trainers argued that in my obsession to scurgle non-NESTs for their alleged linguistic shortcomings, I gave short shrift to other important attributes, such as teaching qualifications, length of experience, individual traits, level of motivation, love of students and much more. However, my most vociferous critics were non-NEST advocacy groups, who contended that the NEST/non-NEST dichotomy fuelled discrimination against non-NESTs in search of a teaching job in English-speaking countries.

For all the backlash, I trust that my attempt to shed light on the NEST/non-NEST conundrum was well worth it. Firstly, I launched an avalanche of research: the study of NESTs and non-NESTs came into its own. Secondly, non-NESTs, who had seldom made their voices heard in the past, were prompted to contribute to this line of research – and they did so eagerly. Thirdly, and most importantly, I like to think that my studies, but especially a follow-up lecture I delivered in many parts of the world under the title ‘Always look on the bright side’, succeeded in boosting non-NESTs’ self-confidence. The message that our linguistic shortfall is amply offset by the benefits we bring to the classroom seems to have empowered lots of my fellow non-NESTs.

When NESTs reigned supreme

Let us now take a look at what the ELT situation was like before the non-NESTs’ self-awareness process began. In a nutshell, native speakers used to be in a position of unchallenged authority. They were regarded as models of the proper use of English which students were required to imitate. A tall order! Non-native teachers were worse off because a high level of English-language proficiency was – and still is – a make-or-break requirement, a good predictor of professional success. Since there was no way we could emulate NESTs in terms of language proficiency, we developed an inferiority complex.

To aggravate matters, we accepted that NESTs were not only the sole repository of the English language but also the gatekeepers of proper ELT methodology and unrivalled writers of authentic teaching materials. Wandering troubadours’ (to borrow Alan Maley’s term for exported keynote speakers), jet-in-jet-out teacher trainers and backpack teachers swarmed conferences, workshops and classrooms (Phillipson 1992) to show us the ‘right’ way to teach. Even though the ideas they promulgated had no roots in and often mimicked the educational traditions of periphery countries, they enjoyed a higher status than home-grown products.

Changing trends

Now what about the current situation? Has anything changed since the first publications on this issue in the early 1990s? My answer is a definite ‘yes’. To start with, today non-native English-speaking teachers outnumber native speakers: out of four English speakers only one is a native speaker – and the gap is widening. This implies that a large proportion of interaction in English takes place between non-native speakers, with no natives present (Seidlhofer 2011). This being the case, the question of ownership inevitably arises. Can a minority group, namely native English speakers, retain their hegemony and continue to arbitrate what is right and wrong in language usage? Widdowson’s answer is unequivocal: native speakers should no longer be considered the true custodians of the English language, which they can ‘lease out to others, while still retaining the freehold. Other people actually own it’ (1994: p385). According to this line of reasoning, any non-native speaker who communicates in English with a native or another non-native interlocutor is entitled to use it creatively, moulding language until it becomes an adequate tool of self-expression. Hundreds of
studies support Widdowson’s doctrine against the ‘native speaker fallacy’ (Phillipson 1992) – none states the opposite. Graddol is even harsher in his judgment when he says: ‘[N]ative speakers may increasingly be identified as part of the problem rather than the source of a solution. They may be seen as bringing with them cultural baggage in which learners wanting to use English primarily as an international language are not interested’ (2006: 114). In this new millennium, native speakers seem to be rapidly losing their authority.

Another trend gathering momentum is that English learners are getting younger. Increasingly English is being introduced in primary schools and even kindergarten – it is on its way to becoming part and parcel of general education around the world. The fact that English, together with information and communications technology (ICT), rivals the three R’s (reading, writing and arithmetic) as a basic skill, enhances its scope and prestige. On the other hand, since it is increasingly seen as a second, rather than a foreign language, it can no longer offer the added value ascribed to foreign languages.

What is to be done then?
With the traditional EFL declining and a new paradigm looming large, a fundamental rethink of language policy and practice is required. Teacher trainers, in particular, bear an increased responsibility for equipping prospective teachers with the knowledge and skills needed for the changing educational environment. It is with these caveats in mind that I propose a nine-point action plan:

1. An adequate teacher supply to satisfy the growing demand for English should be ensured.
2. Work on establishing norms of English as a lingua franca use should be intensified.
3. More heed should be paid to the special needs of young learners.
4. The scope for content and language integrated learning in schools should be broadened.
5. Information and communication technology should be factored into the curriculum of teacher education.
6. The integration of classroom and out-of-school learning opportunities should be reinforced.
7. Language improvement courses for non-NESTs should constitute a fundamental component of teacher education curricula.
8. NEST job applicants prepared to stay for extended periods in a foreign country should be prioritised.
9. Enhanced opportunities for NEST/non-NEST cooperation should be created.

I’m pleased to say that the self-awakening process of non-NESTs is well underway. Native speakers are no longer in a position of unchallenged authority. They’re no longer regarded as custodians of the ‘proper’ use of English and the gatekeepers of ELT methodology. Today, NESTs and non-NESTs own this language in equal measure and both can use it creatively to teach English at their discretion.

Péter Medgyes

References

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The Brain Box: Language and the Cerebral Networks

This article discusses procedural memory and the nature of speech signal data. It also touches on other concepts such as the nature of the speech stream material that is taken into procedural memory and the process by which it is acquired. In a future article, Sue Sullivan will outline her speech stream exercises and discuss the following complementary ideas: (a) processing precedes understanding (b) text blocks uptake (c) intense repetition without understanding is essential for uptake to implicit systems.

**Procedural Memory & Declarative Memory**

The way that these two memory networks serve language, and the difference between them: – i.e the way they operate and their dissimilar outcomes – is important for language teaching. This position is partly based on the complete physiological separation of the two systems. The basal ganglia/cerebellum/frontal lobe network for procedural processes, and the temporal/hippocampus network for the lexical resources of declarative processes, do not intersect.

The procedural memory (PM) system is the automatic, subconscious process that masters the early language and provides fluent, accurate speech and listening ability. The grammar and sound system of L1 are acquired by this procedural network. There is significant evidence to validate this declarative/procedural model.

The declarative memory (DM) stores and accesses information that we learn and are conscious of learning – vocabulary and memory events are processed in the declarative network. We can talk about them or ‘declare’ them. These items in DM can be accessed, thought about and adjusted.

Data active in the procedural memory network (PM) is not available to conscious awareness. And not just the material in procedural memory but the process itself – of data being used or tallied – is beyond the conscious mind. This data is not within our control. It is ‘acquired incidentally, is stored implicitly, is used automatically, and is subserved by procedural memory’ (Paradis, 2009).

Second language research also shows that later L2 learners use mostly declarative circuits while native speakers access procedural circuits. Better L2 learners show a somewhat greater use of procedural memory but do not approach the high-level automatized use of native speakers. Declarative memory provides first language learners with mainly vocabulary items. When later L2 learners use declarative networks to try to produce grammatical sentences and produce or distinguish sounds in the new language, they often struggle to reach acceptable fluency.

The research points to a strong if not total separation of the two networks. For teachers, this is significant – most lessons provide information that will be processed by DM. Even a talk about pairs of sounds or learning about linking will be processed as a fact in conscious memory. But language is best processed by procedural systems.
This is difficult for adult learners who do not seem to have access to these procedural memory circuits. The experience of L2 learners struggling to master the sound system or remember grammatical rules contrasts sharply with the automatic, accurate and instant production and understanding of fluent speech by L1 users. At the heart of this difference are the two memory networks.

How does the procedural memory network create the language system?

Procedural processes cover acquired sequences and skills, and these implicit processes also deal with language. In the implicit system, the basal ganglia play a vital role. They are used for learning to ride a bike, type, fit the new key in the lock, remember a new telephone number, and anything involving muscular effort and learnt patterns. The motor activity of any of the body’s muscles provides feedback on its own actions. In childhood, the network is active, processing the speech signal and the articulatory efforts needed and taking from that what it needs to form a database.

The information processed by the procedural system consists of those shapes and stripes we can see on a spectrogram: formants and wave bursts, and the occurrence of syntax features whose frequency and principles provides food for the language data base. Prosody, melody and rhythm are intertwined with other linguistic information and similarly tallied to form a reliable resource for understanding and producing language.

The uptake to procedural memory systems is obviously not from the sounds of language we hear and are familiar with (Paradis, 2009). It is the sounds of the speech signal that are beneath our awareness. Just as we can notice the clean, fresh air we breathe but are unaware of the process of extracting oxygen from the bloodstream (Paradis), so we might pay attention to the consonants and vowels in a language but are unaware of those surface statistics that provide data to implicit linguistic systems.

These surface statistics include characteristics like formants, the vibrations that are created for each sound, especially vowels.

And it is the procedural memory networks which create the fast accurate procedures of first language use.

As the evidence grows around statistical uptake and implicit procedural systems, it’s clear it would be an advantage for students to make more use of them. How that can be done for adult learners will be the subject of a second article.

References


In her 2003 work, *Phonetic diversity, statistical learning, and acquisition of phonology*, Janet Pierrehumbert proposes a model of statistical uptake where the characteristics of spoken language in all their ‘terrible complexity’ are processed bottom-up with phonological data, then lexicon and syntax elements. This kind of system, she says, allows for a top-down process to refine these elements over time.

The research of Ullman, Paradis and Pierrehumbert, and others, sheds light on the cerebral challenges that face adult L2 learners. Most of our teaching techniques and approaches provide learning opportunities for students in conscious DM networks. There is a vast difference between what we consciously teach and learn, and what procedural memory networks are processing.

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Measuring Creativity

Wojtek Koszykowski investigates the nature of creativity and outlines different means of assessing creativity in language use...

In recent years, ‘creativity’ has become one of the most popular themes in education. We observe a significant increase in workshops dealing with this area when we look at TESOL / IATEFL conference programs throughout the last 20 years. It is important to nourish creativity, yet it seems difficult to understand what exactly creativity is. Having asked a few TESOL France members during the last TESOL France Annual Colloquium, I heard different ideas of what they understand by being creative (being an artist, being innovative, brainstorming skills, problem solving, risk-taking, etc.). Perceiving creativity from different angles might lead to difficulties in assessing it in a reliable, valid and practical way. Whereas it is true that creativity can have many facets (divergent thinking, convergent thinking, risk-taking, etc.), some experts claim that creativity is an ability to imagine a number of items in a given period of time, while others claim that only “new and useful” items really count as truly creative. Over the last few decades there have been hundreds of attempts to construct good creativity measurement tools, all of which have been greatly criticized. However, some of them share a practical assessment scale that might be easily incorporated in any brainstorming activity.

1. Guilford’s Alternative Uses Task

Assuming that creativity involves divergent thinking, Guilford (1967) distinguished four components of creativity measurement: fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. During the Guilford’s Alternative Uses Task, the test takers list (in a defined period of time) as many uses as possible for a common object such as a brick. The lists are scored according to the four components. If a test taker has listed three different, relevant uses, the score for fluency is 3. When the three uses are very different from one another, the score for flexibility is 3. However, if the some uses seem similar, for example: a bookend in a library, a bookend for magazines at home, the fluency component counts as 1 for both of them. Originality depends on how unique and surprising the responses are, a sort of think-out-of-the-box component. A good example would be placing a brick inside the toilet tank in order to save water or crushing a brick into powder used for decorating vases. Although Guilford suggested here a norm-referenced scoring depending on group results expressed in percentages, I suggest keeping it simple and assigning 1 point for each original idea. Finally, the elaboration score depends on how much detail the respondents provide, hence each well defined item will receive 1 point as opposed to items which express a very general idea and score 0.

2. Torrence Test of Creative Thinking

Ellis Paul Torrence created (1984) a number of tests, some of which draw on Guilford’s components. Circles and squares is one of them. Learners receive a sheet of paper with a number of squares (or other shapes if you prefer). They need to imagine what the shapes represent and draw their ideas within a period of time. In the example, we see that the student B has completed all the 5 shapes and therefore gets 5 for fluency but only 1 for flexibility as all the images represent a dice. Both students A and C get 4 points for flexibility, as their ideas are all different. Student D definitely scores 2 points for elaboration as the pictures have quite a number of details. Originality is a subjective criterion. For student A, I personally think that a logo and the arch seem quite unusual as we don’t normally perceive a square when we look at them. In my opinion, originality is seeing something “beyond” the shape.
3. Vocabulary Brainstorming

Drawing on Guilford’s components, I use an activity in which I ask students to list as many words as possible with, let’s say, 3 different letters: A, F, R. Depending on the lesson’s theme and learners’ level, we can narrow down the expected words to a lexical set, for example. Every item on the list scores a point for fluency. Flexibility score will depend on how different the words are from one another, so if a student listed only verbs, the flexibility score will be 1. If all the words are very different from one another, it is a proof of divergent thinking; hence each word will score a point for flexibility. For words such as “far” or “RAF” the elaboration component is inexistent, but longer words or words with affixes such as “affordable” or “reaffirm” are good examples of elaboration. Originality depends on how unusual the items are in view of the learner’s level. “Affordable” is very original at a lower level, but more advanced students might sometimes brainstorm original words such as “to affearate” to express ideas for which there are no words in English yet.


4. Image Imagination

We can exploit the four components while working with pictures in order to prepare them for the Cambridge exams speaking paper. We need to make sure that our learners understand the marking rules of the game. We display a photo to a group of students for 5 minutes and ask them to elicit language and make a list, as if they were going to describe the image afterwards. (We can display two images in the case of comparing and contrasting, etc.). Each correctly written item scores a point for fluency. Flexibility depends here on the category of the language (colloquial expressions, idioms, phrasal verbs, different parts of speech, etc.). A learner who lists three phrasal verbs, will score only 1 point for all of them. Elaboration is demonstrated either through the complexity of the language or paying attention to details in the photo. However, the originality is seeing something “beyond”, not directly there, therefore items expressing feelings or what likely happened before/after/why/etc. the photo was taken, will score a point for originality. In my case, students enjoy marking themselves, verifying the peers’ scores and finish by saying: “Ok teacher, give us a new photo, we want to do it one more time”.

Conclusion:

Creativity measurement tests are not an essential tool to develop better communicative skills, yet there are many benefits of the suggested measurement system, especially when the learners understand the criteria. With every attempt, the quality of brainstorming improves. Each test is a playful, enjoyable activity that might not necessarily measure creativity precisely but nourishes it, stimulates the imagination and facilitates classroom tasks requiring divergent thinking. The time limit generates dynamism, a competitive spirit and increases the challenge level. Guilford’s four components are clear, logical and might be useful in assessing the contents of creative writing. Frequent activities based on the components seem very helpful in preparing students for the speaking paper of most Cambridge exams as learners never cease to come up with new ideas when describing photos or negotiating solutions. I personally use them to self-assess my own work when I create teaching materials and classroom tasks.

How about creating your own classroom game with the new scoring system based on the four components?

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Reference
In this article Stephen Reilly writes about attempting to improve students’ literacy levels by getting them into literature through short stories and drama.

Kindling a desire to read is a sure-fire way of enriching literacy. And mixing the short stories genre along with video, drama and creative writing makes for enhanced student participation and improved language skills. Moreover, discovering enjoyable short stories is immensely rewarding for the students, the teacher, and even students’ parents, who sometimes ask for them. We uncover contemporary authors, get a glimpse of different lives and debate the sensitive issues that stories raise.

Indeed, short stories are perfect for the classroom: authentic and brief enough to be read ‘in one sitting’ as Edgar Allen Poe famously defined them. If teachers provide a sizeable, eclectic selection of authors, periods and genres, students become keen readers. It really is that simple.

What follows is a selection of short stories currently used in my classes along with related classroom activities, which have succeeded in making students into readers in the course of the year.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, **Apollo**: Whilst visiting his parents, Okenwa, a young Nigerian man, learns that Raphael, their former servant, has been arrested for armed robbery, and he recalls his unreciprocated attraction to him. After an intense friendship, ‘jilted’ Okenwa had got Raphael the sack, unwittingly pushing him into an abyss of street crime.

Students discuss Okenwa’s responsibility in Raphael’s downfall then write a stream-of-consciousness style diary by Raphael as he lies in jail, awaiting his trial and reflecting on how he got there. The students imagine that Okenwa goes to visit Raphael in prison, and that the latter claims compensation from the former for unfair dismissal; both parties attempt to reach a settlement.

Clare Boylan, **My Son the Hero Ken**: An Irish boy with learning disabilities, tells his mother his torn clothes and scratches are the result of having rescued a kitten from a tree. The incident happened at the same time as a murder was committed in the neighbourhood. The mother increasingly believes that her son was the murderer, and decides to implement her own form of justice.

Students discuss the process of the mother’s precipitate judgement and her motives. Then in threes, they act out a trial where the mother defends herself before a judge and prosecutor. The judge pronounces a sentence and then in the class group, students compare the outcomes of each trial.

Raymond Carver, **Cathedral**: A husband looks on as his wife welcomes an old blind friend to stay. Taciturn, clumsy and unable to describe a cathedral when one appears on television, he draws one with the blind man’s hand placed on his drawing hand and this moment turns out to be a life-changing one.

Students discuss the difference between looking and seeing and the role of art in personal change. In pairs they re-enact the last scene where one student
TEACHING IDEAS

Roald Dahl, Lamb to the Slaughter: Mary Maloney kills her future ex-husband with a frozen leg of lamb (originally his dinner), then plies the detectives with whisky and feeds them the cooked weapon.

Students discuss the changing role of women since the 1950s then stage the play. Mary's son, who's now a detective, equipped with new technology and determined to find his father's killer, decides to reopen the murder case. Students role-play the discussion he would have with his mother in trying to get her agreement.

Edwidge Danticat, Children of the Sea: A young Haitian couple write unsent letters to each other whilst she has remained in their village and he is on a makeshift boat, escaping persecution from the Tonton Macoutes.

Students identify and explain the two different writing styles in the story and imagine why her father didn't want her to marry her childhood sweetheart. They then share what they know about the current refugee crises in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. They list the political arguments for and against accepting more refugees and make suggestions on how to integrate them better in our communities. Then, in threes, the students roleplay a village council meeting with a mayor, a right-wing and a left-wing councillor, in which they attempt to reach an agreement on how many refugees to welcome and on what conditions.

O. Henry, The Ransom of Red Chief: Two men kidnap the son of a prominent banker in a get-rich-quick scheme, but the child turns out to be unbearable and the kidnappers must pay the parents to take him back.

Students discuss how children's and adults' behaviour has changed in recent decades and of its consequences today. Students imagine that on the way to the boy's house, the kidnappers meet the family's neighbours, who try to dissuade them from returning the child to his parents. Kidnappers, neighbours and child attempt to reach a settlement together.

Jhumpa Lahiri, Interpreter of Maladies: The Das family, who live in the United States, take a holiday in India, their country of origin. They hire Mr Kapasi as an interpreter/guide. In a doctor's surgery, hearing his job described by Mrs Das as 'romantic', Kapasi begins to fantasize about her. Once they're alone, she unburdens herself of an untold secret, although their subsequent conversation exchange sees his fantasies blown away.

Students discuss the reasons for Mrs Das's confession and the symbolism in the story of glasses, windows and cameras. They carry out a roleplay between her and a therapist, where she seeks a solution to alleviate herself of her 'malady'. At the end of the roleplay, the students present their solutions to the class.

Yiyun Li, After a Life: Mr Su and Mr Fong, two elderly Chinese men mired in complicated family situations, become friends at a stockbrokerage. Su and his wife keep secret their severely disabled adult daughter, whereas Fong uses Su as cover for an affair with a younger woman, before suggesting to his wife that she should allow all three of them to live together.

Students speculate on the meaning of Su's thoughts that 'things unsaid had better remain so' and on the burden of shame felt by each of the characters. In twos or threes, the students then carry out a roleplay in which Mr Su attempts to persuade his wife to allow his mistress to live with them.

Tips to find and facilitate reading

- Find the stories online by typing the author's name, the story's title and then either 'pdf' or 'text'. Hold the CTRL key and press + to enlarge the text and facilitate reading. Hold the CTRL key and press F to find a specific word or phrase in the text.
- For lower-level learners, fairy tales can be read as they exist in graded reader form, as does flash fiction, which, although containing high lexical density, is short enough to keep readers interested.

Use short stories and you'll improve students' language skills, their knowledge of English literature, and you'll get them thinking about world issues that concern them. Use the online resources, and you'll also have paper-and clutter-free lessons that mean less prep for teachers and more reading and learning for students.

Stephen Reilly

Links to stories

Apollo: http://goo.gl/6lr1W
My Son the Hero: https://goo.gl/YJLGAR
Cathedral: http://goo.gl/gOCxFD
Lamb to the Slaughter: https://goo.gl/h32Lqb
Children of the Sea: http://goo.gl/oyi0G
The Ransom of Red Chief: https://goo.gl/h2CTvc
Interpreter of Maladies: http://goo.gl/1K8Irw
After a Life: http://goo.gl/iB0q5l

References


Stephen Reilly works for the British Council in Paris. His interests lie in flipped and tableless classrooms and literacy development through literature and drama.

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Google Docs: Writing and Interactivity

TESOL France Bordeaux invited LeAnn Stevens-Larré to share several activities she uses to encourage student writing. Excerpts from her interview by co-ordinator, Dianne Chen, highlight two of those activities taken from her talk in Bordeaux, December 2015.

Q: So, LeAnn, in order to use your writing activities in class, one would first need to set up a few things in Google Drive. How would they go about it?
A: It's important to become familiar with Drive in order to be able to navigate through it. Understanding what all the options (shared with me, my drive, etc.) mean is important. For these two writing activities, it's essential to be able to manage group files and individual files. Everyone can see group files; individual files are private. Students do not have to have a Gmail account to access Drive, but they have to create a Google ID by going to the <create an account> page and selecting <I prefer to use my current email address> in place of creating a username with a Gmail address. With this method, you have a Google account but it's associated with a different email address.

Q: With the second writing activity, each student is working on their individual documents at the same time. How does that work exactly?
A: I have students open their individual documents (only accessible to me and the student). These documents have already been created by me and shared with the students at the beginning of the semester. I then give the writing assignment that they will all be working on at the same time in the computer lab. Meanwhile, I'm on my computer, opening each individual Google doc in its own tab on my browser. This is why it's important that the file is always named appropriately with their name visible in the tab. During this activity, I have to quickly cycle through the tabs as the students write, so I need to be able to see whose work I'm reviewing.

Q: Tell us about your two writing activities. One is a homework-type activity that uses group files, is that right?
A: Yes, every week I play them a song, one that has some connection to culture or history so they gain some value from it beyond language practice. First, they need to take notes and understand the lyrics. Then, for homework I tell them what they need to focus on in the writing task. The first part consists of researching the song: the title, the musician's name and the answers to some trivia questions about the singer or band. For the second part, they're required to write a few sentences on the group document in Google Drive. I monitor and highlight any mistakes to correct. They can ‘talk’ to me through the group doc and I can reciprocate. I've used, among others, Red Solo Cup, This Land is your land, and American Pie.

Q: As the students are writing their assignment, how are you interacting with them?
A: In four ways. You can insert a comment to highlight one specific aspect. It will automatically email the person you have written the comment to. Then, there's the editing mode (just regular text entering) and suggesting which actually shows the edits made, similar to track changes in Word. Lastly, you can use the chat function. While the students are working individually, I go through, highlight, comment, suggest, write into the text ... whatever I feel is most effective at that point. I don't put the onus on myself for correcting them; I just highlight what’s wrong.
Q: What other aspects for the teacher are important to keep in mind?
A: Basically, they’re getting a virtual over-the-shoulder teacher interaction. What that means is that you have to be very, very active. You are reading very quickly, noticing a problem, highlighting, typing. Then you move on. You’re cycling through the docs as quickly as you can and deciding, in real time, what you need to be focusing on. It takes a lot of energy. If all the students are writing in the same document, it’s harder to follow them… you’re scrolling up and down, it’s difficult to manage, so you have to have their writing open in separate documents. In a classroom with few students, that’s not a problem, but with lower levels or large classes the teacher needs to decide how many docs they can cycle through.

I want my students to feel understood, but to also be challenged. The most important thing I want to demonstrate is that writing is a multi-layered, cognitive process and this activity very clearly shows them that.

Q: So, in a nutshell ...?
A: OK, pros: it’s a real-time interaction, specific and targeted error instruction, it’s personalized and it’s saved for posterity. Students cannot be sure when you’re looking and I think that’s important. When you’re walking around a classroom, they know when you’re behind them. But here they don’t know when you’re looking at their work until you start interacting with them. So they’re constantly on guard, yet, they’re usually on task. All of my students aren’t necessarily comfortable with this exercise but I have some students that joke around with me. For example, they write, “Our teacher is so mean!” at the top of the document and then I respond to that. So, it can be play as well, which also teaches them that this is a safe environment and that mistakes are acceptable. It’s a high-energy environment, an energy that you usually don’t get when you are casually just walking around the room.

The cons: typing can be challenging (and this affects everyone). If you are slow, this exercise is likely to be difficult. Secondly, you have to give equal time to each student even if, having gone to one tab, there’s really nothing to say compared to another student who needs a lot more help. It’s tough to give equal time to everyone because some students need more help than others. On the other hand, you don’t want any student to think you’re never there.

Q: Surprising outcomes or last thoughts?
A: I’ve never had an inactive student; they’re just active in different ways. I think the teacher needs to be aware that students can be overwhelmed by the quantity of corrections and it’s important to focus on global issues e.g. text organization, task achievement etc., rather than minor mistakes. I also think the student should understand the methodology of the activity otherwise they can be unsettled by its speed.

...some students will automatically go back and work on corrections while others ignore you and just keep typing. Some can’t cycle back and forth so quickly; they need to stay in one thought. ... everyone produces language and responds to teacher interaction differently.

I want my students to feel understood, but to also be challenged. The most important thing I want to demonstrate is that writing is a multi-layered, cognitive process and this activity very clearly shows them that.

Another interesting thing is that some students will automatically go back and work on corrections while others ignore you and just keep typing. Some can’t cycle back and forth so quickly; they need to stay in one thought. It really depends on the teacher’s purpose. That’s something I didn’t expect when I created this activity, everyone produces language and responds to teacher interaction differently. So it’s something to pay attention to and decide how to manage.

LeAnn Stevens-Larré holds a PhD in American literature and worked at Cameron University (Oklahoma), where she mainly taught composition. In 1999, LeAnn began developing her department’s curriculum for online Composition classes using the Blackboard platform. Upon moving to France, she began teaching EFL and is currently teaching at ENSEIRB-Matmeca. leannlarre@gmail.com

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**TEACHING IDEAS**
'Rocket French’ E-learning Course

Rocket French is produced by Rocket Languages, an award-winning e-learning company who claim their courses are used by over 1,000,000 people. Their aim is to help you speak and understand French faster, using interactive audio lessons. The course has three levels: Premium, Premium Plus and Platinum. Each level has eight core modules supplemented with almost the same number of language and culture lessons and a few survival kit ones for good measure. The modules cover practical situations such as Talking about You, Making a Complaint and Working French. For me, these are the essential weekly topics I need help with. Rocket French also integrates grammar instruction into each module in detailed step-by-step lessons, which is a refreshing change to the ‘grammar rules + multiple choice questions’ I have experienced in other e-learning apps.

The lessons kick off with a bilingual podcast mp3 where two people introduce the context of the lesson. Then you can listen to choosen key phrases with translations and record your versions of the transcript and extra vocabulary to check your pronunciation. This approach is quite guided and can seem overloaded but I just check what I don’t know and I like to work on my pronunciation, so I do some recording.

Once you’re done with learning, it’s time for testing via the Hear it Say it, Write It and then the Know It tests. So you get assessed on your listening, reading, speaking, writing and your understanding via translation. As a teacher and e-learning designer, this does not sound too revolutionary but as a learner, it works.

The last two sections test your general understanding via a short quiz and then comes the best part, in my opinion. As teachers, we are used to ending lessons with speaking activities where we hope for skilled usage of what we’ve covered. Well, in my experience of French e-learning and face-to-face classes, I’d say Rocket French has the most realistic role play simulations available online.

Other features include adding notes to every lesson and collecting any key vocabulary you want to learn. You also have the option of rating your answers or just accepting the computer’s rating. This personalizes the program more than the standard off-the-Google-Play-shelf app. You can also ask study questions in the forum and take part in discussions with Rocket French staff and fellow students. Another nice touch is the regular email contact with a summary of your progress and information about new content, but without the hard sell of some other companies.

Compared to other apps I’ve used, Rocket French is definitely the best as it works on functional speaking for daily interactions. It is not a traditional 4-skill course though, so will not help you prepare for and pass FLE exams, but it doesn’t claim to either and in fact, neither do most apps and e-learning programs. Rocket French really does achieve what it claims in that I can understand and speak French at a higher level already.

Regarding price, it is in the Rosetta Stone area but I chose Rocket French because of the focus on speaking and so far have not been disappointed. Having previously bought Babbel and Frantzastique courses and used the free versions of Busuu, Kwiziq, Memrise and Duolingo, I found Rocket French’s design and method refreshing and very effective.

You can sign up for free trial at: www.rocketlanguages.com/french/premium/

Phil Wade

Phil Wade is an English teacher, Business English coach, e-book author, e-learning and materials creator, and ELT marketing consultant. He is the author of the 2015 David Riley award-winning ‘Presentation Lesson Hacks’. He is also a struggling French learner.

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Relax, Ask and Relax … Flashback to a Summer Teacher Training Course at Pilgrims

Csilla Jaray-Benn looks back on a summer teacher training course run by Pilgrims at the University of Kent in Canterbury, UK, and discovers that there is always something new to learn, even for experienced teachers.

As teachers, we all count the days till the end of the school year to finally be able to recharge our batteries whether on a sunny beach, in the cool mountains or simply by enjoying the idleness of long summer days with family and friends. But the long break can also allow for some time to refill our teaching toolkit, helping to take some of the pressure off that dreaded first day back. So this is what I decided to do, along with hundreds of other teachers at the beautiful campus of the University of Kent in the historic town of Canterbury to learn, share, and genuinely have fun during a two-week teacher training course run by Pilgrims.

Principal, Jim Wright opened the first class by setting the three rules to follow: relax, ask, and relax. What we accomplished, was ‘active relaxation’ in a stimulating, inspiring, creative and easy-going environment created for us by trainers and administrative staff at Pilgrims.

‘Creative Methodology for the Classroom’ was a course run by Mojca Belak and attended by 14 teachers from all over Europe, including Russia, Germany, Slovakia, Italy, Spain, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Poland and France. Most were EFL teachers but a few group members taught other languages. The carefully scheduled programme had the right balance of hands-on activities and the theory behind learning, communication and personal development. Discovering such broad theories as Choice Theory, Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), Multiple Intelligences and Transactional Analysis, helped us see who we are as people and teachers, and how we can use this knowledge to guide our students to progress with their language skills.

We learned creative activities for the classroom

Since its establishment in 1974 by Mario Rinvolucri and James Dixey, Pilgrims has always insisted on the importance of ‘being’. So along these lines, we experienced ‘being’ a learner for two weeks and participating, on average, in 15 different activities per day. Creative activities included ideas for warm-ups, building group dynamics, developing all four skills, addressing different learning styles, or unleashing hidden creativity in our learners. We worked with video and audio materials, songs and fairy tales, we wrote stories, poems, a letter to ourselves, our trainer and even the moon… We also practised writing using another person’s handwriting, forgetting the anxiety of writing in a different language.
We transformed the often boring dictation into loud laughter and fun. As we sat in one corner of the room, different parts of a text were read simultaneously by another team member from the opposite corner. I can still hear Léna’s (Elena Stolyarova) voice, trying to make herself understood by her team who had to screen out the three other voices reading different texts, write down their parts, then re-assemble the text by working together with the other three groups. *Four Voice Dictations*, is a good example of how adding a creative twist to a traditional classroom exercise, can turn it into something memorable and create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.

**We learned about the other person**

Mojca welcomed each trainee with a personal letter and an open invitation to reply to her before the course was over. She corresponds with her university students in Slovenia and though it does take time, exchanging letters between teacher and students helps create a positive, relaxed learning environment, as well as helping improve students’ writing skills. Of all the numerous activities, forcing us to focus on the other person – an important skill in teaching – and on the other person’s problems and difficulties, one stayed with me in particular. Working in pairs, we listened to a personal story of a conflict situation from our partner’s own lives. Our task was then to transform this story into a legend, using features of the traditional fairy tale. It was a powerful activity, which can easily be used with teenagers, young adults, not to mention in response to workplace conflicts which surface during a business English lesson.

**We learned about ourselves**

The Pilgrims’ approach promises personal development and we most definitely received that. We discovered skills we never thought we had, or had never been confident about, such as drawing, drawing with the left hand (surprisingly more accurately than with the right) or writing a poem to offer as a gift, or using images related to the five senses. Creativity is a hidden skill in everyone and not always easy to unleash and express, but with a group built on trust, collaboration, genuine attention to the other person, and a relaxed atmosphere, creativity can be brought to the surface in teachers and students alike.

Creativity is a hidden skill in everyone and not always easy to unleash and express, but with a group built on trust, collaboration, genuine attention to the other person, and a relaxed atmosphere, creativity can be brought to the surface in teachers and students alike.

We spent two intensive weeks learning new things and discovering hidden knowledge and skills, complemented by workshops, as well as time relaxing in one of the many pubs around Canterbury Cathedral. My overall experience of this course can be summed up by the words of the philosopher, Martin Buber: ‘The only way to learn is by encounters’. Pilgrims is a place of encounters: encounters with new ideas, practical activities which always place the person at the centre, and most importantly, encounters with like-minded and like-hearted fellow teachers in a relaxed environment.

Of the three theories we covered, it was **Choice Theory** that resonated with most people. I found Dr. William Glasser’s ideas particularly helpful for teachers. The main point is that almost all behaviour is chosen and we are driven by five basic, genetically determined needs, which include survival, love, power, freedom and fun. When we analyze how these needs are satisfied in our various relationships with colleagues, students, family members, we become aware of why certain situations have such a negative impact on our feelings in general and our performance. In relation to this theory, if there is one reassuring take-away from this course, it is that success in learning is 50 per cent the teacher’s responsibility and 50 per cent that of the student.

In Peter Dyer’s wonderful workshops and sessions, we learned about our bodies as others see them and became conscious of certain postures through the other person’s eyes. When I’m tired, I think about Peter’s activity – imagining that while we are walking, as opposed to a heavy, ground-focused tread, a thin thread is pulling us upwards – and I feel immediately uplifted, optimistic, confident and relaxed! A simple activity like this can change the way we stand in front of the class, during our presentations, in public speaking situations or in every-day life. It helps us become more self-confident as well as convincing.

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We learned about the other person

Mojca welcomed each trainee with a personal letter and an open invitation to reply to her before the course was over. She corresponds with her university students in Slovenia and though it does take time, exchanging letters between teacher and students helps create a positive, relaxed learning environment, as well as helping improve students’ writing skills. Of all the numerous activities, forcing us to focus on the other person – an important skill in teaching – and on the other person's problems and difficulties, one stayed with me in particular. Working in pairs, we listened to a personal story of a conflict situation from our partner's own lives. Our task was then to transform this story into a legend, using features of the traditional fairy tale. It was a powerful activity, which can easily be used with teenagers, young adults, not to mention in response to workplace conflicts which surface during a business English lesson.

We learned about ourselves

The Pilgrims’ approach promises personal development and we most definitely received that. We discovered skills we never thought we had, or had never been confident about, such as drawing, drawing with the left hand (surprisingly more accurately than with the right) or writing a poem to offer as a gift, or using images related to the five senses. Creativity is a hidden skill in everyone and not always easy to unleash and express, but with a group built on trust, collaboration, genuine attention to the other person, and a relaxed atmosphere, creativity can be brought to the surface in teachers and students alike.

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**Csilla Jaray-Benn**

Vice President

TESOL France

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Having already spoken at our inaugural event, we were delighted to welcome back Dennis Davy this February. His talk 'Under African Skies: Teaching English-speaking Africa' not only opened our eyes to the sounds, colours and sensations of English-speaking Africa, but showed us how to exploit poems, songs, stories, films and biographies from this exciting continent.

In 'Use it or Lose it' on 19 March, Jane Revell showed us how to improve our learners' memories by eliciting rather than 'telling' and by using emotionally engaging activities such as music, games, drama or by doing things which are funny, absurd, inspirational and unusual.

In May, Martin Goosey from the British Council in Madrid led 'Multi-story: My lesson has your narrative'. Martin spoke on how to plan lessons which take advantage of the underlying principles of narrative contextualisation; planning your lesson as a story. The teacher is the facilitator, and the learners learn through active participation, from their peers, using TV shows, videos and computer games.

Our last speaker of the year was Chaz Pugliese. His talk, 'The Case for Principled Creative Teaching' highlighted that while creativity means novelty and surprise, it also means hard work and motivation, involving strategies, using flexible frames and taking sensible risks. To quote Chaz: 'It's a feeling of freedom, autonomy, about being able to experiment and develop new ideas and to see them in class' (Being Creative: The challenge of change in the classroom, Delta Publishing).

TESOL Lille has gone forward this year with a new blog, a Facebook page and a pre-event podcast with every speaker we invite. Keep your eyes peeled for our next event!

Gillian Evans
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After a difficult start, mainly due to the events in Paris in November 2015, which forced us to cancel a workshop and re-negotiate our venue, we managed to bounce back and hold five successful workshops between January and September 2016.

In January, through a new type of collaboration with ELT publishers, Katie Cóspito from Black Cat CIDEB gave a highly informative and hands-on workshop on exploiting readers and video clips in the classroom.

Katie demonstrated with countless activities that 'Reading is Key' and she definitely gave us the 'Key to Reading'. For a taste of her workshop, go to: http://bit.ly/2cVigIB

On 2nd April, we put in place a novel form of workshop, by streaming a session selected from the IATEFL monthly webinars (http://www.iatefl.org/join/webinars): 'Colligation & the Need for a Bottom-up Approach to Grammar', led by Hugh Deller. It is true, that while we missed the interaction with the speaker, we were able to engage in our own discussions around this fascinating topic.

In May, Dobrina Ramphort, a French lawyer specialized in the implementation of companies abroad, shared her knowledge of the legal and financial aspects of freelance teacher status in France. Interestingly, several teachers I’ve met since this workshop, have already changed their statuses based on what they learnt from Dobrina.

The academic year finished on a creative note thanks to Peter Dyer from Pilgrim’s. A regular presenter at TESOL France events, Peter helped us ‘make our voice live’ through various activities using texts, imagination and creativity. We learned some essential skills for teachers, students and public speakers.

La Rentrée is always a difficult time for teachers, but in a workshop co-organized with TESOL France Lyon, our own Jeremy Levin provided a large group of attendees with the necessary tools to impress our students. In his interactive and dynamic workshop, Jeremy taught us to use Socrative to quiz, feedback and engage our 21st Century students and then presented a series of games to create and play using PowerPoint.

Hope to see many of you in 2017!

Csilla Jaray-Benn
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