YOUNG LEARNERS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE YOUNG LEARNER SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (CATS: Children and Teenagers)

Autumn 2007 Issue 2/07   'Learning in the Third Millennium'

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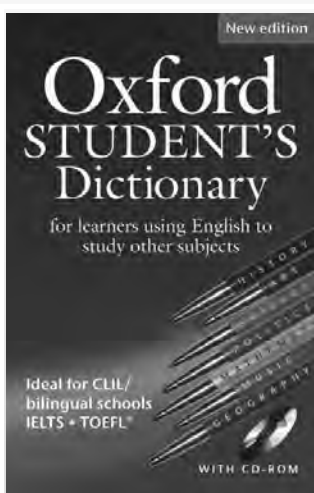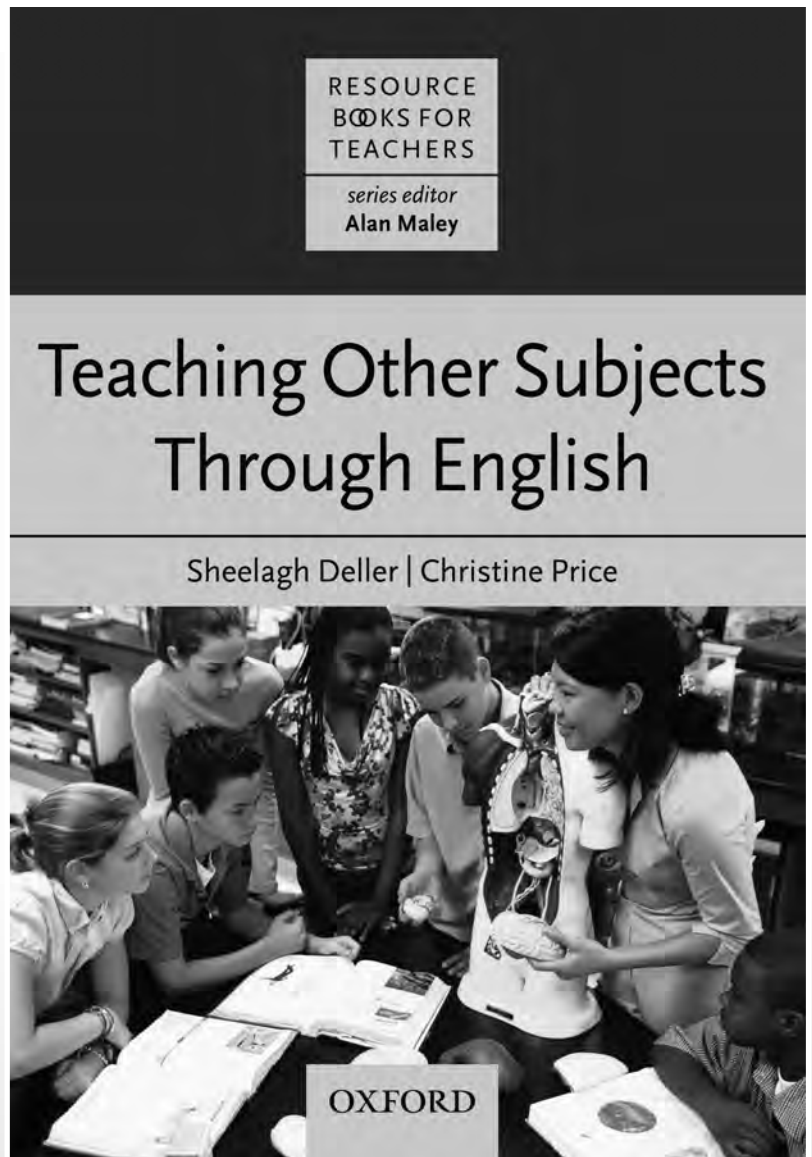
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YOUNG LEARNERS SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

The Young Learners Special Interest Group was initiated in 1985 and is now a worldwide network of teachers of children and teenagers up to 17 years.

Aims

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

What do we offer?

'CATS': This is a bi-annual publication concerned with teaching English to **c**hildren **a**nd **t**eenager**s**. It is available online and through the post. It includes:
- practical ideas for teachers of young learners,
- articles on methodology and theory,
- details of future events such as conferences and seminars,
- reports of recent events
- book reviews.

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

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

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

To find out more about the YL SIG contact:

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CATS is produced twice a year. We welcome contributions or suggestions for future publications on any aspects of teaching English to Young Learners up to 17 years.

Letter from the Coordinators

Events! Publications! Changes!

These three items sum up what coordinating this past year has been about.

Events

It was our first PCE as joint coordinators and it was a success. Over 60 of you attended informative talks and workshops by our eminent speakers. They gave us some clear and helpful insights into literacy, how to teach it and what aspects to focus on. We were generously sponsored by Usbourne Books and Oxford University Press. A big thank you to all – speaker, participants and sponsors!

In fact so successful was our Literacy PCE, that it is being replicated in Hong Kong and Singapore in partnership with the British Council and Lorna Whiston Study Centres. Some of the speakers are different – but the basic outline for the day remains unchanged.

We are currently busy planning a very important event in Bangalore, India in partnership with the British Council. This is a country case study event which will look at how Primary English is being implemented in countries around the world. Check out the website for more information.
http://www.primaryeltconference.org

We are also planning our PCE in Exeter 2008 which will focus on 'differentiation' at both primary and secondary levels. We hope to see many of you at our major annual event.

Publications

We are now in the age of online publications and there are now two that members can download – one from last year's CLIL PCE and the other from this year's Literacy PCE. As a subscription membership based group, it makes financial sense for us to publish online.

Goodbyes and Hellos

This year there have been changes to the committee: we are sad that

- Karen Widl, Austria - Events

- Kay Bentley, UK – CATS Editor

have decided to step down but wish them both every success in the future. They will continue to remain on the committee handing over to the new committee members.

- Wendy Arnold:

'I am standing down as Discussion List Moderator but continue as Joint Coordinator'.

We are very pleased to welcome the following new members:

- Janice Bland , Germany -CATS Co-Editor

- Dennis Newson, Germany - Discussion List Moderator

- Caroline Linse, Korea - Events

- Harry Kuchah, Cameroon - Events

We look forward to meeting all our YLSIG members in India or in Exeter or indeed online! See information on pages

Wendy Arnold, Hong Kong

 Niki Joseph, Portugal

(Joint YLSIG Coordinators)

Editorial

Kay Bentley

I write this as my final editorial for CATS. Editing this publication has been a joy and a challenge. A joy, as it is very exciting commissioning articles, persuading advertisers to promote their wares and working with a committee who share a wealth of expertise about Primary and Secondary young learners and their teachers. A challenge, as the design changed and brought with it a few IT glitches. We hope that this issue will be readable!

The theme of autumn 2007 CATS is a general one. It concerns what is happening today in English classes for young learners around the world. The language learning experiences and contexts they, their teachers, their trainers, their classroom assistants and their parents are involved in at the beginning of the third millennium.

We open with two articles from places not written about in CATS before: **Yemen** and **Bulgaria**. *Coralyn Bradshaw* and *Lyubov Dombeva* paint vivid pictures of the language teaching and learning environments that exist in their countries. Readers will be amazed at the developments in education in both places.

The issue then zooms in on particular classroom issues in **Vietnam** and **Hong Kong.** Both articles are truly fascinating. *Jayne Moon* explores what pupils enjoy while learning English and *Mary Carney* reveals an example of using technology as a way to motivate teenage boys to write. I am sure that both these articles will make readers reflect on how their own pupils respond to English.

Three different aspects of teaching English in **Spain** are then described: how multiple intelligences are developed through Music, Movement and Art (*Teresa Fleta*), the success of a classroom assistant project (*Trevor Doble*) and parents' opinions on their children's new English programme (*Maria José Brioso Valcárcel*). All three articles are cutting edge as they provide much needed research on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approaches and initiatives. They are must reads!

A comparison of language learners in **China** and **Britain** follows. *Liu Ting* offers first hand observations of learners from both countries and gives insight into how cultural differences have an effect on teaching and learning. *David Vale*'s article on a teacher training programme as a low cost model for the 21st century completes the article section.

CATS continues with our regular features: A **Russian** pupil, *Varia Bokuchava*, is featured in 'Looking at a Learner' and **Portugal** is the country featured in 'YLSIGs Around the World'. *Cristina Bento* and *Raquel Coelho* include photographs of very creative work being done there. Our review is by *Jackie Holderness* who writes about *Carol Read's* (former CATS editor) excellent new book on 500 Activities for the Primary Classroom by Macmillan. Discussion list information follows then you'll find *Jennifer Uhler's* Web Watcher news.

So, a marvellous selection of writing which will help YLSIG members build on their knowledge of what is happening in English classrooms today.

Please send contributions for the next two CATS to:

- Kerry Powell kezza_powell@yahoo.co.uk (Spring 2008: Learner Differences/ Multiple Intelligences)

And /or to the new editor who takes over from me

- Janice Bland janbla@arcor.de (Autumn 2008: Drama)

And Kerry writes:
'If you have any activities, or have done research on aspects of the above themes, please write and share them with our YLSIG colleagues. Articles are about 1500 words. Please contact us for more information and contributors' guidelines.

There will also be a new column for letters and views. These could be on YLs in general, YLs in your particular context, feedback on past issues of CATS or suggestions for future issues'.

I wish Kerry and Janice all the very best as editors of CATS. I know they will continue developing the newsletter in a dynamic way to celebrate the joys and meet the challenges of teaching pupils English in the 21st century.

Happy reading,

Kay Bentley kay_bentley@btinternet.com

Yemen: Basic English Education in the Third Millennium

Coralyn Bradshaw

The third millennium and the Yemen is not a collocation that slips easily from the tongue. To think of Yemen is to think of medieval winding streets, towering stone and mud houses, black shrouded female figures hurrying about their business, beggars huddled outside mosques and children trundling wheelbarrows as they sell their wares. With a population of twenty-one million, Yemen is one of the poorest nations in the Arab region. Over 40 % of the Yemeni population lives in poverty, the majority concentrated in rural areas. Yemen's adult literacy rate of 49% is indicative of the low average net enrolment in basic education, which at 72% is one of the lowest in the Middle East and North Africa regions. This figure conceals the greatly lowered enrolment rate for girls which sinks to 30% in rural areas where poverty and traditional attitudes to girls' education limit female development.

The government's effort for education started in 1962 when the Yemen Arab Republic was established. Traditionally, North Yemen had been a completely closed society with a history of centuries of Imamate rule, characterised by a lack roads, electricity, running water, hospitals, and communication system. Even radios were unknown. Education was limited to religious schools and the memorisation of the Koran. Not all children had access to these schools and few girls attended. Meanwhile, South Yemen had had a completely different educational history. Under British occupation, education of a more western nature was made available in Aden. After the British departure in 1967, the People's Democratic Republic of South Yemen started a process of educational development which finally merged with that of the North in 1990, when, after years of strife, unification occurred to create the Republic of Yemen. The educational system currently comprises eight or nine years of Basic and three or four years of Secondary segregated tuition.

It soon became clear that this newly emerging country was facing several educational problems such as lack of budget, leadership, qualified teachers, overcrowding and inefficiency. Various development partners and stakeholders such as the World Bank, UNICEF, WFP, ILO, UNESCO, the governments of Germany, The United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France, became involved with Yemen's Basic Education Development Strategy. Finally, after the G8 Summit in June 2002, Yemen was invited to participate in the Education for All: Fast Track Initiative (EFA: FTI). This led directly to the Third Millennium Development Goals for 2015 to which the Yemeni Government is currently committing 21% of its general budget. An important component of the Basic Education Development Strategy is the introduction of English as a second language in Grade 4 of basic education when children are aged between eight and nine years old. English is usually introduced in Grade 7.

The British Council is now providing support to the Ministry of Education in the form of a primary teacher training pilot project which began in the capital city of Sana'a in March 2006. The training consists of an eight week in-service primary methodology course based around a primary English course book which has been selected for the pilot. A further two weeks of peer micro-teaching completes the ten week course. The course participants come from a variety of backgrounds. Both newly qualified male and female basic and secondary education English teachers, together with inspectors, have attended the course, which was run in Sana'a in the north, Aden, in the south, and Taiz, in the centre of the country during 2006/7. The methodology course started with a foundation of two weeks of theory and continued with six weeks of workshops and hands-on activities aimed at simultaneously increasing the participants' understanding of teaching children, increasing their creativity, and building their self-confidence. A second strand to the training is a four week mentoring course for the inspectors who will be involved in supporting the newly trained teachers.

Carefully selected pilot schools in the three cities will then be involved in the pilot scheme of introducing English at Grade 4. As conditions within schools varies considerably, it is important at this early stage to select schools where the conditions are more favourable and where the school administration is sympathetic to the early

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introduction of English. Yemeni schools typically serve as secondary schools in the morning and basic education schools in the afternoon. The school administration is thoroughly briefed regarding the conditions which should apply in the English fourth grade classes. The following is a list of basic requirements for the fourth grade teachers in order for them to be able to implement the methodology and teaching techniques that they have acquired. Teachers should be provided with: a tape recorder, basic arts and craft resources, a lockable cupboard, permission and support in using the classroom walls for display, and exemption from regular examinations and grading. Most importantly, there should be an upper limit of sixty children to a class.

In order to provide a vignette of general conditions in Yemeni urban schools, course participants were asked to complete a questionnaire about typical problems in their schools. This is what they reported:

Classes can have a hundred children or more; the age range in a class may vary by up to five years; blackboard surfaces are poor; some schools have no toilet facilities; contact with parents is difficult; lack of flashcards, tape recorders, course cassette, teacher's book etc; late arrival of course books; pupils without books; high absenteeism; pupils arriving hungry; lack of support from the administration; too many contact hours; low salary. The latter point is significant as all male teachers have a second job to supplement their income. Lesson planning therefore is something that is not generally practised. Not surprisingly, most teachers reported that pupils were unmotivated and undisciplined. The conditions in rural schools were reported in some places to be as basic as lessons under the trees carried out by teachers who had only a basic education themselves.

In addition to these problems, and presumably as an indirect result, the Yemen Observer, an English Language newspaper, reported on the 10th April 2007:

"About 37 percent of children between five to 15 (sic) are not going to school due to violence that is being practised, said Dr Afaf al-Haimi, a professor of social science at Sana'a University"

According to Dr Al-Haimi's research, teachers regularly beat children for even minor misdemeanours. The headmistress of a girl's school in Sana'a, reported, *"Teachers are beating children for simple reasons such as talking in class or not completing homework"*.

It is against this backdrop that the basic educational reform is taking place, and it is with experience of these conditions that the training of the Grade Four English teachers is being implemented. The situation begs the question: What did the participants make of a course based on the premise of understanding children's developmental needs, understanding how children's brains develop and learn, understanding children's needs for creativity, movement and involvement, understanding the concept of cognitive development and problem solving, understanding the principles of classroom management? There had not been a single aspect or element of the course with which any of the participants had been familiar. Nor had any of the participants ever done peer micro-teaching, and for some of the female participants this was particularly challenging due to the presence of male participants. They could easily have been forgiven for being overwhelmed. In order to gauge reactions, questionnaires were used. In answer to the question: *"What have you learnt about yourself?"* the following response is heart warming and is not atypical of the general response. Elham from Taiz writes:

"I have learnt that the idea of progressing bit by bit, by thinking and asking questions. I learnt to be a good model for my children. I learnt to be aware of my children's needs. I learnt to assess myself gradually. I learnt to be more fair and kind with children. The important thing I learnt about myself is that if I want to learn and do something, I'll do it."

The way ahead for Yemeni teachers is not an easy route. Never did the words of Robert Frost ring more true:
 "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I?
 I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference."

Coralyn Bradshaw is an ELT Consultant specialising in English at primary level. She is a teacher trainer and materials writer. She is author of the primary English course 'Excellent' (Longman). She has extensive experience of working in the Arab world. She lives in Spain

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Studying English the Bulgarian way

Lyubov Dombeva

Why English?

The Bulgarian Ministry of Education official English language programme states that "the new situation in Europe requires students to 1) have knowledge and skills that will allow them to develop independently, 2) apply them in a multicultural environment and 3) work effectively in a team according to international standards". The ability to use English is perceived by society as a major tool for young people to achieve success in life.

The English language environment in Bulgaria is provided by a variety of TV and radio programmes, the Internet, PC games, books, comics and magazines available. They foster learners' motivation to use language as a means of information, communication and entertainment.

The current situation

Pupils start learning English from the second grade of primary school. The main reason not to start from grade one is the difference between the Cyrillic and the Latin alphabet. It is believed that communicative skills and strategies as well as subject knowledge already acquired in L1 will help pupils in learning L2. For the first year, the minimum number of lessons is 64 but schools may be able to provide an additional number as electives, taking into consideration parents' opinion and staff availability.

Primary level ELT staff comprises both primary teachers with sufficient knowledge of English as well as language teachers, depending on school policy and available staff. At this level, ELT aims to enable pupils to communicate in everyday, real-life situations, develop appreciation of other cultures and respect cultural differences. Teachers achieve these using teaching techniques appropriate to the pupils' age, for example, games, songs, drawing, modelling, poems, role-play, and drama. The language of instruction is primarily in L1, although

this may differ among teachers. Pupils are encouraged to develop compensation strategies such as gesturing and miming to overcome communication problems. At this stage, teaching is focused on supporting a positive attitude to learning English. This is why teachers encourage success in using English and instead of punishing mistakes, use them as feedback. In speaking, there is an emphasis on accuracy of pronunciation and accent but also on fluency and pupils' ability to function in English. Teachers encourage learners to see their success and failure as the result of their own efforts and to take responsibility for their learning.

At the end of the primary school, many parents choose to have their children's English language skills tested and certified by external institutions. The most popular tests include Pitman, CAT, PAT, Movers etc.

In low secondary the English language programme aims to further develop pupils' language skills and learning strategies. This is achieved through tasks that stimulate logical thinking and independent decision making and requires implementation of knowledge from other subjects. Activities are used to help pupils understand language structures intuitively. Teachers encourage pupils to use English to satisfy their curiosity, personal interests and communication needs and so demonstrate the practical benefit of learning English. Special attention is paid to preparing pupils for real life situations of intercultural communication by discussing English films, searching the Internet, writing emails in English etc. Pupils' repertoire of compensation techniques increases to include substitution with synonym, antonym, paraphrasing, international words etc. Pupils' ability of self-control and self-assessment is emphasized by the programme.

At the end of VII grade most students are self-motivated, independent learners. In addition to the tourist purposes, young people see language learning as a way to achieve new aims – mobility, study and work in international contexts and participation in international projects.

Admission to secondary language schools follows a national testing procedure in Bulgarian language and literature, and mathematics. It does not depend on the level of knowledge and skills in the foreign language. During their high school studies students

learn two foreign languages over a period of five years.

The first year of intensive English language learning aims to develop students' sensitivity to English structure, general cognitive skills such as analysis, synthesis, associative thinking etc. master English to an extent that will allow students to learn other subjects and acquire varied knowledge through English. The language learning is not a goal in itself, but a tool to gather and produce information; it determines students' professional and/or academic opportunities.

In IX and X grades the level of competences of English is in accordance with the Common European Framework. During that period, students have to achieve a near native speaker knowledge and skills so that their language competences can accommodate bilingual education in other subjects. Most often these subjects are *biology, geography, history, chemistry* and sometimes *physics, philosophy* and *ICT*. Bilingual subjects are taught by non-native speakers, subject teachers with adequate language knowledge.

In XI and XII grades ELT is focused on specific literary and culture knowledge. It presents students with some of the best examples of English and American literature. This corresponds to the Bulgarian language and literature curriculum and aims to help students develop further their critical thinking and ethical and artistic values while working with original English language texts.

If English is taught as a second foreign language in the language high school, the aim is competence to function fluently and efficiently in a multicultural, multilingual context. In my opinion, most students' skills correspond to B2-C1 level.

All this allows students to fulfil the language requirements for various international certificates by the end of their high school education. The Bulgarian Ministry of Education has some success in the international recognition of the graduation diploma of language schools. For over a decade French, Russian, German and Spanish language school graduates do not have to take international exams to have their level of language competency recognized abroad. This is not the case with English as students have to certify their knowledge and skills through various tests (IELTS, TOEFL, SAT, CAE, FCE etc.) to be admitted to foreign

universities. Despite this, hard working students face no difficulties in achieving high scores.

The Drawbacks.

The biggest drawback for the ELT system is the lack of adequately trained English language teachers. On the one hand, English is the most popular foreign language taught in Bulgaria so many teachers are needed. But on the other hand, even though good education has always been a top priority for the nation, the profession has low social status due to low pay. As a result, many good language teachers move on to other jobs.

Another major drawback is, of course, the lack of equipment and teaching materials. This is especially hard felt in smaller towns and rural areas. Sometimes even in schools where multimedia equipment is available, it is not used for language teaching purposes either due to teachers' lack of experience, or because the equipment is only available to the ICT department. The materials used therefore are mainly books, tapes and CDs that go with the book, video films and magazines. Young children respond best to English songs and animated films. Unfortunately, there aren't a lot of young learner programmes on TV, nor specially created videos available to teachers. There are plenty of international course books and other materials on the market, but they are too expensive for the majority of parents. Recently, international publishing houses have developed books for Bulgarian ELT. What teachers value most about them, I think, is that they have native speaker authors or editors.

In subject teaching through English, my own field of work, the main problem is that there are no official Ministry of Education bilingual teaching criteria and strategies to support it. So, it is not clear what the aims of bilingual teaching are and how to achieve them. This means lack of competent staff and not enough suitable CLIL materials. It is generally accepted though, that bilingual teaching has to test subject not language knowledge. Textbooks are mainly literary translations form Bulgarian, text heavy and without CLIL support. Bilingual subjects are taught the same number of lessons as monolingual subjects. Very rarely is bilingual subject teaching given extra lessons from the number of electives. As a result, many students tend to learn by heart without understanding the subject concepts. Pre-service bilingual teacher

training is rare or it doesn't really fulfil the purpose to train specialists with skills to integrate subject and language. In-service training is available through universities' Foreign Language departments.

The Future

I believe, participation in international collaboration projects like Comenius, Science across the World, European Youth Parliament, Solar Schools Forum etc., is the key to successful ELT for students and teachers both in primary and secondary contexts. Such initiatives make it possible for students of different nationalities and backgrounds to share values, knowledge and appreciate the richness of variety of cultures in Europe. They also allow teachers to have access to information, exchange useful materials and methodology and share experience. I believe educating knowledgeable, open-minded and responsible young people is the key to the sustainable and successful future not only for Europe, but for the world.

Lyubov Dombeva is a freelance teacher and teacher trainer based in Sofia, Bulgaria. She specialises in teaching Biology in English. Currently she teaches Biology through the medium of English at Roerich School in Sofia. Lyubov is a member of the Bulgarian English Teachers' Association presenting regularly at the BETA annual conference on Content and Language Integrated Learning. She is an active member of the Forum for

Across the Curriculum Teaching from its beginning (www.factworld.info).
Lyubov also contributes to CLIL courses for teachers of subjects and English at Sofia University and she worked at NILE during the summer of 2006. (dombeva@abv.bg)

Teenagers enjoying an English lesson in Bulgaria.

Learning English in Vietnam: Children's Views on Learning English in School

Jayne Moon

In this article, I will discuss Vietnamese children's attitudes and motivation to learning English, drawing on some aspects of the research I conducted for the Ministry of Education in Vietnam, commissioned by the British Council in 2005. I shall draw on information from some group interviews with 32

children from Grade 3 and 5 and questionnaires from 20 Grade 4 and 5 children (54 children in total).

Given the limited number of children, it would be unwise to read too much into the findings. However, it does highlight some interesting issues with regards to learning English in Vietnam whose experience of teaching English at primary level is relatively recent.

English is an optional subject at primary level in Vietnam with children in Hanoi, the capital, officially allowed to begin from Grade 3(8-9 years) with 2 periods of 40 minutes a week, though in some other cities children start earlier. The importance of English is now widely recognized in Vietnam, both among educationists and members of the public, especially in urban areas.

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Favourite Subject

Children were asked what their favourite subject was in order to see how English ranked in popularity in comparison with other subjects. Most children varied in their preference with only 6 saying that their single preferred subject was English. However, another 11 children said English was one of their favourite subjects along with another subject like Maths, Vietnamese, computing etc.

Reasons for Liking English

Out of 54 children, 49 responded positively when asked if they liked English. Their reasons why they liked English are ordered in terms of frequency in figure 1 below. The majority of reasons they give are utilitarian, related to how English may be useful to them in their future lives as, for example, with the most frequently cited reason e.g. *enables them to communicate with foreigners*. (See Fig 1 below)

Figure 1: Reasons why children liked English (52 respondents)

- Enables them to communicate with foreigners (10)
- Interesting (6)
- Enjoys activities in English class e.g. English movies, songs, using CD-ROMs, looking at pictures (4)
- Can go abroad for study (4)
- It is an international subject/ language (2)
- It is useful and important (2)
- Makes me more intelligent (2)
- Want to be an English teacher (2)
- Can travel the world if I know English (2)
- Will make life better in the future(1)
- Helps in looking for a job later (1)
- Helps in learning other subjects(1)
- Helps me in learning more about English language and England (1)
- Helps me to pronounce more accurately (1)
- Helps with vocabulary development for the future (1)
- Can learn about other children in other countries (1)
- Can learn things through English (1)
- ' I feel comfortable in English' (1)
- I have an English friend

Only a few of the reasons given are more affective or classroom –related e.g. they like the classroom activities e.g. songs, movies etc, *'I have an English friend', 'I feel comfortable with English'.* This contrasts, to some extent, with findings from other research carried out in Europe into children's attitudes and motivation. Nikolov (1999) found that Hungarian children (aged 8-11 years old) tended to give mainly classroom and teacher-related reasons for liking English. In this study, it is revealing that all 4 responses (see Fig 1) referring to classroom activities came from children in one Intensive English class (children have English everyday unlike normal classes) where the teacher was using an attractive multimedia course book with lots of aids, very different from the more standard course book

used by most other classroom teachers surveyed.

However, Nikolov also found that by Grades 3-5 some pupils were beginning to give more utilitarian reasons, like those given by the Vietnamese children.

The reasons given by the Vietnamese children suggest a strong parental influence since many of these children will not have had first hand experience of English in society yet or felt any need for English. The fact that so few cite interesting and enjoyable classroom activities or mention the teacher as a reason for liking English may reflect a different, more formal or studious approach to classroom learning, reflected in some South East Asian classrooms. However, it may also reflect the

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influence of the rather adult-oriented teaching approach employed by many Vietnamese primary English teachers (Moon 2005).

Learning Activities

Children were asked to list the kind of activities they did in English classes and then indicate which activities they liked and disliked. The type of activities children mention are revealing (Fig 2 below).Though these contain some of the more play-oriented activities typically associated with the primary language classroom e.g. singing songs, they also list many more formal types of activity. Some activities were mentioned by only one or two children (e.g. puppet play puzzles).

When asked about the activities they liked best (see opposite), children most frequently mentioned games and songs which are more play-oriented activities. In this, they are similar to their peers in other countries. However, children also frequently mentioned more 'serious language –oriented activities' like writing words or learning new language.

This finding suggests that children may be heavily influenced by parental and teacher views about what is good for language learning which may be different from what they personally enjoy or find interesting. If children do not develop personal and intrinsic reasons for learning English, this may impact on their longer term enthusiasm and motivation. The more formal type of activities mentioned by children are confirmed by classroom observation (Moon 2005 , Grassick 2006) which suggest the prominence of an adult –oriented, accuracy focused methodology, reflecting the fact that the teachers were trained to teach adults or secondary pupils, not children. Although more child friendly text books and more child-oriented methods are gradually being introduced, there will be a need to convince both parents as well as teachers of their value for children's learning.

Children's responses to activities they do not like highlight interesting individual differences and variation in learning preferences/styles and remind us not to stereotype children e.g. not all children like singing.

Fig 2: Activities Children Like and Dislike

Activities children liked	Activities Teachers Do in Class	Activities children disliked
Playing games (20)		Learn grammar (3)
Listening to & singing songs in English (10)	Learn new words/sentences(5)	Listen to music/singing (3)
Listening to/ read stories (5)	Playing Games(4)	Do many exercises (3)
Learning new language and new words (4)	Singing songs (4)	Having to sit and write in English (2)
Speak English (4)	Listening to stories	Pronunciation practice
Read new words and practice (3)	Playing with puppets	Sometimes don't understand
Read English (3)	Puzzles	Listening to tapes a lot and not understanding
Act in a play/concert in English (3)	Scrambled letter game competition	Being teased in English by friends
Group practice (2)	Teaching & learning new language	English lessons when we only stay in class
Writing new words (2)	Group practice	Group practice
Picnic/ study tour (2)	Write new words	Relay races
Camping (2)	Read new words (row by row)	Not every lesson uses a tape recorder
Matching words 2	Revision	Reading a word many times
Using puppets (1)	Doing homework	
Learn to pronounce(1)	Check homework	
Speak English with friends (1)		
Doing crosswords (1)		
Go to audio-visual room (1)		
Listen to experts speak English (1)		

Another insight into children's attitudes to their experience of learning English was gained when small groups of children studying privately at the British Council were asked to compare learning English in the British Council and learning English at school, in terms of which was more fun. All children apart from one said that the British Council classes were more fun for the following reasons:

- Taught by Native speaker teachers
- Kind, friendly, interesting, funny teachers
- More challenging
- Many interesting activities

Intriguingly, one child said she preferred learning in school because ´ *my teacher is very pretty. I like teacher's activities e.g. playing bingo, Lucky numbers. She speaks (English) very well'.* This comment and the other responses above highlight the importance of the TEYL teacher in motivating children and therefore the need to provide specialist TEYL training for Vietnamese state school teachers so that they can support children's learning in child-appropriate ways.

When commenting on their school learning, one child said '*learning is a pressure at school'.* Another child said that she never '*did activities at school only learn and learn',* suggesting a very formal classroom. What is revealing about some of their responses is that they highlight the 'interest 'aspect of learning at the British Council rather than the 'fun' aspect, implying that normal school activities may not provide sufficient variety and cognitive challenge for children in Grade 4 and 5 (9-11).

Out of School English Study

Another intriguing fact that emerged from the study was the number of children who have extra English lessons out of school. 46 children were asked if they learned English out of school. 32 of them were attending private tuition classes, either in private language institutes or with private tutors who are sometimes their English teachers. The main reason children gave for attending these classes was to improve their English but one child mentioned having a chance to speak with ' *foreign teachers'* while another said ' *in class I haven't understood yet'* and yet another ' *at school my teacher's pronunciation is not very accurate*'. The number of children taking some kind of private tuition for English may indicate some parental dissatisfaction with the quality of the teaching in schools. However, it may also suggest that some parents have an eye to their children's prospects

and are keen to ensure that they build up a good foundation in English for the future, given the limited number of hours for English in school. The phenomenon of private tuition or extra English classes, (also common in other parts of South East Asia) may partly explain why some children that I observed in state primary schools already seemed very familiar with the textbook material in class and why the textbook material seemed insufficiently challenging. On some occasions, I noted that some children in the class seemed more confident in English than the teacher.

Conclusions

The insights from this small sample of Vietnamese children's views are revealing. They suggest that most children (in the study sample) are enthusiastic about learning English but that their attitudes to English and ways of learning English are heavily influenced by parental and teacher views. Their comments suggest that some of their English learning is fairly formal and perhaps not very challenging. If they are to sustain their enthusiasm for English into the future, they need opportunities to develop their own intrinsic reasons for learning English and enjoying it. This can be supported through providing specialist TEYL training for state school teachers and more children – appropriate learning materials which are sufficiently interesting and challenging for children.

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Motivating Hong Kong Chinese boys to write

Mary Carney

Background

My job involves observing trainee teachers teaching EYL to Primary and Secondary Hong Kong Chinese learners on the Cambridge ESOL Certificate in English Language Teaching to Young Learners (CELTYL). When asked to write this article, I wondered if my observations might benefit teachers or trainers of ELY working in other contexts. And if so, could teaching or learning be encapsulated in writing? I sat back and thought about it. Encapsulated? Probably not. Describe a lesson where something interesting happened? Possibly!

The learners

Our recent student group on CELTYL was composed of fifteen 12-14 year old boys. Lessons took place in their Chinese Medium Secondary school in one of Hong Kong's low-income areas. Most were Cantonese speakers. A minority came from Mainland China and spoke Mandarin. All were in their first year at secondary school receiving 1 hour per day in English and their level was pre-intermediate, though passive knowledge was high and difficult to evaluate. Motivation was predictably low - most arrived bleary-eyed after their day at school, and not in the mood to understand novice teachers' lack of ease with the classroom, with language teaching, and with teaching an all-boy group.

Motivating teenagers

Ideas which were light-bulb-blazing-above-head-interesting for trainees in planning often constituted a wet rag for the boys in the classroom. Some activity types had a class life of just one lesson – running dictations, for example – before a resistant 'Done it already' became the mantra. Attempts to tap into their Canto-pop-fuelled, technology-loaded, blockbuster cinema, and intensely exam oriented world via reading or writing generally failed if the teacher was unable to emphasise humour, cleverness or subversion.

That said, getting to a lesson finishing line is rarely, if ever, a seamless process. For many teacher trainees, bumpy teaching via numerous clunky detours is a necessary part of their professional development, and appealing to adolescence is often the detour - a world so imagined in its rituals and rules that it almost qualifies as an alternate universe. This may explain why our course book topics e.g. 'Family', 'Sport', 'Computers', when not mediated appropriately, spawned such granite masked reactions in the boys.

Mediating materials

But what exactly constitutes 'appropriate' materials mediation? In the case of our all-boy group, we learned one thing: lessons inclusive of activities involving moving, thinking, or competing tended to increase motivation, work-rate and team ethic. Tasks requiring retrieval of factual information had the same effect. But were these elements formulas for success in teaching boys?

Magic bullets?

They were not magic bullets when competing with other diverse, intangible influences on students' on/off task behaviour, what they said and wrote, and how they worked & interacted with each other and the teacher. The usual suspects – the teacher's presentation, staging, logic, task setting, pace, classroom proxemics, behaviour and technology management - usually influenced task take-up. However, other semi-intangibles, such as the weather, the day of the week, presence or absence of certain students, and trainees' personal charismas, had a major stake. Trainees who broke the affective barrier by being able to hang out with the boys, charm them and win their trust while maintaining distance, discipline and control tended to get higher degrees of co-operative behaviour than those whose well-intentioned efforts to keep control created a stiff, starchy, oppressive atmosphere, unwittingly treating the class as if it were a court.

The lesson

One rainy afternoon the boys arrived to a lesson on the topic of computers. Hoping, but not expecting, to appeal to their collective web-savvy, the trainee teacher asked them to label parts of a computer, which they did effortlessly. She then got them brainstorming what they used computers for. Open class feedback revealed game playing (*war craft* being the most popular), downloading various things, music listening, and online 'chatting'. The trainee dwelt for a moment on chat rooms - it emerged that most of them chatted with school friends, usually after school, and surprisingly, in English, albeit using abbreviated text language. Unsurprisingly, none would divulge what they chatted about. The trainee then suggested chat rooms could be creepy, which the boys found amusing. From there on the lesson threatened to spiral into a comfortable, but rambling shambles until a handout with questions about computer use, which required the boys to respond individually, calmed the atmosphere.

The pre-task:
The questions included the following:

> Is it ok to chat to someone you don't know on the Internet? If so, why? If not, why not?

> Is it ok to open attachments from people you don't know? If so, why? If not, why not?

> Is it ok to upload personal information about yourself? If so, why? If not, why not?

> Is it ok to buy something over the Internet? If so, why? If not, why not?

> Is it ok to download music and films from the Internet? If so, why? If not, why not?

The task took the boys by surprise. Either a happy accident or a primal longing to have a voice, caused all students to vent something very urgent and important about Internet use. The trainee found herself surrounded by a critical adolescent mass hunched in intimate communion, while the clock ticked, the OHP grew hotter and a drizzle blew on the windows. This behaviour forced observing trainees to urgently revise their judgements of the boys' and their abilities. Those previously labelled as silent and gloomy were now metamorphosing

into expert sources of information, opinionating with firecracker vigour.

Things did not stop there. An OHT visual of a well known young Canto Pop star, and a po-faced Hong Kong politician 'chatting' online created hilarity. As neither character could be imagined being in contact, the boys found it even more amusing when asked what they might be chatting about. Girlfriends? Money? The economy? Corruption? Cars? The answer was computer use (which none of them got). A second OHT, revealing the first line of their chat beginning 'Hello, good afternoon' allowed the boys to predict the response which was then revealed. The trainee continued with this hide-predict-reveal technique. Loud roars lifted the roof each time questions or answers were revealed. What seemed to keep them on the edge of their seats was simply comparing each opinion with those they had predicted in the previous task.

The core task:
In pairs, students were given an identity (of someone famous). Each pair shared a blank sheet with a line down the middle. The roles were as incongruous a match as that of the original example (local pop stars and Hollywood actors etc). This time, however, the purpose of the activity was for the pairs to chat about a given problem, e.g. 'Is it ok to switch off my computer when it freezes?'. Problems were handed out in strips then the boys had to work the problem out together by writing their 'chat', line by line.

The proverbial pin could not be heard dropped. Early finishers kept going without prompting, asking for more paper, writing furiously, reading their partner's response, and replying like lightening. Some pairs wrote up to three pages of 'chat'. The trainee monitored unobtrusively, correcting errors occasionally.

The dialogues and language patterns which emerged were diverse. Wild, syntactically off-target but meaningful discourse contrasted with simpler, highly structured but equally purposeful conversations peppered with unrecognisable technological abbreviations and acronyms. None were linguistically perfect, but perfection was not the aim. Problems had been solved and written fluency had emerged, deeming it to be a humdinger of a lesson, about as thrilling as it could get in this class of previously bored, unproductive teenagers. They had found their feet, for half an hour at least.

The post-task:

All 'chats' were finally exhibited on the wall and each was scanned by students via a focusing task which required them to find information, e.g. *find a chat about removing a virus – was the problem solved? If so, how? If not, why not?; find a chat about an unusual attachment – was the problem solved? If so, how? If not, why not?* Open-class feedback followed and, finally, errors were corrected on the board.

Revelations

Overall, the simulation of online chatting in this lesson exposed a number of elements previously unknown to us. Hidden techno-knowledge (about which we adult observers were largely ignorant!), passive language, and also momentary release from the immense stress of the boys' daily lives, i.e. their high-pressure exam system, their long school hours, and the loneliness of recently arrived mainland Chinese boys in their efforts to integrate. They had solved problems, laughed, joked and bonded. Banal frustrations which - think back to yours – are huge worries for many 12-14 year olds, and which the trainees never got to fully understand, had disappeared for one lesson, at least.

Boys & information literacy

For a teacher trainer there can be no greater excitement than classroom events which give some credence to theory - in this case the view that boys' clandestine interest in digital, media and information literacy in their L1 is accessible when you adjust prescriptive ELT material to accommodate it. Although the students did not use technology in the lesson, they role-played doing so. It is thought that when boys read and write such forms (relating to information literacy), they do not consider themselves to be reading or writing perhaps because such materials do not fit into their mainstream English syllabus. In 2007 these forms are appearing increasingly through a combination of written, visual and musical material, incorporating chat, web pages, blogs, and video sites like YouTube and other non-school-sanctioned material. These are heavily accessed by boys outside school. Straddling the line dividing ELT literacy and information literacy can be a gamble when working with teenagers locked into intensive exam systems, such as ours in Hong Kong. But on this day, and with this group it worked

as a means of encouraging fluency in writing. On another day, perhaps it may not.

In post-lesson feedback, trainees reflected on these issues and also on what research tells us about teaching boys i.e. that boys' literacy has come to the fore as an issue in mainstream education as it is found that a significant percentage of boys across cultures do not like to read or write. Research also tells us that material which is humorous, reflects their self-image, contains factual information, and which has less focus on emotion than action, is boy-friendly. Their response to role-play, in particular, can increase when topics are subverted, characters and their relationships explored and resolutions to problem situations sought.

Conclusion

There are many strands to teaching 'stories' such as this one, not all easy to disentangle. It seemed that pitching the material appropriately and pacing it into short sections maintained the boys' interest. However, something else became apparent to trainees in the post lesson refection. Perhaps too great a focus on a relatively small number of remote global issues had previously prevented the students from participating. Perhaps the boys' knowledge had been too often marginalized at the expense of information we felt compelled to transmit via prescriptive ELT texts. Talking less, and letting the boys talk more prior to writing, was also something trainees agreed they had overlooked.

The formula, if there was one, might simply have been this: let boys tell you what they know about technology, and get them reading and talking about it before they write about it.

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Teaching and Learning English through Music, Movement and Art

M. Teresa Fleta

Introduction

Following the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983), we are thought to possess at least eight avenues for learning: Linguistic, Mathematic, Spatial, Musical, Kinaesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal and Naturalistic. Gardner and others that have studied these intelligences suggest that there are many ways of learning and knowing and that learners may have abilities in one or another area and learn better when knowledge is presented to them through a particular intelligence. (Armstrong, 2001; Campbell and Campbell & Dickinson, 1996).

The teaching techniques presented in this paper were developed within this pedagogic framework, to teach and to learn English as a foreign language (L2), bearing in mind that learners have different styles of learning. Child learners and university students worked on story making and storytelling from the different strengths they all possess, putting the theory of MI into practice.

Child Learners' Pedagogic Experience

The twenty one children taking part in the pedagogical experience were from the British Council School of Madrid (BCS). The BCS is a bilingual school (English/Spanish) that takes children from 3 to 18 years of age and 98% of the students are native speakers of Spanish. The experience, designed and carried out by Elisabeth Forster (BCS teacher) and myself, was divided up into six phases and lasted for six months during one academic year. Children (7/8 years old) were in their fourth year at school from Mrs Forster's class.

Phase One: Listening to Music and Drawing

Music was used as initial stimulus for two reasons: for the celebration of Halloween and for the use of the gym class to work on music and movement. Children were asked to close their eyes, listen to: "Peer Gynt Suite" from *In the Hall of the Mountain King* by Grieg, and imagine a character on the carpet in class.

During the art class, child learners drew a picture of the character, gave their character a name and described it. Then, the draft was transferred to a larger format. Characters and vocabulary were related to Halloween: ghosts, witches, monsters, a headless man, or a giant flying mouse.

The purpose of these activities was: to expand pupils' vocabulary in English, tap children's imagination, and work on Musical, Spatial and Linguistic Intelligences.

Phase Two: Moving to the Music

Children listened to "Peer Gynt Suite" in the gym and moved as they thought their character would move, using different types of movement: high, low, and medium; fast and slow; backwards, forwards or sideways; jumping, skipping, running… This activity was carried out in groups and the entire class participated in a discussion at the end.

The purpose of this activity was to review quality of movement skills, reinforce vocabulary in English and develop facets of Kinaesthetic and Musical Intelligences.

Phase Three: Settings, Adjectives and Verbs

Children decided on a setting and a title for a story, and made a list of adjectives and verbs and some of the lexical items chosen were: castles, caves, forests or mountains, brown, green, white, purple, big, huge, fly, run, fight, eat or scare. As children pick up language better (meaning of words, vocabulary, structures, and intonation patterns), they participate in the activities that require their use.

The purpose of this activity was to work on the area of Linguistic Intelligence.

Phase Four: Story Sequencing Format

Children integrated all the information on settings, adjectives and verbs into a story sequencing format in six spaces: the first was for the beginning of the story, the three following for the middle of the story; and two final spaces for the resolution of the problem or conflict. This activity provided children

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with a systematic and structured means of working and gave them the chance to be original and to use their imagination.

In pairs, children interacted with a peer, told him/her their story using the story sequencing format as a guideline or as a script. The listening member of the pair asked questions and indicated whether the story was clear enough. With this activity, children were generating language spontaneously (English L2). It required the storyteller to reflect on his/her own work and to defend it, and what is more important, to think about his/her own thinking.

The purpose of this phase was to give children the opportunity to work on their Interpersonal, Intrapersonal and Linguistic Intelligences.

Phase Five: Story Making

Children transferred their story sequencing format into a book , based on the fairy tale structure (six pages book, a front and a back page). Children transferred the pictures, described the action taking place in the written form, designed and decorated a cover page, and wrote a blurb for the back of the book.

The purpose for this was to work on Linguistic and Spatial Intelligences.

Phase Six: Storytelling

Children read their stories to different audiences, working on the skills that storytelling entails: loud and clear voice, pausing for dramatic effect, showing the illustrations to the audience. Children shared their stories with teachers and children in other classes, a wall display was put up in class with all the examples of children's stories and also, a power point presentation was made with a few examples of the stories to be shown to parents, teachers and other children.

University Students' Experiment

The idea of getting future teachers working on the creation of stories came up during the preparation of three workshop sessions on: story time, story making and storytelling. Students (18) were in their first, second and third year of a degree in Education (Madrid Complutense University).

Time was allotted for each task. First, students listened to "Peer Gynt Suite" individually, drew a

sketch of the character, gave it a name, and a setting. Then, students brainstormed associations in groups, they talked about characters and decided on those to write the story about. They also worked on the story sequencing format and thought of a title. Later, students worked on the text and illustrations for the book, the cover page and the blurb. Finally, they read the stories in class.

Conclusions

Activities presented here support the use of English in class. Both kinds of learners were listening, speaking, reading and writing in English and, what is more important, they were, unconsciously, thinking in English. Learners created characters, places and situations for their stories and by doing so, they were making connections and, as Wright (2006) points out, making connections is what creativity is about. Learners' imagination and creativity were at work and learners lived their stories from the vantage points of the Visual, Kinaesthetic, Spatial, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal and Linguistic Intelligences.

Pedagogical Implications

Learning though music, movement and art is beneficial because it involves learners holistically and gives them input and output opportunities, and it is through interaction and practice that the ability to speak improves.

Story making and storytelling are excellent vehicles and invaluable tools for the presentation of language: to teach and learn in the second language, in the mother tongue, and/or in a third language.

As learners have a combination of different intelligences and as the learning environment influences the way those intelligences develop, teachers will help students to become competent in each of those intelligences if they present a wide range of activities in class.

The twenty seven stories created by the learners (children and future teachers) reflect the way English was internalized through activities designed to put their multiple intelligences into play. Linguistically, learners moved from a one-word level to a sentence level, for finally telling their stories in English. Learners benefited from the Spatial, Kinaesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal

and Musical perspectives in a great number of ways: making their own stories and living them.

Some observations

Some children gave their characters their own names or their friend's names and characters interacted in the stories. By giving their characters their own names shows that children were personally involved in the story and identified themselves with the characters.

To transfer the draft into a larger format and then into the book, proved to be a good exercise for children who have problems with dimensions (size and space). Children chose different places in the class to draw, even the floor.

In general, the boys' stories were repetitive, with a lot of action and involving imitation; the girls' stories were about likes, dislikes and love. Most university students' wrote stories to be told to children.

In the university students' experiment, future teachers found the experience very encouraging, especially because it was a new experience for them. They worked on skills through creativity, imagination, writing, specific motor functions, group working abilities, reached their objective and saw the results of their work immediately.

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Classroom Assistants Project – A Spanish Success Story

Trevor Doble

The teaching and learning of foreign languages has always been important in the Canary Islands, due to its reliance on the tourist industry. So, the Consejeria de Educacion in the Canaries (The Department of Education for the autonomous region of the Canary islands) introduced the teaching of English as a compulsory subject in state Primary schools, for 6 year olds in 2001, 5 year olds in 2003, and 4 year olds in 2006. This initiative, however, brought with it some problems, principally the fact that many English teachers had insufficient linguistic competence to give classes at these lower levels or did not feel confident in many fundamental areas of spoken English, especially "Classroom Language". Thus in October 2001, the "Classroom Assistants Project" was initiated, whereby native speakers of English were placed in class alongside the English teacher, working as an "assistant", with the following general objectives –

- To bring the English language closer to pupils, who should use it in a meaningful way
- To increase pupils' linguistic competence
- To increase teachers' linguistic competence
- To use innovative methodology through team teaching using a teacher and an assistant
- To bring another culture into the classroom, through a classroom assistant
- To reflect on general teaching of English practice in Primary schools.

Twenty-five assistants were selected for the pilot project, covering 39 schools, out of a total of 675 Primary schools located around the Canary Islands. The coordinator for the project was and is, Ana Judith Gutierrez Negrin, from the Canarian Ministry of Education, while my role, as well as training, was to act as a link between the Ministry and the assistants themselves, through meetings and school visits, telephone calls and email contact.

The original idea was to use students from British universities who had to complete a year abroad as

part of their studies, but this approach was soon found to be insufficient. The students wanted to practise Spanish, and were sometimes unaccustomed to being in front of so many small children! This was when another approach was considered, namely to use a resource that was already in place in the Canary Islands: the thousands of native English speakers that already resided here. I was then asked to find suitable people, and provide rudimentary training, as it was decided that it would be better to put the assistants and teachers together as soon as possible and then tailor the training around their needs. There was some opposition to this from the teachers who felt the assistants needed extensive training before entering the classroom, but our answer was that it was not possible to train people for something that had never been done before. First, we had to see how it worked, then later we could provide training if necessary. The cornerstone was and is simplicity itself: the assistant at no time would speak Spanish in school, not to the children, nor the teachers, not even to the caretaker! This, in our view, would create an authentic communicative situation where pupils would soon realise that to say anything to this "English" person, they would have to produce some English.

We had out first meeting at the end of the Christmas term, where the teachers expressed their general amazement that the children had started to produce, at a very basic level, some spoken English! From then on, training could begin in earnest, and the assistants were given workshops on how to use songs, chants, games, storytelling techniques etc., while never losing sight of the fact that they were there to assist the teacher, not teach the class, and that this assistance normally took place for listening and speaking activities. Thus, if a teacher wanted to read a story to the children, the assistant would do it, songs would be sung by the assistant, and general routines at the beginning and end of the class would be led by the assistant too.

Assistants work 16 contact hours per week, plus one hour of coordination with the teacher(s). Some work in two schools.

The following year the project expanded to cover 110 schools, with 103 assistants, and each year there has been a gradual increase, money permitting, in the number of assistants and schools in the project. This academic year we have reached a total of 165 assistants working in over 200 primary schools.

The project is constantly monitored to measure effectiveness through questionnaires, observation, termly meetings, videoing and testing of the children. It became apparent that as well as the pupils' spoken English improving, there was a marked improvement in the teachers' English use and general confidence in the classroom. We also found the following areas were where the assistants proved most effective:

- Extra motivation through having a native speaker
- Authentic English presented in the classroom
- Aspects of British/Irish/American culture introduced in the classroom
- Improvement in storytelling and singing
- Classroom Language
- Improvement in Teacher's English
- Take Chances/Experiment in class
- Extra Pair of Hands!

In 2003 a DVD was produced for training purposes illustrating the above points through recordings of teachers and assistants in action. This has proved extremely useful for teachers and assistants coming into the project.
What qualities/qualifications do we look for in a classroom assistant? While we do like the assistant to have a TEFL certificate, and teaching experience with children is also appreciated, it has not always been possible to find assistants with these qualifications, and some of our most successful assistants have no relevant qualifications at all, just a terrific empathy with the children, flexibility and an ability to learn from their teachers. Indeed, some highly qualified assistants have proved to be less than effective, maybe because of reluctance to "assist" rather than "teach".

The project has been a huge success within the islands, and is unique in Spain. Around 400 other Primary schools in the region have applied for an assistant! It successfully employs a resource – English native speakers – who abound in certain areas of Spain - and in other parts of the world.

This success was recognised at a European level in February this year when the project was awarded the "Sello Europeo" (European Seal) from the European Commission for Innovation in the

Teaching and Learning of Languages at a ceremony in Madrid.

The project is now an established part of language learning at Primary level in the Canary Islands, with many assistants becoming part of the fabric of the school they work in. Other projects, especially the Bilingual CLIL initiative that has started in the Canary Islands, use assistants as a resource to help teachers who are now beginning to teach other subjects through English. Other autonomous regions in Spain have expressed interest in the project, and a similar one is being established in Andalucía, where again, there are enough native speakers to make such a project feasible.

Finally, I am always very happy visiting schools, talking to children who find it natural to communicate in a foreign language and who see that English is not just an academic subject, but something they can use to communicate effectively.

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Family Opinions: Bilingual Spanish-English Programme for Very Young Learners

Maria José Briosa Valcárcel

In this article we present the results of a questionnaire given to families of very young learners at the State Infant and Primary School "*Claudio Moyano*" in Madrid, Spain. The families were asked to evaluate the Bilingual Spanish-English Programme that was recently enacted by the Community of Madrid. The purpose of this project was to use the opinions of the families as a reference to improve our educational practice and the pupil's learning. We also intend to share our project with other English teachers in the European Union. We would like to encourage them to design and develop similar projects in their Infant and Primary Education Programmes.

The importance of language learning

The introduction and implementation of bilingual teaching programmes is currently a highly debated issue among Education professionals in the European Union. This is principally due to the fact that language learning is a crucial element for the integration of pupils in the EU[1]. As a result, "the general trend in Europe has been towards an increase in the number of years during which teaching of at least one foreign language is compulsory, and a lowering of the age at which this provision begins" (Eurydice, 2005:27).

In Spain, the Organic Act for Educative Quality[2] mandates that education authorities must foster the learning of English as a second language in Infant and Primary Education[3]. For this reason, the Community of Madrid initiated a Bilingual Spanish-English Programme during 2004-05. All State Infant and Primary schools were given the opportunity to participate. Initially, this Bilingual Programme was set up for 110 schools. Today, there are 122 schools involved in the Programme[4].

The main objective for Primary Education is to teach English using a new methodological approach called "Content and Language Integrated Learning"[5] (CLIL). This method allows for part of the class hours to be taught in English. In the Community of Madrid, we teach at least one-third of the timetable in English. Spanish Language and Mathematics are the only subjects not included in the programme. Thereby, as the European Commission (2007:22) points out, "pupils learn curricular contents while at the same time exercise and improve their language skills".

In Infant Education, the number of class hours taught in English depends on the number of teachers at the school who specialize in the language. If there are insufficient English teachers, the Bilingual Programme will only apply to Primary Education. The CLIL methodological approach is also used in Infant Education.

The bilingual experience in our school

Due to the importance of language learning in the EU, our school decided to apply for participation in the Bilingual Programme during the 2005-06 school year. Fortunately, we were able to initiate the Programme in both Infant Education and the first year of Primary Education just one year later.

Implementation of the Bilingual Programme

All Spanish State schools include both Infant and Primary class levels. In our school, there are nine classes and sixteen teachers with different specialities. Five teachers specialize in teaching foreign languages. In relation to the size of our school, there are a large number of English teachers. This situation is important for our school because it allows us to implement the Bilingual Programme in Infant Education as well.

Ten hours of English are currently taught per week during the first year of Primary Education. These hours are distributed as: 3h 30´ Knowledge of the Natural, Social and Cultural environment, 1h 30´ Art Education, and 5h of English grammar. In Infant Education[6], pupils receive varying hours of bilingual teaching depending on their age. Three year old children receive three hours of English per week; four year old children receive four hours and five year old children receive five hours.

The objective of the Bilingual Programme is to gradually familiarize children with English for use in everyday situations. To reach this objective, English teachers follow several pedagogic recommendations of the Community of Madrid. These include: speaking only English to the pupils, teaching the curriculum in English, creating a bilingual environment in the school, and organising frequent coordination meetings.

Open Day for families

In our school we consider family opinion to be a critical factor in the success of the Bilingual Programme. For this reason, the Infant English teachers organised an Open Day during the third term of the 2006-07 school year. Before planning the day, our idea was presented to the school's principal, teaching staff and the Bilingual Programme Coordinator. Once they agreed with the proposal, we informed the families of our idea at a general meeting. After the parents expressed their willingness to participate, we sent t a letter that provided more detailed information about the Day.

The Open Day was designed to offer families the chance to observe an English class at every age group of Infant Education. During the Open Day, families were asked to complete a voluntary questionnaire.in order to collect information regarding family opinions about the Bilingual Programme. To show our appreciation for their involvement, each family was given a CD of English songs that included a photo of their child's English class. We felt that this gift would serve to foster family involvement in their child's language learning.

Questionnaire for the families

Out of 54 families, 33 participated and completed the questionnaire. A few families who were not able to participate in the Open Day also completed the questionnaire. We were able to analyse a total of 49 questionnaires. Because a high number of families participated, the analysis of the answers has been useful to collect quality information. The following are the results that we discovered:

The **factors** that parents consider **most important for** their child's **English learning process** are: 1) support of the educational authorities 2) enrolment in a Bilingual school 3) maintaining a bilingual environment in the school 4) professional training for teachers 5) involvement of the teachers 6) extra English activities, and 7) interest of children in learning.

- Among the **strategies used by the Community of Madrid to support the Bilingual Programme**, parents believe that the most important are: hiring assistant English teachers, organizing training programmes for teachers, and encouraging school participation in international education projects.

- Parents consider the main **advantages of learning English at a very young age** to be: 1) their child's English learning process is more natural 2) it will facilitate the acquisition of additional foreign languages, and 3) their English abilities will eventually reach a higher level. Just a few parents believe that there could be **disadvantages**. These parents worry, for example, about a possible negative effect on the self-esteem of children with weak language abilities.

- The **expectations that parents have for their child's English level** at the end of Primary Education are: 1) that children are able to use English for communication in every day life situations; 2) that English become familiar to them, and 3) that they are willing to continue learning this foreign language. Just a few parents expect that their children become bilingual.
- All Parents noticed **improvements in the English learning process of their children.** The improvements include: noticeable enjoyment of singing English songs, increase in vocabulary, and a rise in interest to express himself/herself in English.
- **Parents contribute to their child's English learning in different ways, such as**: 1) asking questions about his/her English classes; 2) reinforcing his/her achievements; 3) helping him/her to practise new vocabulary; 4) emphasizing the importance of speaking a second language, and 5) providing him/her books, games and songs in English.
- Parents are looking for additional ways to help improve their children's English level. They would like **advice from teachers** as well as further **information about the Bilingual Programme.**
- Most parents feel that our school currently has a **bilingual environment**. However, the majority also believe that **it is necessary for the school to increase the number of activities related to English** (book lending, theatre performances, etc.).
- All families feel it necessary to **continue with the Bilingual Programme**.

This qualitative information provides evidence that the Bilingual Programme in our school has been successful. The children are making considerable improvements in their English learning and the parents are very pleased with their progress.

Improvement proposals

After analyzing the responses in the questionnaires and our teaching practices, we plan to make the following improvement proposals:
- To participate in international education projects.
- To have English teachers participate in training courses concerning different aspects of bilingual teaching such as: 1) methodological CLIL approach 2) evaluation strategies 3) collaboration with families, etc.

- To organize workshops with teachers from other bilingual schools in our neighborhood in order to exchange ideas in bilingual teaching.
- To organize a meeting at the beginning of each school year with the families in order to offer information about the design, organization, and development of the Bilingual Programme.
- To advise parents monthly about English activities being held in Madrid for children.
- To give families a list of songs, rhymes and games every 15 days that their children can use to practise English.
- To increase the number of activities related to English. For example: 1) organize monthly workshops where parents help children create English displays to decorate the school 2) have English storybooks computer games and DVDs available for children to borrow, 3) perform English plays to celebrate each major holiday

In order to implement these proposals, we are counting on the cooperation of educational authorities, management teams, teachers and families. Only if these groups work together can the Bilingual Programme be a success.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the fact that all families believe the Bilingual Programme should continue next year motivates us to work as a team and make a daily effort to improve our teaching methods. Likewise, it is rewarding to find that families are willing to collaborate in their child's English learning process because they are noticing significant improvement.

As a final note, we sincerely hope the results of our project can make a positive contribution to the current debate regarding the proper introduction and implementation of bilingual teaching programmes in the European Union.

Notes

[1] English is currently the most taught L2 in the European Union (Eurydice 2005).
[2] The Organic Act was abolished by the Organic Act for Education. This document also draws special attention to language learning in Infant and Primary Education.
[3] Infant Education constitutes the first level of the Spanish education system. It includes children from 0 to 6 years and is set up in two, three-year cycles. Although it is a non-compulsory level, it possesses an unmistakably educational nature. Primary Education is the first compulsory stage of the

system. It includes children from 6 to 12 years and is set up in three, two-year cycles. These first levels are closely tied together (Cide, 2002).

[4] Order 5766/2006, 6th of October, from the Education Department, for the selection of State schools of Infant and Primary Education where the Community of Madrid will implement Bilingual Spanish-English Programmes during the 2007-08

[5] In most EU countries, CLIL provision is offered at primary, lower and upper secondary levels of education. Several countries, including Spain, also organise activities in a second language beginning with Infant Education (Eurydice, 2006).

[6] The Infant Education curriculum is organised around three areas: Personal Identity and Independence, Physical and Social Environment, and Communication and Representation. These areas are considered from a global and interdependent focus (Cide, 2002).

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Differences in Teaching and Learning:

Observations on Language Classes in Britain and China

Liu Ting

Differences in culture, language systems, exam systems and teaching conditions lead to different ways of teaching native languages as well as second languages. Consequently, they have substantial effects on the learning styles of students and this is what teachers need to take into account when they are teaching students from different backgrounds. As a teacher from China who originally taught English in Sichuan Province where language is still taught chiefly in traditional ways, I have spent my gap year teaching English students Chinese in a secondary school and have been observing native speakers English lessons for 2 terms. Therefore, my experiences enable me to compare differences in teaching and learning styles between language classes in Britain and China.

Student-centred/ Teacher-Directed Learning

In Britain I observed student centred learning, where 'students take part in setting goals and objectives', where 'there is concern for student's feelings' and where 'the teacher is sometimes seen as an adviser' (Richards 1996). Students are guided to discover possible answers by themselves through a variety of resources, such as internet, books, and other students. Although reforming is on its way in China, in traditional teacher-centred classes, most Chinese students are still used to the one fixed correct answer presented by authorities, usually from textbooks or teachers.

Respect for authority has such deep roots in Chinese culture that Chinese teachers usually act as authorities in class. They are expected to know everything and to transmit knowledge 100% correctly. Teachers tend to either tell or lead their students to the one fixed correct answer required by the exams, then analyze why and how to reach it. In Britain, however, course work allows for more than one answer and individual ideas are possible. Teachers act more as guides, who are reluctant to tell students answers directly but lead students to explore unknown fields and achieve individual responses by themselves.

An example of the differences in learning is shown by the approach to understanding poetry. Chinese teachers will offer definitions, examples and an explanation of a poem. What students do is copy and memorize them without questioning. British students are offered time in class to refer to books by themselves and read out different answers in class. Teachers might read out theirs as well, but there are no fixed correct answers and students don't have to copy or memorize them. Instead, they receive different information and form their own opinions.

Another example of the differences between the systems is how the personality of characters in novels is analysed, British teachers tend not to tell students answers, but encourage students to show their individual opinions and offer evidence to support their views. They never make judgments on the correctness of the students' opinions though they share their own opinions with the students too. Their role is to guide the students how to show and support their opinions effectively. Although multiple answers are acceptable in Britain, after some discussion, Chinese teachers usually have to show their 'authoritative' answers for students to copy since 'regulation of the way of thinking' will help students gain high marks in exams which require fixed answers.

The Role of Input and Output

In British classes, language is not only a tool to get information but a tool to share ideas and express oneself. Therefore language output, learning through speaking and writing, plays an important role as a way of learning, which is usually integrated with language input, learning through listening and reading. Whereas language input occupies most of the time in Chinese classes, since

input is highlighted in China as the way to absorb valuable experience from ancestors as well as from the west. On the other hand, output is usually considered an individual issue after class. It is also more likely to be narrative as sharing emotions and analyzing causes rather than showing different opinions with evidence, might arouse trouble since Chinese culture has long been accustomed to one authority, one answer and one opinion. What is more, it is widely accepted that students are believed to acquire their output abilities automatically after enough input, as the old Chinese saying goes: 'He who reads widely, owns a gifted pen'.

Consequently, it is easy to understand why output is less valued in Chinese classes. Firstly, most of the output required is repetition of facts or rules previously mentioned by the teachers, students are therefore rather nervous and afraid of being laughed at if they make mistakes, which the others feel is a waste of time. Secondly, students have more interest in the authoritative answers rather than individual opinions in exam-oriented classes. Thirdly, there is not enough time for output from everyone in large Chinese classes of over 50 students. However, top students might be given more chances to produce language. Mostly, Chinese students enjoy the safety of input from authorities, from whom they can obtain knowledge efficiently, while British students prefer the pleasure of output---where their own opinions and knowledge are shared and appreciated, so they learn from each other besides the teacher.

It is then not surprising that Chinese children at the age of 7 can recite and appreciate 50 traditional Chinese poems though they might not write one poem all through their lives, while British children of the same age are required to create their own poems though they might not be able to recite even one poem.

Task-based/ Form-based classes

In task-based classes, task is defined as an activity where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome. Language development is then prompted by language use (Willis & Willis, 2001). British teachers perform more like language practice facilitators (Hill, 2000) who try to design a variety of games, activities and tasks to motivate the students and help them develop their language

skills through the fulfilment of task. In contrast, since task-based approaches are hard to implement because of exam demands, traditional, form-based classes are still the trend in China. Language is analysed into an inventory of forms which can then be presented to the learner and practised as a series of discrete items. Chinese teachers act as language providers and experts who concentrate on how to demonstrate knowledge logically and clearly for students by making full use of cognitive strategies, such as repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note taking, deduction, recombination, imagery, key word, and contextualization. Tasks, games and activities, do not usually function as the chief way of learning but as a way of consolidation.

British students therefore learn through the process of finishing tasks, playing games and participating in activities where their interpersonal skills, such as communication, co-operation, sharing information, and showing ideas, are developed as well. Their sense of achievement comes mainly from what outcomes they can achieve through communication/co-operation with others, whereas Chinese students learn chiefly through cognitive thinking skills such as memorizing, analyzing and reasoning. Besides, they are more conscious of what knowledge they can obtain quickly and effectively through individual thinking.

Take teaching counting numbers as an example. Chinese teachers tend to spend more time explaining the complicated pronunciation system first and then try to make memorizing easier by telling the students some pronunciation tips in English. After that, students might be asked to imitate the pronunciation of the teacher several times, copy the numbers several times and do some fill-in-the-blank or translation exercises. Last of all, one or two games are designed to help them remember the numbers accurately. British teachers simplify the explanation and offer students more time for several games to make sure every student has the chance to practise counting numbers. Instead of telling them reciting tips, British teachers might ask students for their own ideas for reciting at the end of the lesson.

Inductive /Deductive class

Most Chinese teachers tend to use a deductive approach when teaching. Learners are taught rules and a grammar-translation method is followed. This

focuses on the accuracy of language due to the complication of Chinese and the requirement of exams. British teachers, however, often use an inductive method which is more communicative and emphasises fluency.

To teach complicated vocabulary, for example, Chinese teachers explain rules, analyze connections with similar words at the beginning of the class and afterwards present related examples. The students memorize not only one individual word, but groups of related words too, then some exercises or games are designed to help them remember and improve the accuracy of using such vocabulary. British teachers usually present examples first, then let students practise using vocabulary in activities without knowing the rules of usage in advance. Mistakes are corrected and related rules (not systematically) are explained or discovered by the students during the process.

A large bank of vocabulary, accompanied with abstract rules (possibly in native language) is therefore stored logically by Chinese students who then produce the language precisely and according to the rules. In contrast, British students are guided to process target vocabulary by relating words to others through a variety of means.

Practice and Theory

To conclude, different teaching styles partly contribute to different learning styles in different cultures. Generally speaking, Chinese students tend to be more field-independent while British students tend to be more field-dependent. (Witkin, 1962). That is, Chinese students tend to be more autonomous in relation to the development of cognitive restructuring skills. They are more intrinsically motivated and enjoy individualized learning. They tend to be introvert, analytic, and reflective. Conversely, British students tend to be more autonomous in relation to the development of high interpersonal skills. They tend to be extrinsically motivated and enjoy cooperative learning. They tend to be extrovert, communicative, and challenging, willing to raise questions and share opinions.

This summary can be related to Kolb's four learning styles (Kolb,1984), as many British students tend to be Accommodators (Concrete experiencer/Active experimenter), who learn by doing and feeling. They prefer to take a practical, experiential approach. They are attracted to new challenges

and experiences, and to carrying out plans. They do not like routine and will take creative risks to see what happens. They tend to solve problems intuitively on a trial-and-error basis. They often prefer to work in teams to complete tasks; they rely mainly on others for information then carry out their own analysis.

In contrast, many Chinese students tend to be Assimilators (Abstract conceptualizer/ Reflective observer), who learn by watching, listening and thinking. They prefer a concise, logical approach. They prefer logical analysis of ideas, systematic planning and acting on an intellectual understanding of a situation. They tend to be more concerned about abstract concepts and ideas rather than people. They focus more on the logical soundness and preciseness of the ideas rather than their practical values. They prefer reading, lectures, exploring analytical models and having time to think things through. Chinese students are knowledgeable, analytic and reflective. They are obedient, conform to rules and work hard as well.

These observations of differences should help us reconsider our teaching-----how can we learn from different systems and train knowledgeable and challenging, proactive and thinking students?

Through observing language learners in both Britain and China, some leading theories are much clearer, as I have seen them put into practice.

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Mission Impossible or Model for the Future?

David Vale

In September 2007, the Republic of Balkania introduced English into its State Primary Schools at Grade 1(6-7 year olds). The Ministry rejected the efforts of Foreign Publishers to sell generic Course Books, and as a result, I was offered the following mission brief:

'Provide a 5-day seminar for a team of 15 secondary school teachers of English, and a 2-day follow-up for preparation and finalisation of teaching/learning materials to enable the team to:

a) transfer their teaching skills to those appropriate to the teaching of EFL to 6-7 year children
b) train teachers (nationwide) of 6-8 year old children in the teaching of EFL to this age range
c) draft and finalise materials for teaching English to Grade 1 children nationwide for 2007-2008.

Planning for the Seminar

Against the background of a draft National Curriculum for English (which specified the theme areas and learning objectives), and given the time limitations, I decided:

a) to use stories as centres of learning – for training *and* for materials production. For me, children's stories are the richest relevant source of content, language, classroom management, training skills, etc., The demonstration and discussion of their use for 6-7 year olds provides excellent, simple models for materials development;
b) to tailor the story content – and subsequent activities - specifically to the six theme areas specified by the Ministry in their Curriculum Document (*family, classroom, toys, colours, pets, festivities*)
c) to provide the team, within these theme areas, with a wide range of hands-on opportunities to take part in craft, maths, science, music, etc., activities (for 6-7 year olds) – as 'child/ teacher/ trainer' in a variety of micro-teaching contexts;

d) to timetable the training days, and week according to requirements, as they arose within each training day.

This was complex because:

• teachers needed to transfer their knowledge and skills from Secondary to have the confidence and expertise to work at 6-7 year old level;
• additionally, they needed knowledge and experience in *training* new teachers in their (newly acquired) expertise and knowledge;
• they needed to produce a complete set of learning materials for Grade 1 – from scratch. These materials would form not only the complete materials for 'teaching' all Grade 1 children English, but would also provide the 'content' for the training of new teachers.

Regarding the creation of learning materials, Balkania had, in my opinion, correctly ruled against the use of generic textbooks. Thus, I thought it was of paramount importance that the team be empowered to create these materials from their own skills and resources – for the education of children within their own country.

For materials production purposes, I therefore decided to divide the team into five groups of three. Each group chose one of the 5 (out of 6) main themes stipulated by the Ministry and would, with my support, complete the first draft of this material, which needed to provide up to 40 learning hours, by lunchtime on Friday. I considered that by Friday, teachers would have the expertise, confidence and motivation to create, as a team, the final *Festivities* theme – on the Friday afternoon.

I also considered that *skills transfers* (e.g. from Secondary teacher > teacher of 6 year olds, plus teacher > trainer of teachers) could be achieved within the materials development process.

What happened?

Given the need to 'convert' Secondary teachers to teachers of 6 year olds and trainers of teachers of 6 year olds', I chose to provide new input at the beginning of each day – when team was fresh – and the room temperature at its lowest. (Outside temperatures soared to record highs of 46 degrees; there was no air conditioning.)

Day 1: This was the most *complex* day for a variety of reasons. Three stand out:

- the concept of 'stories as centres of learning' for 6-7 year olds was new and contradicted the classroom practice of 'you teach it (mainly language items) – the children learn what you teach – you test it'. In this regard, I used a version of the 3 Bears family (related to the Ministry theme of 'family') as the story example. The notion of introducing children to the *present perfect continuous* (*someone has been eating my porridge*) – caused consternation. (I wonder if my mother realised this difficulty when telling me this story at the age of 3!!!);
- not only was a 'story based' approach new, but also child-specific techniques to support this approach were foreign to the team (as teachers of early teens);
- none of the team had thought themselves capable of writing materials for children that would be used across Balkania.

Against the above – a great deal, in fact, was achieved during the day. For example, the team was actively involved in the discussion, planning and execution of:
- classroom management for storytelling;
- sharing a story with children to ensure active participation;
- games, rhymes and songs as starters/further practice activities;
- 'FAR' (focused – action – response) activities as content + language support

There was also much fruitful discussion and micro-group practice regarding the training/learning implications of storytelling and follow up activities. As a result, all five writing groups successfully produced an original story – or original copy of a traditional story – as the basis for their teaching material production of the week.

Day 2. I attempted to address the issues raised by Day 1 through the creative use of two of my own original copies of stories (*2 birds in a tree, the red bird and the lion*), relating both to the Ministry theme of 'colours'. We re-visited areas of doubt raised on the previous day and the team moved forward into their real roles as teachers of 6-7 year olds, trainers of teachers, and materials writers.

The stories - and making of *educational toys*, as well as, for example, the creation of puppet theatres (taken from my work in India) - proved highly successful. The main didactic areas covered

(via group discussion, content planning, micro-teaching) were:
- how and why to share stories with young children in English;
- differences between 'teaching a story' & 'children sharing storytelling';
- how to link the content of stories to the Ministry Curriculum Themes;
- how to develop content/language curriculum from the story-lines of a story;
- how to develop 'core activities' as the *centres* of learning in a lesson.
- the creative uses of recycled materials e.g. boxes, in a children's class;

As a result, the five 'materials-writing groups' developed an innovative format for their Unit planning – and, with support, made considerable progress in planning/mapping of complete teaching/learning Units.

Day 3. Responding to exceptionally positive feedback from Day 2, I focused on the main areas of perceived (by the team) weakness – for example:
- how to give young children access to the language in a story/core activity;
- which games and songs to use in class amd how to use them;
- how to provide continuity in a one-lesson-per-week situation;
- how to manage 25-30, 6 year olds in a class;
- how to be sure our materials are good enough for the nation;
- how to finish writing the materials by Friday.

In the above regard, I shared my own versions of '*The Giant Potato*' and '*The Lion Hunt*' – relating them to the Ministry themes of 'classroom' and 'pets'. Using real potatoes (and virtual lions), the team created lesson sequences that were practical, effective, and matched their nation's classroom (and parents') resources.

In addition to areas of didactic and training interests, the outcomes of the day were innovative sets of potato realia, puppet theatres and other newly-invented learning aids, as well as the remarkable transition of the team of secondary teachers into a group of fun-loving, creative and confident teachers of 6-7 year olds.

Day 3 also extended the time available for materials preparation. For maximum effect, we set

up a small 'editing team' who ensured continuity of format and content. This was additional to 'magic mingling moments' – periods when teachers shared their work to maximise creativity and peer support.

Day 4 built on the super positive feedback from Day 3. Using re-invented '*mini-beast'* rhymes, songs and stories to parallel the Ministry themes of 'pets and toys', the team focused on notions of 'whole lesson' and 'whole unit' content, including key areas of Vocabulary, Home Link and Creative Evaluation.

Through micro-group/peer discussion and teaching in the morning, the outcomes continued to raise confidence and competence across the group – without exception. This had a considerable virtuous cycle effect on the writing during the afternoon. During this period, we agreed to finalise the first draft of each of the 5 Units by Friday lunch, and produce Unit 6 – *Festivities* – by Friday evening!

Day 5 provided feedback such as 'loved everything' on Day 4 (except the heat). Starting the day with a 'round' singing of '*row, row, row your boat*…', we used a previously unknown festive pirate story to open up the Ministry theme of *festivities*. The team enacted creative explorations of the story as peer/micro teaching activities. What a difference a week makes! Presentations were applauded, awards were awarded (providing an effective opportunity for '*introductions, naming and thank-yous'*) and self-esteem among the whole group reached newer and even higher levels.

As a result, not only were the first drafts of each Unit completed by all groups by lunch, but each group went on after lunch to write and complete a lesson each for Theme 6. Moreover, 50% of the team stayed on (Monday/Tuesday) to successfully transform the first drafts of the materials into a published format that is now being used as core learning materials for Grade 1 classes nationwide across Balkania.

Mission Accomplished?

There were 4 key challenges, to train 15 'secondary' teachers as teachers of 6-7 year olds; to provide training in such a manner that this training could be 'cascaded' to a large number of new teachers by the team; to provide the training content as a practical model and resource for materials production by the team; to provide wide ranging (authorial, editorial, didactic, etc) support to

the team in such ways that they produce a 'Version 1' set of teaching/learning materials – for training and classroom purposes – for their own nation.

In terms of results, the team took on board 'two birds' – and flew high; they listened to 'the tale of the lion' – and became queens of the language jungle; they sailed with the pirate – and discovered unimagined treasure from within themselves. Such achievement was made possible in Balkania by the interest and tireless support of The British Council as well as the lead roles taken by Ministry advisors and the talent, hard work and belief of the teachers in themselves.

I believe that the work done by the team in 7 days provides a rich and valuable model for YLEFL, especially for the State sector, where costs, politics and relevance of learning are critical. In this regard, to empower teachers to produce materials for the language education of their own nation is a truly priceless objective to aim for and achieve.

David Vale is the author of *Teaching Children English* (CUP), *The Cambridge Picture Dictionary, Storyworld* (Macmillan/Heinemann), *The Language Tree* and *The Grammar Tree* (Macmillan). He is a teacher trainer and teacher of EFL at YL/VYL level and has presented at conferences worldwide. He has also taught at universities, NILE and Pilgrims. At present, He is working in India, the Middle East and Europe on the development of low-to-no cost language learning programmes for children, as well as parallel professional development programmes for teachers.

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and

www.connect2english.com – please contact me if you are interested in forming part of a dedicated website to offer schoools, teachers and parents support they need to help children love to learn English at low- to –no –cost.

Looking at a Learner

How English is Studied in Russia

Varia Bokuchava

The education systems in Russia and Britain are different. Every Russian child goes to school between the ages of 6 and 8. There are ten or eleven year groups and all pupils finish school when they are between 15 and 17 years old. Classes have usually about 27 pupils in them and they are becoming smaller because of declining birth rates. However, our class is quite small as there are only 22 pupils and when we go to English lessons, the class is divided in two. Most pupils have three or four lessons of 40 minutes every week. Homework is given out after every lesson and we have dictation and tests after every unit of study. At the end of the year we have an important grammar and listening test.

Our classrooms are organised so that we sit in pairs. We have pair, group and individual tasks. When we are asked questions we put our hands up to answer. Our teachers sometimes use Russian to explain difficult grammar rules and we speak some Russian if we don't understand what the teacher is presenting. In the classroom we have very good bilingual dictionaries and we often use them in lessons and at break time if we want to study English. We have computer labs but we don't use them for English.

We study English using course books with work books and cds which help us to read, improve our pronunciation and to summarise texts. We watch films about British culture, capital cities and other English speaking countries and sometimes we read short texts about English History. There are also some English books in our library.

When we start a new unit in class, we first speak in groups about the topic, giving our opinions about it. These might be answers to questions. In the books we look at the overviews of the content so we know what we are going to learn. For example, it could

future tenses, something we should know about articles, vocabulary connected to the topic. Very often we learn dialogues by heart, we read texts about the topic and do summaries of them. After that we have homework which could be writing our opinions using the reading texts as models.

Some pupils have English pen friends who they find on the Internet. For example, I have a pen friend in America and I try to email her twice a week. A few lucky students can study English abroad and a few have private lessons after school as it is cool to study English and especially to go to England.

Varia Bokuchava is a seventeen year old pupil from Kazan. She attends the Third Gymnasium there. She has been studying English for 8 years and hopes to study Economics and Languages in Russia. She would like to use her English in her future work and in her free time.

YLSIGs Around the World

APPInep

A Young Learner SIG in Portugal

Cristina Bento and Raquel Coelho

Background

APPInep is the YL SIG of the Portuguese English Teachers' Association, APPI. It was founded in 2000, and provides support for pre-school and primary school English teachers, working with children under 10 years old.

In the school year of 2005/2006 the Portuguese Ministry of Education introduced extracurricular English into the first cycle of primary education, focussing on children in grades 3 and 4 (8 and 9 year olds). These classes are not obligatory, but most students stay at school for them, as they also have extracurricular PE lessons, drama and music.

Since October 2006, the Portuguese Ministry of Education has also encouraged schools to provide extracurricular English for grades 1 & 2 (6 and 7 year olds). So, APPInep has been very busy as the teaching of English to primary children is growing!

How do we support Portuguese English teachers?

- The APPInep Bulletin, with practical ideas for teachers working in Portuguese primary and pre-schools, has been published in every issue of the biannual APPI Journal since October 2000 *(www.appi.pt)*, as well as appearing as a special edition in September 2005.
- APPI co-organised two international conferences in Portugal on the theme of teaching English to primary and pre-school children. The first in 2001, with the IATEFL YL SIG. The second in 2005 with the British Council, Lisbon.
- In-service credited training courses have been promoted throughout Portugal, supported by European funded programmes. Non-accredited courses have also been run for teachers who

want to learn about teaching young children.
- APPI collaborated with the Portuguese Ministry of Education in writing the guidelines for English in primary education *'Orientações Programáticas Programa de Generalização do Inglês no 1º Ciclo do Ensino Básico'.* There are separate guidelines for grades 1 & 2 and grades 3 & 4.
- APPI and APPInep are collaborating in the publication of a Portuguese version of a European Language Portfolio for primary education.
- More recently, a special day for APPInep was included at the APPI annual conference in Spring, with a plenary speaker and a whole day of presentations focussing on working with primary and pre-school children.
- In April 2006, APPInep set up a virtual discussion group for Portuguese English Teachers working in primary schools. This discussion list features organised discussions, as well as impromptu ones, and provides a forum for teachers to meet and support each other. The group has over 160 members to date. Group home page: *http://groups.yahoo.com/group/primary-english-teachers*

APPInep Website   http://appinep.appi.pt/

One of our recent objectives was to set up an APPInep website for Portuguese primary English teachers. This was achieved in April 2007, which makes us very proud. English teachers can find a wide range of resources and useful links on the site, and we keep it regularly updated. We have a small committee made up of a coordinator, bulletin editor, membership officer and a web manager.

PORTUGAL Pupils' work

T- Shirt Project

Animals

House Projects

Celebrating St. Valentine's Day

Using books and creating their own

English Corner

Book Review

Jackie Holderness

500 Activities for the Primary Classroom: Carol Read (2007, Macmillan)

This book will be warmly welcomed by EFL writers and teachers. Carol Read combines many years' experience with sound theoretical understanding and that rare ability to inform, support and inspire teachers through her writing. Within each chapter, she brings her expertise and experience as a teacher trainer to the main areas in primary EFL. Recognising that teachers are busy people, she provides concise summaries of the most important issues, without falling into the dangers of over-simplification or being patronising. Detailed references at the end of chapters enable teachers to study each area of EYL more deeply. The Index has several subsections and has separate lists which teachers will find very useful: Language structures; Topics; Learning skills.

Overall, Carol Read summarises recent educational theory in an accessible and practical way. The introductory chapter provides a comprehensive overview of Primary EFL. Embedded in the section, "Working with children", I particularly liked the following two themes: *Creating optimal conditions for children's learning* and *Managing children positively*. These goals lie at the heart of successful YL pedagogy. "The C wheel" is introduced with at least 8 factors for optimal learning, all beginning with the letter C. e.g. Creativity....Connections....Coherence...etc The eight C's are reinforced by the 7 R's, initiatives that teachers may establish in order to manage their class(es) positively from the start. These R's include Relationships, Routines, Rewards...

The 10 activity- based chapters begin with a short methodological introduction which looks at specific areas in greater detail. The layout is clear and there is a useful section at the end of each chapter, called Reflection Time, where readers are encouraged to improve their practice by asking reflective questions. These questions are designed to enhance the quality of the children's learning. It is Carol Read's experience as a teacher trainer which elevates this book above the many "Ideas Banks" that exist in Primary Education. While outlining 500 activities which children will enjoy, Read makes clear the learning Aims and language objectives and offers practical comments and suggestions to ensure activities will work in class.

There are many chapters and activities which will be familiar to EYL teachers but there are also some innovative ones, which means that this book will appeal to teachers of varying levels of experience. There are questionnaires, chants, charts, play scripts, visuals and games which teachers can copy or adapt, such as The Question Board Game.

One chapter is devoted to Content-based learning, which is based upon and related to Topic-based learning or CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). This chapter offers a useful "Investigative learning cycle" to encourage pupils to become more reflective as learners. There are several content-based ideas in this chapter, which could be adapted to suit other curriculum subjects.

There is a chapter on ICT and multimedia but, for obvious reasons, perhaps, there are only a few websites listed in the Further Reading. However, there are some interesting research-based activities and some imaginative ways to use photos and DVDs. In the final chapter, on 'Learning to Learn', there are several activities designed to enhance pupils' self-esteem, a key factor in learning success. The well-established Look, Say Cover, Write, Check approach is recommended for learning spelling, with an example of a "script" which teachers could use to model how to "think aloud" when learning to spell a new word. By encouraging pupils to become aware of their own leaning styles and strategies, (e.g. p.314) teachers can develop metacognitive startegies which will transfer to all areas of the curriculum. Other metacognitive activities include memory sticks, goal setting, clines for vocabulary and a learning diary.

A few areas or issues, e.g. Assessment and Parental involvement, so important in the primary phase, might have been addressed more fully, but Homework and Self Assessment are included and I am sure that there will be many future editions, to ensure that the book develops future issues.

The simplicity of this book's layout and design, the accessibility of its written style are likely to make this a standard and valued EYL textbook. Its many practical activity ideas are underpinned by Read's

sound understanding of how children learn and how important their teachers are, so it will appeal to teachers of all levels of experience. It is evident that Read appreciates the importance of teacher development in the enhancement of learning. It is significant that she starts the book with this quote from Rudyard Kipling, which is one I also hold dear:

"No printed word, nor spoken plea,
Can teach young minds what they should be.
Not all the books on all the shelves,
but what the teachers are themselves..."

Jackie Holderness is a former senior Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University. She is also an EYL materials writer.

Carol Read is a former editor of CATS. She has also written books in the 'Bugs' course book series for Macmillan.

Web Watcher!

Jennifer Uhler Recommends:

Filamentality: This is an online fill in the blank webhunt and samplers www.kn.att.com/wired/fil

Hot Potatoes: An easy to use game and wordhunt maker: www.hotpot.uvic.ca

Audacity: Voice recording software; www.audacity.sourceforge.net

Picasso: A web album www.picasso.google.com

Odeo: An online player and recorder: www.studio.odeo.com

PbWiki: multi-source editing website: www.pbwiki.com

Jennifer Uhler is an English Language Fellow at the University of Tartu, Estonia. She recommended these web sites during her presentation at the YLSIG PCE in Aberdeen this year.

Young Learners Special Interest Group e-discussion group 2006-7

Wendy Arnold (Hong Kong)

Moderator

What an action packed year! And yes, I sound like a recording. Enormous thanks to all our regular contributors and I hope that our 'lurkers' or 'peripheral participants' to be PC, will be tempted to come forward next year. Summaries of all our discussions are available on our website. Log on to http://www.iatefl-ylsig.org and go to web resources, discussion summaries. Or check out the following URL address for archived messages http://groups.yahoo.com/group/younglearners/

We now have over 500 e-discussion members and of these 22% are subscription members – so obviously we need to do a lot more work to find out what you would like from us to convince more e-discussion subscribers! And onto why you should continue to be part of our e-discussion group, or better, become a subscription member in order to benefit from the increasing list of goodies we are developing. I've added where the discussion fielders were based so you can see how small our world has become. The archived discussion summaries also identify the country (where possible) of our members. We are a truly multi-cultural group!

Goodies available for members on our resources site include discussion summaries of fielder-led discussions (see below) CHECK IT OUT! http://www.iatefl-ylsig.org   (resources)

FIELDED DISCUSSIONS *2006-7*
 (summaries in resources link)

20 – 27th October, 2006 *'What price literacy?'* **fielded by** *Alan Maley.*
Alan has lived and worked in PR China, India and Singapore, as well as in Thailand. He has over 30 books to his credit, as well as many articles. He is series editor for the Oxford Resource Book for Teachers, and author of "He Knows Too Much" in the Cambridge English Reader. Alan is Director in Intensive Reading Foundation (ERF). His particular interests are in creative materials design, and teachers' professional and personal development.

19 – 26th January, 2006 '*Stories in Language Teaching'* **fielded by Andrew Wright**.
Andrew is an author, illustrator, teacher trainer and storyteller. As an author he has published: Creating Stories With Children, Oxford University Press; Five Minute Activities, Cambridge University Press; 1000+ Pictures for Teachers to Copy, Longman Pearson. As a teacher trainer he has worked with teachers in thirty countries and as a story teller he has worked with approximately 50,000 students in the last fifteen years.

Whose English? Use of mother tongue **(ad hoc discussion) January 2007**
Refer to yahoo messages 7198-7218

Discipline in the classroom/bad behaviour **(ad hoc discussion) Jan-February, 2007**
Refer to yahoo messages 7212-7367

9 – 16th February, 2007 *Children's L2 writing development: a neglected skill?* **fielded by** Jaynee Moon.
Jaynee is a freelance ELT Primary consultant and teacher educator. She has extensive international experience in Asia, Europe and elsewhere as a teacher educator. She is very interested in children's second language writing development and primary teachers' professional development. She is the author of Children *Learning English* (Macmillan) and one of the editors of *Teaching English to Children* and *Research into Teaching English to Young Learners (University of Pecs).*

7 – 14th December, 2007 *'Resources used with YL'* **fielded by** *Simon Smith*.
 Simon is a freelance teacher trainer and materials writer who works mostly with teachers of children aged 6-11. He is a supervisor and teacher on the University of York's distance MA in TEYL, an associate trainer at NILE in Norwich, and a trainer for Sue Leather Associates. He has lived and worked in Africa, Asia and East and Central Europe. His interests include trainer training, the use of video in teacher training, and low tech resources for children and teachers.

NEW DISCUSSION MODERATOR

I have the greatest pleasure in handing over the baton to **Dennis Newson**, who you will know if you are a member of the YL SIG e-discussion group. Dennis has been a very active discussion member and I have every confidence that he will take our discussion group to a higher plane!

AD HOC DISCUSSIONS INITIATED BY E-MEMBERS in 2006-7

- What we can learn from mainstream systems
- Testing
- Values/beliefs
- Dialogue journals
- Large classes, low tech, low proficiency
- Does accent matter?
- Primary teaching in Finland, England, Greece
- Second Life (IT)
- Transition between primary and secondary
- What makes reading more challenging?

It's impossible to write up all these exciting discussions but some summaries are available in the resources site. For others, follow the thread in the discussion yahoo site.

And don't forget if you have any 'burning questions' of your own, please *DO SHARE*. Often the most exciting impromptu discussions are started by our members' questions!

Here's to a fabulous year of YLsig discussions! Hope to catch up with some of you at the IATEFL Conference in Exeter. Please do come and find me and the rest of the YLSIG committee!

Wendy

YLsig joint co-ordinator (Hong Kong en route to Las Vegas!)
http://www.iatefl-ylsig.org   (resources)
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/younglearners/join (discussions)
http://del.icio.us/ylearn (useful links)
http://www.elearningdesigners.nl/iatefl/ (classroom research)

AND A HUGE 'THANK YOU' TO **WENDY** FOR ALL SHE HAS DONE TO MAKE THE E-DISCUSSION GROUP THE SUCCESS IT IS TODAY.

Asian Events 2007

24th November, 2007 – **Singapore**
(joint YL SIG, Lorna Whiston Study Centres and the British Council at Tanglin Club)

Literacy in the Language Classroom: the role of the YL professional in developing reading and writing skills in young learners

Details: Helen Marjan, Joint Managing Director and Director of Studies
Lorna Whiston Study Centres, 101 Thomson Road #03-18 United Square
Singapore 307591 …

helenmarjan@lornawhiston.com.sg
Tel: 6253 7688   Fax: 6355 0978

26th November, 2007 - **Hong Kong**
(joint YL SIG and British Council at
The British Council Admiralty, Central)

Literacy in the Language Classroom: the role of the YL professional in developing reading and writing skills in young learner

Details: Beverley Craggs at the British Council, Hong Kong

beverley.Craggs@britishcouncil.org.hk

IATEFL Young Learners special interest group (YL SIG)

FUTURE DISCUSSION FIELDERS 2007 - 2008

28th September – 5th October, 2007

Topic no: 1

Relationship between schools and YL families

Caroline Linse is an Associate Professor of TESOL at Sookmyung Women's University in Seoul, Korea where she teaches graduate level courses in the YL TESOL programme and in the general TESOL MA programme. She has worked in ESL programs in various parts of the US including rural Alaska and in EFL programs in Belarus, Latvia and American Samoa. She has published a wide variety of ELT materials both for the EAL and EFL markets. She received her doctorate from Harvard Graduate School of Education. She is also author of the methodology textbook, *Practical English Language: Young Learners,* published by McGraw Hill, part of David Nunan's series- Practical English

9th – 16th November, 2007

Topic no 2

Evaluating, supplementing and devising materials for teaching and learning

Susan Holden has worked as a teacher, teacher trainer, publisher and materials writer over the last 30 years. After training at the Central School of Speech and Drama to teach drama and being involved with educational theatre, she 'relocated' to Italy for some years. Since then, her main materials publishing and writing experiences, in a range of roles, have been in and for Central Europe and Latin America. Latest materials include the factual Portfolio series and the Topics series for Macmillan. Her current interests include CLIL, and exploring ways of engaging the learner and teacher within an educational context.

For details on how to join our discussions visit:

http://www.iatefl-ylsig.org (resources)

or

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/younglearners/join

You will need to join the yahoo group to be on the distribution list.

DON'T FORGET! 2007-8

7- 14th December: Simon Smith – Resources used with YL

January: Janet Enever – YL Policy

February: Jean Stillwell Peccei – tbc

Date tbc Peter Medgyes – Native vs non native teachers

42nd INTERNATIONAL IATEFL CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

EXETER, 7$^{\text{TH}}$—11$^{\text{TH}}$ APRIL 2008

IATEFL's conference in Exeter next year promises to be every bit as exciting as previous conferences. We plan to provide you with a Devon flavour and a very memorable experience.

1400 delegates, 300 presentations, 40 exhibitors

Plenary Speakers

Zoltán Dörnyei (University of Nottingham, England)

Alastair Pennycook (University of Technology Sydney, Australia)

Radmila Popovic (University of Belgrade, Serbia)

Rosa Jinyoung Shim (Open Cyber University, Korea)

Dates to note

17 September 2007 - deadline for speaker proposals and scholarship applications

7 January 2008 - deadline for all speakers to pay their registration fee

21 January 2008 - deadline for other delegates to benefit from the earlybird registration fee

7 April 2008 - Pre-Conference Events

8-11 April 2008 - Conference and Exhibition

www.iatefl.org

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

MA in Teaching English to Young Learners (by Distance)

The English as a Foreign Language Unit of the Department of Educational Studies, University of York, is the only unit in the UK to run this highly specialised MA in TEYL. The programme starts in **July** of each year in **York** and in **November** of each year in **Singapore**. New cohorts are also due to start in Vancouver in 2007

The MA in TEYL is a 2-year programme comprising 8 multimedia self-study modules, plus participation in an annual 2-week face to face Preparatory Course. Additionally, from 2007, there will also be an online Preparatory Course.

Assessment is by eight modules assignments, some of which require the carrying out of small-scale classroom-based research projects. Emphasis is on the linking of theory and practice, making extensive use of material from authentic classes. Throughout the programme students can choose to focus on the following age groups for their assignments : 6-11 years, 11-16 years, or 6-16 years.

The eight modules of the programme are designed for students to gain a full understanding of:

- how foreign languages are acquired by young learners

- how to create the most suitable classroom environment for young learner acquisition of languages

- how to approach curriculum and syllabus design

- how to design and create materials for the young learner classroom

- how to manage professional development in the field of TEYL

- how to design, carry out and interpret results of small-scale Action Research

" This MA has been extremely valuable for me, especially because of its practical nature. All the modules have directly influenced my day-to-day working practice. I think that the programme structure, documentation and supervision have been excellent"

MA in TEYL Graduate

"This course has enabled me to extend my professional development in an unexpectedly enjoyable mode. Whilst not denying that the course was very rigorous and challenging, because so much of it involves practical application and reflection, it melds theory and practice in a usable and coherent way"

MA in TEYL Graduate

For further information contact:

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University of York, York, YO10 5DD, UK
Telephone: +44 (0)1904 432483 Fax: +44 (0)1904 432481
e-mail: efl2@york.ac.uk

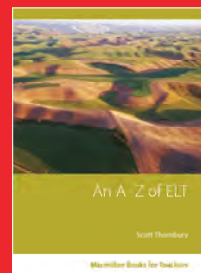**http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/ltc/efl/courses/ma/mateyl.htm**
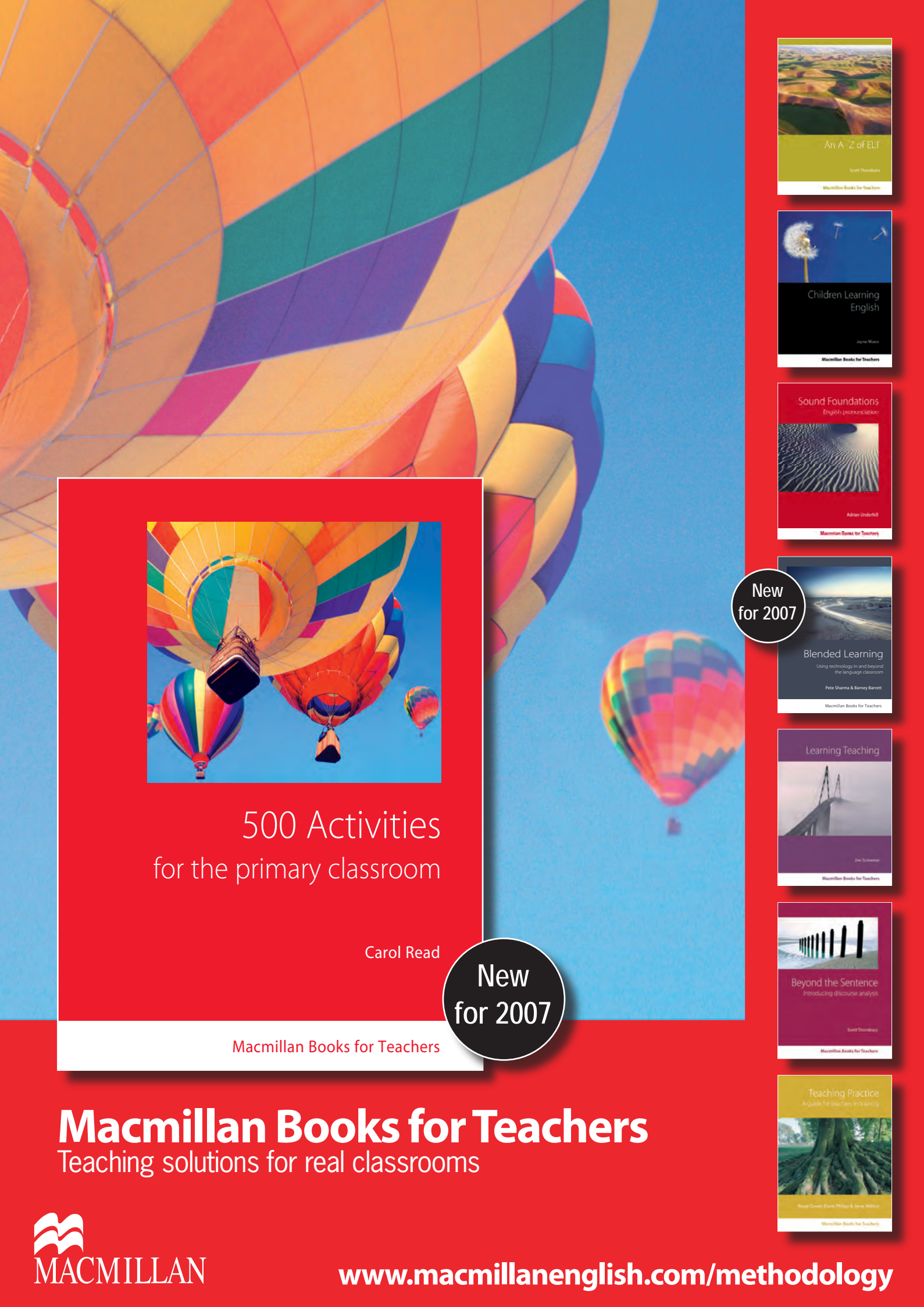
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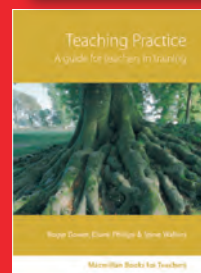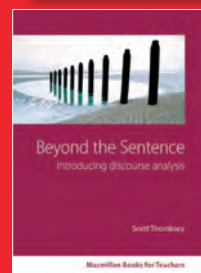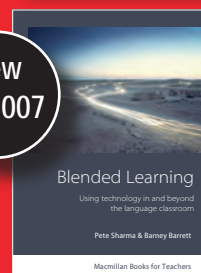
Carol Read

New for 2007

Macmillan Books for Teachers

Macmillan Books for Teachers
Teaching solutions for real classrooms

MACMILLAN

www.macmillanenglish.com/methodology

An A–Z of ELT
Scott Thornbury
Macmillan Books for Teachers

Children Learning English
Jayne Moon
Macmillan Books for Teachers

Sound Foundations
English pronunciation
Adrian Underhill
Macmillan Books for Teachers

New for 2007

Blended Learning
Using technology in and beyond
the language classroom
Pete Sharma & Barney Barrett
Macmillan Books for Teachers

Learning Teaching
Jim Scrivener
Macmillan Books for Teachers

Beyond the Sentence
Introducing discourse analysis
Scott Thornbury
Macmillan Books for Teachers

Teaching Practice
A guide for teachers in training
Macmillan Books for Teachers