folio

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Journal of the Materials Development Association

MATSDA

In this issue:

TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (TESOL) MASTER OF ARTS (FULL TIME)

UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics

The University of Limerick undertakes programmes of education and research to doctorate level in the following areas: business, computing, dance, education, engineering, humanities, mathematics, music, social science and science. The extensive modern campus of the University is located on the banks of the River Shannon at the heart of the 640 acre National Technological Park, approximately 3 miles from the centre of Limerick city. The University has excellent educational, cultural, sporting and residential facilities and accommodates some 13,000 students.

INTRODUCTION

This one-year full-time MA in Teaching English to Speakers Of Other Languages (TESOL) provides teacher education for those wishing to become teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). It is also designed for experienced teachers who wish to update their knowledge and skills. The programme allows teachers to develop and reflect upon their understanding of the various theoretical and practical issues that impact upon the field of language teaching. It places particular emphasis on the notion of informed and critical teaching and the need for teachers to mediate between theory and practice in constructing pedagogies according to specific teaching/learning contexts in line with the most recent approaches in the field. Language technology, and corpus-based approaches to the study of language feature strongly in the programme. A balance is maintained between linguistic content, pedagogic content, and teaching-related research. The programme concludes with a 15,000 word dissertation giving students the opportunity to engage in empirical research, or with an internship allowing students to directly apply the theoretical and practical knowledge they learned on the programme. An alternative graduate diploma exit route is available for those who choose not to do the dissertation or internship.

SAMPLE MODULES

- Language Systems
- Second Language Acquisition Theory & Classroom application
- Research Methodology
- Teaching Practice
- Linguistics for Language Teaching
- Language Pedagogy for ELT
- Technology & Lanaguage Studies
- Blended Learning
- Internship

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A second or first class honours level primary degree or equivalent professional qualification (Primary degree: level 8 NQAI).

Candidates who do not meet the above degree requirements but have equivalent prior professional experience are welcome to apply for admission. All candidates will be required to attend an interview or Skype interview.

Applicants' qualification for entry to some of the modules, e.g. TP and Materials Development modules, will be ascertained on the basis of prior teaching qualification/s and teaching experience.

International students require an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) composite score in the range of 6.5 and not less than 6 in any one component, as for entry to all programmes in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences.

APPLICATIONS

The programme commences in September of each year.
Apply online at: www.ul.ie/gps/
Contact: postgradadmissions@ul.ie
Telephone: +353-(0)61-234377

FURTHER INFORMATION

Applicants who wish to discuss detailed elements of the programme may contact the Course Director: Elaine Riordan, School of Modern Languages & Applied Linguistics
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www.matsda.org

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From the Editor

Freda Mishan, University of Limerick

I am delighted to introduce this year's issue of *Folio*. Despite the impact of the Covid pandemic which curtailed live conferences and consequently submissions, this issue offers great variety in terms of formats (research articles, interviews and sample materials) and of international reach, with contributions from Uzbekistan, The Philippines, Tunisia, Oman, Italy as well as the UK. The articles in this issue cover three aspects of materials development; two articles offer samples of materials, two cover teacher education and training in materials design and the last two turn the spotlight on the materials developers themselves.

Tony Waterman's action research project training Omani English teachers in reflecting on and evaluating materials is followed by Hassen Rached and Raja Zayer's account of insights from materials design workshops led by Rod Bolitho as part of the *Teaching for Success Tunisia* project. Hartle and Andreolli then present a fascinating approach to using visuals in the online language classroom to stimulate critical thinking skills. The next contribution, from Diana Mazgutova and colleagues from third level institutions in Uzbekistan, gives us samples of teacher training materials for EAP. Two interviews round off this issue. One gives us Brian Tomlinson 'in action' being interviewed by postgraduate students in The Philippines. The other is from ELT coursebook author Heather Buchanan, describing her experience of co-authoring OUP's *Navigate*. The closing words to that interview are a clarion call for our profession; "Any budding materials writers out there, get out there and network with others in our profession. Get to know people, go to conferences, etc. You never know where it might lead!"

The contributions in this issue illustrate that the pandemic may have constrained international movement, but certainly not research in and the development of learning materials. While thanking the authors in this issue for their contributions, I would also like to acknowledge their determination and resilience in the face of what continues to be a harsh constraint on the freedom of movement which is so essential in our research field, and which we hitherto took for granted.

Freda Mishan, Editor
University of Limerick
November 2021

Greetings from the President

Brian Tomlinson, MATSDA President

Welcome to another issue of *Folio*, as MATSDA keeps going and growing. We have recently added Tom Court from Hawaii to our MATSDA Committee as Promotions Manager and he has produced some excellent animated videos which can be viewed by going to *www.matsda.org*. He is now planning a series of video interviews and will soon be interviewing myself and Hitomi Masuhara (our MATSDA Secretary) about our recent publications *The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning* (Tomlinson and Masuhara, published by Wiley in 2018) and *SLA Applied: Connecting Theory and Practice* (published by Cambridge University Press in 2021). Tom will then be moving on to interview other members of the MATSDA Committee, regular contributors to MATSDA Conferences and other recent contributors to the field of materials development.

This year we again had to postpone our proposed materials development workshop at the University of Aston and our Listen to the Learners Conference at the Liverpool School of English. We did however go ahead with a combined conference with the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia in collaboration with Wasit University, Iraq. The Conference was a virtual conference with a main theme of Developing L2 Materials and Designing Language Learning to Promote Creativity and Criticality. It was held on August 11th and 12th 2021 over a record-breaking continuous period of twenty four hours and attracted over a hundred participants from all over the world. From the feedback I have received it was a very successful conference despite the constraints of not being face to face. Personally I really missed the informal interaction during and in between sessions which has become a distinguishing feature of MATSDA Conferences.

Next year the MATSDA Conference will almost certainly be in June in Tuscany, Italy. We are in discussions with Centro Studi Mugello, a Bilingual International School in Borgo San Lorenzo near Florence, and a MATSDA Conference will be almost certainly be held with them either at the school in Borgo San Lorenzo or at a Conference Centre in Florence. The details of the Conference will be available soon on the MATSDA website (*www.matsda.org*).

We are also hoping that circumstances will allow us to run the much delayed MATSDA/Aston University materials development workshop and MATSDA/ Liverpool School of English Listen to the Learner Conference next year. There is also a possibility that we will cooperate with the Testing SIG of IATEFL to run a conference on materials for testing.

The book publishing the proceedings of the MATSDA/ University of Liverpool 2019 Conference has been delayed but has now gone to press as Fernández, C. & Adon, B. (Eds.). (2022). *Using Language Learning Materials: Theory and Practice.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars.

This is a collection of papers written by parallel presenters from the MATSDA/University of Liverpool 2019 Conference on Using Language Learning Materials: Theory and Practice.

The book will be published in early 2022.

Hope to see you at one of our Conferences in the near future.

Brian Tomlinson
President of MATSDA

Developing Teachers' Expertise Through Adaptation or Replacement of Course Material

Tony Waterman

This article details a teacher education (TE) project to encourage practicing teachers to evaluate the coursebooks they are using to decide if these materials are adequate or require adapting or even replacing in terms of providing effective learning and teaching. This initial evaluation is followed up by teachers adapting or producing their own new materials and trialling them with their learners for evaluation. Teachers reflect on each pilot of materials and report back to their colleagues in focus group meetings. For this article, the researcher/author analysed data from pre-project questionnaires, focus group meetings, end-of-project interviews and the new materials to produce findings which highlight both context-specific and universal issues of materials evaluation, production and exploitation. Key findings are highlighted and practical implications are drawn for teacher educators running such projects. The conclusion section focuses on more general implications for educators working with teachers and using materials evaluation and production worldwide in a wide variety of training and learning contexts.

The rationale for setting up such a TE project

During my many years working for the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), I had become keenly aware that both expatriate and Omani ELT teachers tended to use either published coursebooks or in-house produced coursebooks without questioning these publications' content, locally-appropriate methodology, relevance to the learners or cultural appropriacy (Gray, 2010).

Eventually, I had the opportunity to work with a group of teachers, most of whom were Omani, and decided to organize a TE project which tasked teachers to evaluate the materials they used and encourage them to develop replacement materials, when needed, within what Núñez Pardo and Téllez Téllez (2015) term a reflective learning environment.

ELT teachers' personal beliefs and hence the professional decisions they make about second language learning are formed from a priori factors such as learning experiences labelled as apprenticeship(s) of observation (Lortie, 1975) and initial pedagogic training, now commonly renamed as teacher preparation (Mann, 2005). Al-Issa (2007) has identified in respect of Omani teachers that their teaching methodology 'still tends to be very formal and emphasizes a largely passive role for students' (p.201). The project aimed to build on the teachers' a priori factors while expanding their knowledge base by having them adapt materials and expand their local ELT practices, in line with Masuhara's (2006) suggested approach of materials adaptation as teacher development. Michel's (2018) study of textbook development provides a comprehensive list of aspects of materials development for teachers to refer to, and Hurst (2015) details a TE programme involving trainees evaluating ELT materials, both of which are useful sources when planning and delivering similar projects.

Such engagement with materials within a TE scenario aims to redress the scant coverage using materials receives in TE projects, as identified by Garton & Graves (2014) and provides valuable developmental work relating directly to how teachers plan lessons and exploit material with their learners.

Evaluation leading to adaptation or replacement of materials

Teachers who simply cover each and every page and task of a prescribed coursebook, categorized as curriculum-transmitters by Thornbury (2005), rarely exhibit the professional approach which effective learning requires. They are failing to consider Cunningsworth's (1984) contention that coursebooks are 'good servants but poor masters' with the implied need to evaluate coursebook content in terms of learning contexts and learner needs. This concurs with Edge and Garton's (2009) position that teachers should be using materials to serve in a subsidiary role to support effective learning. Moreover, as Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018) have identified, 'adaptation has become a necessity rather than an option' (p.83) as a result of global coursebooks failing to support local contexts and local pedagogies adequately.

Conversely, Shawer's (2010) notion of curriculum-developers are teachers who regularly evaluate, question and look for more effective ways to produce and deliver material which is motivating for learners (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). These professional actions also encourage positive learner factors such as affective and cognitive engagement (Jenkins, 2007) and provides learners with a voice (Pennycook, 2001) to express their individual cultural experiences.

These factors should be easier for Omani teachers to address as they themselves have already undergone the locally-contextualized learning experiences of their learners. As Tomlinson (2013) suggests, such local learning experience enables teachers to engage their learners cognitively and emotionally so language acquisition can occur.

Evaluation

Teachers need to evaluate materials against learner outcomes to check on the level of success the materials engender (Stoller & Robinson, 2014). When using course materials with their learners, teachers are able to evaluate the effectiveness of these materials in terms of learner engagement and motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) in line with Tomlinson's (2011) call for teachers to analyse materials as materials-in-action, as actually used in the classroom. Other key areas of focus would include learners' needs and wants and how well the materials satisfy these (Tomlinson, 2006) as well as developing locally-appropriate approaches to address the local learning context (Husbands et al., 2003).

Adaptation

When teachers are deciding whether to (a) continue to use extant course materials or (b) adapt these to their own teaching context, Gray (2010) suggests that they may well require teachers/writers to include locally-appropriate English language teaching methodologies which correspond with both their own and their learners' beliefs, attitudes and expectations (Tudor, 2001). Teachers should feel comfortable with what they produce for the classroom (Mann, 2005) and satisfy what Prabhu (1990) terms a sense of professional acceptability within their working community of practice.

Replacement

Teachers decide to replace course material if they have already used it with learners and found it ineffective or while they are evaluating material at face-value. Teachers will use, amongst others, one or more key criteria to decide the material should be replaced. For example, the material is pedagogically unworkable, does not cover learner outcomes adequately, is inappropriate to the local learning context, or fails to address affective learner factors. Teachers who produce new materials will need to ensure they successfully carry out a balancing act between text input difficulty and task complexity to ensure that meaningful communication leads to successful learning (Samuda & Bygate, 2008).

Context of the TE project

The project involved both Omani and expatriate ELT teachers working in a military airforce college. Teachers' qualifications included a degree in ELT education with some also having completed a CELTA course. Classroom experience ranged from two to ten years. These teachers were provided with in-house produced coursebooks, *Target One, Two* and *Three*, to use with adult Omani learners, most of whom were in uniform. The English language courses lasted for three months each, with learners receiving four 45-minute lessons each day and were pitched at beginner, elementary and pre-intermediate level covering both general English and English for general military purposes. Learners came from not only the Omani air force but also from the army, navy, royal guard, special forces, police and other services. These courses prepared learners so that they could then cope with further military training delivered in English by expatriate instructors.

Constructing the TE project

To follow military protocol, I obtained official approval for the project and kept the education officers responsible for the college updated on progress throughout. To initiate the project, I gave teachers the pre-project questionnaire (*Figure 1* overleaf), to find out if and how they evaluated course material and any actions they had taken to redress problematic tasks. I collected and read the responses and noted that only the more experienced teachers offered tangible action in terms of evaluating materials and reacting to what they had discovered. The questionnaire provided confirmation of what I had expected after so many years working in Oman in RAFO and therefore justified the TE project thereby making it more meaningful as a teacher development tool.

As the teachers had little or no experience of evaluating, adapting or replacing course materials, I organized an initial two-hour awareness-raising PowerPoint-driven workshop presenting some clear aspects of problematic tasks such as: unhelpful instructions and/or confusing procedures; a mismatch between learner outcomes and materials' aims; and a lack of production work for learners during presentation and practice of new target language (see example in *Figure 2* overleaf).

Presentation and discussion of these problematic tasks engaged the teachers in (a) identifying the problem the materials present teachers / learners, (b) deciding how these materials could be adapted (c) selecting what

PRE-PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

Using, adapting or replacing course book material

If you need more space for your answers, please use the other side of this sheet.

Q1:   How often do you adapt / replace course book materials?

Q2:   Why do you feel you need to adapt / replace course book materials?

Q3:   How do you adapt course book materials? (*please give an example*)

Q4:   How do you replace course book materials? (*please give an example*)

Q5:   How do you evaluate these materials? (*please give an example*)

Q6:   How do your learners react to adapted / replacement materials?

Q7:   What benefit do **you** get from adapting / replacing course book materials?

Q8:   Do you have anything more to add?

Thank you very much for your input.

Figure 1: Pre-project questionnaire

TEACHER-EDUCATION PROGRAMME

3.2 Replacing / adding material

1. Sensitizing task for a reading about weather:
    - X   x4 questions – why the focus on the UK!
    - ✓   Replace with the focus on Oman
2. Reading task x8 multiple choice questions:
    - X   Unrealistic task with little focus on weather
    - ✓   Needs more realistic task using weather words
3. Post-reading extension task:
    - X   No post-reading task
    - ✓   Add a new map of Arab Gulf weather map to be described as a speaking and then writing task

TEACHER-EDUCATION SESSION

Figure 2: Workshop slide presenting problems and solutions as awareness-raising

could be done to replace the materials. This initial task produced a wealth of teacher-input as evidenced in the themes section below.

Next, I put the teachers in pairs and handed each pair a pre-selected piece of material made up of a problematic task from the in-house coursebooks at one of the three levels, either from the student book or the workbook. Problems with coursebook tasks, as noted earlier, included: a mis-match between the learner outcome and the actual task; overly-complicated content and/or tasks; and focus on form without necessary learner-production work.

Pairs followed the same process of evaluation, adaptation or replacement as they had done with the examples. Then, when they had ideas crystalized in note form, I mixed up the pairs into two groups so that they could explain the nature of the problems and

exchange their thoughts and ideas for how to redress such problems in their new groupings. This re-grouping produced yet more useful ideas and suggestions whilst also initiating a sense of community (Wenger, 1998) among the teachers. Finally, we had an open group session comparing some interesting and innovative solutions to the problematic material and a short Q&A session about the next stage of the project.

Supported by their experiences during the workshop, teachers were tasked to evaluate the materials they were to teach during the up-coming month and find one task to evaluate and adapt or replace. Then, they had to prepare new material and use it with their learners for one lesson during that month. This process of identifying reasons for adaptation by evaluating the given coursebook, producing new materials, using and evaluating them in the classroom, and discussing how to revise these materials adheres to the principled approach to adaptation advocated by Tomlinson (2003).

Teachers completed a standardized reflection sheet (*Figure 3*), after each lesson. This included guided questions to ensure teachers described (a) why they had chosen certain material (b) what they hoped their new material would do (c) how the lesson went and (d) what they and their learners' impressions were about using the new material. By including their learners' reactions, the reflection sheet addresses Kerfoot's (1993) appeal to involve both teacher- and learner-evaluations of materials. Teachers were then able to use their responses as an aide-memoire during the focus group meetings.

POST-LESSON REFLECTION SHEET

Reflecting on your adaptation / replacement of course book materials

Please complete this sheet after you have tried out the changes you made to a piece of course book material in one of your classes.

Details of the original course book material:

Why you decided to adapt / replace it:

How you evaluated this 'new' material having used it with your learners:

What changes you might make if you used this 'new' material again:

What have you learned from evaluating and then adapting or replacing material:

[*Fragment of original*]

Figure 3: Post-lesson reflection sheet

At the end of the month, we would all meet in a focus group setting and each teacher would describe the whys, hows and their evaluation of their new material. The other teachers were encouraged to listen and then offer constructive criticism in keeping with Kitzinger's (1995) point that such focus group sessions enable participants to explore 'others' knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what

people think but how they think and why they think that way' (p.299). Each meeting would be rounded off with general and/or specific input from myself as teacher educator, such as suggestions how to refine their material or produce alternative task-types. Such support for materials development corresponds to Kiliçkaya's (2018) study of pre-service English teachers producing materials as part of their TE although those trainee teachers did not subsequently use their materials in the classroom.

Each focus group meeting would last approximately 70 minutes with a further reflection sheet being distributed for the following month. These meetings continued for six months thereby adhering to Borg's (2005) call for development projects to take place over an extended period to enable participants to adapt their core beliefs and practices which may engender highly culture-specific approaches to teaching and learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). In this way, I hoped to facilitate teachers' learning which would maintain and improve their skill sets and even foster new skills or approaches (Day & Sachs, 2004) by engaging them in constant self-questioning as they designed, trialled and evaluated their materials (Jolly & Bolitho, 1998).

In order to document the elements of the TE project, I used the following data collection tools: pre-project questionnaires (*Figure 1*); post-lesson reflection sheets (*Figure 3*); audio-recordings of the focus group meetings; post-project interviews; together with analysis of the new materials. At the start of the project, I arranged an informal meeting with the teachers to introduce the aims of the TE project. I explained the covering letter outlining the project and the consent form giving consent to the collection of data for subsequent presentation and publication.

I made audio-recordings of the monthly focus group meetings, which I then transcribed and I also collected a copy of the new materials for analysis. At the end of the six-month project, I conducted a semi-guided end-of-project interview with each teacher individually (*Figure 4*) to collect their overall impressions and any

END-OF-PROJECT INTERVIEW

Using, adapting or replacing course book material

Q1: What did you do about poor course material before the teacher development project?

Q2: Please describe some successes you had during the project.

Q3: Can you recount a low point you had during the project?

Q4: In what ways has the project influenced you as an ELT professional?

Q5: How do you see the project influencing your approach to materials in the future?

Q6: Do you have any suggestions to offer to improve the project?

Q7: Is there anything else you would like to say about the project?

Figure 4: End-of-project interview

other comments teachers had about the TE project.

The resulting written and spoken data, including new materials, were then coded to build up a comprehensive codebook (see sample in *Figure 5*), which enabled me to construct themes emerging from the project, for reporting and publication.

CODEBOOK

PWQ = Pre-project questionnaire   FG1 = Focus group meeting one
RF3 = Post-lesson reflection sheet   F1 = Final interview

Origin	Details	Codes
PWQ5 Wafa	Some are too general to give to students. Some are too difficult (or higher than their level). Some materials are repeating themselves (too easy).	Too difficult / easy
FG2 Abdullah	Providing this Omani map with the weather symbols and the students here have to ask and answer questions.	Catering to local context
FG4 Fatima	This activity is repeated in the workbook so they already know the form of the verbs. They are working in pairs and they have to pick up a card and say the past simple. In this one, they have to change the sentences from the present to past … and expressions, too. They have to make positive, negative or questions.	Replacing a repetitive task Producing cards Very well-designed and produced cards
RF3 Salim	Adapting or replacing materials force me to vary my teaching methods in the class.	Vary teaching methods
F1 Fatima	Before this project I had no experience and you have the book and have to teach every task. Now I can evaluate material because I know my students and I can go to other resources. I can decide what is good.	Confidence to evaluate and select / adapt / replace

Figure 5: Sample codebook entries

Major themes arising during the TE project

Data from the pre-project questionnaires pinpointed two areas which teachers consider as important in respect of using classroom materials with their learners: key aspects of effective materials; and main reasons for replacing ineffective materials.

Key aspects of effective materials

From analysis of the pre-project questionnaire responses, teachers identified three aspects they considered important: appropriacy to learner needs; relevance to local context; and motivating to learners.

Main reasons for replacing ineffective materials

Analysing why teachers felt the need to adapt or replace material, the most common reasons given were as follows: unsuitable content and tasks for the local context and material which was felt to be too short, easy, repetitive, confusing or time-consuming.

Moving on to the data collected from the focus group meetings and from the end-of-project interviews, the following themes emerged: substitution of unsuitable content and tasks for the local context; replacement of short, easy, repetitive, confusing, or time-consuming material; changes in teachers' pedagogic behaviours; the creation of a community of practice; and the significance of the educator's input. Details relating to each of these major themes follows.

Substituting unsuitable content and tasks for the local context

In focus group meeting 2 (FG 2), Wafa[1] explained how she had identified a problematic task involving present / past verb forms.

> *The instructions say write the past tense of the verbs and it's pair work but the problem is how to do the pair work because some of the students might know the answers, some might not. For me this was a waste of time.*

She had replaced it with an innovative verb bingo task using verbs and pictures to be done as a competition in pairs (*Figure 6*). Other teachers voiced their appreciation for the task, in particular the importance of having cards which are visually appealing to learners and teachers as noted in Thurairaj and Roy (2012).
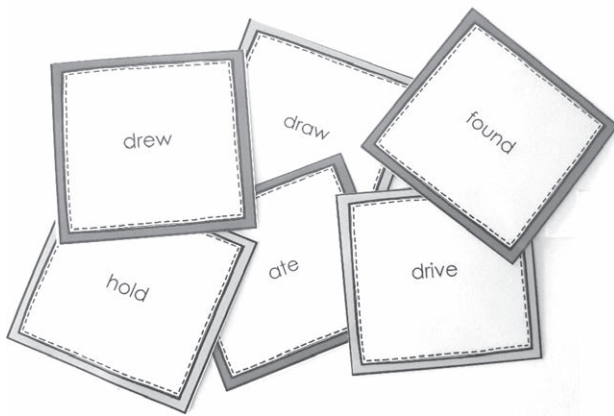

Figure 6: Verb bingo cards

FG 2 continued with Abdullah explaining why a weather map presented too many unknown places for his learners so he had produced a weather map of Oman instead. He continued:

> *The students here have to ask and answer questions about what the weather will be like in some different Omani cities tomorrow using the correct adjective by referring to the symbols provided on the map.*

His well-produced map with weather icons enabled learners to practise using the weather words to ask and answer questions, with a follow-up writing task with the materials set in the local context. In this way, lesson content linked learning to the learners' lives outside the classroom, as advocated by Harwood (2010).

Replacing short, easy, repetitive, confusing, or time-consuming material

In FG 1, Fatima explained how she had identified vocabulary presentation material as being too easy, short and repetitive. Her observation was in line with Tomlinson's (2011) call for material to be pitched a little above learners' level of ability cognitively, linguistically, and skills-wise while still offering learners doable challenge. Her alternative was a multiple-choice task with two options to promote dictionary work. However, other teachers assessed this new task as being too limited and suggested a range of other ideas and, as educator, I felt the need to point out that if this discovery task was to be productive, then an element of information exchange, such as A/B worksheets would increase learners' cognitive engagement.

In FG 4, Abdullah showcased how he had adapted a series of written questions into a questionnaire with prompts so that learners could form questions and gather information from their group's members and then use their notes to construct stories told in the past tense, about their group members. Again, this was an innovative way to adapt coursebook material to provide communicative practice using personalized information which increased levels of learner motivation and led from speaking to writing practice.

Changes in teachers' pedagogic behaviours

During the end-of-project interview, Wafa identified the value of experimenting with cards:

> *Using cards especially with the grammar to differentiate verbs and so on. This was one of the things that I really appreciate especially during the project - the idea cards can be used multiple times in multiple ways to let students work.*

She also said that she was now better informed as to the importance of changing the focus from teacher talking-time to student talking-time:

> *I used to ... mostly with the teacher talking but now I give them some information and they have to work on it and thereby let them enhance their knowledge and at the same time to understand is to let them do things [sic] and elicit their ideas and knowledge so that they build on it. I feel this was very successful.*

This is an example of Clarke's (2008) notion that building professional discourse and community in an educational setting can make 'teachers and teacher educators ... alert to spaces and possibilities for self-development and self-transformation' (p.198). Moreover, Wafa was one of several teachers who felt she had improved her planning in respect of attaining

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1. All names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

her learning outcomes for her learners:

> *[After] we had the [focus group meetings], I know now what to use and how to use every single minute in my lesson just to deliver a very good lesson with goals achieved by the end of it. And try at the same time not to waste time on for example repeating myself and have learner-centred classes rather than teacher-centred.*

During his end-of-project interview, Juma appreciated how he had got a lot of new ideas for evaluating and exploiting material, not merely relying on the teacher's book:

> *[Before] I just tried to do all the tasks in the coursebook and workbook but now I have the idea that we can skip some tasks, change, adapt and add new materials and change delivery.*

Juma had also become more aware of the value of reflecting on his lessons and stated that he had gained a better appreciation of the importance of speaking tasks in the class before embarking on writing practice. In terms of improving future TE sessions, he commented 'I prefer to do practical things in the classroom – the educator can make it more practical' referring to his hope to learn more in future TE sessions about making learners more productive users of English in class time. This is against the backdrop of his learners often performing mechanical drills and exercises prevalent in the *Target* books, produced in-house, which he and the other teachers in this study have to follow.

In FG 3, Abdullah explained how he had replaced a mechanical task with a task requiring learners to make questions from prompts to get information about their working life in the Omani military (*Figure 7*).

This was both innovative and productive. It engaged learners by using their own military working lives and increased learner motivation by engaging learners cognitively (Tomlinson, 2012), providing meaningful practice (Tomlinson, 2005) and challenging content (Masuhara & Tomlinson, 2008) to promote effective language acquisition. Subsequent ideas offered by other teachers resulted in Abdullah re-evaluating his material and going on to produce an impressive questionnaire for learners to use for a mingling task from which each learner could produce a written class report. By engaging in this evaluation process and being receptive to feedback from colleagues (White, 1988), Abdullah not only gained valuable experience but was able to produce more effective material.

During FG 4, Fatima had identified a repetitive task covering present and past simple verb forms and created cards (*Figure 8*), with a picture of each activity and the infinitive verb form on each one which she had then laminated in keeping with Wright's (2005) view that visual aids add to the sensory experiences of learners and teachers. Learners took one card from a pile and produced a sentence which their partner then had to put into the other verb form, present to past or vice versa. Learners were encouraged to offer affirmative, negative and interrogative sentences with both regular and irregular verbs and the activity produced a wealth of language whilst also giving essential feedback to Fatima on how well her learners had mastered the verb forms.

Target Level Three   Unit 2

Question 1: work in groups of four. Tell your partners about your service.

RAO   RAFO RNO   RGO

- Talk about your workplace, duties, different sections and units.

> I work in ....
> ....
> ....

- Write short paragraphs about your partner's service

_____
_____
_____
_____

Figure 7: Questionnaire about learners' working life in the Omani military

Figure 8: Activity cards for verb practice

In her end-of-project interview, Fatima identified how to better achieve her outcomes as the most useful part of the project as well as how to design more effective materials which she had initially found very challenging. Fatima now felt more confident when evaluating, selecting, adapting or replacing materials:

> *At the beginning, I had a problem designing materials. I am not good in this [sic] so I don't know how to organize my ideas and what to put first but during the workshops I got better ... Before this project I had no experience and you have the book and you have to teach every task. Now I can evaluate material because I know my students and I can if I go to other resources [sic], I can decide what is good.*

The creation of a community of practice

In FG 2, participants discussed Abdullah's weather map (see above). Although this had proved both intrinsically interesting and meaningful for his learners, his exploitation of the map could have been more effective if he had followed the suggestions of his peers to make this a pair information-gap task - thereby increasing learner interaction, language production, motivation and learner confidence. Being the second focus group meeting, I was encouraged that teachers were thinking creatively and sharing constructive criticism leading to more effective materials being designed, consistent with Lenning and Ebbers' (2006) view of learning communities where participants can 'engage in product-oriented activities, i.e. activities which are related to their immediate surroundings, real needs and issues' (quoted in Tin, p.256).

Abdullah also highlighted what I myself had been observing:

> *I even got new ideas from my friends here, we had different people with different experience and look at each other's work and pass it out to each other which was really great.*

Once we had reached the end of FG 4, with three very impressive pieces of adapted material offered, I suggested this would be a good time to conclude the project and all the teachers agreed! Even though we had not been able to have six FGs, finishing the TE project on a high note at this point left the teachers in an enthusiastic mood for future TE projects thereby encouraging both positive feedback transmitted to other teachers and education officers in RAFO and hopefully having a positive effect on future TE activities.

The significance of the educator's input

This final theme emanates more from my own role as researcher/educator but was also evidenced in the audio-recordings of the FGs and from the end-of-project interviews. With a wealth of experience not only in TE but also in materials development, I was in an ideal position to pass on my expertise during feedback in the FGs. For example, in relation to Fatima's activity cards, I suggested that if she told her learners the initial information must be *true*, then the activity would become more personalized and even more motivating.

A different way I was also able to support the group was exemplified by my decision to precede FG 3 by a review of the importance of keeping focus on learner outcome(s) when adapting or replacing material. I felt this review was needed as some teachers had previously presented innovative and motivating materials but had lost sight of the learner outcome and therefore failed to cover an important item in the syllabus.

Limitations

I encountered two significant problems while collecting data which impacted negatively on the TE project. First, the nature of working in the military is that teachers are posted in and out of sections and units on an irregular basis. This resulted in an initial eight teachers attending the awareness-raising workshop but the two western-trained expatriate teachers were then posted to another unit and could no longer be included in the project. Two of the other original eight were later moved to other units and one was posted in and joined the project but without the benefit of the awareness-raising workshop.

The second problem was external factors negatively affecting teachers in the English section. These factors included (a) teachers being tasked with extra work which was unrelated to their teaching duties and (b) language teachers having to join sports and other extra curricula events even though they are usually exempt as civilian officers and these can compromise both preparation and teaching. Combining these factors with non-standard leave patterns meant that the planned once-a-month focus group meetings became untenable with teachers either over-burdened with work or absent on holiday. Indeed, after completing only four meetings in six months, I decided the time was right to end the project having just had several excellent tasks presented in the fourth focus group meeting thereby completing the project at a very positive and encouraging moment. Finishing earlier than planned also avoided the project-fatigue I could see creeping into the section.

Discussion

The TE project engaged some of the teachers in materials evaluation for the first time so that they gained insight into one key aspect of lesson planning – ensuring materials are fulfilling the learner outcomes stated in the syllabus. This was a revelation to some teachers but

was not done in a threatening way as they themselves had used the input in the awareness-raising workshop to inform their evaluation process. Furthermore, rather than looking for replacement materials from outside sources such as pedagogic practice books or ELT websites, most of their trialled lessons contained either adapted or new material produced by the teachers themselves. This, I would suggest, is a far more thought-provoking and constructive way to engage in personal development than merely copying others' work from existing materials.

From the process of trialling their new materials, teachers identified the following as key aspects requiring attention: constructing a meaningful, communicative task; promoting communication to give / get needed information; increasing learner motivation; adding challenge to tasks; and planning for speaking leading to writing.

Evaluating their materials post-lesson made teachers reflect on lessons and then also receive feedback from peers and the educator which could produce a considerable amount of constructive input and a wide range of ideas for revising and exploiting material, thereby fulfilling my aim of enabling these teachers to gather teaching and learning experiences, reactions and suggestions (Richards, 2001). Teachers found three key requirements which they agreed on: to increase learner interaction leading to greater enjoyment of lesson tasks; to produce materials which have longevity both in terms of multiple potential uses and which will physically last a number of years before needing to be replaced; and to expand the amount of content in their materials to provide more challenge and increase output.

Conclusions

From the amount of positive feedback received from the teachers in the end-of-project interviews, it is clear that they valued the developmental work required to take part in the TE project despite losing some of their lesson-preparation time to planning, producing and trialling material, completing reflection sheets as well as attending the focus group meetings. Teachers, like learners, learn by doing, and having the support system which the project's community of practice constructed, should enhance the professional working environment of the English language section. As Hargreaves (2003) reports,

> Sharing ideas and expertise, providing moral support when dealing with new and difficult challenges, discussing complex individual cases together – this is the essence of strong collegiality and the basis for professional communities. (p.84).

However, it is incumbent on the educator to organize such a project in a way which avoids threatening experiences when teachers are sharing their materials, ideas and classroom experiences. All feedback should be constructive, offered with a view to building teacher-confidence and promoting a safe staffroom environment, what Huberman (1993) calls common havens for professional reflection, together with a collaborative environment where competition between teachers is excluded.

Such a project offers a further opportunity for educators to gain a more informed view of potential TE needs for teachers in the future, as well as enabling teachers to identify areas of professional need. These needs can then be addressed in future TE projects and/or sessions, no matter where in the world ELT teachers and educators are working together to promote successful learning and teaching.

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Materials design:
Teaching for success in Tunisia

Hassen Rached and Raja Zayer

Introduction

This article presents major learning points gained in the process of materials design training in Tunisia. Textbook and curriculum design has traditionally been one of the main missions of inspectors within the Tunisian education system. The 2002 Education Act sets the inspector of education duties as evaluation, training and pedagogic innovation. Therefore, textbook design comes within the work domain of education inspectors under the third heading of innovation. The process of the training of inspectors of English as textbook designers is discussed starting from the status quo of textbooks in Tunisia going through a reflection upon the three major learning points: working with objectives, intercultural competence, and language awareness for language acquisition. The inadequacy of current Tunisian ELT textbooks to realise curriculum objectives will be discussed in the next section. The following questions will be examined (i) What is the relation between the current textbooks and the failure to realise curriculum objectives? (ii) What are the issues most discussed and most likely to bring about a change? (iii) How can textbooks cater for the demands of the national curriculum and 21st century learning?

The context

Textbooks have always been mentioned, mainly by classroom practitioners, as one of the main reasons for poor student achievement. Although research is scarce in the Tunisian context, case reports, classroom observation and interviews with teachers pinpoint textbooks as one of the major contributing factors. Inadequacies and lack of quality can be pinpointed as the following:

- Absence of a clear road map towards achieving curriculum goals. Textbooks differ in methodology and work strategies. However, according to Daoued (1996) 'the eclecticism exercised by teachers is largely uninformed and based on their own experience as former learners and apprentice teachers' (p. 600).

- Lack of consistency in presenting grammatical rules and terminology. Text material is more focused on form rather than meaning. There is a need for textbooks to provide appropriate strategies to foster the learning process. Ounis (2019) starts from evaluation of the 7th grade Tunisian ELT textbook to conclude that in the Tunisian context, 'opportunities for genuine communication and language practice are very rare and occasional inside the classroom setting, especially with form-focused teaching methodology' (p. 27).

- Current textbooks do not really inculcate higher-order cognitive competencies. In their evaluation of the 3rd grade secondary education textbook, Abid and Moalla (2019) found that it focuses on linguistic skills, with little support for critical thinking skills and development of intercultural competence.

The need for publishing a new series of textbooks had fallen down the list of priorities during the post-2011 revolution socio-political changes that Tunisia had gone through until a partnership project was established between the Ministry of Education and the British Council under the slogan *Teaching for Success Tunisia* in October 2018. This is an initiative that aims at improving student learning outcomes and enhancing the future employability of young Tunisians. In this article, we will be mainly focusing on one part of the programme which is the materials design group facilitated by Rod Bolitho, coursebook author, trainer and ELT projects consultant. The main objectives of the materials design initiative are (i) To train a cohort of inspectors in the generic skills and subskills of writing language teaching and learning materials (ii) To support the production of a new generation of English language textbooks for all three levels of schooling in Tunisia: primary (ages 6-12), preparatory (ages 12-15) and secondary (ages 15-19).

The training programme went through three main phases. The first one was a face-to-face workshop in November 2019. The workshop focused on opening up issues and exploring ideas. In the second phase, two main writing tasks were assigned. (1) A language awareness task, to be completed by January 2020. (2) A structured unit design, for submission by March 2020.

Both tasks were completed in teams based on the principle that the best materials are the result of different thinking styles, different opinions and different beliefs about teaching and learning. In the

third phase, a series of webinars and ongoing dialogue took place from March to May 2020. Several topics were addressed from 'Selecting and Grading Content' to 'The Teacher as Mediator between Textbook and Learners'. The work culminated in a full unit design task incorporating all the features introduced and discussed during the webinars.

Working with objectives

Learning objectives help teachers to keep on track in their planning and teaching. They also tell learners what they should expect to learn in a lesson or series of lessons. Although lesson planning and formulating objectives come as one of the essential components of pre-service and in-service training, classroom observation and post-lesson discussion show that working with objectives is still a problem. Many teachers, veterans included, confuse classroom activities, strategies, and objectives. This is quite revealing as it shows that the focus on delivering activities and teaching language items can lack clear learning objectives. The training stressed the need for a clearly-defined framework for structuring the learning materials. The idea of the training is not to impose conformity but to give direction to learning activities by stating the aims of each lesson or unit in the course. In fact, absence of a clear vision of the big picture may be a contributory factor to the observed underachievement problem.

The training centred around many issues in relation to working with objectives in textbook design. Generally, learning objectives are 'competency-based as they designate exactly what students need to demonstrate mastery of course material' (Mager, 1984, p 43). The learning objectives are synthesised in the acronym SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable for target audience within scheduled time and specified conditions, Relevant and results-oriented and Targeted to the learner and to the desired level of learning. The first issue concerns the 'M' of the SMART acronym. It has to do with whether objectives should be measurable and consequently observable. It has been said that this is redolent of behaviourism. Mager lists the following words as being 'loaded' because they do not describe observable behaviour and are open to many interpretations like 'to know', 'to understand', 'to appreciate', 'to enjoy', 'to believe', 'to have faith in', 'to internalize' (Mager, 1984, p 11).

Another issue discussed turned around one teacher's expressed worry that 'objective-oriented lessons are a burden to the teachers and the students alike. Students learn differently, learning is incremental and students who have actually learnt something may not demonstrate it by the end of the session' (Badis)[1]. In another teacher's words, 'I can feel it when students

acquire a linguistic point' (Manel). Some teachers see that being restricted by objectives makes the lesson 'a sprint race' and cuts down on their responsiveness to classroom events and students' needs. The view is, in some way, backed up by literature. Language acquisition, as hypothesized and described by Krashen, among others, is a slow-building spontaneous process catalysed by exposure to meaningful input in the target language. Production ability emerges when communication is successful and when the input is understood and there is enough of it (Krashen, 1982).

Debate then centres around questions for textbook designers: Does one session that lasts around 50 minutes allow enough time for production ability to emerge? The fact is that learners do not always learn what teachers teach, nor do they learn when or in the way that the teacher wants them to learn. A single lesson of less than an hour is a very limited vehicle for learning in depth to take place. That is why it may be wise to think in terms of 'sub-objectives' or 'enabling objectives' at lesson level, and more cumulatively of assessable objectives at unit level (assuming that a unit consists of four or five lessons). From a textbook writer's point of view, this would enable us to see lessons as building blocks towards a small building at the end of each Unit' (Bolitho, 2020a). This perspective would help to train the teacher to see both the big picture and the stepping stones, encourage him/her to set the direction of travel with the students, and also to clarify sub-objectives in learner-friendly language for each lesson, building towards a final, assessable outcome in the form of some kind of student production. These sub-objectives could also be stated in a learner-friendly way in the textbook. In this way, students will also become more aware of the building blocks of communication. And only the final, end-of-unit objective needs to be expressed in SMART terms, as the sub-objectives are simply enabling in nature. This is definitely the business of the textbook writer, as the end-objectives need to relate to the syllabus.

'Backwards design' was discussed as an excellent strategy to ensure that the roadmap is clear. McTighe and Wiggins define backwards design as a method of designing curriculum by setting goals before choosing instructional methods and forms of assessment. The understanding by design framework offers a planning process and structure to guide curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Its two key ideas are contained in the title: 1) focus on teaching and assessing for understanding and learning transfer, and 2) design curriculum 'backward' from those ends (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012).

If, for example, the objective is to get learners to the stage of giving a group presentation on an interesting topic by the end of a five-lesson unit, then each lesson in that unit should contribute to the end-product,

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1. All participants names have been changed.

which should be assessed, of course. Therefore, there might be a lesson which focuses, for example, on reporting speech, so that opinions can be accurately reported during the presentation. Another lesson in the build-up might have topical and lexical focus, and yet another might home in on language functions such as questioning, asking for information, etc. This relates directly to the point above about sub-objectives.

1. How to build up a sequence of objectives?

At the start of a unit of 4/5 lessons at 'secondaire, ages 15-19' level, for example, a statement of objectives like this could be formulated: By the end of this unit, learners should be able to write a coherent opinion essay on the topic of the unit (e.g. genetic engineering). To reach this point, they will need to: (i) build up topic-related vocabulary and also phrases commonly used in expressing a point of view(lesson 1), (ii) listen to and evaluate a podcast with different points of view on the topic (lesson 2), (iii) hold a class discussion/debate to activate their thinking skills and help them formulate their opinions, and to make preliminary notes towards the essay (lesson 3), (iv) write a first draft of their essay, using appropriate linking devices and markers to be peer reviewed by a classmate (lesson 4). Write a corrected, final version of the essay to be handed in to the teacher (Homework).

2. Should objectives be only observable to be measured?

It is evident that anything that is not observable in some way cannot easily be assessed. As noted earlier, the 'M' in SMART can lead material designers and teachers astray. Bolitho explains that 'measurement and assessment are related but not synonymous. Measurement is linked to numerical yardsticks, whereas assessment may involve the application of agreed criteria which are expressed in words rather than figures. In language teaching and learning, I believe we are more concerned with assessment than measurement' (Bolitho 2020a).

3. What is the contribution of the CEFR (the Common European Framework of Reference) towards working with objectives?

Materials designers may find an answer in the reference level descriptors in the CEFR. However, the CEFR framework cannot simply be taken as it is for it does not claim to offer learning objectives. In the training programme, participants selected CEFR descriptors relevant to the curriculum. The selection process is followed by deconstructing the quality and quantity dimensions in each descriptor and formulating a working lesson plan outline out of it. Here is an example of the 'spoken interaction' objective from CEFR level A2 from the training course material:

> **Spoken Interaction**
> 'Can get simple information about travel, use public transport: buses, trains, and taxis, ask and give directions, and buy tickets.'
> *Analysis*
> **Questions:** *How can I get to….? Could you tell me the way to….? How much is….? Where is the nearest….? Sorry, could you repeat that?*
> **Modal verbs:** *can, could*
> **Other functional language:** *Excuse me…. Thanks for your help, etc*
> **Imperatives:** *Go along…. Turn… Don't…. Take a ….*
> **Vocabulary:** *single/return ticket; taxi rank; fare; number 6 bus; platform; bus stop; catch/take (a bus); ticket machine; ticket office; left/right; straight on; junction; traffic lights; etc*

Bolitho 2020b

In this way, CEFR descriptors can be broken down and reformulated as learning objectives as shown in *Table 1* below.

The cultural aspect in textbook design

Once objectives are clearly set, materials designers have a highly delicate mission to undertake, which is enhancing intercultural competence. Lange and Paige (2003) described intercultural competence as the process of discovering culture as context and its impact on human behaviour and communication, learning about

SKILL AREA	GOAL	CEFR LEVEL CEFR COMPANION (2020)
Reading	Scan through long and complex texts.	B2 (Reading for orientation p. 55)
Speaking	- Communicate detailed information reliably.	B2 (Giving information p. 63)
	- Interpret and describe overall trends shown in simple diagrams (e.g. graphs, bar charts)	B1 (Explaining data p. 97)
Writing	- Write personal letters and notes asking for or conveying simple information of immediate relevance, getting across the point he/she feels to be important.	B1 (Propositional precision p. 142)
Communicative Language competence	- Intervene in a discussion on a familiar topic, using a suitable phrase to get the floor.	B1 (Turn-taking p. 88)

Table 1

universal, culture-general phenomena and culture-specific information about one particular culture. It is a dynamic, developmental and on-going process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviourally, and affectively. In our globalised world, we have more chances to interact with people from different cultures and backgrounds. In order to communicate successfully, we need to see things from various cultural perspectives, be aware of one's own culture and simultaneously be open to other culture insights. In this perspective, being interculturally competent is seen as gaining 'knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one's self' (Byram, 1997, p. 34).

Bearing in mind that 'language expresses cultural reality' (Kramsch, 1998, p. 3) and that 'the link between language and culture is created in every new communicative event' (Risager, 2006, p. 185), culture should not be disregarded in designing curricula and textbooks. Intercultural competence is not likely to develop spontaneously. It is an ongoing process that provides learners with essential tools to avoid cultural misunderstanding and help communication to be more fluent whether in social or professional situations. In an EFL context, focusing on mere mastery of the language is not the only objective textbook writers should aim at. Students cannot master English unless they grasp the different social and cultural contexts the target language is used in (Krasner, 1999).

In Tunisia, the 2002 Education Act states that one of the missions of school is to 'enrich the national culture and to assure its interaction with the universal culture' (2002, p. 1735). The document English Programmes for Secondary Education refers to culture in a very limited way. It just rephrases the 2002 Education Act. However, there is an elaboration that can be found in the 'Aims of Reading/Listening skills' (English Programmes for Secondary Education, 2008, p.11):

- Expand one's knowledge of the world.

- Develop awareness of aspects of the target culture.

- Compare one's culture to that conveyed in texts.

- Develop appreciation of self, environment, and culture.

Thus, the provision is there for textbook designers and teachers to cover 'Landeskunde', factual knowledge about the culture. Secondary level covers awareness-raising of aspects of the target culture, although without specifying those aspects. The third point above covers the interpretive perspective which involves the use of cultural knowledge and awareness to critically compare cultures.

Nevertheless, there is a disagreement about the culture references in Tunisian curriculum documents. Hermessi says, of this context, that 'curricula treat culture in a non-systematic, inconsistent, sometimes frivolous way. Reference to culture seems to be more of a hollow "slogan" than a principled educational objective' (Hermessi, 2017, p. 212).

Applied to textbook material, current English textbooks present cultural aspects in a limited and superficial way. The 7th form teachers' guide (Ben Ali et al., undated, pp.5-6) exemplifies one effort to engage students in a 'cultural exchange whereby a British teenager comes to stay with a Tunisian family as a token of intercultural learning [...] the learner both discovers the main characters and learns language pertaining to everyday life situations as well as the moral attitudes they entail'. The reference is in the same vein as that in the 2002 Education Act and the 2008 English Programmes for Secondary Education. Curriculum designers and textbook authors agree on the need for a policy on the cultural component. However, this goes a long way beyond the position expressed in official documents. In fact, the words and phrases used in them sound more like catchphrases rather than clear guidelines and a set of descriptors that can be used to construct principled pedagogic objectives.

In sum, the way actual textbooks and teaching practice treat intercultural competence is believed to fall behind curriculum goals in preparing students to communicate effectively in anglophone contexts. Classroom observation indicates that culture is seen as an incidental by-product of communicative competence. Current English textbooks in general just familiarize learners with some neutral and so-called congratulatory aspects of the target culture. An observation pointed out in Rodríguez' analysis of the cultural content in English as a foreign language textbooks is that 'congratulatory views underline the study of correct cultural behaviour [...] tourist sites, the lives of famous celebrities, the main human achievements of a country, and tips on how to survive as a tourist in a foreign country' (Rodriguez, 2015, p.169).

'The Cultural Dimension in Language Learning and Textbooks' webinar, by Rod (Bolitho 2020c) stressed the need for giving culture its full credit. In the webinar, it was emphasised that it is the task of textbook designers to select appropriate material, tasks and activities which lend themselves to culture awareness and interpretation. The team worked, analysed, and discussed practical examples. Then, we were invited to design activities that allow cross-cultural encounters and comparisons between local and target cultures, making it easier for students to acquire intercultural competence.

Figure 1 shows an example from the materials designed.

In this example, Activity 2 serves as a basis for comparison between local and target cultures. It taps into learners' beliefs and experiences. When piloted, learners naturally identified England and France as similar to each other and different from the Tunisian

2. a. Do you have a good knowledge of Tunisian, English and French cultures? Go through the table and tick where appropriate.

	Tunisia	England	France
1. It is okay to refuse an invitation.			
2. People take a long lunch break.			
3. People are very punctual.			
4. People enjoy sitting in cafes.			
5. People greet each other by shaking hands.			
6. People can greet strangers by kissing them on the cheek.			

b. Read the text and check if your answers are correct.
c. What have you noticed? Which cultures are similar?

Culture shock: cultural differences in France

Jane is an English teacher who travelled to France to teach English at a preparatory school. Discover here cultural experience:

Although Britain is only a short journey from France, there are many cultural differences within our daily routines and manners. When in Britain, I was often told that I should NEVER refuse an invitation to an event as I am unlikely to be asked again. This was something I forgot, until I experienced the tension it could create with colleagues when you turn down an invitation. Since then, I have found myself immediately saying 'yes' to every invitation as I have learnt there is no polite British way of saying no in France.

3. Read the text again and answer the following questions.

a. What happened when Jane refused a colleague's invitation?
b. Did Jane stick to her British cultural traditions when in France? Justify from the text.
c. How did Jane feel about the French cultural tradition of greeting?
d. Was Jane's experience more about shock of love of cultural differences? Justify from the text.
e. Think about three cultural aspects that Jane might find shocking if she came to teach in Tunisia? What about the cultural aspects that she would love in Tunisia?

Figure 1: An extract from 'Cultural: shock or love'
https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/magazine/life-around-world/culture-shock-cultural-differences-france

local culture. Reading the text to check guesses engages learners in contrasting social and behavioural norms. They may at first be surprised that the already established stereotypes are challenged, but this paves the way to critical awareness-raising.

Activity 3 further enhances the learners' intercultural competence by engaging them in evaluating behaviours, traditions and the different cultural aspects discussed in the text.

To conclude, this type of task illustrates how textbook and curriculum designers can work towards ensuring that students take ownership of their learning and thus also become culturally responsive.

Language awareness for language acquisition

Language instruction, and more precisely, grammar, comes as one of the focal points for textbook designers. The Tunisian English programme for secondary education (2008, p.5) states that 'language is seen both as means of communication and as a system'. It is added that 'knowledge of grammar and how it functions contribute to effective language use'. The programme sets the rationale of teaching English but does not articulate the theoretical framework on how to reach the desired objectives. It is up to textbook designers to translate the general theoretical aims into practice. However, a scrutiny of current textbooks reveals some relevant points. The following findings emerged during initial discussions with the *Teaching for Success Tunisia* materials team in a seminar in Carthage in November 2019 and are based on our own record of these discussions:

a. There is no homogeneity in the terms used in grammar rules.

b. There is no gradation in the presentation of rules from one level to the other. For instance, the 1st form secondary textbook presents a superficial explanation of perfect aspect of the present tense in comparison with the previous school year.

c. There is an emphasis on contrastive analysis. For instance, the present perfect is usually represented in comparison to the simple past, which enables

students to decide when to use each grammatical category by analysing their distinctive features.

d. Grammar usage is oversimplified. There is no mention of the notion of aspect. The perfect aspect of the present tense is simply presented as the 'present perfect tense'. Grammar rules are sometimes limited to the connection between words or adverbial phrases and tenses. Students might be taught, for example, that a present perfect verb should always be used with 'recently' without any further discussion of meaning and other uses.

e. There is usually no visual representation of grammar rules or in-depth discussion. At best, some grammar rules are left with blanks to be filled.

f. The Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) instructional cycle predominates. Lessons start with presentation of grammar rules followed by controlled practice in the form of drills and some contextualized grammar exercises.

It is clear that a different perspective towards designing activities to teach grammar is needed. Language awareness activities (LA) were suggested as an answer. LA comes out of an initial focus on meaning. Unlike the PPP cycle, learners are not told the 'grammar rule', but are given a set of data from which they infer the rule or generalization in their own way. Then, students are encouraged to test their generalizations by searching for other instances in other texts. For Tomlinson, the main objective is to help learners to notice for themselves how language is typically used so that they will note the gaps between their use of the target language and that of proficient users (Tomlinson, 1994, p.122). In the same vein, Schmidt points out that 'noticing is the necessary and sufficient condition for the conversion of input into intake for learning' (Schmidt, 1990, p. 129).

Following a theoretical preamble, the training seminar started with a language awareness activity for the materials design team. The task output revealed a focus on rules and their systematic applications rather than a deep understanding on how language functions. There was a clear need for a model that caters for 'an enhanced consciousness of and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language' (Carter, 2003, p. 64). Therefore, a shift of purpose was taken into consideration. The seminar objectives were to: (i) open up some alternative ways of approaching the language systems, especially grammar, in materials and (ii) familiarise the participants, as writers, with the principles of language awareness work, and some of the practical ways in which it can be introduced into teaching and learning materials.

The following example illustrates the product of the training seminar:

Target level

Second year secondary education (grade 11, age 17)

Rationale

• Learners generally do not use the passive voice in free production.

• Learners make mistakes when using the passive voice in guided practice.

Main teaching/learning problems are

• Conjugation of the past participle forms of irregular verbs.

• Rearrangement of the subject and object constituent of the passive sentences.

• Uncertainty about when the passive voice or the active voice should be used especially if only the subject and verb are given, or the subject is to be omitted.

• Not setting any communicative reason for using the passive makes it just another 'mechanical' classroom exercise. There is no focus on the much more difficult decision-making about when to use passive or active.

• The transformation approach to teaching the passive voice does not highlight the fact that the 'agentless' use of the passive is by far the commonest use.

• Little support from the teacher's book and limited training on awareness-raising techniques result in teachers resorting to top-down transmission of the rule about transforming an active statement to a passive one.

The activities are designed to engage learners in a detective style approach beyond the mechanical transformation exercises and drilling rules of usage (see *Figure 2*). The questions are adapted from Wright and Bolitho (1992, p.294). They involve the following tasks and skills:

- analysing the text and specific phrases within it.

- comparing the data in the text with previous knowledge of voice.

- identifying specific features of the language point.

- sharing perceptions and negotiating joint responses.

Work modes vary from individual reflection and sharing in pairs to class-wide discussions. Most of the high-achieving students evoke the 'feel' for what is right and wrong. Thus, as stated in the objectives above, the activities are designed to instil that feel of the usage of voice in English. To do this, students need to work on whole texts like those in Activities A and B in *Figure 2* above, where the writer has made considered choices, but they will also benefit from becoming aware of how

1. The session

a. Objective

- To raise learners' awareness of the ways in which the passive is used and the factors which govern a speaker's or a writer's choice of the active or passive voice in English.

b. The text

A. Look at the following text and answer the questions after it:

Holidays from hell: Charlie on his worst break

My son Frank was still a kid when we went on holiday in southern France. He and his friend Sophie went parasailing. It's when you are attached to a parachute and tied to a rope, then dragged through the air by a speed boat. Up in the air, the pair were waving excitedly, and – pleased to know that they were enjoying themselves – we waved back. Little did we know, they were in fact screaming and flailing, desperately trying to seek the driver's attention. What they had first thought to be plastic bags polluting the ocean looked increasingly like a swarm of jellyfish as they descended through the air towards the water below.

They were dunked in, unsurprisingly getting very badly stung.

I know I should have been panicking, thinking about air ambulances, insurance and calling poor Sophie's parents. Honestly, though? I found the whole thing absolutely hysterical.

1. Who went on a holiday?
2. Who went parasailing?
3. Why does the writer choose the passive in 'are attached,' 'tied' and 'dragged'?
4. Who attached and tied the kids? Why doesn't the journalist name these people? Is it important to know?
5. Why the active voice again in 'descended'?
6. Why the shift back again to passive in 'were dunked'?
7. Who dunked the kids? Change the phrase into active voice. How does it feel?
8. Why 'getting very badly stung' and not simply 'were very badly stung'?

B. Which of the nouns and adjectives in the list below have a 'passive flavour' about them?
Use a passive construction to define each of them and an active construction to define the others.

| a) Sting | b) attached | c) stung | d) dunked |
| e) descended | f) driver | g) wave | h) find |

Figure 2: Activity on the passive

'activeness' and 'passiveness' underlie aspects of the lexical system as in the third activity. All this implies thinking and talking about English (Bolitho, 2011, p.12). The activity seeks to move from learning to acquisition of the target language point.

Conclusion

In this article, we have highlighted three key learning points for our team as we underwent our training as textbook writers. When the new textbooks are written, we will need to work with in-service teachers to explain the rationale underpinning the decisions we have taken as writers to better meet the demands of 21st century learning. The first key learning point is working with objectives in a way that enhances learning and learners' performance skills in harmony with the CEFR. The second is incorporating materials that foster intercultural competence and thus the ability of students to integrate into other cultures. Last but not least, textbook designers and teachers need to pay careful consideration to formulating the right questions that activate the learners' language awareness. This in turn will build up effective learning strategies in students to enable them to 'continue learning by themselves, beyond the programme' (English Programmes for Secondary Education, 2008, p.5). The new series of textbooks in Tunisia can function as a springboard for teachers' knowledge of the language, language teaching practice and students' learning.

Acknowledgement

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A Pilot Study of Visual Thinking Strategies in EFL Written Production: Putting the Learner at the Heart of the Pedagogy

Sharon Hartle and Giorgia Andreolli

Language in all its forms is the most pervasive and powerful cultural artefact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other, and to themselves

(Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner, 2015, p. 211)

A recent report on the effect of the outbreak of COVID-19 on assessment in Higher Education (OECD, 2020) highlights the impact of the shift to worldwide, online, distance delivery, identifying 424 institutions where onsite teaching was replaced with Remote Emergency Teaching (ERT) (Hodges et al., 2020) in 109 countries. Due to this, over the past two academic years, teachers' professional development has been mainly concerned with the logistics of using technological resources - an inevitable consequence of this shift to distance teaching. The focus has frequently been on how to manage online teaching or resources, perhaps catering for an understandable preoccupation with the mechanics of teaching and learning in new, unfamiliar spaces. Italy, which is the context for our work at the University of Verona, and which was the first European country to feel the effects of the pandemic, is no exception. ERT has been described as 'reactive' (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020), an ad hoc solution to the crisis and, therefore, not an approach that involves the principled planning and implementation of a learning design. Now, however, we feel that the time has come for us to focus once more on the learning design rather than how to use the tools. Our study was held completely online, by means of Zoom, but that is actually beside the point because the fact that we were working online had become 'normalised' to use Bax's (2003) terminology. This means the technology itself had become part of everyday life, just as invisible as a ballpoint pen might be, with no particular novelty factor per se. Our aim, in fact, was to put the learning and the learner back at the heart of the pedagogy rather than focusing on the affordances of technology. We adopted a sociocultural, post-constructive approach to teaching (Lantolf et al., 2015), where learners mediated and negotiated meanings and discourse and then constructed their own personal narratives. Our particular design hopes to create a meeting point between learners, materials, tasks, and tools, where the development of both creativity and critical thinking can be fostered. This article, which provides a snapshot of our learning design and the exploratory study we conducted, aims to report the development of digital materials based on a pedagogically-driven approach. In line with the objectives mentioned above, the following paragraphs describe how we incorporated storytelling, Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) and multimodal literacies in our pilot study.

Visual thinking and storytelling

Putting the learner at the heart of the language learning process in our world involves enabling them to develop multimodal skills. Multimodality in language teaching is not completely new, in fact, as the use of spoken and written language together with visual aids and sound in language learning classrooms has long been the norm for the purposes of introducing new language and contexts, or as prompts for skills work. Developing visual or digital literacy, however, goes beyond this and can lead to empowerment for our learners who move from being content consumers to content interpreters and creators. For many the word literacy conjures images of books, reading and writing, but in a digital world, new literacies are emerging. Communication is conducted through a range of channels and a primary mode is the visual one. Visual literacy has proved difficult to define (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011) but there is a general consensus that it refers to the interpretation of the visual, including the ability to react to images critically, and refers to creating visual objects as well. Interpreting the visual, however, in order to anchor specific meanings to images, often involves the use of the verbal mode. Barthes (1977, p. 39) discussed this 'anchorage' of meaning in images by means of captions, which use

the verbal mode of communication, for instance. In the classroom, learners, constructing their own interpretations and narratives related to an image, may co-construct meaning together with their peers and, at the same time, develop their communication skills. Storytelling, in fact, is an age-old activity which permeates social life in a variety of cultures. Bruner (2002) considers it to be a universal form of discourse that offers us additional worlds as filters through which we can better understand our own, and it is certainly true that narrative is key when anecdotes from daily life are recounted verbally (Labov, 1972). Using a familiar genre, such as the narrative, then, provides a recognizable framework for the learners to develop both their critical thinking skills and their productive language skills. A learner-centred approach, however, means also providing learners with a context to create their own narratives. We have, therefore, focused on combining the language work involved in storytelling within a framework of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) (Housen & DeSantis, 2009).

VTS in practice: What this approach entails

The VTS protocol originated in the context of art education within informal settings, such as museums. The approach rests upon constructivism and involves a teacher-mediated, learner-centered discussion of given images originally intended to develop aesthetic development. A visual input (a picture, or a painting) is carefully selected so that participants can engage with the picture 'using their existing knowledge, interests, and abilities' (Hailey et al., 2015, p. 56). The protocol is deemed to increase critical thinking by developing and communicating new ideas and bringing one's own voice into a group discussion. Furthermore, the image should contain enough ambiguity that it challenges learners to engage with 'strong narratives, accessible but layered' (ibid.). The VTS process is then constructed upon three main questions, namely:

1. *'What is going on in this picture?'*: this question is asked once at the beginning of the discussion;

2. *'What do you see that makes you say that?'*: this question is asked to help participants delve deeper into their ideas;

3. *'What more can we find?'*: this question is used to further prompt reflection.

The sequence is repeated several times in the discussion in order to uncover increasingly complex layers of meaning. A crucial aspect of the overall process is the wording of the questions: by asking '*what is going on*',

in fact, observers are encouraged to find a story that describes the picture and build their own narratives. Additionally, research in healthcare education has found an increase in students' language skills after eight VTS sessions (Naghshineh et al., 2008). An extensive implementation of VTS might thus be needed in order to detect linguistic differences in learners' productions; the design piloted in our study consisted of one session, and due to this we did not anticipate substantial change in the data collected. However, as will be outlined in the next paragraph, a qualitative exploration of participants' written texts produced over a short timespan already suggested insights which might inform future practice.

1. Materials and learning design

Based on the premises outlined above, we carried out a small study aimed at piloting a set of materials developed within a VTS framework. The trial involved 11 advanced learners of English who participated in a face-to-face activity held online on Zoom and inspired by a lesson plan created by Kieran Donaghy[1] around 'The Present' – an animated short film directed by Jacob Frey (2014) telling the story of a boy and a mysterious box he is given by his mother. The structure of the activity consisted of two parts: in Part 1, VTS were explored through written and spoken tasks, whereas Part 2 was dedicated to expanding and personalizing learner narratives through a focus on multimodal competence in the use of presentations.

Part 1

At the materials development stage, we applied VTS by selecting one frame from the short film, which was then used as a visual prompt to elicit written narratives. The image depicted the hands of a person hovering over a slightly open carton box, as well as some additional objects in the background.[2] The choice was motivated by the presence of an element of mystery: observers do not know who is the protagonist or why there is a box - and yet, they must formulate hypotheses, find credible evidence and tell their or version of the story being represented. This is why we also felt that the presence of additional elements (such as a pile of books in the background) scaffolded them during the VTS activity. The structure of Part 1 is summarized in the table below (Table 1). The materials employed include an editable worksheet with step-by-step instructions (see Appendix), sent to the participants at the beginning of the activity, as well as the chosen picture.

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1. Kieran Donaghy (2016). The Present Lesson Plan. Film English. Available at: *https://film-english.com/2016/02/01/the-present/* [Accessed 13 Oct 2021]

2. The movie frame was obtained by pausing the video at second 00:52. Due to copyright, the image was shown online by using the screensharing functionality on Zoom. Students did not receive a copy of the image.

After observing the picture (Stage 0), participants completed the first written task, which reproduced the VTS question '*what is going on in the picture?*'. Afterwards, they were divided into two separate rooms and given time to discuss their ideas in groups; here, we acted as moderators asking the remaining VTS questions ('*what do you see that makes you say that?* and '*what more can we find?*') to stimulate continuous reflection. Lastly, the initial written task was repeated and the worksheet anonymously submitted via an online form. In total, we received eight full submissions due to participant drop-out and incomplete responses. The data collected, consisting of two written tasks per participant, were qualitatively explored through the lens of the Critical Thinking (CT) Framework developed by Dwyer et al. (2014). This framework, in fact, seemed particularly suited to our purposes given the role played by CT skills in the cognitive processing of complex information, fostering of creative problem solving and heuristic discovery. Thus, we connected each text with the sub-skills comprised in this framework and observed the changes emerging from individual written productions after one VTS cycle. The sub-skills considered include:

- Analysis: the process of describing the different components of the picture shown (e.g. objects, colours, setting, etc.);

- Evaluation: assessment of the 'credibility, relevance, logical strength and the potential for omissions, bias and imbalance' (Dwyer et al., 2014, p. 48) in the elicited descriptions by reflecting upon the meaning of elements involved;

- Inference: the capability of synthesizing and reaching a conclusion based on previous examination and assessment (e.g., formulating concluding statements);

- Reflective judgement: the ability to identify personal strengths and limitations, defend one's own opinions, as well as become aware of potential bias.

These four sub-skills served as categories for a thematic analysis of the texts. By connecting different sections with the related category, it was possible to identify a set of possible learning trajectories within the Critical Thinking Framework, illustrated and exemplified in *Table 2* overleaf.

The small size of our sample and the limited time available for VTS practice, which also impacted on the length of participants' texts, do not allow us to further proceed in the analysis. Nonetheless, departing from Bruner (2002), we refer to the patterns which emerged as *narrative movements* which provide students with the means to deconstruct and construct the story. Ultimately, these strategies are used to negotiate and create meanings inextricably tied to personal beliefs, knowledge and skills. For instance, in order to unpack the story behind the picture participants relied upon the use of vague identifiers ('some, something, somebody') especially at the level of analysis. In addition, hedging strategies seem to be employed to evaluate and assess observations though the use of modality ('maybe, there could be, we may think that'). As learners construct their own point of view, engagement with certain topics and emotions clearly emerges: for instance, they evoked the feelings and attitudes of the protagonist both in a disagreeing and empathizing way, and focused on age, gender and occupation as main themes. A tendency towards repetition of the same elements (and hence the same vocabulary) testifies a critical engagement in the image – which points at the revision of the story rather than at the introduction of new features. Lastly, and perhaps more rarely, the use of the first person pronoun 'I' at the level of reflective judgement ('*I'm trying to look for details*') indicates the

Stage	Language and tasks	Timing	Materials
0 Participants observe the image for the first time	Spoken instructions: students receive the worksheet and are instructed to observe the picture shown via screenshare and afterwards answer the first written question	3 min	Picture shared on the screen by the instructor
1 Initiation of a VTS routine	Written prompt: '*describe what is going on*' (VTS question 1)	2 min	Worksheet 1
2 Preparation task	Individual writing task	8 min	Worksheet 1
3 Group discussions	Spoken student-student interaction in breakout rooms, moderated by teachers asking VTS question 2 ('*what makes you say that?*') and 3 ('*what more can we find?*')	15 min	None
4 Final task	Individual writing task, identical to the preparation task	8 min	Worksheet 1

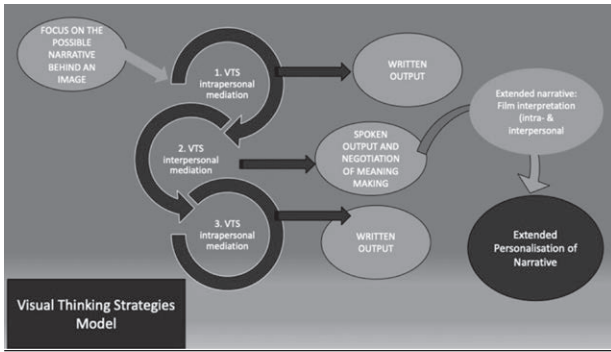**Table 1.** Part 1 design: outline of the stages and VTS model

Image 1. The Visual Thinking Strategies Model in our learning design

potential extension of the interpretation which might be reinforced by further VTS interventions. In fact, despite its limitations, we believe this particular design points in the direction of personalized learning and CT skills development with a focus on awareness-raising strategy work, as exemplified in the following section.

The image above offers a visual representation of the model we implemented: a space where learners could produce a variety of narratives rather than pre-defined content planned by the teacher. The course participants, in fact, mediated the discussion and the language both intra- and interpersonally – which further validates our decision to adopt a socio-constructivist approach. This activity also provided us with a bird's eye view on participants' writing by allowing a comparison between pre- and post-tasks; however, an analysis of spoken interactions is needed to shed light on the negotiation strategies and the themes that sparked debate in the break-out rooms and therefore might explain certain changes of perspective in the texts.

Part 2: Personalizing the presentation

The second part of the study focused on furthering the discussion and developing learner narratives by means of building multimodal competence in the use of presentations. At this stage learners personalize the narratives from the first part and create new meanings related to their own world. This stage involved revealing two thirds of the film to the participants then encouraging prediction of the ending. The skill of predicting content, used in this way, particularly when the 'answer' is then provided, is considered to

Analysis to evaluation, with little or no inference: moving from an objective description of the picture to a more sophisticated and personal assessment of its parts:

In this image we can see a 3D animation of 2 hands going to open a package (box) on a table probably, the left hand is holding the package from the side and the right one is slightly opening it from above (...)	⇨	*From the POV of the person that is opening/ closing the package we may think that it's a boy (mostly a kid or a teenager) due to the type of books around them and their hands+the colour of the jumper. It may be afternoon due to the shadows portrayed (...)*

Analysis to inference, with little or no evaluation: an impressionistic approach with a more intuitive progression, based on feelings or interest for particular details:

The picture is somewhat blurred in the background. There are some recorders and a black box. Someone is opening a brown box. There are books and comics spread out all over the floor and on the table as well (...)	⇨	*It is early in the morning, the sun has just come out and a little child is sitting in his living room on a fluffy carpet opening a box and looking for something to read, to listen to or to play with today.*

Evaluation to inference, with little or no analysis: the progress emerges clearly from the first to the second text but analytic evidence is not provided;

The guy is opening a box in what it seems an office. In the box, there could be some magazines about the business he is running.	⇨	*In the photo, the child is opening the box, where there are some comics or childrens' book to read.*

Inference with little evaluation to reflective judgement: conclusions about what is represented in the picture are formulated in the first text, and revised reflectively after the VTS routine.

Someone, maybe a man, is closing a carton box in the living room of his house. It is early in the morning because shadows are long and the light is white and pure (...). My idea is that he is cleaning his mess, putting inside the box videotape or other items (...).	⇨	*I'm trying to look for details that nobody have noticed and I find the strange shadow near the left hand of the character and I can't figure out what could represent (...).*

Table 2. Criticality in written tasks before and after the VTS routine

be one of the most effective techniques when teaching listening skills (Bruzzano, 2020). Although our primary aim was not the focus on listening, but rather on the use of the film format as a springboard to discussion, development of listening could be seen as a 'covert' aim, in the positive sense advocated by Hadfield (2018). Our main goal, however, was to promote discussion and prediction of multiple possible endings to a film is also a useful way of increasing learner engagement (Field, 2008). This, in turn, may pave the way to further critical analysis of differing opinions. Once our participants had watched the film they were asked to go back into the breakout rooms in new groups and were given a series of questions for discussion. Each of the two groups was asked to choose one question to answer, enabling the learners to choose their own learning path. The questions provided were:

What is the untold story?

What is the new story?

What surprised you?

What is the connection with the image you saw?

What are the interesting components of the video?

These questions were adapted from the Unveiling Stories routine developed by the Harvard Project Zero team (2019[3]). The aim of asking questions such as these is to stimulate negotiation and multimodal skills as well as critical thinking, where learners reach a consensus on specific meanings and present them by means of a range of semiotic channels. The participants chose their question, discussed it and created a visual representation of the key points on Jamboard.[4] The results can be seen below:
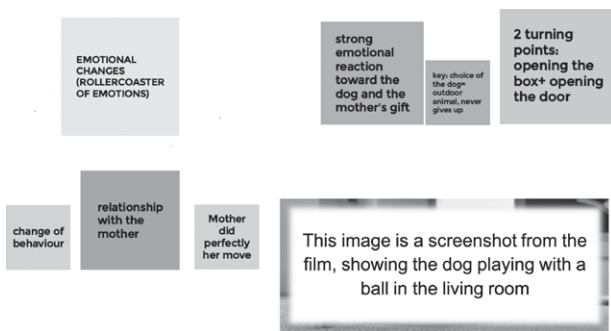

Image 2. Group One Jamboard (picture of a dog with a ball removed for copyright reasons)

Image 3. Group Two Jamboard[5]

These visual presentations were produced in approximately 15 minutes by learners who had never used Jamboard before. After a short introduction to the largely intuitive use of the tool, they were able to summarize the ideas as they discussed the question they had chosen and then presented these ideas in the main room of Zoom to the rest of the group. What is striking is the different directions their discussions took and the different layouts they chose to present their ideas. The first group answered the question: '*What are the interesting components of the video?*' although this question is not included in their visual display. They did not provide a title at all for their board but scattered their ideas around the board in sticky notes. The discussion focused on a series of themes: emotions, the mother's role, the gift, the boy's reaction and the two turning points in the narrative. This is reflected in the use of differing colours for the notes, although the choice of colour is not systematic. The notes, however, outline key ideas, without extending them in discursive text, and these notes were later used as hooks to hang their ideas on during their presentations, whereas the image is provided mainly as decoration and is in the bottom corner, so not in a particularly prominent position. The second group, on the other hand, chose an image as their entire backdrop, which was closely related to their discussion. They answered the question '*What is the untold story?*' – and this is specified on their Jamboard but not as a main heading. The main heading, in fact, is the actual answer to the question: '*the power of love (unconditional)*'. The two text boxes are very carefully placed, one on the left with the skeleton of the plot, while the one on the right shows the way their thoughts and ideas are being constructed

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3. Unveiling Stories. (2019): a thinking routine developed as part of the Harvard Project Zero in the interdisciplinary & Global Studies section of the project.

4. Jamboard is a digital collaborative whiteboard. Available at: *https://edu.google.com/intl/ALL_en/products/jamboard/* [Accessed 17 Oct 2021].

5. Picture credits: Nathan Hanna on Unsplash.com. Available at: *https://unsplash.com/@nathanhanna* and free of copyright [Accessed 17 Oct 2021].

as a result of the discussion: they related the idea of unconditional love to the situation during lockdown and beyond to our 'virtual era' underlining the danger of becoming lost in cyberspace, feeling removed from 'reality' and the importance of learning to take care of ourselves and our social relationships. The depth of these discussions clearly shows that there was a move away from simply analyzing the story or describing the situation to evaluating the underlying themes, inferring intentions and moving towards reflective judgement, where the participants, in Bruner's terms, used the narrative as a lens to view their own reality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let's return to the quotation at the beginning of this article that highlights the power of language in all its forms that humans use to mediate their connection to the world, to each other and to themselves. This is what we aimed at and what our participants were able to do as they used the VTS framework to negotiate and build meanings which were then personalized and further developed in the second part of the study. Working with images, language and multimodality in this way enabled learners to discover multiple levels of interpretation which, in turn, led to levels of developed complexity in their final presentations. Giving the choice of which question to answer also provided more space for learner ingenuity and creativity. A pedagogy, then, that put the learner at the heart of the process, rather than prescribing the content of the lesson, may perhaps have provided the impetus for the development of critical thinking as opposed to focusing solely on enhanced linguistic performance. The design proposed thus highlights how giving space and voice to learners might entail the deconstruction of certain practices, such as content-driven lesson planning. This same pedagogical thinking can be applied to technology and its affordances, which can be adjusted to the design, rather than the contrary. The next step may well be to focus on the emergent language and to extend and integrate new items into learner repertoires. This approach is not intended to be seen as a recipe but is one approach that can be adapted to local contexts and needs and can be applied widely to images of all kinds, ranging from those found in a coursebook to learner-generated images such as photos on smartphones. The VTS strategy can be combined with various teaching aims as well, such as receptive skills work but also as a springboard for discussion and critical thinking as was the case in our study.

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Appendix

Image 1. The worksheet devised for Part 1. Note: initially, four written VTS tasks were devised in the attempt to offer multiple opportunities for critical discussion and language exposure. However, it was necessary to reduce the number of tasks to a preparation and a final task, as shown in the table above. This was done to accommodate our time schedule.

MATERIALS SPOT

Teacher Training Materials on Academic Writing Skills

Diana Mazgutova, Kamola Muradkasimova, Rano Khodjieva, Gulhayo Qobilova and Aziza Yunusova

A set of teacher training materials focused on academic writing were developed in 2017-2018 as part of a postdoctoral research project. The project was conducted at Lancaster University in the UK within the Global Challenges Research Fund strand (GCRF) of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). A team of five English language teaching professionals from several universities in Uzbekistan were involved in the design process: The Uzbek State World Languages University, The University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Tashkent and Bukhara State University. The overarching aim of the project was to help university teachers and learners in Uzbekistan improve their academic English writing proficiency. This was intended to be achieved through the two concrete objectives:

1) To design an interactive model essay website that would contain a corpus of students' and teachers' academic writing in the Uzbek context, and

2) To design a package of teacher training materials for a self-perpetuating workshop on improving academic writing skills of university teachers and learners.

The training materials were designed collaboratively in response to requests made by English language teaching professionals in Uzbek institutions for help with the teaching of academic English writing skills to their students. A three-day intensive workshop was delivered by the team of material writers in Tashkent. The event was attended by ten teachers from seven different universities in Uzbekistan. Within six months upon completion of the workshop, the participants disseminated the materials among their university colleagues. Ultimately, approximately 200 teachers have been trained in Uzbekistan.

The themes of the teacher training sessions were identified via an online needs analysis survey conducted with over a 100 teachers of academic English in Uzbek institutions. The aim of the survey was to determine academic writing needs of Uzbek teachers and learners. Besides a few demographics questions, the survey was focused on identifying teachers' perceptions of their own as well as of their students' academic writing difficulties. The data were analysed using SPSS software and descriptive statistics were produced.

The resulting Academic English Teacher Training Manual (https://aeim.co.uk/information-for-teachers/) consisted of eight self-contained sets of materials (see below for the list of sessions), each focusing on a particular aspect of academic reading and writing, and each corresponding with an individual session. The themes of the sessions were identified with the aid of the needs analysis survey. For example, a large number of survey respondents pointed out that they were struggling with identifying and evaluating academic sources; therefore, this topic was chosen as one of the session themes. All eight sessions included in the manual are listed below.

Session 1. Introduction to the Academic English Teacher Training Workshop

Session 2. Giving Feedback and Evaluating Academic Writing

Session 3. Finding and Evaluating Sources

Session 4. Thinking, Reading and Writing Critically

Session 5. Building Argument and Integrating Evidence

Session 6. Summarising and Evaluating Academic Sources

Session 7. Coherence and Cohesion in Academic Writing

Session 8. Introducing the Academic English Interactive Mentor (AEIM) Website

We have chosen to present the material from two sessions, Session 2 and Session 5 from the manual. Both sessions are focused on important aspects of academic writing - giving feedback (Session 2) and argumentation (Session 5). The sessions were conducted in English and were attended by ten participants in the initial workshop. However, later, the teachers who attended the workshop conducted similar two-day events in their

home institutions and each of the sessions was attended by over 20 people in every institution.

Session 2: Giving feedback and evaluating academic writing

SESSION 2 of the Manual addresses the theme of Giving feedback and evaluating academic writing. The aims of the session are as follows: 1) to raise participants' awareness of giving proper feedback, 2) to enable participants to practise giving feedback on learners' writing, and 3) to raise participants' awareness of the core criteria of giving feedback.

In the plenary session, different techniques were used such as 'Think, Pair, Share', to make participants think individually, pair and then share with the whole group.

TIME: 90 minutes

PROCEDURE:

Lead-in (10 minutes). Teacher (T) asks Participants (Ps) the following questions and discusses them in plenary: (1) How do you usually give oral and written feedback? (2) How, do you think, is the feedback you give generally received by your students? (3) What do you think your students usually do with the feedback they get from you? (4) Have you ever been given feedback on your writing? How did you find it? Was it helpful?

ACTIVITY 1. Effective versus ineffective feedback (30 minutes)

1. T shows Ps an episode from the TV show 'America's Got Talent 2017', where both positive and negative feedback is given by the judges. While watching, Ps take notes and make a list of the feedback features.

2. T explains that in this activity they will be discussing the characteristic features of effective and ineffective feedback on academic writing. T divides Ps into two groups and distributes poster paper, markers and pins to each group. Group 1 prepares a poster presentation about the features of effective feedback, and Group 2 about the features of ineffective feedback. Ps work on their posters for approximately 10 minutes.

3. Once the posters are ready, the representatives of each group put their posters up on the wall and present them to the whole group. T encourages Ps to be as specific as possible and support the points they make with relevant examples. T might anticipate the following features of effective and ineffective feedback to be mentioned in the presentations:

Effective feedback features	Ineffective feedback features
Impersonal	Subjective
Adequate	Too general
Constructive	Negative
Reasonable	Non-specific
Unbiased	Biased

ACTIVITY 2. Giving feedback on a student essay (35 minutes)

1. T explains that the purpose of this activity is to discuss how the Ps themselves give feedback on their students' writing.

2. T asks Ps to complete the following task individually:

Imagine that your student has written a problem-solution essay and you need to give them feedback. Read the essay and decide what mark you would give to this student and why (justify by providing at least 2 or 3 reasons). What criteria would you use to evaluate this essay?

Smoking is on the increase among young people. What solutions to this problem can you suggest?

In this developed 21st century smoking has already been one of the most global and noticeable issue in the world, actually among young people. I am concerned to believe that some necessary and essential solutions should be done in order to decrease it such as to make parents not to be indulgent to their children, to restrict sophisticating advertisements of smoking and to make strict laws against for it.

To my way of thinking the best way to solve the problem is associated with parents. This is because unfortunately some parents are so indulgent that many convenient conditions are created for their children by them at present. As a result, they are doing what they want. If parents can bring up children strictly, they cannot manage to do such kind of things. This will lead to the effect to the problem.

I am convinced that another practical suggestion to this is to ban the presentations of the smoking. Due to the fact that such nice advertisement make young people interest to use alcohol such as smoking. By the restricting the advertisements of alcohols, there could be decrease of using them among people. In addition to this not only young people, but also other people should be warned medically that smoking is being attributed to the rise in death rates.

It is conviction that one possibility of the issue is that strict disciplines should be implemented such as expensive fine for smokers by the government. Consequently, the number of the smokers will highly go down.

As a conclusion, I would like to say that the exclusive and effective ways to prevent humanity from smoking are related to parents, mass media and eventually government.

Source: Academic English Interactive Mentor (AEIM) *website: https://aeim.co.uk/*

(AEIM is open access, the writers gave their consent to include the essays on the website)

3. T invites Ps to share their ideas in small groups by discussing the following questions:

(1) What are the strengths of this essay?

(2) What are the weaknesses of this essay?

(3) What mark would you give for this piece of writing?

4. T concludes this activity by asking Ps to respond to four **Multiple-Choice Questions**:

(1) According to the thesis statement, i.e., the sentence that states the main idea of the essay, how many main points will the essay consist of?
a. One   b. Two   c. Three

(2) Which of the essay paragraphs has a more effective topic sentence, i.e., a sentence that expresses the main idea of the paragraph?
a. P.2   b. P.3   c. P.4

(3) Which of the essay paragraphs requires some use of research-based evidence?
a. P.1   b. P.2   c. P.3

(4) What is the main problem with this essay?
a. The topic sentence
b. The thesis statement
c. Supporting sentences

ACTIVITY 3. Round up (15 minutes)

The aim of the following activity is to enable Ps to reflect on their practice and self-assess their skill of giving feedback.

1. T explains that the aim of this part of the session is to ensure that Ps are aware of the importance of giving feedback on students' writing, in particular oral feedback during one-to-one tutorials.

2. T invites Ps to complete the **Giving Feedback Quiz** first individually and then compare their ideas with their partner:

For each statement, choose 'Rarely', 'Sometimes', or 'Often' to indicate how consistently you use the described behaviour in the workplace.

1. I pick an appropriate time and place to give feedback.
RARELY ☐   SOMETIMES ☐   OFTEN ☐

2. I keep my emotions in check remaining calm and keeping my voice even.
RARELY ☐   SOMETIMES ☐   OFTEN ☐

3. I provide specific, detailed information about a person's behaviour or performance.
RARELY ☐   SOMETIMES ☐   OFTEN ☐

4. I explain the impact the actions are having on the team or organisation.
RARELY ☐   SOMETIMES ☐   OFTEN ☐

5. I really listen to the response of those receiving my feedback.
RARELY ☐   SOMETIMES ☐   OFTEN ☐

6. I clarify my expectations if there is any confusion about the behaviour in question.
RARELY ☐   SOMETIMES ☐   OFTEN ☐

7. I remember to thank and encourage the receivers of my feedback.
RARELY ☐   SOMETIMES ☐   OFTEN ☐

8. I provide feedback that is fact-based.
RARELY ☐   SOMETIMES ☐   OFTEN ☐

9. I focus on the steps of the feedback process to keep the dialogue on track.
RARELY ☐   SOMETIMES ☐   OFTEN ☐

10. I end a feedback session with an action plan to move forward.
RARELY ☐   SOMETIMES ☐   OFTEN ☐

RARELY   There is room for improvement. Gaining insight into your skills is the first step in improving.

SOMETIMES You are on your way to demonstrating good feedback behaviours – keep practising!

OFTEN   Excellent work – but there is always room for improvement!

Source: Health Education and Training Institute (2012). The *Learning Guide: A handbook for allied health professionals facilitating learning in the workplace.* HETI, Sydney.

3. T distributes the handout which contains the section from the article The Seven Principles of good feedback (see Appendix A) and asks Ps to read the text individually and take notes.

4. T might want to elaborate on the first five principles and invite Ps to elaborate on the last two reflecting on their own teaching and feedback-giving practice.

Session 5: Building Argument and Integrating Evidence

In Session 5, we focus on Building Argument and Integrating Evidence. The aims of this session are as follows: 1) to raise participants' awareness of argument-building in academic writing, 2) to help participants identify the difference between persuasive and argumentative writing, and 3) to focus on developing effective arguments with evidence and introduce the ways of presenting evidence, e.g., quoting, paraphrasing, and summarising.

TIME: 90 minutes

PROCEDURE:

Lead-in (10 minutes). T introduces the topic of the session and shows Ps a PowerPoint slide with several questions they are asked to discuss as a whole group: 1) What is an argument? 2) Why is argumentation important in academic writing? 3) What is the evidence and how is it presented in academic texts? 4) How do you usually integrate evidence in your writing?

ACTIVITY 1. Identifying the argument (20 minutes)

1. T establishes that identifying the argument can be challenging. T asks Ps to think of the definitions of several concepts, i.e., 'premise', 'conclusion', and 'argument'. On the PowerPoint slide, T first shows these three words, and after having some discussion, T shows the definitions of each of the three concepts.

2. T then gives an ancient example of logic, the one that Aristotle used in teaching at his Academy: (1) All men are mortal. (2) Socrates was a man. (3) Therefore, Socrates is mortal. T explains that the three lines above taken together constitute an argument. Line 3 is the conclusion. Lines 1 and 2 are premises. T points out that before analysing arguments, they need to be identified (in terms of premises and conclusions). The easiest way to do that is to examine the text for clues.

3. T distributes the handout below and asks Ps to sort out the indicators into one of two columns, **premise indicators** or **conclusion indicators**:

- Since	- Which shows that
- Hence	- Because
- For	- Accordingly
- I conclude that	- It follows that
- As	- Consequently

- Follows from	- As shown by
- So	- May be derived from
- Which implies that	- Thus
- May be deduced from	- In as much as
- For this reason	- May be inferred from
- Proves that	- Therefore
- As indicated by	- The reason is that
- Given that|	- As a result
- Which entails (noun)	

4. T shows the answers on a PowerPoint slide:

Premise indicators:

Since	As indicated by
Because	The reason is that
For	May be inferred from
As follows from	May be derived from
As shown by	May be deduced
In as much as	Given that

Conclusion indicators:

Therefore/Thus	As a result
Hence/So	Which implies that
Which entails (noun)	For this reason
Accordingly	It follows that
Consequently	I conclude that
Proves that	Which shows that

ACTIVITY 2. Building an argument (10 minutes)

1. T distributes the handout below with examples of argument and asks Ps to identify the *premise, conclusion* and *their indicators*:

1. 'Since pain is a state of consciousness, a 'mental event,' it can never be directly observed' (Singer, 1973).

2. 'All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality' (Luther King, 1963).

3. 'Genes and proteins are discovered, not invented. Inventions are patentable, discoveries are not. Thus, protein patents are intrinsically flawed' (Alroy, 2000).

4. 'A meter is longer than a yard. Therefore, since this ship is 100 meters long, it is longer than a football field' (Scholars' Lab).

5. 'I hate books. They only teach us to talk about what we do not know' (Rousseau, 1762).

6. 'Twenty-eight children in the United States were killed by falling television sets between 1990 and 1997. That is four times as many people as were killed by great white shark attacks in the twentieth century. Loosely speaking, this means that watching 'Jaws' on TV is more dangerous than swimming in the

Pacific' ('The Statistical Shark', 2001).

7. 'It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts' (Conan Doyle, 1891).

8. 'Since 1976, states [in the United States] have executed 612 people and released 81 from death row who were found to be innocent. Is there any reason to believe that the criminal justice system is more accurate in non-capital cases? If the criminal justice system makes half the mistakes in non-capital cases that it makes in capital cases, thousands of innocent people live in our prisons' (Moustakis, 2000).

9. 'Has it ever occurred to you how lucky you are to be alive? More than 99% of all creatures that have ever lived have died without progeny, but not a single one of your ancestors falls into this group' (Dennett, 1995).

10. 'Get a job that lets you 'analyze' or 'evaluate' something as opposed to actually 'doing' something. When you evaluate something you get to criticize the work of others. If you do something, other people get to criticize you' (Adams, 1996).

(Source: Build a better argument, 2014. Available at: *https://akoniarriaga.wordpress.com/2014/11/24/build-a-better-argument-2/*)

2. T reminds Ps that premises can come before or after conclusions, or they can occur in partial sentences.

3. T asks Ps to work in pairs and compare/discuss their answers.

ACTIVITY 3. Identifying characteristics of persuasive and argumentative writing (15 minutes)

1. T divides Ps into two groups and gives both groups posters and markers.

2. T gives Ps instructions for the activity: the two groups are responsible for different types of writing: Group 1 for persuasive writing, and Group 2 for argumentative writing. Their task is to decide on the key characteristics specific to that type of writing, i.e., argumentative or persuasive and reflect it on their posters.

3. When the groups finish both posters, they put them up on the wall, and a representative from each group presents their poster to the whole group followed by a plenary discussion.

4. T distributes the handout which summarises the main differences between persuasive and argumentative writing:

Subtle but significant differences between persuasive writing and argumentative writing

Goal of persuasive writing: to get reader to agree with you/your point of view on a particular topic.

Goal of argumentative writing: to get reader to acknowledge that your side is valid and deserves consideration as another point of view.

General technique of persuasive writing: blends facts and emotion in attempt to convince the reader that the writer is 'right' (Often relies heavily on opinion.)

General technique of argumentative writing: offers the reader relevant reasons, credible facts, and sufficient evidence to show that the writer has a valid and worthy perspective.

Starting point of persuasive writing: identify a topic and your side.

Starting point of argumentative writing: research a topic and then align with one side.

Viewpoint presented in persuasive writing: persuasion has a single-minded goal. It is based on a personal conviction that a particular way of thinking is the only sensible way to think. Writer presents one side - his side. (Persuasive writing may include ONE opposing point, it is then quickly dismissed/refuted.)

Viewpoint presented in argumentative writing: acknowledge that opposing views exist, not only to hint at what a fair-minded person you are, but to give you the opportunity to counter these views tactfully in order to show why you feel that your own view is the more worthy one to hold. Writer presents multiple perspectives, although is clearly for one side.

Audience of persuasive writing: needs intended audience. Knowing what they think and currently believe, the writer 'attacks' attempting to persuade them to his side.

Audience of argumentative writing: doesn't need an audience to convince. The writer is content with simply putting it out there.

Attitude of persuasive writing: persuasive writers want to gain another 'vote' so they 'go after' readers more aggressively. Persuasive writing is more personal, more passionate, more emotional.

Attitude of argumentative writing: simply to get the reader to consider you have an idea worthy of listening to. The writer is sharing a conviction, whether the audience ends up agreeing or not.

ACTIVITY 4. Differentiating between persuasive and argumentative writing (15 minutes)

1. T distributes the handout and asks Ps to read the two essays and identify whether each of them represents persuasive or argumentative writing by colour-coding the distinctive features of each type of writing:

Essay 1.

Animal Testing

Animal testing has benefited human health. People do not contract polio anymore because of a vaccine tested on animals. Advances in antibiotics, insulin, and other drugs have been made possible through research done on animals. Animal testing should continue to benefit medical research.

In order for scientists to create new drugs, they have to be able to test them. Scientists have found that many animals have similar physical processes to humans. Watching how a new drug affects an animal makes it possible to find out how new drugs might affect the human body.

The cost of animal testing makes it an affordable option. Laboratory animals are in abundance. It is easy to breed rats and other animals and to keep them in labs.

Animal testing saves human lives. It would be wrong to test new drugs on humans. How many people would die because doctors could not administer medication before compiling all the information about a new drug? When surveyed, 99% of all active doctors in the United States stated that animal research has paved the way to many medical advancements. An impressive 97% of doctors support the continuous use of animals for research. Animal testing should be continued for medical research. It provides a safe method for drug testing that is inexpensive and easy to maintain. Doctors endorse the usage of animals for testing. It is possible that the cure for AIDS could come about through animal testing.

Type of writing:

Essay 2.

Animal Testing

Medical research involving animals has dramatically improved the health of the human race. Without animal testing, the cure for polio would not exist and diabetics would suffer or die from their disease. Despite these benefits, some people believe that animals should be not be used for testing medical techniques and drugs.

This essay will outline the advantages of animal testing. Animal testing allows scientists to test and create new drugs. Animals such as monkeys or rabbits have similar

physical processes to humans. This allows scientists to test the effects of certain drugs. If a drug produces adverse effects in animals, it is probably unfit for human use.

Animal testing is cheap. There is a large supply of animals for medical research. Animals are easily bred and maintained safely in controlled labs. The costs of testing on humans would be extremely high.

Many people argue that animal testing is cruel. In some cases, this is true. However, it would be much more cruel to test new drugs on people or children, or to let people die because there was not enough information about a drug. Furthermore, legislation in most countries sets standards for animal treatment, and laboratories have guidelines to prevent cruelty.

Opponents of animal research also say that information from animals does not apply to humans. They point to certain commercial drugs, which have been withdrawn because of side effects in humans. While it is true that animal systems differ from human systems, there are enough similarities to apply information from animals to humans.

Animal rights campaigners claim that we don't need new tests because we already have vast amounts of information. However, many new deadly infections appear every year and new treatments and drugs are needed to combat these deadly plagues.

Animal testing is needed in the world we live in. Our responsibility is to manage the animals in our care and balance their suffering against the good that comes from them.

Type of writing:

Source: Smekens Education Solutions, Inc. (2011). Available at: *www.SmekensEducation.com*

2. T elicits Ps responses, gives feedback and discusses the activity in the plenary.

ACTIVITY 5. Developing effective argument: Integrating and presenting evidence (20 minutes)

1. T explains that every argument should be supported with the evidence and asks Ps to give their definitions of evidence and/or some examples.

2. Then, on the PowerPoint slide 'What is evidence?', T shows the definition of 'evidence', i.e., facts, reasons, personal experience, expert research, statistics.

3. T divides Ps into two small groups distributes the handout (see below) and asks the Ps to name the type of evidence and integrate them. T asks Ps to write down a claim and a counterclaim while listening to each other.

T divides Ps into two small groups. Each group gets a card with debatable claim. Group 1 gets

the card 'DEBATABLE CLAIM: Year-round school IMPROVES students' academic achievement' and Group 2 gets the card 'DEBATABLE CLAIM: Year-round school DOES NOT improve students' academic achievement' (see both cards below).

First, Ps are asked to read the evidence and fill in the box with the evidence type. Then one member from each group reads the evidence and the member of the opposing group writes a claim or a counterclaim to the proposed evidence.

4. T explains that there are three ways to present evidence and shows them on a PowerPoint slide: quoting (taking a direct quote and integrating it into the essay using quotation marks), paraphrasing (expressing a short passage in your own words; completely rewriting the passage while retaining meaning), and summarising (expressing longer excerpts in your own words; conveying the main ideas and main points of source material).

5. T divides the whole group into three groups and distributes posters and markers to each group. T then asks Ps to make a list of DO'S and DON'T'S of each way of presenting evidence on their poster.

6. When Ps finish the task, T invites each group to present their posters to the whole group.

T summarises the whole session by emphasizing that presenting precise evidence and integrating it is essential in building an argument which makes academic writing effective.

Group 1:

DEBATABLE CLAIM: Year-round school IMPROVES students' academic achievement.

Evidence type?	Evidence
	Because students have multiple breaks throughout the year, they experience less academic burnout. They have frequent opportunities to refresh and restart their learning experience.
	A review of 39 studies confirmed summertime learning loss: test scores drop over summer vacation (Cooper, et al., 1996)
	Year-round schools have lower drop-out rates (2%) than traditional schools (5%) (StatisticBrain.com).
	One study of six elementary schools, three on traditional calendars and three on year-round schedules, found positive effects of year-round education. The sample of students in the year-round schools posted overall test-scores that were higher than students at the schools with traditional calendars (Education Week).
	I forgot fewer of my math skills over the summer because my summer break was so short thanks to year-round school.

Group 2:

DEBATABLE CLAIM Year-round school DOES NOT improve students' academic achievement.

Evidence type?	Evidence
	Year-round school and traditional schools are the same academically because they both require students to go to school for 180 days per year.
	Bradley McMillan, from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, examined achievement differences between year-round and traditional calendar students using data for more than 345,000 North Carolina public school students. He found that achievement in year-round schools was no higher than in traditional schools (Education Week).
	I get really tired attending year-round school. Because we don't have an extended summer break when I can go to camp or play sports or relax with my friends, it just seems like I'm in school endlessly.
	In Salt Lake City, Utah, of the district's elementary year-round schools, only 50% made Adequate Yearly Progress on standardized tests last year. Eighty percent of the traditional calendar elementary schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (Deseret News).
	The year-round calendar, with its multiple 3-week breaks, offers more chances for students to forget concepts and skills than a traditional school calendar with one long summer break.

As noted at the start, these materials were designed in response to requests made by English language teaching professionals in Higher Educational Institutions in Uzbekistan. The conducted needs analysis showed that there is a gap in the teaching of academic writing in English classes. Thus, the reforms established in developing the educational system aim at learning from the international experience and implementing the findings in the current system. The teaching materials included in the article are intended to build the evidence and conceptual frameworks for EAP (English for Academic Purposes) teachers in preparing, teaching and assessing academic writing skills of L2 learners.

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Appendix A

Seven principles of good feedback practice: Facilitating self-regulation

From the self-regulation model and the research literature on formative assessment it is possible to identify some principles of good feedback practice. Good feedback practice is broadly defined here as anything that might strengthen the students' capacity to self-regulate their own performance. A synthesis of the research literature led to the following seven principles.

Good feedback practice:

1. helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);

2. facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning;

3. delivers high quality information to students about their learning;

4. encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning;

5. encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;

6. provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;

7. provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching.

The following sections provide the rationale for each principle in terms of the self-regulation and the associated research literature. Specific strategies that teachers can use to facilitate self-regulation are proposed after the presentation of each principle.

1. Helps clarify what good performance is.

Students can only achieve learning goals if they understand those goals, assume some ownership of them, and can assess progress (Sadler, 1989; Black & Wiliam, 1998). In academic settings, understanding goals means that there must be a reasonable degree of overlap between the task goals set by students and the goals originally set by the teacher. This is logically essential given that it is the students' goals that serve as the criteria for self-regulation. However, there is considerable research evidence showing significant mismatches between tutors' and students' conceptions of goals and of assessment criteria and standards.

Hounsell (1997) has shown that tutors and students often have quite different conceptions about the goals and criteria for essays in undergraduate courses in history and psychology and that poor essay performance is correlated with the degree of mismatch. In a similar vein, Norton (1990) has shown that when students were asked to rank specific assessment criteria for an essay task they produced quite different rankings from those of their teachers, emphasising content above critical

thinking and argument. Weak and incorrect conceptions of goals not only influence what students do but also the value of external feedback information. If students do not share (at least in part) their teacher's conceptions of assessment goals (and criteria and standards) then the feedback information they receive is unlikely to 'connect' (Hounsell, 1997). In this case, it will be difficult for students to evaluate discrepancies between required and actual performance. It is also important to note here that feedback not has not only has a role in helping guide students towards academic goals but, over time, it also has a role in helping clarify what these goals are (Sadler, 1989).

One way of clarifying task requirements (goals/criteria/standards) is to provide students with written documents containing statements that describe assessment criteria and/or the standards that define different levels of achievement. However, many studies have shown that it is difficult to make assessment criteria and standards explicit through written documentation or through verbal descriptions in class (Rust, Price & O'Donovan, 2003). Most criteria for academic tasks are complex, multidimensional (Sadler, 1989) and difficult to articulate; they are often 'tacit' and unarticulated in the mind of the teacher. As Yorke (2003) notes:

> *Statements of expected standards, curriculum objectives or learning outcomes are generally insufficient to onvey the richness of meaning that is wrapped up in them (p.480).*

Hence there is a need for strategies that complement written materials and simple verbal explanations. An approach that has proved particularly powerful in clarifying goals and standards has been to provide students with 'exemplars' of performance (Orsmond, Merry and Reiling, 2002). Exemplars are effective because they make explicit what is required and they define a valid standard against which students can compare their work.

Other strategies that have proved effective in clarifying criteria, standards and goals include: (i) providing better definitions of requirements using carefully constructed criteria sheets and performance level definitions; (ii) increasing discussion and reflection about criteria and standards in class (e.g. before an assignment); (iii) involving students in assessment exercises where they mark or comment on other students' work in relation to defined criteria and standards; (iv) workshops where students in collaboration with the teacher devise or negotiate their own assessment criteria for a piece of work. These strategies exemplify increasing levels of self-regulation.

2. Facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning

As suggested earlier, one effective way to develop self-regulation in students is to provide them with opportunities to practise regulating aspects of their own learning and to reflect on that practice. Students are (to some extent) already engaged in monitoring gaps between internally set task goals and the outcomes that they are generating (both internal and external). This monitoring is a by-product of such purposeful engagement in a task (Figure 1). However, in order to build on this, and to develop systematically the learner's capacity for self-regulation, teachers need to create more structured opportunities for self-monitoring and the judging of progression to goals. Self-assessment tasks are an effective way of achieving this, as are activities that encourage reflection on learning progress.

Over the last decade there has been an increasing interest in self-assessment in higher education (Boud, 1995). Research shows that, when suitably organised, self-assessment can lead to significant enhancements in learning and achievement. For example, McDonald and Boud (2003) have shown that training in self-assessment can improve students' performance in final examinations. Also, Taras (2001; 2002; 2003) has carried out a number of studies on student self-assessment in higher education which have shown positive benefits. In one study, students were trained in self-assessment under two conditions: self-assessment prior to peer and tutor feedback and self-assessment with integrated tutor feedback. The latter condition involved students self-assessing after they had received tutor feedback. The results showed that while both conditions benefited learning, self-assessment with integrated tutor feedback helped students identify and correct more errors (those that they or peers had not been aware of) than self-assessment prior to peer or tutor feedback. Interestingly, this study not only shows the benefits of integrating external and internal feedback, but it also shows ways of helping students internalise and use tutor feedback.

In developing self-assessment skills, it is important to engage students in both identifying standards/criteria that will apply to their work (discussed in principle 1 above) and in making judgements about how their work relates to these standards (Boud, 1986). While structured opportunities for training in self-assessment are important there are other ways of supporting the development of these skills. One approach is to provide students with opportunities to evaluate and provide feedback on each other's work. Such peer processes help develop the skills needed to make objective judgements against standards, skills which are transferred when students turn to producing and regulating their own work (Boud, Cohen and Sampson, 1999; Gibbs, 1999). Another approach is to create frequent opportunities for reflection by students during their study. Cowan (1999) identifies ways that this can be done both in the context of simple classroom activities and during longer-term projects.

Other examples of structured reflection and self-assessment are varied and might include students: (i) requesting the kinds of feedback they would like when they hand in work; (ii) identifying the strengths and weaknesses in their own work in relation to criteria or standards before handing it in for teacher feedback; (iii) reflecting on their achievements and selecting work in order to compile a portfolio; (iv) reflecting before a task on achievement milestones and reflecting back on progress and forward to the next stage of action (Cowan, 1999).

3. Delivers high quality information to students about their learning.

While research shows that teachers have a central role in developing their students' own capacity for self-regulation, they are also a crucial source of external feedback. Feedback from teachers is a source against which students can evaluate progress and check out their own internal constructions of goals, criteria and standards. Moreover, teachers are much more effective in identifying errors or misconceptions in students' work than peers or the students themselves. In effect, feedback from teachers can help substantiate student self-regulation.

In the research literature, there is little consensus about what constitutes good quality external feedback. Quality is defined quite broadly and tends to be discussed in relation

to student needs and teacher-defined goals. For example, most researchers and textbook writers (e.g. Freeman and Lewis, 1998) are concerned that feedback to students might be delayed, not relevant or informative, that it might focus on low level learning goals or might be overwhelming in quantity or deficient in tone (i.e. too critical). For these researchers, the way forward is to ensure that feedback is provided in a timely manner (close to the act of learning production), that it focuses not just on strengths and weaknesses but also on offering corrective advice, that it directs students to higher order learning goals and that it involves some praise alongside constructive criticism. While each of these issues is important, there is a need for a more focused definition of quality in relation to external feedback, a definition that links more closely to the idea of self-regulation. Hence it is proposed here that:

> *Good quality external feedback is information that helps students trouble-shoot their own performance and self-correct: that is, it helps students take action to reduce the discrepancy between their intentions and the resulting effects.*

In this context, it is argued that where feedback is given it is important that it is related to (and that students understand its relation to) goals, standards or criteria. Moreover, from this definition it is clear that external feedback should also help convey to students an appropriate conception of the goal. This is not always the case. For example, it has become common practice in recent years to devise feedback sheets with assessment criteria as a way of informing students about task requirements and of providing consistent feedback in relation to goals (where there are a number of assessors). However, Sadler (1983) has argued that the use of criteria sheets often has unwanted effects in relation to essay assessments: for example, if there are a large number of criteria (12-20) this may convey to the student a conception of an the essay as a list of things to be done (ticked off) rather than as a holistic process (e.g. involving the production of a coherent argument supported by evidence). So as well as relating feedback to criteria and goals, teachers should also be alert to the fact that instruments they use to deliver feedback might adversely influence students' conceptions of the expected goals.

In the literature on essay assessment, some researchers have tried to formulate guidelines regarding the quantity and tone of feedback comments that, when analysed, show a close correspondence with the principle underlying the above definition of feedback quality. For example, Lunsford (1997) examined the written feedback comments given by writing experts on students' essays. From his analysis he made two proposals. Firstly, that three well thought out feedback comments per essay was the optimum if the expectation was that students would act on these comments. Secondly, and more importantly, these comments should indicate to the student how the reader (the teacher) experienced the essay as it was read (i.e. playing back to the students how the essay worked) rather than offer judgemental comments. Such comments would help the student grasp the difference between his or her intentions (goals) and the effects of the writing. Lunsford also advises that the comments should always be written in a non-authoritative tone and where possible they should offer corrective advice (both about the writing process as well as about content) instead of just information about strengths and weaknesses. In relation to self-regulation, Lunsford's reader response strategy supports the shift from feedback provided by the teacher to students'

evaluating their own writing.

The literature on external feedback is undeveloped in terms of how teachers should frame feedback comments, what kind of discourse should be used, how many comments are appropriate and in what context they should be made. Much more research is required in this area. One fruitful area of investigation is that, currently being conducted by Gibbs and Simpson (in press), on the relationship between feedback and the time students spend on task. They have shown that if students receive feedback often and regularly it enables better monitoring and self-regulation of progress by students. Other research is investigating the strengths of alternative modes of feedback communication (e.g. audio feedback, computer feedback) and of alternative ways of producing feedback information (e.g. poster productions where students get feedback by comparing their work with that of other students) (Hounsell, 2004; Hounsel & McCune, 2003).

Further strategies that increase the quality of teacher feedback based on the definition given above and on traditional research include: (i) making sure that feedback is provided in relation to pre-defined criteria but paying particular attention to the number of criteria; (ii) providing timely feedback – this means before it is too late for students to change their work (i.e. before submission) rather than just, as the research literature often suggests, soon after submission; (iii) providing corrective advice, not just information on strengths/weaknesses; (iv) limiting the amount of feedback so that it is actually used; (v) prioritising areas for improvement; (vi) providing online tests so that feedback can be accessed anytime, any place and as many times as students wish.

4. Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning.

In the self-regulation model, for external feedback to be effective it must be understood and internalised by the student before it can be used to make productive improvements. Yet in the research literature (Chanock, 2000; Hyland, 2000) there is a great deal of evidence that students do not understand the feedback given by tutors (e.g. 'this essay is not sufficiently analytical') and are therefore not be able to take action to reduce the discrepancy between their intentions (goals) and the effects they would like to produce (i.e. the student may not know what to do to make the essay 'more analytical'). External feedback as a transmission process involving 'telling' ignores the active role the student must play in constructing meaning from feedback messages and of using this to regulate performance.

One way of increasing the effectiveness of external feedback and the likelihood that the information provided is understood by students is to conceptualise feedback more as dialogue rather than as information transmission. Feedback as dialogue means that the student not only receives initial feedback information but also has the opportunity to engage the teacher in discussion about that feedback. Some researchers maintain that teacher-student dialogue is essential if feedback is to be effective in higher education (Laurillard, 2002). Freeman and Lewis (1998) argue that the teacher 'should try to stimulate a response and a continuing dialogue – whether this be on the topics that formed the basis of the assignment or aspects of students' performance or the feedback itself' (p51). Discussions with the teacher help students to develop their understanding of expectations and standards, to check out and correct misunderstandings and to get an immediate response to difficulties.

Unfortunately, with large class sizes it can be difficult for the teacher to engage in dialogue with students. Nonetheless, there are ways that teachers might increase feedback dialogue even in these situations. One approach is to structure small group break-out discussions of feedback in class after students have received written comments on their individual assignments. Another approach is to use classroom technologies. These technologies help collate student responses to in-class questions (often multiple-choice questions) using handset devices. The results are feed back to the class visually as a histogram. This collated feedback has been used as a trigger for peer discussion (e.g. 'convince your neighbour that you have the right answer') and teacher-managed discussion in large classes (e.g. Nicol and Boyle, 2003; Boyle and Nicol, 2003).

These studies identify another source of external feedback to students – their peers. Peer dialogue enhances in students a sense of self-control over learning in a variety of ways. Firstly, students who have just learned something are often better able than teachers to explain it to their classmates in a language and in a way that is accessible. Secondly, peer discussion exposes students to alternative perspectives on problems and to alternative tactics and strategies. Alternative perspectives enable students to revise or reject their initial hypothesis and construct new knowledge and meaning through negotiation. Thirdly, by commenting on the work of peers, students develop detachment of judgement (about work in relation to standards) which is transferred to the assessment of their own work (e.g. 'I didn't do that either'). Fourthly, peer discussion can be motivational in that it encourages students to persist (see, Boyle and Nicol, 2003). Finally, it is sometimes easier for students to accept critiques of their work from peers rather than tutors.

Dialogical feedback strategies that support self-regulation include: (i) providing feedback using one-minute papers in class (see, Angelo and Cross, 1993); (ii) reviewing feedback in tutorials where students are asked to read the feedback comments they have been given earlier on an assignment and discuss these with peers (they might also be asked to suggest strategies to improve performance next time); (iii) asking students to find one or two examples of feedback comments that they found useful and to explain how they helped (iv) having students give each other descriptive feedback on their work in relation to published criteria before submission; (iv) group projects especially where students discuss criteria and standards before the project begins.

5. Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem.

Motivation and self-esteem play a very important role in learning and assessment. Studies by Dweck (1999) show that depending on their beliefs about learning students possess qualitatively different motivational frameworks. These frameworks affect both students' responses to external feedback and their commitment to the self-regulation of learning.

Research in school settings has shown that frequent high stakes assessment (where marks or grades are given) has a 'negative impact on motivation for learning that militates against preparation for lifelong learning' (Harlen & Crick, 2003). Dweck (1999) argues that such assessments encourage students to focus on performance goals (passing the test, looking good) rather than learning goals (mastering the subject). In one study, Butler (1988) demonstrated that feedback comments alone increased students' subsequent interest in learning when compared with two other controlled situations, one where only marks were given and the other where students were given feedback and marks. Butler argued that students paid less attention to the comments when given marks and consequently did not try to use the comments to make improvements. This phenomenon is also commonly reported by academics in higher education.

Butler (1987) has also argued that grading student performance has less effect than feedback comments because it leads students to compare themselves against others (ego-involvement) rather than to focus on the difficulties in the task and on making efforts to improve (task involvement). Feedback given as grades has also been shown to have especially negative effects on the self-esteem of low ability students (Craven, Marsh & Debus, 1991).

Dweck (1999) has interpreted these findings in terms of a developmental model that differentiates students into those who believe that ability is fixed and that there is a limit to what they can achieve (the 'entity view') and those that believe that their ability is malleable and depends on the effort that is input into a task (the 'incremental view'). These views affect how students respond to learning difficulties. Those with an entity view (fixed) interpret failure as a reflection of their low ability and are likely to give up whereas those with an incremental view (malleable) interpret this as a challenge or an obstacle to be overcome and increase their effort. Grant and Dweck (2003) have confirmed the validity of this model within higher education as have Yorke and Knight (2003) who found that about one-third of a sample of 2269 undergraduates students in first and final years, and across a range of disciplines, held beliefs in fixed intelligence.

Although this is an under-explored area of research in HE, there is evidence that teachers can have a positive or negative effect on motivation and self-esteem. They can influence both the goals that students set (learning or performance goals) as well as their commitment to those goals. Praising effort and strategic behaviours, and focusing students through feedback on learning goals, leads to higher achievement than praising ability or intelligence. The latter can result in a learned-helplessness orientation (Dweck, 1999). As Black and Wiliam (1998) note, feedback that draws attention away from the task and towards self-esteem can have a negative effect on attitudes and performance. In other words, it is important that students understand that feedback is an evaluation, not of the person but of the performance in context. This holds true whether the feedback derives from an external source or is generated through self-assessment.

These studies on motivation and self-esteem are important - they help explain why students often fail to self-regulate. In terms of teaching practice they suggest that motivation and self-esteem are more likely to be enhanced when a course has many low-stakes assessment tasks, with feedback geared to providing information about progress and achievement, rather than high stakes summative assessment tasks where information is only about success or failure or about how students compare with their peers (e.g. grades). Other strategies that help encourage high levels of motivation and self-esteem include: (i) providing marks on written work only after students have responded to feedback comments (Gibbs, 1999); (ii) allocating time for students to re-write selected pieces of work – this would help change students' expectations about purpose and learning goals; (iii) automated testing with feedback; (iv) drafts and resubmissions.

6. Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.

So far, feedback has been discussed from a cognitive or informational perspective and from a motivational perspective. However, in terms of self-regulation we must also consider how feedback influences behaviour and the academic work that is produced. According to Yorke (2003), two questions might be asked regarding external feedback. First, is the feedback of the best quality and second, does it lead to changes in student behaviour? Many writers have focused on the first question but the second is equally important. External feedback provides an opportunity to close a gap between current performance and the performance expected by the teacher.

As Boud notes:

> The only way to tell if learning results from feedback is for students to make some kind of response to complete the feedback loop (Sadler, 1989). This is one of the most often forgotten aspects of formative assessment. Unless students are able to use the feedback to produce improved work, through for example, re-doing the same assignment, neither they nor those giving the feedback will know that it has been effective (2000, p158).

In the self-regulation model (Figure 1), Boud's arguments about closing the performance gap might be viewed in two ways. First, closing the gap is about supporting students while engaged in the act of production of a piece of work (e.g. essays, presentations). Second, it is about providing opportunities to repeat the same 'task-performance-external feedback cycle' by, for example, allowing resubmission. External feedback should support both processes: it should help students to recognise the next steps in learning and how to take them, both during production and in relation to the next assignment.

Supporting the act of production requires the generation of concurrent or intrinsic feedback that students can interact with while engaged in an assessment task. This feedback would normally be built into the task (e.g. a group task with peer interaction, or a computer simulation) or the task might be broken down into components each associated with its own feedback. Many forms of electronic feedback (e.g. online simulations) can be automatically generated to support task engagement (Bull & McKenna, 2004). Providing feedback at subtask level is not significantly different from other forms of feedback described in this paper.

In higher education, most students have little opportunity to use directly the feedback they receive to close the performance gap especially in the case of planned assignments. Invariably they move on to the next assessment task soon after feedback is received. While not all work can be re-submitted, many writers argue that re-submissions should play a more prominent role in learning (Boud, 2000). Also, greater emphasis might need to be given to providing feedback on work-in-progress (e.g. on structures for essays, plans for reports, sketches) and to encouraging students to plan the strategies they might use to improve subsequent work (Hounsell, 2004).

The following are some specific strategies to help students use external feedback to regulate and close the performance gap: (i) provide feedback on work in progress and increase opportunities for resubmission; (ii) introduce two stage assignments where feedback on stage one helps improve stage two (Gibbs, 2004); (iii) teachers might model the strategies they would use to close a performance gap in class (e.g. model how to structure an essay when given a new question); (iv) specifically provide some 'action points' alongside the normal feedback provision; (v) involve students in groups in identifying their own action points in class after they have read the feedback on their assignments. The latter strategy would integrate feedback into the teaching and learning process and involve the students more actively in the generation and planned use of feedback.

7. Provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching.

Good feedback practice is not only about providing accessible and usable information that helps students improve their learning, but it is also about providing good information to teachers. As Yorke (2003) notes:

> The act of assessing has an effect on the assessor as well as the student. Assessors learn about the extent to which they [students] have developed expertise and can tailor their teaching accordingly (p.482).

In order to produce feedback that is relevant and informative and meets students' needs, teachers themselves need good data about how students are progressing. They also need to be involved in reviewing and reflecting on this data and in taking action to help support the development of self-regulation in their students.

In the self-regulation model information about students only becomes available when the learning outcomes are translated into public performances and products. Teachers help generate this public information about students through a variety of methods – by setting assessment tasks, by questioning of students in class and by observing behaviour (e.g. presentations). Such information helps teachers uncover student difficulties with subject matter (e.g. conceptual misunderstandings) and with study methods.

Frequent assessment tasks, especially diagnostic tests, can help teachers generate cumulative information about students' levels of understanding and skill so that they can adapt their teaching accordingly. This is one of the key ideas behind the work in the US of Angelo and Cross (1993). They have shown how teachers can gain regular feedback information about student learning within large classes by using variants of the one-minute paper – questions that are posed to students before a teaching session begins and responded to at the end of the session (e.g. What was the most important argument in this lecture? What question remains uppermost in your mind now at the end of this teaching session?). These strategies can be adapted to any classroom situation or discipline. Moreover, they help develop in students important meta-cognitive skills such as the ability to think holistically and to identify gaps in understanding (Steadman, 1998).

As well as giving feedback to the teacher, one-minute papers can also be used to provide feedback to the student (e.g. when teachers replay some of the student responses to the one-minute paper in class at the next teaching session). Indeed, this approach allows teachers and students to share, on a regular basis, their conceptions about both the goals and processes of learning (Stefani & Nicol, 1997) thus supporting academic self-regulation.

Other strategies available to teachers to help generate and collate quality information about student learning include (i) having students request the feedback they would like when they make an assignment submission (e.g. on a proforma

with published criteria); (ii) having students identify where they are having difficulties when they hand in assessed work; (iii) asking students in groups to identify 'a question worth asking', based on prior study, that they would like to explore for a short time at the beginning of the next tutorial.

Source: Nicol, D. J., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. Studies in Higher Education, 31(2), 199-218.

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Heather Buchanan
ELT coursebook author

Thank you for agreeing to this interview, Heather.

*1. What got you interested in writing an
   ELT coursebook?*

As with so many TEFLers, I just fell into the job – right time, right place. I was working at Leeds Metropolitan University, mainly as a CELTA trainer, when a new reader, Brian Tomlinson, joined our team, and the rest is history! I was invited to do a two-week materials development training course (in 2001, I think) led by Brian Tomlinson and Hitomi Masuhara, which opened my eyes to the world of materials. What really interested me was the interface between theory and practice in materials and the reflective nature of the training course. After that, I was included in the materials development team led by Brian. Our projects included a primary series and a junior high coursebook series for China, and other projects for Ethiopian teachers. I was involved as co-author for all these projects and learned so much in the process.

*2. How did you get the contract to write
   this coursebook?*

Again, right time, right place, in a way. I was at an ELT Journal drinks reception at IATEFL and heard about a coursebook writing opportunity that was coming up with Oxford University Press. It was actually advertised quite widely on social media etc., and anyone could apply by sending in a short materials sample and (if I remember rightly) sending in a CV and answering a few questions. I decided I had nothing to lose, so sent in my sample. A selection process with three different stages followed, whereby shortlisted applicants attended workshops in Oxford, then submitted further samples, etc. Each time, the group got smaller, and the process became more nerve-wracking, until the coursebook author team was finalised.

*3. [if you are willing to specify] What is the name of
   the coursebook and the publisher?*

Navigate B1+, published by Oxford University Press.

*4. What were the parameters you were given by the
   publisher, with regard to structure, number of
   units, topics, activity types, CEFR etc.?*

Interestingly, many of these were discussed at length in the workshops we attended in Oxford during the selection process. I remember us considering a number of options with regard to unit structure in particular: what would the unique features of the book be, and how would they be incorporated into the materials? However, some decisions had already been made by the publisher, such as what levels would be offered, and what the target market would be. Extensive market research had also been done before the authors were recruited, which shaped parameters related to the style of the book.

Before we started writing, we had a unit structure to work with, and we knew the number of units. The first task for authors, once contracts started, was to design the 'Scope and Sequence' of the book. This is where topics, grammar and skills syllabuses etc. were worked out, with reference to the CEFR.

*5. What was the procedure with respect to the
   publisher – did you submit the outline, unit by
   unit, the whole book or what?*

After the Scope and Sequence was submitted, then the deadlines came thick and fast. Co-author teams would submit three or four draft units at a time, and deadlines for second and third drafts were also built into the schedule once a complete draft had been written. Feedback came from the editors a few weeks after we sent in our draft chapters.

*6. What was the methodology/approach you took, or
   were asked to take, in the materials?*

The coursebook has a multi-syllabus, with grammar, vocabulary, functions and skills syllabuses woven through. The methodology was broadly a 'weak' communicative approach, but with tasks with clear outcomes at the end of lessons. Grammar was generally presented in semi-authentic texts and there was a certain amount of self-discovery. Productive skills work was organised according to genres or functions, and receptive skills work included a clear focus on bottom-up subskills, with micro-skill practice incorporated into lessons as well as more traditional top-down tasks.

*7. Your coursebook was co-written. What was the
   process/procedure that yourself and your co-writer
   adopted when writing the material?*

My co-author and I lived on different continents and

in different time zones, so we always met virtually. We would take a unit each and exchange our draft units by email before meeting up on Skype to discuss them. We would also talk about problems we were having/dilemmas we were facing in between meetings, by email. Once we got to the second draft stage, we sometimes worked on each other's first drafts, which was an interesting way to work.

8. What were the positives of working within the parameters set by the publisher?

It was good to have clear guidance about the style and 'flavour' of the book, for example, the majority of texts had to be information-rich and aimed at adults. The unit structure was clear, and we also had clear guidance about how many activities should be included in a spread, how long texts should be, and so on. We had a clear idea who our coursebook was aimed at, which really helped us to visualise the materials being used in the classroom.

9. What were the constraints of working within the parameters set by the publisher?

Honestly, the constraints were the most difficult part of writing for publication, for me. Constraints are positive and workable to a point, but when we had so many operating at the same time, for example vocabulary syllabus, PARSNIP[1] and other cultural constraints, writing interesting, clear texts of the right length, at the right level and without copyright issues, and with enough examples of the target grammar and recycling previous items, the task of writing a lesson became much, much more difficult.

10. Was there anything that you would have liked to have done, done differently or included, that the publishers rejected or didn't allow?

In retrospect, some of my ideas for topics were terrible and I don't blame the publishers for rejecting them at all! There were other topics and texts that I disagreed about – but I think that is the case on every project.

I think through personal choice I would have included more authentic texts and more materials of the type I would use myself, with more freedom for the teacher, for example. One of the things I learnt by writing for publication, however, is that you have to write for teachers who are quite different for yourself: teachers who are trained in a different way, who are L2 English speakers, or who are teaching in a different part of the world. You have to accept that not everyone teaches in the same way as you.

11. Do you have any other coursebooks in the pipeline?

Not at the moment – it wouldn't be possible to fit that in my schedule now. I went part-time at work to work on the Navigate project but that was really a one-off.

12. Any other comments you would like to add?

Never underestimate how much work is involved in writing a coursebook! Having said that, any budding materials writers out there, get out there and network with others in our profession. Get to know people, go to conferences, etc. You never know where it might lead!

Thank you very much for sharing your experiences with Folio *readers.*

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1. The acronym PARSNIP stands for the topics that tend to be avoided in coursebooks for reasons of cultural sensitivity: politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, ideologies, pork.

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Brian Tomlinson
at Leyte Normal University, The Philippines:
'Language Learning Materials Development'

The interview with Professor Brian Tomlinson was part of the culmination for the course Language Learning Materials Development, which is a requirement for the Bachelor in Secondary Education major in English program at Leyte Normal University, Tacloban City, Philippines. The event was held on April 28th, 2021, at 6:00 pm (Philippine time) via Google Meet, attended by more than a hundred third year university students, with Professor Brian Tomlinson, leading expert on materials development for language learning, as guest speaker. The session was in a question and answer format, where selected students had the chance to ask questions which were comprehensively answered by Professor Tomlinson.

How important is material development towards facilitating student learning?

Professor Tomlinson: Actually, very, very important. It is actually a tool to acquire a language without using materials at all from natural exposure because massive exposure is one of the key principles of language acquisition.

I have worked in Africa, most people speak three, four, five languages without any instruction but those conditions which are massive exposure to the language in use is a real motivation. There is a real need of one to learn the language/s and opportunities to use it. Here we are talking about students in an institution. Now, what I would say is that materials help to create those conditions, they don't really need materials to teach them about a language. They don't really need materials to give them practice. In my view, they need materials to provide this basic pre-requisite of exposure. Therefore, materials must include this exposure to the language in use and they cannot assume that the student is motivated. They cannot assume that the student really needs the language.

Now, I ask you how many students actually really need, and how many really want English? Now, those are necessary conditions but it is possible to create them through materials. It is possible by setting tasks for example, and providing texts which are engaging, which engage the feelings, the emotions, the experiences of the learner. Affective engagement, cognitive engagement. Okay? Now, if we can do that through materials,

provide this massive exposure to the language in use which is comprehensible, which is recycled and which is meaningful to the learner and that connects to their experience, and we can engage the learner in reading, listening, in doing, then the materials are doing the job which we really want them to do.

Alright, now having said that I'm quite notorious for sometimes saying that materials can prevent language acquisition. And I have witnessed this. I have worked in nine different countries all over the world and I have seen materials which are so impoverished, so boring, so unengaging, that they are actually preventing language acquisition. So, what I'm saying is materials development is potentially vital to students' learning. But it's got to be the right sort of materials development - materials development which is informed by principles of language acquisition, by what we know about language learning.

Aside from books, what are the other language learning materials which can be applied consistently regardless of the modifications of the curriculum?

Professor Tomlinson: I better start with my definition of language learning materials because we tend to think of language learning materials as textbooks and not as our experience as teachers and as learners. I argue that language learning materials can be anything which can be facilitative to language acquisition, so, obviously, other types of materials would be digital materials, would be video, would be film, would be newspapers, would be magazines, would be comics and so on. And there are also, less obvious things. I'm a great believer in encouraging learners to look for English outside the classroom, and in many places where I go people say to me, "Oh! There is no English outside the classroom". Then, I challenge the learners for homework to find as much English as possible.

Now, I've been to the Philippines once, but I'm pretty sure there's a lot of English on shops, on adverts, on posters, on notices, in newspapers, and all around in the environment. And these are vital facilitators of learning. And I get learners to actually take photos of notices and advertisements and to bring them to class. And I get people to work out of what they mean.

And I give you an example. Has anyone been to Indonesia? I used to live in Indonesia and I couldn't speak the national language (Bahasa Indonesia). But when I was driving home, from work, which could take sometimes two hours because of the traffic, I used to look at notices in Indonesian. And I remember getting stuck for maybe 30 minutes in the traffic and there was a big notice by the side of the road. And four words on the notice: mobil, tuci, aiaa,panas. Mobil, M-O-B-I-L; tuci, T-U-C-I; aiaa is A-I-A- A; panas, P-A-N-A-S. I have no idea what it means but in that environment I could see quite a few cars. So, I thought mobil uh, maybe it's a petrol station - and I looked but I couldn't see any petrol pumps. And then, that night I went to a restaurant. In Indonesia, in most restaurants, you eat with your hands so you wash your hands before eating. I noticed by the wash basin, it said, tuci - so something to do with 'wash'. And then the next day, I went to buy some drinking water from a shop and I asked for water and the lady said, "Uh, you mean, aiaa?" and on the bottle was the word aiaa. So wait a minute. So, mobil, tuci, has something to do with washing and cars and water.

And then I went to another restaurant and I like my food very spicy, very hot. So, I asked the waitress, "Please make it hot". And she said, "You mean, panas or pedas?" and I asked her to explain the difference, "Panas is hot. Yeah, panas means hot in temperature; pedas means spice and chilli". The next day, I drove past, the same notice, and noticed people were washing their cars. So, mobil, tuci, aiaa, panas —car wash with hot water.

So remember that learners find out things for themselves and make the effort to understand. So, this learner involvement I think, is crucial.

I am a great believer in extensive reading. Extensive reading has been demonstrated to be the most valuable way of helping learners acquire communicative competence. And again, in Indonesia, I was encouraging teachers on my course to use extensive reading. But teachers said, "We have no books, we have no money". So, one teacher came up with a wonderful idea, she presented the class with a box and she said to the class, "We've got a library. We've got a class library. Come and see". And all the kids ran to look in the box and it was empty and the kids were very angry, "It's only a box! It is not a library!" And she said, "Oh it is! This is your library. You're going to fill it with interesting things to read. Your homework tonight, everybody, is to try to find something interesting in English, and bring it to class on Friday". So, 40 kids in the class, each one manages to bring something. Some of them were books, some newspapers, some magazines, some were just packets - like a corn flake packet, and some of the kids actually looked up in the telephone directory and found some names and they went to people's houses, "Excuse me, do you have anything

interesting to read in English?"

So, on the Friday, they had 40 things in the box to read. Some of them were books but most of them weren't. And every week for ten weeks, they did this. So, in ten weeks' time, they had 400. And the teacher had to do nothing when she came up with the idea. And the students came up the materials.

So, I'm really saying that this is an important addition to books. Books can give this sense of security and they are complete and they are professional. But, in addition, the learners can find many, many things for themselves giving vital language exposure and ideally, in a motivated way.

Does the reliance on new technologies and electronic materials in language learning material development pose any risk or some kind of danger to both the content creators and learners? And if there are, what are they?

Professor Tomlinson: The new technology gives us wonderful new opportunities to access the language in use and the ability to use it.

I've worked on digital materials in various courses. I've been disturbed by the creators, because they're more concerned with the technology than they are with the learning opportunities provided by the materials. But digital materials - you can use whenever you want to use them. They offer things which folks don't, and they offer possibilities of interaction where technology gives feedback on what you've done. So these affordances are real. And we should take advantage of them and welcome them.

But what I found out was that for many content creators, instead of the content, they're more interested in the technology. And many of the materials are very disappointing because they're simply doing what could be done in a book, but they're doing it at greater expense. So it is costing more for these materials which are not doing anything the book couldn't do. We are talking about filling in the blanks, matching activities, sentence completion activities. Now digital materials create colours, sound and give answers. It's not really using the affordances of technology. And there's also a danger there that the learners are feeling that this is really wonderful, but are not actually gaining much from it.

For example, I did a study on creativity in primary school, the question was, "do electronic materials facilitate creativity?" And I can't remember how many schools, maybe four or five schools were involved. And what I found was, in the school which was well-resourced, it didn't really make any difference to the students. In the schools which are not well-resourced where students had to share a computer, there wasn't much increase in creativity and the simple reason was,

in those schools, it wasn't the materials themselves which increased the creativity, it was the learners' interaction when using them. And when they were doing so, they had to interact, they had to talk with each other. It was the learners' interaction which was facilitating language acquisition and creativity.

Over 30 years ago, there was a lot of research which said the most valuable resource of learners and the most valuable source of communication is interaction between learners, especially if it is cooperative, so a group of learners working on a task gains social coherence.

Now, going back to the question, the biggest danger with electronic materials is if they are actually preventing learner - learner interaction. So the ideal electronic material is a material that increases the possibility for learner - learner interaction. Now, of course electronic materials can do this because they can connect learners from other rooms, other schools, other places, other countries even.

I edited a book about blended learning and one of the interesting chapters was about driving in Turkey. So there are a lot of English passengers in taxis, and so they were doing a course with taxi drivers because they rarely are able to meet in the classroom. So they meet once a week and then they use their mobiles to access the tutor and discuss with them. And when they had a passenger, they actually recorded their interaction with the permission of the passenger, and the tutor gave feedback on that interaction. That's something you couldn't do with the book, and they were using the affordance of the mobile in a very creative way.

So what I'm saying is, beware of the danger of technology restricting interaction and restricting exposure to language in use. Make use of it to increase exposure to language in use. And increase opportunity for interaction. Of course, interaction isn't just oral, it can be written in or via blogs, etc. There's a variety in English which is some sort of mixture of spoken and written English. So yeah, technology can be extremely useful, and it can be extremely dangerous.

In the negative trends of materials development, one particular trend is the absence of controversial issues to stimulate thoughts. In the Philippine context, censorship is highly present especially if it has vulgar and provocative concepts. As English teachers, how can we address this in order to deliver salient points to be taken from these controversial issues without compromising the cultural and social beliefs of the students?

Professor Tomlinson: That's a really good question. It really interests me, what I know about it is controversial issues are vital. Part of the sort of interaction I've been talking about. If in a group there is no conversation, no communication, there's no need to try and achieve anything. So, you have a photograph of a beautiful mountain, a beautiful forest and the question is, "do you find this beautiful?" and the answer is "yes". No language, no communication. Observing a controversial photograph might provoke different views than this and is extremely valuable for not only exposure to language in use but for the opportunity to communicate.

So how do we do this? I've been to many countries all around the world and I tend to use a lot of very controversial materials; I'll give you a couple of examples. I work with materials developers in Iran. Now, Iran is like what you have described, there's a lot of censorship of materials. They're very very sensitive to various issues. What we did was brainstorm issues in Iranian community which were permissible to discuss and in which there are differing views and then the students developed materials from these issues. They developed dialogues, they developed stories, and some very creative ones. I'll give you an example. The issue of the mother in Iran and the relationship with a son who was growing up; the issue was of the mother in Iranian society and in particular her relationship with her teenage son and the tendency of the mother to speak, to cling to the son and to be motherly and the son being very embarrassed - and they developed the story. The son was going to the UK to study and the mother was very upset. She didn't want her son to go and, in the end, she accepted it and when he left home to go to the airport, she kept giving him huge bags full of food and sweets and also presents. The problem was he had his suitcase; he couldn't carry all this on the plane. How does he manage to get on the plane without upsetting his mother? So, this becomes an issue and there's a lot of different suggestions as to what he should do, what he shouldn't do.

So, in other words, the answer really is you've got to look at the society you're writing for and ask what can we discuss to become controversial. I'll give an example in Oman where I also worked. In Oman, in their classes, the males are on the side, they separate it, the males are on the left side, and the females are on the other. This was a university in Oman. The males come through one door; the females come through another door. There's a lot of separation and very very rarely they are seen to actively communicate with one other. There is this very very strict separation and it was disturbing because we couldn't really get conversations going. We couldn't get communication going. I used a poem with the class, which in itself is not controversial. There's no problem but I made it controversial. It's a poem called "Not now, Bernard". It's about a young boy who comes home from school and says, "hello, Dad" and the father says, "Not now, Bernard". "Hello, Mom", "Not now, Bernard" and the parents are busy and they don't pay any attention to the young boy and he says to the mother, "there's a monster in the garden he's going to eat me" and the mother says "not now, Bernard, not now, Bernard". Bernard goes into the garden and there is the monster and the monster ate Bernard. The monster goes into

the house and the mother and father don't notice that it's a monster so they give dinner to the monster, then they give comics to the monster, they just don't notice. At one point, at the end of the poem, the monster says "I'm a monster", and gets very angry at them for not noticing. It's a children's poem, a very silly, funny children's poem.

But the question is, who is responsible for Bernard's death? A very serious question and immediately one of them answered "the mother, obviously". Why? "it's a mother's job to look after the child". She neglected the child and suddenly one of the young female students said, "No, it's the father". What? The father? Why the father? Because she was cooking the dinner, the mother was busy and the father was reading the paper. The father could have looked after him and suddenly there was this wonderful argument and that's the great thing about controversy.

Controversy sparks argument and is actively engaging. People express their ideas and it's making people express themselves and even get into a very heated argument; it went on for about 20 minutes with everybody joining in using English which was the first time ever in the whole year that they had that sort of communication.

And then somebody said, "It's the teacher's fault". What? Why the teacher? "Well, the teacher should teach the child to be patient and not bother the parents". What? And so, they started talking, and now there is the female with different views and somebody said; "It's the society's fault". What? Why society? "Well, society spoils children, we are too indulgent". And I didn't ask any more questions within any of the exercises and we just spent forty minutes using English which came from a controversial issue which wasn't a controversial text but it was turned into one.

In some countries, I have taken a risk. I was adviser for a coursebook in Bolivia, South America, and they had an English textbook from an English publisher and it was very boring because British publishers erase taboo topics, so if you're a materials writer, you cannot use these topics. These topics include history, politics, religion, alcohol, drugs, sex and there are about ten topics you can't use. Death is another one, and as a result the textbooks are so boring, that's why textbooks are so boring because the authors can't use these topics. It was a huge risk with the textbook and we actually had an official from the Ministry of Education and what we did was to ask students to all do a massive questionnaire as to what it is they wanted in their new coursebook. Most of the topics they suggested were taboo topics. They wanted to discuss corruption, collusion, marital violence, sexual abuse, alcohol abuse, all these taboo topics, and I said to them, to the Ministry of Education, this is what the students want to read about and discuss. They have written it in their questionnaire. This is what

we talk about in the playground, why can't we talk about it in the classroom? And the Ministry gave me permission so, in that coursebook, it's a coursebook called Untarget, of ten units, at least eight of them are on controversial issues. There's a whole unit on drug abuse and no preaching. It starts with a song, and a poem, and an interview, and a story and then there's a debate, and there is a cartoon. There is a cartoon that goes through the book and in the cartoon, a girl says to her friend, "Are you done with your homework?" and her friend says "I'll tell my mother I'm going to yours to do the homework and we'll go to the club" and these two girls go to the club and in the club, they take marijuana, they take drugs.

Wow, I've never seen this in a coursebook anywhere and what an impact that had on the students. The girls, they were bold and the little girls they are really like, they are naughty but nice. Suddenly there was this huge issue. This controversial issue that brought out this discussion about the dangers of drug abuse and its very powerful effect. So, it was educationally valuable and also incredibly valuable for language acquisition. Highly motivated, highly engaged, being pushed to use a lot of language. It is crucial to get permission from the Ministry, to get permission from principals. I got no problem from the students; the danger of course is parents who might complain. There was actually a complaint, but not with me, but with somebody else. You have to be very careful but it is the main reason why coursebooks ae so boring: they don't have controversial issues. Another thing we did in Japan where I worked was we subverted the textbook. This was Headway, very famous, I should be careful about saying this, not a very interesting coursebook which we subverted where there was a unit about the happiest family in England and it was a stereotypical family. Husband, wife, the son, the daughter, boring jobs, boring texts. I got them to rewrite it as the happiest person/family in Japan, but to change it completely, so it wasn't normal, it was an abnormal family. There were some great stories and one them was the mother was a sumo wrestler, only men are sumo wrestlers and only men are allowed in what they call the basho, the ring where they fight, so, it was very controversial, but the text wasn't, the coursebook wasn't. What we did in the class was, it wasn't me doing it but it was the students doing it. I think that is the way around it, or else you are denying learners vital opportunities to dig into it.

Now that we are in a pandemic and education has shifted to a different way of learning, how can principles of language acquisition still be helpful and effective when teachers have only limited actions and resources than face-to-face classes?

Professor Tomlinson: It's really a question of asking, "What can the teacher do to let learners help each other?", "How can the learners use the electronic

devices they have in their exposure and the interaction they need?". So, it's really a question of stimulating the learners.

As I said, find English for themselves to use English for themselves. For example, setting up a project which students do in groups of four which will require them to frequently meet online to discuss the progress of the project, and they have different roles in the project. So, that's something that is fairly easy but very useful to do and that would be leading eventually to a group presentation on their project. Another obvious one is the teacher can introduce them to various web sources where they can find materials.

In the book - at the beginning I mentioned the recent book, A Complete Guide to Theory and Practice of Materials Development - at the end of that book it actually included resources where you can get free access to stories, to poems, to songs, to adverts, to all sorts of resources. There's a shortened version of web resources and each learner goes to the resource, finds a text which they really enjoy. And then, in another lesson, that's discussed with another student. So, it's been available to other students and they will talk about why they like it, why it's so interesting. So, there are all sorts of little ideas like that which can, in a way, enrich the students' experience.

So it might actually be more profitable than in a face-to-face class, in a face-to-face class, the teacher feels an obligation to teach and the learners feel an obligation to learn. Often teaching gets in the way of acquisition and an obligation to learn explicitly can get in the way of acquisition.

I'm not saying that all teaching is of no value, I'm not saying that all explicit learning is of no value, but the danger of the classroom is that it in a way enforces obligations. I've done research on this, and I find it myself, oh I'm in a classroom and I'm not teaching, I should be teaching. As I said earlier, a valuable thing you could do with the class is to get them to read. So, in an extensive reading lesson, the teacher himself 'fails' to teach. The students are gaining more from learning than they would from teaching. So, it's a real problem, it's a real dilemma. But now, the teacher is released from that, when he is no longer in the classroom.

So, forget about the classroom, this is opening up the world to the students to go out to the streets, go on to the web, go out to the world, find English, use English, do it for something you're interested in, do it for something you enjoy. For example, I'm a football fanatic. I'm a supporter of the Liverpool football team. I find anywhere in the world, I can pick up a newspaper talking about football and understand it. Not completely, but enough, because of my interest, what they call topic familiarity. If you're really familiar with the topic you can understand text which seems to be beyond your level. So, what I do is encourage learners

to find what they are most interested in. Go to the web, find something on that topic in English, see when you can read about it, see what you can come up with. So, football for example, the web is full of websites in English about football and there's a website on the English Premier League. So, yeah, you could say that it's too difficult; it's not if you have that topic familiarity and the motivation. So, yeah, lots of ways in which the teachers can turn a disadvantage into an advantage.

One of the substantial debates in language learning materials development is authenticity. In a face-to-face setting, teachers can easily bring to class authentic materials such as realia; however, with the current health situation of the world, delivery of classes has shifted to online and modular learning. How would a language teacher be able to integrate or bring authentic materials in an online or modular distance learning?

Professor Tomlinson: There are two things: there's the teacher bringing materials themselves and displaying it on the screen and there's the teacher stimulating, encouraging learners to find materials, which is what I will talk about.

My answer to the question would have been that the teacher could bring authentic materials and the teachers notice as I've mentioned whether it is a freely available material and really needs to ask two questions. First question is, "Does this engage me?" Alright, forget the learners; ask yourself "Does this material engage me?" "Does it make me think?" "Does it make me feel?" "Am I involved in it?" and select a few materials.

Then, ask the question: "Would this engage my learners?" Will they be able to understand and gain something?" And this question of comprehensibility is very important. Why? They need to understand the word 'comprehensible'. They think it means that they should be able to understand everything - not so. You can actually appreciate and enjoy gaining from a written or spoken text in which you do not understand everything, but you understand enough.

Let me give you an example. There's a British novel called Vanity Fair written in Victorian times, a very long time ago and very difficult to read. Obviously, it's authentic. And there is a graded reader version, a simplified version. And for an experiment, we took a page from the original novel and we took a page from the graded reader. Then, we swapped around. Afterwards, the students were asked, "Which text do you find more interesting, A or B?"

Interestingly, every single student showed the original authentic material as being much more interesting than the graded reader. Everyone said that they didn't understand everything, but it was exciting. The students said, "I felt nervous. I felt excited. I really wanted to read on". Whereas for the other text, "This

was very easy. I understood everything but it wasn't very interesting". And I have found that many, many times. It's the content; if it's intrinsically interesting, learners will push themselves, they will persevere. They will tolerate ambiguity.

One problem with most learners is they are intolerant of ambiguity. If they're reading a text and they come across a word or an expression they don't know, they stop. They worry about it. They blame themselves, "Oh, I don't understand it. I don't really like the content". When in fact, very often if you read on, what you didn't understand becomes clearer, the context disambiguates before you, or it's repeated, and this time, you understand it well, right?

So, if it's authentic texts which is really engaging, learners can push themselves to understand a much higher level. So, I encourage teachers to take a risk. I take a risk, sometimes it doesn't work, sometimes you overestimate the learners and they can't understand. You can just dump it and move on to a new one. That's what I do.

So, I'm suggesting something I have been doing for years which is what I call task-free activities - task-free - there's no task. Every lesson starts with the teacher performing a text. It could be a joke, it could be a short story, it could be an anecdote, it could be an extract from a newspaper, it could be an extract from a drama, it could be an extract from a film, but it's me doing the performance - two to three minutes. But I do observe and provoke and the learners simply listen and watch the performance. And then, there is no task, no questions, no comprehension questions, no intrusion of the students, no checking of comprehension; just a minute silence to let them absorb it and then the lesson starts. At the end of the lesson, the learners can take a written version of that text from the teacher and put it in a loose-leaf file, and they build up that file, over the semester, of texts which have moved them and then return to them and reread them and sometimes they can ask the teacher. The teacher doesn't ask them, they ask the teacher, so it is stimulating interaction from learners to teacher - not interrogation from teacher to learner.

You can also do this on the web, you can do this online, by the teacher selecting a fairly short text at the beginning of the lesson. At the end of the lesson, the teacher gives a link to where they can find the text. If they want to, they add it to their library of texts. So the teacher finds ways which will engage the learners and ways of stimulating the learners to do it by themselves.

As future educators, how can we develop learning material that does not linguistically, intellectually, and emotionally underestimate our students?

Professor Tomlinson: That is really a good question because behind this question is the assumption that many materials do underestimate our students and I think that is true - I think many materials underestimate their students but particularly low level students, so lower intermediate and intermediate - we tend to think because they are labelled as lower intermediate that they are lower intermediate in intelligence, lower intermediate in experience - that is very very insulting.

I've been really insulted by the level - the intellectual level of the materials and it reduces you - particularly for adults - it reduces you to a child, so this is very bold question. Number one is choice. Ideally, learners need to be given a choice - choice of texts and choice of tasks, so that they will choose the text that is linguistically, intellectually and emotionally appropriate for their level of experience and interest.

So, one way of doing this is providing options of choice of texts and of tasks and I was gonna give an example from Senegal where we were working on a materials development project and what we did was to have each text at three different levels: there was the original, there was a slightly reduced and slightly simplified one, and then there was a much easier version of the text. So three different versions and the students in the class, we give them a few minutes to glance at the different versions and then to decide which one to use and then they chose which text. So we have three different texts with the same topic, same content, being used at the same time. Then, the students got together in groups and did the tasks. So in a group, you have students who had read text one, some have read text two and some have read text three, but then they all read the text at different levels and they were all able to do the task together as a group - as a cohesive group. Now what I said earlier about the value of interaction in a cooperative, cohesive group. You'd expect them to choose the easy one (the one that made the authentic text more accessible) but then they chose the one which was appropriate, and some of the students who had chosen the easier one afterwards then read the more difficult one - so that's one example of offering choice.

Another is, I start with the same text but then I put maybe different tasks on the wall around the classroom and I grade them, without telling the students, from linguistically simple to linguistically demanding and the students work on their own and then they decide which one to do and they can do this individually, in pairs or in a group. I give you a quick example, a poem about an old lady, it starts, "I'm an old old lady and I don't have long to live", and who is very selfish and demanding. She says for example, she wants to be who she wants but she doesn't want to be left alone. And I found that it's very controversial in some societies as to whether they like the old lady or not and whether they respect her, but basically first I perform the poem.

Then the first task is to learn to recite the poem in the voice of the old lady, so linguistically very simple,

but they have to understand the poem in order to understand what sort of voice to read it in. The second one was to paint a picture of the old lady to understand, to paint the picture. The third one was, if you were the old lady, write a letter to your son in Australia and again, this needs an understanding of the poem, and the fourth was, if there was a man sitting on the bench, write a conversation between the old man and the old lady. The fifth one was, you're the family of the old lady, you're worried that she's getting very depressed, you're in a meeting to decide what to do. And the sixth one was ten comprehension questions on the poem. Nobody ever did the comprehension questions, never. They just chose which one they wanted to do and when they finished it, they could move on to another one.

If they found the task too easy or too boring or they found it too difficult they do another one, so it's giving the learners choice to decide what is linguistically, intellectually and emotionally suitable. Another example, one of the best ways of doing this, is to get students to choose. An example in Indonesia again; the teacher says to the students at the beginning of term; "We're going to use the same book. Do you like your course book?" "Oh yes, Ma'am we like the course book". And then she said, "Are you sure?" "Yes, yes we like it". "Now, come on tell me the truth, you can tell me the truth, do you like it?" "No". "Why no?" "It's boring, in fact the reading passages are boring". "Okay, what we'll do is this", she said.

So there are thirty students, divide them into ten groups. Week one, she said to group one, "Okay, this week you must find an interesting text which would really interest your students or friends in the class". Alright. "Bring it to me on Friday and I will use it on Monday for the reading lesson instead of the course book". Students then bring a text which is linguistically, intellectually and emotionally interesting, and the students did it and on Monday, and they did that every week for the semester, so everyone was involved in finding a text for the students and the texts were really interesting and engaging.

And the next term she said, "Okay, shall we go back to the course book?" "No, no, no, no, carry on". And they carried on, and this time, not only did she get them to bring the text, she got the group to do the lesson plan, to bring it to her on Friday for Monday.

So, this is the answer I think - letting the students decide on the selection, finding the texts, developing the tasks, choosing from the tasks. The students have to go to the web, to various newspaper sources on the web and find a text which they found interesting and understandable and engaging and use that text to do those tasks.

So I think that's the answer, that if we rely on ourselves all the time, we are gonna get it wrong. The publishers, they're terrified that the activities will be too difficult, therefore the course book will be unpopular and it won't sell. The teacher is pleased because the students get good marks and it is the teacher who decides on the course book, not the students. Students never usually decide what course book to use, although I involve my students in the selection of texts and tasks.

[End of interview transcript]

Students who attended the interview were appreciative of the time and useful insights so generously shared by Professor Tomlinson.

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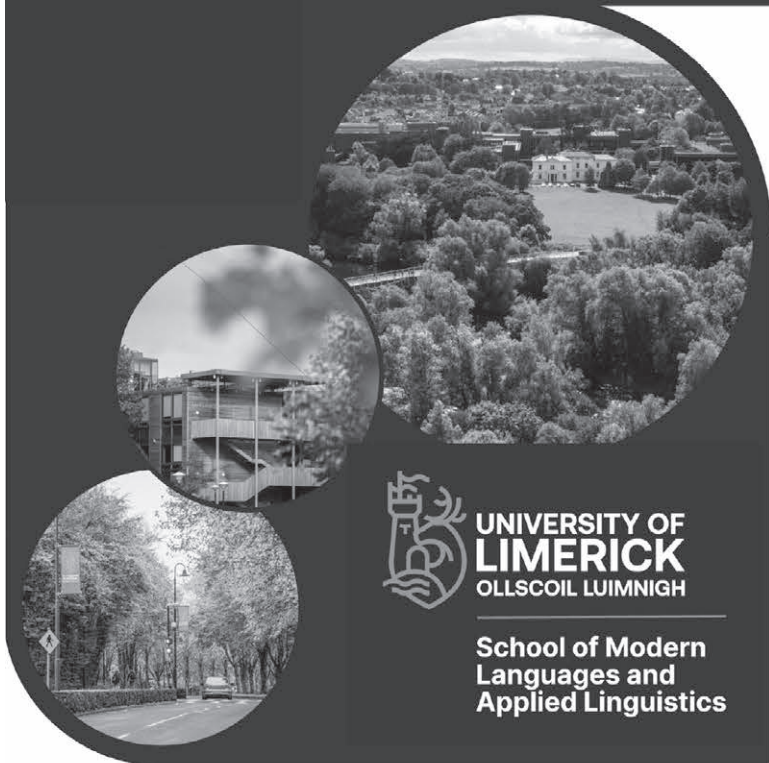|	
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INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURED PHD IN ARTS AND HUMANITIES

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School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics

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Applicants who wish to discuss detailed elements of the programme may contact the Course Director: Dr Angela Farrell, School of Modern Languages & Applied Linguistics
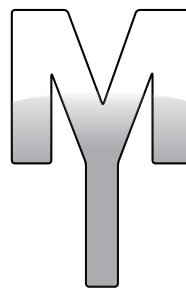
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