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*The second issue of the ELTAM Journal is finally ready. Great thanks to the editorial board and all the contributors. We are looking forward to our 2016 conference in Struga in October and hoping for your further contributions.*

*Editor-in-chief*

# RE-INTRODUCING OWN-LANGUAGE USE, CODE-SWITCHING AND TRANSLATION IN FL CLASSROOMS THROUGH INTRALINGUAL STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

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## *Abstract*

The article focuses on a recent paradigm shift concerned with the re-introduction of own-language use, code-switching and translation in foreign language classrooms. It offers some practical suggestions for activities which integrate intra- and crosslingual strategies and approaches, suitable for students of different proficiency levels. The examples show how intralingual bottom-up and top-down processing, as well as process and product approaches can be used in translation/interpreting activities in class.

**Key words:** own-language, code-switching, translation, intralingual, crosslingual

One of the fundamental questions in foreign language teaching, which has always served as a dividing line between academics, teachers and learners is whether to use learners' own language in class or avoid it at all costs. In a recent state-of-the-art review of own-language use in language teaching and learning Hall and Cook (2012:278) point out that: "twelve years into the twenty-first century, there is evidence that this division, which, in many contexts, might arguably be characterised as one between theory and practice, may be coming to an end, and that the existence and advantages of using the learners' own language in class are increasingly recognised". They see this new development as resulting from a combination of factors, such as the social turn in applied linguistics, which acknowledges complexity, diversity, difference and uncertainty within language and language learning; and theories, such as complexity theory, sociocultural theory and ecological approaches (ibid.).

The majority of EFL contexts in Bulgaria do not exclude Bulgarian completely from either teacher's or students' talk in class at all levels of education. Strictly monolingual instruction where only the new target language is used by both teachers and students is limited to private schools, especially if the teachers are native speakers who do not speak the language of their students, high schools, exam classes, preparing student for high-stake exams such as Cambridge, IELTS, TOEFL, etc., and university courses where English is the language of instruction. Own language use is more and more perceived as a necessity in the reality of globalised multilingual discourse. On the other hand, the changing status of English as a global lingua franca, inevitably has its effect on the way languages are taught. Therefore maintaining one's identity as a FL learner and speaker makes using one's own language, code switching and translation acceptable and normal in language classrooms (Levine 2009). In addition, code-switching and translation activities work towards an increased intercultural communicative

competence, since they allow for making not only linguistic but also cross-cultural comparisons.

These changes and the need for lifelong learning have recently led to a change in traditional ELT terminology, so that it better corresponds to the multilingual focus of language learning. Thus, according to Hall and Cook, it is more appropriate to use the term *own language* instead of *mother tongue*, *first language* or *native language*; and *new language* instead of *second*, *foreign* or *target language*. The teaching and learning involving both students' own and new language is called *crosslingual*, whereas instruction done only by means of a new language is called *intralingual* (for a detailed discussion see Hall and Cook 2012:273-274). The use of these terms requires some clarification for the purposes of the present discussion. In full awareness of this difference, by own language in this article I will mean Bulgarian, which is the official language, whereas students' mother tongue can vary between Bulgarian, Turkish, Romanian, Armenian, etc. The effect of bi- and multi-lingualism on studying a new language is not underestimated, it is just not a focus of the present discussion.

Intralingual (monolingual) teaching was the norm, at least in theory, for most of 20th century, and as such was associated with high quality and prestige, small classes in private schools taught by qualified teachers, predominantly native speakers. Nowadays the situation hasn't changed much, and although most mainstream school teachers admit to using Bulgarian in class, they don't do it as a planned decision and look for all kinds of excuses for its use, including the size of the classes, the low proficiency level of students, students speaking minority languages, and time constraints or discipline problems.

Originally the assumption underlying language teaching in the communicative and post-communicative era has been that the goal of language teaching is to prepare students to communicate in monolingual environments and to emulate as far as possible the use of the new language by its native speakers – a goal which for many learners is neither useful, nor desirable or attainable (Davies 1995, 2003). On the contrary, a lot of students in mainstream schools fail to achieve the desired level of proficiency - a fact which is detrimental to their motivation and self-esteem (for a detailed discussion see Boyadzhieva cited in Templer 2014: 9).

The drawbacks of excessively intralingual teaching become particularly evident when high school graduates with a relatively high proficiency level have to engage in translation and interpreting activities at university. Although their proficiency is higher compared to that of graduates of schools with less intensive tuition, the exclusion of cross-lingual activities, own language use and translation from the classroom activities repertoire leads to their underperformance in translation and some of the theoretical linguistic courses, which rely on students' systematic knowledge of their own language system.

The advantages of crosslingual teaching are well grounded in the theory of cognition and language learning and they presume building on prior knowledge, which is encoded in students' own language and activated through noticing and developing language awareness. In the process of learning, prior knowledge and the learners' own language provide a cognitive

framework through which new knowledge is constructed and regulated (Hall and Cook 2012:291). Sociocultural theories, on the other hand, view own language use as a cognitive tool for scaffolding new language learning. This happens when learners use their own language for collaborative talk during tasks, such as jointly explaining the nature of tasks, solving problems and maintaining focus. This helps them understand task content, focuses their attention on form, and helps establish and maintain interpersonal collaboration and interaction (see Swain & Lapkin 2000).

The two types of teaching - intra- and crosslingual - should not be seen as opposites which exclude each other, but rather as complimentary, in a "continuum whereby learners' own languages will be used in different ways and to differing extents at various stages during instruction" (Stern 1992: 279). In this continuum the learner's own language is used as a reference system for the new language and the transfer of learning and communication strategies is seen as a prerequisite for successful second language acquisition. The argument of the continuum is further extended by Widdowson (2003: 149–164) in his discussion of 'bilingualisation' (the process of acquiring a new language), where he argues that monolingual language teaching procedures fail to recognise the ways in which all bilingual language users fuse their knowledge of two languages into a single system of compound bilingualism.

A balanced combination of both intra- and crosslingual teaching procedures is probably the best way to avoid the extremes of overuse of either of these instruction modes. Teacher's choice of instruction mode and activities should depend mainly on the purpose and context of learning. Thus, in intensive exam preparation, including the maturity exam in Bulgaria, intralingual teaching should dominate. On the other hand, if the teaching is aimed at developing student's knowledge of the new language and the skills for its use, mediating activities such as translation and interpreting and other crosslingual strategies can be incorporated into classroom procedures. To emphasize the complimentary character of intra- and crosslanguage teaching Stern suggests that intralingual teaching strategies will be more effective, if they are used in crosslingual activities such as translation, use of bilingual dictionaries, consecutive and simultaneous interpreting and interpretive treatment of texts (1992: 295). Own-language use on the other hand, should compensate for the limited time and exposure to the new language which learners need to decode in order to understand its meaning, and then use creatively to produce new meanings. Research shows that code-switching and own-language use facilitate learning by reducing the processing load for learners in cognitively challenging tasks, where learners resort to the so-called private verbal thinking (in their own language) or mental translation.

Although the term 'own language use' is more general than translation, they should not be treated separately. In his book *Translation in language teaching* G. Cook (2010) argues for a major reassessment and reintroduction of translation into language teaching and learning. His arguments are based on language learning theory and educational research and present translation as a natural and effective means of improving language learning, raising language awareness, intercultural competence and understanding of conceptual metaphors and literary texts. Malmkjær (1998: 8) even gives translation the status of an important 'fifth skill' which is inclusive of the other four skills and should be practised together with them.

A question arises as to how translation and own language use as crosslanguage skills can be integrated with the other four skills, which are intralanguage. And how is it possible to use intralanguage strategies to develop a crosslanguage skill? In order to answer this question I will focus on two examples of possible integration. The first one concerns bottom-up and top-down processing, strategies normally used for developing receptive skills (reading and listening). The second example is of two approaches used to teach writing - process and product, and their potential for integrating with translation/interpreting activities in class.

### **1. Bottom-up processing**

Bottom-up strategies in listening involve processing single items, such as acoustic signals, sounds, words, and segmenting speech into larger units such as phrases, clauses, sentences and intonation patterns. Meaning is inferred from the available clues in the speech flow, and lexical knowledge is employed to assign meanings to words and use logical reasoning to infer the relationships between them. In the process of inferring the meaning predictions are made about what might come next. During these processes the load on short-term memory is heavy as listeners try to hold various parts of the message in mind while inferring meaning and deciding what is necessary to retain. Overload can occur if there is too much unfamiliar information and, as a result, a greater part of the message can be lost. In such cases only the gist of the spoken message is retained and stored in the long-term memory, and its detailed structure is lost (Hedge 2000:231). This is exactly what happens when students rely mainly on bottom-up reconstruction of meaning where the amount of unfamiliar vocabulary is too big.

One of the activities based on optimising bottom up processing in listening is dictogloss. It facilitates intensive listening and encourages students to work together and produce language forms collaboratively by reconstructing a text presented to them orally. In a dictogloss, the teacher reads aloud a short text at a normal pace while students jot down any words or phrases they know as they listen. The students listen to the text three or four times and each time add new words or segments of text which precede or follow the words they have put down in the previous listening. Then they work in small groups or pairs to reproduce the text as closely as possible to the original text. In the original version of dictogloss (Wajnryb 1990), students should use the target language to discuss the accuracy of their language use. The teacher's role is to monitor students' activities and provide feedback, correction or language input. Finally, the reconstructed text is analyzed, compared with the original, and corrected by students and the teacher together. At this stage, students discuss the choices they have made, and the teacher helps them understand and fix their linguistic problems. The text used for a dictogloss can be authentic or constructed/ modified by the teacher.

The overload of the short-term memory in this activity could be reduced by modifying the task, so that the discussion and all collaborative work is done by students in their own language. Thus students' efforts are redirected to remembering and reconstructing the text as a final product, and time is not wasted on thinking about the correct wording of discussion language. As a follow-up activity the whole text can be divided into several parts and translated orally into

Bulgarian by different students in turns. This could be done as a whole class activity, so that all students can listen to and discuss the suggested versions and offer changes and improvements on the spot. In this way oral translation, which involves quick code-switching is made easier, because the students are already familiar with the text since they have been engaged in intensive decoding of meaning in the previous activity.

The procedures for applying bottom-up strategies in reading are similar, though with the major advantage of visual support. A noticing and highlighting activity can be used for identifying the key vocabulary and structures which help students deduce the main meaning of the text. Then these prompts can be translated into the new language and different translation equivalents can be compared and discussed. This bottom-up scanning activity can be done collaboratively in pairs or groups and then the results can be discussed whole class. Students' own language can be used to reduce the work load and to save time for producing a translation, which again is discussed whole class with feedback offered by teacher and the students in their own language. The same exercise can be done with a source text in students' own language which has to be translated into English. This will save effort, time and will increase students confidence and motivation to achieve their goal and work towards an end product rather than struggling with the new language as a means. It is important for the texts to be short, and to contain the new language which has already been taught in class, so that students would not need to spend time looking words up in dictionaries. These mini-translation or interpreting activities should be short and used mainly for revision and consolidation of items and patterns previously taught.

## **2. Top-down processing**

Top-down strategies involve activation of prior knowledge before reading/listening to the text. They rely on students' ability to infer meaning from contextual clues and schematic knowledge, which might differ culturally. Thus for example 'Once upon a time' or 'They lived happily ever after' signal the genre of a fairy tale but this might not be the case for a Bulgarian student unless the teacher has drawn their attention to the corresponding phrases in Bulgarian. Recognition of formal schemata helps students activate their knowledge of different speech events and their characteristic features. Content schemata, on the other hand, include general world knowledge, sociocultural knowledge, topic knowledge and local knowledge (see Hedge 2000:233). Predictability of speech events vary depending on the culture and it is important for the teacher to draw students' attention to the formal correspondences between the routines or scripts, such as buying things in a shop, going to the doctor, asking for directions at the station, etc. The teacher should also raise students' awareness of the pragmatic appropriateness and socio-cultural aspect of different speech events. Using prior knowledge as a strategy for effective listening/reading is vitally important, and it can be used in cross-lingual translation activities, so that the students can easily retrieve corresponding scripts in either their own or in the new language. Both interpreting and translation, require quick retrieval of memorised and automatised chunks of language, so an own language discussion or brain storming could probably facilitate code switching and lead to better end products.

Here is an example of a business telephone conversation which can be used for either bottom-up or top-down processing with the use of own language and translation depending on students' needs and the teacher's preferences:

*Switchboard operator (S.O): Good morning. Hollings Plastics. Can I help you?*

*Caller: Hello. My name is Monique Chapuis. I'm the personal assistant of the marketing director of the Laboratoire du Valin. I'd like to speak to the sales director, please.*

*S.O. Right, I'll put you through....Sorry, his line is engaged. Would you like to hold on or call back later?*

*Caller: I think I'll hold on, thank you.*

....

*S.O. Sorry to keep you waiting. The line is still engaged. Would you like to leave a message?*

*Caller: No, Thank you. Perhaps I could speak to his assistant or secretary?*

*S.O. Of course. Hold the line please and I'll try Mr Carpenter's assistant.*

*Assistant: Hello, Jennifer Davis speaking.*

*Caller: Hello, my name is Monique Chapuis and I wanted to speak to the sales manager. Can I explain my problem to you?*

*Assistant: By all means, I'm his personal assistant.*

....

*Caller: Well, thank you very much. You've been most helpful. I shall confirm my request in writing. Goodbye.*

*Assistant: We'll look forward to hearing from you. Goodbye. (Дожра и Жанио-Пауъл 2000: 133)*

In a bottom-up procedure the students can be asked to listen to or read the conversation and pick up/ highlight the key language. The corresponding translation equivalents can be elicited from the students or given by the teacher. Then they can be practised in isolation in a limited one-sentence context. Finally, the translation of the whole conversation can be done orally or, alternatively, a similar conversation can be elicited from the students. The key language and its equivalents in Bulgarian can include the following items:

*switchboard operator - телефонист*

*to put someone through - да свържа някого*

*the line is engaged - Линията е заета /Дава заето/*

*to hold on - изчаквам*

*to call back - да се обадя отново*

*to hold the line - изчаквам, не затварям*

*to keep someone waiting - карам някого да чака*

*Jenniferspeaking - Дженифър е /на телефона/*

*byallmeans - естествено, разбира се*

Students' attention should be drawn to the pragmatic features of the speech event, such as the structure of the conversation, turn taking, and politeness in expressions like: *can I help you; look forward to hearing from you; you've been most helpful; would you like to..., please, etc.*

As an alternative follow-up (could be done as revision or consolidation several days later) the target text can be reconstructed back from prompts, given in students' own language. These resemble instructions for a role play, but the difference is that the prompts are in Bulgarian (the translation in the brackets is provided here for the purposes of this article). The instructions can be written in role cards for the participants. Here are some examples:

*Телефонистът (The switchboard operator):*

1. Виестетелефониств Hollings Plastics. Отговорете на обаждането.(You are a switchboard operator at Hollings Plastics. Receive the incoming call).

2. Кажете, че ще свържете клиента с директора по продажбите. Кажете, че дава заето и попитайте дали клиента ще почака или ще позвъни по-късно.(Tell the client that you will put him/her through to the sales director. Tell him/her that the line is engaged and ask if s/he would like to wait or call back later).

3. Извинете се, че го карате да чака, но линията все още е заета. Попитайте го дали иска да остави съобщение.(Apologize for making him/her wait, and explain that the line is still engaged. Ask if s/he would like to leave a message).

4. Съгласете се, кажете да не затваря за да го свържете с асистента и т.н.(Confirm, tell him/her to hold on so you can put him through to director's assistant).

*Клиентът (The client):*

1. Представете се на лицето, което вдигне телефона и кажете с кого желаете да разговаряте. (Introduce yourself and say who you would like to talk to).

2. Като Ви кажат, че телефонът дава заето, отговорете дали искате да изчакате, да позвъните отново или да оставите съобщение. (When they tell you that the line is engaged, decide if you want to wait, call again later or leave a message).

3. Попитайте дали може да говорите с асистента или секретарката на директора и т.н.(Ask if you can speak to the director's assistant or his secretary, etc.).

### **3. Process and product approaches in translation**

Both product and process approaches have their advantages and their application in teaching writing depends mainly on students' needs and proficiency, the type of text, teacher's preferences and other factors. In product approach students are encouraged to study and mimic a model text. The approach has several stages, which include: 1. Studying and highlighting the characteristic features of a model text, such as a formal letter or any other genre with relatively stable and recognisable genre features; 2. Controlled practice of the highlighted features in isolation; 3. Organisation of ideas; 4. Writing a new text by mimicking the original.

The process approach, on the other hand, is much more interactive, making use of brainstorming, group discussion, oral feedback, etc. The process usually goes through the following stages: 1. Generating ideas through brainstorming; 2. Discussing their relevance to the topic and selecting the most important point to be used as prompts in writing; 3. Organising ideas and planning through mindmaps or linear sequences; 4. Writing the first draft in pairs or groups; 5. Exchanging drafts, feedback and peer-correction; 6. Writing a final draft.

As it can be seen the two approaches differ mainly in their beginning stages. While in product approach students see and discuss the target product right from the beginning, in process approach they start from scratch and create the text gradually, concentrating first on the meaning, and then on the formal features of the text. Thus, the considerable freedom of the process approach is opposed to the preemptive focus on form and structure in the product approach which requires pre-teaching of lexical and grammatical features to be used as building blocks for students' texts. An important consideration which is related to the relevance of either of these approaches is that certain genres "lend themselves more favourably to one approach than the other" (Steele 2004). Genres with fixed features are more suited to a product approach with a focus on layout, style, structure of the text and its grammatical correctness.

Applied to translation, this refers to texts belonging to media, business or academic discourse. Translation of fictional texts, on the other hand, will benefit more from applying a process approach, where generating and comparing different versions is important for choosing the best translational equivalents. Another advantage of the process approach is student-teacher collaboration, scaffolding and support by the teacher in providing students with the language resources they need for expressing intended meaning. Here is an example of a product approach, in which students can see both the source text (Bulgarian) and its translation right from the beginning:

<p><i>Estat</i>Индексна бизнес климата</p> <p>Изследването е проведено в периода 6 -14 януари 2003 г. сред 399 фирми е и представително на равнище работещи предприятия. Критериите за подбор на фирмите от извадката са регион, сектор, брой на наетите и тип собственост. Методиката на индекса и математическият модел са разработени от Агенция за социални и маркетингови изследвания <i>Estat</i>.</p> <p>След края на последното тримесечие на 2002 година интегрираната стойност на <i>Estat</i>Индекс на бизнес климата е -2.55. Регистрираното намаление като абсолютна стойност е незначително (-0,71 пункта), индексът остава в неутралната част на скалата, където състоянието на бизнес климата се характеризира като "нито благоприятно, нито неблагоприятно". Въпреки това обаче <i>Estat</i>Индекс показва</p>	<p><i>Estat Business Climate Index</i></p> <p>The survey was carried out in the period between 6 and 14 January 2003 among 399 firms and is representative of operational enterprises. The criteria for selection of the company sample are region, sector, number of employees and type of property. The methodology of the index and the mathematical model have been developed by the Agency for Social and Marketing Research <i>Estat</i>.</p> <p>The Estate Index compound value stood at -2,55 as of end Q4 of 2002. It registered an insignificant decline of -0=71 points over the fourth quarter of last year and remained in the neutral section of its range, where the condition of the business climate is characterised 'neither as favourable nor as unfavourable'. Despite this fact, the <i>Estat</i> Index has shown a sustained tendency for decline, signalling a gradually worsening situation in the country's business sector.</p>
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*устойчива тенденция на намаляване, което е сигнал за постепенно влошаващото се положение на бизнес сектора в страната.*

*In Business, April 2003, p. 80*

The procedure might involve activities connected with: 1. Identifying the source of the text, its audience (target reader), the main purpose of the text and its genre. 2. Asking students to find the key features of the text which signal the genre. 3. Highlighting key vocabulary and structures in source text and target text. 4 Identifying different types of translation shifts - structure, class, unit, or intra-system shifts (see Munday 2001:81) . These could be features related to: word order, e.g. *След края на последното тримесечие на 2002 година интегрираната стойност на Estat Index на бизнес климата е -2.55. - The Estate Index compound value stood at -2,55 as of end Q4 of 2002.*; omission, e.g. *представително на равнище работещи предприятия - representative of operational enterprises*; change of syntactic structure from passive to active - *Регистрираното намаление като абсолютна стойност е незначително - It registered an insignificant decline*, collocations - *устойчива тенденция на намаляване - sustained tendency for decline*, shortening of a clause by means of a participle - *което е сигнал за постепенно влошаващото се положение - signalling a gradually worsening situation*, etc.

Applying the product approach to this type of text has the advantage of saving time and providing students with specialised knowledge (e.g. of terminology) which they are not expected to have. It does not mean that the product approach is not suitable for translating fiction.

The process approach, on the other hand, has its benefits in that it involves students actively, keeps them focussed and promotes collaboration for achieving better results. It contradicts the traditional idea of translation as a solitary self-sustained process and allows for intensive scaffolding and peer learning throughout the process. When presented with the source text students are involved in a brainstorming process of eliciting ideas about the text, which activates their mental schemata and helps them map the text against background knowledge, either elicited from them or provided by the teacher. The translation is done together in pairs or groups and the versions are then compared and discussed whole class.

#### **4. Own language use and code-switching in class**

Incorporating cross-lingual strategies and own-language use are inseparable from translation and interpreting activities in class. Research has identified some important pedagogic functions of own-language use by teachers, among which are grammar instruction, classroom management and administration, demonstrating empathy or showing solidarity with the

learners, providing translations for unknown words and compensating for learners' apparent lack of understanding or responding to learners already speaking in their own language (Polio and Duff 1994). Among other reasons for using students' own language are its reassuring role in class to minimize the potentially alienating effects of monolingual teaching (Littlewood & Yu 2011). Another benefit of own language use is in neutralising anxieties which naturally arise in mixed-proficiency classes where some students avoid contributing to discussions not because they don't have much to say but because they don't have the language to express themselves. As Allwright and Bailey (1991:173) observed, "banishing the learners' first language deprives them of their normal means of communication and so of the ability to behave fully as normal people".

Translation and code switching activate the potential of cross-lingual transfer, which is one of the main prerequisites for the development of students' interlanguage. Cummins (2007) identifies five types of cross-lingual transfer depending on the sociolinguistic and educational context: transfer of phonological awareness; pragmatic aspects of language use; metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies, such as vocabulary acquisition strategies; specific linguistic elements; conceptual elements. Thus Cummins emphasizes that learning is likely to be more efficient if teachers draw learners' attention to the similarities and differences between their languages, coordinating and reinforcing learning strategies across languages. Although contrastive analysis has lost its popularity within the intralanguage paradigm it gains new recognition in the revival of form-focused instruction and translation as relevant classroom activities. Recent research shows that learners taught unfamiliar vocabulary items via translation did better in a subsequent retention test than those taught solely through meaning-focused instruction and, what is more, produced better translations (Laufer & Girsai 2008).

To sum up, there are important advantages in incorporating intralingual and crosslingual strategies and approaches in teaching students of various age and proficiency levels. Own language use has always been present in foreign language classrooms with a different degree of intensity, but it would be interesting to look into students' and teachers' attitudes to it in order to decide if there is a principle change in its status in contemporary teaching methodology. Although there has been some recent revival of interest in contrastive form focused crosslingual instruction and translation, and their effect on learners' achievement in class, the area still needs to be researched further in order to obtain more conclusive evidence.

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## ALL THE WORLD IS A STAGE

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### *Abstract*

Unequal skills, knowledges and capabilities of students present challenges for the teacher who cares. A major concern for me is to get English words which cling in each student out and to nudge them, not push them to talk. It is particularly important for ADHD students, those who are bored, those who lack attention from their parents as they come from divorced families and those who have problems in social interaction. It gives the enormous educational, emotional, behavioral, social benefits in these activities. Drama, movement, gestures, mime are the key points. The purpose of drama is to strengthen children by their appearance in front of their friends, parents. This workshop examines the role of drama and music in overcoming the disadvantages of traditional classroom in helping rebuild opportunity for kids to talk, chat, communicate, and share ideas, enthusiasm and wish to speak that have been in decline so far. I decided to do it outside the classroom.

**Keywords:** drama, movements, mime, troubled students, inspired, motivated, connected, convinced, outside the classroom, confidence, praise, stimulate, supervise, deadline, a coach, an advisor, excitement, a successful teacher

Can I act? Can I mime? Can I sing? Can I say a rhyme by heart? These are the questions pupils ask themselves day in day out. With these questions in mind they come to the classes and they face the books, tiny letters, enormous paragraphs, stock pictures and suffocating air in the classroom that make them sleep, yawn and some of them claustrophobic. The classes are mostly dull, the teachers are often tedious. The things they are given and told to do are so trivial and demands are narrow and limited. Schools do have bad strategies and don't meet the real needs of children. These are the images of conventional teaching.

I was going to share with all who were interested to join my workshop my experience how I motivated my students, made them interested, engaged. I offered them something new. I inspired them by giving them any piece of activity. On Thursday, 8th May, 2014 in the indoor venue at Sports Centre "Olimp-Zvezdara" an extraordinary performance was held called "Shakespeare at Olimp". This was a creative show made by more than one hundred hard-working, diligent kids and their teacher - me. That was a unique program which was held in remembrance to 450 years from the birth of one of the greatest writers and dramatists in the world – William Shakespeare. Together with him, we entered a dream: two fencers (children) fought for life, for success, for happiness, for diligence...

This was the chance for all kids who wanted to show their talents in acting, saying the chant, dancing, sports and singing. The audience was thrilled and showed their respect by applauding to each of various parts of the plays and at the same time they praised engagement of all participants. It is not difficult to imagine this, but pictures show more than the words. If you had been there you would have felt the positive energy that was given to us by those “small” and “big” artists.

I helped students overcome their fear of speaking English. I did it because I noticed they do have knowledge, but it clings somewhere in them - makes little or no sense. There are numerous reasons for that: either they are afraid of failing or disappointing their parents and teachers or they are shy, introvert or have problems with socialization or have ADHD syndrome or similar. I involved troubled pupils – bad guys who really contributed to the team. I connected them with those who were expected to be successful. And after all, I convinced them they can perform well or even better than they thought. So, as “the world is a stage” I decided to leave the classroom and do something outside the classroom. The key moments are drama, movements, gestures, mime. I used every opportunity to nudge students not to push them to speak English and to relate what they really know with the reality that they carry around in their minds.

There are two reasons why the children were put into the live situation: first they meet for the first time with the Middle English, with the rhymes that are not the contemporary text, and second they themselves act them out amazed that they succeeded, they were able to, they did it! During the school life kids lack opportunity to and occasions to share their experience from their lives. They gain confidence of exchanging mutual knowledge by bringing their own ideas or at least having a notion that they bring their own ideas. But it was not easy to start. We practiced “milk and cookies” and other easy exercises which relax them. The initial idea was to learn the sonnets in Serbian, the roles of famous names as Romeo and Juliet, or in Seven Ages of Man, as well as less famous but engaging roles of master and his servant who talked through mimes, gestures, and funny pitch of voice in Comedy of Errors. Then they acted and entertained even those who poorly speak and understand English. They “saw” in front of their eyes that life changes, man gets older and dies sans teeth sans eyes sans taste sans anything... When they did the first step I asked them who will learn the same lines in English. It went to show that many students required to learn lines in English. The small ones even learned the lines that contained grammatical structures and tenses that they have not learned yet but were funny or romantic. They didn’t even notice it was Present perfect Tense or Causative Have.

The seven grader, who used to interrupt each class with yelling, laughing, strolling to and fro, opened the performance with: “To be or not to be...” having been explained that his act was to be the highlight of the event. Actually, he has ALWAYS wanted to draw attention and he DID it but this time it was positive, the audience looked at him, greeted him and praised his actions.

“Teacher, teacher, I want to be a fool”, said one 9 -year-old who never asked anything. I told him OK and he bought an expensive dress for the fool. We all expected he would be unbearable. But he sat in the center of the stage without moving just watching everything. After the show he started to bring his books regularly to the class, write, draw, sing - he even came out to the board to write some words. The same happened with 6 dancers in The Black Nag and the girl

and the boy who practiced gymnastics. After the show they improved their English. We flourished the love for dance, music and sports, created costumes and masks. They feel more involved, more stimulated and more important.

I told them that the importance of Shakespeare is in the poetry of his language, in his talent for music, as well as in the balance of his ideas and the structural antitheses. In his plays, I told them, Shakespeare demonstrated human virtues and flaws, psychic states of all human beings, having built the gallery of unforgettable characters and universal human characteristics. I tried to find ways to explain them what the certain character felt, to experience what he experienced so they could feel excitement and simply live at least several minutes in that century to be able to feel passion, emotion, urgency. Two girls told me: Ok, then, we'll show you Shakespeare without words with cups. In short, moving the cups and tapping them against the desk they showed anger, fear, amazement, vanity in 40 seconds.

The last but not the least, Shakespeare respected love saying that love is not the toy of time, it does not change, it is eternal till the Judgment Day. This was particularly strong idea for my students as Shakespeare quoted: "If it is an error prove to me or I never wrote anything nor man loved!!!" My students with great enthusiasm, energy and wish to show learned language outside the classroom flourish their sunny age of their life. Although it is short age of them it is full of songs, rhymes, laughter, happiness, music, movements.

As one could have seen this kind of activity may offer great educational, behavioral, emotional and social benefits for each student even for those who have watched.

It has already been known that in a successful company if you face with an individual with zero motivation and zero experience or knowledge there is nothing you can do as a leader to get good work out of this individual. It is a waste of time giving any piece of activity to that individual. So, your best decision, if it is the matter of performance, to give it to someone else who would be able to contribute something worthwhile to the team. And you do know that companies must make money and they mustn't lose time.

At school we don't make money. We create individuals we educate them. It seems at the beginning there is nothing you can do as a teacher to get them to do something well. You don't give roles only to good ones like "I have specifically chosen you because you can speak English well and you can perform well. You give roles to those who you get trust in them, gradually step by step, day in day out. The whole point was to make them feel and be even more successful than you are.

But, keep in mind: you should dedicate a lot of time, be prepared to constant questions and their innovations, help and interfere, supervise, set the activity, check and audit and look over it. And never underestimate a student. What else... expect the changes – ups and downs, straighten them by praising as when you eat m&m – I love it! Keep reminding them of the deadline because all that is playing for them. Manage by passing the day-to-day work. And the last but not the least get parents involved.

To sum up, you give them the roles, there is scarce energy and time, they gain responsibility and you gain trust in them. You support them and praise them, remove obstacles and set the deadline and you become in that way a friend, a coach an advisor.

You all remember the story of Dambo the young elephant who wanted to learn to fly. With a little help of his friend – a mouse he was explained that he could fly if he held a feather. So he learned to fly with the notion that the feather helped him to fly. Accidentally, he lost his feather but he continued to fly. If you achieve that, you are going to be a successful teacher. You will be the one who will help them in the times of discouragement to overcome their fears in speaking English.

I personally feel I can transmit the feeling that each generation has its own trait and the next one brings something new. But each generation has students who would always remember the childhood by the tiny role in the big performance because, after all, the whole world is a stage where each man has its role... Why not in your classroom?

Here I enclose the link with photos and movies where you can see and feel the atmosphere:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/tfjr7lx3xjgwx72/AAAGOovoHhDAjAoHbJmEEDdYa?dl=0>

# DEVELOPING YOUNG LEARNERS' LANGUAGE SKILLS THROUGH STORYTELLING AND PUPPETRY TECHNIQUES

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## *Abstract*

*“Children learn by head, hand and heart” J. Pestalozzi.*

Most of us are familiar with one form or another of storytelling and puppetry. Stories are essential elements of our life because they come from the need of the people to convey messages, to convey the truth about their dreams, expectations and desires. We all grew up with stories told first from our parents and later from our teachers. Now it is the teachers' turn to continue the magic behind each one. Let's offer this unique experience to our little learners and fill their mind and their heart with unforgettable moments in learning. Educators have long known that the arts can contribute to learner academic success and emotional well being. In our fast-paced, media-driven world, storytelling and puppetry use in class can be a nurturing way to remind children that their spoken words are powerful, that listening is important, and that clear communication between people is an art. Storytelling and puppetry are easily accessible to all children. No special equipment beyond the imagination and the power of listening and speaking is needed to create artistic images through these educational tools.

**Key words:** Storytelling, puppetry, interaction, enjoyment, English language acquisition.

## **What is Storytelling?**

*Storytelling* is the oldest form of education. Cultures around the world have always told tales as a way of passing down their beliefs, traditions, and history to future generations. Storytelling is a creative art form that has entertained and informed across centuries and cultures (Fisher, 1985), and its instructional potential continues to serve teachers. Storytelling, or oral literature, has many of its roots in the attempt to explain life or the mysteries of the world and the universe to try to make sense out of things (Tway, 1985). The magic of storytelling has been a tradition of every culture and civilization since the dawn of language. It binds human beings and celebrates their heritage as no other language art can. *Stories* capture imagination and emotions (Dörnyei, 2000) and engage the use of language and gestures in colourful ways in order to create scenes in a sequence in the mind of the listeners (Gere, Kozlovich & Kelin 2011). Storytelling conjures up all sorts of visions and possibilities: faraway lands, magnificent

adventures, enchanted princes, beautiful princesses, evil wizards and witches, a few dragons and demons, a couple of castles and cottages (Fredericks, 2008).

### **Why Using Storytelling in Class?**

*“Storytelling involves imagination and the use of language and gestures to create scenes in the mind of the listener”*. Jeff Gere (A storytelling activist).

Storytelling is an excellent method of sharing experiences in order to make sense of our world right here and now. *Stories* build kinship, allow a glimpse into other people's lives and perhaps let us see ourselves in the story. *Storytelling* provides a non-threatening way to ease students into learning. It raises country faithfulness and loyalty. *Storytelling* can embody the values of self-discipline. It also encourages learners to explore their unique expressiveness and heightens a learner's ability to communicate thoughts and feelings in an articulate and lucid manner. Storytelling can remind children that spoken words are powerful, that listening is important, and clear communication between people is an art. It creates a common bond linking past to present, present to future, and person to person, regardless of ethnic origin. These benefits exceed the art experience to support daily life skills. Storytelling is a skill that can improve all language skills. Donald Davis, a noted storyteller, teaches storytelling as a bridge between a child's 'first language' (gestures and speech) and 'second language' (writing).

Rosen (1986) enumerates several factors about the universality of narrative that deserve consideration:

(1) human beings dream and speak to themselves in narrative (inner narrative speech), (2) a basic form of narrative is not only telling but also retelling, and

(3) narrative is oral in the sense that an individual can engage with it fully without encountering it in written form. Storytelling, probably the oldest form of narrative in the world, is not the same as reading aloud, because in storytelling, the interaction between teller and listener is immediate, personal, active, and direct. Preece (1987), George and Schaer (1986) investigated the effects of three mediums for presenting literature to children and discovered that storytelling and dramatization were significantly more effective in facilitating recall of prose content than was television. These findings indicated that storytelling is an achievable method for activating children's imaginations, finally leading to a higher cognitive level in student acknowledgements. Reinehr (1987) claimed ways to use mythic literature to teach children about themselves and to help them write and develop their own stories and legends. For very young children, the sequencing of events or the shaping of stories may be difficult, as children tend to ramble. However, sharing stories can give youngsters more of a "sense of story" an awareness that can help them in both reading and writing (Kempter, 1986; Trabasso Van Den Broek, 1985 & Tray, 1985).

Perhaps storytelling's greatest value for a teacher is its effectiveness in promoting and stimulating a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere in the classroom. Scott (1985) explains that storytelling can:

(1) introduce children to a range of story experiences;

- (2) provide young students with models of story patterns, themes, characters, and incidents to help them in their own writing, oral language, and thinking;
- (3) nurture and encourage a sense of humor in children;
- (4) help put children's own words in perspective;
- (5) increase knowledge and understanding of other places, races, and beliefs;
- (6) introduce new ideas and be used to question established concepts without threat to the individual;
- (7) lead to discussions that are far ranging and often more satisfying than those arising from formal lessons; and
- (8) serve as the most painless way of teaching children to listen, to concentrate, and to follow the thread and logic of an argument.

It is obvious that through storytelling young learners can develop:

- A comprehension of human nature.
- An understanding of feelings and emotions.
- An awareness of the role characteristics people adopt.
- A comprehension of sequence of events.
- Language skills (Reading, vocabulary, grammar, word order and pronunciation).
- Their attention span and their capacity to listen.
- Their capacity to follow instructions.
- Their ability to co-operate, collaborate and co-exist effectively with others; and
- An appreciation of various concepts.

It is beneficial to use storytelling in class because it stimulates fantasy elements and creativity offering escape from reality (Good and Brophy, 1994 & Dörnyei, 2001), promotes pair/group interaction (Good and Brophy, *ibid*), arouses curiosity and attention (Dörnyei, *ibid*), induces interest and suspense (Good and Brophy, *ibid*) by speculating or predicting about the content of the story, engages the learners in challenging and motivating tasks (Dörnyei, *ibid*), offers the learners opportunities for discussions concerning controversial issues promoting all four language skills (Good and Brophy, *ibid* & Dörnyei, *ibid*), entertains learners and keeps them interested in many different ways by offering them exciting content, interesting characters and tension.

Children love stories and puppets. *Storytelling* and *puppetry* are two universal, traditional art forms that have featured strongly in all cultures as effective communication tools. They are also great tools to send a message or teach a moral. Important messages can be so skillfully conducted through storytelling and puppetry, as the listeners are so charmed by the magic images the storyteller paints before their eyes. Finally, Storytelling and puppetry are great educational and teaching tools for teachers who wish to touch the sensitive hearts of the young

learners, to teach them ethics, morals and to convey messages about the highest principles and virtues in life.

### **Exploitation of the Right Story**

*"Every accomplishment starts with the decision to try".*

A teacher should narrate a story in such a way as to transfer kids into the wonderful world of imagination. This can be easily done with the use of storytelling and puppets as well. Pederson (1995) claims that "*story telling is the original form of teaching*" and he claims that "*A storyteller is always a teacher, and the teacher is always a storyteller*". Yes, indeed. There is no single small village or area without its own story or fairy tale. People's folklore starts there, in and via stories. The classroom is a natural continuation to this human activity. There are many ways teachers can exploit stories in class:

- First of all teachers have to select the right story for each particular group of young learners. Then they have to think carefully which are the best techniques / strategies to implement in and they have to prepare a lesson plan in Pre-while and Post story telling steps.
- It is crucial to prepare and present in class challenging, interesting, motivating and enjoyable activities.
- Teachers should use comprehensible vocabulary for their learners, varying the pace, tone and control of the reading speed. These are important elements when teaching a story or using puppets.
- The use of puppets, pictures, masks can be creative and helpful ideas to be used in class while teaching a L2 language. Also role playing contributes to a positive teaching. Teachers can easily find many books and fables that focus on storytelling and puppetry. The internet is also a good source of material.
- In many contexts, stories have many functions. Many circumstances and incidents about creation and creatures are explained in stories. The human fables, weaknesses and attributes are best understood through stories. Stories about envy, gluttony, greed, lust, heartlessness, intelligence, wisdom, craftsmanship, courage and cowardice are taught to children via storytelling and puppetry techniques.
- Stories are lessons meant to teach, excite, educate, and entertain everybody. They are natural ways to exposing learners to all the facets of language in terms of simplicity, interest and curiosity.
- A good idea about story telling in class is to ask students to prepare the dialogues of a story they like, and play it in class or in front of their parents using puppets they have created themselves. Narrating the stories is very important and using aids while telling the story is not less important. It attracts the listeners who wish to be part of the story themselves.
- Find stories young learners love and match their age and language level. It is important to choose stories with a simple structure, with positive values (i.e., ones that express joy, compassion, humour, resourcefulness, and other positive aspects of human nature). Teachers can study the selected story's background (Pederson, 1995) and decide how to present it in

class. Young learners will be able to understand texts they read if they know 90-95% of the words. (Shin, 2007). If the story has a lot of unknown vocabulary, teachers should make sure that they can make it comprehensible before or during the storytelling. It really helps if the children know the most frequent words.

### ***Implementation of Storytelling and Puppetry in class***

One of the most common ways to use storytelling and puppetry in class is by briefly introducing the concept and the activities concerning storytelling. If young learners are unfamiliar with storytelling, teachers can begin with short sessions and have younger learners sit around them or introduce the story with a puppet in hand. The teachers read slowly and clearly and tell or enact a story to illustrate the points made in the introduction. (It is important to make comments about the illustrations). According to Brewster, Ellis, & Girard, (2002) it is encouraging to motivate young learners to take part in the storytelling. Young learners can participate in a story by using puppets. It is a good idea to begin with personal tales before moving on to short stories. Teachers should select stories that are easily learned. When narrating a story, teachers should change the way they narrate the story. They should pause where appropriate and change their voice for different characters. A good idea is to make sound effects and use music background where possible. Also it is a clever idea to repeat, expand, and formulate (Brewster, Ellis, & Girard, *ibid*).

Another way of exploiting these two educational tools in class is by:

- Using routines for starting and finishing storytelling, in order to attract children's attention.
- Creating or bringing in visuals and realia for storytelling (pictures, puppets, masks).
- Building a visuals and realia bank (Shin, 2007).
- Encouraging children to tell the story to a friend /parent using puppets (and imitate your storytelling).

Some useful methodology teachers can use when storytelling is taking place in young learners' classroom (Shin,*ibid*) contains Pre- and Post Storytelling activities:

Pre-Storytelling activities:

- Attract young learners' attention by introducing the story using a puppet.
- Connect the story to prior knowledge and experiences.
- Review language in the story young learners already know.
- Teach new vocabulary or expressions.
- Have young learners predict what will happen in the story.
- Give young learners a purpose for listening.

Post- Storytelling activities:

- Total Physical Response (TPR) activities.

- Ask learners to create their own beginning and ending of the story.
- Drama and role playing using puppets.
- Group retelling and replaying
- Story mapping.
- Story boarding.
- Games that check comprehension (e.g., “Start and Stop”, retelling with mistakes and using pictures out of order).

### ***Why using Puppets to Teach Very Young Language Learners?***

It is said that “*What learners enjoy, they learn it*”.

*“If a child does not learn in the way in which we teach, then we must teach him/her in the way he/she learns”*

Pollock & Waller (dyslexia)

Puppetry is a type of theatre or performance which involves the manipulation of puppets. It is very ancient, and is believed to have originated 30,000 years BC. Puppetry takes many forms but they all share the process of animating inanimate performing objects. Puppetry is used in almost all human societies both as an amusement– in performances – and ceremonially in traditional customs and celebrations such as carnivals. Most puppetry involves storytelling. The use of puppets in language development has long been acclaimed as a means of promoting self-consciousness and self-esteem in young learners. The puppet interface provides a way for both young and old learners to investigate language in a safe and sometimes humorous manner, producing a spirit of exploration. This teaching method incorporates multiple learning methods, is quite simple and can be easily used in class with amazing results.

The use of puppets in class helps teachers to change the quality of their whole class discourse and to promote and increase young learners’ talk, and participation in class. Through the puppets, teachers also use more narrative to construct their teaching in challenging contexts, and encourage children in their engagement to whole class discussion. What is important to remember is that puppets illustrate different feelings and talk to young learners’ emotions. Not only can teachers provide their young learners with enjoyable and pleasant lessons during a puppet show class, they will be amazed and surprised at what they can learn about their young learners while they interact with the puppets. If approached and taught appropriately puppet sessions can become a very significant teaching technique to create a platform for creating interaction if and when the need arises. Interaction with puppets encourages self-expression, self-confidence, self-esteem and helps a child cope with his fears and feelings. Puppets however never cease to capture the imaginations of their audiences as they create an awesome and fascinating imaginary world. They have the capacity to break down barriers offering an effective means to initiate communication. When it comes to dealing with problems,

children find it easier to work through something that is troubling them if they can express the problem.

The reasons why many teachers use puppets along with storytelling in class are:

- A puppet in hand introduces classroom management, classroom discipline and classroom routines and rules. Children are more attentive when their puppet asks them to be careful, to pay attention to their teacher and to behave well. If a young learner is not attentive, the teacher can turn the puppet toward that child and ask him/her to be more careful.
- Children learn through getting visually, aurally and kinesthetically involved in a subject (Shin, 2007). Young learners love listening to a story, watching, playing, talking and playing at the same time or listening to puppets. Puppets are bright and colourful, tactile and moving. They engage the child as a whole person. This increases the children's' interest in the lesson and leads to deeper learning (Shin, 2010).
- Teachers can model a language via the puppet by asking and answering various questions in order to demonstrate a simple dialogue or to instruct how an activity will be done. This way young learners are more attentive to what teachers say.
- Some children feel timid and shy to speak in English because they are unsure of the pronunciation of certain words or of exactly how to express themselves. In such cases puppets can act as a psychological support for a child (Pederson, 1995). When a child speaks through the puppet, it is not the child who is perceived as making mistakes but the puppet and children find this liberating because children see puppets as special friends who they can talk to in English. When young learners use their own puppets to speak out when a new language is introduced this will help them use the language freely.
- Puppets manage to attract young learners' attention immediately. They create a non-threatening and warm classroom environment.
- Puppets motivate young learners toward language learning and promote speaking skills by raising classroom interaction.
- Puppetry in class promotes opportunities for different intelligences and various language needs.
- Puppetry in class also encourages all language skills and cover all curriculum areas by offering more exposure to young learners.
- Puppetry in class increases vocabulary use easily.
- Puppets can be used as models to introduce new language function.
- Puppets infuse confidence in the children.
- Young learners can carry out a game, conduct a dialogue, write a letter, read a story or send an email to their favourite puppets.
- Young learners can use puppets in order to learn counting. Puppetry in class promotes pair and group work and increases young learners' cooperation and interaction (Preece, 1987).
- Teachers can show directions using puppets in hand. Teachers can easily use hand and finger puppets together or separately. They can instruct various tasks or introduce next activity by asking the puppet to use a DVD or a CD. This way young learners understand that they are going to listen to a song, sing all together or watch a video sequence.

### ***How To Use Puppets to Teach a Lesson***

Using puppets to teach a lesson is a simple and communicative way to get your audience to engage in what they are learning. Puppets can be believable characters with unique personalities, voices, and emotions that audiences can connect with on a personable level. Puppets can also bring human qualities to many lessons without being intimidating and can teach lessons that create a lasting impact on the audience as Gere, Kozlovich, & Kelin (2011) suggest.

- At the beginning of a school year teachers can think of the kind of puppets they can use for each class of young learners and make a list of expressions they may use in class.
- Choose the lesson you want to teach. You may want to find a story book that teaches a lesson directly or design a real-life interaction scenario that teaches a lesson that you can act out with the puppets.
- Practice teaching the lesson with your puppets without any audience. It is advisable for the teachers to practice hand movements before introducing puppets to young learners. This can be done at home in front of a mirror. This way teachers know what the children see in class.
- Select the puppet(s) and the props you intend to use. Develop the characters of the puppets. Make sure the puppets are appropriate for the lesson being taught.
- Set the stage for your puppet show.
- Teach the lesson using your puppets in a style similar to the one you practiced earlier. Puppets in class work especially well when they are involved in a story where they have a problem to solve. Children will want to help the puppets by solving the problem. At the end of the story the children can talk directly to the puppet about how they think they can solve the problem.

#### **Exploring Listening Skills through puppets: Useful tips:**

- Design a dialogue between two puppets that matches the language skills you are trying to teach, using any kind of puppet from simple sock puppets to plush dolls. Choose a topic that is of interest to your group, such as animals or sports.
- Memorize or familiarize yourself with the dialogue and present this to the class, letting the puppets develop a personality (Preece, *ibid*).
- Check for understanding by asking open-ended questions of the children. You can ask questions as the teacher or as the puppet.

#### **Exploring Speaking Skills: Useful tips:**

- Put students in groups of two to four and have them design a short puppet play with each person using one puppet.

- Present young learners with a topic or let them choose their own and explain that they are to use the language skills they are learning when creating their dialogue. Ask them to write down specific script for each puppet character to say.
- Allow class time for puppet creation, if possible
- Keep the dialogues for young learners simple and plan *when* and *how* to use puppets in class. When planning a lesson think of language opportunities to use puppets.
- Use puppets to model effective practice and find out how to create a positive atmosphere in class.
- Puppets should be polite and friendly with young learners. They should support young learners, praise them when they are trying to be involved in the learning procedure and show their disappointment when children make a noise in class.
- Young learners love talking to puppets, so introduce activities that promote children's perspective and involvement.
- Use various props in class when using puppets and explain young learners about them. For example, their favourite puppet is cold today, so you can bring a cloth and cover it or ask young learners what to do to keep it warm etc.
- Teachers can assist young learners produce puppets in class by using simple materials such as socks, pieces of colorful clothes, scissors, paper, colours, pictures, cards etc.
- Present these student-created puppet plays in class, letting each group perform for their peers.

### ***Conclusion***

We all grew up with stories told first from our parents and later from our teachers. Young learners are impulsive, entertaining, inquisitive, energetic, social and spontaneous. They crave the teachers' attention and their love. They love listening to stories and playing with puppets. Storytelling and puppetry are engaging, fun, challenging, interesting and motivating issues which help children feel confident with the language they learn. Storytelling and puppetry serve many functions; including lightening young learners' interests, encouraging the flow of lectures, making material memorable, overcoming young learners' anxiety, and building strong relationship between the teacher and the learners, or among learners themselves becoming the cornerstones of teaching. Stories presented to young learners through puppets use a holistic approach to language teaching and support natural acquisition of the language. They can introduce young learners to other cultures and attitudes and help language learners develop critical thinking skills.

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## DEVELOPING LANGUAGE SKILLS THROUGH CASE STUDIES

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### *Abstract*

Adults learn differently from children and generally have different motivation for learning. Typically, they identify the need to learn and they usually need or want to apply their newfound knowledge soon after the acquisition. This means that a teacher can get the best results with adults when they are fully involved in the learning process. Consequently, adult language learning should be meaningful and in context and based on developing other skills along with the language skills in order to make it meaningful, applicable, measurable, long-lasting, and “real”. It should provide additional information besides language principles and concepts, and develop language skills along with analytical, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. Case studies are a great way to improve language learning since they provide learners with an opportunity to solve a problem by applying what they know and are definitely something to consider adding to language teaching. In this paper, we outline the general characteristics of adult learning and case studies as a type of problem-solving learning and its advantages applicable in the EFL classroom. Moreover, we provide short class delivery guidelines and a lesson plan to additionally encourage EFL teachers to use case studies for language learning.

Adults have a general tendency to learn differently from children. They also have different motivation for learning. Most often, adults learn new skills because they want to or they need to and have to apply the newly acquired knowledge shortly after the learning process. Malcolm Knowles, practitioner and theorist of adult education considered to be the father of andragogy, based adult learning on four key observations of adult learners suggesting four basic principles that can be applied to adult learning (Knowles, 1984): Adults learn best if they know the reason why they are learning something and if they are involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction; Adults learn best through experience; Adults tend to view learning as an opportunity to solve problems thus adult learning should be problem-centered rather than content-oriented; Adults learn best when the topic is relevant to them and immediately applicable (Kearsley, 2010).

This means that a teacher can get the best results with adults when they are fully involved in the learning experience. If a teacher gives an adult an opportunity to practice and work with a new skill or newfound knowledge, a solid foundation for high-quality learning is most probably made. Moreover, in this way the adult learner is more likely to retain over time the new skill or newfound knowledge.

Consequently, adult language learning should be meaningful and in context as well. It should be based on developing other skills along with the language skills in order to make language learning meaningful, applicable, measurable, long-lasting, and “real”. It should provide additional information or content besides language principles and concepts; it should develop learning and language skills along with analytical, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. This approach in language teaching has been suggested by several theoreticians and practitioners of language teaching. Context and meaningfulness is at the center of several approaches and methods of language education, for example: the Language Immersion, a method of teaching a foreign language (developed in Canada in 1960s) in which the foreign/second language (L2) is the medium of classroom instruction which enables studying other subjects in the L2 (Anderson & Rhodes, 1983); Content-Based Instruction or CBI (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989) which provides second-language learners instruction in content and language; Content and Language Integrated Learning or CLIL (Marsh & Maljers in 1994)<sup>1</sup>, a methodology similar to CBI which implies learning content through a foreign language; English for Specific Purposes (ESP) which implies teaching English for vocational or occupational needs.

This article suggests one possible way to make adult language learning meaningful and in context and that is through the use of case studies. The use of case studies in the EFL classroom not only provides context and meaningfulness, enables developing language and other indispensable skills like analytical, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills, it also gives language learners an opportunity to practice transfer of knowledge from other subjects or other related or non-related fields of study. Furthermore, case studies are student-centered thus stress the importance of sharing the responsibility of learning, acquiring, and application of knowledge and skills between the teacher and the learner. Finally, case studies provide an opportunity for meeting the different needs of the learners connected to the various learning styles they have.

#### *How do we define case studies?*

Case studies are a form of problem-based learning, where a situation that needs a resolution is presented. Problem-based learning - PBL is a style of active learning and a student-centered approach in which students learn about a subject through the experience of solving a problem (Barr & Tagg, 1995). They also learn both thinking strategies and knowledge in a specific field. PBL helps the students acquire flexible and transferable knowledge and develop effective problem solving and analytical skills. Furthermore, it puts through self-directed learning and effective collaboration through group and/or pair work. Case studies are a method used in medicine, psychology, science etc. In this paper business case studies will be taken into consideration for language learning purposes. A typical business case study is a detailed account or a well-outlined story (real or imaginary) of what happened in a particular company over a period in time. Often case studies deal with a specific situation in a whole industry or project in a set period of time. The case study should provide the learner details about the situation which is often given in a historical context. The key characters or stakeholders are also introduced and

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<sup>1</sup>[http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/clilmatrix/EN/CLIL\\_background\\_EN.htm](http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/clilmatrix/EN/CLIL_background_EN.htm)

the objectives and the challenges they are facing are outlined. This is followed by specific examples and/or data, which the learner uses to analyze the situation, determine and/or analyze what happened, and make recommendations how to solve the problem. The depth of a case depends on the lesson being taught. A case study can be short comprising of two or three pages, or long consisting of twenty or more pages. A good case study stimulates critical thinking regarding the information presented; enables development of a thorough assessment of the situation which will ultimately lead to a well-thought-out solution or recommendation.

#### *Why use a case study in the EFL classroom?*

Case studies are a great way to improve and enrich a learning experience. First, they get the learner involved and encourage immediate use of newly acquired skills and knowledge. They differ from lectures or various assigned readings because they require participation and conscious application of a wide range of skills and knowledge. Furthermore, case studies point to the difference between knowing what to do and knowing how to do something. Case studies offer an opportunity to compare the learner's recommendations and solutions to a problem with what actually happened which gives an additional opportunity for development of skills, acquiring knowledge, discussion, assessment, and evaluation and thus differing from other practical or problem-based forms of learning, like scenarios and simulations. They are also suitable for individualized learning since they include tasks that match the needs of the learners in relation to the differences in individuals' learning styles. They include visuals, charts, pies, photos and can involve various activities suitable for individualized learning (pair or/and group; drawing charts, visuals, sketches; listening, reading, writing, and speaking activities). Finally, they put language skills in practice and make language learning meaningful, memorable, real, and in context.

#### *The Structure of a Case Study*

A typical case study structure includes these elements: *executive summary* where the objective of the case study is defined and the key challenge is stated; *opening paragraph* which serves to capture the reader's interest; *scope* where the background, the context, the approach, and the issues involved are defined; *presentation of the facts* which serves for developing an objective picture of what is/was happening; *description of key issues* where the viewpoints, the decisions, and the interests of the involved parties are outlined as well as the problem(s) that should be addressed. The key issues or the problem can be presented in form of a question or several key questions which is particularly suitable for learners who do not have experience with case studies. Most often, case studies are followed by annexes where appropriate data (charts, pies, photos etc.) are presented connected to the topic and the issue in the case study. These additional pieces of information are valuable for thorough analysis of the problem and providing a solution. Most case studies contain a paragraph explaining what actually happened in the end and how the problem was really solved and the consequences it resulted in. This part is not included in the version given to the students at first since it can influence students' suggestions and of course spoil the fun.

#### *Evaluating Learners Needs*

Learners need to have some theoretical knowledge to handle the questions and challenges in the case study. Teachers should assess learners' needs, interests, and previous knowledge in order to choose an appropriate case study especially when it comes to the EFL classroom. For language learning aims, teachers should choose simpler case studies unless it is a group of learners with homogenous and thorough professional background and experience.

### *Class Delivery Guidelines*

Once the teacher evaluates the students' needs and chooses an appropriate case study as outlined in the previous section, the class delivery of the case study should take place. Many case studies come with teacher's notes which are very useful and help teachers in the class delivery. However, having in mind that the case studies that we are proposing for the EFL classroom do not have language learning as a primary goal, we hope that with these short class delivery guidelines we will help EFL teachers in using the case studies in the EFL classroom.

As to any other activity, a suitable warm-up to the subject matter in the case study should be provided. Our experience has shown that the most useful warm-up is a class or group discussion or a brainstorming activity on the general topic covered in the case study. A related video is also a nice way to introduce the topic and stir the students. Through these warm-up activities the teacher introduces the necessary vocabulary students need in grasping the case study. Furthermore, the warm-up prepares the students to think about the topic and anticipate the problem further developed in the case study. It also provides the students with the indispensable background information (on the industry, country, event, time period etc.) in order to understand the setting of the case study and successfully find a solution to the problem or deal with the tasks.

The following activity is actually a reading assignment. Students should carefully read the case study and its annexes. Very often case studies should be read more than once since they usually contain many facts and a lot of information. Students should be familiar with the content of the case study in order to decide later which facts and pieces of information are relevant for the assigned tasks and can be useful for solving the problem. Bigger case studies can be assigned as homework. Shorter case studies can be read in class silently or out loud depending on the students' needs. Some parts like charts, statistics, pies, tables, photos inscriptions should be gone through and discussed either in groups or as a whole-class activity since they provide the students with additional input for addressing the issues in the case study. Depending on the time teachers have at their disposal, students' needs and level, the case studies can be read in groups since they are divided in meaningful units and then share the information they have read. This procedure is time saving and useful when covering longer case studies but it can also be done with shorter ones since it adds up to the aims of the class helping students develop oral presentation skills. When students are presenting their part of the case study to their fellow students, the teacher can check students' understanding of the content and can clarify certain ambiguous aspects. Thus, the comprehension part that comes after the reading activity is joined with the actual presentation. If the reading of the case study is assigned as homework or done in class as a whole-class activity, teachers should prepare a follow-up reading comprehension activity which can actually consist of several key questions that students answer through a class

discussion which can ensure the teacher that students are on the right track and will be able to solve the problem(s) in the following activity. Once the reading comprehension part is done, the new vocabulary should be covered. This can be done through a preparation of a glossary of terms done in groups, as a whole-class activity, or as a home-work assignment.

Next comes the part with the *Key issues* which is at the heart of the whole class and should be allocated the biggest chunk of time. The *Key issues* part of the case study can consist of questions for discussion, problem(s) to solve, and/or tasks to perform. This part is usually done in groups. Once the groups are ready, they share their work, compare and contrast their solutions, discuss, and conclude.

The follow-up activity is actually comparing students' solution(s) or their way of addressing the issue(s) with what actually happened with a particular person, company, project or industry. The information what actually happened can be found in the teacher's notes and the teacher decides when and if he/she provides that piece of information to the students. Other or additional follow-ups are possible depending on the case study, students' needs and level, and time. These usually include a writing activity like various letters, minutes, reports or summaries.

### *Lesson Plan*

In order to further help and encourage teachers to use case studies in the EFL classroom, we suggest one lesson plan. The case study that this lesson plan covers is entitled *Nissan Motor Company Ltd.: Building Operational Resiliency* by William Schmidt and David Simchi-Levi from the LearningEdge, a free learning resource from MIT Sloan School of Management. Even though this learning resource is designed for management educators and students, the materials it offers can be easily adapted and used by EFL teachers. The resource provides free access to various case studies and other interesting business related materials and activities. The topics of the case studies vary from operations management, entrepreneurship, leadership, strategy, ethics, sustainability, and system dynamics. They are meant to facilitate class discussion and do not promote a specific point of view. Some case studies focus on the decision-making process; others are more descriptive elaborating what has happened in a specific business environment, thus suitable to be used in an EFL classroom.

This particular case study falls under the heading of Operation management and reviews the organizational structure of a famous company Nissan Motor and examines its operational decisions after the Japan's Great earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011 aimed at recovering from this natural disaster sooner than its competition.

**Level:** Intermediate/advanced Business English

**Number of students:** 18-30

**Time:** 2h30/3h

**Necessary material:** copies of the case study for each student; flip chart (preferably)/board; markers in colors; computer, internet access and an over-head projector (preferably)

**Lesson objectives:** Develop students' critical, analytical and problem solving skills; develop students speaking, reading, oral presentation skills;

**Procedure:**

1. Warm-up/ Class discussion (20 minutes)

Teacher elicits from the students whether they are familiar with the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan which is one of the most powerful ones on record. The students are shown a short CNN video on the event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0l6z0HaUAM> Students discuss the video and share their thoughts.

In the focus of the discussion are the effects of this extremely serious calamity i.e. a humanitarian and an environmental crisis accruing from the earthquake; the tsunami and the resulting nuclear emergency; an economic crisis. Teacher can spur a brainstorming session and students can think of possible effects of this unfortunate event writing students' ideas on the board or preferably on a flip chart so that the paper sheet can be put on the wall after the session for everyone to see and use the ideas for the following activities.

After the brainstorming session, students read the introduction to the case study silently and then compare their ideas to the ideas i.e. effects presented in the text. Students go through Exhibit 1 and 2 (a chart and a table). If reading charts has been introduced to the class, which is often a topic in Business English courses, these two visuals can be read by two individual students. This provides an excellent speaking activity. To round up, students can share their knowledge regarding Nissan, anticipate what the case study is going to be about, and guess how Nissan dealt with the crisis.

2. Reading and comprehension and preparation of oral presentations (20 minutes)

Students are divided in 6 groups of 3-4 students and each group reads its own part of the case study silently: *History of the Japanese Automotive Industry*, *Nissan's Supply Chain Philosophy: A Focus on Flexibility*, *Risk Management at Nissan*, *Nissan's Response to the Disaster*, *Recovery by the Big Three Japanese Auto Manufacturers*, and *Recovery by the Big Three Japanese Auto Manufacturers*. Once they read their parts, they discuss in groups what they have read to check comprehension. Furthermore, the teacher approaches each group to check comprehension and clarify certain aspects if necessary. Each group then prepares a five-minute oral presentation of the part they have read and include interpretation of the exhibits provided in the case study relevant to their part. Each group of students is given markers and a paper sheet from the flip chart to write the plan of the presentation and/or draw certain aspects that need to be pointed out. This activity will have most success if students were already introduced to the technics of preparing and giving an oral presentation and the general structure of an oral presentation (brief overview of the content, introduction, main point(s), summary).

3. Oral presentations (30-40 minutes)

Each group gives a presentation. The time limit should be observed rigorously. While listening to their fellow students' presentations, students should take notes of what have been presented

with, thus creating the whole picture. Students should be introduced to note-taking technics beforehand for best results. The paper sheets of the groups' presentations should be put on the wall as well. Once the presentations are over, students share their notes and recreate the whole case study. One student is asked to read out loud the final part Going Forward which deals with *Nissans future plans*. In this way students are almost ready to deal with the core of the case study *Case Discussion Questions*.

#### 4. Vocabulary bank (15 minutes)

The following activity is actually making a glossary and clarifying unknown vocabulary. Students scan the text and skim for words/expressions that they are not familiar with and together with the help of the teacher provide an explanation in their mother tongue and/or a synonym in English. Students should be encouraged to use dictionaries in the classroom.

#### 5. Case Discussion Questions (30-40 minutes)

Each group is given 20 minutes to answer the five case discussion questions which can be found at the end of the case study. The answers should not be written down because it hinders oral performance. Still, notes on the answers should be made to facilitate discussion and to make sure group decision within the group itself. The focus here is reevaluation of the organizational structure and operational decisions made by Nissan adding students' personal points of view. Moreover, to respond to the task, students go through a decision making process of their own, a small debate and exchange of ideas and then adopt one answer for the whole group. When all groups are ready, they share their answers and compare and contrast their suggestions, remarks, ideas and solutions question by question.

#### 6. Follow-up (10 minutes)

As a follow up activity we suggest the teacher share with the students what happened to Nissan after 2012, putting in perspective the future plans of the company outlined in the last part of the case study. Students comment, elaborate on their points of view, and draw possible conclusions and lessons to be learned, thus rounding up the discussion. If there were different points of view, a wide variety of voices, and students found it particularly difficult to come to terms with and adopt one answer as a group in the fifth activity, as a follow up we suggest each students to provide a written answer to the *Case Discussion Questions* as homework. In this way the teacher gives each student the opportunity to elaborate and justify his/her position while further developing writing skills.

#### *Key Points*

Case studies are an excellent way to improve language learning since they provide learners with an opportunity to solve a problem by applying what they know, develop language skills while working on or putting in use their critical, analytical, and problem solving skills. Furthermore, they make language learning meaningful and memorable. In order to ensure a successful usage of case studies for language learning aims, EFL teachers should have in mind students' level and make a thorough evaluation of students' needs before introducing

case studies in the EFL classroom. With the appropriate adaptation of the class delivery of the case study to the students level, needs and interests, case studies not only can be exceptionally beneficial and rewarding, but also a lot of fun.

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# FLIPPED CLASSROOM – TAILORING THE CLASSROOM TO THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY LEARNER

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## *Abstract*

In our schools, students have grown accustomed to the traditional methods of instructions where the teachers stand in front of the class lecturing the same thing to all the students present. Then, just at the end of the class, students are given homework to reinforce the learned concepts at home where they get little or no added support. As a result of this way of teaching, students are just “passive” listeners on the receiving end of a one-way communication process that encourages little critical thinking. In order to change this trend of passive listening, teachers around the globe employ technology to implement a blended learning method that “frees up” class time for collaborative activities by shifting lectures out of the classroom on the internet. This method, known as a “flipped classroom”, combines the benefits of direct instructions and active learning to engage students in the educational process.

The action research project was carried out to determine if the model of the flipped classroom would have a positive effect on the learning environment by increasing student engagement, collaboration among students and interaction time with the students and teacher.

**Keywords:** flipped classroom, collaboration, student engagement

## **1. Introduction**

The classroom environment is always changing, and teachers must adapt in order to meet student needs. In the last five years teachers have been asked to integrate new technologies into their classroom. One of the reasons for this is because today’s students have grown up in a world where there has always been Google, iPods and YouTube. Prensky (2001) regarded the individuals born into this modern world as “Digital Natives” and stated that “computer games, email, the internet, cell phones and instant messaging are integral parts of their lives” (p.1). In 2001, Chan also noted that the growth of information and communication technology, especially internet-related technology, has changed how, what, who, when, where and why we learn (as cited in Lee, 2005).

A recent trend that has developed in education is known as the “flipped classroom” or “inverted classroom.” A flipped classroom, as its name implies, is a class where the lecture and homework have been reversed or “flipped”. In other words, the activities and exercises normally completed at home are worked on in the classroom, and the lectures normally given during class time is given as homework through video lectures, podcasts, or some other direct instruction delivery method.

If we look at the reasons why teachers started implementing the flipped classroom model into their classrooms, we can come up with the following conclusions: students learn at different paces (slow, medium, fast); sometimes students miss important pieces of information from class even though they are “present”; occasionally students are absent (due to being sick, sports) and miss lessons; often students do not complete homework fully or correctly at home because they “forgot” how to do it from class (or simply copying from a friend); teacher spend most of class time lecturing and not giving students a lot of time to practice on their own without support; and teacher spend many extra hours tutoring and re-explaining to students who didn’t “get it” in class.

There are some misconceptions about what the flipped classroom actually is. Some misconceptions about the flipped classroom are that students spend the entire time in front of a computer, students work without structure, the videos replace the teacher, students work in isolation, or that it is an online course. An effective flipped classroom is one that, the time normally spent lecturing, is used for in-class activities, discussions, problems, and group projects. The most meaningful learning in a flipped classroom occurs as a result of efficient use of the extra class time (Tucker 2012). The direct instruction given to students as homework can take the form of a video, a power point, a handout, or a combination of these.

The purpose of action research project was to examine the effects of the flipped classroom model on the learning environment and student achievement. I collected data on lecture time in-class, interactions between students, student engagement, and overall grade assessments. Ultimately, utilizing technology should reduce class time traditionally spent on lectures. As a result, I hoped the flipped classroom would provide students with more time to interact with each other and with me, hence increasing student engagement and achievement in my classroom.

The main research questions were:

- *How does flipped classroom model change the learning environment?*
- *Does the flipped classroom model reduce lecture time in class, and consequently, allow for more interactions between students?*
- *Does the flipped classroom model increase student engagement and achievement?*

## **1. Literature review**

The flipped classroom developed in response to a variety of changes in the classroom environment, including students’ learning preferences, limited classroom time, and increased access to technology. It has the potential to be an effective and useful method of education. By replacing the direct instruction from class with video lectures watched as homework outside class allows for more class-time to be used for active learning. Active learning can include different activities, discussions, independent problem solving, and project-based learning (Bergmann, Overmyer, & Wilie, 2012). By doing this, teachers create a classroom environment which uses collaboration and constructive learning, but at the same time it is blended with the

direct instruction used outside the classroom (Tucker, 2012). Constructive learning happens when students gain knowledge through direct personal experiences (Ultanir, 2012). These personal experiences can be increased in a flipped classroom through the use of different types of activities, creating students who are active learners (employing higher-order levels of understanding: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), rather than passive learners (utilizing only lower-order levels of understanding: absorbing information from hearing, seeing, and reading) (Minhas, Ghosh, & Swanzy, 2012; Sams, 2013). Active learning has been found to produce better grades than passive learning (Minhas, Ghosh, & Swanzy, 2012). Collaborative learning takes place when two or more people learn something together, holding one another accountable for their learning. Also this type of learning creates students who are more invested in their own learning. (Roberts, 2004). Through group activities, projects, and group problem solving in the flipped classroom teachers can introduce a high level of collaborative learning.

The flipped classroom also involves a change in the teacher's role. In a traditional class, the teacher can be portrayed as the "sage on the stage" that presents information in engaging ways in hopes that students will pay attention and absorb the information (Bergmann, Overmyer, & Wilie, 2012). The flipped classroom moves away from this idea, putting the teacher in the role of the "guide on the side" who works with the students to guide them through their individual learning experiences (Bergmann, Overmyer, & Wilie, 2012). In the flipped classroom the responsibility for learning is flipped from teacher's hands to students' hands and the face to face time is flipped from teacher-focused to student-focused.

## **2. Methodology**

In order to analyze the effects of the flipped classroom model, I compared a flipped classroom with a non-flipped classroom. By comparing the two methods of teaching I was able to find some of the effects the flipped method had on my classroom. The participants in the research were my sixth grade students who have studied English as a second language for 5 years in a traditional non-flipped classroom. In order to compare the two methods of teaching I decided to teach the 1<sup>st</sup> Module from the course (19 lessons) using the traditional method of teaching and then teach the 2<sup>nd</sup> Module (19 lessons) using the flipped classroom model.

I first gathered data from a traditional non-flipped classroom so that I would have a baseline data with which to compare the flipped classroom. These lessons were designed with normal classroom events such as lectures, exercises, and other activities. I recorded students' participation and engagement in class using check lists. For homework students were given practice exercises about the material covered in class. Homework completion was also recorded. Students had to complete 2 master quizzes during the 1<sup>st</sup> Module. At the end of the module they completed the Module test 1 and the results were noted.

Following the implementation of the traditional non-flipped classroom for the 1<sup>st</sup> Module I implemented the flipped classroom for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Module. I created a website ([www.teacherljubicaflippedclassroom.weebly.com](http://www.teacherljubicaflippedclassroom.weebly.com)) where I uploaded the Tutorials for the module. So for homework, students were assigned to watch 5 to 10 minute video lectures or

PowerPoint presentations followed by online exercises in a Google form prior to coming to class. At the end of each Google form, students had to complete 2 additional questions (What I understood the most? What I am still confused about?) which gave me a better insight if students need it additional help from me in class. Once students arrived in class, they were split into 3 groups according to the results from the Tutorial exercises. The first group was comprised from students who completely understood the material and could work on additional exercises alone without my help. The second group was comprised from students who did well on the exercises but still needed additional help from me by asking me additional questions or explanations about the material. After 5- to 10-minute discussions, students continued working collaboratively or individually on the rest of the given exercises. The third group was comprised from students who had problems understanding the material and students who didn't watch the Tutorial before class. Because of the available time in class now I was able to work 1-on-1 with this group of students. During time spent working on exercises students were placed in strategic pairs or "buddies" and pairs were combined to form larger groups of four students. While working students were instructed to work with their buddy then check answers with their larger group of four. During the implementation of the flipped classroom model, the results from the 5 online Tutorials were recorded for each student as well as the results from 2 master quizzes students had to complete during the Module. At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Module students completed the Module test 2 and the results were noted.

### **3. Data analysis**

#### **3.1 Expected results**

Before conducting my research, I hypothesized flipping the classroom would cause lecture time in class to decrease. I expected students would be more engaged with exercises, activities and projects due to increased work time in class. I strongly believed students would appreciate opportunities to collaborate between each other. Ultimately, I expected scores to rise in the flipped classroom. Therefore, I anticipated quiz and test scores from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Module to be slightly higher compared to the scores from the 1<sup>st</sup> Module, but did not expect them to increase significantly. I realized it would be difficult to attribute any positive results to one aspect of the flipped classroom as they could be attributed to the content being studied, to the video lectures, more time in class to do exercises, collaboration opportunities, or other unknown reasons.

While I imagined students would appreciate more class time to complete exercises, activities and projects, I anticipated mixed feelings toward learning through Tutorials. Just as some students prefer a physical textbook over an electronic textbook, some students may prefer face-to-face lectures over video lectures. I was also certain that not all students would watch every Tutorial every time. I did expect student engagement levels during class to increase due to reduced lecture time.

#### **3.2 Results and interpretations**

To address my research questions both qualitative and quantitative data were collected.

**Journal.** Qualitative data were collected through a teacher journal which was updated daily. Analyzing the qualitative data aimed to address whether flipping the classroom decreased classroom lecture time, consequently allowing more time for students to collaborate and engage with the content. At the end of the flipped classroom implementation, 38 journal entries had been recorded. Initially when I introduced the concept of the flipped classroom, most students seemed willing to give the Tutorials a try. I then gave students twenty minutes to watch the first Tutorial in class, and at the conclusion students were generally positive.

During the flipped classroom, I was extremely pleased with effort students put forth to complete the activities in class. I was also pleased with students' willingness to collaborate with one another. While students regularly asked me questions, the majority of discussions happened between students. From my observations, 45 students regularly engaged in discussion with their students, while 20 worked more individually. My journal continually contained entries involving student engagement. Increased engagement was especially apparent in students who did not spend much time doing homework in the traditional setting.

While the majority of my flipped classroom journal contained positive entries, the most frequently re-occurring negative issue was connected to students not watching the videos. About 20% of the students didn't watch the Tutorial prior to class. But this percentage was the same as the number of students who didn't complete homework in the traditional non-flipped classroom. In the non-flipped classroom about 10 to 12 students out of the 65 total students did not do the homework each night. In the flipped classroom the homework showed that on the first day of the implementing the flipped classroom model 19 students out of 65 students didn't do the homework (watch the Tutorial prior to class). The second time 17 students didn't do the homework and on the third time 12 students didn't do the homework. On the first day of the flipped classroom model a great deal of students did not do the homework, but each time more students did the homework as the flipped classroom went on. This could imply that when transitioning to a flipped classroom for the first time many students might not do the homework at first, but over time a teacher might see the levels of homework completion rise.

**Test scores.** To assess student achievement, I used the results for quizzes and tests from both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Module. After comparing the results, it could not be concluded that flipping the classroom was tied to increased overall academic performance. On the 1<sup>st</sup> Module quizzes and test students' average grade was 68% and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Module quizzes and test students average grade was 72%. Like I mentioned before, this grade does not show that students got significantly better grades on the flipped than in a non-flipped classroom. But I can confidently conclude that flipping the classroom did not hurt overall academic performance.

**Survey.** To better understand the effects the flipped classroom model had on the learning environment, I gave the students a survey. The survey contained 16 statements scored on a five-point Likert scale, and two additional questions. For each statement, students specified whether they strongly disagreed, disagreed, had no opinion or were neutral, agreed, or strongly agreed. The two questions at the end of the survey addressed the positive and negative themes

associated with the flipped classroom model. Survey items were designed to address the research questions involving student engagement and collaboration. Few of the questions were asked to gain an insight into students' perception of learning and academic achievement while the classroom was flipped. Additional questions also addressed how students watched the videos.

For items 1-10 and 15-16, agree and strongly agree choices indicate positive student perceptions toward the learning environment during the flipped classroom implementation, collaboration and engagement. Negative student perceptions are reflected in disagree and strongly disagree choices. The neutral choice shows no preference or no perceived change. Items 1-10 and 15-16 can be found in **Tables 1-3**. Items 11-14, included in **Table 4**, addressed characteristics specific to how videos were watched. These items were not in connection with the research questions, but were included in the survey because they provided useful information.

**Table 1**

<i>Student Responses to Survey Items Related to Collaboration</i>					
<b>Item</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
4. When the classroom is flipped, I spent more time working with classmates	5%	4%	10%	27%	19%
5. I understand the exercises better when I work with a classmate	5%	5%	10%	24%	21%
6. The flipped classroom allows for more time to ask the teacher questions in class	2%	3%	7%	29%	24%

Students' responses related to collaboration in class are given in **Table 1**. For all three survey items, 45%-53% of students marked agree or strongly agree, 5%-10% of students marked disagree or strongly disagree and 7%-10% indicated no preference or no perceived change. Of the students surveyed, 53% thought the flipped classroom allowed more time to ask the teacher questions in class, 46% spent more time working with classmates, and 45% felt they understood the problem sets better when working with a classmate.

**Table 2**

<i>Student Responses to Survey Items Related to Student Engagement</i>					
<b>Item</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
9. I am more engaged watching the videos than I was during in-class lectures	3%	7%	10%	28%	17%
15. When I watch the videos, I take notes	2%	5%	8%	34%	16%

Students' responses related to students' engagement are given in **Table 2**. For both survey items, 45%-50% of students marked agree or strongly agree, 7%-10% of students marked disagree or strongly disagree and 8%-10% indicated no preference or no perceived change. Of the students surveyed, 45% thought that they were more engaged watching the videos than during in-class lectures and 50% took notes while watching the videos.

**Table 3**

<i>Student Responses to Survey Items Related to Student Learning and Academic Achievement</i>					
<b>Item</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
1. The video lectures help me understand vocabulary and grammar concepts	3%	5%	5%	23%	29%
2. I would rather watch a Tutorial for homework than do exercises for homework	3%	3%	6%	29%	24%
3. I prefer the flipped classroom over the traditional classroom format	3%	4%	8%	32%	18%
7. The flipped classroom allows more time to work on exercises in class	2%	4%	8%	27%	24%
10. I learn better watching the Tutorials than I do during in-class lectures	5%	5%	10%	30%	15%
16. I want to continue learning English with the flipped classroom model	2%	5%	7%	25%	26%

The greatest volume of positive student perceptions occurred for the survey items related to students learning and academic achievements, as seen in **Table 3**. For all six survey items, around 45%-50% of students marked agree or strongly agree, 6%-10% of students marked disagree or strongly disagree and 5%-10% indicated no preference or no perceived change. Of the students surveyed, 52% thought that the Tutorials helped them understand vocabulary and grammar concepts, 53% stated they would rather watch Tutorials for homework, 50% preferred the flipped classroom, 51% thought the flipped classroom allowed more time to work on exercises in class, 45% stated they learn better thought the Tutorials and 51% would like to continue learning English with the flipped classroom model.

**Table 4**

<i>Student Responses to Survey Items Related to Watching the Tutorials</i>					
<b>Item</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
11. I watched the Tutorials before class	5%	6%	15%	11%	20%
12. I often paused the Tutorials when watching in order to understand the concept better	5%	3%	10%	20%	27%

13. I rewind some of the Tutorials or watch them more than once	5%	5%	9%	25%	21%
14. I fast forward the Tutorials when watching them	14%	11%	12%	11%	17%

**Table 4** contains items 11-14, which directly related to how students watched video lectures. On item 11, 31% of students indicated they watched the Tutorials prior to class, while 11% indicated they did not and 15% were neutral. If we presume that the students who marked the statement neutral sometimes watched the Tutorial before coming to class and sometimes they didn't, than these responses correspond with my observation that about 20% of students were not watching the Tutorials prior to class. 47% of students paused the videos to process content, and 46% rewound some videos or watched them more than once. 38% of students fast forwarded some videos. Responses to items 12, 13, and 14 are related to pace of learning. Even though a teacher can pause and provide additional explanation during lectures in a traditional classroom. The Tutorials give an opportunity for each student to learn at his/her own pace. It appears the almost half of students took advantage of this opportunity.

The student's responses to the two free response questions addressing the positive and the negative feelings associated with the flipped classroom model are given in **Tables 5 and 6**. From the positive aspects of the flipped classroom model 7 out of 11 items were positively marked by more than 50% of the students. Providing more class time for students to ask questions and get help, the ability to re-watch the Tutorials and having more time in class to complete exercises were chosen by majority of the students. The most frequent negative themes were not being able to interact with the teacher during video lectures and that some Tutorials were hard to understand. Also 28% of students indicated that they experienced some computer problems while watching the Tutorials due to slow internet connections.

**Table 5**

<i>Student Responses to the question: What do you like about the flipped classroom?</i>	
More time to ask questions/get help	63%
Could review concepts by re-watching the Tutorials	60%
More time in class to complete exercises	55%
More interested/engaged in learning English	51%
Tutorials helped with understanding	49%
Watching the Tutorials for homework is less time consuming than completing exercises for homework	49%
Could learn at own pace	45%
Helpful to work with classmates	40%

Could focus better during Tutorials versus an in-class lecture	35%
Less stressful/more flexible learning environment	26%
Easy to catch-up if absent	23%

**Table 6**

<i>Student Responses to the question: What did you not like about the flipped classroom?</i>	
Some Tutorials are difficult to understand	55%
Can't ask questions or interact with the teacher during the Tutorials	52%
Experienced computer problems when trying to watch the Tutorials	28%
Would forget to watch the Tutorials	23%
Could focus better during in-class lecture versus watching the Tutorials	20%
Watching the Tutorials for homework is more time consuming than completing exercises for homework	18%
Hard to find time to watch the Tutorials	15%
Do not like watching videos for homework	12%

## Conclusion

Using the flipped classroom model allows covering content prior to students attending class which means freeing class time for collaborative learning projects. Strengths of the method include: meeting the needs of diverse learners, taking advantage of the community of learners in classrooms, allowing students to be in charge of their learning and their success and providing opportunities for individualized instruction. The hypothesis was that these strengths would allow a change in the learning environment that would increase student collaboration and achievement.

The first research question focused on the impact flipping has on the learning environment. Students had more time to complete various exercises and projects in the flipped classroom versus the traditional classroom. Delivering the content through the Tutorials allowed for this change. Even though one quarter of students did not constantly watch the Tutorials prior class, for the majority of students who watched them, collaboration opportunities seemed to be a great benefit of the flipped classroom.

The second research question was “Does the flipped classroom model reduce lecture time in-class, and consequently, allow for more interactions between students?” After evaluating all the data from my research, I can answer yes to both parts of this question. As a teacher, observing

students collaborate with one another was the most rewarding part of the flipped classroom. It also became quite obvious I did not need to be the only source for information. Most students were willing to explain grammatical and vocabulary concepts to a peer. Instead of immediately asking me for help, students regularly turned to a classmate.

Regarding the third question, “Does the flipped classroom model increase student engagement and achievement?”, I can say that students were more engaged with in-class exercises and projects, but I cannot confidently report they were more engaged with video lectures. A great number of students pointed out that one of the negative sides of the Tutorials was not being able to ask the teacher questions immediately. Regarding student achievement, I am unable to report increased academic gains based only on one Module in the year. Generally, I was pleased with the academic performances and did not observe any negative effects.

One unexpected research outcome related to pace of the learning environment. In the free response portion of the survey, nearly half of the students made positive comment related to learning at their own pace. Also almost a quarter of the students stated that the learning environment was less stressful or more flexible. This result caused me to reflect on the pressures of a one-pace-fits-all traditional classroom atmosphere.

Each classroom is different. Methods that work well with one group of students may not work as well with another. For educators thinking about flipping their classroom, I encourage them to plan which units work best with video lectures. It’s more likely that students would they paid better attention to videos made by their teacher versus videos from another source. Taping lectures can be time consuming, but worth it. I suggest starting with one unit or module. Videos should be concise, as students can always pause or rewind them. It might take a while for students to get in the routine of the flipped classroom so switching back and forth between video lectures and traditional lectures could get confusing.

As expected, lack of video-watching was the most negative aspect of flipping. But for me, the positive effects of the flipped classroom model far outweighed the negative. I would suggest flipping to most any educator, as long as their students have access to technology. I especially encourage flipping in classes where students are willing to engage in conversations about the content, or for teachers looking for a change of pace. Every flipped classroom is unique; no formula exists to perfect this instructional practice. However, it seems the flipped classroom holds too much potential to be just another passing trend. Collaboration, engagement, and more individualized pacing are benefits of the flipped classroom that cannot be ignored.

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# INCREASING READING COMPREHENSION BY USING PATTERN BOOKS, READERS THEATRE AND STORY MAPPING

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## *Abstract*

Beginning-level second language readers are just beginning to pull meaning from reading texts. Therefore, they need more experience with written language and need to be exposed to reading and writing for readily perceived purposes. This paper will examine and give examples of several teaching strategies that have proven useful for beginning readers such as using Pattern books, Story mapping and Readers theatre. Pattern books are stories which use repeated phrases and rhymes. The use of pattern books help in modelling reading, challenging students' current level of linguistic competence and assisting comprehension through the repetition of a simple sentence pattern. Readers' theatre is an excellent activity for beginning second language readers as they read and dramatize a script from a story. It doesn't require sets, costumes, or memorized lines. The goal is to read a script aloud effectively which would enable the audience to visualize the action, instead of memorizing lines and acting out literature as in a play. Story mapping is an example of scaffolding because it helps students use the basic structure of a story to understand and compose stories. They may be used to focus student's attention on important parts of a story. Finally, story maps provide a starting point for students to share their individual ideas and responses to the events in a story as well as discuss various views and experiences presented in a story.

**Key words:** pattern books, readers' theatre, story mapping, beginning readers, EFL/ESL

## **Introduction**

Reading can be seen as an “interactive” process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or reading fluency. This is a process in which a reader interacts dynamically with a text as he/she tries to elicit the meaning of the text and in this process uses linguistic or systemic knowledge as well as schematic knowledge (Alyousef, 2005). Engaged reading is based on motivational and cognitive characteristics of the reader who is intrinsically motivated, who uses cognitive strategies and interacts socially to learn from text. Engagement can be noticed in student's cognitive effort, self-direction and perseverance in reading (Guthrie et al, 2004). It is the teacher's responsibilities to motivate students to read by choosing the appropriate materials and especially for those at the early stages of learning. Beginning ESL readers, regardless of their age, need more experience with written language, they need to be exposed to reading and writing for readily perceived purposes. If they are literate in their first language, they probably have some idea of what reading and writing are for, but their literacy concepts should be broadened. They may still not be completely familiar with the English alphabet and spelling patterns. They need frequent reminders of the many ways we use reading

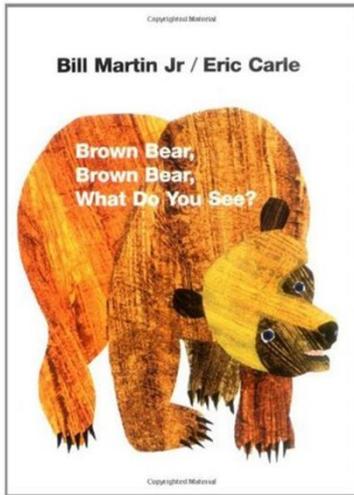
and writing for practical purposes and enjoyment and they need enough practice to move them toward being able to read simple texts independently. Since they are just beginning to pull meaning from reading short texts, they need practice to solidify sound/symbol correspondences as well as process information beyond sentence-level texts (Peregoy & Boyle, 2012). This paper will examine and give examples of several teaching strategies that have proven useful and motivating for beginning readers such as using Pattern books, Story mapping and Readers theatre.

### **Pattern Books**

Pattern books are stories which use repeated phrases and rhymes. The predictable patterns allow beginning L2 readers to become involved immediately in a literacy event in the second language. The use of pattern books can be seen as literacy scaffolds because they are modelling reading, challenging students' current level of linguistic competence and supporting comprehension with the repetition of a simple sentence pattern. In addition, pattern books regularly have pictures that can facilitate story comprehension. When students make predictions, they form ideas about the future based on what they already know or believe. A predictable book is one that uses patterns, sequences, and connections in the pictures or words which enable children to guess what will come next in the story. Predictable books can be used to help children learn what to expect from spoken and written language.

First, teachers need to choose a variety of predictable books to read with very young learners, such as picture books with basic vocabulary and simple rhyme patterns and let children anticipate what word comes next, for e.g. *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish* by Dr. Seuss; *Drummer Hoff* by Barbara Emberley; *Rap A Tap Tap* by Leo and Dianne Dillon; *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain* by Verna Aardema. Then, teachers should enable children to repeat simple phrases or refrains with a reader. Teachers also need to use children's favourite books over and over again. Young children may want to hear the same poem or book many times, and thus they get to know the word patterns. Many children like to fill in the blank when teacher leave out a word or two at the end of a sentence. Some children will enjoy catching the "mistakes" when teacher playfully change a few words in a familiar book. Teacher can also expand on children's predictions - children can make up dialogue between protagonists in nearly or completely wordless books. Children who know a book well can discuss different versions of the same story.

Example of a pattern book: *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*



TEACHER READS: Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you See?

(Teacher turns the page and children see a picture of a red bird)

CHILDREN REPLY: Red bird!

TEACHER READS: I see a red bird looking at me!

Red bird, Red bird, what do you see?

(Teacher turns the page and children see a picture of a yellow duck)

CHILDREN REPLY: Yellow duck!

TEACHER READS; I see a yellow duck looking at me.

Yellow duck, Yellow duck, what do you see?

(Teacher turns the page and children see a picture of a blue horse.)

CHRDREN REPLY: Blue horse looking at me.

According to Peregoy & Boyle, 2012, a partial list of pattern books that have proven successful with older and younger English language learners includes the following:

- Allard, H. (1979). *Bumps in the Night*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Brown, M. (1947). *Goodnight Moon*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Carle, E. (1977). *The Grumpy Ladybug*. New York: Crowell.
- de Paoia, T. (1978). *Pancakes for Breakfast*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Flack, M. (1932). *Ask Mr. Bear*. New York: Macmillan.
- Gaïdone, P. (1975). *The Gingerbread Boy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Hoban, R. (1972). *Count and See*. New York: Macmillan.
- Keats, E. J. (1971). *Over in the Meadow*. New York: Scholastic.
- Kent, J. (1971). *The Fat Cat*. New York: Scholastic.
- Martin, B. (1967). *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Mayer, M. (1968). *If I Had...* New York: Dial.
- Polushkin, M. (1978). *Mother, Mother, I Want Another*. New York: Crown.
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### **Readers Theatre**

Readers' theatre is an excellent activity for beginning second language readers as they read and dramatize a script from a story. Readers theatre is when readers read a script adapted from literature and the audience is picturing the action while hearing the script being read aloud. It doesn't require sets, memorized lines or costumes. The goal is to read a script aloud effectively which would enable the audience to visualize the action, instead of memorizing lines and acting out literature as in a play. By using voice, gestures and facial expressions performers bring the text alive. Readers Theatre helps students to develop fluency because they have repeated exposure to text, to improve comprehension and to integrate reading, writing, speaking, listening in an authentic context. Furthermore, it provides a real purpose for reading, engages students and increases motivation, provides opportunities for cooperative learning, builds confidence and improves self-image of students. The Reader's Theatre strategy combines students' desire to perform with the need for oral reading practice. It presents an enjoyable and engaging way of improving fluency and increasing comprehension. Teacher should introduce Readers Theatre using prepared scripts since students need to grasp the concept of Readers Theatre and become familiar with the format of a script before writing their own. Readers need to practice their roles in different ways – individually, in pairs or small groups, privately and in front of others. Teacher should also rehearse with the readers and model expressive reading, providing direction and support regarding their expression, interpretation, positions and motions (Peregoy & Boyle, 2012).

The possible challenges of using Readers Theatre in class may be the complex vocabulary or language structures in scripts for a specific group of students. But this can be overcome by adapting the scripts to the form they will be comfortable with without losing the essence of the

story. Another challenge may be the unfamiliarity of the stories and the cultural dimension, but this can also be overcome by gradually introducing students to different stories from different cultural background. This can present an opportunity to broaden children's horizons and introduce them to stories from different parts of the world, which can be very beneficial for young children, as Mixon & Tamu, 2006 suggest. However, it can be challenging to find appropriate script that beginner readers can use. Thus, teachers need to adapt the stories and scripts to suit the level and the needs of their students. There are many websites that offer many interesting and appropriate scripts that can be downloaded and used with young learners, for e.g. <http://www.thebestclass.org/rtscripts.html>.

### Readers Theatre in action - The North Wind and The Sun



### Story mapping

Story mapping is an example of scaffolding because it helps students use the basic structure of a story for understanding and composing stories. Stories usually have a basic skeletal structure consisting of a major character(s), a goal they wish to achieve, an obstacle that makes it difficult and a resolution of a conflict between the goal and the obstacle. Simple story maps can be used to focus students' attention on important parts of a story. Finally, the story maps provide an opportunity for students to share their responses to the values and events in the text, as well as to discuss various views and experiences presented in a story (Peregoy & Boyle, 2012).

A story map presents a visual tool that is used to help students recall details about what they have read and bring them closer to the story. Story maps outline events or important facts which can range from simple sketches of protagonists and events, to more specific and complex information, for e.g. the title, setting, author, sequence of events, etc. Creating a story map helps students understand and remember the elements and structure in a story more easily. As a result, learners will be able to isolate and identify plot, setting, protagonists, and conclusion of a story, construct a simple story map to accompany a book or short story and give an oral summary of a story using their story maps.

The use of a story map as a pre- and post-reading activity increases learners' reading comprehension. A story map is a graphic organizer that helps learners to organize the information from the books. Story maps can help them navigate through a book like a regular map through a city, showing where things are. The story map teaches learners about story

structure and the elements that make a good story. These elements match the basic questions we would ask about any story: WHAT, WHERE, WHO, WHY, WHEN, and HOW. In this way it helps children classify ideas and communicate more effectively.

Examples of story maps:

The North Wind and the Sun

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

What happened first? What happened next? What happened last?

Beginning Middle End

Setting: \_\_\_\_\_  
Where: \_\_\_\_\_  
When: \_\_\_\_\_

Major characters: \_\_\_\_\_  
Minor characters: \_\_\_\_\_

Plot/Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

Event 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
Event 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
Event 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Outcome: \_\_\_\_\_

Story mapping in action - The North Wind and The Sun



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# THE USE OF THE MODAL VERB CAN IN TEFL

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## *Abstract*

A modal verb is a type of auxiliary verb that is used to indicate modality. Auxiliary verbs are as their name suggests, helping verbs, help complete the form and meaning of main verbs. They are called *modal* because they express the *mood* of verbs. They do not make up a verb phrase on their own, but must usually be accompanied by a following main verb. Modality is a linguistic phenomenon, which allows one to make a judgement about situations that need not be real. To understand the phenomenon thoroughly, certain auxiliary verbs which express modality need to be studied.

The aim of the paper is to present modality of the modal verb *can* and its meanings. The analysis will be based on epistemic and deontic modality and the most frequent and common meanings, namely possibility, ability and permission.

**Key words:** epistemic, deontic, modality, can, students

## INTRODUCTION

Many students are not aware of the subtle shades of meaning that are found within the meaning of a modal. Modals are difficult for students to grasp because a modal and modality are rarely explained to the student, the form of modals does not follow the conventional rules of grammar, and there are so many meanings of modals that students often get confused about which modal to choose.

Modality is centrally concerned with the speaker's attitude towards the factuality or actualisation of the situation expressed by the rest of the clause. (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 173).

According to Quirk, at its most general, modality may be defined as the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses being true. (Quirk, 1985: 219)

Comparing the two definitions, they express the same idea by different words. The definitions imply that modality refers to the way in which a text can express attitudes towards a situation. This characteristic of modality is what makes it different from a sentence expressing a directly known proposition.

To sum up, modality is a linguistic phenomenon, which allows one to make a judgement about situations that need not be real. To understand the phenomenon thoroughly, certain auxiliary verbs which express modality need to be studied. Therefore, modal auxiliaries, especially the modal verb *can*, and some other aspects concerning modality will be examined later in this paper.

'Epistemic' and 'deontic' modality are the terms most frequently mentioned by English grammarians. These two kinds of modality are occasionally referred to as 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic', e.g. by Quirk, where the term 'extrinsic' corresponds with the term 'epistemic' and the term 'intrinsic' corresponds with the term 'deontic'. Jennifer Coates divides modality into 'epistemic' and 'non-epistemic' modality and uses the term 'root' modality standing for 'deontic'. (Coates, 1983: 20)

Basically, there are no or only slight differences between what the terms mean. The characteristics and descriptions of these two kinds of modality are often identical or very similar.

Epistemic modality expresses confidence/doubts, a judgement about the truth of a proposition (whether it is possible, probable, or necessarily true). Epistemic modality means belief modality:

*Paul can't be in Liverpool.*

When we look at the above example and focus on its negation, the modality is not affected. The example can be paraphrased as: *I'm sure/I confidently assume that Paul is not Liverpool.* Jennifer Coates (1983: 19) claims that the negative form of the modal verb *can* represents epistemic modality when supplying the missing negative for *must* and that the modal verb *can* in its positive form is never epistemic.

Deontic modality involves the giving of directives (in terms of such notions as permission and obligation or prohibition). Deontic modality means action modality.

*You can attend the lectures.*

According to Quirk the modal auxiliaries are so called because of their contribution of meanings in the area known as modality (including such concepts as volition, probability, and obligation).

Modal auxiliaries form a group of 9 verbs, particularly: *can*, *may*, *must*, *shall*, *will*, *ought*, *need*, *dare*, and *used to*, where the last verb mentioned in the list represents this group only marginally. As Quirk claims, certain modals such as *can* and *will* are extremely common, whereas others,

such as *shall*, *ought to* and *need* are relatively rare. (Quirk, 1985, 220). This claim indicates the fact that the use of modal verbs is a very problematic area in the English grammar.

Considering the meanings of the modal verb *can*, these meanings might be considered the most frequent: possibility, permission and ability. As for frequency of individual meanings, Leech claims that the 'Possibility' meaning of *can* is very common, the 'Ability' meaning is common and the 'Permission' meaning is less common. (Leech, 2004, p. 74).

Each individual meaning has many properties. As for the possibility meaning, *can* is generally paraphrasable by 'it is possible' followed by an infinitive clause:

*Electricity can kill.* ('It is possible for electricity to kill')

An important characteristic of this meaning, namely the passive voice, which frequently occurs with the possibility meaning. When the speaker cannot presuppose the willingness of the subject to carry out the proposition that the passive is found, and the written texts in particular are marked by the association of passive voice with *can*:

*We believe that solutions can be found which will prove satisfactory.* ('We believe that it is possible to find solutions which will prove satisfactory.')

The ability meaning can be expressed as mental power, physical power and skill or knowledge. The difference is evident in the following examples:

*I can remember it.*

*I can carry heavy loads.*

*I can speak English.*

As for the above mentioned examples, first sentence represents mental power, second sentence represents physical power and the third example represents knowledge.

Ability meaning is often linked with an activity which is accepted as positive/desirable such as: *I can swim. / I can play the piano.* Furthermore, "*Can* in this sense is more or less synonymous with *be capable of*. When it refers to an acquired ability (as in *Can you speak Greek?*), *can* is also more or less equivalent to *know how to*."

To comprehend the permission meaning of the modal verb *can*, its characteristic would be mentioned through the following sentences:

*You can smoke in here.* ('You are permitted to smoke in here.')

*Can I open the window?* ('Will you permit me to open the window?')

*Can we call you Sue?* (Will you permit us to call you Sue?)

## **THE AIM OF THE PAPER**

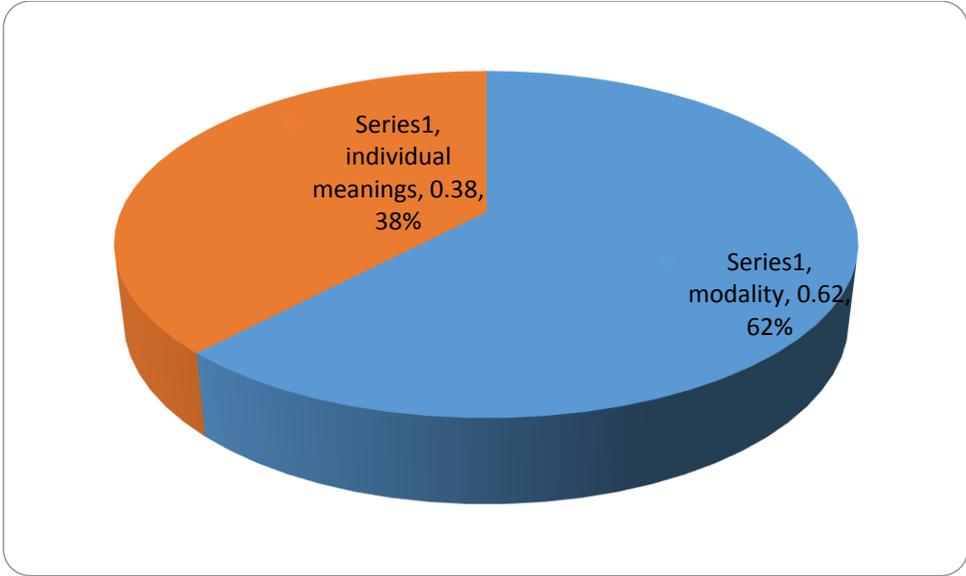
The purpose of this work is to display the level of awareness of Faculty of *Information and Communication Technologies*' students in Bitola for the various uses of English modal verb *can*, particularly deontic and epistemic kinds of modality and its three major meanings (the possibility meaning, the ability meaning, and the permission meaning).

### METHODS AND MATERIALS

A descriptive research method was used with an anonymous survey conducted on 40 students from the Faculty of *Information and Communication Technologies* -Bitola. The questionnaire was combined included closed -ended questions and open-ended questions where students could express their views and judgements. The hypothesis upon which the survey was based that students will face more difficulties to recognize the epistemic and deontic modality of the modal verb *can* then its meanings.

On average, the majority of the students did not successfully recognize modality as well as the meanings of the modal verb *can*. In regards to the question *Is it difficult for you to deal with epistemic and deontic modality as well as with meanings (possibility, ability and permission) of the modal verb can?* (Graph No. 1), results showed that modality is more problematic area ( 62%) than the individual meanings of *can* (38%) which is in line with our initial hypothesis.

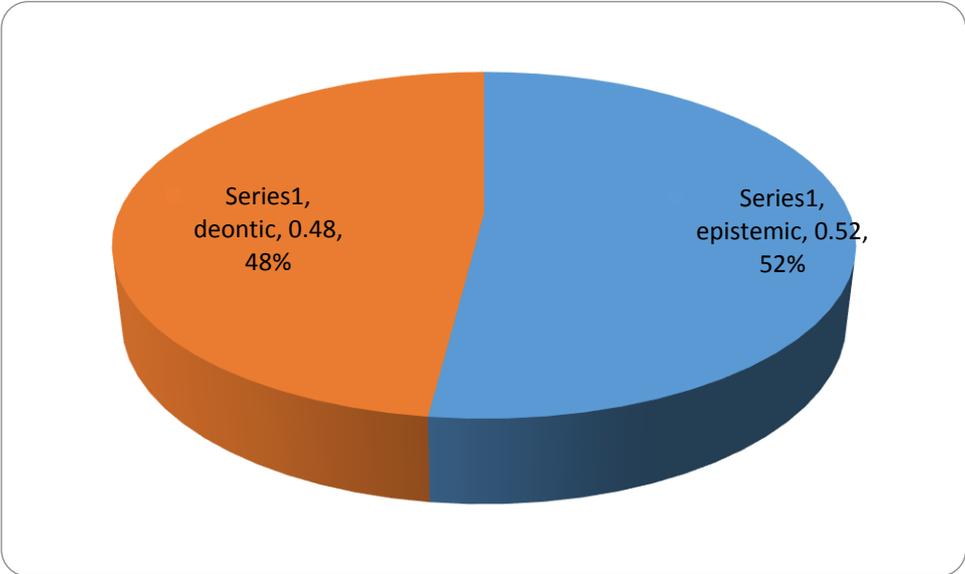
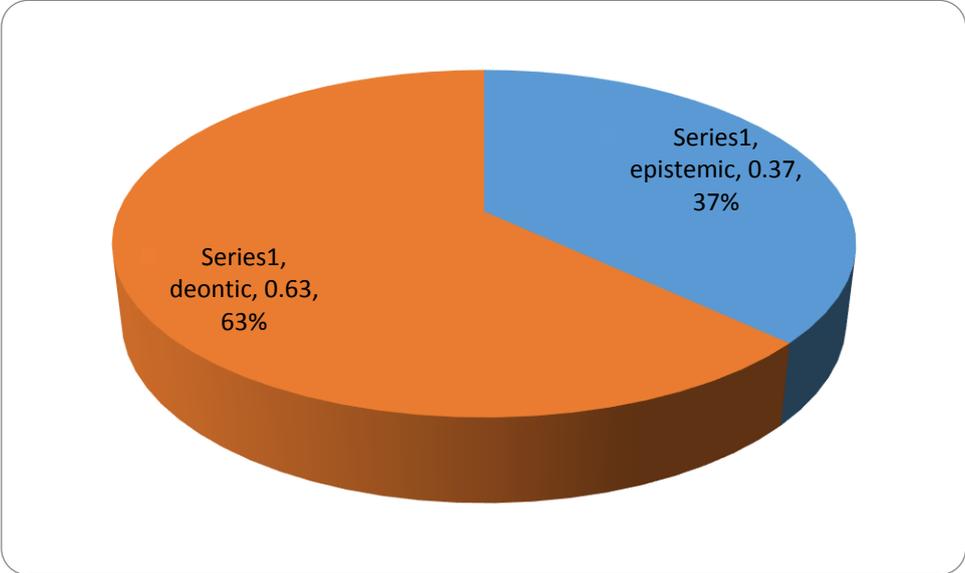
**Graph No. 1** Is it difficult for you to deal with epistemic and deontic modality as well as with meanings (possibility, ability and permission) of the modal verb *can*?



The analysis of answers to the question *Which modality is used in the sentences: Paul can't be in Liverpool and We can borrow up to six books at a time* showed that (37%) of the students

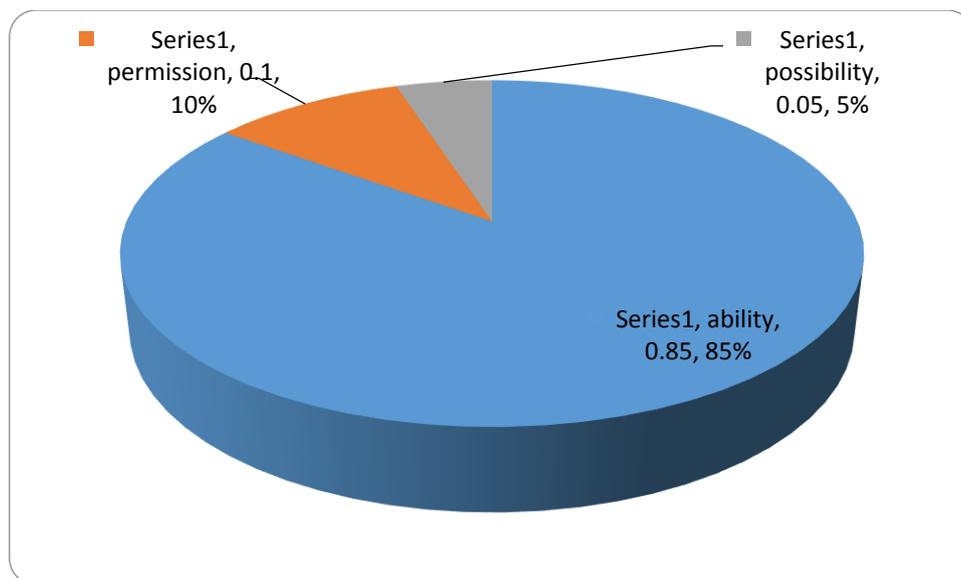
answered epistemic and (63%) deontic modality for the first sentence and (52%) epistemic and (48%) deontic modality for the second one. (Graph No.2 ).

**Graph No. 2** Which modality is used in the sentences: *Paul can't be in Liverpool* and *We can borrow up to six books at a time*.



In regards to the answers What kind of meaning (possibility, ability or permission ) is used in the sentence: *I can carry heavy loads* ( 85%) answered ability, (10%) permission and (5%) possibility. (Graph No. 3)

**Graph No. 3.** What kind of meaning (possibility, ability and permission ) is used in the sentence:  
*I can carry heavy loads.*



### CONCLUSION

Basically, however, the English verb system is fairly simple (more simple than most western European languages) but a little more complicated than most oriental languages. Each modal can have more than one meaning and each meaning is a member of an inter-related system. As Cook proposes *“The problem lies not in the surface positioning of modals nor in their wide range of meanings, but in associating the right modal with the right meaning”* (Cook, 1978).

Generally speaking, this survey is in line with our initial hypothesis that students lack knowledge relative to modality, modal verb *can* and its meanings. Teaching modals requires a thorough knowledge of the modal system and how it is systematic. Even though the prospect of teaching modal auxiliaries is overwhelming, if you understand the modal system and its systematicity, then teaching modals well is accessible!

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# **STRATEGIES FOR CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT USED BY MACEDONIAN ESL TEACHERS**

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## *Abstract*

In most studies on teaching and learning English as a second language (ESL), the accent is normally placed on the students, i.e. on the students' needs and the ways in which they efficiently acquire the language; the obstacles they meet in the language acquisition process and the strategies they apply to overcome them.

In contrast, this paper shifts the focus on teachers, more precisely on non-native ESL teachers who, in essence, are also language learners themselves. In particular, this paper touches on Macedonian ESL teachers and their awareness of the need for constant professional development, irrespective of whether they teach English at primary, secondary or tertiary level of education.

Namely, the tailor-made questionnaire for this particular research investigates the opportunities for professional development that Macedonian ESL teachers have at their disposal, as well as the extent to which they take advantage of them; it also elicits the strategies which teachers apply not just to maintain but also to upgrade their knowledge of the language (vocabulary, grammar and fluency). Finally, it attempts to shed light on the resources and opportunities which Macedonian ESL teachers believe could considerably enhance their linguistic competence and professional performance but to which, unfortunately, they currently lack access.

## **Introduction**

Most ESL teachers share one common feature - their search for excellence. However, unlike native ESL teachers, who should primarily master the art of teaching, non-native ESL teachers face an additional major challenge – they should master the English language itself. This undertaking, undoubtedly, requires extremely serious, continuous and strenuous efforts directed not only at mastering the language system but also at maintaining high proficiency in it. In other words, non-native ESL teachers, unlike their native counterparts, in coping with this challenge have to demonstrate willingness and determination to withstand two powerful 'adversaries'. The natural process of oblivion constantly erases bits and pieces of their memory, mostly, due to lack of revision or exposure to the language. The physical distance from the English speaking countries also prevents them from establishing direct communication with native English speakers, which has proved to be invaluable for second language acquisition.

Additionally, there are other circumstances which place a number of new and very serious demands on both novice and veteran ESL teachers. The extremely fast-paced technical development incites inevitable and drastic changes in the student population and triggers

unavoidable education reforms worldwide. This implies that ESL teachers should constantly be on alert for the newest trends in the language itself, as well as in the teaching process.

Considering all these facts, ESL teachers are obviously left with only one available and truly reliable 'ally' - life-long learning, i.e. continuous professional development (CPD).

The aim of this paper is to investigate the case of CPD of Macedonian ESL teachers at all levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary). Actually, it brings to the fore their efforts not only to maintain but also to upgrade their knowledge of the English language as well as their teaching skills. More precisely, it aims to disclose what strategies they use in order to enhance their vocabulary, grammar and fluency; how they feel about going to conferences, seminars, workshops; attending online forums and courses; being part of professional bodies which offer opportunities for CPD; as well as what obstacles they face on their path to self-improvement as ESL practitioners.

In that respect, in this paper, first, we provide some theoretical background on the meaning of the term CPD and its integral components which is followed by a short explication of the methodology used in this particular research. At the end of the paper, we offer a discussion of the findings as well as some concluding remarks pertaining to Macedonian ESL teachers' CPD.

### ***What is teachers' continuous professional development?***

In the teacher education literature so far, the accent has definitely been on preparing and training teachers to enter the teaching profession, nevertheless, nowadays, 'there is a growing body of evidence that teachers' CPD has also been receiving more and more attention' (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992b in Tsui et al., 1996: 461).

According to many scholars the most common and concise definition of the term CPD is the one which describes CPD as 'a continuous intellectual, experiential, and attitudinal growth of teachers' (Joyce & Weil, 1980; Lange, 1983; Lange, 1990 in Tsui et al., 1996: 462). More precisely, teachers' CPD has been described as 'a planned, continuous and lifelong process whereby teachers try to develop their personal and professional qualities, and to improve their knowledge, skills and practice, leading to their empowerment, the improvement of their agency and the development of their organization and their pupils' (Padwad and Dixit, 2011: 10).

The above stated definitions have been confirmed by yet another scholar, Harding (2009), who purports that CPD is continuous as professionals should always be looking for ways to deal with new challenges and improve performance. It is also the responsibility of the individual teacher, since the teacher should identify his or her own needs and how to meet those needs. Moreover, in Harding's terms, CPD is evaluative rather than descriptive, so that the teacher understands the impact of the activity. Finally, CPD is an essential component of professional life, not an extra one (in Davidson et al. 2012).

Evidently, all definitions of teachers' CPD clearly underline its importance for teachers, yet, so far no consensus has been reached on what teachers' CPD actually encompasses. Thus, Hargreaves and Fullan (1992a), for instance, distinguish among three approaches to teacher development. The first approach refers to knowledge and skills development of teachers; the second approach emphasizes the importance of self-understanding which involves reflecting on one's personal and practical knowledge of teaching, and the third approach of teacher development focuses on the collaborative school culture in which teachers routinely support, work with and learn from each other (in Tsui et al., 1996: 462).

Similarly, Bell and Gilbert (1996) identify three main types of teacher development - professional, social and personal. According to them, professional development is the cognitive development of ideas and the development of classroom action and practices; social development is the development of collaborative ways of relating to and working with other teachers; and personal development is the self-initiated development of the ability to discuss and solve their own problems, and to feel better about themselves as teachers (in Tsui et al., 1996).

Davidson et al. (2012: 6), on the other hand, recognize four integral components of teachers' CPD. Namely, they claim that CPD consists of a) developing a reflective approach to your work; b) expanding your skills and knowledge through working with resources; c) sharing and learning with other teachers and d) participating in training workshops and courses.

Having in mind the integral components of CPD, Johnson (2009) investigated the actual activities that ESL teachers undertake in order to enhance their professional development in all its various forms. He, actually, conducted a study among ESL teachers and ascertained that they employ plenty of diverse activities such as: attending sessions at conferences given by experts, or attending smaller, more intimate workshops where there is an opportunity to discuss and debate ideas and opinions; joining online communities which offer interactive virtual conferences, or blogs, forums and discussion boards; talking informally to other teachers in the staffroom; reading of internet materials, journals, books as well as taking part in reading groups; giving sessions which can range from a small in-school meeting where teaching ideas are shared right through to giving sessions at large international conferences; engaging in writing which could range from writing short articles right through to writing books; keeping a diary and reflecting on one's teaching; doing a formal course; becoming a member of professional bodies which provide CPD; practicing peer observation; participating in projects together with fellow professionals etc.

## **Methodology**

As the aim of this paper is to investigate the attitude of Macedonian ESL teachers at all levels of education (primary, secondary, and tertiary) to CPD, we opted for compiling a questionnaire for CPD (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire consists of 12 questions touching upon the four

CPD components: developing teachers' knowledge and skills; building a collaborative climate with other ESL practitioners; developing a habit to reflect on and evaluate one's work and progress, and, finally, attending events whose sole purpose is to provide additional opportunities for CPD.

The questionnaire was distributed electronically to approximately 50 Macedonian ESL teachers, mostly, from the city of Bitola and the city of Skopje. However, considering the fact that nothing obliged the contacted teachers to fill in the questionnaire, except for their good will of course, unfortunately, only 20 teachers responded to it.

Ten of the ESL teachers who filled in the questionnaire teach English at university; eight of them are primary school teachers and two are secondary school teachers. The work experience of most of the interviewed teachers ranges from 8 years up to 30 years of teaching. Only three of the interviewed teachers stated that they have just started their teaching career.

## **Results**

The analysis of the teachers' responses yielded some really insightful and interesting findings in reference to Macedonian ESL teachers' attitude towards CPD.

Thus, for instance, the CPD questionnaire, first, sets out to establish what opportunities Macedonian ESL teachers have at their disposal in terms of CPD and how often they take advantage of these opportunities. More precisely, it attempts to reveal whether these opportunities are initiated entirely by the teachers' zest for deepening their knowledge and enhancing their teaching, or, perhaps, they are provided and imposed on teachers, occasionally, or in a systematic and well-organized manner, by the educational institutions where they teach.

In that respect, half of the informants deny receiving any CPD opportunities from their work institutions. The other half confirms that their institutions help them with their CPD but they also express overt dissatisfaction with the very few and limited opportunities they are offered and the meager finances which their institutions allocate for CPD. In fact, only two of them state that they are quite satisfied with the opportunities offered to them, mainly in the form of seminars, conferences and round tables.

This finding points to the fact that CPD in the educational institutions in the Republic of Macedonia is still mostly seen as a self-driven and self-initiated process. In other words, it appears that it is almost entirely up to the teachers to decide what forms of CPD opportunities they would create for themselves. In this context, the analysis of the informants' responses reveals that Macedonian ESL teachers who teach at tertiary level attach greater importance to both attending and actively participating in regional and international seminars, conferences, workshops and lectures delivered by distinguished linguists. However, they also display keen awareness of the fact that they should equally apply themselves to doing their own research and presenting and publishing their own articles and books as part of their CPD. The rest of the

teachers who teach at primary and secondary level seem to be more practically oriented, though. They put greater emphasis on using the Internet as the main tool for satisfying all their CPD needs. In that direction, they underline various opportunities they find and make use of on the Internet such as e-news, audio-video documentaries, e-books, audio books, electronic newspapers and magazines, Teachers Tube, webinars, online websites for English teachers etc. In this group, the answer of only one evidently very enthusiastic primary teacher stands out as she presents herself as very skillful in and eager about creating a very efficient blend between teaching English and ICT. Namely, she states that:

*“Since modern teacher tends to implement the ICT in the teaching and the new approach -learning through games, I created my own blog where I upload all learning activities and share all recent apps and innovations. I also collaborate with teachers from other countries, work on projects together and exchange knowledge. I also use Moodle-which is an open source learning platform and this is how I connect in a global way. I am also subscribed to the EdTech review and web 2.0 tools and receive all educational news.”*

The questionnaire also puts to the test Macedonian ESL teachers’ preparedness to take advantage of the latest trends in teachers’ CPD which are conditioned by the newest advances in information technology – online forums and online courses (Chart 1). Almost all of the interviewed Macedonian ESL teachers, unfortunately, profess that they have never attended any online courses or online forums. Only four of the respondents (two primary teachers and two tertiary teachers) state the opposite and claim to have had some previous experience with both online forums and online courses. However, only one of them is very specific about the courses she has attended (*ICT in primary education by Coursera; How to be a together teacher by Coursera; E-learning and digital cultures by EdTech*).

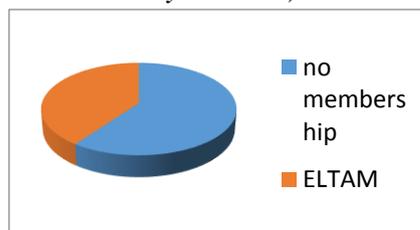


Chart1

Despite being a self-driven process, CPD surely does not happen in isolation. That is why the questionnaire further aims to examine teachers’ willingness to cooperate with other ESL teachers and be part of larger communities of people which share the same interests.

More precisely, the aim is to check whether Macedonian ESL teachers are members of any professional bodies which offer opportunities for CPD (Chart 2). Surprisingly, more than half of the teachers (12 ESL teachers) deny being members of any such bodies. The rest of the teachers claim that they are members of ELTAM (Macedonian English Language Teachers’ Association). Only one teacher states to have acquired an IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language) membership as well.

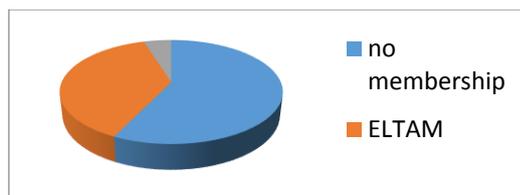


Chart 2

The following question in the CPD questionnaire addresses the incidence with which Macedonian ESL teachers attend conferences, seminars and workshops. The majority of the informants claim that they attend conferences, seminars or workshops twice or three times a year. Only a couple of them state that they do that more frequently, i.e. three or four times or four to five times a year. However, two of the teachers opt for a markedly higher frequency, which suggests that they take their CPD very seriously. Namely, one of them is the primary teacher who is very enthusiastic about combining teaching ESL with ICT and she claims that she attends online workshops once a month and webinars three or four times a month. The other one teaches at tertiary level and states that she attends 3 to 4 conferences a year, four to five workshops and 5-10 online events.

The CPD questionnaire also encourages teachers to reflect on their work and appraise themselves and their progress. Namely, one of the questions invites them to explicitly state whether they feel content or discontent with the extent to which they make use of the various CPD opportunities they have at their disposal. As to this issue, the teachers' answers indicate that their opinions are quite divided. Namely, one third of the teachers simply do not wish to speak their mind about that. This suggests that they are not particularly keen on reflecting on their work and appraising themselves. The other third states that they are not completely satisfied with the extent to which they make use of the CPD opportunities offered to them. They attribute that to lack of time; some complain that, on a regional basis, CPD opportunities are very scarce, whereas some of the teachers admit that they simply lack motivation. Finally, one third of the teachers hold the completely opposite standpoint. They feel that they are investing enough in their CPD and that they are taking advantage of as many CPD opportunities as they possibly can. In this context we single out one of the tertiary teachers' statement:

*“Yes. It provides me with the opportunity to keep up with new trends and advances in the field of teaching ESL and to share some of my ideas and achievements with other colleagues. It has a positive impact on self – evaluation as well.”*

In addition, three of the questions in the CPD questionnaire refer specifically to the strategies, i.e. activities ESL teachers undertake in order to maintain and upgrade their vocabulary, grammar and fluency in English, respectively (Table 1).

With regards to the vocabulary, the teachers are almost unanimous. They all agree that reading books and journals (online and in hard copy), as well as reading online news and blogs constantly is the main prerequisite for enriching their vocabulary knowledge. Apart from reading, they highlight the significance of listening to spoken texts (mostly TV, films, documentaries, songs etc.). In addition, they all make mention of conversing with native English speakers as a very useful strategy not only for learning new words and phrases but also

for revising the already acquired ones. One of the teachers says that she tries to learn a new word every day and that she keeps her own lexicon. Another teacher claims that she uses premier websites like Vocabsushi and consults online dictionaries on a daily basis to expand her vocabulary knowledge.

VOCABULARY	GRAMMAR	FLUENCY
<b>continuous contacts and conversations with native speakers</b>		
<b>constant exposure to the English language (written or spoken) (TV, films, documentaries, songs, videos on Youtube, books and journals online and in hard copy, online news and blogs)</b>		
learning a new word every day and keeping a lexicon	constant revision of grammar rules by consulting grammar books and articles on specific grammar points	joining online discussion groups and discussion clubs
using premier vocabulary websites (Vocabsushi)	online grammar quizzes and exercises	constant use of the language
consulting online dictionaries	translation	writing activities

Table 1

As to enhancing their grammar knowledge, the interviewed teachers profess that, first and foremost, solid grammar knowledge requires constant revision of grammar rules. Hence, to their mind, consulting grammar books and articles on specific grammar points, on a regular basis is also a must for all ESL teachers. Some of them advocate a more practical approach to maintaining and upgrading one's grammar knowledge. This approach presupposes constant reference to online grammar quizzes and exercises. Moreover, some of the teachers state that constant exposure to the English language (written or spoken) and continuous contacts with native speakers have also proven to be very efficient for enhancing grammar knowledge. Translation has also been singled out as a good strategy for revising the old and acquiring new grammar rules as well.

Communicating with native speakers, i.e. socializing and keeping contacts with people from the English speaking countries, is seen as the main precondition for achieving native-like fluency by almost all of the interviewed teachers. In addition, some of them believe that watching videos on Youtube, as well as joining online discussion groups and discussion clubs could also contribute immensely in that respect. One of the teachers mentions that she tries to constantly use English with both her students and colleagues who also teach English. Two of the teachers go even further and try to establish strong links between two seemingly unrelated

skills, speaking and writing. Namely, they state that what helps them improve their fluency significantly is actually their extensive writing activity.

Finally, the last question in the CPD questionnaire tackles the opportunities and resources for CPD which Macedonian ESL teachers believe could considerably ameliorate their prospects for professional progress, but to which, unfortunately, they have a very limited access. The informants' reactions to this issue, in fact, give rise to several major points. Namely, the tertiary ESL teachers wish to have a more liberal access to professional journals and electronic libraries which they believe would help them immensely with their own scientific research. They, also, believe that more regional conferences, seminars and workshops with more British and American professional linguists should be organized much more frequently. And last but not the least, the education institutions (primary and secondary schools and universities) should invest much more in resources and opportunities for CPD. Thus, for instance, they should establish cooperation with other educational institutions all over the world; organize more teacher exchange programs and endorse more grants for more frequent stays in the English speaking countries.

### **Discussion of findings**

Although a limited number of ESL teachers took part in this study, yet the insights gained from their answers with regards to Macedonian ESL teachers' CPD are rather revealing and suggestive.

Thus, one of the most important inferences which could be drawn on the basis of the interviewed teachers' answers is that the educational institutions in the Republic of Macedonia offer a very limited support for teachers' CPD, or, in most cases, this support is practically non-existent. This could be seen as the very first serious drawback which Macedonian ESL teacher experience on their path towards CPD.

What derives from this research as another interesting finding is that conferences, seminars and workshops as means for achieving CPD are highly prioritized by the majority of the respondents. This is especially the case with the tertiary teachers. However, this should not be surprising, if one considers the fact that their academic careers, in essence, are two-faceted, i.e. comprise both teaching and conducting scientific research. The latter obligatorily requires attending such events where interactions with fellow professionals are viable.

The CPD questionnaire also reveals that Macedonian ESL teachers are not particularly inclined towards taking advantage of the newest forms of CPD - online forums and online courses, even though, judging from some of their other statements, teachers do not seem to shun IT as a means for providing CPD opportunities. Quite on the contrary, teachers seem to be extremely aware of the possibilities the Internet offers to them in terms of CPD and they make visible efforts to utilize them as much as possible. Hence, the only reasonable explanation why they do not make use of the available online forums and courses would be the financial implications of such

activities. The same explanation most probably, at least partly, applies to their lack of interest in becoming members of professional bodies which create excellent conditions for CPD.

Finally, there is at least one more insight gained from this small-scale research worth mentioning. Namely, all the interviewed Macedonian ESL teachers seem to concur that maintaining and upgrading vocabulary, grammar and fluency are heavily dependent on more regular contacts and interactions with native English speakers and constant exposure to the English language. This practically emphasizes the necessity of more frequent stays in the English speaking countries and greater exposure to both the English language and culture on the part of Macedonian ESL teachers.

## **Conclusion**

This paper looks into the opportunities offered to Macedonian ESL teachers as well as the challenges they encounter on their path towards CDP. In other words, the CPD opportunities are obviously numerous, but so are the restrictions which prevent teachers from making the most of these opportunities.

In any case, ESL teachers should not lose sight of the fact that CPD takes place across all the stages of their career and that, irrespective of all the obstacles, they should incessantly strive towards further developing their skills, knowledge and prospects.

The second major point that we would like to make with this paper is that notwithstanding the fact that CPD is self-chosen and self-directed for the most part, yet, it should necessarily be combined with systematic, organized and sustainable CPD programs provided by the educational institutions themselves.

## **Appendix**

### **Questionnaire for ESL Teachers**

Type of education: a) primary, b) secondary or c) tertiary

1. How long have you been teaching English?
2. Does your institution offer any opportunities for continuous professional development (CPD)?

3. What opportunities for CPD do you create for yourself?
4. Have you ever taken any online courses for CPD?
5. Have you ever taken part in any online forums?
6. Are you a member of any professional bodies which provide CPD?
7. Are you satisfied with the extent to which you make use of the various opportunities for CPD? Why?
8. What strategies do you use to maintain and upgrade your vocabulary knowledge?
9. What strategies do you use to maintain and upgrade your grammar knowledge?
10. What strategies do you use to maintain and upgrade your fluency?
11. What opportunities for enhancing your linguistic performance would you like to have an access to more often?
12. Any further comments?

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# THE TEACHER AS A CREATOR OF THE LEARNING ATMOSPHERE

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## *Abstract*

The teacher is the creator of the classroom atmosphere and the leader of the process of teaching and learning so he has to do his best; use his knowledge, the resources he has and organize the class to make it a pleasant and interesting experience for the students. The modern way of teaching and learning requires a lot of effort, creativity, and resourcefulness on the side of the teacher. The needs of the students nowadays are different compared to the students' years ago; the internet, television, computer games and modern ways of communication have changed not only the way people live but also the way teachers teach. So, the teacher's task will be to include the games, the internet, the modern technology and use all his/her creativity and knowledge to meet the needs and demands of the modern students. The issue of the teacher as a manager, leader and organizer of the world of studying will be discussed in the paper.

**Key words:** *creativity, modern way of teaching, process of teaching, leader, knowledge, modern technology*

## **Introduction**

Students' progress and motivation in class is mainly dependent on the teacher. The teacher can create and the teacher can destroy the learning atmosphere with only one action. This is why lesson planning is of utmost importance in the teaching process. So the teacher should plan in advance every step, every action and have back up plan for every situation and every unexpected event that might occur in class. Teachers have to be well prepared, intuitive, creative and well trained. Even from the first entry in the classroom the teacher has to show a positive attitude towards the students and the class, when the teacher heads towards the classroom, he/she has to leave everything behind, every problem, every unpleasant mood, everything that might have an effect on the class. Since the first entry is the ice breaker of the relationship between the teacher and his students the teacher has to be careful not to leave bad first impression on the students because they are very good at reading emotions and facial expressions, that is all they see when the teacher enters their classroom. The next 40 of 45 minutes are a projection of what the teacher was created into during his/her career, his/her professional development, his/her creativity and knowledge. That is why teachers' development is very important and does not finish when he/she becomes a teacher, it is a career-long process. Teachers develop, work and prepare for their stage all the time, they prepare for a 40-45 minutes show in which they have to be immaculate, to make the class interesting and at the same time teach the children, that takes a lot of knowledge, work and devotion.

Unlike many other professions, the teaching is usually a job that can be for life, but even though it is a rewarding job, the teaching process and working with students may be very challenging and frustrating. Teachers who learn to process their own stress would possibly thrive in the profession and stay longer period than those who start working as teachers with expectation of having an easy and fulfilled career. If this is true, then who can be a real teacher or what are the qualities and skills of a great teacher.

A real teacher is not the one who can simply impart information but along with it he/she must be able to influence and make a difference to the lives of the children. A teacher must be creative, dynamic, adaptive and willing to change and lifelong improvement and development. So how can a teacher possess all these qualities is what we need to consider. The only possible answer would be the passion. To do something with a passion means to do something sincerely. The passion towards some career or work will lead to a devotion to the school's philosophy and the goal of education. Teachers should know what to expect and use their resources for goals where they can be most effective. This does not mean that they should ignore the gifted students or concentrate all their attention on weaker ones. That means that they should identify the different needs, strengths and weaknesses of each student and maintaining a positive and engaged atmosphere.

A teacher should be always at work. Teachers should be constantly engaged with how they act in class following the lesson plans and the curriculum requirements, so he/she can be successful at teaching the curriculum requirements. Teachers have to be creative in the way they use their teaching materials, so after finishing the planned teaching period they will reap the rewards of their creativity. Teaching is not simply about going through the given syllabus but directing them to achieve their goals and create their way of thinking in such a way that they become responsible personalities. In the process of teaching, educators often become not only teachers from whom they learn useful information, but also mentors or counselors. So they often become role models to look upon. Teachers have a great influence on the way their students develop and grow. They spend many hours with the students days after days and so a lot of them remember their favorite teachers with great esteem and thinking of them fondly. In time students realize that those talented educators have given them the opportunities that otherwise they might not have encountered.

It is not only that teachers deal with students every day and they also have to create and nourish a proper student-teacher relationship. At the same time teachers have to interact with parents and families. There are some cases when parents can be as challenging as the students if not more. Teachers have to work as partners with the parents to improve the educational process and provide education on high standards for their students/children. They can also be effective agents in influencing the community by involving parents into teaching and offering them the rewards and benefits of teaching.

It is well known that working as a teacher is very stressful and the salary is very low, but there are numerous benefits from the teaching profession. There is an opportunity to work with young

people and this is one of the main reasons why many people have decided to become teachers. Many people love the idea of influencing the future of the country, so becoming a teacher can help them achieve that goal. Teachers have to play the most important roles in the lives of young learners. It can be said that in the importance and effect they have on children's lives, teachers are second only to parents, more important in the lives of students even than friends and other relatives. Teachers can even have that influence to become mentors in the community. Other opportunities are that they can specialize in a certain field or subject and enjoy continuing education and support from professional organization specialized in the field of teaching and the specialties of the subject they teach and many other. Still, there can be an amount of freedom in teaching, again depending on the teacher's creativity and willingness to work. Even though teachers have a curriculum they need to follow, the methods and strategies used to achieve the curriculum goals are often left for the teachers to choose and they can be products of their own creativity and initiative. Thus, teachers and students build the relationships and learning environment in the confines of the classroom. So, teaching and learning is a very personal interaction, the classroom becomes the second home both for teachers and students. Having in mind all these things the teaching as a profession has many advantages compared to many other professions.

### **Professional development**

The professional development of a teacher represents professional and personal growth on a daily basis. It is a long lasting, continuous process which starts from the beginning of the preparation for this profession and lasts to the end of their profession as a teacher. If they choose to stay in that field of interest, it can be a lifelong process, it is a process in which in different ways means training of the teacher with new knowledge, skills, strategies in the appropriate fields and capability of using the appropriate technologies.

The most important and basic goal of the educational policy as a whole is the student; he/she is the center of all the processes, activities and fields of the educational sphere. Every student deserves to be taught by a competent teacher. But the question is how to provide competent teachers for all of them. It is possible only with a positive motivation of the teachers and making standards which will make them get promoted and motivate them to a lifelong learning.

In order to get a competent teacher with the skills and knowledge needed for creating a favorable atmosphere and give the necessary knowledge to his/her students, the whole system should be dedicated to his/her development and with that the educational system will receive students who will accomplish the goals of the education. Placing clear expectations for what the teacher is expected to achieve and what he/she should do to accomplish that, the competences of the teacher should be clearly given.

In order for a good, complete and competent teacher to be built, he/she has to think in the direction of lifelong education and development. When a teacher becomes a teacher and stops learning and advancing he/she can never fulfill the standards which the educational system place for him/her; and he/she will never achieve a good atmosphere in the classroom and will never know the problems every student is experiencing. Teachers who stop working on their

professional development will never recognize the needs of the students and the education in general. The profession teacher needs a constant advancing, progress and following of the modern educational aspects.

At the same time, the teacher has to have a critical view towards the education and a critical view towards his/her teaching and would work on the wider development of the educational process and system.

So, the teaching profession is not static and permanent, inert, inflexible people cannot be good teachers.



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2. <http://imgarcade.com/1/professional-development-for-science-teachers/>

## **Professional development of the teachers is of utmost importance for the educational process**

Using ICT in the teaching process makes the classroom atmosphere more pleasant for students and closer to their needs

The modern time brings changes in the whole functioning and in every pore of the society. Above all it is important and noticeable for the present times that the informatics and computing technology is spreading very fast in the medical care, the production capacities, local and state institutions, banks, education and every other possible level of functioning of the humanity.

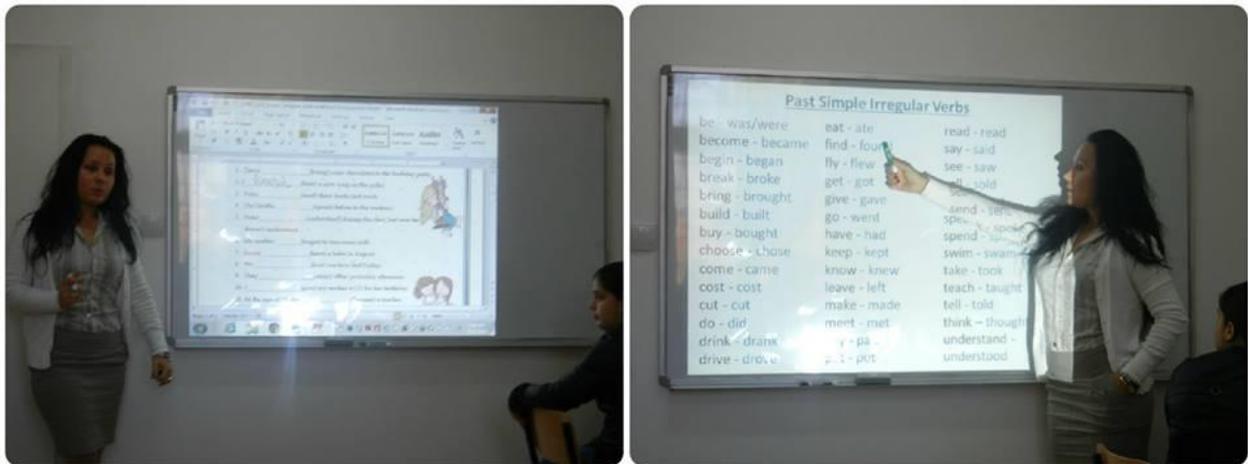
That is why today the use of ICT in teaching is of crucial importance. Being literate in the past, nowadays it is of the same importance to be able to work with a computer. The students, on the other side, are surrounded with computer technology on a daily basis and the generations of

today cannot think of a day without modern technology, games, television and social networks for easier communication, they are even often called the technological natives.

The interest of the students implies the use of informatics technology and computers in the school and in that way somehow naturally takes its place in the schools and among the students. Because of that the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Macedonia introduces the modern technology in the schools legally, each teacher has to use a minimum of 30 percent of classes of ICT. But the question is if the use of the computer technology for some teachers represent need or obligation implied by the Ministry of Education, and if all the teachers see the technology as an advantage or disadvantage in class?

For the ELT the use of Informatics Technology is more than necessary because of the nature of the subject. It is more natural and easier to acquire it by use of audio and visual and gaming exercises and activities. Seeing the importance of the audio-visual tools and programs, the Bureau for Development of the Education and the British Council, in order to ease and promote the work of the teachers of English in the Republic of Macedonia made a program and a manual for usage of ICT in the teaching, something that should be a basic tool for every teacher.

### Modern teacher in a modern classroom using ICT



Personal photographs – Natalija Gjorgjieva [https://www.facebook.com/nattaliq/photos\\_albums](https://www.facebook.com/nattaliq/photos_albums)



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2. <http://www.mrfineberg.ca/artifacts/>

## **Picture 2. Modern classrooms with a lot of technology**

Not every teacher is capable and well trained for using ICT in classroom, and thus unable to make a more student friendly classroom and learning atmosphere. That is where the professional development and trainings take over. Every teacher has to keep pace with the modern education in terms of the use of technology for educational purpose, and create an atmosphere which is natural for the modern students, where they can feel more at home and will be more willing to learn.

### **Every student needs same attention and different approach**

Every student in your classroom is a student with different educational needs. And every teacher has to pay equal attention to every student. Some students learn better with audio visual stimulation, others by reading, some by experiencing things, and the teacher has to fulfill the need of all these students. Every student has to have the same amount of treatment in order for the teacher to accomplish the goal of reaching a good learning atmosphere.

Today`s image of the students with special educational needs are dramatically different than the ones generations before. Students who have short time frame of attention, students who have need for physical activity, the addicts of the modern technology and the students with a need for assertiveness are only part of those specific type of young people the modern teacher meets. There is not a teacher who at least once a day has met the modern problem of the students with special educational needs and who takes a lot of energy, material and effort from him so he/she can teach them. Always and in every classroom there must be a student or students who show symptoms of students with special educational needs. They always make chaos in the classroom and take the attention of other students and make the teaching process more complicated than it is. And the teacher is the one who has to control it or the class will become uncontrollable and the teaching goals will not be achieved. The teacher has to achieve a learning atmosphere, has to have in mind these situations and these students in mind when preparing classes and when teaching in class.

Continuous seminars, trainings, new editions with didactical and other educational themes are more needed than it is thought so the teacher can understand the needs of the modern students. What should I do with a student who yells all the time? What should I do with a student who cannot remember anything? What should I do with a student who controls the classroom? Are some of the questions that the modern teacher asks on a daily basis.

The students with special educational needs which are specially defined in the educational process and whole teams in and outside the school like pedagogues, psychologists, defectologists and other work on their including and adopting in the educational system, but the teacher is left alone to cope with them in the classroom during the process of teaching, and the teacher has to create an atmosphere which is suitable for teaching all these different types of learners who have different types of needs in the process of teaching and learning.

### **Classroom environment**

The physical environment that the teacher and the students are in has a great influence on how they learn and what the atmosphere in the classroom and between the students is. Setting up the classroom is more of a compromise between the students and the teacher to fulfill all the functions the teacher would ideally want, and to make a good learning atmosphere. Still, having a perfect situation and environment is a real rarity almost equal to impossible. There are many factors over which the teacher has control and which can help developing the classroom atmosphere, creativity and improve learning.

The most important and fundamental feature is how teachers organize the classroom, how they place the tables and chairs, there is a multitude of choices a teacher has in organizing the classroom. The tables can be in rows or groups; the whiteboard can be in focus or out of focus; there can be a carpet area where the students can sit up close to each other or not. Ideally, the teachers would want more flexibility and adaptability in the classroom in terms of changing the arrangements and the teaching setting to increase the number of choices when preparing the class. A default arrangement where students sit in groups but can easily turn their chairs to see the board is preferable for all the teachers, but some classrooms are limited by desk top computers or heavy and massive tables which cannot be moved.

Encouraging good group work is fundamental for creative, enquiry-based learning, good learning atmosphere and group seating encourages cooperation and collaboration. If the tables are too big then students won't be able to hear each other well or see resources they are using. Students lose concentration if they see something upside down or only a part of it because it is not clear enough or far away from them. When planning a group work teachers are advised to seat four children on a desk for two, so they can be closer to each other and have a better collaboration and communication and that will give better results in creating good learning atmosphere.



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2. [https://encrypted-tbn1.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcT3FsagS5z0JAf\\_95\\_7jQCJ2WTMquUrhKEzPfsX1PUXjTKCNHUC](https://encrypted-tbn1.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcT3FsagS5z0JAf_95_7jQCJ2WTMquUrhKEzPfsX1PUXjTKCNHUC)

**Desk top computers and heavy and massive tables which cannot be moved decrease the ability of the teacher to organize the classroom for good group work;**

An ideal classroom would have different areas and in those different areas various types of activities can be carried. Still, in practice this can be very difficult to achieve. Encouraging creativity in classroom spurs the creative impetus of the students. There should be a space where students can reflect, having different studying materials around the classroom, whiteboards for writing down ideas, storage shelves and drawers for students` project and many other preconditions in the classroom can make things easier for the teachers. But most of these do not depend on the teacher, but they should be provided by the ministry of education, and they are a factor a teacher cannot have a great control on.

Making the classroom an attractive and interesting place makes the activities that happen there interesting and exceptional too. The classroom should be decorated to appeal to the students and to make the learning atmosphere positive and motivating, but creative as well. Nevertheless, the creativity and knowledge of the teacher has to be given an utmost attention, because even if the teacher has all the assets he/she needs for the class, if he/she doesn`t use them, they are completely useless.



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**Flexible and easily movable desks and chairs ease the teachers` ability to organize the classroom to suit his/her needs;**



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**The flexible classrooms give freedom of the teacher to plan various types of activities and encourage creativity**

### **Motivating students**

Being able to motivate students to learn is the most useful skill a teacher can have. When a student is motivated to learn their own impetus takes over and the teacher is able to guide, provide structure and information, suggest methods of working, pose questions and the students will willingly take them forward.

Motivation is often classified in three ways: *extrinsic*, when students are motivated by the possible results (winning a prize or a good grade, fear of punishment) or *intrinsic*, when students are motivated by the experience itself and *internal* motivation, when a task is not intrinsically motivated but the students recognize that it will be worth doing in the long run.

Teachers tend to use a lot of extrinsic motivation. They offer stickers or merit points, smiles, praise and threats of sanctions. However, if only the extrinsic motivation is used, the students do not learn to motivate themselves or they will not understand the importance of the task for its own sake.

In motivating students to learn well there are numerous of things a teacher can do.

Observing what students find intrinsically motivating can be very useful for the teacher to steer the teaching and learning to positive outcome of the class. If a majority of the class loves team games or singing or drama then using those techniques to teach can be very motivating. Putting learning in an authentic or realistic situation can also motivate students to learn and make the learning atmosphere effective and pleasant for the students.

Exploring opportunities that occur naturally in the school, teachers can think ahead to plan opportunities for learning to happen in authentic situations. Some situations for learning can be stimulated by using role-play techniques.

The activities that the teacher uses as role-play or authentic situations stimulates the students' need to learn and display certain skills within a context that the students feel to be authentic, even though recognizing that it is stimulated, they engage in the learning with a will, and that is the utmost goal the teachers can achieve in class.

However easy this can seem, making students like learning and engaging them in the activities the teacher has planned is a challenging and difficult task.

### **Team work in the classroom**

Teachers should promote and prepare team work in groups in classroom and outside of it, encouraging students to make projects and papers together and bond and interact so they can feel part of a community in the classroom and learn with joy.

Researchers report that students learn best when they are actively involved in the process. Students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats. And teachers should know from experience, when students feel connected, engaged, and included, they feel more satisfied with the process of learning. In addition, group work provides students with more “real world” experience, because most of them will indeed be spending much of their working lives developing projects in groups. Groups also often provide more of a sense of “shared purpose” in a class, which means that students feel a greater sense of dedication to the material. Finally, groups in which students meet with students they might not regularly associate with can provide students with new insights and ways of thinking.

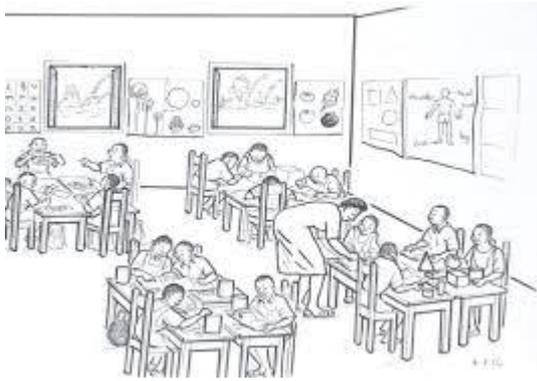
Many classes have the opportunity to engage students in group or pair work. Students should not assume that their material does not lend itself to groups—group work can be successful in almost all classes, regardless of size or content. Writing reports, solving problems, designing projects for presentation, preparing briefings or position papers—these are a few examples of how students can work in pairs or small groups. These groups may complete their work in a single class session or over several weeks. Typically, students work together until the task is finished and their project is graded. The important thing is that students feel engaged, important and part of a community. This is a skill that will be important for the rest of their life because every project they will do in future will be a team work activity.

**Team work and group work promotes learning to a higher level, every student has a contribution and feels important.**

But how to make a team? One of the challenges in organizing group work is deciding how the groups will be formed so that all students have equal opportunities to participate and feel included. When students self-select groups, they tend to do so based on affinities: friends, teammates, ethnicity, gender, and so on. That can mean that some students who don't fit into one of the major groups in a course can find it hard to become a member of a group. The suggestions below are designed to help teachers pair students or create small learning groups in

your class. We have limited the suggestions to those that foster inclusiveness. The alternative to these suggestions is simply to let students form groups with whomever they wish.

**Assign students to groups based on specific criteria.** Some teachers assign students to groups to maximize their heterogeneity: a mix of males and females, verbal and quiet students, the cynical and the optimistic. By assigning students, teachers can take into account students' prior achievement, levels of preparation, work habits, ethnicity, and gender. For larger classes, this can be handled in sections. **Assign students to groups randomly.** Some teachers assign students to groups randomly using the first letter of the students' last names or a table of random numbers. By assigning students to groups, even randomly, you avoid the risk that students who select their own groups or partners will socialize too much, self-segregate, or that some students will be excluded or "last chosen." **Rotate groups throughout the semester.** If you do make assignments, consider rotating groups throughout the semester. **Regularly check in with the groups.** If the task spans several weeks, the teachers will want to establish checkpoints with the groups. Ask groups to turn in outlines or drafts or to meet with you periodically. Team work is very motivating and interesting for the students, so the teachers are willing to use it often to create a good learning atmosphere.



**Teams should be well planned and prepared in advance by the teacher in order for them to be effective**

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## **Conclusion**

Creating a good learning atmosphere and well planned classes is not an easy task at all. There are a lot of circumstances, preconditions and factors which have to be fulfilled by the teacher to create a learning atmosphere that encourages students and makes their time spent in class enjoyable, comfortable and easy to learn in. Some of the factors and preconditions depend on the teacher, but some cannot be changed and the teacher cannot do anything to improve them. The teachers can do everything to improve themselves as professionals by trainings and giving their best in class. The teachers can do everything to plan the class to make students' learning interesting, motivating, creative and effective.

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## **GRAMMAR TEACHING: CAN LESS BE MORE?**

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### *Abstract*

Every teacher tends to be successful in their work by motivating students to learn what they are taught, so that they later see the learnt things used in practice. When speaking of teaching a language, the teacher's biggest satisfaction is to hear their students use the language in a conversational act. But, in order to equip them with the forms that should be used in one act, among other parts of the language, the teachers should also teach grammar. Thus, grammar is an inevitable part of the language teaching process, which should be given a significant place in a language class. Still, although it is a fact that grammar has to be taught, it is an eternal debate among the teachers about how much grammar should be presented to students so that they learn it properly: whether explicit grammar rules should be taught, or limited 'dosed' grammar gives better results.

The paper examines several authors' views on this question, considers several teaching experiences and gives priority to the stand that although, when it comes to teaching, the old belief is that the more information is offered, the more successful the teaching and the learning are, yet, this study tends to prove that the process of grammar teaching is more productive if 'dosed' grammar is presented to the students in a carefully planned way.

*Keywords:* English grammar, teaching, explicitly, implicitly.

### **Grammar Teaching: Can Less Be More?**

The paper is interested in several views on the way grammar is and how it should be taught. Factual information and experiment results are given about how grammar has been taught until now and what results that kind of teaching has produced. Since the main question of the paper is whether to teach grammar explicitly or not, the focus is on the amount of grammar that should be presented to students: whether they learn and perform better if they are given and presented all the rules they need to know in order to express themselves (accurately), or even when presented with fewer rules and less grammar, the students would still manage to use correct English.

This dilemma whether less grammar can give more results is revisited due to the fact that students do not feel comfortable when presented explicit grammar rules, and to the accepted belief among most teachers that students dislike grammar, and therefore cannot learn the language when grammar is in focus.

The study aims at questioning the truthfulness of that belief and tends to show that it is not the mere image of grammar with its own complexity that 'frightens' the students, but it is the way this part of the language is presented. Namely, students may indeed dislike grammar but that is because it is presented forcefully and unpedagogically, without having learning in the focus, but concentrating on the material that needs to be covered and presented. Otherwise, if the right grammar form that is in accordance with the class objectives is taught in a planned way, the students would only benefit from that and their learning would be more successful.

In other words, even when teaching grammar, if students are given more practical information, rather than scarce, 'dry' explanation, they can be only more manageable in the learning process.

Generally speaking, teaching is a cognitive ability and is affected first by the teacher's character individually, then by their experiences they have had in the classroom, and, of course, by the advice and lessons they are given when attending seminars, workshops and conferences (Vaneva, 2014).

Namely, during teaching, the teachers shape their instruction by what they have been taught, how they have been trained, and what they have experienced while teaching, so that they build their own perception of teaching and later on practise it in their work.

When it comes to teaching grammar, in this case English grammar, which this paper analyses, although the reasoning given here can refer to other languages too, the evidence in literature shows that the teachers, who are uncertain of their knowledge of grammar, try to avoid teaching it whenever it is possible. They can do that because they do not feel confident in their knowledge of grammar and therefore they do not feel secure when teaching it, as a result, they avoid grammar teaching to 'protect' themselves from the students' grammar questions and to 'secure' a more enjoyable class atmosphere for themselves and for the students when grammar is being taught.

Although in literature there are no explicit studies on the relationship between how teachers perceive their knowledge of grammar and how they teach in the classroom, yet, there are authors cited in Borg (2001), who claim that new teachers who felt their knowledge of grammar is inadequate, they avoid teaching grammar – a fact that goes in favour of the previously stated opinion. As a result, this alludes to the fact that the teachers' good knowledge of grammar gives them confidence, and confidence motivates their behavior, that is, it determines how they teach in the classroom. Thus, the teachers' experience tailors how much grammar they would teach.

Since in literature it has already been proven that grammar is best taught in context, and authentic material should be used to produce better results, the question that arises again, to which I am constantly coming back and thus examining its value is how much grammar should be taught, that is, whether teaching more or less grammar would give better results.

Baron (1982) (as cited in Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratham, 2011) says that very often an English teacher is perceived as a person whose only pleasure is to find the faults of others. Consequently, when grammar is mentioned, the students feel bored, but also uncomfortable, and even terrified. That is why they are uninterested in class, undisciplined, or even skip grammar classes, only to minimize the discomfort, but actually in that way they only postpone the problem they are facing with and they deprive themselves from being enabled to produce a well-educated expression in English.

Therefore, the teachers should reconsider the way in which they teach grammar, meaning the amount of grammar information they would present to their students in class. It is rather simple and pretty understandable that if the selection and the approach are made properly, then the students will enjoy the class, they will experience the learning process more positively, and eventually benefit from grammar teaching.

Provided we accept the fact that grammar is seen as a main demotivating force among L2 learners, it should be unanimously believed that grammar prevents students from speaking fluently, that is, if they feel they lack grammar rules, they will not use and speak the language actively.

This again poses the central question whether more or less grammar should be taught, so that the students better learn the language and the teachers are perceived as more successful instructors.

## **Method**

The paper is based on research done by the author about different views on grammar teaching, present in the EFL literature, and draws conclusions from a survey completed by English teachers in Macedonia and Slovenia, and their perceptions of grammar teaching.

The answer to the main question of this paper is found among the answers that the respondents of the electronic survey gave.

Namely, scientifically it is an unproven, but subconsciously an accepted fact that **less is more**, when it comes to teaching and learning, which, transferred to our context, means that when less, planned grammar is presented to students in a more focused way, they definitely learn more.

This stems from the understanding that grammar should be taught to each level and age group, and language teaching should definitely consist of grammar teaching (Toska et al., 2011, Kaçani, 2013) since grammar is an inevitable part of the language, but what the paper is mainly concerned with and tends to convey is that first the teachers ought to determine their students' level of English and then teach the appropriate amount of grammar, that is, they should give the students 'dosed' input, as much as they can process, which would normally result in a production of correct output.

In other words, if the students are given all the explanation and presented all the grammar rules, regardless of their level and their previous language background, the students would be confused with all the information presented to them, they would not know how to apply it, and they would not be able to upgrade their previous knowledge with the new facts. This would definitely yield no results, as far as grammar teaching is concerned and learning and mastering this language part is to be catered for.

Therefore, at university, on seminars, workshops, the teachers should be taught that they should make the right assessment of their students' level of English, group them according to their level, and gradually teach grammar - present them with a structure by structure. The input offered to them should be in accordance with the level and that would inevitably result in students' gradual absorption of the new information.

## **Discussion**

Yet, if we strive to give students appropriate grammar teaching and thus make them interested in grammar as well as intrigued enough to learn it so that later they would be linguistically correct in their spoken and written expression, we ought to be fair enough and admit that certain prerequisites should be met on part of teachers, when teaching of grammar. I extract the following two as the most important ones, or at least they are basic, starting conditions that should be met if we tend to expect our students to be proficient and accurate language users:

1. The teachers should be highly qualified, competent, and well-trained, meaning they should have mastered the grammar for themselves first, so that later, when teaching grammar, they use that mastery for their students, and
2. Their competence would help them in determining the amount of grammar they teach, and in assessing when to use 'raw' grammar rules, and when to use communicative activities, because sometimes, indeed, students learn better if they are given explicit grammar rules, or sometimes when they are given communicative activities, which can increase their fluency. Yet, the latter-said is valid only for some and, especially, for high level students and therefore is not in our focus of attention.

The stand that goes in favour of the conclusion to which the paper develops is that students do not have to be given all the rules when they are being taught grammar, because that would make them passive learners and reluctant to speak and use the language. In this latter case, they would rather be given more and more explanation and wait for the right moment when they would feel competent to 'release' their potential, which is almost always postponed until very late moment. That prolonged time is nothing but disadvantageous, because in that period the students do not use the language, namely they do not speak it or write in it, so mistakes cannot be corrected, which is crucial part of the learning process, nor are they praised for their correct use of the language, and they lose the wish to use the language, as they have distanced themselves from it, which is all due to their insecurity about knowing the grammar rules or feeling fear of not correctly understanding and using grammar in their expression.

To prevent this, students should be given 'rich' input, and urged to work with it. If they are engaged with the input, if they do something with it, they will be actively involved in the teaching-learning process and will be 'forced' to produce the language, which in return will give them self-confidence, self-esteem, and encouragement in learning and using English grammar.

As one of the activities that can be used for well-directed, planned and, primarily, productive grammar teaching are *structured input activities* (Wong, 2005). Those are activities in which the input has been structured to meet a particular goal, and the goal of this input is not just to get learners notice target forms but to also alter any incorrect strategies they may be using to process input so that they make form-meaning connections correctly and more efficiently.

In the same source, (Wong, 2005), VanPatten's stand is that when learners hear some input, they first try to understand the message the input conveys before paying attention to how that message is encoded linguistically, meaning they would process input for meaning before form, or would focus first on semantic expression and then on the formal devices used to convey the

input. In other words, more meaningful items will be processed before less meaningful ones; thus function words being less meaningful, while content words are more meaningful, that is, lexical words because they carry the meaning.

Here are some examples of grammar teaching through *structured input*:

Last night Ann **watched** TV.

Yesterday she **cleaned** up her room.

Last Sunday Ben **walked** his dog in the park.

The explanation about the use of the input in teaching past simple tense is that only teaching the **-ed** form is not enough for students to understand the past simple; because no form is used in isolation and thus simple listing and memorizing does not help the teaching-learning process, so authentic, linguistic and situational context should be given from which the students would infer the meaning, connect the meaning with the form used in the sentence, and associate the grammar rule that their teacher has given when explaining the structure with their own rules at which they would arrive after being given the sentence.

Thus, in the sentence:

Last night Ann **watched** TV.

last night has priority over **-ed** because it carries more meaning, actually it is last night that has semantic information, while **-ed** carries only formal information, and bearing in mind the fact that in learning the semantic material has priority over the formal information, it would be easier for the students to recognize and use the English past simple tense if there are other past simple indicators in the sentence than only the formal marker added to the verb.

## **Conclusion**

From all that has been said about the process of grammar teaching, explicitly alluding to English grammar, and what the recommendations are for it in the future, several conclusions can be drawn that can be suggested for better grammar teaching. They are expected to make the teaching easier and more goal-fulfilling for the teachers, and beneficial and smoother for the students.

The first recommendation is to present one thing at a time, so that students are led gradually from one point of learning to another and not to be bombarded at one time with all the items that are to be learnt. Another recommendation is to keep meaning in focus, that is, always to direct students' attention to meaning in order to enable them to learn semantically, not formally, then to move from sentences to connected discourse, which means to learn cognitively – move from the smaller to the bigger part and construct the whole picture out of the small, constituent parts. Then, another very important thing is to have learners do something with the input,

meaning that they should be provided with appropriate information and required to use it in a way and in contexts which prove that they understand how to use it, since the correct usage of the input would make it clear to the teacher that the form is understood and learnt, so they can use it independently, after practising and repeating it for several times. In the teaching process, it is the learner's processing strategies that should be always kept in mind. In other words, when teaching, the teacher ought to always think of the students: how they think, how fast they process the information, what eases their learning, how they can be helped if and when the learning is slower, and what contexts they can be supplied with so that the forms find their appropriate linguistic 'environment' in which they can be realised. Another recommendation is, although grammar is taught, to teach communicative activities, those that are less focused on grammar, since the open and constant focus on grammar may deter the students from learning the form and, what is more, the use of the grammar structure. With more communicative activities and persistent focus and emphasis on the communicative function of grammar, that is, by using grammar in context and by pointing out how grammar cannot be used in isolation but it serves to accomplish the communicative goal in the language, the students would realize that learning grammar is not only for the grammar itself, but learning this language segment would help them voice their ideas and express their thoughts. Very closely connected with this is the next suggestion: to move the teaching process from teaching grammar to teaching learners to communicate. By teaching students grammar, the teacher enables them not only to know that grammar structure, but how to use it and to communicate effectively. If students are excessively presented with rules, their language use would be diminished; therefore, the open presentation of rules should be avoided, because if given all the rules and not practising them, the students would not know what to do with them and how to use them, which 'cripples' their language ability and makes them only passive users of the language. The ninth suggestion is that the teachers are expected to turn their students' communicative competence – the knowledge about how to communicate - into communicative ability; that is, making them use their knowledge and using it in practice, thus, making them really able to communicate and transforming them from passive into active language users. The last recommendation that can be made to the teachers, and which has been prevailing in the discussion about teaching grammar, is that direct, explicit teaching of grammar rules should be avoided, but sufficient, authentic material is to be given to the students so that out of that input they are enabled to elicit the rules and come to their own conclusions about the use of the grammar structures.

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