

Volume 2 Issue 3
Winter 2020

ICC Journal



 **ICC**
the international language association

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EDITORIAL

Barry Tomalin, Editor ICC Journal

Welcome to our Winter Issue 3 of the 2020 ICC Journal. As you can see we've expanded our content to provide teachers and language experts with a greater variety of articles and reports. Despite COVID-19, ICC-Languages has surfed the waves as our profession extends its work into online learning in our ICC-Languages annual conference, our webinars and our EUROLTA foreign language teacher training courses.

Apart from the Corona virus the other great threat to our society is climate change and in the first of our two **keynote articles**, Professor Engelberg Thaler of Augsburg University argues that the UN Sustainable Development Goals should form part of our language teaching classes and shows how it can be done. Tatjana Kovac in Belgrade argues the importance of teaching pragmatics, what native speakers actually say, in addition to grammar and vocabulary and conducts a fascinating survey comparing Serbian learners of English attitudes to pragmatics and their familiarity with it at different CEFR levels.

ICC-Languages signature language training course, EUROLTA, has undergone the rigours of going online in 2020 and features the experiences of trainees in Germany and Greece to the new style of delivery in **The Euroлта Experience**. Also in **Teachers Tips** on online teaching Vicki Sarantidou and Luke Prodromou show how to teach a beautiful poem by Greek poet Constantine Cavafy online, with Ken Wilson offering ten key quotations for teachers to help reflection on good practice.

The **ICC-Languages Annual conference** went online for the first time this year and the keynote speakers have summarised their talks in ICC Conference Presentations together with two more brilliant online **Webinars** by Elizabeth Mickiewicz and Geoff Tranter. You can access the recordings at [ICC-Languages.eu](https://www.icc-languages.eu) and click on Webinars and Conferences.

Enjoy the read and we wish you all a Happy Christmas and a very Happy New Year. Keep safe and stay well and join us for our next issue in April 2021.

KEYNOTE ARTICLE 1

SUSTAINABLE LANGUAGE TEACHING

*Before I sink into the big sleep
I want to hear the scream of the butterfly*
(Jim Morrison, The Doors)

Professor Engelbert Thaler PhD

Engelbert Thaler is Chair of Didactics in English language, literature and culture at the University of Augsburg and the founder of Balanced Teaching. He has published over 500 papers on the methodology of English language teaching and is the author of 'Challenges: Global Learning in a Globalised World' and 'Balanced Teaching in Practice'. His research interests lie in audiovisual media, didactics literary didactics, cultural awareness and teacher training. In this important paper he addresses how the UN sustainable development goals can be incorporated into language teaching and contribute to the enrichment of teacher and student experience.

ABSTRACT

The term "sustainability" has had a stellar career. After first appearing in scientific discourse and later advancing to the political context, it has become a buzzword in individual life design. And even bank managers now conjure up "sustainable profits". Can it also play a role in the discourse on the quality of foreign language teaching? This article attempts not only to present the relevant content and materials, but also to address sustainable structures, methods and relationships.

KEY WORDS: sustainability, 3-pillar model, structures, classroom ecology, relationships.

1. TERMINOLOGY

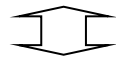
The uncertainty resulting from the inflationary use of the term in various areas can best be reduced by a brief reflection on its historical roots. In 1713, Hans Carl von Carlowitz, in his "Sylvicultura oeconomica" ("Instruction for wild tree

cultivation"), established the imperative in German forestry: "Do not cut more wood than will grow back". In view of the growing demand for wood in Saxony's mining industry (silver mines), he demanded "that wood be handled with care" (cf. Grober, 2013b). The term "careful" can be seen as a precursor of the term "sustainable" – with the original text of sustainability which requires that man should cultivate and preserve the earth being already formulated in the Bible (Genesis 2, 15).

Furthermore in religious–philosophical texts of Western thinking, the concept of sustainability is already laid out. Spinoza, for example, demands "Suum esse conservare" (preserve one's own being), and Saint Francis of Assisi praises the grandiosity of creation in his "Canticle of the Sun" ("Laudes creaturarum").

Albert Schweitzer:

Man has lost the ability to foresee and provide. In the end he will destroy the earth.



Prince Charles:

Deep within our human spirit, there is an innate ability to live sustainably with nature

(Grover, 2013a, 25).

Scientific milestones of the last century are the "Limits of Growth" of the Club of Rome (1972) and the Brundtland Report (e.g. Hauff, 2018). In 1987, the Brundtland Report called for a "permanent state of equilibrium" and defined sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (<https://academicimpact>). Markus Vogt (2013) formulates important ethical guiding concepts in the Anthropocene:

- responsible planetary stewardship,
- resilience in the face of the "debris of modernity" (Bruno Latour),
- ability to take risks due to "systematic ignorance",
- Green Development Rights.

Sustainability thus generally means preserving something for future generations. The Sustainability Council of the German Federal Government, for example, defines it this way:

"Sustainable development means considering environmental aspects equally with social and economic aspects ... We must leave our children and grandchildren an intact ecological, social and economic structure" (German Council for Sustainable Development).

In this context, the 17 goals for a sustainable future (Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs) of the UN are of outstanding relevance – also popularised as "The Glorious 17" (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The Glorious 17 (<https://link.springer.com>)

By now, various definitions and models of sustainability exist, including the cradle-to-cradle vision, integrative sustainability model, triple bottom line, triple top line. The most popular is the three-pillar model, which closely follows the official definition of sustainability (see Figure 2).

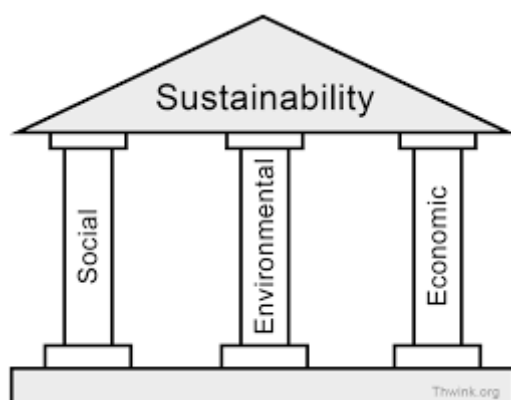


Figure 2: 3-pillar model of sustainability (www.blog.industrialecology.uni-freiburg)

2. THE 3-PILLAR MODEL OF SUSTAINABILITY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING?

With a little goodwill, this generally accepted three-pillar model can also be applied to foreign language teaching. Here, "economy" stands for effective teaching that promotes learning success (cf. *Wirksamkeit* in Prusse & Prusse, 2018), with the German term *Wirksamkeit* having two English equivalents of Latin origin (Thaler, 2019, p. 4):

effectiveness:

ratio of achieved goal to defined goal, result : goal

efficiency:

relationship between achieved result and resources used, result : expenditure

effectiveness = doing the right things, efficiency = doing things right

► foreign language teaching: doing the right things right

With regard to effective (and efficient) teaching, Klippel refers to the McKinsey Report (Barber & Mourshed, 2007) and points to "three factors for success that exist in the countries that scored best in PISA: first, the right choice of those who take up a teaching position and, second, their excellent training for effective teaching. Third, the structural conditions of the respective school system are important in that the system must guarantee good teaching for all children" (2007, p. 10).

The well-known Hattie study (2008) assigns the teacher factor the greatest effect on teaching success – "and thus confirms what we have always suspected from our own school and life experience" (Klippel, Ib.).

The teacher personality also plays an outstanding role in the third pillar, i.e. relationships, which comprises the complex interaction processes in teaching. In the middle pillar, classroom ecology, the contents (input), methods and competences (output) can be subsumed (cf. also the three curriculum designs in Richards, 2013).

Thus, one could construct a 3-pillar model of sustainable foreign language teaching, with the transitions between the three pillars and their components being fluid, of course (Figure 3).

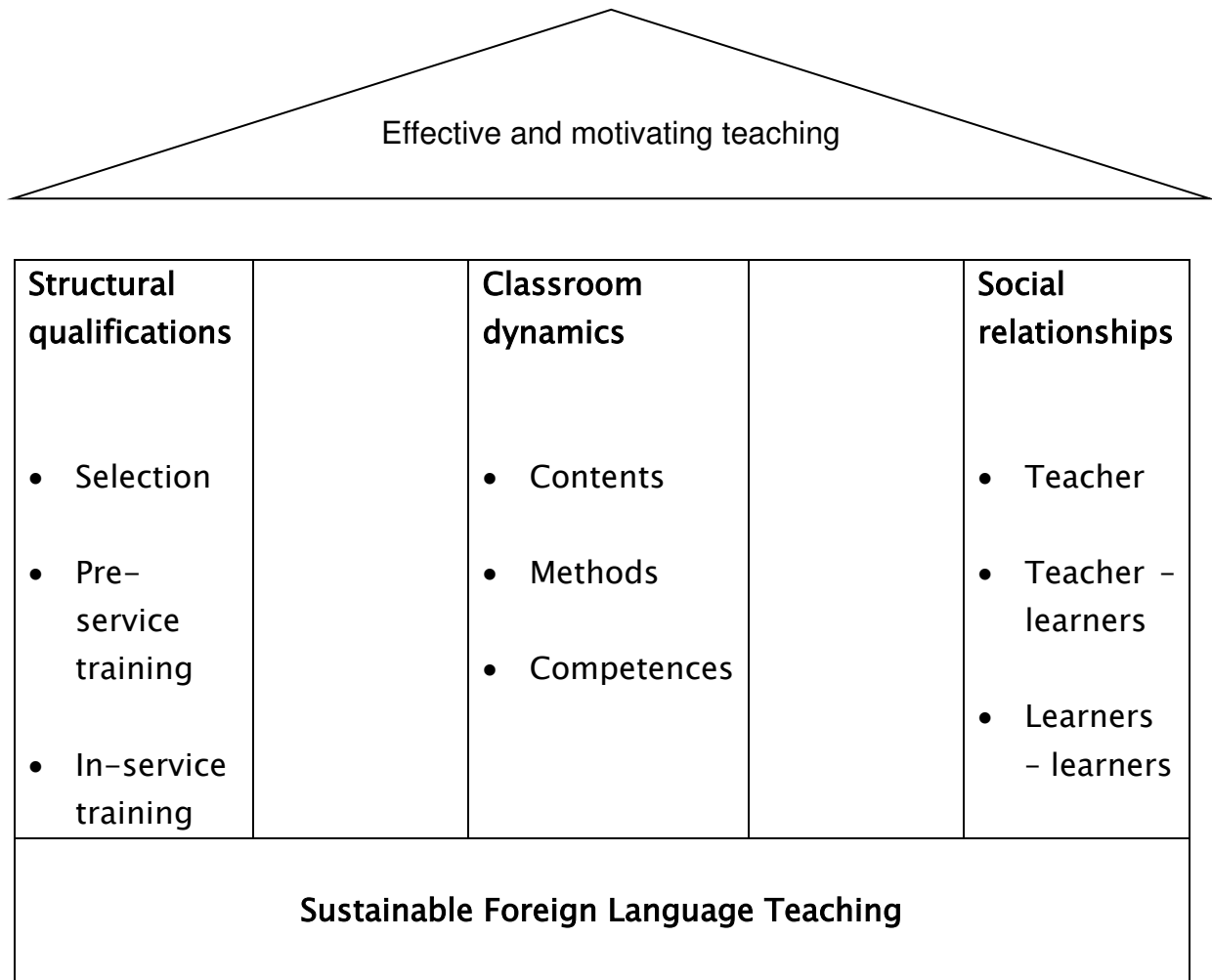


Figure 3: 3-pillar model of sustainable foreign language teaching

3. STRUCTURES

A (selective) look at the three phases of teacher training in Germany, for example, shows the following desiderata.

3.1. Selection

- **Aptitude test:** In contrast to countries like Finland, many German universities do not have a (strict) aptitude assessment procedure for future foreign language teachers. Instead of considering the teaching profession as a vocation, some students just see it as a makeshift solution (job mentality).
- **Studying without *Abitur* (A-levels):** With about 60,000 people in 2017, the number of people studying at a German university without *Abitur* has quadrupled in the past ten years (CHE, 2019).

- Lateral entrants: 8.4% of teaching staff requirements are now covered by lateral entrants. It is clear, however, that "the performance of learners in English taught by teachers from other subjects is lower" than in classes with teachers with basic training (Kirchhoff et al., 2018, p. 5).



Fig. 4: The bad English teacher (pinterest.com)

3.2. Pre-service training

Of course, there is a need for optimising teacher training at university as well. Among other things, a compulsory stay abroad of longer duration would be important to improve (oral) language competence, promote intercultural communication skills, and develop personality. Unfortunately, in addition to legal barriers, personal obstacles often stand in the way of this necessity, so that quite often the foreign language is not developed in the target country.

3.3. In-service development

In the 3rd phase of teacher training (after university and traineeship), the structural foundations for effective teaching must be improved as well. A look at the 4 *Au's* of teacher satisfaction (improving, feeling at ease, refreshing, taking a language bath) (Figure 5) may help to prevent too many *Aua* (Ouch) experiences – because a satisfied (not self-satisfied) teacher is a better teacher.

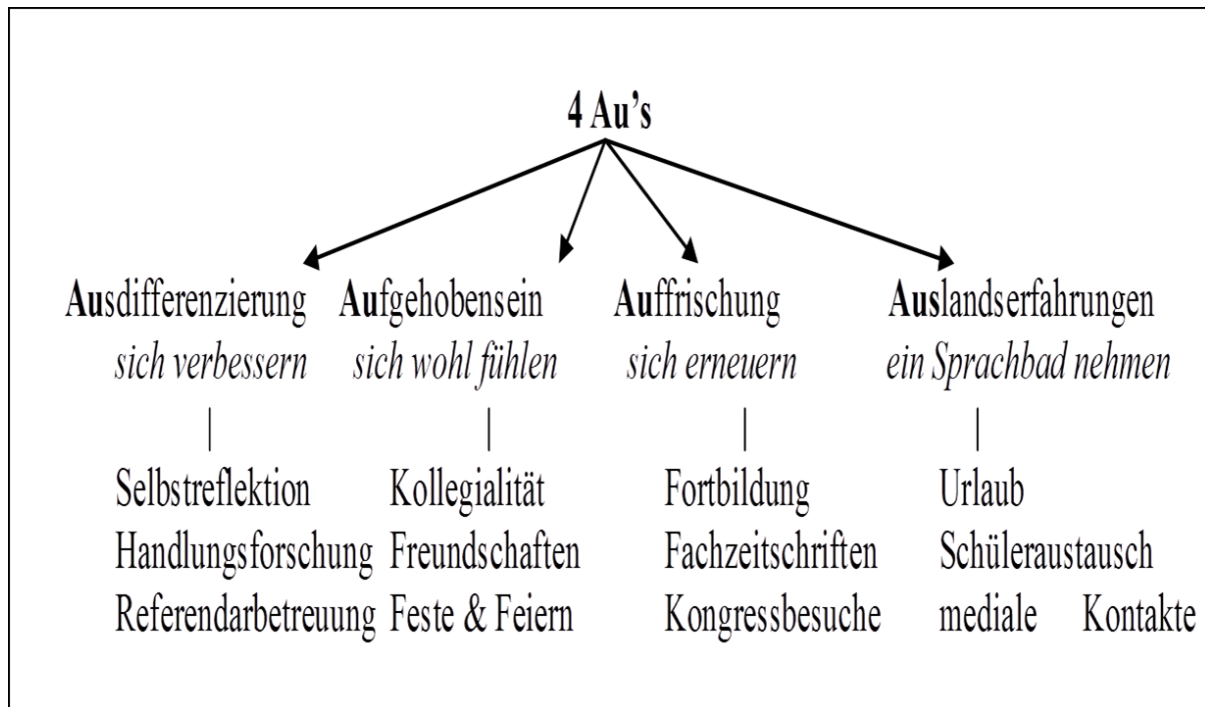


Figure 5: The 4 Au's of teacher satisfaction (Thaler, 2012, p. 47)

4. CONTENT

In the national educational standards (2003 and 2012 respectively) for Germany, for example, the term "sustainability" is not explicitly mentioned. The Conference of the Ministers of Education made up for this with the "Orientation Framework for the Learning Area of Global Development" as a contribution to the world action programme "Education for Sustainable Development" (KMK/BMZ, 2016). Approximately 20 pages of this document (from point 4.2.2.) are devoted to the new foreign languages (English, French, Spanish):

- Contribution of the new foreign languages to the learning area of global development
- Sub-competencies related to the subject
- Global development issues in foreign language teaching
- Competence-oriented teaching example: Adivasi Tea Project
- Performance monitoring and learning development interviews
- Literature and material sources

The dictum "unus mundus" (Marc Aurel, 'one world') is now also followed by the curricula of the individual states, which, in the context of globalisation/global learning, also deal with sustainability, e.g. "consumer and media behaviour of young people, also with regard to sustainability" (Bavarian Curriculum Plus for 9th year English grammar school: ISB). Global Education

is also discussed in professional journals (e.g. PFU 5/2012), TEFL anthologies (e.g. Lütge, 2017), master's theses and teaching models of various textbook publishers.

For example, the series "Challenges. Global Learning in a Globalised World" (Thaler, 2005ff.) comprises 16 issues, including

- Global Warming – Earth's Climate at the Tipping Point? (Einhoff, 2007)

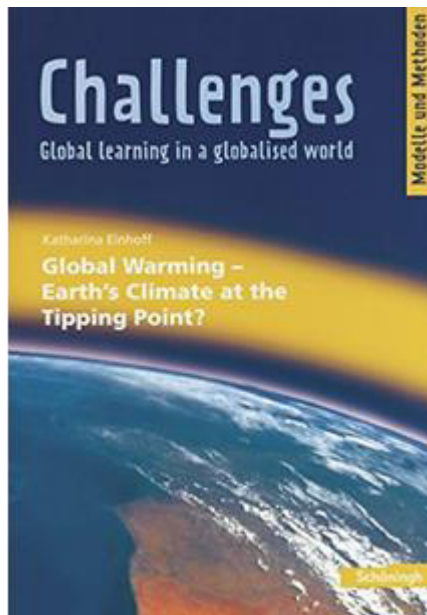


Figure 6: *Challenges*, example

- Them and Us – On the Way to One World? (Kollmeyer, 2007)
- The West Against the Rest? Beliefs and Values in Western Societies (Panne, 2011)
- Science (Fiction) in the Third Millennium (Pottbäcker, 2006)
- Global Economy – Hype, Hazard or Hope? (Edelbrock/Schmidt-Grob, 2008)

Global Economy (2008):

Aspect 1: Trade and economy in history – The cradle of big business

Aspect 2: China – A rising economy on the global market

Aspect 3: Economy and the human being – How economic development threatens or supports people

Aspect 4: Politics and economy – A tightrope walk between economic forces and increasing inequalities

Aspect 5: Starbucks – The impact of a global coffee company

Figure 7: Contents of a *Challenges* booklet

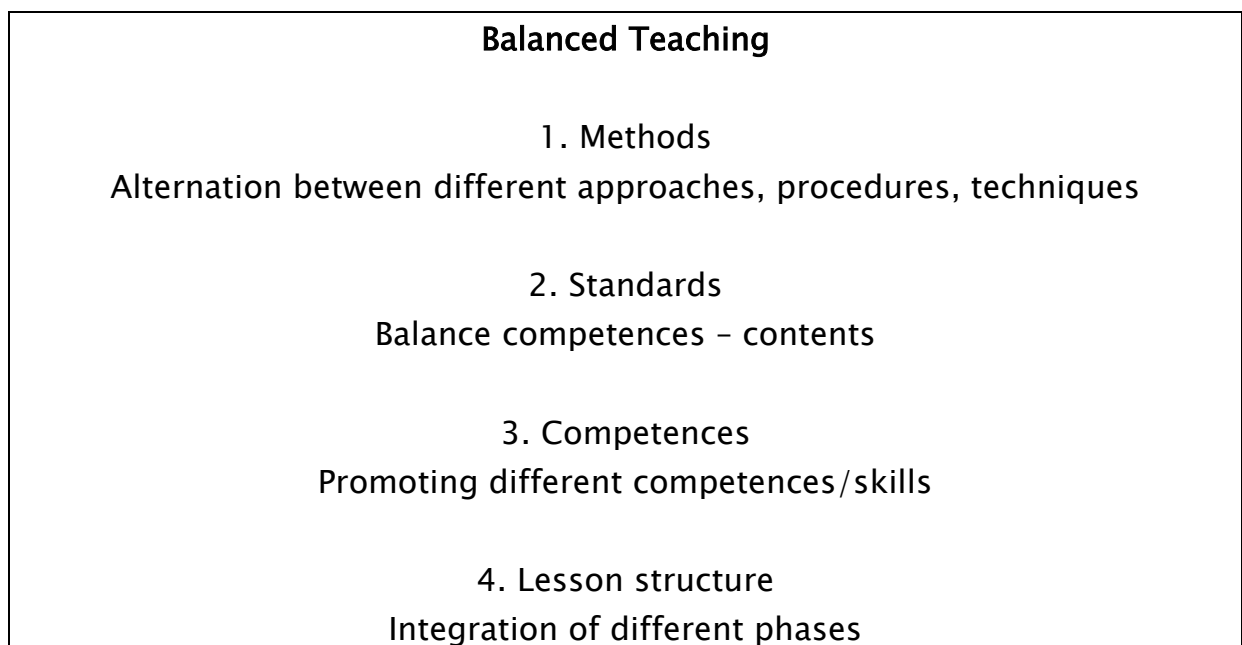
5. METHODS

Even if some apologists of the post-method era proclaim the end of the method discourse, sensibly arranged learning scenarios still play a decisive role for sustainable teaching success (post-post-method era?).



Figure 8: Balance between teacher control and learner orientation (pinterest.at)

The importance of balance and common sense, the knowledge of the pendulum swings of science, the rejection of bandwagon hopping, and the recognition of the individuality of the teacher's personality are, for example, reflected in the concept of Balanced Teaching (Thaler, 2011, 2012) (Figure 9).



5. Topics

Selection by curricula and students, linguistic and non-linguistic content

6. Interaction patterns

Whole-class teaching and individual work, pair work, group work

7. Speed

Fast and slow phases

8. Activation

Exciting and calming activities (stir – settle)

9. Mode of working

In oral and written form

10. Degree of difficulty

Easy, medium, difficult activities

11. Activities

Tasks and exercises (and tests)

12. Focus

Fluency and accuracy (and complexity, appropriacy)

13. Mood

Serious and cheerful phases

14. Teacher's role

Guide on the side and sage on the stage

15. Student's role

Knowledge, skills, action

16. Gender

Female and male needs/interests

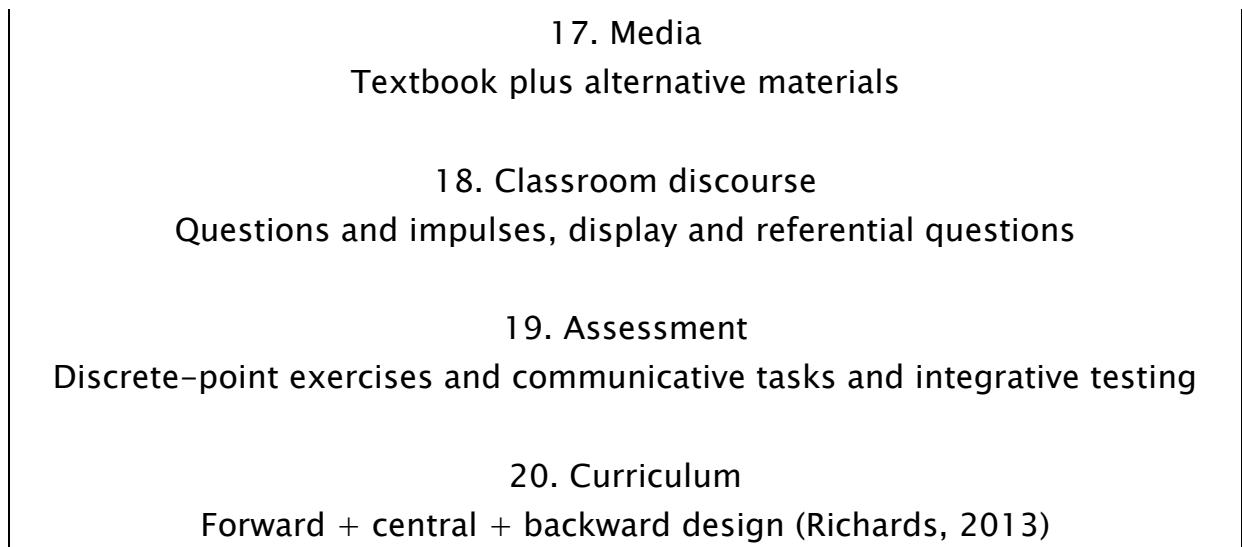


Figure 9: Balanced Teaching (in the broadest sense)

No. 20 makes it clear that there are two other basic options for the conception of a curriculum in addition to backward design (output). In our COS era, the age of the competence-obsession-syndrome, some narrowing down to the output-orientation has set in (e.g. Council of Europe 2001), but we should not forget the contents (forward design) and processes/relationships (central design) besides the competences.

6. RELATIONSHIPS

The social pillar of the 3-pillar model focuses on the teacher personality and relationships – between teacher and students as well as among the learners themselves. A few relevant insights are listed below:

- The famous core characteristics of a good teacher, according to Carl Rogers, are empathy, authenticity, respect: "Teachers need an EAR".
- The 3 F's (*fördern, fordern, führen*) stand for promote, demand – and also lead.
- The occupational physiologist Müller-Limmroth satirically emphasises the role expectation overload in his famous quote:

<p>"Probably there are not many professions for which society makes such contradictory demands ... in a word: the teacher has the task of leading a hiking group of top athletes and disabled people through impassable terrain,</p>
--

in fog, in a north–south direction, so that everyone arrives in the best of moods and, if possible, at three different destinations at the same time" (Müller–Limmroth, 1988)

... or more succinctly:

Be a teacher,
Be a hero!

Among the empirical studies on what makes a good foreign language teacher, the Moskowitz study of "outstanding language teachers" still stands out (Figure 10, cf. Thaler, 2012):

<p>The outstanding foreign language teacher ...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. has thorough knowledge of subject matter 2. is very well prepared 3. is fluent in the use of the foreign language 4. enjoys teaching 5. is willing and able to answer students' questions 6. is fair 7. organises the lessons well 8. has good classroom control 9. conveys self-confidence 10. is dedicated and hard-working

Figure 10: Top ten characteristics of outstanding foreign language teachers

And the omnipresent Hattie study makes an apodictic observation (2009):

The teacher matters!

The teacher as "director" places great value on cognitive activation, clear structure and individualised feedback to the students.

7. CONCLUSION

In the legendary epic rock song *When the Music's over* (1967), Jim Morrison, lead singer of the Doors, begs: "I want to hear the scream of the butterfly", to

lament a few lines later: "What have they done to the earth? What have they done to our fair sister?"

"Our fair sister" must be preserved, and "sustainability" may be the key to her and our survival. It would be desirable, however, if first the once noble word coined by Carlowitz and mentioned at the beginning of this paper, did not degenerate into fraudulent labelling employed by political spin doctors and advertising yuppies; secondly, if bureaucratic reform mania in education did not lead to teachers being forced to learn sustainability content by top-down regulation – *par ordre du mufti*; and thirdly, if the comprehensive concept of sustainability in foreign language teaching was not reduced to topics and content only.

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KEYNOTE ARTICLE 2

AWARENESS OF PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE AMONG LEARNERS OF ENGLISH IN SERBIA

Tatjana Kovac

Tatjana Kovac is a Director of Studies at "St Nicolas School", based in Belgrade, Serbia. She has been involved in ELT for over 20 years as a teacher, trainer, recruiter and examiner. She holds a BA in English language and literature and an MA in Applied Linguistics. She has given a number of teacher training workshops and presented at conferences. Her recent article was about teachers' anxiety and unmet expectations of students in ESP courses. Her main areas of interest are humanistic approach in teaching and intercultural pragmatics.

Abstract:

This paper explores the importance of teaching pragmatics in language classes in addition to more traditional approaches of grammar and vocabulary teaching. After analysing the key concepts she gives examples of typical pragmatic utterances in English of complaints, disagreements, compliments and apologies and compares them with Serbian. The paper concludes with a survey of students at different levels of CEFR and their familiarity with English pragmatics.

KEYWORDS: *speech acts, pragmatics, cultural norms, complaints, disagreements, compliments, apologies.*

1. Introduction:

Learning a language involves much more than mastering a set of grammatical rules and memorising lexical items. Language learning often means gaining membership of a cultural group. This process requires sustained interaction and “negotiation” with other members with regard to the ways in which shared experiences are conceptualised and the ways in which the language is used.

We use language to perform certain actions. Therefore, recognising what actions people perform by what they are saying is a key component of successful language use.

Human language is a system through which we express the way we understand different experiences. This understanding relates to beliefs, norms, customs, traditions, values and it is often subject to the outside world.

Language is deeply embedded in the culture of a nation. Language research requires a parallel ethnographic research and culture must be taken into account. In language classes, it is sometimes necessary to explain cultural concepts which are traditionally linked to different features of that language. (Palmer & Sharifian, 2007, p. 3).

Foreign language classes should prepare students to communicate successfully beyond their cultural boundaries. Some studies have shown that culturally based differences in what is expected during the communication can be a major cause of intercultural difficulties (Rose & Kasper, 2001, p. 125).

In addition to social and cultural knowledge about the speech community, it is important to know the language forms used in a number of sometimes delicate intercultural situations, depending on who is talking to whom, the relative positions of the interlocutors' authority and the context of communication.

2. Theoretical considerations

2.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is defined as "the study of people's comprehension and the production of linguistic action in context". (Kasper and Blum Kulka 1993:3). Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication (Crystal, 1985: 240).

Pragmatic knowledge enables us to create or interpret discourse by relating utterances or sentences and texts to their meaning, to the intentions of language users and to relevant characteristics of the language use setting (Bachman and Palmer, 1996:69).

Andrew Cohen states that whether the reception or production is pragmatically successful in the given L2 depends on various factors, such as: our proficiency in that L2 and possibly in other (especially related) languages, our age, gender, occupation, social status, and experience in the relevant L2 speaking communities as well as our multilingual/multicultural experiences in general (Cohen, 2010, p.3). He adds that pragmatic norms refer to a range of tendencies or conventions for pragmatic language use that are not absolute or fixed but are typical or generally preferred in the L2 community (Cohen, 2010, p. 13).

Causes of learners' divergence from native-like pragmatic language use are various. Most commonly, the divergence is the result of insufficient pragmatic ability. Sometimes learners may simply not know what is typically said on certain occasions and as a result, produce divergent language forms. Or, because their pragmatic awareness has gaps, they decide to take a guess according to what they think most speakers would say, which turns out to be not quite typical in that particular context. On other occasions, they may rely on the sociocultural norms and language behaviour associated with another community which they are more familiar with. (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010, p. 77).

It may also happen that learners memorise foreign words and phrases but then they realise that they do not know when and how to use them efficiently.

Learners' pragmatic divergence can sometimes be caused by their sense of resistance as they refuse to learn certain language forms that conflict with their own subjective position or they wish to accentuate their linguistic differences.

The way learners understand the importance of intercultural pragmatics also depends on where they learn the L2. Learners who learn the language while

living in the target culture tend to regard pragmatics as important, showing greater sensitivity to pragmatic errors than to grammatical errors. On the contrary, learners who learn the language in a classroom outside the target culture appear to be less sensitive to appropriateness and place more importance on grammatical accuracy instead (Hassall, 2008, p. 74).

3. Pragmatics in language teaching

Traditional FL teaching is not very rich in pragmatic input or practice. FL learners in traditional classroom settings tend to mainly perform language tasks where propositional meanings must be expressed clearly and accurately but interpersonal meanings matter little.

Finally, high level learners think about pragmatics more often. Low-level learners are more preoccupied with learning grammar and linguistic rules.

3.1 Politeness

Politeness is a pre-condition of interpersonal cooperation. The phenomenon of politeness is reflected in the language, too. Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson say there are three main strategies of politeness: “positive politeness” (the expression of solidarity), “negative politeness” (the expression of restraint), and “off-record politeness” (the avoidance of unequivocal impositions). The uses of each are tied to social determinants, specifically the relationship between speaker and addressee and the potential offensiveness of the message content (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 2).

It is important to mention the cultural notion of ‘face’, which consists of two specific kinds of desires: the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions (avoiding loss of face), and the desire to be approved of (saving or giving face).

According to George Yule, ‘face’ means the public self-image of a person. It refers to that emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognise. Politeness, in an interaction, can then be defined as the means employed to show awareness of another person's ‘face’ (Yule, 1996, p. 60).

One way of knowing a person's has suffered loss of face is by their emotional reactions. Threats involving loss of face usually produce feelings of embarrassment, shame, humiliation, agitation, confusion or defensiveness. (Redmond, 2015, p. 8).

3.2 Speech acts

Actions performed via utterances are generally called speech acts and, in English, they are commonly given more specific labels, such as apology, complaint, compliment or request. The speaker normally expects that their communicative intention will be recognised by the hearer. Recognising the specific speech act that the speaker performs with what is uttered is the main characteristic of pragmatic competence. People who are learning a foreign language cannot automatically understand the activation of a speech act. Both the speaker and the hearer are usually helped in this process by the circumstances surrounding the utterance. These circumstances are called the 'speech event' (Yule, 1996, p. 47).

Speech acts that primarily threaten the listener with loss of face, indicating that the speaker does not intend to avoid impeding the listener's freedom to do what he/she wants can include:

- orders and requests
- suggestions, advice
- reminding
- threats, warnings, challenges
- offers
- promises
- compliments
- expressing strong emotions

Those acts that threaten the listener's face by indicating that the speaker does not care about the his/her feelings, wishes, etc. can include:

- expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule, complaints and reprimands, accusations or insults
- contradictions or disagreements

- expressions of violent emotions
- irreverence or mentioning of taboo topics
- giving bad news
- blatant non-cooperation in an activity

The speaker may suffer loss of face by the following acts:

- expressing thanks
- excuses
- acceptance of offers
- unwilling promises

The following speech acts may also cause the speaker loss of face:

- apologies
- acceptance of a compliment
- breakdown of physical control over the body
- self-humiliation
- confessions or admissions of guilt
- emotional leakage, uncontrolled laughter or crying

4. Speech acts

For the purpose of this research, focus has been placed on four speech acts: two which may cause the listener loss of face – complaints and disagreement, and two which may give face to or save the face of the speaker – apologies and compliments.

4.1 Complaints and disagreement

In using speech acts of complaints and disagreement, it is common to start by explaining the problem calmly. In English language pragmatics, the approach should be diplomatic so, for example, instead of saying:

This restaurant is dirty.

The waiters were rude.

we say:

This restaurant is not very clean.

The waiters were not polite.

We are not supposed to use extreme words and therefore in disagreeing with a suggestion, it is not right to say:

That proposal is useless.

but

I find that proposal is not very useful because...

4.1.1 Complaints

When it comes to complaints in English, we should first state a problem, express the feelings related to it and require an action in reference to the problem. Before expressing a complaint, we begin with *I'm sorry* or *Excuse me*. The British tend to avoid direct or aggressive complaints. The manner of speaking is calm, diplomatic and appropriate. For example:

I'm afraid there's a problem.

I don't want to make a scene but this is unacceptable.

I'm sorry to have to say this but...

I'm sorry to bother you but...

I think you might have forgotten to...

Excuse me if I'm out of line but...

There may have been a misunderstanding about...

Don't get me wrong but I think we should...

4.1.2 Disagreement

When using this speech act, we should show that we understand the other person's opinion. It is a good idea to apologise before introducing our disagreement and finally, it helps to pretend to be unsure about our position. What we need to avoid using is harsh *No* or *I don't agree*. Some of the phrases we can use are:

I see what you are saying but I think...

I respect your point but from my perspective...

I take your point but that isn't the way I see it...

True, that is a fair point, but I have to say that I disagree...

I'm sorry but I have to disagree with you on...

I'm not sure I agree with you on...

I'm afraid I disagree...

To argue in favour of your position or opinion effectively, it is best to finish your disagreement by offering an alternative or a suggestion. This is a solution-focused argument and can also soften the disagreement.

Here are some useful expressions to use after expressing your disagreement:

Instead, I think we should...

My suggestion would be to...

An alternative solution might be...

I would recommend that we...

How about we...?

Speakers whose L1 is not English sometimes tend to use phrases which are simplified, too short and may sound too direct or even rude.

4.2 Apologies and giving / receiving compliments

4.2.1 Apologies

An apology should contain the following components:

- Taking on responsibility
- Explanation
- Offer of repair
- Promise of forbearance (Sari, 2016, p. 2)

By including remorse for something done and acknowledgment that we are responsible for hurting someone, we help to rebuild trust and a good relationship with the person we have hurt. By admitting guilt, we restore dignity to the person who was injured and the recovery process begins.

Apologies usually begin with *I'm sorry* or *I apologise*. With these words, we express our sincere regret for the damage done.

The one who apologises should try to correct the situation.

If there's anything I can do to get it right for you, please tell me.

And in the end, there is a promise that it will not happen again. This restores trust and improves the relationship.

4.2.2 Compliments

Compliments are used for a variety of reasons, and one of those which are important for learners of L2 is opening and maintaining conversations with native speakers. Conversely, not knowing the rules for complimenting can sometimes result in awkward or uncomfortable moments for learners.

Neglecting to give a compliment when one is expected can be interpreted as a sign of disapproval (Billmyer, 1990, p. 4, 5).

Three major categories of compliments have been identified:

- appearance or possessions
- abilities or accomplishments
- personality traits (Ishihara, 2010, p. 4):

There is a variety of strategies for responding to compliments:

- showing appreciation
- agreeing
- downgrading
- questioning
- commenting on history
- shifting credit
- returning the compliment (Ishihara, 2010, p. 129)

There are a number of strategies for responding to a compliment:

a) Acceptance

- *Thanks. / Thank you.*
- Comment of acceptance (*Yes, it's my favorite, too.*)
- Raising praise to a higher level (*Really suits me well, doesn't it?*)

b) Mitigation

- Commenting on history. (*I bought it for my trip to Paris.*)
- Transferring credit to someone else. (*My sister gave it to me.*)
- Requesting confirmation or repetition (*Do you really like it?*)
- Returning a compliment (*So is yours.*)
- Reducing value (*It's really quite old.*)

(Billmyer, 1990, p. 8).

c) Rejection

- Expression of disagreement (A: *You look good and healthy!* B: *I feel fat*)

d) No answer

e) Interpreting a compliment as a request

- The one to whom the compliment is intended interprets this as a request (*You want to borrow it?*)

Accepting a compliment is polite but can sometimes mean the end of a conversation (Billmyer, 1990, p. 8).

Refusing a compliment is potentially an act which may cause the listener loss of face (Billmyer, 1990, p. 8).

Redirecting a compliment (commenting on history, shifting credit, mitigating, requesting confirmation, or reducing value) is a favorite way to respond to a compliment among native speakers. This maintains the conversation (Billmyer, 1990, p. 8).

5. Results of the research

The aim of the research was to find out how much students learning English at a language school in Serbia know about its pragmatics. The starting hypothesis was that the majority of students in Serbia paid more attention to grammar whether it was their own choice or they were influenced by their teachers who put great emphasis on grammatical accuracy and disregarded the importance of pragmatics during their classes. The additional hypothesis was that higher-level students were more aware of the importance of using pragmatic conventions in communication with native speakers.

The sample consisted of 85 adult learners of English language. The instruments of the research included a questionnaire and an interview. Besides this quantitative part of the research, the conclusions were based on the qualitative analysis done after observing a large number of classes. The statistics are shown in percentages.

Distribution of respondents according to levels of proficiency in English (CEFR):

A2: 11 students

A2/B1: 18 students

B1: 23 students

B2: 19 students

C1: 14 students

Slightly less than half of the students surveyed had been learning English for more than three years – 47%. Between one and three years of study was the response given by 39% of the students. And finally, 14% of the respondents had been learning English for less than a year.

The answers to the questions from the survey differed in relation to the level of knowledge of the English language, so the results are shown by levels. Having been asked whether they were familiar with the politeness formulae in English which were the subject of this research, the learners gave the following answers:

5.1 Complaints

A2

None of the participants said that they were not familiar with the ways to express them in English. At this level, 55% answered that they were familiar, and 45% circled the answer "partially familiar".

A2/B1

In this group, 56% of the participants surveyed were familiar with the formulae of politeness in complaints; 33% of them were partially acquainted; 11% of the students answered that they were not familiar with polite phrases for expressing complaints in English.

B1

Of the total number of the participants surveyed, 78% chose the answer "fully familiar", 22% answered "partially" and no one circled the answer "not familiar".

B2

The vast majority of the participants, 95%, stated that they were familiar with the expressions used by English speakers in their complaints and 5% of them answered "partially familiar".

C1

All the participants (100%) said that they were familiar with the formulae for making complaints in English.

5.2 Disagreement

A2

The majority of the participants circled the answer "not familiar" – 72%. The remaining 28% chose the answer "partially familiar". No one said they were fully acquainted with the way to express disagreement in English.

A2/B1

At this level, 61% of the participants stated that they were familiar with using this speech act, and 39% believed that they were partially acquainted.

B1

The answer “fully familiar” was the answer circled by 67% of the respondents in this group. The rest of them, 33% of the students, thought they were partially familiar.

B2

Of the total number of the participants surveyed, 89% said they were fully acquainted with formulas for expressing disagreements in English, and 11% of them chose the option “partially acquainted”.

C1

All of the students surveyed (100%) circled the answer “fully acquainted”.

5.3 Apologising

A2

The participants mostly chose the answer “acquainted” – 82%. “Partially familiar” was the option circled by 18% of the students surveyed.

A2/B1

The majority of the participants (78%) chose the answer “fully familiar”, whereas 22% of the respondents in this survey thought they were partially familiar with the ways of using this speech act.

B1

The students surveyed mostly thought (83%) that they were familiar with polite formulae of apologies in English. Others (17%) claimed to be partially familiar.

B2

At this level, 63% of the participants believed that they were fully acquainted with the speech act of apologising in English, and 37% opted for the answer “partially familiar”.

C1

To this question, 7% of the students gave the answer “partially acquainted”, and all the others, 93%, chose “fully acquainted”.

5.4 Giving and receiving compliments

A2

In this group, 36% of the respondents answered with “fully acquainted”, 18% chose the answer “partially familiar”, and 46% of them said that they were not familiar with the formulae of politeness in giving and receiving compliments in English.

A2/B1

At this level, 50% of the students decided to answer "completely familiar", 44% circled "partially familiar" and 6% of the participants believed that they were not familiar with the ways to give and receive compliments politely in English.

B1

The majority of the students at this level were familiar with this speech act in English language. The remaining 17% circled the answer "partially familiar".

B2

When it comes to familiarity with English polite phrases for giving and receiving compliments, the majority of participants (89%) chose the answer "totally familiar". The rest, 11%, were partially familiar with them.

C1

As in the previous question, 7% of the students at this level chose the answer "partially familiar", and 93% said they were fully familiar with the phrases for giving and receiving compliments in English.

When asked whether they had had an opportunity to practise the above-mentioned speech acts during the course they were currently attending or within some previous courses, they answered as follows:

A2

Of the students surveyed at this level 55% answered "no", whereas 45% of them answered "partially". They mentioned complaints as situations which were sometimes practised in class.

A2/B1

Half of the respondents (50%) said that they had partially practised the analysed speech acts, 25% circled the answer "yes, we practised them" and the same number (25%) answered "no, we didn't practise them". Most of them wrote that they had practised making complaints.

B1

52% of the students who participated in the research said that they had practised the speech acts mentioned. 28% of them answered "no", and the remaining 20% claimed they had partially practised them. Judging by the answers at this level, the most commonly practised situations were related to making apologies.

B2

The respondents at this level of knowledge answered this question differently. 42% of them said that they had practised the situations mentioned, 32% circled the answer "no", and 26% of them said "partially". As an example of the situations they had practised, they mentioned complaining at restaurants and hotels.

C1

Here, 72% of the students surveyed answered "yes", whereas 28% of them circled the answer "partially". They stated that they had practised complaints at hotels, expressing disagreement, apologising and giving or receiving compliments.

5.5 Similarities and differences between English and Serbian

The next question referred to the similarities and differences that the students noticed in the use of the mentioned speech acts in English and Serbian. Some respondents were unable to describe the differences, and those who responded stated the following differences:

- "The English are more cautious in their complaints" (A2)
- "In complaints, the degree of politeness is similar in both languages." (C1)
- "Although we have many ways to express them, we are not very polite in our complaints, unlike the English who are." (C1)
- "A complaint sounds more polite in English." (C1)
- "Complaints in Serbian often sound less polite because they are more direct." (B2)
- "Apologies sound more sincere in Serbian, English sounds insincere and certain phrases are used too often." (C1)
- "In my opinion, there is a greater degree of politeness in apologies in Serbian and sincerity is felt more." (C1)
- "In Serbian, phrases for polite apologies are used in formal speech, whereas in English they are more common in everyday speech." (C1)
- "Apologising is more polite in English" (C1)
- "The English apologise too much." (B1)
- "When apologising and receiving compliments, the English always use the same boring phrases." (B1)
- "Giving and receiving compliments is identical in both languages, and we respond to compliments in both languages simply with "thank you"." (C1)

- "Compliments in both languages can be given and received in many ways."
(C1)
- "Compliments are given and received in the same way in both languages."
(B2)
- "I did not notice any differences in compliments between the two languages." (C1)
- "I don't think there are any differences in using compliments between English and Serbian speakers." (C1)
- "I know more ways to express disagreement in English than in Serbian."
(C1)
- "In English, each disagreement begins with an apology." (C1)
- "Serbian is richer with phrases to express disagreement than English." (B2)
- "Polite statements are longer in English." (C1)
- "The English are more polite." (A2)
- "Common polite phrases are more often used in English." (A2 / B1)
- "English is more formal." (B1)
- "In the UK, they adhere more to their tradition and the use of common polite phrases." (B2)

5.6 Grammar or pragmatics?

At the end, the participants were asked the following question: "What is more important to you in communicating with a native speaker – the grammatical accuracy of sentences spoken or the use of appropriate polite phrases characteristic of native speakers?"

A2

Of the students surveyed at this level generally (73%) thought that grammar was more important to them than the use of polite phrases.

A2/B1

Grammatical accuracy was more important for 78% of the respondents who were at this level of knowledge.

B1

The majority of the respondents (83%) said that grammar rules were more important to them.

B2

Slightly more than a half of the participants (53%) answered that the use of appropriate characteristic polite phrases was of more importance to them.

C1

The majority of the students (72%) answered that grammatical accuracy was more important to them.

6. Conclusion

Based on the survey conducted and the interviews with the students, it can be concluded that the familiarity with the formulas of politeness in the speech acts analysed grows with the increase of the level of knowledge of the English language. Some exceptions may occur, as in the case when 11% of the students at the A2 / B1 level answered that they were not familiar with the formulas for making complaints, and the students at the lower level of knowledge (A2) stated that they were all completely or partially acquainted. This could be attributed to the fact that students only later in the process of learning a foreign language become aware of the complexity of the language and the multitude of ways to express something.

The research showed that out of all four speech acts which were analysed, the students had mostly practised making complaints (situations in restaurants and hotels) and apologies. Only the students at C1 level said that they had practised all of the speech acts mentioned.

When asked about the similarities and differences in the pragmatics of English and Serbian, specifically in the four speech acts, most of the students were not able to define them, or answer that question, which indicates that either they did not think much about how to use English speech acts appropriately or their teachers did not focus on explaining similarities and differences. It is also noticeable that students with a more advanced level of knowledge are more aware of intercultural pragmatics than those at a lower level. The students who commented on this topic mostly concluded that in English the phrases were more polite and the language was more formal. Some questioned the sincerity of native English speakers in apologising, which shows a subjective cultural attitude, and perhaps resistance to foreign pragmatics. They noticed the least differences in giving compliments and responding to them.

After talking to the students and observing some classes, it can be concluded that, due to the transfer from the mother tongue and the politeness norms to which they are accustomed, students of English as a

foreign language in Serbia are more direct in using the speech acts of complaints and disagreements, they are more concise in using apologies and in the speech act of giving and receiving compliments they use politeness strategies similar to English speakers.

Finally, when asked to rate what was more important to them: grammatical accuracy or knowledge of pragmatics, at all levels the answer was the same – most students considered grammar more important. Although this confirms the author's initial thesis that students in Serbia pay more attention to grammar than pragmatics in learning English, the other part of the assumption that awareness of the importance of pragmatics grows with the level of knowledge is somewhat refuted. This follows from the fact that despite the fact that students at higher levels had better knowledge of the speech acts, approximately the same percentage of the students at levels A2 and C1 pointed out that grammar was more important than pragmatics. The same conclusion can be reached after observing classes where it was noticeable that students often hesitated to speak during the practice of everyday situations because they paid great attention to grammatical structures they were supposed to use and gave less importance to the use of appropriate polite phrases and the use of adequate intonation. This situation is a consequence not only of the students' perception, but also of the teachers' influence as some of them put grammar in the foreground, neglecting the cultural dimension of the spoken words and sentences that should be presented to their students in class.

The research showed that students in Serbia lack opportunities to develop English pragmatic skills in classes. It is necessary to improve the awareness of both teachers and students that it is of great importance to learn the cultural value of mitigating what can actually be interpreted as a confrontational activity. The point is to show that the power of a speech act threatening loss of face can be softened by the use of certain words or phrases. Without understanding the cultural and pragmatic norms of a foreign language, there can be no optimal communicative competence. By looking at the socio-cultural expectations of native speakers, students will be able to function more successfully in the community where that language is used.

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The EUROLTA Experience

Myriam Fischer-Callus and Ifigenia Georgiadou

Myriam is international EUROLTA Co-ordinator. Ifigenia is Director of the Hellenic Centre in Greece. Both are board members of ICC-Languages. EUROLTA (European Certificate in Language Teaching to Adults) is an internationally recognised teacher training programme for people who want to teach languages to adults using up to date methodologies.

As in many countries worldwide, as part of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools went into lockdown and closed in March 2020. EUROLTA teacher trainers were confronted with the need to teach online and faced a huge challenge in moving rapidly from a face to face programme to an online course.

For many of our student language teachers this was their very first opportunity to participate actively in an online course. Unsurprisingly, many of our student teachers felt uncertain, anxious and overwhelmed at the beginning of the course. However, by the end of the programme, they reported that they now had greater confidence in their own abilities to adjust to virtual instruction. They were glad to have learnt new skills, new digital tools and software.

At the same time, our teacher trainers were thankful to be able to work and glad to still communicate with their trainees. They did not have transitional time and had to switch to teaching online with little warning and preparation.

Our experience was that the EUROLTA participants were highly motivated, grateful that they could carry on with their course and excited to take part in what they called a 'new experiment'. As the programme came to an end, the trainee teachers reported that not only did they learn how to teach languages with more confidence but had acquired the necessary technical and pedagogical skills to integrate digital technology in their teaching. We are grateful to our trainees, Paul, Gudrun and Michalis, who have allowed us to pass on their experience.

Paul Hobbs, EUROLTA Trainee, English Language Instructor living in Germany

“Initially I was sceptical as to how, and if, doing the EUROLTA advanced training seminar would help me. I have always been a bit sceptical about programmes that are held outside of a university setting. As someone who has studied Applied Linguistics and Pedagogy in university, I was worried that the training would be nothing but repetition. This was far from the truth. As time goes by, more research is being done in the areas of language learning, language teaching and simply on language learners themselves. This in turn translates into teachers needing to update their knowledge to ensure that they are helping their language learners most effectively. In addition, as a language instructor, I believe that it is important for teachers to return to a classroom setting and to remain learners so they can better identify with students as well as ensure they are able to help students to the best of their abilities. Most importantly, the experience in the EUROLTA programme exceeded my expectations in that we were able to actively use modern technology and techniques, which can be used online as a result of the current demands of language teaching due to the corona crisis. Initially, I was overwhelmed regarding having to suddenly change everything that I was doing and teach online. The EUROLTA seminar gave me the extra boost of confidence, provided me with practical skills, which can easily be applied to the classroom, as well as helping me look at the materials with which I was working in a whole new light. I personally feel that I now have more tools and knowhow for more effective language teaching both online and in person. With the support of the knowledgeable EUROLTA trainers, I feel a new sense confidence entering the classroom. I feel that regardless of the situation I am faced with, I will be better able to help my students achieve their language learning goals.”

Gudrun, trainee teacher in Germany

“Working with EUROLTA in times of the corona pandemic and the lockdown initially presented a great challenge because it made me realise how much an interpersonal, learner-centred work with a highly creative approach is part of the EUROLTA teaching and learning programme. During the lockdown, the question arose as to how far a distance learning course could

meet these important requirements of the EUROLTA philosophy. The resulting cooperation among the trainers who participated in the development of the distance learning course, the belief in a good concept, the innovative and creative ideas that could be realised with the help of different techniques and media programmes, as well as the willingness of the participants to learn and try new things out with some initial scepticism but full of goodwill, all this made the new EUROLTA concept an exceptionally positive and enriching experience for me!"

Michalis Karakonstantis, Youth Leader and Educational Officer at the Greek Council for Refugees <https://www.gcr.gr/en/>

"Having already 15 years of teaching behind me, I divide all these years into two different periods: the pre and post-EUROLTA period. I found myself, in the pre-EUROLTA period, trying to apply all the academic knowledge I acquired during my studies of which I am very proud. Nevertheless, it seems I had no consciousness of myself as an educator in this period. Perhaps, I was imitating the teachers I had in the past, interpreting the educational procedure by measuring my value through the achievements of my students. Did my students succeed in the exams? I completed the task I was assigned to and moved forward to the next one.

By completing tasks one after the other, successfully or not, I found myself in my late thirties at a crossroads wondering how to do something meaningful. Accidentally, I stepped into EUROLTA, through an advertisement on Facebook. Keywords such as 'training of practical skills', 'learner-centred-methodology', or 'portfolio-based assessment' motivated me, to begin with.

The next 8 months, as long as the training lasted, acted as a re-construction period. First of all, I realised, I was not the only person who coped with adversities. I found it extremely helpful, that we kept a diary as a way of self-reflecting on our tasks. A hands-on experience by monitoring other educators and being monitored by a mentor was a unique moment in the EUROLTA training. Looking back, I now comprehend how I found self-orientation by connecting my previous experience with the new one as if

solving a puzzle. EUROLTA has worked as a compass by helping me navigate the stormy waters of teaching.

Today, as an education team leader in an institution which provides Greek language lessons to refugees, I try to pass all the knowledge and experience I gained through EUROLTA to the educators I coordinate. We have created an inner support network through which we are enhancing our confidence and competencies, improving our skills and techniques, and sharing our thoughts on the daily working routine. A byproduct of the abovementioned way of cooperation is the forging of interpersonal relations between the team members.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our everyday life in many ways and, in particular, the education sector. Our student teachers are now entering the teaching profession at a time when teaching is different. No one knows whether we shall ever return to what we think of as normality.

While language teachers have knowledge about how to teach languages most are unfamiliar of how to teach online effectively. ICC has responded to this educational challenge posed by Covid-19 by supporting schools, institutions and student teachers with an online EUROLTA teacher training course.

The pandemic has given us a chance to rethink online education.

For more information please contact Myriam at:

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ICC–LANGUAGES ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORT

What will happen after Covid–19? How will teaching and training change? What are the challenges and opportunities? Is it a time for ‘risky thinking’?

In its first ever online annual conference, ICC–Languages hosted members and friends to discuss Teaching and Training in the Time of Covid–19 and the way forward when the pandemic is finally under control. Excellently organised by the ICC–Languages committee under its chair, Ellinor Haase, ably supported by Ozlem Yuges as ICC–Languages coordinator and Malou Berger, the conference featured presentations by teachers from Belgrade (where the original face–to–face conference was scheduled to be hosted), Naples, the ECML in Graz and London.

Quoting the Italian fashion designer, Giorgio Armani, saying ‘Fashion is ahead of its time’ in her opening keynote, Susanna Slivensky of the ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages) asked why language training should not also be considered also ‘ahead of its time’ and stressed the importance of the ‘human touch’ in successful teaching and teacher education and how Covid–19 had frustrated that purpose while promoting the search for fresh opportunities for communication online. She went on to describe the initiatives taken by the ECML to bring teachers together online to ensure teaching and training was ‘fit for purpose’. Things will change for sure as a result of Covid–19, she said and expressed the need for innovative ways of reaching teachers and achieving the democratisation of teaching and learning. New innovation would demand ‘Risky Thinking’ she concluded.

Following the theme of achieving the human touch in spite of social distancing, Marijana Prodanovic from Belgrade explored humanistic approaches in online language testing. The practice of testing has always been a challenging one within the language teaching–learning process and required delicate attention paid by all the participants. The COVID–19 outbreak, which marked the beginning of the year 2020, has brought about abrupt and major changes on everyday life. Education has experienced them overnight and so intensively that the old habits, approaches and teaching methods, as well as testing practices have to be adapted to a newly created virtual learning environment. A study has been conducted, aiming to

illustrate some prominent perspectives of tertiary level ESP teachers and learners on language testing in online context. It has been concluded that the overall attitude towards the novel, Covid-19 imposed, language teaching-learning environment is rather positive – anyhow, all the parts of such an environment, testing being an important one, are still evolving and need humanistic approaches support along the path.

Barry Tomalin from Glasgow Caledonian University London turned the discussion to focus on intercultural training in the corporate world, stressing the importance of focus on the business requirement to improve performance in international business relations rather than a straightforward description of the cultural characteristics of a new partner or client or team. Expanding on Susanna Slivensky's point about 'risky thinking', he invoked the recent work of Milton Bennett, director of the Portland University Oregon Intercultural Development Research Institute (IDRI), and his concept of COVID-19 allowing entry to a new 'constructivist' paradigm which would allow teachers to connect more equally with students by a thorough process of inclusion as equals in the learning process, being tolerant and practising humility while embracing and respecting students' cultural identity.

Emma Abbate from Naples, a teacher of history and Geography using the CLIL approach, described her use of online tools to make her classes at once more lively and more involving while still being relevant. She uses the EU digital platforms *Europeana* and *Go-Lab* to teach a foreign language together with subject's content specific vocabulary and to promote multilingualism in classroom. *Europeana* is the European digital platform for cultural and scientific heritage. It provides free access to a collection of millions of digitised items – books, music, artworks and more– from around thousands of libraries, museums, archives and galleries across Europe. *Go-Lab* is a platform aimed at free access to online/virtual laboratories and is an integral part of Scientix, the community for STEM teaching in Europe. Both portals are also a great support for teaching online because they provide a lot of material for lesson planning and creating.

In the final presentation, Rob Williams, former chair of ICC-Languages and principal lecturer at the University of Westminster in London, initiated a discussion of how students and teachers could work together on co-creating

assessments and methodology, always taking into account university regulations, thereby empowering and engaging students actively in the assessment process. Rob argued that within the limits of the examination format students could be involved in deciding the examination tasks thereby taking charge of their own learning rather than just practising tasks. As he said, "If students take an active role in how they are evaluated, they become more invested in the content of the course and in being successful on it."

The discussion continued with a panel discussing opportunities for changes in language education following the pandemic and concluded with a 'virtual cocktail' offered by the chair, Ellinor Haase. A good time was had by all.

THE EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MODERN LANGUAGES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE (ECML): PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Susanna Slivensky

Susanna Slivensky is Deputy Director of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML).

Lockdown, contact tracing and self-isolation are words that did not belong to the everyday vocabulary of learners and teachers at the beginning of 2020. By the end of the year 2020 they do. In this context of crisis how is the ECML supporting language teachers and learners? Which ideas are promoted by the ECML in order to prepare for sustainable 21st century learning environments in the post-Corona era?

ECML and innovation

Since it was founded in 1994, the Centre has focused its work on innovation, on promoting innovative, sustainable approaches in language education (Kettemann 2009). Innovation can be described as the capacity to manage change effectively (Heyworth 2003) and in the current health crisis, this capacity is the key to addressing the challenges at hand successfully.

The ECML's 25th anniversary publication "Changing contexts, evolving competences: 25 years of inspiring innovation in language education" (Cavalli et al. 2019) highlights nine thematic areas and related approaches which facilitate effective language teaching and learning: Teacher and learner competences, plurilingual and intercultural education, content and language integrated learning, curricula and evaluation, sign languages, languages of schooling, migrant education and employment, new media in language education and early language learning.

Bringing together expertise in order to bridge the gap between innovation and implementation is one of the objectives of the ECML's Professional Network Forum which unites 16 international professional institutions and associations, all committed to promoting quality in language education. ICC is a long standing and valued member of this group.

Responses to the crisis and evolving themes

The Corona crisis has changed ECML operations temporarily. The focus on face-to-face activities for experts at the Centre in Graz, Austria has shifted to fully online meetings. Initial feedback from project teams and participants indicates that they are satisfied – sometimes to their own surprise – with the project work over the distance. Yet there is a strong desire for a return to face-to-face meetings.

A very positive effect of this expansion of online activities can be observed with regard to the outreach of ECML activities. For example, in 2019 the ECML welcomed 1.693 participants to face-to-face meetings in Graz and in member states. In 2020 a single event set up in response to the crisis, the ECML webinar “Taking your teaching online”¹, brought together 2.800 participants online. In the four months since the webinar took place, 18.000 access views have been registered.

In times of Corona the ECML tries both to respond to current needs and to consider the longer term effects of this unprecedented crisis on language teaching and learning. Developing future plans starts with identifying evolving themes that are now even clearer than before the crisis. The following issues are of particular relevance:

- Empowering language professionals – with a focus on teachers and on innovative ways to reach them.
- Lobbying for a culture of innovation and for cooperative implementation: this means fostering environments where innovative ideas and approaches can be developed in professional communities across educational sectors and across different fields of expertise.
- Taking responsibility for the future: being aware of the role of quality language education for future generations, connecting language learning with sustainable development goals, 21st century skills or the EU’s strategy for a green and digital Europe.

Risky thinking

Taking risks triggers learning. Based on this assumption, a research group at the University of Ottawa developed an interesting linguistic risk-taking

¹ For ECML webinars see: <https://www.ecml.at/Resources/Webinars/tabid/5456/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

initiative². The ECML has adopted the idea in the context of activities for the European Day of Languages (The Secret Agent's Language Challenges App³).

Taking risks, risky thinking and thinking out of the box are vital aspects of language education during and after the crisis. Risky thinking can help cut across languages, cultures and subjects to meet the complex challenges of our future. The ECML will continue to be a partner for professionals who are open to risky thinking and inspiring innovation in language education in the post-Corona era.

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² University of Ottawa, Canadian Centre for Studies and Research on Bilingualism and Language Planning (CCERBAL), <https://ccerbal.uottawa.ca/linguistic-risk/>

³ <https://edl.ecml.at/Activities/Languagechallenge/tabid/3207/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

TESTING THE UNTESTABLE: HUMANISTIC APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE TESTING IN THE MODERN-ERA

Marijana Prodanovic

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Never has the practice of language assessment been an easy one. On the contrary, it has always been a rather complex undertaking, encompassing a number of stages pertinent to planning, development, grading, delivery, monitoring, reporting, etc. Constant changes in the social context one could witness almost on a daily basis, along with intensive intercultural exchanges and influences, have led to numerous novelties in the sphere of education. In order to keep pace with the ongoing trends language assessment is also evolving, attracting much attention, not only on the part of teachers, but also policy-makers in the field of linguistics.

The COVID-19 outbreak, which marked the beginning of the year 2020, caught us all unprepared, bringing about momentous changes in everyday life. The field of education experienced them overnight and all the old habits, approaches and teaching methods had to be adapted to a newly created virtual learning environment.

Different forms of distance education cannot be regarded as a novelty in the area of higher education – they have been offered by many higher-education institutions around the globe for years. Back in April 2020, UNESCO estimated that over a billion and a half students across the world had, up to that moment, experienced changes in their educational pattern. Now that the pandemic of COVID-19 has reached every country in the world, it could be seen that the majority of educational institutions have shifted to the imposed, *new normal* models of teaching and learning, all of which contain the same denominator – online context.

The *new normal* learning environment has given rise to numerous questions all the stakeholders are pondering – and *How to deliver my exams online* appears to be one of them.

In order to shed some more light on EFL teachers' and learners' perspectives on the phenomenon of language testing in a virtual learning environment, a

study, addressing higher-education context, at a university (comprising 6 faculties) in Serbia, has been conducted.

What the participants in the study, EFL (ESP and EAP) teachers and students, faced at the beginning of spring 2020 was a leap into the unknown. It is worth noting that during the winter portion of the academic year, all the respondents were engaged in traditional, face-to-face teaching. At the beginning of the summer term (end of February 2020), they managed to attend traditional, classroom-held lectures for two weeks – when the pandemic outbreak resulted in the closure of educational institutions. Students' and teachers' satisfaction, as well as comparison between two forms of instruction – face-to-face and online was measured via an Opinion Questionnaire (OQ).

The results of the study pointed to the fact that the teachers feel rather confident when conducting lectures in an online environment. However, they state that varying degrees of hardship might be identified when teaching and testing different language skills. In their opinion the most demanding skills to test in a virtual learning environment are speaking, writing and listening, while reading, as well as grammar and vocabulary-related portions are easier to be tested.

The general attitude of the students towards online teaching and learning experience is quite positive, and their answers to all the questions posed unanimously contribute to this sentiment. They agree that online tests could be administered in such a way so as to prevent any academic integrity violations. Despite the fact they dominantly feel used to the new testing mode, what they point to is that the lack of face-to-face interaction is still strongly felt during speaking skills lectures and tests, thus confirming that this mode of teaching and learning is still an evolving process, offering a wide spectrum of possibilities to be exploited.

We are now all witnessing the fact that the wreckage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet left behind – but what could also be seen is that, in this unprecedented moment, educators, students, policy-makers, i.e. all the stakeholders, are joining forces – training their staff, sharing practices, resources, etc., so as to enable continuity of teaching and learning – and this

is when and where humanism, in its inherent sense, embodying its approaches to teaching (and testing) is to play a leading role.

INNOVATION IN BUSINESS CULTURAL TRAINING

Barry Tomalin MA, Glasgow Caledonian University London

1. The business perspective

In many respects there is a disjunct in business management cultural training and what business management trainees actually want.

Ultimately, business management trainees are concerned with how to improve their business performance. In a global business environment language and culture are increasingly recognised as key business skills but need to be presented from a business point of view. As trainers we do pre-work with our management trainees to find out about their management style and what they need to know. As the summary below shows, their aims are frequently couched in business management terms.

- Basics and essentials of how to manage an international team
- How best to determine cultural differences in advance
- How to deal with conflict
- How to deal with an offensive customer
- How to delegate tasks
- How to get a 'no' answer from an Asian colleague or superior
- How to build relationships
- How to have a difference approach on performance review per culture
- How to lead by keeping staff motivated
- How to make people grow. How correct behaviour. Giving feedback
- How to balance control and freedom of action
- How different/similar are other European managers?

We call this procedure 'Need to Know' and use it as an agenda in delivering our courses.

2. Language, culture and business

We have found that certain areas of business procedure directly combine an understanding of language and culture as well as business management procedures. I identify four key areas; Presentations, Meetings, Negotiation and Networking. Once again if we look at the 'Need

to Knows' of business clients we can see an emphasis on improving performance in multinational management environments.

PERFORMANCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to make a successful presentation • Listening habits 	MEETINGS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to run an effective meeting • How to participate effectively in a meeting • How to run and participate in virtual meetings
NEGOTIATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to run a successful negotiation • How to negotiate difficult situations • How to keep the door open after an unsuccessful negotiation 	NETWORKING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to show respect • How to build good relations • How NOT to cause offence

3. What types of training?

Over a number of years we have observed a number of trends in the demand for cultural training. The key training courses remain standard however.

- Market briefings
- Mobility briefings (and repatriation)
- Intercultural awareness (general onboarding)
- Team building
- Diversity management
- Effective communications (communication, presentation, meetings, negotiation, networking)
- Supporting international students/staff

The demand is less about understanding models of cultural training but much more about understanding individual concepts of how cultural influences can affect international business and their application to international markets.

4. New influences on management training

One of the most interesting developments in business management training is the importance of altering attitudes and values within organisations by courses in emotional intelligence (Daniel Goleman) and mindfulness (Jon Kabatt Zinn). Goleman identified the four dimensions of emotional intelligence as self-awareness, self management, empathy and building relationships. Jon Kabatt Zin defined mindfulness as 'a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.' These changes in training in work lifestyle and attitude have potential impact on key issues in business cultural training.

5. Influences on business cultural training.

First is the INCA Project. INCA stands for Intercultural Competence Assessment, an EU sponsored project developed by Professor Michael Byram at Durham University in the UK and released in 2009. It divides intercultural competence into three levels, Basic, Intermediate and Full and gives a description of skills and competences at each level. There is an assessor manual and an assessee version and you can access it at ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/the... . Most importantly, for management training, Byram identifies five qualities of the successful

international manager. They are tolerance of ambiguity, which I interpret as patience when you don't know what's going on, behavioural flexibility, acknowledging that the people on the ground may have the best answer to a problem, communicative awareness, knowledge discovery, showing interest in others' background cultures, respect for otherness (inclusiveness) and empathy (putting yourself in the other's shoes). Explain this to your training group and ask which they consider themselves best at and which most need working on. The results can be really important in changing attitudes and increasing empathy and awareness when dealing with multinational colleagues and clients.

Next is Milton Bennett's DMIS theory of cultural adaptation, entitled the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) originally applied to dealing with culture shock. The DMIS has much wider application, however, in relation to working in multicultural departments and teams and especially when working internationally and virtually with colleagues and clients overseas.

Bennett believes that we are entering a new paradigm shift and that our Multicultural awareness and teaching must reflect this change. The concept of a paradigm shift was first elaborated by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, published in 1962. Kuhn defined a paradigm as, "an epistemological world view that assigns and limits the accessibility of theories, concepts, models and methods of enquiry." Bennett identifies four paradigms of culture and civilisation over the ages. The Traditional paradigm ('gods and monsters'), The Newtonian paradigm (observer independence /Linear causality), The Einstein relativism paradigm (everything is relative/

dependent on context) and, the one he sees us moving into, the Constructivist paradigm (tolerance, empathy, responsibility). Basically, he sees the last hundred years as a discordance between factual analysis (Newton) and narratives based on different points of view (Einstein and context). What he looks forward to, possibly post pandemic, is a constructivist paradigm based on humility, tolerance, respect, awareness of difference and what brings us together and empathy, encouraging mutual understanding.

And finally, how does this relate to intercultural business training? A focus on understanding, empathy, adaptation, commitment and internationality and global citizenship. We have an even more interesting job ahead of us!

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HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE CLIL APPROACH USING THE EU DIGITAL PLATFORMS EUROPEANA AND GO-LAB

Emma Abbate

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The umbrella term CLIL is the acronym for "Content and Language Integrated Learning" as first defined by David Marsh (1994) and refers to a complex learning methodology which has become one of the most significant curriculum trends. It is recommended by the European Commission and the Council of Europe as a successful and innovative practice for fostering the quality of school curricula and language proficiency.⁴

In the evidence that foreign language instruction is more effective when combined with content instruction (Dalton-Puffer, 2008), in the CLIL approach the curriculum subjects are delivered through a second language (L2).

In CLIL settings the additional knowledge is gained through tasks (Task based learning) or projects (Project based learning) assigned in a cross-curricular perspective mostly focused on peer or group activities and dynamic learning experiences within laboratories or workshops (Coyle et al., 2010).

.Thus, in order to facilitate the cognitive load of content learning in the target language, CLIL teachers have to carefully select authentic texts and extra-linguistic materials, such as videos or images, accommodating them (scaffolding) when needed, to make the input in L2 comprehensible (Krashen, 1982).

But where to find original material that, once adjusted, can be implemented into a CLIL lesson? The results of two European projects meet this request: *Europeana* and *Go-Lab* enable teachers to easily design CLIL lessons and

⁴ European Commission, Eurydice *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe 2017. Brussels.*

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/756ebdaa-f694-44e4-8409-21eef02c9b9b>

relevant tasks by making available a wide array of materials adaptable to educational aims.

*Europeana*⁵ is the European platform for cultural and scientific heritage launched by the EU Commission in 2008. It provides free access to a collection of millions of digitised items – books, music, artefacts – from different heritage institutions (libraries, museums, archives) across Europe. It also offers audiovisual resources, such as virtual exhibitions, galleries, blogs and thematic collections on art, fashion, photography, etc.

From a flipped or online learning perspective, in this huge repository, teachers find ideas and materials to support classroom practice. *Europeana* is a sort of virtual background to generate catching eLearning scenarios starting from cultural heritage. By using and rearranging the portal's sources, CLIL teachers can develop digital activities that encourage both content and language learning as in the two examples below (History):

FOCUS ON CONTENT AND LANGUAGE

Content: This patriotic cartoon shows Britain as bulldog, why? How could this postcard influence public opinion?

Language: What's the meaning of "Get to be done"? Do you remember the use of the expression **GET + SOMETHING + DONE**? Make an example



Look these speechless political cartoons, then insert appropriate sentences in the bubbles: what might the characters say or think?

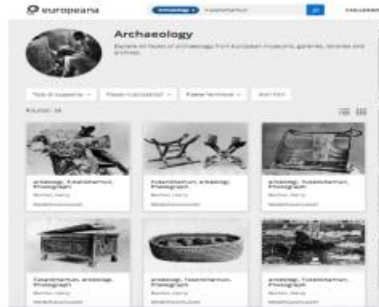


In *Europeana* the students' digital skills and critical thinking (such as prioritizing, sorting and analysing) are promoted when they explore the digital collections with sophisticated search and filter tools in order to carry out a given task or project as in the examples below (Art):

⁵ <https://www.europeana.eu>

YOU ARE SHERLOCK HOLMES!

Search on EUROPEANA ARCHEOLOGY section all the items found inside Tutankhamun tomb. From the items you have collected tell the story of this famous Egyptian Pharaoh: how was his daily life? Using items as clues try to make an hypothesis on his mysterious death



MINECRAFT: A CLASS PROJECT

Search on EUROPEANA pictures for the reconstruction of Babylon roof gardens and use them to reproduce the monument on Minecraft



Another European web portal useful for CLIL, is the *Go-Lab* Sharing Platform⁶: it gathers a vast assortment of virtual laboratories (“Labs”)⁷ provided by famous research institutions from all over the world. These remote labs allow STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) students to perform scientific experiments within online settings: many accessible web-applications (“Apps”)⁸ guide and support them in this learning experience as digital scaffolding tools.

In *Go-Lab* the thinking skills and the associated specialist language, are both enhanced.

By applying Bloom’s taxonomy (1956), used in CLIL for increasingly cognitively demanding tasks creation, teachers stimulate students to acquire the academic language and the complex knowledge linked to the subject’s ‘content: learners suggest hypotheses, conduct online experiments, examine experimental data, reach conclusions, observe interactive simulations of phenomena, and so on, all in L2.

Moreover, *Graasp*⁹, the free authoring and learning platform contained in the *Go-Lab* ecosystem, assists teachers to effortlessly design Inquiry Learning

⁶ <https://www.golabz.eu/>. The platform is embedded in Scientix, the online community for the teaching of science in Europe (<http://www.scientix.eu>)

⁷ <https://www.golabz.eu/labs>

⁸ <https://www.golabz.eu/apps>

⁹ <https://graasp.eu/>

Spaces (ILS), which are digital spaces planned according to the stages of the inquiry learning process¹⁰. ILS contain multimedia materials chosen and uploaded by the teacher and shared with students, so they can study individually or in groups, in class or at home, passing from *the LOTS (Lower Order Thinking Skills)* to the *HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills)* through all phases of a research path. Both in *Europeana* and *Go-Lab*, students with spatial-visual abilities will acquire the information faster.

In conclusion, the two platforms enable teacher to design interdisciplinary and integrated CLIL scenarios and tailor-made activities that meet the needs of different types of learners and learning styles, according to the renowned Harvard Professor Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory (1983).

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Please note: The illustrations contain a few English errors we were unable to correct.

¹⁰ <https://support.golabz.eu/inquiry-based-learning>

CO-CREATING ASSESSMENTS – A PERSONAL REFLECTION

Rob Williams MA, University of Westminster

Evaluating learner ability is a key component in the teaching cycle. We need to find out what our learners know and what they can do periodically. It helps us plan. It helps us see whether what we have spent time working on has been understood. It helps us recognise progress of individuals and whole classes. Evaluation and certification are key to a learner's progress. Success in formal assessments (in school, national examinations, internationally recognised certificates) opens doors to a next phase in a person's growth, in their personal and professional development. It is understandable, then that as teachers we spend time designing tests and training learners to pass exams. But should it always be the people in authority who do this? Cannot we involve learners in this process and what would the benefits be?

We can look at this in two particular contexts: in the situation where a course is self-contained and the outcomes are determined 'in house' and in the situation of preparing learners for externally benchmarked examinations (for example, the Cambridge suites of examinations).

What is common to both is that assessment is determined in response to a framework. In the self-contained module context, the module will have a series of learning outcomes – what it is that the learners will know/be able to do at the end of a module. In a university context, where I currently work, there are a set of competences that are germane to academia (critical thinking, structuring arguments, undertaking independent research etc) and then the module leader is at liberty to set their own. In a language teaching context, there are standard descriptor documents (most notably the CEFR) which establish a framework and from which we can select learning outcomes.

Once this is established, why don't we then engage with learners and have them think about and construct ways of demonstrating their abilities/knowledge? As an example, I run a module about communication in the workplace, where in part we focus on meetings: different cultural expectations of meetings; chairing techniques; ways to participate. The

assessment is to film a meeting and reflect on it. Within this construct, students, create their own companies/organisations, build a series of identity documents (vision statement, mission statement, advertising, presentation pitch etc). They also work out potential scenarios for their companies/organisations to meet. I take one of these scenarios and develop a series of preparation documents which they respond to by setting up their own strategies etc. We also jointly establish what to focus on in their reflections of the meeting (it is the reflection that carries the bulk of the grade). In this way we co-create the assessment each year in response to a given framework.

In a more traditional language class, we could take parts of the CEFR as outcome statements and have students work out how they could demonstrate their competences and how they would like to be assessed. This can take the form of guided discussion and everyone in the group has to sign up to the final class decisions.

Where we don't have the luxury of this kind of freedom, where there are external constraints placed on us by national and international examinations, we can still use co-creation, albeit with limitations. For example, we could have students design their own listening tasks for each other. We analyse the format and create group projects where different groups source different audio/video extracts, compose their tasks and test each other.

The question then becomes, why do this? Why not just stick to the tried and tested route of top down decision making about assessment design and extensive practice of past examination papers?

To take the second question first. Clearly there is a need to be aware of an examination format and to have practice in the skills needed to be successful. It is important to simulate timed examinations so that learners are not disadvantaged when they come to sit the test for real. But if we **only** practise, what are we actually teaching?

By having students engage with designing tasks, they are engaging with language in a more detailed manner than simply doing repetitive practice.

They have to know the answers to their questions, they have to reflect on whether what they have designed really does demonstrate the CEFR statement it is supposed to. This means that they take charge of their own learning in a way that simply practising tasks and reacting to the score they got won't achieve.

If students take an active role in how they are evaluated, they become more engaged in the assessment process and therefore more invested in the content of the course and in being successful on it.

The challenges are possibly the time this might take in the classroom and different expectations of what the roles of teacher and learner are. Clearly there will always need to be adjustment. But if we are in the business of motivating learners and preparing them for life beyond our care, then should we not demystify what assessment is and at the same time possibly learn new ways of doing it from the people we are working with?

The more that students are engaged in assessment design, the greater the level of understanding of assessment principles and processes, and the higher their motivation and results. (Race, 2009)

Co-creation involves developing deeper relationships between student and teacher, and between students and other students. Education is perceived as a shared endeavour where learning and teaching are done with students not to them (Cook-Sather et al. 2014).

ICC–LANGUAGES WEBINARS

COLLABORATIVE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING (COIL) IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Elizabeth Mickiewicz, Coventry University

Elizabeth Mickiewicz is an Academic Manager at the Centre for Global Engagement at Coventry University. She is responsible for coordinating and delivering tutor training courses including the ICC EUROLTA. Coventry University has utilised this training scheme to develop into one of the UK's largest language programmes, promoting bilingualism and internationalisation across the community. Elizabeth manages a team of native-speaker tutors who teach over 30 languages between them.

Internationalisation allows higher education institutions to add a global dimension to their teaching and learning. Although this agenda can be supported through students travelling overseas, those that are not able or willing to partake in physical mobility, may complete a project in Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). COIL refers to virtual mobility experiences that are incorporated into the curriculum, providing students with discipline-specific exchanges. It involves cross-border collaborations with learners from different backgrounds and cultures and uses internet-based tools that allow learners to interact asynchronously or synchronously. Another key component is a set of robust internationalised learning outcomes. These are aimed at developing students' intercultural competencies and global perspectives, alongside their subject ones. COIL projects also have a reflective component, where students have the opportunity to think critically about their experience. These reflections are planned, logged, recorded and reviewed to assess the value added.

Coventry University has run successful COIL projects for a number of years. Figures from the academic year 2019 – 2020 show that nearly 3800 students participated in COIL across all faculties, incorporating over one hundred institutions in 44 countries. Example projects include individuals within the healthcare sector that worked together to understand the differences in medical practice in other parts of the world. Student exchanges allowed

participants to deepen their knowledge of another country's systems and how that influenced the implementation of theory into practice. Another example in the subject of drama, facilitating students in developing their digital and intercultural skills through performing a play virtually with their European counterparts. This received a university excellence award in 'Best Internationalisation of the Curriculum Initiative'.

The university's global language programme, *Linguae Mundi* has begun to build on the success other faculties have had by embedding COIL into its courses, thus allowing learners in different areas of the globe to practise languages with native speakers and learn about another culture's perspectives, beliefs, values and communication styles. Language-orientated COIL projects have included interviews, role-plays and interactions through blogs and online platforms. Examples include using a Spanish partner to understand the purpose and functions of the regional ombudsman in Spain to support consumer disputes. In this project, alongside learning associated subject language to express opinions and complain, learners also had insight into the different systems used in a country where the target language was spoken. The COIL partner was also able to contrast the cultural differences in complaining through the various countries of origin the students in the UK represented. Language learners have also explored controversial topics, such as Fake News and have had first-hand accounts on the impact of contested election results on local communities – allowing them to add deeper meaning to news events they had watched and read about.

COIL projects have had notable impact on staff across Coventry University, with lecturers citing widening their community of expertise and deepening their subject knowledge amongst the benefits. Staff have reported also that their students can be further challenged and are able to discover other styles of learning. They note a sense of pride and increased motivation when individuals are given the opportunity to practise with native speakers and learn about different customs. Moreover, the learners have themselves reported that the authenticity of the communication improved learning and made it more memorable.

If you are interested in learning more about how COIL works at Coventry University or would like to collaborate with the university, please see the useful contact and links below:

Global Languages, Linguae Mundi: linguaemundi.cge@coventry.ac.uk

Coventry University's COIL Team: COIL.CGE@coventry.ac.uk

<https://www.coventry.ac.uk/study-at-coventry/centre-for-global-engagement/collaborative-online-international-learning-coil/>

You can access Elizabeth's webinar at www.icc-languages.eu/webinars.

SMILES AND MORE! HUMOUR AS A TEACHING RESOURCE FOR DEVELOPING THE CREATIVE USE OF LANGUAGE

Geoff Tranter

Geoff Tranter has been based in Germany for many years working in various sectors of education. At the present time he teaches ESP at the Technical University in Dortmund, Germany. Geoff is especially interested in humour, in particular the use of humour as a teaching resource to promote language learning and creativity. He has written books on this topic (available from DELTA www.deltapublishing.co.uk).

The topic of this well-attended webinar was how to make language teaching more motivating by including opportunities for the creative use of language. Geoff explained that by the creative use of language he meant using the language students have acquired to make their own meaningful utterances. Why humour? Apparently, we don't laugh enough. According to research done at Stanford University in the US, babies laugh on average 400 times a day and over 35 years old only 15. A recent US Gallup poll study said people laugh significantly less during the week than on weekends. Working adults, as researcher Eric Tsytlylin said, are 'in the midst of a laughter drought'.

Humour helps us build good relations; it can increase the impact of what you say; it can be a lighter way of introducing a serious topic and, generally, it creates a happier environment by encouraging a more harmonious team. However, a note of caution is in order. Not everyone has the same sense of humour. It's important to identify the right points for humorous interaction; not act in bad taste; ensure a natural exchange avoiding pre-learned jokes and always remember the only safe target is yourself!

Linguistically, the use of humour encourages creativity by students producing authentic language and encouraging motivation. Also humour sticks in the mind and supports and enhances the memory. Geoff identifies three key strategies for using humour in the classroom. Strategy 1 is to aim to raise awareness of the potential for humour in any context. Strategy 2 is to develop the ability to recognise words that have different meanings in different contexts. Strategy 3 is to use humour to change the perspective and the context of what is being studied.

So what raw material is available and how can teachers use it? The first is cartoons and comic strips. All cartoons and comic strips (usually 3 or 4 cartoons telling a story) are easy to find in newspapers and online. Ones about computers are especially useful. As a teaching task, show the class a number of cartoons. The students can choose one that advertises something they like, or want to give to their boss or to a neighbour or to hang up in their office or their kitchen. Then the students present their choices to the class and explain why they have chosen them. This encourages a personal and creative use of language.

A second lesson plan can be based on acronyms. Acronyms are initials which represent a company, product or brand. People enjoy making humorous sentences from the acronym, for example BMW=Broke My Wallet. The acronym activity involves giving the class an acronym, asking them to identify what it represents and then make a humorous statement using the letters of the acronym as the first letter of each word. For example, we are ICC-Languages and this is the ICC Journal. Make a three word statement which describes ICC, using the initials as the first letter of each word, for example 'I Communicate Clearly'. An alternative activity is to explain an acronym but leave out some words, which the students have to fill in. A good example is the Portuguese airline TAP. TAP is sometimes jokingly presented as T.... another p..... (Take another plane).

Jobs and professions are another useful source for humour. You can try a matching exercise where students have to match two halves of a humorous sentence from a range of alternatives. As an example:

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. Old actors never die, they simply. . . | a. lose their |
| circulation. | |
| 2. Old newspaper editors never die, they just lose... | b. lose their parts. |
- And so on.

Short TV comedy sketches, watched online through YouTube, can be useful sources for humour and language creativity, especially because plays on words are often part of the script. Find a common topic in the sketch and

ask, for example, 'How many words can you hear that refer to IT (Information technology)?

Finally, changing the perspective is an interesting creative activity. 'Why did the chicken cross the road?' is a rhetorical question. The standard answer is 'To get to the other side'. However, get the students to change the perspective and find other reasons. Two amusing possibilities are 'For some foul reason' (fowl = chicken, foul= unfair), or 'for some poultry reason' (poultry describes chickens, paltry means unimportant). This can be a good way of increasing vocabulary as well as encouraging the creative use of language.

To sum up, humour is a great method in the classroom to encourage learning, creativity and imagination in a lively and motivating way. Ten minutes of class time will liven up the whole teaching programme and be a memorable part of the lesson. And it's fun!

Geoff Tranter's annual collection of cartoons and sayings called Testing Times can be accessed online. For the latest Testing Times visit www.hltmag.co.uk/feb2020/testing-times.

You can access Geoff's webinar at www.icc-languages.eu/webinars.

TEACHING TIPS

Vicki Sarantidou and Luke Prodromou

Luke Prodromou and Vicki Sarantidou report on an online lesson using a poem by the famous Greek poet, Constantine Cavafy.

My first online lesson

Lock-down has locked us out of school and face-to-face teaching. Universal online teaching was imposed by the Ministry so there's no choice anymore. No blended-teaching no flipped-classrooms, no old-fashioned lock-step teaching; we're all techies, IT-illiterates and luddites and all lock-stepped into lock-down teaching.

The students are protesting at not being able to go to school after occupying the school to protest against the wearing of masks in class. In the days before the first day of using the Ministry platform – Cisco-Web-Ex, I had to frantically try and familiarise myself with the ins and outs of the platform, rehearse the first lesson with friends and relatives and practise uploading and sharing text and video files and to find suitable material for this new medium.

The first day was a fiasco. The system crashed, inundated with thousands of new users from one day to the next. I describe it succinctly as 'non-line teaching'. Online teaching wasn't as simple as just giving out photocopies in class. Even taking the register becomes intricate and time-consuming.

Teaching a poem online

But the second day I was saved by the system working smoothly and by Constantine Cavafy. I chose *Walls*, a poem which seems appropriate to lock-down and the isolation it brings. Here is the poem.

*With no consideration, no pity, no shame,
they have built walls around me, thick and high.
And now I sit here feeling hopeless.*

*I can't think of anything else: this fate gnaws my mind –
because I had so much to do outside.
When they were building the walls, how could I not have noticed!
But I never heard the builders, not a sound.
Imperceptibly they have closed me off from the outside world.
(Cavafy 1897)*

I introduced the poem with pictures of various kinds of walls (The Berlin Wall, the wall between Israel and Palestine, between the communities in Cyprus and a man languishing in prison).

I elicited more examples and the students came up with the Great Wall of China, Trump's Wall – and of course, the current lock-down.

I then pre-taught key or tricky words from the poem. The students then skimmed the poem and filled in the gaps as below.

With no consideration, no pity, no shame
They built walls around (1)____, huge and high
And now (2)_____sit here, without hope
I think of nothing else: this fate eats (3)____ mind
Because I had so much to do out there
Ah, when (4)_____ were building the walls, how could I not have noticed!
But (5)_____never heard the noise of builders, not a sound
Imperceptibly, they cut (6) _____ off from the outside world.

Next, I played a video-clip of the poem in English so they could check their answers. You can access it at www.youtube.com/watch?v=nehgZRUERuU.

A discussion followed. "Talk about walls in your life. Who builds the walls? What can we do to bring down the walls?"

Because I have mixed-level classes with some B2 level students and others who freak out when I use English, I asked them to attempt to translate the poem into the mother-tongue. I finished the lesson by playing a video-clip of the poem in the original Greek.

Discipline problems

My first online lesson saw a reduction in discipline problems. The 'show-offs' could no longer, literally, 'show off'. If some students were able to unmute themselves and indulged in cheeky comments or bad language I simply muted them. If they used the chat box to write rude remarks I reminded them that they would be graded on their performance online and I could easily eject them from the room at the click of a button. I was omnipotent.

Online teaching also makes playing truant easier. Students can just connect, enter the room, the teacher sees their name and then they are free...to go back to bed.

Luke's comments

The most note-worthy feature of this online lesson is the way normally rowdy students behaved with relative calm when online and in cases where disruptive behaviour occurred the teacher was able very quickly to deal with the problem at the click of a button. Vocabulary teaching and the possibility of being tested are also discipline-friendly tactics. The relevant choice of topic is also discipline-friendly.

SEVEN QUOTATIONS TO MAKE YOU THINK

Ken Wilson

My most recent conference talk focused on quotations from famous people that we can use to think about the way we teach. I find it useful to go outside our specialised world for words of wisdom that we can reflect on. If you think about the meaning from a teaching point of view, the quotations may have a different meaning than the person quoted originally intended.

Quotation 1

Imagination is more important than knowledge.

Albert Einstein

I have no idea what Albert Einstein meant when he said this, but my interpretation is as follows. In a typical class (of any subject, but particularly a language class), students all know where they are in the class 'pecking order' – she's better than me, he's not as good as me. This pecking order is entirely based on the students' ability to deal with the teacher's presentation style and possibly also the way new material is presented and practised in a course book. It isn't based on the students' ability, for example, to be imaginative.

For me, Einstein's quote means that if you bring student imagination and creativity into the equation, this knowledge-based pecking order stops being so dominant.

Quotation 2

I never let my schooling interfere with my education.

Mark Twain

A mildly amusing remark, but if we take it seriously for a moment, what does it tell us? Probably that Mark Twain (whose real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens) was a bright, imaginative student who wasn't well served by the delivery style of education that was normal in his day.

What is the message for teachers today? Are we delivering too much information? Can we assert less control over proceedings in class and let the students use their imagination more?

Quotation 3

Nothing will ever be attempted if all possible objections must first be overcome.

Samuel Johnson (1709–1781) Author of A Dictionary of the English Language

A good lesson should give students an opportunity to do at least one of those things. You may have created a wonderful way to 'teach' the present perfect conditional or present vocabulary to do with transport but does your lesson plan include an opportunity for the students to express something about their identity, their desires/ambitions, their opinions or their knowledge? If it doesn't, modify it!

Quotation 4

People have a very basic desire to express who they are.

Mark Zuckerberg

This is what Zuckerberg said when someone asked him to explain the success of his social media invention, Facebook. I modified it, as follows:

People have a very basic desire to express

- who they are
- what they want
- what they think
- what they know

A good lesson should give students an opportunity to do at least one of those things. You may have created a wonderful way to 'teach' the present perfect or present vocabulary but does your lesson plan give your students an opportunity to express something about their identity, their desires/ambitions, their opinions or their knowledge? If it doesn't, modify it!

Quotation 5

I love people who make me laugh. I honestly think it's the thing I like most, to laugh. It cures a multitude of ills. It's probably the most important thing in a person.

Audrey Hepburn

I completely agree with film actor Audrey Hepburn about this. If you can devise pair or group activities that make people laugh, it's good for the atmosphere in the class.

Quotation 6

If I had to live my life again, I'd make the same mistakes, only sooner.

Tallulah Bankhead

Tallulah Bankhead (1902–1968) was a very successful film actor in the 1930s. It's a provocative quote but the reason I use it is to remind teachers that there is nothing wrong with students making mistakes, and to try to be more sympathetic about them. In fact, it's possible to enjoy mistakes, because sometimes they are very interesting and can tell you a lot about the students' thought processes.

Quotation 7

I've learned that people may forget what you said, they may forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel.

Maya Angelou (1928–2014) – an African American writer

I think this quote perfectly encapsulates the way teachers can affect the lives of their students. When we think about our favourite teachers, what we remember may not be the things they taught us, but the atmosphere in the class, and the warm feeling that we had when we were there.

Try to be the teacher that your students will remember with affection fifty years from now.

REVIEWS

The Meaning of Travel

By Emily Thomas

Published by Oxford University Press 2020

Reviewed by Barry Tomalin

They say travel broadens the mind and the phrase itself is attributed to the British author G.K. Chesterton who in 1921 wrote, “They say travel broadens the mind but first you must have the mind.” Emily Thomas is a great traveller and, as, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Durham University in the UK, she certainly has a mind. In *The Meaning of Travel* she explores why travelling is so important because it encourages the search for and understanding otherness and is thus distinct from tourism which largely cushions the traveller against alternative and maybe uncomfortable realities. This book embraces two journeys, one her lone trip to Alaska in the far north of the United States on the Arctic Circle and the other, her journey through the experiences of some of the great travellers of history – philosophers. Did you know, for example, that the French philosopher, Rene Descartes, was a great traveller and went to Sweden, packing 2000 books for his journey and dying there in 1650?

In an immensely enjoyable and informative read. Emily Thomas examines in twelve chapters why philosophers care about travel, why maps are geographically inaccurate and mainly reflect political and cultural viewpoints, the birth of tourism, the development of travel writing, genderism in travel, the trend in doom travel and whether space travel will show the Earth’s insignificance. She begins and ends with her Top 10 Vintage tips before you leave and when you return home each of which contains ten reflections from well-known historical sources.

As language teachers and interculturalists we all recognise the value of visiting and maybe living and working in the country whose national language we are learning but it really kickstarted in Europe’s ‘age of discovery’ from the late 15th century to the 17th. China of course had already travelled widely with the voyages of Admiral Zhang He whose expeditionary voyages took him to South East Asia, Africa, and the Indian subcontinent and

the Vikings who travelled from Norway, Denmark and Sweden as far as the Mediterranean and even crossed the Atlantic in the 8th to 11th centuries CE.

However, thinking about travel really started with the English philosopher, Francis Bacon, who wrote that travel allows us to explore the natural world and expands the limits of our knowledge. (*The Great Instauration*, 1620). Other philosophers such as Montaigne and Descartes followed him. Montaigne wrote that 'travel is a very improving thing' and Descartes travelled all over Europe before settling in Sweden where he died of pneumonia. In his book *Emile: or Treatise on Education* the philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote that travel accelerates the progress of nature and completes the man for good or evil. In other words he believed travel was a defining educational concept.

The principle was taken up by the development of 'tourism' through 'the grand tour' (a phrase adopted from French) to describe how the sons of well-born families completed their education by visiting the artistic monuments and centres of France, Italy and other European countries. The first organised tour was in the UK by the travel Agency Thomas Cook in 1841. By 2016 1.2 billion international arrivals a year had been registered.

As I write, travel is severely restricted due to Covid-19 but one interesting if slightly dark feature of the book is 'doom tourism', the increase in people wanting to visit places threatened by climate change before they disappear. Emily Thomas discusses the ethics of 'doom tourism'. Should people avoid visiting places under threat so as not to add to the pollution or should they visit, become more responsive to the environmental crisis and become 'tourist ambassadors' for at risk places? The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators tried this but reports suggest it hasn't worked as well as expected.

And what about when you return home? Do you suffer from culture shock after you travel? 'Travelling' concludes Emily Thomas, 'Can change the way we feel about our home places. Before voyaging abroad you might believe your home town to be the most beautiful, most important place in the world. It is unlikely you will feel that way on your return.' Why not? Read the book and find out.

AND FINALLY,. . . FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS EVERYWHERE

- An Oxford comma walks into a bar where it spends the evening watching the television, getting drunk, and smoking cigars.
- A bar was walked into by the passive voice.
- An oxymoron walked into a bar, and the silence was deafening.
- Two quotation marks walk into a “bar.”
- A malapropism walks into a bar, looking for all intensive purposes like a wolf in cheap clothing, muttering epitaphs and casting dispersions on his magnificent other, who takes him for granite.
- Hyperbole totally rips into this insane bar and absolutely destroys everything.
- A question mark walks into a bar?
- A non sequitur walks into a bar. In a strong wind, even turkeys can fly.
- Papyrus and Comic Sans walk into a bar. The bartender says, "Get out -- we don't serve your type."
- A mixed metaphor walks into a bar, seeing the handwriting on the wall but hoping to nip it in the bud.
- A comma splice walks into a bar, it has a drink and then leaves.
- Three intransitive verbs walk into a bar. They sit. They converse. They depart.
- At the end of the day, a cliché walks into a bar -- fresh as a daisy, cute as a button, and sharp as a tack.
- A run-on sentence walks into a bar it starts flirting. With a cute little sentence fragment.
- A figure of speech literally walks into a bar and ends up getting figuratively hammered.
- An allusion walks into a bar, despite the fact that alcohol is its Achilles heel.
- The subjunctive would have walked into a bar, had it only known.
- The past, present, and future walked into a bar. It was tense.
- A dyslexic walks into a bra.
- A verb walks into a bar, sees a beautiful noun, and suggests they conjugate. The noun declines.
- A simile walks into a bar, as parched as a desert.
- A gerund and an infinitive walk into a bar, drinking to forget.



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