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## Editor's introduction

Like a jeweller takes great care and pride in their work, we, the teachers, also take great pride in our teaching. Instead of polishing gemstones, we polish the minds of future intellectuals. Nowhere is our great skill so clearly visible as when we sit down to put all our experience, knowledge and scholarly wonder on paper. Many people often view teaching as something that "just happens", something that can be done with no previous knowledge of methodology or any sort of academic thought.

This book is living proof of how much reflection, skill and research goes into our profession. You will find insights not only into the latest teaching trends, but also the tried and tested methods, as well as analyses of our current situation. Our authors range from university students to experienced teachers, native and non-native speakers, proving that teaching is a unifying profession.

We hope you enjoy this edition and that you will share the ideas and insights you get from your reading with your colleagues.

Yours,  
*IATEFL Slovenia Editorial Board*

# Teachers 1-0 Nightingales

**Mojca Belak**

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*Gorenjski slavček*, *The Nightingale of the Gorenjska*, the most popular Slovenian opera, was last staged in the Opera in Ljubljana in March 2013. The extremely patriotic libretto was written by Luiza Pesjak in 1872, at the time when Slovenians were massively leaving the country in search of a better life elsewhere. Now Slovenians are again leaving the motherland, and *Gorenjski slavček* again delights opera goers. Sadly, neither opera performance has had much impact on emigration; the only difference is that today it is not desperate factory and field workers but young intellectuals that are packing their bags. Compared to the anaemic influence of the opera or other official attempts of Slovenia to keep their people at home, teachers' impact on students is massive, and it is the aim of this article to prove this.

Teachers are much more than walking dictionaries, much more than people who managed to get the inner logic of English grammar. We are also educators: a lot of our time is spent teaching young people about life, relationships, culture, and much more. The fact is that we make lasting impressions on our students. The messages – or *transactions* – we send to them are threefold. The first teacher-student transaction is sent and received consciously, the second is partly conscious and partly not, and it is also picked up either consciously or subconsciously, while the third transaction is conveyed as well as received subconsciously.

## **The three transactions**

What we convey in the first transaction is the subject we teach. This, of course, is done consciously and is the primary purpose of teaching. Comments we make about students' performance are also conveyed and received consciously.

With the second transaction teachers convey our values, beliefs, points of view, and much more. It shows the teacher as a person and includes points such as being on time, being tolerant, keeping their cool, not taking themselves too seriously, being able to admit a mistake, solving problems on the spot, sticking to rules, treating students with respect, and so on.

The third teacher-student transaction conveys subtle messages that reach beyond language itself, and which teachers are usually not aware of. It is this last, subconscious transaction that is most interesting. The core of subconscious messages is deep in the mind. It is partly influenced by individual filters that sift the reality that comes in through the five senses. Besides, most modern westerners are culturally conditioned into allowing our subconscious to be greatly influenced by the outside world itself. Imagine a young teacher who gets a job in an English speaking country. After a few years she reaches a point when she has to decide either to stay abroad for good, or return home. She chooses the latter, moves back home and starts teaching there. The very fact that she had a good, well-paid job abroad but returned home and is happy to be back gives her students a message that being true to one's roots matters. The young teacher doesn't need to verbalise any of this; she radiates it by being herself.

As the third transaction is subconscious, it is very important how teachers feel about our job, because we will convey this to students without really knowing it. The problem is that Slovenian teachers haven't been very happy for some time now.

### **What makes Slovenian teachers unhappy**

Slovenian culture is focused on the negative and traditionally criticism is always present in our environment. As a consequence teachers are rarely praised for what we do, yet we are expected to constantly praise our students. We are also expected to develop in all sorts of directions, depending on the current fashion: one year it's learning to learn, next year it can be discussion circles, bringing out true potential in students, and so on and so forth, often with not exactly competent instructors that waste teachers' time. Such forced professional development is bound to fail because development is something highly personal and it is against its nature to be ordered top down.

### **Insensitive evaluation of what we do**

Besides, there are also some totally insensitive ways of evaluating our work that give teachers headaches. Take *doprinos ur*. All of a sudden teachers have to justify doing our job. Teaching is not like working in an office, still the authors of our legislation try to squeeze us into ready-made definitions of what it is like to be a civil servant. It is not surprising that teaching profession evades their efforts, and the result is a catastrophe that makes civil servants in schools wanting to stop being civil, and feeling more and more like servants. Which logic makes it possible to have teachers in primary and secondary school start a new school year with about minus 40 hours that they need to cover besides their regular teaching workload before the next summer break?

Instead of evaluating our work by its quality, schools provide teaching staff with chip-operated cards so that it is clear when teachers arrive and leave the building, because somebody in some office light years away from any real school situation thinks that if we are not at school, we are not doing any work. But it is usually away from school that we correct tests and homework, do lesson plans and get most of our ideas. By reading, watching TV or doing anything on the Internet teachers explore English further and convey it to our students. This is not timed because it cannot be, but it goes without saying that it is as much part of our work as being in class. Just because it cannot be measured, categorised and counted it does not mean that it is not useful.

### **Working with people**

We work with people. In fact, what we do all day is manage relationships (Delaney: 2014). We constantly deal with unpredictable human beings and our lesson plans can prove of little use when we have to respond to a situation in class. This is highly stressful and totally different from just sitting at a computer, so an hour in class can never equal an hour in an office.

But there is more. When we studied ELT, we predominantly learned about an ideal classroom situation with attentive and motivated learners, but now teaching means wrestling with special needs. 83% of teachers all over the world have had no training in learning difficulties or special educational needs, and 85% want training of this kind to be included in CELTA and similar courses (Robson White: 2015). So when did inclusion creep in our classrooms? The theory is more than noble, but does it really work? I would be interested in research into how bright primary school leavers feel about experiencing learning difficulties of a third of their classmates on a daily basis for nine years. The chances that they developed into tolerant individuals are rather slim.

Every thinking person knows that achievements in sport are less important for a country than achievements in science or education. Sport makes people happy, but does not feed them, heal them or give them shelter. Yet, our classes are full of learning difficulties children while sports teams are not. If inclusion is such a good idea, why doesn't it apply there? Because it doesn't work; it just brings down the cost of education of learning difficulties children. What is more, these children often get rejected by their peers or are easy targets for bullies (Robson White: 2015). When it comes to children with learning educational difficulties, nobody seems to enjoy inclusion, and yet challenging these approaches is now not only politically incorrect, it's almost taboo.

### **Neglecting good students**

No matter how much teachers like people in general, we see ourselves in good students, those that we now do not have time to work with. While we deal with their less able or more problematic peers, the clever ones are bored beyond belief. In the past the less able students dropped out after primary school, and work progressed faster in grammar schools. Now more than half of the population progresses from primary to gram-

mar school, so the less able ones slow down the teaching process there, too, and for the clever students boredom continues. Everybody keeps quiet about this as if being clever has become something not to be mentioned in polite conversation.

Streamed education clearly showed how unwelcome it is to be a gifted and fast learner. In those times English was taught at three levels, the first, the second, and the third. Contrary to all logic the best learners were in group three, not group one, apparently in order not to hurt the feelings of those less able ones, as if being clever is something bad. Has this country forgotten that it is the good students that are the intellectuals of tomorrow? They are the ones Slovenia will need in the future, but instead of caring for them, this country does everything in its power to make them want to move abroad as soon as possible to get better education - or better jobs when they graduate.

### **Parents and colleagues**

Another jewel in the crown of teachers' complaints is parents and their interfering in the teaching process. Learning is not always just something highly enjoyable. Acquiring knowledge also hurts, and needs discipline, sometimes even suffering. Teaching and learning is a process that requires cooperation and mutual respect on both sides, which is what modern parents often forget. Their children, especially if they were brought up permissively, cannot cope with a simple no, and to them a low grade has a message attached to it, the message that says 'I don't like you'. This is not what teachers have in mind. It is our role, our job to push students a little further. Parents forget that their children are not customers and teachers are not here to serve them and continually keep them happy.

The next issue that makes teachers unhappy is colleagues who are not good teachers but are allowed to teach as if quality didn't matter. Every staffroom has teachers and teachers, some born to teach, some teaching because teaching used to be seen as a secured job for life. There are teachers who care and those who don't. The caring ones get upset by the way we are treated, the not caring ones just couldn't care less. The caring ones get dissatisfied, dispirited, disappointed. The not caring ones remain unmoved.

The last point on the list of what bothers Slovenian teachers and influences how we feel about our job is teachers who work drunk. More than 80% of my students have been taught by at least one drunken teacher; as a learner I have encountered four. They taught physics in primary school, Slovenian in grammar school, and English verb and English phonetics at university. How dare I mention them and break this solid Slovenian taboo? How dared they teach me and many before and after me?

### **Unhappy teachers can do a lot of damage**

When lorry drivers go on strike, they can bring the whole country to a standstill. When teachers are unhappy, we don't, but unhappy teachers can do a lot of damage. Overworked, underpaid and less and less respected, we have almost forgotten what teaching is all about. It is giving knowledge and giving a bit of ourselves with it. Students will remember a teacher not only because of their subject, but because of their personality and attitude. Still, the greatest power we have is hidden in the subconscious, and because the nature of our job makes us influential, it can have an extremely big effect on the generations we teach and consequently on the whole country.

By being unhappy about our job we subconsciously let young generations know that it's not worth going through the studies, it's not worth the effort, because this country cannot value and is probably also not worth the gift she is given by her teachers and her intellectuals. Without knowing we radiate the painful realisation that if a student is really gifted and really wants to succeed, then this country is not the place to settle and develop. And while for many gifted young people their favourite place in the country has become the departure lounge at Ljubljana airport, Slovenia hasn't done much to stop them from leaving for good. One of the epic failures in this direction was staging *The Nightingale of the Gorenjska* in the Opera in 2013.

While opera singers may not have made anyone reconsider their plans to emigrate, teachers, and particularly English teachers can do a lot here. We are our students' windows into the world and we equip them with English, the tool that will help them spread their wings and fly away - if they so choose. In their choice they may be gently pushed into staying or leaving by us, their teachers, albeit subconsciously.

And finally I'm returning to the story of the teacher who came back from abroad twenty years ago to teach English in Slovenia. It doesn't have a happy ending. The way I see the world, there are only two roles a person has in life: a role model or a warning to others. When I moved back home, I was a role model, a happy teacher who career-wise was exactly where she wanted to be. For years and years I looked forward to every day at work. Alas, most of this has now gone. The attitude of this country towards me as a teacher has killed a lot of enthusiasm in me. I have gradually turned into a warning to posterity, and on the subconscious level my students know it. When years ago they came to me to discuss possibilities in their future career, I advised them to spend at least six months in an English-speaking country, but it went without saying that all that was just a step in their career before they returned home to teach. I still get students who ask me about their future career, and I still tell them to go abroad, but at the same time I radiate this extra message that reaches beyond words and says, "Don't come back like I have, or you'll be sorry".

### **And finally**

The content of the third transaction is not entirely the teachers' responsibility. We are who we are, and if the message is not welcome, it is also because we are not treated well. This country should offer us conditions in which we could flourish, because teachers are an integral part of a system, and in order for it to work, all parts of it need to work towards the same aim. If Slovenia wants to keep her intellectuals at home and succeed as a country, she had better start working on keeping her teachers happy.

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# Looking for an ideal husband?

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*Il. gimnazija Maribor*

Those Slovene high-school students who are taking their national external school leaving exam (the Matura) are required to read, critically approach and analyse two literary texts, one of them being Oscar Wilde's society play *An Ideal Husband*. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to provide teachers with ideas on how to tackle this (or any other) literary work in the classroom. This article addresses a number of approaches, strategies and techniques that teachers can employ when teaching this play; also, it provides suggestions on how to tackle literary lessons at standard and higher level. Further, it gives ideas on how to stimulate students' creative potential (creativity tasks) and how to help students develop their language skills (writing, speaking) based on the play. Lastly, the article provides suggestion on how to exploit the 1999 *An Ideal Husband* film in conjunction with the text.

## **Standard level: understanding the plot**

Most grammar school teachers need to prepare their students for the standard level (SL) English Matura exam, meaning they need to prepare their students for the oral component of the exam, where the students are expected to critically respond to a shorter segment from the literary work. For students to do this successfully, they need to have read the work, understood the plot and grasped the general message of the literary work. Here, therefore, the teacher's task is to enable the students to understand, and hopefully appreciate, the plot of the literary work. Taxonomically, dealing with the plot is the simplest step, yet it is the most crucial, since it is the scaffolding for understanding the entire work.

With my SL students, I spent four school lessons on each act, amounting to 16 school lessons in total for the entire play, meaning we read one act per week. For this purpose, I have devised a number of tasks focusing on the plot that were accompanied by mini comprehension tests, the aim of which was to test my students' basic (factual) knowledge of the plot. Before starting a new act, the students were administered a short, but detailed multiple-choice test (the latter format was chosen to ease the teacher's assessment). When dealing solely with the plot, a number of exercises were introduced, but rather than adhering to a rather stale question-answer format, a more varied (and hopefully interesting) set of exercises was provided (e.g. filling in tables, completing charts, speech bubbles etc.), addressing different types of intelligence.

An example of a diagram:

*Throughout the years, Sir Robert developed his own philosophy. At one point he says, "... wealth has given me enormous power. It gave me at the very outset of my life freedom, and freedom is everything." On the basis of this quote, complete the below diagram that sums up Sir Robert's view on wealth and what it enables.*



An example of a simple table:

*When Sir Robert is away to write a letter to the PM, Lord Goring gives Lady Chiltern a moralising speech on men's and women's lives. Reas it and write down the differences.*

MEN'S LIVES	WOMEN'S LIVES

Also, for every new act, a handout on the act's most useful vocabulary was given (e.g. matching keywords and definitions; word formation – forming new words on the basis of the words provided etc.), an example of which is provided below:

*Match the words/phrases from the box with their definitions.*

CONSERVATORY	ANXIOUS	BE LED ASTRAY	VACANT TO MAR	CANDID	ON THE BRINK OF	ELOQUENCE	
1. feeling uncomfortable or nervous or worry about something that is happening or might happen in the future	2. be led away from the correct path or correct way of doing something	3. free, occupied (of spaces)	4. be about to do something	5. truthful and honest, esp. about something difficult or painful	6. the ability to give a clear, strong message	7. to spoil (something), making it less perfect or less enjoyable	8. a glass room, usually connected to a house, in which plants are grown and kept
						1. _____	2. _____
						3. _____	4. _____
						5. _____	6. _____
						7. _____	8. _____

With SL students, I spent two school lessons dealing with the plot; each first lesson of the week began with a short comprehension test, and then followed by a plot-based discussion that finished with vocabulary tasks (mostly they were done as homework). The remaining two lessons were spent on developing the students' creativity or speaking/writing skills, the activities for which are described below.

**Higher level: understanding the themes**

With higher level (HL) students, virtually no time was spent on dealing with the basic plot line of the play. The assumption was that the students had not only read, but also thoroughly understood the plot as part of their SL curriculum. For the purpose of HL lessons, tasks have been devised that focus exclusively on the *themes* of the play.

The following themes were explored: in Act I, we addressed the varying concepts of femininity and different types of women (Mrs Cheveley as the manipulative femme fatale, Lady Chiltern as the typical Victorian housewife (despite her seemingly progressive behaviour); Lady Basildon as the socialite, etc.); the concept of love and marriage (the Chilterns and the role of love in their relationship) and morality (Mrs Cheveley's attempts to blackmail). In Act II, we explored the themes of money, power, corruption (especially on the basis of Sir Robert's ill-gotten gains); the theme of truth, deceit (the origin of Sir Robert's power and social standing and lies as the basis of his marriage); the theme of societal changes (as represented by the "clash" between the older Victorian generation - Lord Caversham, Lady Markby - and the younger generation). In Act III, we explored the themes of dandyism and aestheticism (as exemplified by Lord Goring); developing conjugal life (the Chilterns), and the basic thematic dichotomy of good vs. bad (Robert/Goring/Lady Chiltern vs Mrs. Cheveley etc.); and the reversal of gender roles (idolatry of men rather than women, as is traditionally the case). Finally, in Act IV, we explored the themes of the nature of the Chilterns' marriage and how the two characters develop (mature) in the course of the play; and the two facets of Goring's personality (dandy vs. the philosopher).

This approach, I believe, gears students towards thinking about the play in terms of themes rather than the plot, preparing them for a literary essay, where simple and straightforward narration should be avoided and a thematic analysis of the work(s) is expected.

### Language skills development

When reading a literary work, it is always important for the student to respond to it creatively – be it in the written or spoken form. If, however, we combine such a creative response with examination requirements (e.g. writing a particular text type – a letter, an article, a report), we effectively pursue at least three aims: we motivate the student to read the work in greater detail; we encourage the students to revise their text-type writing skills and, finally, we boost students’ creativity. An example of such a task is provided below:

**Sydney,**  
the Chilterns are giving another political party. Everybody who's anybody will be there. Write an article about this party for tomorrow's edition. Focus on:

- who attended the party and what they were wearing;
- describe the party (food, drink, music, decoration of the rooms);
- write what the overall atmosphere of the event was like.

lots of politicians, but interesting conversations about...

Mrs Cheveley (diamonds, dress, Vienna), Miss Chiltern (lovely), Goring (lavish dinner jacket)

food/drink great, plenty decor: Triumph of Love

Also, the students were asked to conduct a role-play where they had to assume identities of different literary characters. This role-play was conducted in the form of a Victorian dinner party; in order to add a touch of authenticity, the teacher is encouraged to prepare some tea, biscuits or play some Victorian music in the background. The students were given role-play cards; the topic of the discussion was marriage and a clash of Victorian ideals. An example of such role cards is provided below:

<p>You are <b>old LORD CAVERSHAM</b>, Goring's father. At all times, you are serious and morose. You believe the society "has gone to the dogs" and that old traditional values are no longer upheld. One cannot live for pleasure solely (like your son) – it's a young man's duty to get married! In fact, you think of marriage as a sort of business deal between families. The couple should have no say in the matter: after all – money is at stake! Be ready to express your views on marriage at the dinner party. And don't forget your manners!</p>	<p>You are <b>old LADY MARKBY</b>. You are kind and friendly. You were brought up believing that the social classes should not mix: in the upper social class, there is no place for members of the middle (or working) class (the Society has become "dreadfully mixed"). You regard a lady marrying a middle-class man a disgrace (like Lady Brancaster's daughter). You yourself were taught to know "nothing." You look down upon the Higher Education of Women: a good wife does not need any formal education! Be ready to express your views on marriage at the dinner party. And don't forget your manners!</p>
<p>You are <b>Lord Goring</b>. You are flamboyant. You believe that one should select one's own partner in marriage. Love is an integral part. Yet, it's the wife's responsibility to stand by her husband and support him in all his decisions. Also, you were engaged once, but it ended badly and you ended up paying for your mistake. Be ready to express your views on marriage at the dinner party. And don't forget your manners!</p>	<p>You are <b>Mrs. Cheveley</b>. You have had two lovers and inherited their wealth. To you, marriage is a business transaction – a transaction of wealth. You were once engaged with Lord Goring and you profited from the relationship handsomely, just like you did with other relationships. You believe that "a romance should never begin with sentiment. It should begin with science and end with a settlement." You believe a woman is entitled to using good looks and deceit to achieve her aims. Be ready to express your views on marriage at the dinner party. And don't forget your manners!</p>

Also, simpler role-plays, dialogues or phone conversations between different literary characters can be carried out.

### Creativity tasks

Since creativity ignites students’ motivation to read and work, a “creative” task has been devised for each of the four acts, meaning that one “creative” task per week can be introduced. Still, these tasks help students appreciate the literary work better, as they focus on some of the more important aspects of the work.

In one such activity, the students were put in an imaginary situation of creating a new, modern version of the film *An Ideal Husband*. Here the students were working in groups and had to take on new roles, i.e. the role of *film directors* (whose task it was to find the appropriate actors/actresses for the roles on the basis of Wilde’s stage directions), *costume designers* (whose role it was to search the websites of fashion stores and create a new, modern look for the literary characters – but they had to stay true to Wilde’s instructions) or

location managers (whose role it was to search the websites of real estate agencies to find the appropriate locations for the new film). After having made their joint decisions as groups, the students presented them to the rest on the class, rationally justifying their decisions.

In another activity, when talking about the concepts of femininity in the play, the students read a fragment of Coventry Patmore's poem *The Angel in the House*, a popular Victorian poem (partially reproduced below) that celebrates the ideal Victorian housewife. Having read the poem (and its modern jumbled translation which they needed to put in the correct order), the students were asked to write their own poem entitled *An Ideal Wife*. It makes sense to have students work in boys-only and girls-only groups.

Original	Interpretation
<p style="text-align: center;">A</p> <p>Man must be pleased; but him to please Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf Of his consoled necessities She casts her best, she flings herself.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">B</p> <p>While she, too gentle even to force His penitence by kind replies, Waits by, expecting his remorse, With pardon in her pitying eyes;</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p>And if he once, by shame oppressed, A comfortable word confers, She leans and weeps against his breast, And seems to think the sin was hers;</p> <p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <p>She loves with love that cannot tire; And when, ah woe, she loves alone, Through passionate duty love springs higher, As grass grows taller round a stone.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>The woman needs to love her man even when he's away; in fact, in his absence, her love for him must be even stronger and more virtuous.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>If the man has been offended, she must be kind to him, cuddle with him and believe it's actually her fault.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>The woman needs to be tender and if the man does something wrong, she must not urge him to admit his mistake; rather, she must obediently wait for him to admit the mistake on his own.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>It's a woman's duty to see to all of her husband's needs; in fact, she should be happy and do everything in her power to meet all of his demands.</p>

Bearing in mind that Wilde's comedies rely primarily on brilliantly witty use of language, students were asked in one activity to choose one or several epigrams. Then, by drawing a simple comic strip, the students' task was to use these epigrams in a new context befitting the chosen epigram, contextually embedding it in their comic strip.

### Film lessons

With several film renditions of the play, I explored the 1999 film version of *An Ideal Husband*. Rather than on language or the plot, these tasks centre on the students' interpretation of the play and film. An example of such activities is provided below:

**STUDENT 1 – IDENTIFYING CHANGES** while watching the film, follow the original text of the play. Your task is to establish how the film makers have modified the original text. (Have they made it shorter, longer, simpler, more complex, or more contemporary? How have they changed the original act?)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT 2 – EMOTIONS & REACTIONS** Pay attention to how the actors portray Sir Robert's and Mrs Cheveley's emotions and reactions. Answer the following questions.

How does Sir Robert react when Mrs Cheveley mentions Baron Arnheim?

\_\_\_\_\_

In what tone does Mrs Cheveley tell Sir Robert about the letter?

\_\_\_\_\_

How are Mrs Cheveley and Sir Robert presented throughout the segment of the film you have watched?

\_\_\_\_\_

The above approach, where students are given different tasks related to the same film segment, creates the need to exchange information, simulating an authentic situation in which students feel the need to use language.

### **Conclusion**

The article addresses a number of ways of how a literary work, in this case *An Ideal Husband*, can be explored in the EFL classroom. After having dealt with the basic plot line, and vocabulary, the teacher can upgrade his/her lessons with more pleasurable, but also taxonomically more demanding activities, such as role plays based on the literary work or students' creative written responses to the work. Further, the article provides ideas on how the existing film materials can be effectively exploited in the classroom.

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# Ten Characteristics of Highly Effective EF/SL Teachers

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The question of what makes someone a good teacher is relevant for all teaching contexts, but it is especially important in the field of English as a foreign or second language (EF/SL) where teachers can be hired simply for being a native speaker with a bachelor's degree. Most people, if asked, would be able to express an opinion on what makes a teacher good or effective. These opinions would be based primarily on their own experiences in the classroom as students (McDonough and Shaw 1993). When prompted, most people would offer up adjectives like *caring, fun, interesting, and flexible*.

## **Review of the Literature**

The earliest studies of teacher efficacy defined it as "the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to alter student performance" (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978, p. 84).

Since then, a considerable amount of research has been done over the years, yet very basic questions still persist. Educators have failed to reach agreement on answers to questions like:

- What is effective teaching?
- How is it defined?
- How may it be measured?

Many researchers in the field believe that consensus on the above-mentioned questions is not possible. What the research has found, however, is that the overall expectations of a "good teacher" have not changed drastically over the years but how they are manifested in the classroom has (Larsen-Freeman 1986). Much of the research conducted has sought to identify characteristics, factors, traits and/or classroom behaviors of "effective teachers."

A number of F/SL educators have come out with lists of characteristics which describe effective teachers; see the Resources section for a few.

## **My Top 10 Characteristics of a Highly Effective EF/SL Teacher**

In preparing my list of top 10 characteristics, I initially began with 26 characteristics. Because 26 characteristics were a bit unwieldy, I narrowed my focus to the 10 I believe to be most important. Consequently, this list (like all the others) is not exhaustive or comprehensive. It is simply what I feel constitutes characteristics of excellence in our profession based on my experience as an English language educator, my observations, and on my research.

### **1. A "Calling" to the Profession**

My top 10 list is in no order of importance, except for #1. Effective teachers are driven and passionate about what they do and feel a "call" to teach as well as a passion to help students learn and grow. Without this mission, or calling, teaching is just another job—and a tough one at that. Central to this calling is the idea of a positive attitude. Effective teachers recognize that teaching is demanding. Despite this, they exhibit a sense of pride in what they do.

Adopt, adapt, improve

## 2. Professional Knowledge

Shulman (1986) has identified seven types of knowledge that highly effective teachers must have. According to him, teachers need knowledge about

- the content they are teaching;
- the curriculum, materials, and programs;
- the broad principles and strategies that constitute classroom management and organization;
- the student population;
- the particular educational context they are teaching in;
- educational aims and values, and
- pedagogical content knowledge, which is a special mix of content and pedagogy unique to teachers.

According to Pasternak and Bailey (2004), teachers need both declarative and procedural knowledge to function effectively in their classrooms. Declarative knowledge refers to knowledge about the content area they are teaching whereas procedural knowledge refers to the ability to do things in the classroom.

I believe that the right credentials and sound professional knowledge are of paramount importance in determining effectiveness. That means a Master's degree in TESOL/applied linguistics for teachers teaching at the university level or a Bachelor's degree with a TESOL specialization or certification for those working in primary/secondary schools. As a part of sustaining sound professional knowledge, teachers must recognize the importance of professional development and keeping up-to-date with technology.

## 3. Personality/Personal Qualities

To what extent personality factors relate to teaching effectiveness has been the topic of numerous empirical studies. Weinstein (1998) conducted a study which identified 10 characteristics "good teachers" were thought to have (as cited in Brown and Rodgers 2002, p. 153). Seven out of the ten characteristics related to personality. The Weinstein study found personality factors like patience, warmth, creativity, humor, and outgoingness to be indicative of effective teaching.

Additional validation of the importance of personality characteristics comes to us from an unlikely source, Hollywood, which shows that teachers who have believed in their students, offered them guidance and support and went the extra mile to ensure their success, were the ones that were dramatized in movies like *Stand and Deliver*, *Dangerous Minds*, *Dead Poets Society*, and *Freedom Writers*.

## 4. With-it-ness

The concept of with-it-ness (McEwan 2002) is defined as the state of being on top of things, tuned in to the teaching/learning environment, and in control of the different facets of classroom life and our jobs. A "with-it" teacher is one who can organize and manage their classroom, engage students in the lesson, and keep up a fast-paced momentum. Teachers with this quality are ones who can multitask, use their time most effectively, and adapt to the changing needs and demands of their job and the profession.

## 5. Instructional Effectiveness

For many, if teachers possess the requisite qualifications and years of teaching experience, being a good teacher is considered a given. However, we all know and work with teachers who have good credentials and lots of experience but have the same one year of teaching experience 20 times (as opposed to having 20 years of teaching experience). Knowing your content area and being able to deliver effective lessons matters. Study after study confirms that students who have high quality teachers make significant and lasting learning gains. Those with less effective teachers play a constant game of academic catch up.

## 6. Good Communication Skills

Highly effective teachers must be good communicators as they are required to articulate ideas, talk about issues, and express their beliefs and values about teaching. Because teachers take on numerous roles in their classrooms and in the workplace, they must be skilled at conflict resolution as well.

## 7. Street Smarts

Street smart teachers are those who have knowledge about what is happening around them (knowledge of the students, the school, the community, and the cultural environment), and they combine this knowledge

with common sense to solve problems. Street smart teachers are also politically savvy in that they are familiar with their institutional culture and they know which materials and topics to avoid both in class and in the workplace, and which battles to fight.

### 8. Willingness to Go the Extra Mile

For teachers to be considered effective, they need to believe in their own ability to make a difference in their students' lives. Their expectations of their students are always high. Moreover, they show a willingness to inspire and motivate their students through example.

### 9. Commitment to Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is now recognized by educators, governing bodies, accreditation organizations, certification boards, employers and the general public as one of the most important competencies that people must possess (Collins 2009).

Effective teachers are concerned with their self- and professional development and regularly reflect on what they do in their classrooms. They also engage in strategic career planning, which, for many teachers, means assuming a leadership position.

### 10. Life Outside the Classroom

A multitude of sources in the professional and self-help literature cite the importance of not being too consumed by the job. Research also shows that people with hobbies and friends outside of their profession suffer less stress, which in turn increases an individual's productivity at work. So my final thoughts on this are that teachers should find something else that defines them outside of the workplace.

### Conclusion

There is really no "secret" recipe to being the perfect teacher, nor is being perfect even realistic. As you read through my list of top 10 characteristics and the lists of others who have come before me, I encourage you to reflect on what you feel constitutes effectiveness with your students and in your particular educational context. There is probably no teacher out there who is uniformly strong in all areas. Like me, you will recognize your strengths and you will probably take note of some areas that need work. This reflective self-evaluation is, I feel, yet another essential characteristic of effectiveness. Indeed, the most important characteristics of effective teaching might not appear on any list.

This idea is best expressed by de Saint-Exupéry (1943) in *The Little Prince*: "That which is essential cannot be seen with the eye. Only with the heart can one know it rightly."

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# I Can't Get No (Correct English)

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What do your car, your smartphone, your TV, your computer, and your local bar have in common? They all have some way of playing music. That means that you are almost certainly going to be fed your daily dose, whether you like it or not, the “or not” bit usually meaning a radio station in a public place you can’t avoid playing the latest hits. The problem is that the quality of music and lyrics has plummeted in recent years. Despite the fact that every decade has had its share of lyrical lemons (*Love Me Do* by the legendary Beatles, *That’s The Way (I Like It)* by KC & The Sunshine Band come to mind), the 2010s have so far proven that repetitive and unimaginative lyrics have become a prevailing feature in modern pop music. The problem this article approaches, however, is not the cookie-cutter manner of making pop songs, but rather the ungrammaticality in its lyrics, which is becoming alarmingly acceptable and is leading to a lot of incorrect language being used both in everyday situations. In other words, what grammatical errors did popular music make us internalize, and why is music in particular so effective in doing so?

## Exhibit A: Rolling Stones – I Can’t Get No (Satisfaction)

As mentioned, even British rock and roll classics don’t escape the “questionable lyrics” label. The iconic chorus of the song consists of repeating the song title over and over again, Mick Jagger belting “I Can’t Get No!” a total of 20 times during the song’s runtime of a little under four minutes. The grammatical problem here is very obvious: double negation. Its use can have many explanations. One that crossed my mind is that Jagger wanted to bring the song closer to the “kids” – rock, n’ roll was, at the time, a form of rebellion, a movement of nonconformity, and proper language was (and is) taught in school by “The Man”, which means that improper language was just another way to rebel against authority. This idea of using “street talk” and slang in songs is also widely used in today’s music, most notably hip-hop and rap artists. Sadly, as much as I would like the explanation for “I Can’t Get No” to be so profound and culturally significant, it was pointed out to me that using “no” instead of “any” was probably done to fit the lyrical idea within the four beat boundary that the iconic distorted guitar riff imposes. “I Can’t Get No” has four syllables and it would be difficult to convey this idea in a catchy manner if it were phrased otherwise. Nonetheless, this does not render the song irrelevant to the main question.

## Exhibit B: Carly Rae Jepsen – Call Me Maybe

This song by a Canadian artist was hugely popular in 2012, and this time, the error is not so immediately apparent, perhaps because the rules for using commas in English are more akin to friendly guidelines than rules. If we compare “Call Me Maybe” with the well-known opener of Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, “Call me Ishmael”, we can begin to notice that something is amiss here. There should be a comma before “maybe”; otherwise “call” could be interpreted as a complex transitive verb that requires an object complement, more specifically a „name“ in this case. Call me „Maybe“? If this error seems insignificant and the alternative interpretation implausible, the Internet has shown that the listeners of this song themselves found issue with the way the main line of the song is phrased. The official lyrics booklet has it as “CALL ME MAYBE”, while the most viewed lyrics video on YouTube at the time of writing not only has a comma before “maybe”, but commas in many other verses of the song. Also, memes and captions poking fun at the double interpretation have surfaced (note the comma in the left meme):



### Exhibit C: Nicki Minaj – Beez in the Trap

The worst has been saved for last. When I asked the audience that attended my talk what this might mean, the first response was that it has something to do with bees and that the „z“ in place of the usual „-s“ plural marker is a mere stylization. Seeing the title in isolation prior to hearing the song, that does seem the most likely explanation; actually listening (or even simply reading the lyrics) to the song leaves the listener rather confused: „I beez in the trap, bee, beez in the trap“ is the main line of the song’s „hook“. Since the mysterious word is preceded by „I“, the subject of the sentence, and followed by „in the trap“, which is an adjunct of place, the only logical explanation is that „beez“ is the predicator, meaning it is some form of verb. The problem is, of course, that this is a completely fabricated form that does not conform to any existing or even historical rules of verb morphology. The artist’s official explanation of the term is as follows: „It just means, I am always.. you know, that’s our slang way of saying, I beez doing such-and-such-and-such. So it’s really like, I am always in the trap.‘ Now, the trap, ladies and gentlemen, relates to anywhere where you get your money.“ (Cooper 2012) Because of this explanation, the idea of „street talk“ mentioned in „Exhibit A“ comes to mind, and in certain subcultures, the use of the bare infinitive of the verb „to be“ in sentences like „don’t you be saying that“ is completely acceptable or even regarded as a feature of the subculture’s language. In this case, however, there is no one to back that claim up, no subculture, not even a group of friends to substantiate the claim that anyone besides Nicki Minaj uses „beez“ in the way that she does. Merely googling „beez“ yields little more than links to the song or its lyrics.

There are other minor problems in the song, like the very frequent (bordering on forced) use of „ain’t“ and double negation, but they are overshadowed by „beez“, not to mention they are acceptable constructions in certain registers and social contexts.

### Music’s secret weapon

Analysis of three songs from different English speaking countries and different musical genres has shown that ungrammaticality is a feature of both past and present lyrics – yet the question of what sets music apart from other media in terms of internalization still remains. Bad grammar has flooded over the Internet (look no further than YouTube’s comment sections of popular videos), television and even printed media, so why does music make us memorize ungrammatical structures so easily? The answer is very simple, as simple as the choruses of all the three chosen songs, which were not chosen at random or just *because* they feature bad grammar. They were chosen because they have bad grammar *in the chorus*, the part of the song that repeats the most, the part that crowds sing along to at live shows, the part you are most likely to end up humming to yourself while driving to work, even if you didn’t even like the song and it may have annoyed you to no end.

Music’s secret weapon is therefore catchiness: because the grammatical structure is not only repeated very frequently in the song, but also has a rhythm and melody associated with it, it tends to get “stuck” in our heads which in turn, leads to *very* quick and effective internalization. Hearing „I can’t get no“ or even worse, „bitches ain’t shit and they ain’t sayin nuthin“ over and over again makes us treat these constructions as acceptable, or

familiar at the very least, and you might be greeted with raised eyebrows if you try to explain to students that „ain't“ and double negation are grammatically incorrect. Mick Jagger said it! Nicki Minaj said it! The popularity and fame of musicians may lead the listeners to think that since their favorite artist can top charts and sell millions of albums with “beez” and “I can't get no” and “call me maybe”, they must know what they are doing in terms of English (and they are native speakers, after all). In other words, it can be argued that if Mick Jagger or Nicki Minaj can sing it on the radio, apparently anyone else can use it as well. In this sense, the „cultural“ explanation I mentioned might come in handy in explaining why „can't get no“ may have been used, especially given the fact that the Rolling Stones released a cover of Muddy Water's *I Can't Be Satisfied*, which suggests they know perfectly well how to handle negation in this context. On the other hand, the Nicki Minaj song is a great way to explain that slang is one thing, and making up senseless words is another.

### **Surviving the Bad Grammar Flood**

When incorrect constructions become internalized, a sort of „correctness shift“ happens. As the songs above illustrate, „incorrect“ becomes „close enough“, and „close enough“ becomes „correct“, while „correct“ is a thing of the past. So, how to tackle „I didn't do nothing“, „ain't tryna“ or „I beez at home“ surfacing in the classroom? The underlying issue is critical thinking (or lack thereof) – students and adults alike do not think about what they are hearing; they just listen and subconsciously internalize through it. Obviously, in the classroom, a teacher cannot simply tell their students to listen to better music, but they can try to show them how embarrassing using bad grammar can be in several ways, since recognizing that a problem exists is the first step to solving it. For example, a more traditional pair or group work based exercise would be to ask them to act out dialogues, person A with lines written in Standard English, and person B with lines that have poor grammar or an unusually colloquial register, which would most likely result in funny or embarrassing situations (picture Nicki Minaj using the same language used in the song to try and defend herself in court). A more 21<sup>st</sup> century approach would be to show them a video series on YouTube called “Your Grammar Sucks”, hosted by John Douglass of the channel „jacksfilms“. The series has, at the time of writing, a hundred videos that consist of the show's host reading actual posts which contain bad spelling and grammar. This makes the posts either funny, unintentionally vulgar, unintelligible or lacking sense or coherence. For example, „when I see a she message. i can't stop to smile“. In short, it is a showcase of the Internet's most grammatically butchered comments, tweets and posts. Whatever your chosen solution might be, there is no question that the grammar flood is still raging, and your students and (god forbid) colleagues will certainly inundate you at some point – hopefully, the „rafts“ mentioned above will help you navigate and survive it. Grab one. You'll need it.

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# Oscar Wilde's Megamix

Kristina Gregorčič

During my research on Oscar Wilde's life and work, I focused on the connection between this late-Victorian writer and the music of his time. This topic was chosen with the intention of casting new light on Oscar Wilde, whose play *An Ideal Husband* is also listed as one of the obligatory reading materials for the final Matura exam.

Although a straightforward connection between a literary work and a musical composition can be established only rarely, it is indisputable that music has had a strong influence on writers and poets throughout history. Establishing the parallel between the musical and literary creation of a certain period can therefore help us see a literary work from a different perspective that is not to be neglected.

In the first part of my article, I will shed some light on how Oscar Wilde contributed to Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *Patience*, and what impact this opera had on the great Victorian writer. The second part of the article will demonstrate why Wilde's play *An Ideal Husband* could also be called a "musical" play.

## **Oscar Wilde's rise to fame and its musical background**

During their collaboration in the last three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the librettist William Schwenck Gilbert and the composer Arthur Sullivan composed fourteen comic operas. These short operas of light and humorous nature mark the beginning of the English comic opera, a genre that developed under the management of Richard D'Oyly Carte and his opera company.

At first, Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operas were staged at the Opera Comique. In 1881, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company was moved to the Savoy Theatre. This West End theatre was built exclusively for productions of Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operas, which later also became known as the "Savoy operas".

The interior of the Savoy Theatre was lavish, reflecting "the wedding of art and commerce that characterizes fin-de-siècle aestheticism" (Williams 2011: 152). One of the most significant luxuries introduced in the Savoy was undoubtedly electric lighting. No other public building in the world was at the time lit entirely by electricity, which made the Savoy even more interesting for the audiences to visit. Apart from the electric lighting, the theatre also appealed to the more demanding audiences with its cloakrooms, printed programs and the system of queuing, the concept which had up to then been unfamiliar to the British.

However, it was not only the interior of the Savoy that mirrored aestheticism, which promoted *l'art pour l'art*, or the pursuit of beauty for its own sake. *Patience; or, Bunthorne's Bride*, the first comic opera staged in the Savoy, alluded strongly to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Aesthetic Movement as well. The opera centres on two poets: Reginald Bunthorne and Archibald Grosvenor. If Grosvenor is very simple and pragmatic, Bunthorne – as every full-blown aesthete – strives to achieve the sublime, speaks in an erudite jargon and shows great admiration for blue-and-white china. He also likes to dress in the so-called "aesthetic garb" and "walk down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily" (Gilbert and Sullivan 1997).

The two protagonists in *Patience* best describe themselves in the duet "When I Go out of Door". Grosvenor

claims to be “an ev’ryday young man: / a commonplace type, / with a stick and a pipe, / and a half-bred black-and-tan”. Bunthorne, on the other hand, describes himself as “a Japanese young man – / a blue-and-white young man – / Francesca di Rimini, miminy, piminy, / Je-ne-sais-quoi young man!” (Gilbert and Sullivan 1997) It has been claimed that Bunthorne’s character was modeled upon Oscar Wilde, who was also one of the proponents of the Aesthetic Movement at the time. However, Carolyn Williams refutes such statements, describing Bunthorne’s character as a collage of features which were typical of contemporary figures, such as Whistler, Wilde, Burne-Jones, Pater, Rossetti, Morris, and Swinburne (Williams 2008). Wilde’s direct contribution to Bunthorne’s character is said to be his famous remark: “I find it harder and harder every day to live up to my blue china”.

When Richard D’Oyly Carte asked Oscar Wilde to conduct a series of lectures in America, the writer accepted the offer immediately. The purpose of Oscar Wilde’s American lecture tour in 1882 was to make the American audiences familiar with the Aesthetic Movement, which had up to then only spread in Europe. During his lectures, Wilde tried to behave, dress and talk in Bunthorne’s manner, so that the audiences could recognize elements of parody in *Patience*. He can therefore be seen both as one of the models for Bunthorne, as well as his “spin-off product” (Williams 2011: 165).

Wilde’s rise to fame can definitely be attributed to his American lecture tour. For the American audiences, his way of thinking and behaving were something out of the ordinary and he soon became a popular trademark. Many caricatures and songs, such as F. H. Snow’s *Oscar Wilde Galop* for solo piano, alluded to Wilde’s personality and were very popular with the audiences due to their simple and catchy melodies. Their main aim was probably to bring in money. However, it cannot be denied that they also bear a testament to the public image that Oscar Wilde created through his lectures.

#### **“Musicality” in the play *An Ideal Husband***

Another interesting link between Oscar Wilde and music can be established simply by reading his literary work. As a poet, Wilde must have been aware of the important role that rhythm and musicality play in literature. This is why his literary works are pleasing to the ear if read aloud. Wilde’s play *An Ideal Husband* is no exception in this respect. According to John Paul Riquelme, the “source of musicality” in *An Ideal Husband* is to be found by looking at Wilde’s creative process of writing the play (Bristow et al. 2013).

Before starting to write, Wilde often jotted down or drew sketches of his ideas in notebooks. Similarly, the process of writing *An Ideal Husband* started as a drawing: on one of the notebook pages, Wilde drew the letters I, R, D, E, A and L. Some of the core words in the play that can be generated from the letters mentioned above are *idle*, *lead*, *lie*, *ideal* and *real*. As these words recur several times through the book and as they resonate with each other on the phonic level, the reader is likely to establish a connection between them (Bristow et al. 2013).

One of the instances containing the above mentioned words appears in *The First Act of An Ideal Husband*:

MABEL CHILTERN. (Coming up to LORD CAVERSHAM.) Why do you call Lord Goring good-for-nothing? /.../

LORD CAVERSHAM. Because he leads such an idle life.

MABEL CHILTERN. How can you say such a thing? Why, he rides in the Row at ten o’clock in the morning, goes to the Opera three times a week, changes his clothes at least five times a day, and dines out every night of the season. You don’t call that leading an idle life, do you? (Wilde 2008: 9–10)

Riquelme also suggests that it was the phonetic aspect that influenced Wilde’s opting for the title *An Ideal Husband*, rather than *The Ideal Husband*. Since *an idle* resonates more with *an ideal* than it would have with *the ideal*, the choice for the former must have seemed only logical to Wilde, who always showed a genuine love of playing with language (Bristow et al. 2013).

Another example of Wilde's linguistic play based on the phonic resemblance between words appears in *The First Act of An Ideal Husband*:

VICOMTE DE NANJAC. (Approaching.) Ah, the English young lady is the dragon of good taste, is she not? Quite the dragon of good taste. (Wilde 2008: 26)

Peter Raby argues that here Vicomte de Nanjac swaps the word *paragon*, semantically connected to the word *ideal*, with the word *dragon* (Bristow *et al.* 2013). This amusing substitution adds to the equivocal character of the play and motivates the reader (or the audience) to read between the lines and to search for additional meanings that are hidden in the seemingly simple and easily comprehensible text.

### Conclusion

From my own secondary school years, I remember that after reading Matura books for the zillionth time, I started losing interest in reading – not just reading for the final Matura exam, but reading in general. This is why I believe that it helps if a literary work is sometimes shown from a “non-literary” point of view. Spicing things up with the help of music can bring positive results, especially because music can be approached on a purely instinctive level. Listeners do not need any special musical knowledge to be able to feel the character of a musical piece and to sense its hidden “message”.

As a great indicator of the time in which it is created, music can also cast a new or a brighter light on a certain historical period. It thus helps to enrich the factual knowledge that is predominantly acquired through compulsory education.

Last but not least: music is fun. It will definitely reduce the pre-Matura stress that the majority of pupils experience while preparing for the big day.

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# How to Encourage Learner Autonomy with an E-Portfolio

**Vesna Gros**

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To think or not to think should not really be a question any more, though we know that our students often fail to think with their own head. For example, during recent times we have noticed that students at our school are weak at reading and writing, have too high expectations and lack planning skills. This fact led us to join the EUfolio project, which focuses primarily on developing critical thinking and formative assessment. In the project we use the Mahara e-portfolio to help our students improve.

In a nutshell, Mahara is a fully featured free web application to build an electronic portfolio. In this e-portfolio, students can create journals, upload files, embed social media resources from the web and collaborate with other users in groups. What makes Mahara different from other e-portfolio systems, is that users control which items and what information within their portfolio other users see. In Mahara, this is called a view. E-portfolio owners not only publish artefacts in their view but can also receive public or private feedback on their view and artefacts within that view.

When we started using e-portfolios with our students, each student first created their own profile. They seemed to have enjoyed this greatly and immediately started forming groups and changing wallpapers and themes. Their profiles were written entirely in English in higher grades and they could receive immediate (public or private) teacher feedback on the content.

Soon after beginning of the project, we observed the change in attitude towards e-portfolios. Some of our students were vaguely familiar with the concept of portfolios since they were accumulating their work in some form or another in lower grades, but they had never been using an e-portfolio with the aim of planning and monitoring their progress. So, when we asked our students what they had thought of e-portfolios before starting the project, they considered it something weird and difficult, aimed at adults, and did not really know what to make of it. However, after they had tried it themselves, they realized it was actually fun and useful. Mahara now helps them improve their learning skills, but they also use it as a space to chat with friends and express their feelings and opinions. The majority of students as well as teachers in the project welcomed the change in class.

However, initial steps of introducing Mahara were not all hassle-free. Namely, some younger students were not so competent with computers and on the other hand some more computer savvy ones were really impatient. Among older students some expressed no interest whatsoever, claiming that Mahara cannot compete with Facebook or other social media. Another challenge we faced was adopting the AFL principles and encouraging critical thinking among students, which were both new concepts for us. AFL stands for 'assessment for learning'. Basically, it is a concept where the teacher as mentor guides the student towards their goals by giving constant feedback. Sometimes teaching someone something is just not enough. If students want to really master a skill, they have to define and understand their goals and criteria for success. They have to try each step out themselves and keep evaluating their own progress as they go along.

As for critical thinking, we first designed a questionnaire to check what our sixth graders thought of critical thinking and how they would react in different situations. We used different questions of both closed and

open type. We came up with some interesting results, namely that students avoided choosing answers on either parts of the scale and preferred to tentatively answer somewhere in the middle. In addition to that, they proved to be prone to overhasty assumptions. For example, when asked if they believed a maths teacher if she claimed that 13 multiplied by 26 is 336, a third said yes. Similarly, they would not try a computer game if some classmates said it was boring.

In grade 6 we also spent quite some time explaining what conclusions, opinions and facts are, since they were not that familiar with the terms. Critical thinking itself proved to be something completely alien to them and some even claimed that critical thinking equals criticising. So we had many discussions about facts, opinions, dependable sources, etc.

As a follow-up activity, students provided witty illustrations of quotes on thinking, which were later scanned and uploaded in their e-portfolio, so that the whole class could see them and comment on them. Initially, these were simple short comments. However, they evolved into something much bigger, which brings us to self-evaluation and constructive feedback. Both are heavily encouraged and supported by the so-called 'My learning' tab, which guides the students through planning, formative assessment and feedback. It is subdivided in 5 categories:

- Setting the goals  
What is my goal? What do I want to achieve?
- Prior knowledge  
What do I already know? What can I already do?
- Strategies  
How can I achieve my goal?
- Evidence  
How will I prove that I have achieved the goal?
- Self-evaluation

How successful have I been? Have I reached my goal?

The process is aimed at improving the planning and organisational skills of the students as well as curbing their sometimes too high expectations and making them able to objectively assess their own work. Below I provide a student's learning plan on the topic of reading, since we struggle to get our students to read more. Sometimes, we feel really powerless when our pupils start sighing and moaning when we bring up reading comprehension tasks or reading badge. So Mahara really helped us out here and provided a good new tool to plan, monitor and evaluate students' reading. I told my students that since they were in grade 6 and the impending national examinations were coming up soon it was about time we did something about their poor reading skills. We spent an entire lesson in our computer room, planning how they could improve their reading and this is just one result:

#### Setting the goals

- I will do the EPI reading badge,
- I will start to read more,
- I will achieve good results at the national examinations,
- I will read thicker books in English,
- I will put together a reading list of books I want to read.

#### Prior Knowledge

- I have read in English before, e.g. Toy Story 2,
- I read required school reading, but I also read for pleasure,
- I usually read sci-fi novels,
- I also like adventure and funny books,
- I read about 40 books a year,
- I do not read newspapers,
- I read my favourite magazine Bravo.

### Strategies

- I will create a reading schedule,
- I will talk to my sister about books,
- I will buy books that people recommend to me,
- I will read books of different genres,
- I will ask my teacher for help,
- I will use a dictionary.

### Evidence

- I will write down the list of books I have read on the Internet (Goodreads),
- I will do the reading badge,
- I will achieve good school grades and good results at the national examinations,
- my vocabulary will expand.

It soon turned out we were being a bit unrealistic. Let us face it: reading in English is in fact quite challenging for our students. Especially reading comprehension at our national examinations makes them want to jump out the window and quit school forever. Therefore, we had to first make our student overcome the fear of failure. For this purpose, I adapted the text by Lewis Carol in order to equip my students with strategies for solving reading comprehension tasks. The task was a text in English with deliberately installed gibberish words:

It is a bryllyg day, and the slythy togs go to school. The lesson is about gyres and gimble. At mimsy o'clock they eat mombles for dinner. And the mother grabes the grass before she goes to bed.

1. What is the weather like?
2. Who goes to school?
3. What do they learn at school?
4. When do they eat dinner?
5. What do they eat for dinner?
6. Does mother slithe in the evening?

The students did very well with the task and after they had mastered the strategy for solving certain types of reading comprehension tasks it was a lot easier to do reading comprehension tasks from our national examinations. After overcoming initial obstacles, they relaxed and also showed great enthusiasm for the reading badge. The self-evaluation form showed that 66 % percent of my pupils read substantially more during that period and not only did they read but they also reflected upon the things they read, which means that we provided good foundations with critical thinking. What is of even more importance for me as their English teacher is that 81 % of the students agreed that their vocabulary had expanded noticeably since the beginning of the school year thanks to reading. Besides, the 2013/2014 results at the national examinations proved to be slightly better compared to last year's generation of sixth graders.

To wrap up the cycle on reading, I encouraged my students to choose their favourite book they read in the project and create a digital advertisement for it. I provided an example and they followed by using Paint programme. We took it even further by creating mini blogs or Mahara views; I taught my student how to embed videos and images in Mahara and they really enjoyed it since it gave their creativity free reign. After we did that, they kept asking when we were going to use e-portfolios again. It also spurred a bit of healthy competition, because they all saw and commented upon each other's work, struggling to improve it, correcting their own mistakes and learning a whole lot in the process.

Since then, I am convinced that the use of an e-portfolio indeed brings added value to the curriculum. It has changed the way students look upon their own work and monitor their own progress. Last, but not least, our head teacher also showed great enthusiasm for it, trying to convince more of the teacher staff to start using it, be it for themselves as their personal e-portfolio or for use in class.

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# When ELT Met TED, Teaching with TED Talks: Creating your Own Lesson with TED-Ed

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The concept of sharing ideas, the student-centered approach, the importance of critical thinking, the use of authentic materials, and the idea of learner autonomy are some of the buzzwords and commonly recurring themes in the contemporary ELT. Incorporating these concepts into teaching often entails creating your original teaching materials.

Over the past decades, there has been a radical shift from traditional teacher-centered perceptions of foreign language teaching in which the learner was merely a passive recipient of information to more innovative approaches focusing on the needs of the learner. Defined three decades ago as ‘... an attitude towards learning in which the learner is prepared to take, or does take, responsibility for his own learning’ (Dickinson 1995: 167), the concept of learner autonomy has gained momentum and the developments are fast and significant including a new understanding of the role of the teacher, the role of the student, and the nature of the teaching/learning environment.

In light of these developments, the learner has gained unprecedented levels of independence and has learned to assume responsibility for their own learning. This student-centered approach can be facilitated by the use of authentic materials, which enhances the development of receptive and productive skills of the learners. The right selection of materials provides the students with contexts in which they can also develop their creativity and critical thinking skills. Indirectly, the student-centered approach allows autonomous learners to find their creative outlets that allow for self-reflection but also increase students’ awareness of learning, eventually leading to increased student motivation and achievement.

Many of these changes can be related to technological advances.

## **TED - authenticity in the classroom**

Incorporating TED Talks in the curriculum is a sure way to foster learner autonomy. TED Talks constitute authentic listening materials providing a variety of contexts and a springboard for a wide array of in-class, but also out-of-class, activities and tasks. The use of TED talks in ELT, and in education in more general terms, is not a new phenomenon. Unfortunately, more often than not, it takes the form of merely screening a talk relevant to the topic discussed in class. There is so much more potential to be explored. TED talks trigger deeper thought and insights into all aspects of life such as technology, business, arts, sciences, or education, and with the use of the right tools, this potential can be exploited to the fullest. Many of the ideas promoted by the TED conference are worth spreading in the classroom. Olivia Cucinotta, a high school student in 2014, wrote a post for the TED blog regarding the use of TED talks in education: “(...) TED Talks in the classroom really do take advantage of that ‘percolation of ideas.’ Talks work best when teachers use them to give perspective and to generate discussion around difficult topics” (2014). Indeed, TED Talks influence young people, help them gain a different perspective, change their attitudes, spark their minds, and ultimately reshape the world by achieving a growth mindset. In terms of their linguistic competency, students are exposed to real discourse in which language comes alive and words acquire a deeper meaning.

Merely introducing students to TED Talks opens up new doors for them and motivates them to explore the whole new world which unfolds in front of their eyes. The motivation becomes even greater when the students are given the possibility to access online lessons based on TED Talks, respond to questions, and use the specially designed TED-Ed platform in order to get into a dialogue with the instructor and a discussion with their classmates.

### **But what is TED?**

TED stands for Technology Entertainment Design. Many people relate the second letter with education though. In fact, TED is about education, since it's much more than a conference. TED is a platform for sharing ideas, which educators around the world have been tapping into in order to inspire their students and spark discussions in the classroom. Not surprisingly, the most popular TED talk, counting more than 30 million views, is Sir Ken Robinson's talk about schools killing creativity.

### **A Platform for Spreading Ideas**

In 2009, TED launched the TEDx program, allowing individuals and teams to organize an independent TED-like event. Seven years later, the TEDx programme has enabled people all over the world to share their ideas and inspire local communities. In May 2014, TED celebrated 10,000 TEDx events in 167 countries. There are even events focused solely on education or student speakers, as well as events organized at universities and libraries. There are also TEDx events organized entirely by students.

Since all TEDx talks have to be recorded and made available online for free, some get selected and amplified by TED by getting featured on the main TED website. Really inspiring TEDx speakers might also be invited to give a second talk at one of the main TED conferences.

### **Going Mainstream**

Although TED started appealing to a constantly increasing audience via the Internet, offering all the talks for free on the TED website, as well as on YouTube, iTunes and via mobile apps, it has also started spreading via mainstream media in order to reach an even wider audience and create conversations around those ideas. TED Books offers longer narratives based on TED talks and NPR's TED Radio Hour focuses on specific themes by going over selected TED talks and interviewing the speakers. One of TED's latest initiatives was a TV special focused on education. TED Talks Education featured 8 speakers, including Sir Ken Robinson and Bill Gates. All talks are available online.

### **TED-Ed**

In April 2012, TED launched TED-Ed, an online platform for educators to create original animated lessons or take existing TED talks or other YouTube videos and use them as teaching material.

According to Chris Anderson, Curator of TED, "[o]ne of the repeated requests from teachers regarding TED-Talks has been the desire to present them with added materials that allow someone to dig deeper. The TED-Ed tools allow anyone to do just that" (2012). Since the flipped classroom model has become more popular, TED-Ed became a very useful tool because it allows educators to easily create teaching content from TED-Ed lessons, TED talks or any other video available on YouTube. These videos can become lessons, with multiple choice or open-ended questions, a dig deeper section, a final thought and a discussion section. All this content can be delivered before class time (at home) so students can then come to class prepared for a discussion, a project or other group activity. Educators can therefore time-shift their lecture time and take better advantage of the limited and precious in-class time.

### **TED + ELT = LOVE**

TED-Ed is the place where two distinct disciplines, English language instruction and social media, meet and thrive. It is a cross-disciplinary dialogue, which results in an innovative approach to foreign language teaching.

The TED-Ed platform offers educators an opportunity to create a complete online lesson starting with a short introduction to the talk ("Let's Begin..."), moving on to the projection of the recording ("Watch") and responding to multiple choice or open-ended questions ("Think"), recommending additional resources for further research ("Dig Deeper"), and eventually getting the students engaged in a discussion related to the

content of the talk, initiated by the instructor (“Discuss”). The final stage of a TED-Ed lesson is the equivalent of a post-listening stage in a conventional classroom (“... And Finally”) during which the students can be assigned an essay topic or get motivated to take action.

Once finished with creating the lesson, teachers can send their students the link. Students then log into TED-Ed with their TED or Facebook account and start watching the video. Then, they continue with answering the questions. Students’ responses are recorded and the teacher gets notified every time a student completes a lesson. The teacher can leave feedback for the student online. If a student does not log in before starting a lesson, he or she can view the lesson, practice answering the questions, but the answers are not recorded. Lessons can be created as unlisted (they can only be shared via link) or public (searchable on the web).

In such a way a TED talk, or any other video available on YouTube, can become a complete online lesson and through the TED-Ed platform it can be made available to selected students, or much wider audiences, at any time and from any location. This, by definition, grants the learners enormous autonomy and shifts the focus from the instructor to the learner. This shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning creates a student-centered environment in which students take greater responsibility for their learning, develop critical thinking skills, and benefit from the exposure to real life context of an authentic discourse.

Here are some lesson examples created by the authors of this article:

- Benjamin Zander: *Classical Music with Shining Eyes* <http://ed.ted.com/on/UaFFRT6Y>
- Aimee Mullins: *The Opportunity of Adversity* <http://ed.ted.com/on/7TizHFvK>
- Lisa Kristine: *Illuminating the World of Modern-Day Slavery* <http://ed.ted.com/on/8Le9f3sB>
- Matt Cutts: *Try Something New for 30 Days* <http://ed.ted.com/on/4CEqhinG>
- Angela Lee Duckworth: *The Key to Success? Grit* <http://ed.ted.com/on/xafJr3pc>

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# Writing and ePortfolio

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Writing is one of the most challenging skills to learn and, from a teacher's perspective, to teach. The reason lies in the complexity of the writing process, which requires that a writer combines a good knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and awareness of styles and registers applied to different kinds of texts. In addition, careful planning and proofreading should also take place before and after the act of writing.

As a teacher I try to develop my students' writing skills by using various writing prompts, tasks and tools. At this year's IATEFL Slovenia conference I presented some, a few are listed below. Some are focused on the process of planning, other on the development of the awareness of styles and registers. Tools and ideas for practicing specific writing tasks and genres can also be found. I would like to point out that they are listed in no specific order and present a pool of ideas for the classroom use. Each of them should be adapted for your students' level of knowledge. A presentation of the ePortfolio Mahara, used as a tool for developing writing skills, is also included.

### **Text message symbols**

Students use text message symbols all the time. They use them when texting, expressing opinions on social websites, in apps. Sometimes text symbols accidentally appear in written assignments and test papers. Why would not we use them in the classroom as well, this time on purpose, for example for writing a conversation or a poem? To demonstrate when they should and should not be used? There are many periodic text message tables available online which can serve as a visual aid for both students and teachers. *Gr8? GL!*

### **Persuasion map**

This tool is helpful when planning and organizing your ideas and arguments for writing an argumentative essay. My students commented that it helped them understand how to give examples to support the arguments which they used. They also learned in which part of an essay they should express their opinions. The link to the persuasion map can be found in References.

### **Mystery cube**

Another planning tool is a mystery cube. Students need to decide what mystery or crime they will write about, who the detectives and victims will be, set the setting, think of clues and decide upon a solution. All the data is automatically written on a sheet of paper which can be printed out and cut, folded and taped into a cube which students use when writing a story. The link to the mystery cube can be found in References.

### **Keys as writing prompts**

A sentence which includes the word key is attached as a tag to a real key. For example, the sentence *The key fit locker #321 at the airport. What had they left me?* is tagged to a key. More keys with tagged sentences or lines are put into a bag. Each student picks out a key with a line and writes a story which includes that line. The line serves either as a title or it can be found at the beginning or at another point in the story.

### **ePortfolio Mahara**

One of the tools I also use when developing my students' writing skills is the ePortfolio Mahara, an electronic portfolio, introduced by the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia. It can serve not only

as a storage space for documents and videos but also as a preparation tool when planning the process of writing or as a tool for giving teacher and peer feedback. It can be turned into a learning environment where students show their creativity, teachers can use it as a tool for the concept of a flipped classroom.

In order to start, users need to register and create an account. After that they can log in by typing their usernames and passwords. The ePortfolio represents a safe environment in which users can create without the fear that someone unwanted would see their work because they decide who they share their work and content of their pages with. I believe this is an important point to consider when deciding upon a tool to be used in a classroom. For a better understanding of how the ePortfolio looks like and how it works, a link to it can be found in References.

### **ePortfolio as a planning tool**

Students should learn how to prepare for different tasks and plan the whole process. In Mahara there is a special tab *My learning*, where students need to fill in different stages of planning their work. When learning how to write a formal email, students needed to set their goals when writing emails, write what they already knew about writing emails, write about the strategies they were going to use, write about the evidence they would collect and how they would self-evaluate themselves.

### **ePortfolio and the flipped classroom**

Usually teachers explain new things during a lesson at school. Afterwards students do some exercises on a new topic at home. The concept of the flipped classroom turns this procedure upside down. Students learn the theory at home and practise at school. I used this method when teaching my students how to write a formal email. They needed to log in ePortfolio and follow the instructions on pages I had prepared. They read a formal email, wrote their definitions of a formal and informal email and published them in their ePortfolios, all of this at home. At school, they did some exercises on writing formal emails and together we made a comparison chart of features typical of a formal and informal email. At the end they needed to write their formal emails. All of the writing process took place at school.

### **ePortfolio as a tool for giving feedback**

The ePortfolio can be used also as a tool for giving peer and teacher feedback. In the case of writing a formal email, each student shared his or her email with another student, a person they worked in pair with. Then the students started to assess each other's emails with the help of the criteria from the assessment chart we had made together. Students read the emails and wrote their feedbacks on their formal emails directly into the ePortfolio page. In this way, emails and feedbacks were visible only to the pair of students working together.

As a teacher I need to be granted access to see the works and pages produced by my students. When this happens, I am able to give feedback in various forms. I can write comments, insert emoticons, attach files and embed images, videos or links to external web pages. What I like best is the possibility to create draft entries for later publishing.

### **ePortfolio as a tool for self-assessment**

The ePortfolio can be used also as a tool for self-assessment. Students can use the same methods as listed in the previous paragraph. In addition to that they can write a journal or a blog on their achievements in developing their writing abilities as one of the pages in the ePortfolio.

### **Last but not least: The winner is...**

In this article some prompts, tasks and tools for developing writing skills were presented. If I had to single out the most valuable one, I would opt for the ePortfolio as a planning tool. My students were familiar with the fact that they need to work on improving their grammar, vocabulary, become aware of different styles and registers, have someone check their written records, do some extensive reading, all in favour of developing their writing skills. What they did not pay attention to, however, was the writing process as a whole and the fact that it should be planned ahead and not plunged into. They were organisationally challenged and therefore focused on writing tasks and not on their learning outcome. They forgot that completing a written assignment is only one stage in the process of developing writing skills. The use of the ePortfolio and the tab *My learning* helped them see the big picture.

## Q WRITING EMAILS

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### Postavljanje ciljev

My goals in this year are to learn how to write emails, to enrich my vocabulary, to understand the difference between informal and formal emails and to learn how to send a quality email.

### Predznanje

I write emails in Slovene often, but not in English. I have never written an email in English. Sometimes I use an English word in a Slovenian email.

### Strategije

I'm going to prepare myself for writing emails with studying and learning english mails, I'm going to listen to a teacher and I will check my grammar and vocabulary very often and I will check grammar again with my class. I will allways do my homework.

### Dokazi

I will know that I have become a better email writer, because I will send an email to my classmate and he/she is going to mark my email according to the criteria.

### Samoevalvacija

I will mark my improvement on writing emails according to the criteria of grammar, vocabulary, work-checking, style and register and reading.

## References

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  - ePortfolio Mahara <https://listovnik.sio.si/>
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# Who Let the Dogs In? Unleashing Students' Potential with Therapy Dogs

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## **Introduction**

The symbiotic relationship between humans and animals, in particular dogs, dates from prehistory. In modern society, friendly contact with dogs and other animals brings a wide range of benefits for human health and well-being. These can be derived not only from the daily interactions that people have with their own pets but also from contact with other peoples' animals, brought in to a location from elsewhere for the specific purpose of offering comfort, companionship, and affection to strangers. Therapy teams can thus be seen at work in disaster areas comforting survivors and on university campuses during exam time helping students cope with stress. They make visits to nursing homes, schools, libraries, summer camps, rehabilitation centers, hospitals, and many other places. These visits may be casual, one-off affairs or planned, goal-oriented weekly sessions carried out under the supervision of a specially trained therapist; they may involve interactions with a group of people or with just a single individual.

One of the earliest mentions of animal-assisted therapy as a deliberately adopted method of helping people is its use at York Retreat, an asylum for the mentally ill founded in 1796 at Larnel Hill, York, and run by the Society of Friends. William Tuke, a Quaker and pioneer in the development of more humane methods of treating mental illness, was in charge of the facility at its inception and stocked its courtyards and gardens with various small domesticated animals as part of the treatment process, in the belief that contact with these animals would enhance the humanity of the emotionally ill. In the late 1960s, child psychotherapist Boris Levinson used his own dog in therapy sessions with clients as a catalyst in helping children deal with their problems. His paper on the topic, "The Dog as 'CoTherapist'" (1962), gained recognition in the field of psychotherapy. In the late 1970s and 1980s animal-assisted therapy (AAT) developed into a credible and expanding field and an applicable way of aiding many different kinds of users in a wide variety of institutional settings. Over the past few decades, studies of the beneficial effects of AAT have been published in peer-reviewed academic journals in medicine, psychology and psychotherapy, gerontology, social work, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and many other fields, including our own: education. The jury is in: interacting with animals has been shown to trigger observable and statistically significant physiological, psychological, and cognitive changes in humans (Beetz *et al.* 2012). Put more simply, contact with dogs and other animals reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, makes people feel better, and can help them learn new things.

## **Animal-assisted education (AAE)**

Consequently, educators are also among those making increasing use of dogs in their professional work, to aid teaching and learning. A study of elementary schoolchildren in Vienna by Kotrschal and Ortbauer (2002) found that the presence of a therapy dog in the classroom stimulated social cohesion and improved teaching conditions. Given these effects, an innovative program called *Schulhund* has been developing in recent years in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, in which dogs are regularly present in the classroom (Beetz 2013). Currently more than 350 schools are included in the program. In contrast to volunteer therapy teams who work through an outside organization, under the *Schulhund* program participating teachers may bring in their own dogs if these are found to be suited to the work. In Slovenia, Mojca Trampuš, a secondary teacher of mathematics, is regularly accompanied in the classroom by her certified therapy dog Šapa, and has written a useful handbook (in Slovene) based on her experience (Trampuš 2014). A number of other therapy teams from the organization

Tačke pomagačke (“Helping Paws”) as well as from others active in this field in Slovenia make weekly or bi-monthly visits to primary and special education classes at schools throughout the country, working together with teachers with the specific objective of improving learning, social skills, and classroom management. It is hoped that the *Schulhund* program will be formally instituted in Slovenian schools in the near future.

### **Learning and teaching English with Bamm Bamm**

So how can we make use of this tool in ways specific to the language learning classroom? To me as an EFL teacher and an active volunteer in the Slovenian animal-assisted therapy organization Tačke pomagačke, it seemed logical and natural to bring my certified therapy dog Bamm Bamm to my classes and make use of him in a variety of ways in my lessons. As with many tools and methods used in EFL teaching, the possibilities offered by a therapy dog are limited only by our imagination. Think of any topic or activity: virtually any of them can involve the use of a dog. I’ve always been a proponent of using realia in the classroom whenever possible, as a way of evoking responses and engaging learners. Bringing a real dog into the classroom engages and motivates learners in ways that a picture of a dog or even a stuffed toy dog cannot.

Not every dog is suited for this type of work. Physical characteristics are not important: therapy dogs come in every size, age, and breed or breed mixture. Behavior and temperament, however, are critical: therapy dogs need to be calm, stable, friendly, and well trained. Dogs are tested for these traits and their reactions to different situations before being accepted into the program.

My border collie Bamm Bamm and I have been involved with Tačke pomagačke since early 2011, first working as trainees under the supervision of more experienced mentors, then independently as a certified therapy team. Like most border collies and other working breeds, Bamm Bamm loves physical activity, but he is also capable of being perfectly calm and still for extended periods of time. He’s very people-oriented and thrives on interaction with them—first and foremost with me, of course, but he also enjoys being petted by and working together with perfect strangers. His role in my EFL classes thus runs along a broad continuum from completely passive (lying quietly in one spot) to more active (as a prop in teaching a grammar or vocabulary topic) to being the central focus of the lesson.

The first thing I do on entering a classroom in advance of my students is put down a blanket for him and park him there, where he will remain until released. His mere presence in the room helps to create a positive mood in the group: upon seeing him as they walk through the door, students more often than not react by smiling broadly, greeting him (in English), and going over and petting him before taking their seats. While I am presenting a topic he lies unobtrusively in his spot; after putting students to work on a task, whether individually or in pairs/groups, I release him from his stay and he circulates quietly around the class, moving slowly from one student to another, often underneath their desks: with one hand they write and with the other they reach down to pet him, a pleasant experience for all involved.

Wearing his harness, with pouches attached on either side, he can also be put to effective use as a courier. I use him in this way to put students in pairs or groups, distribute instructions for specific tasks, practice vocabulary (numbers, colors, animals, and more), and deliver speaking prompts, among others. In the latter task, he provides additional value by staying beside the speaker as a calming and encouraging presence as the student carries out a potentially stressful, challenging, and intimidating task—speaking in a foreign language in front of others. In all these situations, the process of calling a dog and accepting something from the animal rather than the teacher makes the lesson more memorable and interesting.

Students are invariably intrigued when I tell them that Bamm Bamm knows three languages. Initially trained in German by his previous owner, he now lives in a Slovene-speaking environment, and I speak to him in English. This introduction can be used as a lead-in to several classroom discussions, whether focusing on Bamm Bamm’s life, which they are eager to learn more about, or shifting the focus to the students, asking them which other languages they know and highlighting the importance of knowing a foreign language (or several) in a globalized world. Since Bamm Bamm’s commands are nearly all in English, students can gain speaking practice as well as a sense of empowerment by using verbal commands to perform various actions and tricks with him. Space permitting, we can set up an obstacle course for practice in giving and following directions (go, stop, left, right, straight ahead, under, over, around, through, etc.)—with the added twist that they are guiding Bamm Bamm as they go.

### Sample lesson for teaching prepositions of place: Where's Bamm Bamm?

A lesson that has proved to be a hit with many groups, in particular younger learners, is one that I call "Where's Bamm Bamm?". I start by reading the well-known interactive children's picture book "Where's Spot?" by Eric Hill. Students are thus introduced to spatial prepositions such as in(side), behind, under, etc. as well as nouns (names of animals, furniture items). I then place Bamm Bamm in a variety of positions (under the table, in the box, on the blanket, behind the chair, next to the window, between the chair and the box, and so on), I first introduce an object ("This is a box"), then place him in/on/under it, then ask the class "Where's Bamm Bamm?", eliciting the response "Bamm Bamm is in the box". Once students are familiar with the prepositions and names of things, they take turns putting Bamm Bamm into a position, which they can do simply by saying the name of the object they want him to go to ("Blanket!" "Chair!" "Box!", etc.), The student then asks the rest of the class "Where's Bamm Bamm?".

At this point Bamm Bamm's active role as a prop is concluded, but he remains available to wander around and visit as students work at their desks on follow-on activities. For learners who are not yet literate, this could be drawing a picture of Bamm Bamm, Spot, or whatever they like in a certain location. For older learners, I usually provide a matching or gap fill activity. After a lively lesson involving an activity with Bamm Bamm, they tend to be more focused, attentive, and capable of staying on task and working independently on written exercises reinforcing the material learned than if I had simply presented the grammar and vocabulary on the board.

### Classroom management

In addition to helping students learn content, Bamm Bamm helps me with classroom management. My least favorite aspect of teaching is occasionally having to deal with disruptive behavior. Bamm Bamm helps already just by being there and contributing to a more cooperative learning environment, since learners tend to be more motivated, attentive, and engaged when he is involved in a lesson. But I've found he also makes a useful ally when I need to deal with undesirable behavior in students. For example, when students get too loud and disruptive, I tell them that they are stressing and scaring Bamm Bamm, and that I'll have to put him away if it doesn't improve. Since they like having him there, they try harder to control themselves. He can also be used as a reward for good behavior: if students work productively and complete a task on time, I'll allow free time at the end for doing tricks with Bamm Bamm, which they all enjoy. Moreover, Bamm Bamm is a role model for good behavior. He's never mean to anyone, he follows directions, he lies quietly and patiently for long periods of time, and he exercises admirable impulse control. Finally, when a student is especially disruptive, disrespectful, and anti-authority, I can more easily establish a rapport with them and encourage better behavior through Bamm Bamm than in my own role as teacher.

### Conclusion

We teachers have a growing repertory of creative ways to reach and teach our students: through music, drama, Cuisenaire rods, humor, new technologies, nature, physical movement, art, role plays, chants, and (best of all) a mixture of the above and more. As animal-assisted education continues to develop, therapy dogs can now be added to this teaching toolbox, bringing numerous benefits at many levels. Should the *Schulhund* program take root in Slovenia, teachers who wish to do so and whose dogs meet the criteria will be able to bring their own dogs to school as valuable classroom assistants. In the meantime, teachers have the option of teaming up with volunteer therapy teams from Tačke pomagačke and similar organizations, inviting them to make one-off or regular visits to their classes.

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# Super Teaching with Mind Maps

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## **Introduction**

The Mind Map, which is a graphical technique to improve creative thinking and knowledge attainment, utilizes colours, images, codes, and dimensions to amplify and enhance key ideas. This technique augments the visualization of relationships and links between concepts, which aids in information acquisition, data retention, and overall comprehension. As such, it can be of great help in English Language classroom as a way to keep students' attention and motivate them to face bravely everyday challenges presented to them in the form of grammar and vocabulary. For the second year in a row Mind Maps are used successfully as a teaching technique in English Language classes at Elementary School "25. novembar", and a recent study has shown that students who learn with the help of Mind Maps show better understanding of the matter and better results in examinations. This proves that the linear explanation of grammar and vocabulary just isn't enough, and that Mind Maps, as a natural function of a brilliant human mind, can liberate our students' brains and help them find joy and express themselves creatively in their learning.

## **About mind maps**

Mind maps as such have been around since 1974, when Tony Buzan presented this concept of a radial tree, using key words in a colourful tree-like structure. Tony Buzan also introduced the concept of Radiant Thinking and in his words "Radiant Thinking (from 'to radiate', meaning 'to spread or move in directions, or from a given centre') refers to associative thought processes that proceed from or connect to a central point. The other meanings of 'radiant' are also relevant: 'shining brightly', 'the look of bright eyes beaming with joy and hope' and 'the focal point of meteoric shower'-similar to the 'burst of thought.'" (Buzan 1993: 57)

According to Buzan, human beings are able to access and use this ability of our brains by using another concept he introduced at the same time: Mind Maps. Mind Map is a graphic representation of Radiant Thinking, and presents a natural function of the human brain. This powerful graphic technique can be applied to every aspect of human life, where there is a need for improved learning and clear thinking (Buzan 1993).

All Mind Maps have four basic characteristics applied to them:

- a) the subject of attention is crystallised in a central image
- b) the main themes of the subject radiate from the central image as branches
- c) branches comprise a key image or key word printed on an associated line.  
Topics of lesser importance are also represented as branches attached to higher level branches
- d) the branches form a connected radial structure. (Buzan 1993:59)

How can teachers and students benefit from Mind Maps? According to Tony Buzan (1993), there are many benefits of teaching with Mind Maps. They have the tendency to inspire interest in the students, which makes them more receptive and co-operative in the classroom. Teacher's lessons and presentations become more spontaneous, creative and enjoyable, both for the teacher and the students. When Mind Maps are used for teacher's lesson plans and notes, they become more flexible, rather than remaining relatively rigid as the time passes, and the teachers are able to make changes and add to their lesson plans and notes quickly, which also causes their physical volume to be drastically reduced. Since the Mind Maps present only rel-

evant material and its form is very clear and easily memorable, students' marks in examinations have the tendency to be higher. Mind Maps show not just the facts but also the relationships between those facts, and students are able to obtain a deeper understanding of the subject. Mind Maps can be used in teaching for preparation of lesson plans and notes, yearly, term and daily planning, lessons and presentations, projects and examinations.

Why should teachers use Mind Maps? The answer lies in problems created by standard linear notes, which tend to create a global sleeping sickness. They use considerably less than half of the capacity of our cerebral cortex and make brains reject and forget information. Linear notes also obscure key words, make it difficult to remember, waste our time and fail to stimulate brain creatively (Buzan 1993).

**Application in ELT**

Mind Maps can be applied in ELT in many different areas and here are some of them, which have been done in English Language classes at Elementary school "25. novembar":

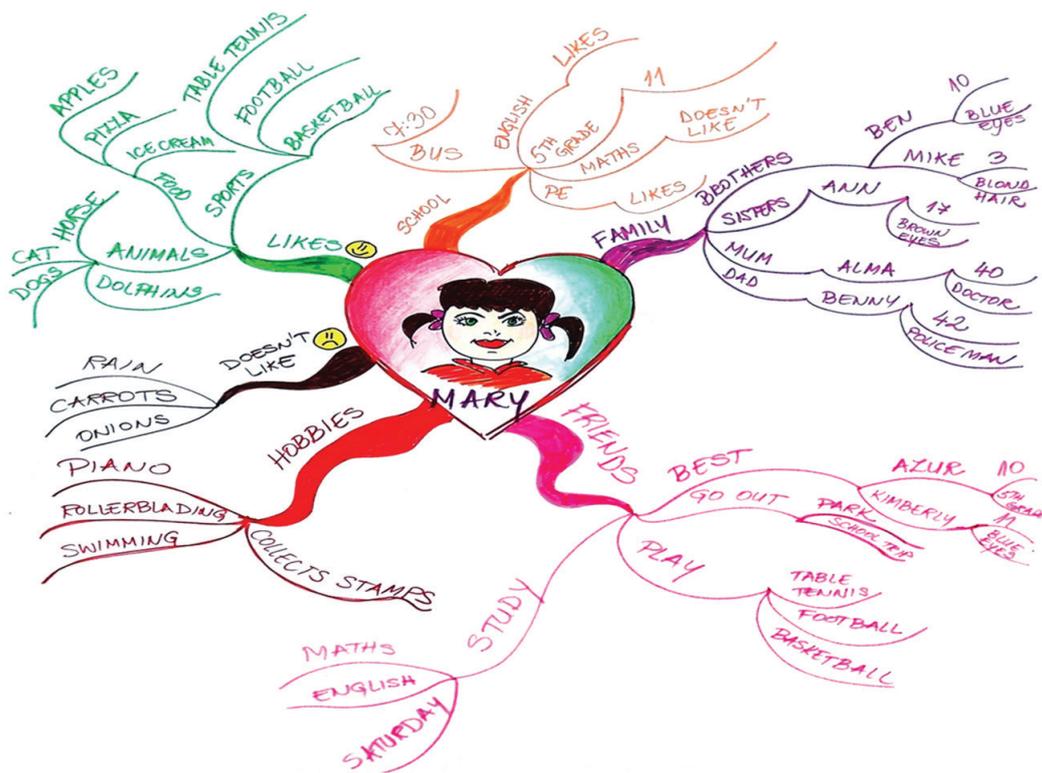
1. Grammar: present, past and future tenses in general, and then each individually (Present simple, Past simple, Present perfect, Present perfect continuous), verb patterns, passive voice, conditionals and articles.



2. Vocabulary: clothes, sports, food, collocations and phrasal verbs.
3. Speaking: last year, with 5th graders, after learning about the Present simple, a Mind Map was drawn about an imaginary girl called Mary and her life (age, family, school, likes and dislikes, favourite activities etc.). This Mind Map was done in 3rd person singular of Present simple. While this Mind Map was drawn, students were instructed to individually draw Mind Maps about themselves, describing their life in 3rd person singular as well. The following week, during the revision of Present simple tense, students used their own Mind Maps to talk about themselves, but this time in 1st person singular, which helped them revise this tense for the upcoming test and hone their speaking skills.

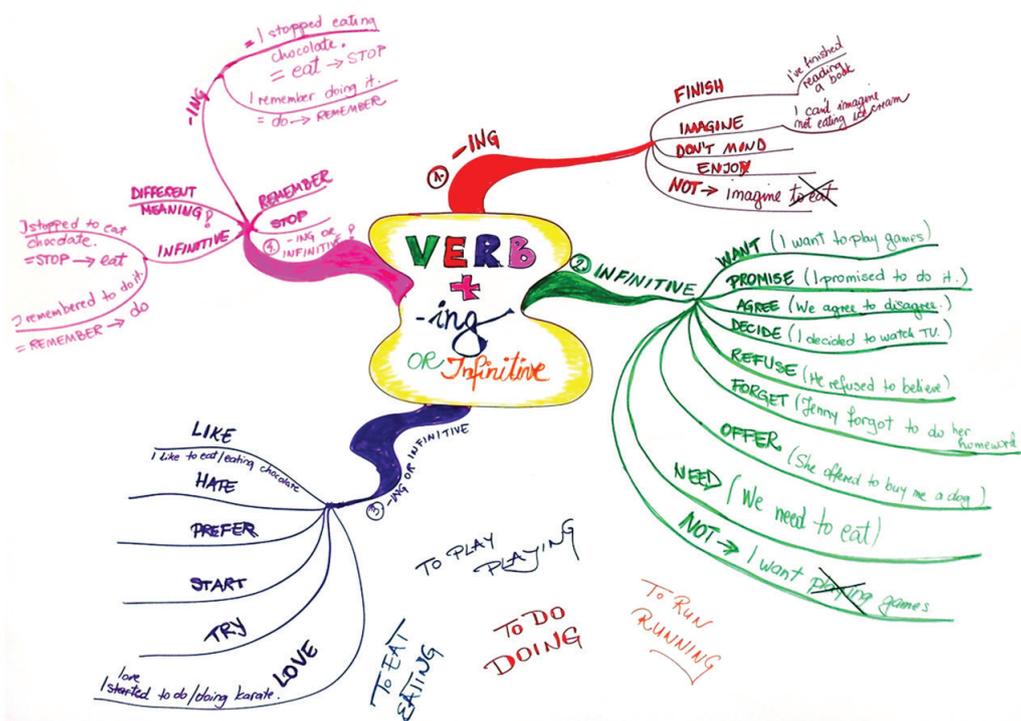
**Present study**

The goal of the present study is to determine whether involving Mind Maps can actually facilitate a higher level of knowledge in eighth grade students (age 13 or 14), thus opening possibilities for EFL teaching based on Mind Maps.



The participants were 73 Bosnian pupils attending three classes of the eighth grade of the public elementary school „25. novembar“ in Velika Kladuša, Bosnia and Herzegovina. They have studied English for five years prior to eighth grade, all in a formal educational setting. They have been assigned to their particular class on the basis of their previous achievements in education and upbringing, which means all classes were equal in terms of general success at school. The experimental group consisted of two classes (8a and 8b = 48 students), and the control group consisted of 25 students.

Both groups were taught „verb + -ing or infinitive“ patterns in the same way, but the revision for the experimental group consisted of verbal revision while drawing the Mind Map at the same time.



The revision for the control group consisted of verbal revision while making linear notes on the blackboard. Both groups were then given an additional exercise in which they were required to fill in the gaps with an appropriate form (-ing or infinitive). The experimental group was able to look up their notes in the form of a Mind Map they each made, and the control group had a help of their standard linear notes they took. Both groups were tested in the next class with a help of a Power Point presentation consisting of slides which showed 25 sentences. Each slide was shown for 10 seconds and students had to choose a) or b) on their answer sheets.

**Here are some examples of the sentences they were given:**

1. I would like \_\_\_\_\_ (come) to the party with you.  
 a) to come  
 b) coming
  
2. He enjoys \_\_\_\_\_ (have) a bath in the evening.  
 a) to have  
 b) having
  
3. Do you mind \_\_\_\_\_ (give) me a hand?  
 a) to give  
 b) giving

Basic hypothesis of this small study is that the experimental group will have a better understanding of „verb + -ing or infinitive“ patterns, and therefore perform better when tested. The results support the given hypothesis.

	Maximum	Average Score	%
<b>Control group</b>	25	16.20	64.80
<b>Exp. group 1</b>	25	18.40	73.60
<b>Exp. group 2</b>	25	18.20	72.80
<b>EG 1+2</b>	25	18.30	73.20

Students in two experimental groups have, on average, scored 2.1 points (or 8.4%) better than the students in the control group.

**Conclusion**

Mind Maps present a very visual way to capture one’s thoughts and ideas, and their application in education has shown multiple benefits. Using Mind Maps in ELT is a great opportunity for every teacher to explore these benefits, and make their classes more interesting and students more motivated. This brain-friendly technique uses lots of colours and key words, and our brains cannot help but to be attracted to it. This greatly increases the joys of learning and teaching. The concept of radiant thinking, which led to the concept of mind mapping, promotes all aspects of the brain working in synergy, with thought beginning from a central point. With Mind Maps „every word and image becomes in itself a subcentre of association, the whole proceeding in a potentially infinite chain of branching patterns away from or towards the common centre. Although the Mind Map is drawn on a two-dimensional page it represents a multi-dimensional reality, encompassing space, time and colour.“ (Buzan 1993: 57). Mind Maps show us that the learning potential of the human brain is basically unlimited.

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# Getting unstuck

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## **Background**

When speaking to a group of teachers, we often find that some may be fairly new to the profession and others have been teaching for years. But in general, most of us agree on one aspect, namely that teaching tends to be an all encompassing and sometimes isolating job making it hard to see beyond the classroom or our own situation at times. Unfortunately, due to the amount of work we have and the pressure we experience to be excellent at our jobs, we may find that we rarely venture out of our own little worlds.

For this reason, feeling stuck has become a common state-of-being for teachers at various times in their careers. We may simply feel cannot take on anything else, everything we do is routine, and our days repeat themselves over and over as in the film 'Groundhog Day'. Finding a way out also presents its own challenges. While crowd-sourcing for this talk these reasons for not trying out new things came up: fear of failure, lack of time and or money, lack of opportunities, no support from others and not knowing where to start. In addition, we may also be expected to be everything to everyone: 'surrogate parent, petty cash officer, coat finder, walking encyclopedia, and pencil sharpener' are some of the more humorous examples. However, in reality we are people who 'live' their jobs, need to be exceptional listeners, enjoy experimentation, express empathy for our learners, and are eternal students.

## **How we can stretch**

Considering the challenge of what we can do, it seemed that coming up with areas we can stretch into would be a possible way forward. These broke down into eight distinct categories:

- Using new methods
- Teaching new subjects
- Using new technology
- CPD (Continual Professional Development)
- Stretching out of our learning styles
- Working with colleagues
- Setting up a PLN (personal learning network)
- Moving into new areas of ELT

In order to find out how people around the world are making use of these possibilities I started by asking a group of teachers enrolled in the TESOL EVO (Electronic Village Online) course I was helping to moderate for IATEFL BESIG. In addition, I posted these questions on Facebook and in the end had responses from twenty-four colleagues from twenty-one countries. Some of their ideas and suggestions are as follows:

## **New methods**

- using a riddle from the Merchant of Venice to help students write.
- giving students responsibility for revision rather than pre-planning by the teacher
- using TPR (Total Physical Response) with adults

### **New subjects**

- when getting new groups with different focal points, find out what they need
- getting topics from the students and developing the lessons

### **New technology**

- using Prezi (an online presentation program) and teaching learners to use it as well as using Vocaroo, an online voice recorder, and MentorMob, which helps you create 'learning playlists' of web content
- using Bitstrips (designing cartoons) with young learners
- Using a wiki with MA students.
- Using an iPad for downloading apps, especially for pronunciation.

### **Continual Professional Development**

- completing various diploma and certificate courses
- using Facebooks, reading methodology books, attending webinars and conferences
- doing an online leadership course and a course on how to teach hearing-impaired students.
- blogging, tweeting, and reading blogs.
- doing an MA in the UK
- took part in TKT (Teaching Knowledge Test – a Cambridge exam for teachers), attended a 'Train the trainer' course
- taking part in ELT chat
- doing an MA and the DELTA (Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults)
- taking part in MOOCs (Massive Open Online Course).
- completing a CELTA (Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults)
- working on learning other languages

### **Stretching out of your learning style**

- doing more kinaesthetic activities although teacher is visual
- learning to be more hands-on than visual
- trying to use auditory channel which is the least preferred

### **Colleagues**

- taught colleagues about concept questions and inductive teaching (where learners come to understanding of rules by looking at examples)
- helping colleagues to learn English
- having colleagues come to classes or vice versa to give each other feedback
- having business breakfast and group events for teaching team

### **Professional Learning Network (PLN)**

- set up network of professionals and friends and working with with one-to-one
- exchanging ideas and materials and discussing translations.
- use of social networks.
- going to conferences

### **New area of ELT**

- becoming a DOS (Director of Studies)
- teaching with Skype or Google + Hangout (group video calls, exchange of photos, etc).
- doing administrative work, teacher training and formal evaluations
- blogging and attending webinars
- embarking on a new CLIL (Content and Language integrated Learning) project
- writing for journals and newsletters
- doing translations, editing and writing
- set up a private kindergarten
- working on university programs
- translating, interpreting, copy-editing.

- developing online community for learners in Southeast Asia and running online courses.
- being a tutor for the CertTESOL
- organizing exchange programs for students
- started writing a fiction book for ELT learners
- learned to make and edit videos and creating a video production unit at home.

As we see from these ideas some of the things we can branch into include:

- Writing supplementary materials, coursebooks, online materials
- Editing
- Blogging
- Getting involved in testing and assessment
- Becoming active in a teaching association
- Training other teachers
- Learning to use new technology and incorporate it into the classroom
- Collaborating with colleagues
- Setting up a PLN
- Translating and interpreting

### **Writing out a timeline**

As we often forget what we have actually accomplished in our lives and professional careers, one thing we can do is to make a timeline of events. Sitting down for a few minutes to reflect on what we have done and when is a helpful way to think about where we began and where we are now while taking into account the milestones which were part of the journey.

### **Specific ideas**

One option is taking part in the eltchat. This is a Twitter-based chat which takes place on Wednesdays at 12.00 or 21.00 (GMT) every week except during the summer holidays. Anyone can suggest a topic and then vote on the one they would like to discuss. The chats are moderated by a team and the transcripts and summaries published after the chats. You can get involved by suggesting topics, voting for one, taking part in the chat and/or writing up the summary. The exciting thing about the chat is not just that it is free peer-oriented feedback, but it is a wonderful way to begin setting up a PLN.

### **Eltpics**

This is an initiative which was started by a group of dedicated teachers with the idea of 'photos by teachers for teachers' using a Creative Commons license. They began to ask colleagues and friends to take pictures which they upload to a Flickr account. There are different categories and the photos are organized so that teachers can easily find them. To participate you can go to the eltpics page on Facebook and upload a photo which will then be added to the albums. When you need something for a class or a talk, you can look through the collection and download it to use as long as you acknowledge the source. At the moment there are over 21,000 photos on the site.

### **Disabled Access Friendly Campaign**

This campaign, which won an ELTON award for 'Innovation in Teacher Resources', was started in 2010 and is run by volunteers who write and collect free lesson plans to use in the ELT classroom which aim to raise awareness of issues involving mobility disabilities. The lessons range from A1-C2 and often include video clips and worksheets and texts which are ready to print out and use in class. If you are looking for a new topic in the classroom, this site can certainly provide you with ideas.

### **Simple English Videos**

As mentioned earlier, Vicki Hollett began her own video production company in her home. She and her husband Jay have been producing short videos (ranging from one to three minutes) on language difficulties that learners often face. They also have some which deal with social or business-oriented situations. These are free of charge and designed for use by teachers and students. Many of them also include transcripts and worksheets. Another bonus is that Vicki is British and Jay is American so students have the chance to hear both accents.

### Trying something new – a Facebook page

Another place to get inspiration is the new Facebook page called *'Trying something new'*. This was started by Theodora Papapanagiotou in Greece and serves as a platform to exchange new ideas with other teachers around the world.

### Matt Cutts: 'Try something new for 30 days' a TED Talk

This inspirational TED talk gives us a number of ideas we can try out and encourages us to just 'try something new'. Matt Cutts gives examples of what he did and his experiences with making change sustainable.

### Summing up

The theme of this talk is a phrase I heard while learning about NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming). 'If you always do what you have always done, you will always get what you have always gotten.' Giving this some thought may make a difference in your thinking and thinking, how you look at the ELT world and the way you approach tasks. The goal of this talk is to offer a number of ideas in order to help teachers stretch out of their daily routines and 'try something new'.

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# NLP in the Classroom

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'The map is not the territory: we all have different maps of the world.' This phrase has long been used by NLP practitioners to express the idea that we all experience the world around us differently. It certainly rings true for many teachers who continue to search for ways to reach their students and create a supportive atmosphere in the classroom.

## **What is NLP?**

NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) consists of a variety of techniques which can enable us to refine communication to achieve results. It is used today by therapists, business people, educators and politicians. Some of the major areas covered by NLP include becoming aware of our communication patterns, establishing and maintaining rapport, realistic goal setting, building on resources, discovering what motivates us and others, and creativity strategies, to name a few.

## **The background of NLP**

NLP makes use of the presupposition that that we all perceive the world around us in different ways. Sights, sounds and feelings are filtered through our sensory system before they are sent on to our brains where they are processed and stored for recall at a later date. Understanding these processes became the focal point of John Grinder, a professor of linguistics, and Richard Bandler, a psychology student, who met in the 1970's at the University of California in Santa Cruz. In order to understand what makes communication successful, Bandler and Grinder decided to observe three renowned therapists; Virginia Satir (the founder of family therapy), Fritz Perls (the originator of Gestalt therapy) and Milton Erickson (a hypnotherapist). They first video-taped and then analysed speech patterns, body language and intonation in sessions held by these therapists. Their idea was to break down the elements of successful communication into specific parts so that they could teach these communication skills to other people. Bandler and Grinder worked out a system of coding which they called Neuro-Linguistic Programming; "Neuro" representing the brain and the nervous system where all human behaviour is created, "Linguistic" representing the words we use to express our thoughts and feelings, and "Programming" representing the patterns and actions we use to produce results and achieve our goals. (O'Connor 1990: 43)

## **The principles of NLP**

- The meaning of the communication is the response it elicits.
- We communicate on two levels: conscious and unconscious.
- People with the most flexibility have the best chances of achieving the response they desire.
- The more options we have, the greater our chances of success.
- If you keep doing what you have always done, you will always get what you have always gotten.
- If you know exactly what you want, it is easier to get it.
- We cannot change others, we can only change ourselves.
- Rapport means meeting someone in their model of the world.
- The map is not the territory.

### Representational systems

One of the basic ways NLP is used in education has to do with the processing of information. The world around us exists in our own perceptions and memories. NLP has named our sensory channels “representational” systems referring to the way we “re-present” or make sense of our external environments. Due to the constant bombardment of the information we receive every day, NLP practitioners maintain that most people have created a set of filters in order to keep from becoming overwhelmed. These filters can be divided into visual, auditory and kinaesthetic channels although in adults and older adolescents the kinaesthetic channel is generally sub-divided into a motoric or an emotional preference. When we are truly relaxed we find it easier to access and make use of each of these sensory channels, however when we are stressed we tend to rely on our most comfortable channel(s). It is, however, possible to perceive information in one channel, store it as a memory using another channel and express it using a third one. This particular mode of thinking can be expressed in different ways. One of them is through our eye movements as illustrated in the chart below. Looking up indicates visual accessing of information, looking to the side indicates auditory accessing, and looking down to our right indicates kinaesthetic accessing while looking down to our left indicates listening to an internal dialogue. In addition, looking to the left generally means searching for visual or auditory memories and to the right means constructing pictures or sounds. (This is true for most right-handed people. Left-handed people may look to the opposite side for their memories or constructions, although looking up always indicates visual processing and to the side always indicates auditory processing).”

#### NLP Eye Accessing Cues

(This is when you look at another person.)



Looking up to his/her right means the person is constructing images he/she has never seen.



Looking up to his/her left means the person is remembering images he/she has seen.



Looking to his/her right side means the person is constructing sounds he/she has never heard.



Looking to his/her left side means the person is remembering sounds he/she has heard.



Looking down to his/her right means the person is remembering or constructing feelings, physical experiences or emotions.



Looking down to his/her left means the person is listening to his/her inner voice.

Another possibility for us to become aware of the system in which a person is thinking at the moment is by listening to the language he or she uses. Visual people tend to use phrases such as “Is it clear?” or “Do you see what I mean?” Auditory people will ask, “Does that sound OK?” or “I hear what you are saying.” Kinaesthetic people tend to use action or feeling words such as “Let me walk you through it.” or “It just doesn’t feel right.” When we begin to notice our own language patterns as well as listening more carefully to people around us, we become aware of these patterns emerging again and again.

A third option for determining thought patterns deals with behavioral indications. Visually-oriented people need to see information in order to understand it. They often use color-coded systems to help them organize material. They like to get handouts and need to take notes so that they can refer to them later. As teachers they may spend time making their handouts look good and students will often highlight or underline important material. They may, however, have trouble remembering oral instructions, a point which teachers whose main channel is auditory need to be aware of. Auditory people, on the other hand, process information by listening and prefer to concentrate on the voice and tonality of the speaker. They love discussions and remember details of what was discussed. Sometimes they need to think aloud and talk through their thoughts. Auditory learners often acquire excellent accents in the foreign language and are able to express themselves well. Kinaesthetically-oriented people understand information through their feelings and experiences. They need to try things out for themselves and are often the action-oriented students in a classroom who enjoy hands-on projects and tasks. They tend to use gestures and movements while speaking and may have trouble sitting still for too long a period of time. They enjoy the social aspect of class but it is very important for them to have a good atmosphere in order to feel comfortable.

### **NLP in the classroom**

There are a number of ways to use NLP in the classroom and several of them are described below.

#### **Teaching / re-teaching**

One option which is useful when trying to get ideas, concepts, grammar points, etc. across is a technique called 'Teaching / Re-teaching'. This concept, developed by Michael Grinder (Grinder 1991:33-36) suggests that when we first present something new, we should do it using all the representational channels. We can write the information on the board, explain it aloud and use gestures or move about to help get the idea across. However, some learners may need more help grasping the concept. In this case, we can use a 're-teaching' segment. The example given in the presentation dealt with the use of the '3<sup>rd</sup> person singular s' in Present Simple sentences and how it 'disappears' when we make questions. Several participants were asked to come to the front of the room and given cards which had words on them making the sentence 'Maria likes pizza.' Then one person was given a card with a question mark on it and another one a card with 'Does'. The person with the question mark was instructed to push away the person with the 'full stop' and the one with 'Does' had to push away the 's'. The process was then reversed and the 'full stop' and the 's' replaced the 'question mark' and the 'does'. It was then explained that the primarily kinaesthetic learners need to feel with their bodies that the 'does' and the 's' cannot be found in the same sentence, a technique which has worked well with some of my learners. The same principle can be applied to making contractions. Here, two words such as 'It is' are written out on a card. The card is then folded so that the 'i' is hidden and a paper clip is added to represent the comma. In this way a kinaesthetic learner does not have to ask why a letter 'disappears' but understands the concept that it is just hidden. An idea for more advanced learners was an activity which demonstrated behaviour of people in a 'buyer's' or a 'seller's' market. Five students were told they were employers and the rest were looking for a job. They had to line up and sell themselves. Then the roles were reversed and five students were applicants and the rest needed to hire people. Through this role play, it became very apparent how market forces work and the students were able to physically understand the concept of supply and demand.

#### **Sensory-acuity exercises**

These short activities can be incorporated into classroom work to help learners begin to use additional representational channels. As most people are more comfortable with one or two channels, becoming aware of the less used ones can help learners to develop new learning strategies and increase their ability to perceive material in more than one way. As Michael Grinder points out 'It is not so much what we have learned, but where we have it stored' meaning that if we can remember something using a visual, auditory and the kinaesthetic channel, then we have more chance of accessing it when we need it. In this section of the workshop, we tried out three activities. First the participants closed their eyes and described someone in the room to their partner, then they followed a partner around by listening to a sound they made and finally practiced writing words on each others' backs.

#### **Rapport**

The practical part of the workshop finished with the importance of rapport and how we can establish and maintain it with our learners. After discussing the importance of elements such as matching body language,

posture, distance between speakers, register, and the volume and speed of the voice, we tried out the 'Three-minute exercise'. Three people were called to the front of the room. One was instructed to tell a story to the second person who was instructed to match body language. The third person gave the listener a signal after one minute to indicate that the listener should then mismatch body language. The speaker told her story enthusiastically until the listener 'appeared through her body language' to have lost interest and stopped suddenly. This exercise can include giving a second signal so that the listener begins to match again but as the group understood the concept, we stopped there. It was then pointed out how a teacher can support (or not support) a student who is giving a talk or taking an oral exam, simply through the use of body language.

### Summary

Summing up, these basic techniques can be easily learned. However, they need to be practiced on a daily basis. In the everyday stressful situation of the classroom, it is easy to forget that our learners may be experiencing the world differently than we do. However, for those who have become used to doing this, they notice results very quickly and gain the motivation to continue with these strategies. In the end, they find that changing their own behaviour pays as they expend less energy and the results may be more easily achieved and concepts understood more easily.

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# A New Way to Start the Lesson – Phrase of the Day

**Tanja Stare Pušavec**

*Osnovna šola Davorina Jenka, Cerklje na Gorenjskem*

I would like to begin this paper by giving some background information of how the topic of my workshop came about and how I gradually gathered a lot of materials and ideas. It all arose out of the needs and wishes of the pupils to be able to use their computers and Internet as much as possible. Since it is often difficult to find tasks for the pupils to do, phrases seemed a great idea to be explored into more detail. Phrases are an important cultural element of the language that our pupils should not be missing.

A phrase is defined as “a sequence of two or more words arranged in a grammatical construction and acting as a unit in a sentence” (dictionary.reference.com) or “a short group of words that are often used together and have a particular meaning” (dictionary.cambridge.org). Phrases are numerous and they seem very difficult for non-native speakers. You can never be sure whether a certain phrase consists of translational equivalents of the Slovene phrase, e.g. *an elephant in a china shop*, or of different English words, for example *as busy as a bee*. On one hand Slovene speakers of English make a lot of mistakes with phrases because of the influence of the mother tongue, while on the other they avoid using phrases at all for fear of making mistakes. Even primary school pupils are faced with phrases every day when listening to music, watching films or using the Internet. That is also the reason that some of the phrases come naturally to them. Knowing which words go together is an important part of understanding the meaning and using the new language successfully.

Working with pupils at the age of fourteen and fifteen is not always an easy task. They are very particular about what they want to do and about what they do not even want to touch. Using the Internet is certainly one of the favourite pastime activities of a modern pupil. So why not encourage our pupils to make use of online resources? You just need to come up with an idea that will be creative and not too demanding. Phrases seemed convenient enough and since they are a part of everyday vocabulary, pupils need to be aware of their existence.

When we first started explaining phrases, I found out that our pupils do not use online dictionaries at all. They were not aware of the possibilities they offer. I used the introductory lesson giving an example phrase and showing my pupils what a great tool online dictionaries are.

Phrases cannot be taught separately, that is without any context. That was why I decided to start introducing phrases as lesson starters. First I chose a topic: phrases with animals, phrases with numbers, phrases about food... Working with phrases can serve as an introduction into a new topic. The teacher collects a number of most common phrases with a certain key word. We started with animal phrases because we were just talking about food and food also comes from animals.

What can you do with phrases?

First the phrase needs to be explained in English and a sample sentence given. Then, if possible some etymology follows. Words and phrases have not always been as they are now. With the progress of the human kind the number of new words and phrases has been increasing all the time. One phrase is as old as the hills while another one comes from the previous century. It is interesting to know that. Here online resources

proved extremely useful. Pupils were trying to find the origin of the phrase and some story behind it. Sometimes the source showed more phrases with similar meaning. They could go exploring on and on.

After assembling a certain set of phrases, there is a lot to be done with them. The teacher can carry out mini projects with phrases. Writing a story using as many phrases as possible is one option. There are other possibilities such as writing a dialogue or a poem. Many free online tools make school lessons memorable, enjoyable and increase the learner autonomy since pupils choose what they want to do. A word cloud maker is one example ([www.worditout.com](http://www.worditout.com) and [www.tagxedo.com](http://www.tagxedo.com)). Pupils pick up phrases, find their perfect layout using a word cloud maker and prepare a display of their work. When the phrases are displayed on the wall, a competition is set up: Who can be the first to write down all the phrases correctly? Another great tool is a movie maker ([www.dvolver.com/moviemaker](http://www.dvolver.com/moviemaker)). Just by following simple rules pupils come up with their own movie in a matter of minutes. Writing compositions and essays is boring. No! Who says so? Using a newspaper generator ([www.fodey.com/generators/newspaper](http://www.fodey.com/generators/newspaper)) is the best possible solution. Of course, you need to put something down first. Using this tool pupils edit their text and it appears in a form of a newspaper story. They present an interesting story about the origin of a phrase. They write a comparative analysis between Slovene and English phrases. It is not too difficult if you know that you will eventually present your work in a nice form and style.

What about the teacher? An endless array of tools is offered online. Just pick and choose. The web site [www.theteacherscorner.net](http://www.theteacherscorner.net) is simple to use and you can create your tests, exercises or other activities.

Sometimes, just to break the ice after a holiday or a written assignment, you can make use of the so-called phrase/word of the day that many online dictionaries offer.

An example from IH Bristol: <http://www.ihbristol.com/english-phrases/>

March 6th 2015: **„a drop in the ocean“**

We use this expression to say that a quantity - usually money - is not very important for someone or something.

*Example 1*

She wears a lot of expensive jewellery.  
That gold ring must be worth thousands!  
Sure, but she's a multi-millionaire, so that's a drop in the ocean for her.

*Example 2*

The government is spending £2 million on improving car parking in the city.  
Yes, but that's a drop in the ocean compared to what they spend on arms.

An example of an animal phrase, adapted from [phrases.org.uk](http://phrases.org.uk):

**A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush**

**Meaning:** It's better to have a lesser but certain advantage than the possibility of a greater one that may come to nothing.

**Origin:** This proverb refers back to mediaeval falconry where a bird in the hand (the falcon) was a valuable asset and certainly worth more than two in the bush (the prey).

**Phrases with a similar meaning:**

A living dog is better than a dead lion.  
All that glitters is not gold.  
Look before you leap.

### Interesting facts:

The Bird in Hand was adopted as a pub name in England in the Middle Ages and many of this name still survive.

English migrants to America took the expression with them and, 'bird in hand' must have been known there by 1734 as this was the year in which a small town in Pennsylvania was founded with that name.

Other languages and cultures have their own version of this proverb, notably the Slovene, 'Boljši vrabec v roki kot golob na strehi' (A sparrow in the fist is better than a pigeon on the roof.).

A gap fill activity (Origin of the phrase: **Barking up the wrong tree**, from [www.TheTeachersCorner.net](http://www.TheTeachersCorner.net))

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
© www.TheTeachersCorner.net

**Complete the Sentence**

Use the words in the list below to complete the sentence

1. Barking up the wrong tree

2. If a person is being falsely accused of something, they might use this phrase to inform the accuser that they are mistaken. The \_\_\_\_\_ of this phrase is believed to be rooted in dogs and \_\_\_\_\_. Dogs are sometimes used during hunting because of their strong sense of \_\_\_\_\_ their ability to chase and \_\_\_\_\_ other animals, and they add a bit of extra \_\_\_\_\_ for the hunter. After spotting another animal, a dog will likely give \_\_\_\_\_. The fleeing animal, if it is capable, may decide to \_\_\_\_\_ a tree in order to get \_\_\_\_\_. However, since dogs are not great \_\_\_\_\_ climbing trees, they will instead \_\_\_\_\_ at the trunk of the tree and \_\_\_\_\_ which gives the hunter an indication on where the fleeing animal went. Well, a dog can make a \_\_\_\_\_ and choose the \_\_\_\_\_ tree. How would the dog get it wrong? Well, there are a number of \_\_\_\_\_ that could have led to the mistake. Perhaps the dog was unable to keep \_\_\_\_\_ with the fleeing animal during the chase, or maybe it got distracted along the way by something. Whatever the case, if a dog \_\_\_\_\_ to pick the right tree, well, then they are literally 'barking up the wrong tree.' This expression goes \_\_\_\_\_ to at least the early 19th century. \* Jason was barking up the wrong tree when he said I was the one that ate his cookies after he left the room; it was \_\_\_\_\_ his dog, Max!

actually  
mistake  
origin  
back  
smell  
away  
factors  
falls  
track  
climb  
security  
wrong  
at  
remain  
pace  
chase  
bark,  
hunting.

To conclude, I would like to point out that using phrases in my English lessons helps me achieve not just two but many objectives: pupils have become more aware of the richness of the English language, they have started using some phrases, they use Internet for learning and acquiring knowledge, they have realized that there are many different dictionaries and other free tools available online waiting for them to start using them and they like attending English lessons because they know there will be something for everyone as far as learning styles and interests are concerned. Just remember not to exaggerate with too many phrases, to introduce them in context and use real life, authentic material.

### Resources

Teachers are encouraged to explore the material in the following sites.

Alber, R. Vocabulary Instruction Teaching Tips. *Edutopia*. (Retrieved 10 April 2015 from <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/vocabulary-instruction-teaching-tips-rebecca-alber>.)

Busy Teacher. <http://busyteacher.org/3712-how-to-teach-english-idioms-and-their-meaning.html>

[http://www.tesol.org/docs/books/bk\\_ELTD\\_Vocabulary\\_974](http://www.tesol.org/docs/books/bk_ELTD_Vocabulary_974)

BBC Learning English. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/theteacher/>

### References

- International House Bristol Phrase of the Day. <http://www.ihbristol.com/english-phrases/>
- The Phrase Finder. <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/a-bird-in-the-hand.html>
- The Teachers Corner <http://www.theteacherscorner.net>

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# The Online World Behind the Scenes

(Confessions of a Former Computer-Game Addict)

**Maša Strajnšak**

The charms of the virtual world seem almost irresistible to a large part of the current younger generation. The online world mesmerizes the young and causes us to spend hours in front of our computers playing games while the rest of the world struggles to understand this new addiction. These games are largely perceived as a waste of time and the reason for lack of interest in other hobbies or antisocial behaviour. However, they can be so much more than that.

A personal experience with an online role-playing game called *World of Warcraft* taught me that online games have so much to give yet most people take so little from them. In fact, they offer just what teachers often seek - a common ground between education and entertainment.

It is important to understand that modern online games have a particular feature that makes them unique: you cannot play alone. They require communication, collaboration and contribution. That means that a society is formed, which concerns the individual in a way very similar to real life. Every player has a particular task and a specific role to play and often several players must unite to complete more difficult tasks. The society, of course, is divided into smaller units that work together to contribute to it.

## **Job applications**

In order to be a part of such a unit, called guild, an application is necessary. Much like a job application, it consists of a motivational letter and an "in-game" CV, which means listing your experience, role, skills and profession. The motivational letter expresses the desire to be a part of the chosen guild and the reasoning behind it. Constructing such a letter requires great writing skills as well as a particular mind-set. Writing several such applications within the game thus greatly influences your performance when applying for a job in real life as well, which is very important to those of us who have only just begun our careers and do not have much experience.

## **Skills applicable to real life**

Becoming a part of a guild again means certain new tasks and duties. More than that, however, it encourages and rewards skills very useful and applicable to real life: responsibility, reliability and good teamwork. Individuals are confronted with difficult situations and experience tough, sometimes unfair competition that they learn to deal with. Leading roles on the other hand require an inspiring presence, impeccable performance, ability to work under pressure and deal with stress, experience as well as constant self-improvement. Leaders, too, get into difficult situations where they must resolve arguments or choose between a friend and someone who is sure to do the task well. When these situations then arise in real life, players don't necessarily know the exact solution but they at least have had experience with something similar, which inspires confidence and provides ground to build on.

## **Money management**

Most online games of this type also have a currency (gold pieces, for example), which is earned by completing tasks, quests, helping people and selling various items. This currency is then used for buying other things you need such as food and drink, materials used by a profession or desirable items. Some items can be very

expensive and require weeks or months of saving up or even working towards earning more money. Some players borrow money and others lend it (some proving to be more trustworthy than others). It is an opportunity to learn money management or even experience things such as buying and reselling for profit, in an "invented" environment, which will not affect you long-term in real life.

### **Discovering other cultures and backgrounds**

Of course, the online world having its own society, there is a large base of players to meet. You meet a lot of people every day. What is interesting about these people is that they come from all sorts of backgrounds. This way, individuals from vastly varied backgrounds, which have previously been stuck in their little bubble of school, hobby or work friends, come into contact with someone completely different but strangely interesting and intriguing. Police officers play alongside convicts, the latter become friends with lawyers while immensely rich people become aware of the world of the poor. Stereotypes are broken and some boundaries breached as people of all nationalities begin to discover each other's cultures.

### **Confidence**

The myth of antisocial gamers is not completely invented. There are definitely some out there that devote their lives to the game at the expense of their work, studies or socialising. However, with all the focus on these "antisocial" individuals, many positive aspects of online communications are too often overlooked. For many, the game is a confidence boost. It is another world, where they can prove themselves and receive encouragement, admiration, support or understanding. Meeting so many people every day (as opposed to, as previously mentioned, a closed circle of the every-day routine) is bound to result in a person, or two, that will seem to understand things others do not or that, at least, offer a different perspective, due to a different background and a different set of experiences.

### **Friendships**

Those concerned about their appearance are relieved when they can hide behind their backgrounds and people of a more shy nature relish the communication system largely based on typing, rather than speaking. Because deleting a message or simply not replying anymore is so easy, similarly to text messages, many people feel a lot less vulnerable and are willing to talk more openly. There is no judgement based on physical appearance because someone is first made known through his or her actions. Thus, many good and long-lasting friendships can be made. Even online, a person can still be judged or appreciated based on how reliable, trustworthy, helpful or generous he or she is.

### **Learning foreign languages**

Making friends only encourages players to communicate more, often in a foreign language. Imagine a student that only knew the basics of English and never cared much for it now finally realising that they cannot share all the excitement of the day with their friend because they do not know the words for it. Quickly, ignorance turns into interest and students (me being one of them) suddenly want to jump over the wall that we call the language barrier. Not only did I start paying more attention during language lessons at school, I started soaking up words in the game to the point where I absorbed and used them without realizing it. Suddenly I was thrown into a world with a language I only had very limited knowledge of, but knowing English was simply necessary to get involved.

### **Vocabulary**

There is an endless supply of vocabulary hidden in these games from everyday conversation, to materials used by various professions, tools, weapons, clothing, food, fauna and flora. As players progress through the game, gather materials and interact with people, the names of these things are repeated hundreds of times, while their minds are relaxed and ready to soak everything up because they are enjoying themselves.

### **Confidence when speaking a foreign language**

As the game gets to a certain point, oral communication becomes part of it too, as the pace is simply so fast that writing just won't do. That is where all that you've learnt is used more actively too. I was encouraged to speak on a daily basis and within a relatively short time, I progressed from a shy short worded conversation to being able to give a presentation in a foreign language without any problems.

### **Contacts to practise the language with**

Students once had pen pals, now we have “contacts” and a “friendlist”. The game not only provides the vocabulary and the structures of an every-day conversation, it also provides the reason to use it, which is a constant presence of someone to practise with. In a world where it is not uncommon for people to leave their country in search of jobs or good opportunities, online games offer another world where you can run around with your friends or relatives, just a click away. It is a great way to keep in touch and have an activity in common even when thousands of miles away.

### **Travelling**

Meanwhile, those that were once thousands of miles away now come and visit the friends they met online. Cultures mix and people travel and explore new countries that before seemed so far away and so different. I travelled through most of Europe having “native” guides everywhere and a place to sleep. I’ve seen the Norwegian fjords, the French cliffs, the Czech parks, climbed Ben Nevis and explored so many more amazing places thanks to the contacts I acquired in this other world. Most importantly, however, I learnt to respect and love languages. They became my passion. Not only did I learn English but also French, Spanish, Dutch and Russian thanks to the game and the friends I met through it.

### **Relaxed environment to learn in**

The game can teach you a lot, as long as you know how to apply it to real life. That is what should be encouraged - the use and the transfer of skills from a hobby we love, into a life in which we’ll use them. From no knowledge and interest, to fluency, that is the difference a relaxed and fun approach makes so it is definitely something to strive for, when teaching languages. An environment where learners do not perceive the subject as the necessary evil but as a skill essential to something they enjoy. Turn learning languages into a game and people will play.

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# Towards Adopting a New View of Understanding and Teaching Idioms

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## **Introduction**

Understanding and translating phraseological units from one language to another is one of the key issues in linguistics, which in turn presents a topic of concern in both translation studies and second language teaching. Idioms, as complex figurative components of a language, pose a challenge when introduced to second language learners. Created as combined research in the domains of applied cognitive linguistics and phraseology, this paper aims to shed a light on the metaphorical aspect of idioms as important cultural elements, taking as an example idioms with the component “heart”, as well as to point to the innovative possibilities of teaching these expressions in second language acquisition.

## **Terminology**

Linguistic terminology often oscillates between different terms for similar phraseological forms. The academic approach of linguists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and other neighbor countries offers a number of terms, such as “phaseme” (Vrgoč and Fink Arsovski 2008: 5), “phraseologism” (under the influence of Soviet and German linguists), “idiom”, “idiomatic expression”, “fixed expression”, “fixed collocation”, “phraseological form”, etc. (Tanović 2000: 22; Hrustić 2001: 18). On the other hand, English linguists often resort to the simplistic term “idiom” (case in point: Crystal 1987: 96-97), which is used as an umbrella term for various ‘phraseological apparitions’ across the various subdisciplines of linguistics, and is also the most familiar term in second language teaching. Therefore, in the interest of simplicity and clear understanding, we will also use the term “idiom”, since it has a broader meaning, and, as Jerolimov (2001: 87), pointed out, phraseological expressions are often “idiomatized combinations with emphasised metaphorisation”, bringing into attention the metaphoric quality of idioms, with which we are also concerned in the following chapter.

## **Cultural models and conceptualisation**

Figurative language is immanent to everyday communication. The key role of metaphor, as the ‘basic unit’ of figurative expression, was recognised by Lakoff and Johnson in their seminal work *Metaphors We Live By*, where our conceptual system, in terms of the way we think and act, was seen as fundamentally metaphoric in nature.

This breakthrough view of metaphor has influenced countless research endeavours from cognitive linguistics to second language acquisition, and metaphor, along with metonymy - a term also closely connected to the process of conceptualisation - have been discovered and analysed in almost all instances of language use. However, viewing idioms as important cultural elements and their classification still requires a fair amount of academic work, especially in the area of teaching and learning a second language. In order to master English language, which is the language in focus, students often have to wade through a jungle of unknown lexical constructions and can often misunderstand figurative expressions. The question is: how can teachers provide a better understanding of idioms and offer an interesting insight into the English language and culture at the same time<sup>1</sup>?

<sup>1</sup> By “English culture” we mean the culture that is created in the areas of the world where the main/official language is English (Great Britain and the USA, primarily), which are also presented in various forms as cultures of importance in EFL textbooks and curriculum.

First, we need to understand that both metaphor and metonymy play a large role in understanding idioms and other language features. The process of cognition (therefore, of the emergence of both metaphor and metonymy in our mind) cannot take place without embodiment, which, in short, „involves people’s subjective, felt experiences of their bodies in action that provide part of the fundamental grounding for language and thought“ (Kövecses 2010: 325). Our cognition is shaped by the way we perceive and interact with the world with our bodies, and this is particularly true when it comes to emotions. The concepts of emotions are also based on bodily experiences, and they pose a starting point in understanding a wide variety of idioms, especially those with a body part as a component. Sharifian *et al.* (2008: 13-14) sum it up in the following paragraph, noting precisely the reason why we have a tendency to metonymise and metaphorise our experiences by using body-related terms:

„First of all, all the languages included reveal a tendency to employ the domain of internal body organs as a source of conceptualizations for the human faculties of thought and emotion, for personality traits, for mood, etc. This is not astonishing, in view of the fact that people all over the world, independent of their cultural backgrounds and culture-specific conceptualization of the body itself, do have bodies that are basically similar and therefore necessarily share bodily experiences.“

Second, the same authors (*ibid.*) point to the fact that different cultures have different points of location for the human mind, identifying three main centers: the abdomen region, the heart region, and the head region. Languages, therefore, can be divided into abdomenocentric, cardiocentric, and cerebrocentric, and while the exact position of some languages in this trifold is yet to be determined, based on linguistic discoveries by Niemeier (2008), as well as our own research in several idioms dictionaries and consequent analysis of idioms with the component „heart“, we can state that English language has a definitive strong hold on the cardiocentric part of the aforementioned ‚triangle‘ of conceptualisation (although its place today is poliocentric, with the ‚other foot‘ set firmly in cerebrocentric conceptualisation). Moreover, the heart is seen as the central organ of the body since the ancient times, representing the ‚headquarters‘ of emotions in the philosophical dualism of mind/reason vs. emotions, and a very powerful symbol in most cultures around the world, especially when looking at the Western tradition of symbolising the head and the heart as diametrically opposite (more on the role of the heart in Niemeier 2008).

### **Classification of idioms with the component „heart“**

According to Hrustić (2001: 63), idioms<sup>2</sup> are created in order to emphasise our expressions in situations in which the speaker is subjectively involved in the events: death, accidents, success, excitement, sadness, etc. These affective human states are a good foundation for the metaphoric creation of picturesque linguistic forms such as idioms, adds Hrustić (*ibid.*).

In the previous chapter, we have alluded to the research of idioms in English language that contain the component „heart“. The lexicographic material consists of available idioms dictionaries and online idioms collections, which have produced a total of 84 idioms with the common lexical field of „heart“. We have adopted the metonymic classification of these idioms by Niemeier (2008: 351-ff.), and introduced three more classes, so the final division is as follows:

- 1) *Heart* as a metonymy for A PERSON’S FEELINGS
- 2) *Heart* as a metonymy for a PERSON AS A WHOLE
- 3) *Heart* as an OBJECT OF VALUE
- 4) *Heart* as a CONTAINER
- 5) *Heart* as a metonymy for WILL/REASON
- 6) *Heart* as a MEASURING INSTRUMENT
- 7) *Heart* as a CENTER

Since the physical constraints of this paper do not offer enough room to individually analyse all 84 idioms based on this classification, we will only present an idiom per instance (seven in total), along with examples found in the dictionaries in the form of sentences.

<sup>2</sup> As previously noted, Hrustić has delved into the issue of terminology – in her work she uses the term „phrase“ although she recognises the use of the synonym „idiom“ in English and American linguistics (2001, 18).

### Heart as a metonymy for A PERSON'S FEELINGS

- 1) close to someone's heart  
*Animal rights is an issue very close to my heart.* (CIDI<sup>3</sup> 2002: 184)  
Heart as a metonymy for a PERSON AS A WHOLE
- 2) be a bleeding heart  
*People keep telling me to stop being such a bleeding heart. «That's life», they say.* (EHFR: 101)  
Heart as an OBJECT OF VALUE
- 3) lose your heart to someone or something  
*Paul Gauguin lost his heart to the Pacific islands with their silky white sands and Parisian-style cafes.* (EHFR: 102)  
Heart as a CONTAINER
- 4) pour your heart out  
*I'd only met him once, and here he was, pouring out his heart to me.* (CIDI: 185)  
Heart as a metonymy for WILL/REASON
- 5) have a change of heart  
*«Goodfellas» marked a change of heart for Scorsese, who had sworn he would never make a film about the Mafia.* (LID: 58)  
Heart as a MEASURING INSTRUMENT
- 6) know/learn something (off) by heart  
*He's my favourite poet. I know several of his poems by heart.* (CIDI: 185)  
Heart as a CENTER
- 7) in your heart of hearts  
*I knew in my heart of hearts that something was wrong, but I just wasn't ready to deal with it.* (CIDI: 185)

### Applying innovative idiom-learning techniques in the classroom

Littlemore (2009: 3) notes that key concepts of cognitive linguistics, such as metaphor and metonymy, are highly relevant to second language learning and teaching. Kövecses (2010: 239) states that if we raise our students' level of awareness of metaphor, we also raise their vocabulary acquisition, and adds that "this strategy is a welcome addition to the methodologies teachers and curriculum writers currently use in teaching vocabulary in foreign language instruction."

Developing a better understanding of the figurative components of English language can provide learners of this language with knowledge of idioms as an important linguistic/cultural element, and their application in activities that concern all four skills. Besides the aforementioned significance of „heart“ in terms of cultural conceptualisation, using idioms with the component „heart“ as an example served another purpose – since these idioms are closely connected to human emotions, with which students are often preoccupied on a daily basis in their pre-teen and teenage years, they provide a solid basis for connecting the abstract definition to a concrete and clear example, thus engaging learners in a more fluent conversation enriched with idioms.

Learners should have a variety of learning modes presented to them, where, as Gass and Selinker (2008: 437) add, „they can accommodate to the various modes in which incoming information is processed.“ Therefore, in order to engage all types of learners, the ways of teaching all elements of language, including idioms, should entail visual prompts, role-play, movement, as well as other techniques that require interaction and creative input from learners, since, as Wright *et al.* (1994: 1) note that "if they are amused, angered, challenged, intrigued or surprised the content is clearly meaningful to them. Thus the meaning of the language they listen to, read, speak and write will be more vividly experienced, and, therefore, better remembered."

Some of the student-centered activities that boost their knowledge of idioms include the following:

- organising students in groups, where each group receives a prompt in the form of an idiom that they have to either act out or draw in order to receive points (e.g. pretending to „be a bleeding heart“, where the other students need to guess the idiom) – this activity would ensure the existence of deeper thinking processes while describing the idiom visually or kinesthetically,

<sup>3</sup> The following acronyms have been used to note the dictionaries where the examples were found: CIDI – Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms; EHFR - Englesko-hrvatski frazeološki rječnik; LID – Longman Idioms Dictionary.

- having students draw or in some other way present an idiom as being different from the learned phrase (for example, „Queen of Hearts“ would then be drawn as the „queen of spades“ card – reversed association), where their pairs need to guess the right idiom,
- using lyrics of contemporary songs that appeal to their current taste in music, have the students find and underline idioms present in the text (this activity can be broadened to collocations and proverbs as well)
- discussing literal versus figurative meaning of English idioms (and their translation – finding the counterparts in the mother tongue), where the metaphoric aspect of idioms can provide a deeper understanding of their use in language,
- organising competitions where students need to lead a normal conversation in English using as many idioms as possible (teacher can provide additional constraints such as using idioms learned in previous classes, etc.),
- for students that are not yet capable of conversing in English, idioms can be presented simply as a theme of an art project (topical posters presenting somatic idioms, animal idioms, etc.)
- for advanced students, idioms can also present a challenge in discovering the origin – etymological research using modern technology.

All of these activities represent innovative ways of learning idioms by incorporating the aspect of metaphoric/metonymic conceptualisation present in the cognitive linguistics approach, thus offering a new look at language itself, as well as the culture behind the creation of these intricate linguistic elements.

### Conclusion

Idioms are not an abstract linguistic component, but one of the key ingredients of the civilisational/cultural heritage that reflects its most colourful elements precisely in a given language. By acknowledging the existence of metaphor and metonymy in these phraseological units, such as those present in the example of idioms with the component “heart”, we are able to discover the basic concepts shared across cultures and nations and provide a deeper understanding of language to both students and ourselves as linguists and teachers.

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# Person-centered learning

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When I first started teaching, I thought that planning an interesting and exciting lesson is all it takes to make students actively involved in the learning process, and thereby successful. The students, especially the younger ones, thoroughly enjoyed the lessons and I firmly believed that they made progress, as far as their language abilities were concerned. I was well aware even then that every student learns a foreign language in a different way, and that they need to find out what works for them. My role was to provide the kind of input that suits all learning styles, choose content they liked, and find ways to present it properly and assess their knowledge/skills according to the objectives (mostly given in the books) set. I felt I was doing everything right because that is how I was trained and taught.

I soon became disillusioned, however, because no matter what I did or how exciting and activity-packed my lessons were, not all the students *performed* well, and most of them kept making the same mistakes over and over again. This, at that time, left me with the impression that I was either doing something wrong or that my students weren't trying hard enough.

During my MA I read about learning theories (which should have been covered in my undergraduate studies) and that made me realize how much I had missed out on. Learning more about theories of second language acquisition such as Krashen's along many other aspects related to language learning, I began to understand the learning process better and this completely changed my approach, methodology as well as my expectations. I started paying more attention to what I did in class, and began building up my lessons around students' real needs and abilities. I set more realistic and feasible goals and I started to feel that, for the first time, my teaching became student-centered. I realized that, before this change took place, what I had been doing was for my own entertainment and for my wish to prove my creativity. I can now freely admit that this was rather vain and this realization did hurt, but once I had become aware, it helped me grow both personally and professionally.

However, just when I felt that there was real progress, no matter how slow, and that my students were gaining workable and active knowledge, the national system for standardized external testing was introduced. Now, in addition to the requirements of the national curriculum, another constraint, and more pressure, was put on teachers to achieve a target they themselves hadn't set.

Needless to say, the national curriculum for all the subjects is based on a so-called 'average student' in an 'average school' so the teaching materials and the tests should accommodate all learners. Thus, the teacher is meant to teach the material chosen by the Ministry, use course books approved by the Ministry, apply a (or THE) methodology approved by the Ministry, with a compulsory percentage of 'IT use' prescribed by the Ministry *et al.* in order to achieve the goal(s) set by the Ministry - viz. good (sic.) results as determined by external exams. As you can see, this is more about the mysterious workings of the Education Ministry, and the teachers are asked to 'play' their role for the sake of alleged 'fairness'. I haven't mentioned the learners because, indeed, they are not mentioned; only their results!

Having explained this, I would like to move on to what I saw as the biggest challenge in the context of where I teach. First, my students are not 'average' students in an 'average' school because I teach mixed ability classes - mixed grades not only mixed abilities - *but* also with different ages and ethnicities, different mother tongues, vastly different socio-economic backgrounds, in an underdeveloped, rural and extremely traditional environment. More often than not, my students come to school with little or no previous general knowledge which is a result of a variety of reasons: many live below the poverty line with parents who are poorly educated so it is a very complex and incredibly sensitive environment.

So, on one side there are my own and the external expectations, requirements and goals, and on the other there is reality. That is why many teachers in my country end up *teaching the materials rather than the students*. Sadly, this gap is widening because the students are only thought of in terms of measurable test results, and the teachers are worried more about numbers than teaching individual learners with particular needs. When we take into consideration the following stipulation:

"Teachers whose grades deviate from the grades obtained in the external exams will have a 20 % decrease in their salaries in the forthcoming year. For those teachers (according to Article 8 from the Primary Education Law), there will be compulsory counseling provided by the Bureau of Education. If after two years of counseling, the teacher continues to have students with discrepancies between the two grades, they will lose the right to teach and the school principal will sign the termination of his/her contract." (Law for Primary Education, Article 97)

We can understand why teachers are scared, frustrated and lack enthusiasm. In the light of this, I could have easily given up but, once I had stopped moaning and whining, I decided to go back to basics and adopt a teaching approach that is not just student but is person-centered. I felt that we (they?) had lost sight of what really matters and that it is people's feelings, interests, needs, sense of belonging and security in the classroom, that should come first and be of utmost priority. So, I became far more flexible and understanding about the students' needs. I tried to be more confident about what went on in the classroom rather than holding on to a prepared lesson plan. Of course, I do have a certain plan before I go into class, but then it depends on what happens, or what I come to see in front of me during the lesson that guides me.

I try to make my students feel more confident, and I start from what they already know regardless of how little that may be; I build on that in line with Paolo Freire's idea that the best way to educate people is to start with what they already know! I take small steps but those are steps, nonetheless, which means we, both the learners and I, are moving forward. I set feasible and attainable goals and objectives; I try to give as much input as I think they can handle; I don't overestimate or underestimate them; but I definitely do not strictly stick to the national programmes created by the Bureau of Education. There is a risk there and I am well aware of the fact that my students may 'under-achieve' in relation to the external test (unless they cheat and that I am liable for counseling and/or having to pay fines).

Whatever happens, I have decided not to accept the 'assembly line' philosophy and enforced standardization policy. If I manage to teach tolerance but fail to teach the tenses, so be it. Perhaps they will certainly recognize the 'present tense' because it is going to matter in their 'future'.

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