

ASOCIACION EX ALUMNOS DEL PROFESORADO EN LENGUAS VIVAS "J.R.FERNANDEZ"
DEPARTAMENTO DE ALUMNOS LIBRES



Teachers' Centre

AEXALEVI *Forum*

Issue XI - May 2012

AEXALEVI *Forum*

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Get your students to speak...in English!

Prof. Beatriz Petrucelli

We sometimes wonder: How can we motivate our students to speak English in class?

When I began working at *La Asociación*, back in March 1980, students of English did not have the chance of being constantly exposed to the language as they are now, so it was harder for them to understand English and to put what they learnt into practice. They were a little bit reluctant to have conversation segments in class since it took them longer to express what they meant to say. They thought in Spanish. They felt embarrassed.

Later on, however, let's say since the late 90's or the beginning of the new century, students of English have been constantly surrounded by an ever increasing rise of different aids which back up and strengthen their understanding and production in class. Students definitely understand English much more as they not only have the

opportunity of watching films and listening to songs, but also of engaging in conversation with foreigners coming to our country, or using the Internet, which enables you to chat with someone actually living in the antipodes.

The situation has definitely changed. Students feel stronger now. Sometimes the very young ones have a grasp on some colloquial vocabulary we, teachers, don't know since their contact with movies and song lyrics is an everyday ordinary thing.

Yet, how come that some students are still unwilling to talk in class in this era of communication? I believe they do so because they feel they will be judged, (I don't mean corrected, which is a good thing to do; we learn through trial and error), I actually mean JUDGED. They feel the teacher will get angry with them if they make a mistake and their mates will laugh at them. I have been told so by several students who have

gone through this situation, especially at school and, let me assure you, you can see they are taken out of their comfort zone when asked to take part in a class.

The picture in some classes is that sometimes students are not familiar with the one sitting next to them, which makes them feel uncomfortable; they do not even know their teacher's name! Ask them a question in front of everybody, ask them to produce an example, let alone a comment on the reader, and you'll be taking them out of their comfort zone. They just feel OK listening to you and making comments in Spanish. And sometimes they think that will do. They suppose they will learn by osmosis.

Mind you, not all students are like this. There are some people who love to take active part in class and this is fantastic because sometimes they motivate the others to follow their example, since their mates see that there's no harm at all in speaking in English in an English class!

Then there's the obnoxious student who once in a while speaks English but more often than not is saying things in Spanish, which turns out to be annoying, since it totally breaks the atmosphere that you succeeded in creating. You are delivering a beautiful class in English and then comes *Pepe*

and says: "Buen día. Perdón que llegué tarde pero....."

Reader time: The ordeal which would have put more than one Templar to the test.

There are different student attitudes to the reader. In general there are those who seldom prepare the readers, and you are faced with a class of twelve, during which some students can take part because they **did** read the story (by heart more often than not), some others who read it two weeks ago and are proud of having carried out the task but naturally do not remember a single word (who would?), and there's those who have forgotten to do their oral assignment for the day because they either didn't take it down in their notebooks, or they did so but they didn't remember to check, or they simply don't care about the assignment at all.

Alas! You are filled with despair and I know of some teachers who, seeing the time for the final exam is inexorably coming closer and closer, provide their students with a summary, which the poor things commit to memory. The point is: can we deal with a reader as if it were a memo test? By no means! We have to be patient enough and try and explain to our students the purpose and benefit of reading short stories, novels and plays. In the long run, if we tell them, for instance, that the book in

question is just one more means that will help them acquire vocabulary, comprehension and fluency; if we tell them that we are interested in their comments and opinions whether they liked the book or not and that we ourselves will profit from our students' rendering; if we tell them so and we believe what we are saying and we mean it from the bottom of our hearts, our students will not fail to see it and, as I was saying, in the long run, even if it is November, they will come to understand the paramount importance of complementing their learning of the language via one of the most important and beautiful things a human being can do: READ BOOKS.

I firmly believe, and I've been proven right in my own classes year after year, that if our students **feel happy in class**, comfortable enough, if they know their teachers and one another extremely well, they will not only feel like talking in English, but they will also understand the need of reading and doing some written work at home to keep in touch with the language between classes. This is a long and patience-trying process, though.

I would love to make you aware of the fact that nowadays, no matter how old students are, no matter whether it's a children's, preadolescents' or older learners' class, these students, **when properly motivated**, will be happy to

actively engage in conversation, singing, debating, i.e., they will be willing to take up a leading role in class. This is what the wise Daisaku Ikeda says about teachers and students, which I guess summarizes what I think about education, but he really knows how to put it beautifully:

The relationship between teacher and pupil can be a vital link through which new horizons are opened up and life develops. To me, the essence of education is this process whereby one person's character inspires another. When teachers become partners in the process of discovery, burning with a passion for truth, the desire to learn will naturally be ignited in their students' hearts. And once children feel that their teachers are genuinely concerned for their individual welfare, they will begin to trust them and open up to them.

Thank you, Beatriz!

AEXALEVIDAY

Teachers sharing with teachers!

Prof. Florencia Insua

It was a day to share, to interact, to exchange ideas and to realize that “we are all in this together” as the song said in the inspiring video we saw that day.

There was nothing missing! We all had the chance to get useful information about AEXALEVI exams and bibliography. We found out about the advantages of AEXALEVI exams over other types of exams available on the market. In the morning we all got tips for helping our students develop their writing skills. And in the afternoon we had the chance to get wonderful prizes. Many left with coursebooks, activity packs, readers and dictionaries courtesy of Pearson, Cambridge, Oxford and SBS. And then, the perfect closing of an action-filled day: the much-awaited raffle of a language course in the Hampstead School of English in London!. But, this day will be memorable for us at the Asociación because we were proud to hold

excellent workshops led by some of our teachers at *La Asociación*:

Vanessa Bain: “**Project work in the EFL class: an opportunity to enhance our students’ performance**”. Vanessa delighted us with a wonderful presentation on the benefits of project work and shared with us a very successful project that she had developed and carried out with her primary school students at I.E.S en Lenguas Vivas J.R.F.

Lucía Desalvo and Paola Fotonana: “**How to make the most of speaking activities and storytelling**”. Lucía and Paola showed us how to motivate young learners to speak in class through fun and challenging activities. They also gave us tips to make the most of the magic of storytelling.

Karin Pelicarić. “**Learn to speak by speaking**”. Karin fully engaged participants in a lively interaction activity geared toward putting ourselves in our students’ shoes and showing us

how to make the most of classroom speaking time.

Beatriz Petrucelli . **“Get your students to speak...in English”**. Beatriz invited us to peep into her secrets to make students feel comfortable in the classroom and to create the atmosphere to get students use English in class.

Paola Verando: **“An Innovative way of dealing with readers in the classroom”**. Paola opened a variety of possibilities to deal with readers by making use of literary theories such as post-colonialism and feminism, among others, in order to carry out a much deeper analysis and arrive at a richer understanding of the stories.



Participants at AEXALEVIDAY



Vannesa Bain led the afternoon plenary

It was a pleasure to share the afternoon with these excellent professionals: highly competent teachers and examiners willing to share their experience and to help other teachers get the best from their students.

AEXALEVI DAY was a day to remember that we are all together in this wonderful journey. It was day to remember that we are teachers who should never lose our own drive to learn. We always go on learning about new aspects of language, new teaching approaches, new technologies and we also learn from our students. We should always remember that students and teachers make up a team. We may be the leaders of that team, but it is the spirit of working together towards a common goal which will lead us to success!



From left to right: Mariana Ulanowicz, Head of Hampstead School of English, Angela Edelmann de Abregó, Vice-President of the Committee at *La Asociación*, Diana Ogando, Coordinator of *Departamento de Alumnos Libres* at *La Asociación*, Mariela Pauluzzi, Coordinator at Colegio Valle Grande, and Liliana Luna, Head of *La Asociación*.

What did some teachers say about AEXALEVI DAY?

"The Aexalevi Day was really fruitful and motivating. We enjoyed an atmosphere of cooperation, professionalism and comradeship. We got a clear picture of the different levels, new material and changes for this year. It was good to review the advantages of being a member of "La Asociación" !"

Mariana Ulanowicz

HAMPSTEAD ARGENTINA



Needless to say how meaningful the event has been in every aspect. Your energy and enthusiasm is contagious, and attending Aexalevi Day every year is undoubtedly a great thing! We are actually satisfied and very grateful for your help and commitment"

COLEGIO SAN CARLOS -
ENGLISH DEP.- Marina Otero

"I enjoy these meetings indeed. The last one seems always better than the former, though this is probably only in my mind. Anyway the truth is that I always feel as if time stands still when I'm there and I could stay forever. The review on exams and activities is perfectly clear and the lectures that I attended have actually been useful supplying plenty of information to keep us all updated and inspired."

Joe Pollari

How to describe AEXALEVI Day? How can I define with words such a well done job, academically perfect? How to reproduce the emotion I felt to see my colleagues showing their work so naturally, with such joy and enthusiasm? How can I tell you? Making reference to a phrase: "team work". Thank you for such a beautiful day!

Carla Montoya



COMING SOON!!

AEXALEVI TEACHER DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR

Rethinking Teaching:

Getting our bearings in a fast changing scenario

**June 23rd
9a.m to 5 p.m**

**Escuela Argentina Modelo
Riobamba 1059- CABA**

Prof. Sarah Hillyard “ Back to VAK:Lively classrooms for visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners”

Lic. Gustavo Paz “ Motivation and Secondary School Students”

Mg. Laura Renart “ Bumps and Shocks- Culture in the Teenage Classroom”

Lic. Mady Casco “Using Topic-based Projects with Adult Learners”

For more information contact us at alumnoslibres@aexalevi.org.ar



Teachers' Centre Project Work 2012

A Mirror of Ourselves

Prof. Florencia Insua

The ones who attended the fantastic workshop by Vanessa Bain on AEXALEVI DAY already know about the advantages of Project work.

This year, the Teachers' Centre has invited all the courses at "La Asociación" to participate in a new project and we would like you to join us as well.

The project aims to create an atmosphere of reflection about ourselves as individuals and as members of a community. We would like our students to engage in both introspection and group discussion of some issues that we believe are relevant to our society nowadays and which will contribute toward our students' personal growth and the development of their linguistic, social and interpersonal skills.

Main themes / topic areas of the project:

1. Prejudice and Discrimination
2. Citizenship
3. Children's Rights
4. Self Expression (Art)

You may deal with only one or two of the suggested topics or decide to work with all of them. This will depend on the time available for the project and your students' interests and age.

Prejudice and Discrimination

Sub topics

Prejudice and discrimination on the basis of sex, age, race, social status, nationality, etc

Bullying

Harassment in Social Networks

Citizenship

Subtopics

Traffic Laws

Good manners

Getting along at home, with neighbours, at school, etc

Children's Rights

Sub topics

Child Labour

Children in the media

NGOs working for Children's Rights

Self Expression

Sub topics

Art

Photography

Music

All the previous topics and subtopics will require that research be done by the students (or the teacher in the case of courses with young children). The teacher will need to guide her/his students in their research and also plan instances of classroom discussion and tasks. Both teacher and students will then have to decide on the product of the project.

All projects need a product, something that can be shown or made public by the end of the process. These are just some ideas or suggestions, but of course you can let your imagination fly and come up with different and more creative ideas.

Possible Project products:

- A poster (For example: " how to get home after a party", "traffic regulations in the city", "children's rights"/ "do's and don'ts at school", etc)

- A presentation (on types of discrimination, causes and consequences, children's rights, etc). You may even ask your students to make a PowerPoint presentation!
- A flyer (what to do if you're a victim of bullying/ how to be a good neighbor / how to help a children's rights organization, etc)
- An advertisement for a campaign (to prevent discrimination/raise awareness on children's rights/ to encourage safe driving)
- A commercial (film a short commercial on any of the first three topics) There are short ads in Youtube which are very appealing. (See appendix)
- A filmed news report (film a short TV news report)
- A song (write a song to raise awareness on discrimination and prejudice)
- A photograph exhibition on the topic: "A mirror of ourselves" (discuss the theme and ask students to bring pictures they believe should be included in the exhibit. Have students describe them and explain their views. This may require them to do some research on

photography techniques and jargon)

- An artistic exhibition (similar to the photograph exhibition, but with drawings students have done)

As you see from these examples the sky is the limit! You know your students and what motivates them. Every product aims at developing different skills and you can exploit them so that your students will be learning without realizing they are doing so. What's more, they will be learning to care about others, to get to know themselves and how they feel about these topics.

We hope you can devote some lessons this year for this project and send us your comments and photos of your students' work to our email address: teacherscentre@aexalevi.org.ar.

Your students' work will be exhibited in our traditional Teacher's Day celebration at *La Asociación* in September.

Appendix

Here are a few Youtube links that can help get you started.

Prejudice and discrimination

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wr3ujTt89A&feature=related>

Anti discrimination advert

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Dm7-yJfEc&NR=1&feature=fvwp>

Stop discrimination video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVP_Rcq9aEE&feature=related Prejudice

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdvfVqv6usw&feature=related> Labels

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hy-XUeoJ0w&NR=1&feature=fvwp>

Bullying

Children's rights

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJWKMpB30nY&feature=relmfu> Cartoon

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLNUsS2hLBM&feature=related>

Unicef comercial Australia

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2W-E61ylhE&feature=related>

best short film Child Labour

Citizenship

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaJB_RzHyN3A&feature=related

on being a good citizen at school

Unplugged: From Film-making to Teaching

Mg. Myrian Casamassima

A few days ago I went to the cinema and I was once more completely taken aback by the wonders of technology in the latest film about superheroes. Although it was predictable from beginning to end, it entertained me for quite a while. On my return to the real world, I recalled Scott Thornbury. He acknowledges the beginning of the Dogme movement in ELT as stemming from film-making.

“In 1995 a group of Danish film-makers, including Lars von Trier, signed a vow of chastity, which became the manifesto of the Dogme 95 film-making collective. Their intention was to cleanse cinema of an obsessive concern for technique and rehabilitate a cinema which foregrounded the story, and the inner life of the characters. They rejected the superficiality and trickery of mainstream film-making. Films made according to Dogme 95 prescriptions (such as Thomas Vinterberg's *Festen*) typically have a

rough, gritty, even raw, quality and are certainly a far remove from the slick artifice and technical virtuosity of Hollywood.” (Thornbury, 2000).

Dogme 95 established a set of rules to which some film-makers, such as Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, committed in an attempt to free film-making from the excessive artificiality of technology and to frame the story in the real world. One of their tenets is that “shooting should be done on location”. This means that they avoid using props as they consider that if a certain prop is necessary, they must shoot on the location where that is naturally available. They also claim that if no music is being played in the scene, then it should not be added to the scene. Artificial lighting is not added to the scene either. They believe that natural conditions for film-making allow the emergence of characters and stories.

In a reaction against the sophisticated abundance of resources in ELT, Scott Thornbury and Neil Forrester inspired in Dogme 95 for film-making to call for a return to real language learning conditions, thus generating a Dogme school of teaching also known as *Teaching Unplugged*. "Shooting must be done on location" means for Thornbury and Forrester that "Teaching should be done using only the resources that teachers and students bring to the classroom - i.e. themselves- and whatever happens to be in the classroom" (Thornbury, 2000). Dogme rejects an invasion of resources and techniques as well as teachers with Obsessive Grammar Syndrome (OGS). Dogme is not a method but an urge to go back to a pre-method stage where learning emerged out of students and teachers in natural talk.

All this talk about films reminds me of 1985 *The Purple Rose of Cairo* by Woody Allen, in which archeologist Tom Baxter walks off the screen and into Cecilia's life and is shocked to see, later in the film, that no music is played when he kisses her in the real world.

I understand that Scott Thornbury's critical view of the overflow of resources, techniques and methods that surrounds us in ELT is actually a call for reflection on what we believe in and what we wish to do. We may not wholly agree with him or adhere to the Dogme principles, but at least we may begin to tell what is artificial from what is natural in language learning and to what extent we will allow artificiality to creep in. Are classrooms artificial or natural locations for learning? Are technological resources artificial or natural for the 21st century learner? Perhaps both *natural* and *artificial* need to be redefined. Natural and artificial for whom, where, when? Would you get unplugged? From what and to what extent? Good food for thought, don't you think?

References

Thornbury, S. (2000). A Dogma for EFL. *IATEFL Issue 153*.