



La Asociación

Ex Alumnos del Profesorado en Lenguas Vivas

"Juan R. Fernández"

National Exams, International Standards

Teachers' Centre

AEXALEVI *Forum*

**5th
Anniversary**

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AEXALEVI Forum, Cheers!

Mg. Myrian Casamassima



In March 2009, Marta Moure, Head of *Departamento de Alumnos Libres* at that time, created the Teachers' Centre and trusted me with its coordination. Marta had the vision of a community of teachers working together, sharing ideas and experience. She was interested as well in contributing systematically to raising the standards of English Language teaching in our country, a mission that AEXALEVI has embraced since it was founded in 1916, and for which Marta had worked enthusiastically for over twenty years as Head of Department.

I began my work as the coordinator of the Teachers' Centre with a clear objective in mind but with unclear pathways: they needed to be created and sustained if the mission was to be accomplished. Marta was a great guide for me as to what could be done and how. She considered that the Teachers' Centre had to be targeted first of all to Member Teachers, who had always trusted AEXALEVI as their guide for years and years.

We started with Teachers' Centre Forum, meetings held every other week on Friday afternoons at *La Asociación*. Before the first meeting, I thought that I was going to be entirely on my own, perhaps having some coffee, among books in the library. To my surprise, teachers began to arrive. And they stayed on. We soon became a lovely group of

colleagues and friends, who worked together for three years non-stop. We enjoyed countless moments of sharing and learning as a group. In 2013, Liliana Luna, Head of *La Asociación*, thought of broadening the frontiers of the Forum by opening doors to all the community. More and more teachers began to attend the meetings, now held on Saturday mornings as teacher development workshops.

But the story that I would like to tell here is the story of *AEXALEVI Forum*. I recall that it was a wet afternoon when I strolled into Marta's office with a new idea in mind. I had always wondered why *La Asociación* did not have a publication of its own, considering its vast experience and the excellence of its teachers.

Marta was busy at her desk and looked up at me with a smile on her face as usual. I had imagined that she would find my idea silly but I was determined. I plucked up courage and asked, “Marta, why can’t we have our own publication at *La Asociación*?” Her answer was quick and firm: “We can”. That was all she uttered “We can”. We exchanged intriguing looks and I disappeared into Gloria’s office, which was next door and where I used to work at the computer. Gloria was Marta’s committed secretary.

A few minutes later, I heard Marta coming into Gloria’s office and I turned round. She said, “We have to think of a name for the magazine”. She went back to her office. Five minutes later, and I can guarantee that it was not more than five, Marta appeared in Gloria’s office again. “It will be called AEXALEVI *Forum*,” she announced and told me “Bring your proposal tomorrow”. Gloria and I looked at each other and began to laugh. That was the way Marta thought of ideas. In the flick of a second, she had taken the decision to start the magazine, to allow me to work on the idea and she had even decided what it would be called. Of course, I was back at her office the next day, with a sketch full of ideas for content and design. I knew right from the beginning that Marta would conceive of AEXALEVI *Forum* as a magazine for teachers from all walks of life and not as a technical publication,

not as a journal. “We need to reach everybody,” she would say and that has always been the spirit of AEXALEVI *Forum*.

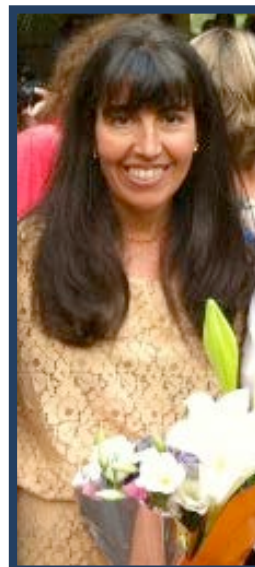
The first issues proved to be difficult to write. I did almost all the writing myself until Florencia Insua joined us. Later, we counted on her contributions and on the contributions made by Member teachers as well. Now we are proud of having articles written by many teachers beyond the AEXALEVI community and we have even published interviews to international ELT writers.

As I said, I recall that afternoon vividly. It was wet outside and as I walked to the underground station in the drizzle, I realized that it had been a great day, not only because AEXALEVI *Forum* had been born but also because I had learnt a very important lesson. I had learnt that ideas cannot be considered silly, as I had been afraid mine could have been, until they are expressed and shared because it is in that sharing that they may take shape to become reality.

Here is one idea out of many that we have had at the Teachers’ Centre that has come true under Marta’s guidance, support and trust, and that continues growing under Liliana’s. Let us enjoy this special issue together. Cheers, AEXALEVI *Forum*, a toast for many issues to come!

Interview

Paula López Cano, M.A. Dean of IES Lenguas Vivas



In our anniversary issue, we interview Dean of IES Lenguas Vivas “Juan Ramón Fernández”, Paula López Cano, who has enthusiastically given us permanent support since we started our work at the Teachers’ Centre in 2009. With a vast career and strong commitment, Paula is undoubtedly a major role model both at AEXALEVI and at Lenguas Vivas.

AEXALEVI Forum

When we think of Paula Lopez Cano, we think of Lenguas Vivas. You have been an active participant of the life at Lenguas Vivas for many years, since you were at school. You have also been an active teacher at AEXALEVI for a long time. How do you feel after such continuous commitment – a life-time commitment, we should say- to both mother and daughter institutions?

Paula López Cano

I believe this commitment was a natural development. I soon became strongly identified with the institution and its values. I

fell in love with learning foreign languages and felt deep admiration and respect for my teachers. It was such a nourishing environment. We breathed a love of learning. Of course there were hard times and difficult subjects to deal with, but I always felt that the hard work would pay off. Although I didn’t always say I’d go into teaching, I realized in my last year in high school that I enjoyed teaching. I loved preparing oral presentations and always offered to help classmates with assignments and papers. I also realized that I had a natural interest in how classes were planned and delivered and was very critical of teaching methods and classroom tasks. I loved talking to the student teachers who came to do their practicum in our English and

French classes. I liked to ask them about their plans and teaching strategies. I was truly lucky that I found encouragement and good models in my school. On beginning teacher training college, I got an offer to work at the *Asociación*, where I was able to learn the craft with wonderful colleagues who were enormously supportive. The *Asociación* was the springboard for my career, the place where I first tested my wings. There I had the freedom to explore different techniques and develop my own teaching style in a truly collaborative spirit. The staff room at the *Asociación* has always been a source of ideas and encouragement. Both the *Lenguas* and the *Asociación* are places where you share work with deeply committed professionals at different stages in their careers and with a great variety of interests. This diversity provides a stimulating, challenging environment. The students at tertiary level at *Lenguas* are brilliant and deeply motivated, so it is a real joy to teach and learn from them. This probably explains my commitment. I can't even think of myself ever getting tired of teaching at *Lenguas*.

AEXALEVI Forum

You said once that you recognized somebody's smile at *Lenguas Vivas* as the inspiration to embark upon your teaching career. Can you tell us the story? Whose smile was it?

Paula López Cano

I always recall with great fondness that the first smile I saw at the *Lenguas* was that of my first year English teacher: Susana Lezcano. She was always so sweet and inspiring. I loved her classes and I was so eager to learn. And I also remember her smile on the day I told her I'd decided to become a teacher of English. That smile showed pride and encouragement. Just what I needed to validate my decision. She has always been a source of inspiration and encouragement.

AEXALEVI Forum

We must say that Susana has been a source of inspiration and encouragement for many of us.

Our next question is about the new generations of students. We cannot deny that teaching them is quite challenging for teachers who were taught and trained in a different "world". How do you think teacher training should change in order to cope with the challenges teachers face nowadays?

Paula López Cano

I think we need to tap into the roots of what true teaching is. Teaching is about giving, sharing. But perhaps today's social changes make it difficult to build the "traditional" bonds between teachers and students. There has been an erosion of confidence in schools and teachers. Our conception of what kind of education is needed for 21st century

citizenship has changed. I believe we need to become more flexible, more open to new ideas, more willing to empower our students. We can no longer think of ourselves as the sources of knowledge. Classes have to look and feel different. We need to free ourselves from “deficit thinking”, meaning the idea that today’s students are handicapped in comparison to previous generations of students. We need to believe in our students’ and in our own capacity for meaningful learning and teaching. The new teaching will develop out of a collaborative environment. We cannot rely on experts who think big theories for us to apply in the classroom or technologies that offer a shortcut for learning. We will have to co-construct learning with our students and colleagues.

AEXALEVI Forum

A teacher with vast experience such as yours surely has many anecdotes and moving experiences that have made a difference in your ideas about this profession. Can you think of any experience/moment/situation in your life as a teacher that has had big impact on your views about teaching?

Paula López Cano

This is surely a very interesting question, but it is hard to think of a “lightbulb moment”. I can’t

think of one great moment of insight. I’d say that my views have evolved gradually by building up experience in the “trenches”, learning with and from colleagues and my interest in keeping up with the latest research in teaching.

AEXALEVI Forum

What advice would you give teachers or students who are giving their first steps in teaching?

Paula López Cano

I would tell them to try to take on big challenges as soon as they graduate. When you are fresh out of training college, you’re on a roll. It’s the perfect time to go for big goals, to explore different strategies, to face different types of students and learning environments. That kind of variety will make new teachers more creative and more adaptable. It can be tough at times but I believe this kind of approach can sustain motivation and commitment.

Thank you, Paula!

Encouraging Inquiry-based learning in EFL: A Five-step Model

Mg. Marina Falasca

Marina Falasca holds an M.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction, Adult and Higher Education from South Dakota State University, USA. She has specialized in foreign language teaching methodologies and has published articles on foreign language pedagogy in Argentina, Australia, and the U.S.



How familiar are you with the concept of inquiry-based learning? Does the word ring a bell? Whether you are familiar with it or not, I bet you are constantly wondering how to help your students think critically while engaging them in more “meaningful” activities. As complex as it may sound, inquiry-based learning (IBL) is all about helping your students build, test and reflect on their learning. To put it simply, your role is to guide students in finding the answers themselves and encourage them to ask new questions along the way. But, why and how should we do this?

According to Cooper and Prescott (1989), the amount of student learning that occurs in a classroom is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in the educational process. Yet teachers tend to dominate classrooms, where nearly 70% of instructional time is consumed by teacher talk (Kauchak & Eggen, 2006). IBL contrasts with traditional teaching approaches, placing students at the heart of the teaching-learning

process. Thus, IBL is driven by students themselves. Teachers are mere facilitators who help learners arrive at their “true” questions—the things that truly matter to them. Needless to say, students find this a lot more motivating and soon develop a keen sense of ownership.

Don't get the wrong idea, however: Inquiry-based learning is not unstructured. Far from

that, it requires a lot of planning and preparation on the part of the teacher. If you choose to adopt an inquiry-based learning approach, you must help your students identify and refine their “real” questions into learning projects or opportunities. You must then guide the subsequent research, inquiry, and reporting processes. The question, again, is how to do it effectively. Easier said than done, right?

There are many models of inquiry-learning described in the literature. I shall present as an example the *cyclic inquiry model* presented on the [inquiry page](#) sponsored by "[Chip](#)" [Bruce](#) et. al of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). This cycle of inquiry will help you plan engaging lessons that can guide your students through the inquiry process, that is, help them identify problems, brainstorm solutions, formulate questions, reflect, make conclusions, and present results (Bruner, 2004; Wiske, 1997).

Step 1. Ask

Start by posing the lesson topic in the form of a question and then probe, prompt, and redirect student responses to establish the inquiry climate. If, for example, your lesson topic is “the pervasive influence of technology”, a good starting question might be: Should cell phones be allowed in schools? When students have shared their ideas and begin to feel comfortable with the process, encourage them to raise a question of their own, plan a procedure for answering the

question, determine how to carry out the procedure, and decide how the results might be presented. The easiest and most common approach at this stage might be the survey format.

Step 2. Investigate

After student questions are agreed on, the next step is to investigate them. At this stage of the inquiry process, you must ask students to recall prior knowledge or experiences related to their own questions and to brainstorm possible methods of investigating them by identifying resources and designing and carrying out a plan of action. Possible resources at this point might be the Internet, YouTube, online newspapers, and/or personal interviews.

Step 3. Create

When you and your students have jointly determined that sufficient information has been gathered, you can ask individual students to begin thinking critically about the relationship between the information obtained (evidence) and their own questions—for example, how the information may or may not answer their questions fully or completely. The important thing is that students start reflecting upon the appropriateness of their questions or hypotheses, redefine their questions if necessary and/or construct new ones, and decide whether to look for more data.

To synthesize the new knowledge or ideas that typically come up at this stage, it might be a good idea to ask each student to create a chart summarizing the information collected or to give an oral presentation stating their progress thus far. A simpler option might be to have students put together a list of new or redefined questions.

Step 4. Discuss

At this stage, you must help create an inviting climate where students discuss their findings, new ideas, and experiences with one another. This is typically done in pairs or small groups. Possible tasks might include sharing notes, discussing conclusions, and comparing and contrasting experiences across groups.

Step 5. Reflect

After discussion, you must have students critique and communicate their results to the rest of the class. Above all, you should expect them to be able to reflect on their newly acquired knowledge by critically assessing the appropriateness of their questions, their methods of investigation, and the accuracy of their conclusions. Methods for presenting findings can include a traditional written or oral report or a more extensive multimedia presentation (Martinello & Cook, 2000).

The Ask, Investigate, Create, Discuss, and Reflect Model described above will hopefully encourage students to evaluate whether a

satisfactory solution was found, whether new questions are warranted, and, if so, what new questions might be posed. If new questions emerge, the cycle of inquiry can start again with a new lesson.

According to most researchers, inquiry-learning is appropriate for all ages and class groups (Kauchak & Eggen, 2006). However, it might be best suited for intermediate+ EFL students, who are able “to recombine learned material in order to express personal meaning”(ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, 2012, p. 7). Still, any lesson can be turned into an inquiry-based lesson as long as it requires exploration and discovery by the students themselves. Even a traditional grammar lesson can be modified to set an appropriate inquiry climate. Following the preceding model, the teacher could start the lesson by posing the following question to students: Should the Present Perfect be used to describe completed actions in the Past? Far from memorizing rules and examples, the students would be encouraged to find the answer themselves by consulting various resources and sharing their findings with their classmates.

Clearly, learning requires more than just facts and rules. If we want our students to be able to make connections, reach conclusions, and reflect upon how they learn, we must resort to instructional strategies that encourage the cognitive processes required both to form concepts AND combine them into larger patterns and abstractions that promote

problem-solving skills. IBL can help you do that while serving as an important motivator for ensuring active student involvement in subsequent lessons and tasks.

Thank you, Marina!

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TEACHERS ' CENTRE FORUM 2014

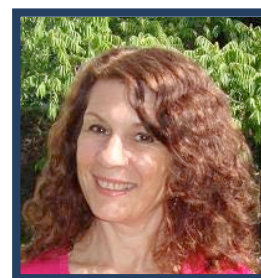
COMING SOON

September 6th

Transcending Popcorn: A Critical View of Films in the ELT Class

Lic. Mercedes Foligna

Mercedes Foligna is a graduate teacher of English from I.E.S. en Lenguas Vivas “Juan Ramón Fernández” and a *Licenciada* in Educational Management from Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero. She is a teacher trainer at Instituto Superior Palomar de Caseros, where she teaches Language and Culture and is a Practicum IV supervisor.



Have you ever met a student who would take their English textbook to read on the beach? Not me. The most devoted ones may pack up a reader to enjoy while sunbathing. But when it comes to movies, most learners - old and young - will choose the cinema to have a moment of fun. In an attempt to integrate the workshop and the playground, films and videos have been intensively used in the ELT classroom to present or recycle both vocabulary and grammatical structures. But films are rich texts that offer much wider possibilities: they can serve as a springboard to take language learners beyond the shallow waters of words and images by stretching their power of analysis and imagination.

What does it take to trespass the barrier of literal meaning? Procedures and strategies are varied: some of them are meant to develop critical thinking while others help widen their creativity. Sometimes we are so focused on teaching English that we forget that helping our students to think and to

develop their creativity is part of our job. In an age in which children and teenagers are subject to the manipulation of the media, critical thinking is an empowering tool. It is true that the ELT classroom has certain constraints: analysis and discussion call for the use of words that may not be available in

an elementary to pre-intermediate learner's vocabulary bank. But even if the critical o it.

reflection has to be made in L1, it is worth seizing the opportunity to d

Some ideas:

Film	Scene	Activity
Shrek I (2001)	Opening scene (in which he cleans up and eats)	What does this scene show? What kind of monster is Shrek? List the qualities that a monster should have and the qualities a hero should have. Does Shrek follow the traditional model? What are our prejudices?
Toy Story I (1995)	The toys are waiting for Andy to open the presents	Compare the toys in motion with the real toys. Are they as lovely? What makes them attractive? How much do they cost? Who is the leader of the toys? What makes him the leader? Compare him to other leaders in other films you have seen.
Social Network (2010)	Facebook becomes a big company	What is Zuckerberg wearing? Why? What does the choice of the outfit imply?
Private Peaceful (2012)	All	Find out about the author of the novel and the director of the film. How does the context of production influence the way in which the setting is recreated? What wars were going on in the world at the moment the novel was written?
The Remains of the Day (1986)	Scene "A racy book"	How long does this scene last, compared to the number of pages in the book? What is the role of silence in this scene? How can sexual attraction be read between the lines?

Our decision about what film we are going to use will depend on key factors, such as our students' age and their interests. This is also our opportunity to show them old films that they might not choose to see otherwise. When working with kids, the fact that most of our students have already seen the best known Disney films plays in our favour, not only because they associate them with a pleasant experience, but also because they are already acquainted with the plot. This lets us concentrate on certain scenes in particular. In most cases, the film to see is the only variable in the course in which students can have

some decision. Negotiating which film they are going to discuss gives them a certain sense of ownership of their learning process, and may be an extra factor of motivation.

So, teachers, you should remember that critical viewing is much more than the simple act of showing a film or a film adaptation of a novel. It is a way of going beyond the text itself into our students' life and knowledge.

Thank you, Mercedes!

Reference:

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TEACHERS ' CENTRE FORUM 2014

COMING SOON

October 4th

It Worked for me

By Member Teacher at AEXALEVI

Prof. Silvia Ryan



Silvia is a graduate teacher from Instituto Superior del Profesorado “Joaquin V. Gonzalez”. She co-directs Shamrock School of English in San Vicente with Noelia Nieto. Silvia has vast experience as an English teacher at primary and secondary schools both at private and at state-run institutions. She has been a Member Teacher at AEXALEVI for many years and she is an active member of Teachers’ Centre Forum.

If I wandered through my memories, surely in some place I would probably find myself in the same town where I now live and work: San Vicente.

When I was about 13, a friend of my mother’s moved here and we started visiting her at least once a month. Years later, I started giving private lessons to help my mother who had retired as headmistress in a school in Temperley. To my surprise, some time later I met my husband who only lived 20 km away. After some years we got married and moved to the country. Little by little I started giving up all my previous jobs and only worked in San Vicente. This gave me the chance to be close to my daughter Victoria (as she could come with me) and do what I love: teaching.

Years went by and to the end of 2005, I felt I was needing a change. How did this change come about? In September 2005 Noelia, a fellow teacher, and I travelled to the FAAPI conference in Santa Fe. We didn’t know each other well, only shared hallways at different

schools. And, then and there Shamrock was formed. I told her about my need to find somebody to help me and at the beginning of 2006 we were working together. My 50 students came with me and little by little Shamrock started growing. In 2007 Yanina joined us, then Mabi, Vicky (my daughter) and then Flor, Guada, Agus and Malen. This year Agus and Malen left to follow their studies in other towns and Manuel (Noe’s brother) and Mica joined the team.

I believe Shamrock is as our motto says “**More than English**”, not only do we help our students to learn English but try to help them become better people. All in all, I think I didn’t make a mistake when I decided to become a teacher. **It’s worked for me.**

Thank you, Silvia!

Stories from the Heart

By Member Teacher at AEXALEVI

Prof. Silvina Echegaray



Silvina Echegaray is a graduate teacher from I.E.S. Lenguas Vivas “Juan Ramón Fernández”. She is co-director of LET’S, School of English, Gral. Las Heras. She teaches English at secondary school. She has been a Member Teacher at AEXALEVI since 1997. Last year she joined the Teachers’ Centre Forum.

I like to think of life as an adventure, a challenge, a freedom, a passion, a creation, an opportunity for learning... And it is easy to sense all these feelings when we are surrounded by breathtaking landscapes or in front of an impressive work of art. But most of the days of our lives, we have a job, a timetable, deadlines to meet, responsibilities to handle... Should we resign ourselves to the fact that we have to “work”, to do a job as a way of earning a living? I refuse to accept the idea that the only enjoyable moments can be found during the holidays or in our free time! I want to live every day of my life like an opportunity to create, to generate new projects and enjoy the excitement of doing so! And probably that is the reason why I have chosen TEACHING as a career.

Teaching is certainly a **challenge**. It is thrilling because you need to use all your will and determination to deal with students with difficulties (and difficult students, too!), to motivate reluctant teenagers, to engage newcomers and make them feel that learning English is GREAT. However, there are times when you feel you are running out of ideas and it is necessary to find new ways of motivating yourself.



Fortunately, I have discovered a place where I have met other teachers who **love** what they do, who regard **learning** as a lifelong process, and who want to enjoy the exhilarating feeling of **creating**, and this is the TEACHERS' CENTRE FORUM.



ideas and, above all, our feelings. The synergy which is generated in every meeting makes us all come out full of enthusiasm and renewed energy. And experiencing these emotions reinforces my idea that teaching is definitely a **passion**, and we are lucky to have found a career which feels like an **adventure** every day.

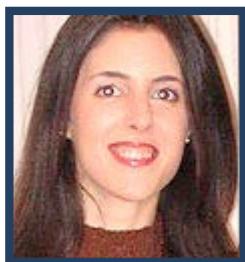
HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, TEACHERS' CENTRE!

Thank you, Silvina!

On a Saturday morning once a month, we are invited to gather at the premises of La Asociación to take part in the TEACHERS' CENTRE FORUM meetings. These teacher development workshops offer us the possibility not only to keep up-to-date with the latest methodologies and discuss novel ways of dealing with old topics, but also to reflect upon what we are doing and how we are doing it. But what makes these meetings really **motivating** is that they give us the opportunity to come together with other teachers who are also searching for ways of keeping alive their passion for teaching English, and we can **share** our experiences,



Developing the Fifth Skill through Literature in the EFL Class



Florencia Perduca, M.A.

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There is no single model for teaching and learning English. Nowadays there is a diverse range of methods and practices constituting more complex pedagogical frameworks that position critical cultural awareness at the centre. Byram (1997: 133) proposes a model of **Intercultural Communicative Competence** which focuses on processes and methods of analysing social processes and their outcomes, providing learners with critical tools to develop their understanding of their own **language, culture and society**, as well as others, through active engagement with the language taught/acquired. The Intercultural Communicative Competence Model is particularly concerned with complementing the basic four skills with a crucial fifth ability, that of **intercultural interpretation** (Corbett, 2003: 18). This **fifth skill** is essential to democratising societies, since it helps learners challenge the representation of a certain society only in terms of the dominant group or elite. It also encourages learners to see themselves as active members of a globalising world in which they are not 'outsiders' but **intercultural speakers**. Intercultural competence is mainly focused on using the global to express the local and it fosters working empathically so as to cross links between the local culture and the 'other cultures'.

Intercultural competence involves not only the practical question of linguistic competence for communication, but also active work in the classroom with “the relationship between the language, the cultural practices and the beliefs of a group through the interplay of language and identity” (Byram, 1997: 22). This seems to suggest that the learning process of an intercultural speaker would be focused on the exposure to linguistic variety and cultural difference as well as on the acquisition of methods of analysis that will enable the learner to explore “how language works, how we make sense in language and how we mean things to each other” (Corbett, 2003: ix). A model based on intercultural competence provides the learner with strategies for exploring cultural difference (by means of observing, analysing and understanding both the home and the target culture) and with strategies for narrowing down the gap between different individuals and communities. As Claire Kramsch (1993: 25) puts it, this lends itself for our EFL classrooms to dwell on a “**third place**”, a constructive space or a vantage point, in which the information gap can be transformed into an intercultural contact zone which invites the learner to empathise with others, understand difference and mediate between cultures. Learners are also encouraged to turn their attention back on their own social beliefs, stereotypes and practices as well as cultural identities.

This model invites teachers to choose to work with creative resource materials, such as **literature**, which empower learners to speak about themselves and to speak about others as they work cross-curricularly. This implies working towards an active acquisition of **language** that equips learners with ways of analysing and interpreting **cultures**. John McRae (1995: 9) highlights that culture is always at play in what he names “**literatures with a small ‘I’**” and defines as “representational materials”; that is to say, those texts (from a wide variety of genres such as popular songs, folk narratives, oral literature, graffiti, etc) which are not aimed at performing a specific transaction but at involving “the reader in imaginative, creative and empathic thinking” through the representational use of language. Since these materials are not “transparent” or “determinate”, they are not to be interpreted in one single way. So they allow a plurality of meanings and invite the reader to tamper or intervene with them actively.

Interdisciplinary work between language and literature in the EFL classroom offers a framework in which cultures are in play and flux. Literature provides the learners with the possibility of identifying with the experience and perspectives of people in the countries and communities in which certain languages are spoken and to compare them to their

own. This helps the learner grow more sensitive to (inter)cultural identity and difference. Literature and storytelling spur the learners' own imaginative thinking and foster their creative reading and writing. Literary texts and genres trigger real, motivational and dynamic responses which suggest that reading is not a mere reaction to the text but an interaction between reader and writer mediated through the text. For many learners, literature provides the affective, attitudinal and experiential factors motivating them to talk and engage with language and culture, both the local and the target. Besides, literature becomes a tangible means for the learning of differences between language varieties, registers and styles.

Literature is ideal for developing an awareness of language use, since it invites reflection on both usage (knowledge of linguistic rules) and use (knowledge of how to use rules for effective communication).

Literature discloses real contexts of situation and linguistic occurrence and helps learners discover and/or identify different social actors and beliefs.

Literature also presents language in

discourse within the parameters of setting and role relationships and throws light on why certain forms are used. In a few words, literature is a key contributor to the development of skills and competences. Besides, as a key contributor to intercultural interpretation, literature invites reflection on socio-cultural (mis)constructions and (mis)representations and it initiates learners into the experience of critical exploration of selfness and otherness. This helps learners cross their cultural borders, so as to challenge their own schemas, and to imagine themselves into very different situations and identities. Literature stands out as a springboard for learners to empathise with the experience of others, to get to know more about themselves and to explore what binds cultures together in spite of their differences. There is, then, a particular foregrounding of the instrumental educational value of teaching languages within a model more sensitive to **critical cultural awareness and intercultural mediation**.

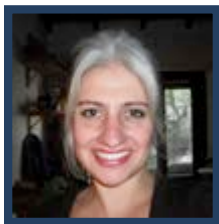
Thank you, Florencia!

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The Wheel of Fortune in ELT: Failure as a Necessary Prelude to Success

Lic. Cecilia Sassone



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In Oriental philosophy, the Wheel of Fortune symbolizes the cycles and seasons of life, the repetition of history; success following failure, growth and evolution. It claims that current events will lead to better situations, to greater wisdom. The past holds clues to the future.¹ While we will not be delving into oriental symbolism, comparing and contrasting the basic concepts in this wheel with the process of language teaching can help us explore how necessary changes can come about in any ELT field. Let’s see concrete examples in teaching English to adults.



¹ Image retrieved and text adapted from http://tarotmastershimure.blogspot.com.ar/2008_06_01_archive.html, accessed on May 25 2014.

How many of us with vast experience teaching adults have actually come across “hopeless cases” or “chronic dropouts” whose imperative need to learn was indirectly proportional to their (presumed) ability for language learning? I regret to say – although I indulge in the insight as well – that after some in-depth analysis and years of observation and reflection, I feel we teachers have misplaced (at least in part) the focus: it is not only about what adults can or cannot do, about what they need to communicate and when or about what they need to believe about themselves as language learners. It is above all about how they need the learning object – in this case the language – to be presented to them, in light of the tools they are naturally endowed with, so that they find the learning task natural to their age group and style, in line with their capabilities and still manageable, realistic and achievable.

In general, adults need to communicate in the second language with as much detail and as soon as possible. It is no doubt a challenging accomplishment. Yet, it is not the student’s failure but our own when our short-sightedness to see their true potential and provide them with the tools they need to reach their goals affects their self-concept as language learners. So the questions we ought to ask ourselves are: how can we simplify, change or adapt the task to these particular learners while meeting their goals? Is there anything we are missing out? It is this creative process crammed with failure and success

stories that I wish to exemplify through the Wheel of Fortune in the next few lines.

The “cycles and seasons” in ELT have brought to us teachers a myriad of language teaching methods and approaches; when winter hit a method, a new one was blooming bringing to us new hopes, happiness, a new spring. But after some seasons, that method would also see some of its leaves fall – there would be new ideas challenging the old, with some old ideas still surviving the seasons and cycles.

Among the notions that have pervaded ELT, there have been some perennial autumn leaves firmly stuck to the tree trunk and quite reluctant to fall, namely those trying to make the process fun and natural to the student; those considering their needs, wants and preferences; those relying on students’ capabilities, learning from others and shifting the focus from teacher to student, to name a few.

But some other leaves are shakier today – or so they should. The concept that our mother tongue mostly interferes with language learning has led to the ingrained belief, ever since the early 20th century, that L2 should be taught in L2. Different methods and approaches have posited varying shades of this belief, allowing perhaps sparingly for translation, but never actually rooting L2 learning on the adult students’ L1 code, already used so effectively for communication. Another leaf we have seen for seasons on

end in ELT has been the comparison of second language learning in adults to child L1 acquisition or L2 learning. There is no denying the findings have actually shed some glaring light on the whole language teaching process. However, as I see it, these two beliefs, unquestioned as they have been, are the root cause for a number of unfortunate experiences and cases of failure among an eager-for-not-long share of the adult population.

And still, as we seek for a tropical weather without seasons in this “post-methods era” whose life span is uncertain, our eclectic use of approaches and methods intermingles with technology to provide our students with more opportunities for learning. So the wheel still keeps moving.

As seen in the Wheel of Fortune, success is preceded by failure, growth and evolution in a constant cycle that repeats itself. Without a doubt, evolution is a spring rather than a straight line: we seem to go back at times, but we are actually always moving forward, moving upwards. Some may argue there have been many successes in the history of ELT, or otherwise learning would not have taken place. True. But while we indulge in the victories, we know there are covert cases of failure left stranded along the way – if only there were valid statistics depicting this success-failure ratio! So in analyzing failure we ask ourselves: is it the failure of the method or approach? Of the eclectic choices made by the teacher? Of the possibly

wrongful use of technology to approach the learning task? All these queries empower us, make us challenge paradigms and search for new tools and new ways. Nothing much could be accomplished from our perspective of the process if the student were all to blame. An open-minded analysis will surely take us to the growth stage of the cycle where we accept breaking with the old, with the status quo. We thank the old for its contributions, and move forward to create anew. The proposal of novel ways of teaching and learning will necessarily keep on taking ELT practice along its path of evolution, and even to a “post post methods era”. Ultimately, and even if the new ways are accepted and used far and wide bringing light to dark or shadowy spots, it will be necessary, once we have delighted in our successes, to poke the new paradigm once again.

“The past holds clues to the future.” There is no way of moving forward but by looking at our past; labeling eras and periods is a way of denying the questioning and of fossilizing the cycle of failure, growth and evolution and success. We need to question to move forward and higher. “Current events will lead to better situations, the past holds clues to the future”. Let us let change be.

Thank you, Cecilia!

How to Plan Pronunciation Work that Actually Works

Prof. Gisela Frenquelli

Here is the first of a series of articles about pronunciation in the classroom by Prof. Gisela Frenquelli.



Gisela is a graduate teacher from I.E.S. Lenguas Vivas “J.R. Fernández”. She has specialized in Phonetics also at Lenguas Vivas. She has vast experience as a teacher in a variety of contexts. She has lectured and written about the Pedagogy of Phonetics.

In an interview published in the last issue of AEXALEVI FORUM, Prof. Alan Cruttenden exhorted teachers to introduce systematic work on pronunciation in the classroom. However, the truth is that while we know that skills like grammar and vocabulary are vital, pronunciation is often a neglected subject. So why is it important to teach pronunciation, and how can you teach it successfully?

When learning a language there are many things to study and practice, such as vocabulary and grammar; and skills such as reading, writing and speaking. A key to good speaking is good pronunciation. This is because English-speaking listeners find it much easier to understand someone whose pronunciation is basically correct but whose grammar remains weak than the reverse: excellent grammar can be completely masked by poor pronunciation.

Pronunciation work should be done regularly, according to Prof. Cruttenden, and it should be fun for the learner. In this article, I will present different ways in which pronunciation work can be taught and learned effectively. One way of achieving this is through games.

PRONUNCIATION GAMES

Pronunciation games range from simple competitive games to more sophisticated problem solving puzzles. The book *Pronunciation Games*, by Mark Hancock, published by MacMillan, offers numerous and varied ideas for games to cater for the needs of learners of all levels and age groups. The games can be adapted to the particular needs of a group of learners and are based on a wide variety of activity types including mazes, jigsaws, card and board games, guessing activities and lateral thinking.

These activities can be used as awareness raising activities or for controlled practice or revision and can be exploited to cover pronunciation points ranging from individual sounds and word stress to sentence stress and intonation. For example, we know that the spelling of a word is not always an accurate guide to how it is pronounced. There are 26 letters in the English alphabet but there are many more sounds in the English language. This means that the number of sounds in a word is not always the same as the number of letters. The word 'CAT' has three letters and three sounds but the word 'CATCH' has five letters but still only three sounds. So you can play a game with your students to make them

more aware of sounds as opposed to spelling.

“Find the rule”

Find the rule is a guessing game for the whole class. In this game you need to decide on a rule for accepting or rejecting words suggested by students; then they will try to discover what this rule is. First, choose a rule and make a list of words that exemplify this rule – make sure the words are from the same grammatical category, e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. Then you need to decide on a model sentence into which your examples will fit, e.g. *I'm going to buy a ...* . “the word must contain three sounds, e.g. hat, lock, apple, coat”; or “The word must contain three syllables, e.g. telephone, magazine, cigarette, elephant”.

Conducting the game:

- 1) Get the class to sit in more or less a circle.
- 2) Say your model sentence with an example word in the space. Indicate that the person next to you should repeat the model sentence, changing the word at the end, and so on around the circle.
- 3) After each contribution, say whether or not you accept the word given at the end, but do not say why; students should try to guess this.
- 4) When students catch on to what the rule is, they should not say the rule. Instead, they should simply supply a

correct contribution when it is their turn. 5) When most students appear to have caught on, ask someone to explain what the rule is. 6) If nobody seems to be catching on, give a few hints such as *Don't think about spelling! Or Think about sounds!* The first time you play this game, more hints will probably be necessary.

An important consideration about using games in the classroom is that whichever type you choose you should always try to adapt them to the particular needs of

your learners and to practise lexis they are familiar with. You can plan a revision activity that recycles vocabulary and at the same time introduce important pronunciation notions such as word stress, weak forms or sentence rhythm in bite-sized training sessions. Once the learners have been made aware of a certain pronunciation rule or process, you can tap into this knowledge at appropriate times to give them feedback and encourage self-monitoring.

"Stress moves"

There is no doubt that stress is one of the main tools used in English to convey word and sentence meaning so it is crucial that learners become aware of stress early on in their training. If the stress pattern of a phrase is correct the phrase can be understood in context even though some other aspects are incorrect. However, even if the consonant pronunciation is perfect, the overall meaning of the message will be missed if the stress pattern is not given correctly.

"Stress moves" is a game of physical movement for the whole class to learn about and practise patterns of word stress. It requires a minimum level of English and is an ideal resource to use with young learners. To play this game, choose about twenty words from your course or ask your students to suggest one word each. Make sure that the words contain a number of different patterns. For example:

1 ●	2 ●●	3 ●●●	4 ●●●●	5 ●●●●●
jeans	monkey	balloon	banana	bicycle

Write your words on flashcards. Then decide on some "stress moves" before the class and practise them a little. Stress moves are physical movements which you make as you say the word. There should be one move to accompany the stressed syllable and a different

move for each of the rest of the syllables. For example, you can make a fist for each unstressed syllable and open your fingers for the stressed syllable. Or you can clap your hands for each unstressed syllable and bang the desk for the stressed syllable. Write some of the words on the board and demonstrate using the appropriate stress moves from the system you have chosen. Invite members of the class to say some words with the appropriate stress moves. Then give student a flashcard and ask each of them in turn to complete the sentence *My word is ...* with the appropriate stress move(s).

Conducting the game:

1) One player begins the game by saying his/her own word with the appropriate stress move(s) and then saying another player's word. This player then continuous by say his/her word and another player's word. The game continuous in this way until someone makes a mistake. A mistake occurs when a player fails to respond when his/her word is called, or when he/she forgets to repeat his/her word first or when they pronounce a word incorrectly or they make the wrong stress moves. 2) Each player begins with 10 points and loses one point for each mistake. 3) Finish the game when one player has lost all 10 points.

Once the stress move idea has been introduced, it can be used whenever you want to show the stress pattern of a word. The game can be played as revision at regular intervals.

"Rhythm dominoes"

"Rhythm dominoes" is a matching game with cards for two or three players to raise awareness of stress patterns in short phrases. 1 ●●● 2 ●●● 3 ●●● 4 ●●●● 5 ●●●● 6 ●●●● Preparation: 1) Write on the board a list of the following stress pattern symbols: Next to pattern 1 write an example, such as *Close the door* and say the phrase aloud to illustrate its stress pattern. 2) On another part of the board, write an example of one of the other patterns, such as *Can't you hear me?* Ask students how many syllables the phrase has and which ones are stressed; then invite them to identify its stress pattern. 3) Choose examples of the other patterns so that finally you have on the board one example for each pattern.

On the downside, however, many teachers may feel discouraged from planning pronunciation work consistently on the grounds that they simply do not have the time, especially when examinations time looms on the horizon.

An alternative and/or complementary way of ensuring that pronunciation work is done regularly in the classroom is by adopting techniques that you can adapt to the resources you have so that they can naturally become a common practice in the classroom.

These activities should somehow always involve learners in either listening or speaking for the truth is that learners will not become more fluent because of what they know about but because of what they are familiar with. It is hard to learn rules; not so hard if you become familiar with the words. How to do this? There are many ways – and they all involve *repetition!* You can get learners to perform dialogues from plays or films, sing songs or recite poems; play games and exploit drama techniques to reduce stress connected with pronunciation practice and deal with learners' emotions more efficiently.

Finally, it is important to give your learners feedback on their pronunciation as often and as accurately as possible. But it is even more important to make sure that they understand what you talking about when you do so. Having done activities to introduce these notions to them even if piecemeal will most certainly greatly improve their chances of “getting it right”.

To conclude, Prof. Cruttenden also highlighted the importance of acknowledging progress even if this is achieved by small increments. Teaching pronunciation does not mean dramatic upheaval in the classroom. With small investments in the right places you can radically transform the quality of your lesson and give learners pronunciation work that actually works for them. I believe the resources presented in this article are sufficient evidence of this and I hope they will serve you well.

Thank you, Gisela!

Learn more about pronunciation in our next issue.