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“Juan R. Fernández”

National Exams, International Standards

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AEXALEVI Forum

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Share Life Achievement Award for *Liliana Luna*



Diana Ogando, Marina Kirac, Liliana Luna and Omar Villareal.

AEXALEVI'S former Head Liliana Luna received the Share Life Achievement Award at the latest Share Convention, which took place at the Regente Palace Hotel on July 27.

The Share Academic Committee, made up of Dr Omar Villareal, Mag. Marina Kirac, Dr Maria Rosa Mucci, Mag. Oriel Villagarcía and Mag. Martín Villareal, among other outstanding ELT professionals, has set up this award with the aim of "honouring a professional career that the Academic Committee has deemed to be meritorious and

praiseworthy, not necessarily one that has met with extraordinary success, but one which deserves the profound respect of the ELT community".

The award-giving ceremony was conducted by Omar Villareal, with his usual warmth and charm.

Liliana made a moving speech. She said she felt proud and honoured to be given such an award and remarked she felt blessed and privileged to receive a prize for having done what she has loved all her life.

Liliana thanked her family for their unflinching support and remembered some of the inspiring professionals she met over more than 40 years at different public and private institutions, such as Liliana's first Italian teacher at ENSPA (Escuela Normal de Avellaneda "Próspero Alemandri), who implemented the Direct Method in his classes.



Liliana Luna and Diana Ogando



Liliana Luna with her family and AEXALEVI members.



Liliana Luna and Silvia López Thomas de Ripoll

Special words of thanks were dedicated to AEXALEVI authorities: the late Rosa Moure de Vicien, who was the President when Liliana became "Directora del Departamento de Alumnos Regulares", and the present authorities, Angela E. de Abregó and Silvia López Thomas de Ripoll, who bestowed their absolute trust and whole-hearted support on Liliana.

Silvia López Thomas de Ripoll presented Liliana with a beautiful bouquet on behalf of Liliana's peers at the AEXALEVI Executive Committee.

AEXALEVI FORUM would like to share Liliana Luna's biodata with its readers.

Congrats, Liliana!

Liliana Beatriz Luna graduated from INES en Lenguas Vivas "Juan R. Fernández" as a teacher of English for Primary Schools in 1977 and as a Teacher of English in 1979. She also holds an MA in Education and Professional Development from the University of East Anglia, UK.



She has vast experience teaching at all levels both in public and private institutions. She specialized in and taught Methodology at IES en Lenguas Vivas "Juan R. Fernández". As a very young teacher and lecturer, she was involved in curriculum development and in-service teacher training for Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires. She was a tenured teacher at Escuela Superior de Comercio "Carlos Pellegrini" for 30 years and was appointed Head of the English Department at a very early age.

Liliana was a member of the team that designed the curriculum for the "Licenciatura en Inglés" offered by Universidad de San Martín, where she taught Management in English Language Teaching.

From 1979 until her retirement last year Liliana worked at AEXALEVI (Asociación Ex Alumnos del Lenguas Vivas), where she was a teacher first, then a coordinator and, following a "Concurso de Antecedentes y Oposición", Head of the Students' Department starting in 1991 and General Director as from 2010.

Liliana has therefore been involved in training and supervising teachers as well as organizing professional development activities (such as the AEXALEVI Annual Convention) for the ELT community in Argentina and especially for the AEXALEVI Member Teachers all over the country.

She started and coordinated the AEXALEVI Ceibal team to provide remote English lessons to primary school children in Uruguay on behalf of the British Council.

She is also interested in e-learning and teaching and has designed some teacher development courses to be delivered online.

Liliana is a consultant for several schools and a member of the AEXALEVI Executive Committee.

F for Final, T for Task

Myrian Casamassima



It is Sunday 7 p.m. Time to sit down and plan for school. You fight a little against your unwillingness to do it and you drag your feet towards the kitchen table, where your textbook is waiting for you with a big smile on its cover – a frequent situation that most teachers may experience although not all textbooks are so friendly.

Now, where to start? You have to plan a new unit, so you automatically look at the grammatical content in the textbook. You spot it in under a second as we, teachers, have X-ray vision to scan textbooks for grammar. Besides, we have a special sensor for vocabulary, which allows us to list all the new words in a unit in a very efficient way. Science-fiction? I do not think so.

What to do next? This is the bit in which our programming may fail. Indeed, the programme may have no clear instructions as to how to move from the grammar and vocabulary into the unit proper. If that is the case, you may wish to read on and find one possible way in which the problem can be sorted out.

Look at the topic of your unit and daydream for a while. Visualize the

photo gallery that your students may create with selfies showing their favourite rooms at home, and captions describing them. Imagine the online surveys that your learners can generate and report on in a unit about free time. Think of the poems or the stories that they could write to produce a class book. Dream of a food tasting session, where dishes are tried and described. Smile at the traditional board games that your students can recreate. Foresee the lapbook in which they write about themselves. Daydream on. That is the power of final task. Once you are into it, you will keep on creating beyond your initial thoughts about the grammar and the vocabulary in the textbook.

What is a final task? We have seen several examples above. As you may guess, a final task is a complex activity

to be carried out towards the end of the unit. *Complex* does not mean *difficult*. It means *complex*, i.e. it should involve the students in some kind of challenge beyond language. Notice that in all the examples we have given the learners have to produce something that is both challenging and communicative. Estaire and Zanon discuss final tasks at length and define them as “communication tasks at their highest point of communicativeness, at a level that is realistic and achievable by the students in a given class” (1998;23). Their definition provides us with the key for success: final tasks must be realistic and achievable. In other words, we need to think about what can be close to our learners’ reality and, concurrently, feasible in the span of the unit. Many times, this implies planning small-scale tasks (as opposed to large-scale tasks like plays, TV programmes, magazines, etc), which can be carried out within the time that it takes us to develop the unit.

With your mind on final task, you can now begin to think about your unit in a more communicative and creative way. The final task will be your guide throughout as, during the development of the unit, the students will need to learn the content that will ensure its completion. Here content means not only the grammar and the vocabulary first singled out, but also the skills and

any other type of content that the final task may call for.

I asked newly grad teachers from I.E.S Lenguas Vivas “Juan Ramón Fernández” what they thought of final task after they had planned units with final tasks at secondary school in state schools, in the city of Buenos Aires. Prof. Elisa Dominguez and Prof. Victoria Sartor said that “A final task gives you the drive so you know where the goal is”. Prof. Antonella D’Angelo concluded that “Having a final task organized our work and lessons and it also helped us when we had to adjust our planning. Some lessons were called off so we needed to decide what to do and how. The final task was what kept us on track and guided us”.

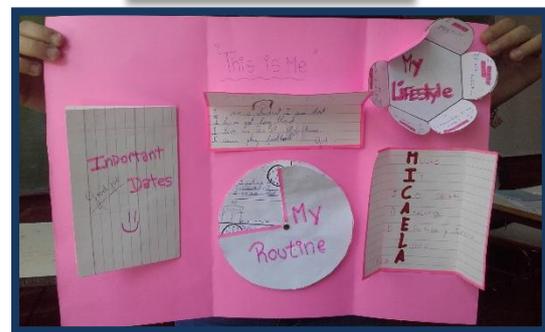
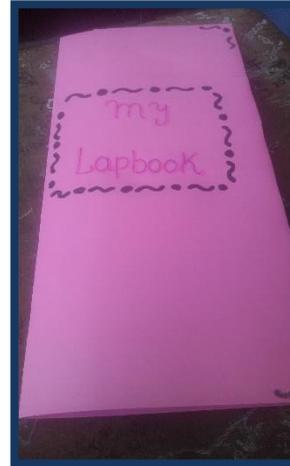
These teachers talk about the final task as a goal, as the focus that keeps our work on track, especially when there are many comings and goings along the way towards it. Indeed, the final task may represent a suitable unit organizer in that it sets a task in particular as the goal to be achieved while all the unit is actually a preparation for that task. In this respect, the final task helps us to organize the unit around something that will engage the students in communicating meanings through the language learnt in the unit. As a result, there will be output to be published, shared, presented and assessed.

Therefore, the final task can be seen as an opportunity for authentic assessment: the teacher will be able to evaluate the students' performance and production during the task. This occasion for assessment will allow the students themselves to reflect on their work and to evaluate their products. What is more, their parents will be able to see the outcomes of the final task and to take pride in their children for what they are doing and achieving in the English class. The eyes of the school principal or head of department may also be set on the final task as a means to follow up on what a class can do and how they are progressing. From all points of view, the final task is a clear asset in our plan.

It is Sunday. 7 p.m. Time to sit down and plan for school. You fight a little against your unwillingness to do it and you drag your feet towards the kitchen table, where your textbook is waiting for you with a big smile on its cover. Now, where to start? You have to plan a new unit, so you automatically sit back, relax and daydream of a task that meets the requirements for final task: Is it communicative? Is it complex, i.e. does it involve the students in some degree of challenge beyond language? Is it achievable within your unit? Is it realistic? Does it render an output that can be presented or shared or

published, and assessed? Go ahead. Daydream on.

Two examples of final tasks produced by trainees at I.E.S. Lenguas Vivas: the lapbook and the healthy breakfast session.



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ESI and AEXALEVI Readers



Paola Verando

Those teachers who work at schools will always hear the same phrase after an ESI “jornada”: we teachers must include ESI (Spanish initials for Comprehensive Sex Education) in the classroom. But how can we do it? Do we have the right training to deal with ESI?

Well, first let us deal with what ESI is not. Of late, many erroneous conceptions of “ESI” have been built and we must do away with them if we want to do our job right:

1.ESI is not about introducing minor age students into sexual practices. This is a common misconception. Depending on the educational level (initial, primary or secondary school), ESI will be implemented in different ways, but none of those ways will contribute to our students becoming sexually active. Rather, in secondary school students are taught how to respect themselves and their bodies in order to exert their sexuality safely. Anyway, during initial and primary school ESI contents revolve around other axes which we will explore later on.

2.ESI is not about promoting homosexuality. On the contrary, it is about promoting understanding of and respect for any expression of sexuality that any individual may have.

3.ESI is about teaching contraceptive methods. Actually, that is one of the many contents in the five ESI axes, but it is only dealt with in secondary school by specialised teachers (namely, Biology or Health Education).

The role of the rest of the teachers in a school revolves basically around the five following axes (according to national law 26150):

1. promoting health care and self-safety (not only regarding sex practices);

2. encouraging understanding of and respect for others (not only because of their sex or sexual choice, but regarding their age, physical appearance, religion, ethnia, nationality, etc.);
3. raising awareness of and helping students to comprehend their emotions (is it right to feel this way? Why do I feel like this?);
4. empowering students with knowledge about their rights irrespective of their gender, age, nationality, ethnia;
5. helping students to become conscious of their socially assigned roles (as regards physical appearance, emotions, place in a family, tasks or jobs, to name a few) and to be able to deconstruct them.

But how can we help our students do anything of that? Really, it is not that difficult. Any topic that we see in class could be food for thought for this. Take colours: one simple activity could be to form two groups of colours: colours for boys and colours for girls. Many students will tell you there is no such thing as colours assigned to a particular gender. So... it is at this moment that you can help them become aware of this by means of reflective questions: *Is pink only for girls? Am I wearing pink clothes? What colour is your uniform? Do you have a different colour for boys or girls in*

your uniform? Short activity with a non-linguistic purpose to work on the fifth axis. As simple as that.

Going back to the title of this article, how can we use literature to explore any of these axes? Well, literature as an art expression paints a picture of the world, however fictitious or improbable it may be. Analysing or reflecting upon different passages in the literature we ask our students to read is just one of the ways in which we can explore ESI in the classroom.

Below, you will see how different AEXALEVI readers can be used in order to explore the five different ESI axes.

Promoting Health Care and Self-Safety: *The Barcelona Game, set reader for Pre-Adolescents I*

I must assure you I had never thought of this graded reader along these lines, but it was the self-same students that suggested this. Apart from the fact that our main character, Holly, hates football and prefers quieter activities such as reading and that, therefore, this graded reader could be used for the fifth axis (do all girls hate football? Do all girls enjoy reading?), there is another fragment which is worth mentioning.

At a certain point in the story, Holly loses her bag with all her family's passports, the tickets to the Barcelona game and their money. Desperate, she goes out of

Café La Masia to find the man who has mistaken her bag for his. When she spots him and realises she has no money for a taxi, a motorcyclist stops and offers her a lift. Yes, a guy she had never seen in her whole life. And she takes the lift without thinking it twice. It was at this very point that my students pointed this out to me: is it OK to talk to strangers and to jump on their motorcycles? Well, given the times we are living, the answer is 'no'. In the fictional world, Holly's plan worked out all nicely, but what if it had not?

Even if your students do not make a point of this or do not even spot it, will you let the chance to talk about self-safety slip your hands? Given these #niunamenos times, there is no way you could avoid working on this. Just think of it. Otherwise, you could be promoting the opposite idea.

Other graded readers to explore in this light: *We love Toys*, *Can you See Lions?*, *Excalibur*, and *The Picture of Dorian Grey*.

Encouraging Understanding of and Respect for others: *Face*, set reader for 7th year adolescents.

There are many AEXALEVI readers which could be used to explore this axis, but -for economy reasons- we will only be dealing with *Face*, by Benjamin Zephaniah.

In this novel, Martin, the main character, suffers from peer discrimination and bullying after having his face burnt in a car accident. Prior to the accident, Martin had been a superfluous, quite popular boy at school who went out with Natalie, a girl who occasionally worked as a model.

The way Martin builds a new "face" and "identity" makes this work a jewel for ESI. The idea of losing those he "loved" for his appearance, the friends that he chose to have after the accident and how he developed into a mature boy who could accept diversity are worth exploring. Probably you have been doing this all along, but now you know that the work you have been doing falls into the ESI category.

Other graded readers to explore in this light: *Monster in the Box*, *Who's Coming for Tea?*, *Wild Animals- A Hungry Visitor*, *The Camping Trip*, *Pedro's Project*, *The Missing Coins*, *The Canterville Ghost*, *Eye of the Storm*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *Animal Farm*, and *Voodoo Island*.

Raising Awareness of and Helping Students to Comprehend their Emotions: *Sally's Phone*, set reader for 1st year Adolescents.

Once again, many graded readers could be used to explore this axis. *Sally's Phone* is just a title in a long list. This graded reader deals with Sally, a girl

who has a sick relationship with her domineering boyfriend. All throughout the story, we read how Sally becomes more and more in conflict with her relationship. Her boyfriend is always telling her what to do, or what to wear, and even phones her on repeated occasions just to check up on her. Even if Sally does not express her contradictory feelings, the images that accompany the book do make a point of this. Then, there is also the fact of those who surround her and how they do not approve of her boyfriend's relationship. How she feels about them is also important in this analysis.

It is essential to make a point of Sally's feelings, not only of the fact that her boyfriend is domineering. Making students put themselves in Sally's situation is a must. Probably, this has happened to them before. It is true that they may lack the words to express their feelings, but you could help them out by previously introducing vocabulary by means of emojis. The story is divided into different moments of the day, so students could choose a feeling (or several) per moment. Just make sure you offer them an array of possibilities, so they have plenty of options to choose from.

Other graded readers to explore in this light: *Callum the Caterpillar*, *Spider Spider*, *Shaun the Sheep- Save the Tree*, *Charlie and the Birthday Party*,

The Secret of the Stones, *The Wrong Trousers*, *The Climb*, *The Earthquake*, *Teacher's Dead*, and *Hamlet*.

Empowering Students with Knowledge about their Rights Irrespective of their Gender, Age, Nationality, Ethnia, etc.: *Oliver Twist*, set reader for 5th year adolescents.

We all know about how this classic explores the ordeals an orphan goes through during his childhood. What we must insist on, while dealing with this adapted reader, is the violation of rights that many of the characters in the story suffer from. What with the orphans who suffered malnutrition, the street children who were taught how to rob, the different instances of violence against women or the impoverished conditions in which many of the adult characters lived, the abridged adaptation of this novel by Charles Dickens offers a zillion doors to explore ESI. Interesting intertextual relations could be established between the book and the Declaration of Human Rights, and/or of Children's Rights.

Other graded readers to explore in this light: *The Happy Prince*, *Matilda*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Diary of a Young Girl*, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, and *An Inspector Calls*.

Helping Students Become Conscious of their Socially Assigned Roles: *K's First Case*, set reader for 3rd year adolescents.

This graded reader deals with Katrina Kirby, a female police detective, whose job is occasionally disdained due to her being a woman. The phrase “a woman doing a man’s job” is repeated quite a few times. It is imperative to make our students reflect upon this: do jobs for women or jobs for men really exist?

There is another important aspect of the story that you could exploit with your students. The victim’s lover, Angela Everett, is referred to as “a pretty little thing” and she is said to have been using all her charms to try to encourage her lover to include her in his will. She is deemed to be an object of desire because of her looks. We should definitely make a point of this in class: what do women need to look like? Do these looks correspond with their success? How different are Katrina and Angela?

Other graded readers to explore in this light: *The Sandcastle Competition*, *Footprints in the Forest*, *Girl on a Motorcycle*, *The Street Lawyer*, and *Macbeth*.

The tools for us to introduce ESI in our lessons are at the tip of our fingers – it is up to us, as adult and responsible teachers, to make good use of them and enrich our role as educators.

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Happy Teacher's Day!

To celebrate this special occasion, we asked several colleagues to tell us why they had decided to become teachers. Here is what they said. We thank all of them for their contributions.

Actually, being a teacher didn't catch me by surprise. There was never a time in my life when I felt as though I ever wanted to do a different job. I used to play school roles when very little, and I do still remember how upset I felt when it wasn't my turn to play "the teacher". Thereafter, throughout my school years, only on the odd occasion did I feel inspired by educators. However, the great exceptions were always my "English and Art" teachers, whose lessons and passion to get us involved in their "magic English world" were amazingly contagious. My inspiration has always come from a vision of students engaged in a world that goes beyond the classroom and becomes more realistic, in such a way that they can discover their talents and gain confidence so that whatever they learn becomes meaningful. As for me, teaching is a job you do not choose, but you might somehow be led to embark on a never-ending learning mission...



Marina Otero. *Colegio San Carlos de Mercedes, Corrientes.*

When I was a little girl I always used to help my classmates when they had difficulty in solving work. Teachers would usually ask me to teach my friends after finishing my activities. A tiny spark of delight kindled in me and, eventually, I realised I was not only good at that but also in my element. Of course, I decided to become a teacher of my favourite subject ever – English. It was a very demanding course of studies and the job keeps on being challenging. Yet, I cannot imagine any other career for me. I absolutely love every part of teaching (and learning). Entering a classroom is, in my opinion, art.



Valeria Gatta. *Compañía de María, CABA.*

Why did I choose teaching as a profession? Well, to tell you the truth, it wasn't my first option or job. In the mid '80s, I was working as an assistant manager in the claims department of the Buenos Aires branch of an American Insurance Company. Suddenly, many insurance companies began to close or go suspiciously bankrupt because of new economic policies, if you know what I mean.

After quitting my job in 1991, I realized I had to reconsider my life. Reading the newspaper one random Sunday morning, I saw an ad for a Language and Literature teacher at a bilingual school close to home. Suddenly, it dawned on me that teaching was the solution. The following morning, I called them up, and two days later I had an interview and got the job. That was 1992 and I've been teaching ever since.

I've gone through all the stages – teaching grade school, high school, being a coordinator, a Cambridge Oral Examiner, and finally an academic secretary in high school. I've had my ups and downs, I've cried, laughed and even sworn against the system. But you know what, that comes with the job.

To be honest, if I had to do it all over again, I would. The reason is the following – when a teacher sees that a former student did well on their chosen career path and has succeeded in life, it is our finest moment. Even at present a teacher's efforts to help their students learn seems, at times, in vain. But I think the time will come when we see that those seeds of love and labor will bear fruits of sweet success for the student. And this can be regarded as the moment of triumph for a teacher. This moment is priceless and immeasurable. And you know what, it makes you feel damn great!!!

Liliana Falcone. AEXALEVI.

I felt at home with teaching before deciding to become a teacher. I would be the one who explained things to my classmates before tests and lessons at secondary school. When it came to choosing a career, I was not sure about going into teaching.



I did the History Teacher Training Course first. But life led me into primary school where I developed most of my career in this profession I love and I am proud of. Schools are land of possibility and dreams. If I had a second life I would become a teacher once again.

Mariela Pauluzzi. Colegio Valle Grande, CABA.

Guidelines for the Mindful Teacher



Florencia Insua

We tend to begin our teaching practice with a lot of enthusiasm. We are full of creative ideas to implement in class and we take our job as an adventure. We experiment, we try new things until one day we start to work in a sort of automatic pilot mode. Teaching can be extremely rewarding but also frustrating at times. It is difficult to go through our teaching profession keeping the same level of enthusiasm and commitment. Many times, as teachers, we face situations that put our patience and emotional stability to the test. When was the last time you felt truly connected to your teaching practice and your students? When was the last time you thought about teaching as a journey to enjoy and learn from? We do not need to be experts in Mindfulness to become more mindful teachers, but we do need more mindful teachers to have more complete and experiential teaching in our schools. But how can we become more mindful in our everyday teaching?

In order to become more mindful teachers, it is useful to explore what Mindfulness is and why it is being implemented in educational institutions. Mindfulness has become more popular in the last few years. It started as Mindfulness-based interventions intended to help people undergoing chronic pain, depression and anxiety disorders. John Kabat-Zinn, a doctor at

the Medical Centre of the University of Massachusetts, began to use a series of mechanisms of Mindfulness as part of a programme to deal with stress management known as MBSR (Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction), which has now become a powerful practice in many fields. That is why we can now hear about mindful eating,

mindful fitness, mindful parenting and mindful education, among others.

A basic definition of Mindfulness is “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non judgementally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994 p26). This may sound simple but it is definitely not easy to implement in our everyday lives, for example when we are in a crowded classroom at school, at a traffic jam or having an argument. However, becoming a mindful teacher is worth the effort considering it has lots of benefits for our health (both physical and emotional), our job and the way we perceive the world around us. That includes, of course, the way we connect to our teaching practice and our students. There are a few principles that can make a significant difference in the way we deal with our teaching activities.

Be here now.

Mindful teachers are present in the present. They are paying attention to what is happening in their classroom with their students. This means that our bodies and our minds should be in the exact same place and form part of the experience we are going through. Now, this may seem rather obvious to some but very frequently we find ourselves thinking about what happened that morning before going to class, or what will happen in the meeting we will have after class, some family issues we need

to solve, the report cards we should have completed or the exams we need to correct. Being present in the present gives us the possibility to restore the ability to connect to the little things, to the subtle, to those moments we usually take for granted. One way to do so is to focus on our breathing. Breathing is the anchor we may need to realize that we are present in the present. Paying attention to your breathing one minute before leaving home or before going to class can make an incredible difference in the way you start your day. Just try sitting on a comfortable chair with your eyes closed listening to your breathing. Paying attention to the air going into and out of your body will bring a completely different view of what our body means to you and all it does for you during the day. If you find that you get distracted too easily you may ask yourself three basic questions:

- a) Where is my mind at this moment?
- b) What is my mind doing?
- c) Am I conscious that I am breathing?

Have a beginner’s mind.

As teachers we are used to being experts in the subject we teach. It is required for us to have some level of expertise in our field and, therefore, it is on this knowledge that our confidence relies when being in front of a class. Nevertheless, the “I know” pattern

sometimes prevents us from considering different perspectives and hinders the impulse of curiosity. And curiosity is a precursor of creativity. Once in a while it is useful to carry out an exercise in which you imagine you are doing something or seeing something for the first time. The beginner's mind is a term taken from Zenn Buddhism and it refers to having an attitude of openness, eagerness and lack of preconceptions when studying a subject. Whenever you have to deal with the same bibliography year after year, you may try having a beginner's mind and pretending you are working with it for the first time. When you have to teach one course again, it may be interesting to leave your preconceptions aside and look at the group as if you have never been their teacher before. We are not minimizing the advantages of having experience in something, but the truth is that keeping an open mind may offer us a world of possibilities and help us find different and new ways of doing what we have been doing for so long. To encourage a beginner's mind, you may try doing an exercise called "Mindful observation". Mindful observation consists of very simple steps: gaze at an object for a couple of seconds, forget about its name and its use and ask yourself how you would experience this object if you didn't know what it is and what it is for. Notice the shape, the texture and the colour, without any type of judgement. If you do this for some

minutes, you will experience a different perception of that object and you will be working on the preconceptions of your mind.

Become conscious of your own limitations and be ready to challenge them.

Very frequently we have great expectations about ourselves and our future. Teachers work many hours, both at school and at home. It is an extremely demanding job and our minds have the tendency to try to keep everything under control. Mindful teachers know that some situations and circumstances are beyond their control and they have come to terms with their own limitations. Limitations may take different shapes. The most obvious are health or physical disabilities. Others are limited time or energy. Mindful teachers know that there are two laws of nature that are always true: impermanence and change. Nothing is permanent in our lives. Life is a mysterious process that we are invited to go through, learn from and experience. The process is not linear and changes from one moment to another. This uncertainty may generate fear and anxiety. At times we need to adapt to change or help our students adapt to change. Adapting is not the same as accepting a situation in a passive way. On the contrary, it is developing a powerful tool by which we decide to come to terms with that which

we cannot momentarily change. It may mean accepting certain characteristics of a group of students or institution. It may involve adapting to a certain working schedule. At other times, we will find ourselves in the need of challenging our limitations.

You may work with your limitations by reflecting on them. Think about your current teaching experience and what aspects of it you may consider unpleasant. Ask yourself: Can I do anything to feel different about it? Which aspects of the situation can I change? Which aspects of the situation do not depend on me?

Communicate effectively.

Mindful teachers know the importance of effective and conscious communication. They reflect on *how* they communicate with their students. They pay attention to their body language, their gestures and posture. They select appropriate words and the right moment. They develop the capacity to be receptive and listen attentively. They talk to their students with a certain intention, but focus on expressing how they feel about different situations that give rise to conflict in the classroom. They leave aside emotions that may hinder communication. Mindful communication is based on mutual respect and enhances the connection between teacher and students. Next time you have an instance of

communication with your students, try having a more mindful approach to it, pay specific attention to listening, select your words, tone and gestures carefully and evaluate how you felt taking a more mindful role.

Show commitment.

Mindful teachers are committed to their profession and their students. They are coherent and consistent with their values, and what they believe is a priority in the classroom. What is your intention in this course? What do your students need from you? What can you learn from them? Do your students have a short-term objective such as passing an international exam? Do you need your students to change their view about what learning a foreign language is about? Do your students need to learn how to be more autonomous? Do they need to learn how to work together or change their attitude towards each other? The syllabus may be the same as that of the previous year but every group of students will require a different implementation considering what they need to learn from you and the course. Mindful teachers should have the intuition to discover what those needs are and how to work with them throughout the school year.

In his book “Wherever you go, there you are”, John Kabat- Zinn refers to Rene Daumal and his unfinished novel called

“Mount Analogue”. This novel is an allegorical account of the discovery and ascent of a mountain. In this novel Daumal compares alpinism and art: “Alpinism is the art of climbing mountains by confronting the greatest dangers with the greatest prudence. Art is used to mean the accomplishment of knowledge in action”. Kabat-Zinn says that the part he remembers more vividly is that there is an unwritten rule for climbers at Mount Analogue. The rule is that before leaving a refuge to go to the next one, one must leave everything ready for the new climbers to come, and that walking down the mountain is as important as going up because one must share with the rest of the climbers the knowledge of what you have found at the summit so that those climbers can take some information that will be useful for them on their way up. In some way, we do something similar when we teach: we share with our students part of the journey we have gone through, we make available to them our experience with the intention that all that we have learned will be useful for them. Becoming a more mindful teacher will take us back to those first years of teaching when everything was new and exciting, when we were going up the mountain and dealing with its dangers and obstacles, learning from every little step and discovering the pleasant and the unpleasant sides of the adventurous journey we started every day.

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Dictionaries, Those Somewhat Distant Friends

Gustavo Sevilla



In this age of electronic gadgetry, conventional dictionaries are often criticized and dismissed as hopelessly incomplete, as having limited value, or as downright misleading. However, even bilingual dictionaries can prove invaluable if put to good use. In Peter Newmark's words, "all reference books, however bad, are potentially useful, provided that you know their limitations". As teachers of English, the last thing we'd do – unless extremely necessary and only after all other resources have been used up – is refer our students to an English-Spanish/Spanish-English dictionary. Being so varied in nature, there are other dictionaries we should definitely prioritize in our teaching routine.

Now, what role do dictionaries play in our lessons? As a translator, I have to say I have always felt some kind of veneration for those voluminous books which so often dispel my doubts and help me find the exact word or phrase I'm looking for. I remember from the last year of my translator's course a language teacher, perhaps the best one I ever had, who used the famous Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (for some reason, there was not so wide a variety of portable English-English dictionaries back then) as a textbook. He compared words, detected shades of meaning, and gave the clearest examples with the aid of that book.

It would be unwise to claim that dictionaries substitute for course books. However, it would be equally unwise to disregard their importance as a valuable supplement for our lessons, mainly in upper intermediate and advanced courses. It has always fascinated me how precise and to-the-point the examples provided by dictionaries can be, so much so that, should there remain any doubt as to how a word or phrase is used, the examples illustrating the entry will most likely clear it up wonderfully well. Additionally, most dictionaries now include collocations as well as examples from some corpus. Do we take real advantage of this enriching linguistic opportunity to help our students express

themselves more idiomatically and form more accurate and complete units of meaning?

Once upon a time, dictionaries tended to be as large as boring, including just a few, usually hardly distinguishable drawings and making hardly any reference to collocations, synonyms or patterns. They just classified the word according to its category (noun, adjective, verb, adverb, etc.), gave one or more definitions, and then offered some examples – if any at all. I think competition has become so fierce lately that publishers now endeavour to produce the most comprehensive and integrated dictionaries, frequently including, as mentioned above, features that were once exclusive of or peculiar to more specific books, such as dictionaries of synonyms and antonyms, idioms dictionaries, thesauruses, usage manuals, illustrated encyclopedias, etc.

Collocations dictionaries are perhaps the latest development in this field, being for this reason the least abundant of all (I remember the surprise a native speaker I know once experienced when he learnt there were collocations dictionaries for learners of the language!). They are also scarce in Spanish (where they are usually known as “*diccionarios combinatorios*”). I have found them to be of great use. A good collocations dictionary, such as the one published by Oxford (*Oxford*

Collocations Dictionary for students of English), will provide (in printed and virtual format) a list of all or most of the possible combinations we can think of for a vast majority of the open-class words of the language. In the case of a noun, any such dictionary will tell us, for example, what verbs and adjectives it can collocate with, as well as what prepositions can precede or follow it, always including concise and clear examples to dispel any imaginable doubt.

Now, is there any way in which we can organize learning so that our students can realize how useful dictionaries can be? I think there are many. I firmly believe students should be encouraged to use dictionaries, either in book form or on line, from the very start. When I had CAE and CPE courses, or prepared students to sit for the teachers and translators training college entrance examination, I always laid stress on their using mainly the collocations and idioms dictionaries. This year, for example, seeing that my FCE students were not too elaborate in their compositions, I made a point of teaching them some “ways of ...” using the definitions and examples provided by the dictionary. They were astonished to recognize some of those new words in “Animal Farm” (for example, the different ways of walking of the pigs and other characters), and I then urged them to

use at least some such terms in any writing exercise they engaged in (for example, different ways of shining for the description of places, or different ways of speaking for the reproduction of dialogues). Obsessed with the importance of their using more sophisticated patterns and words, I was happy to notice the lexical richness of some of their compositions increase to some extent.

Going back to collocations dictionaries, they are especially useful because they combine those two skills we evaluate in any course: grammar and vocabulary. General dictionaries will usually meet both needs efficiently, but collocations dictionaries offer the extra benefit of showing, in a more orderly fashion, the patterns and accompanying terms of most of the words of the language (not only those that are more popular or more common, as is the case with general dictionaries). Verbs and adjectives accompanying nouns, for example, are presented in groups which are lexically related. No such relationship can be observed in general dictionaries, where accompanying words appear to be disorganized – if they do appear at all –, being therefore harder to contrast and remember. Let's compare the word "forum" as shown in a collocations and in a general dictionary:

forum *noun*

1 way people can exchange ideas

ADJECTIVE

important, useful

public

VERB + FORUM

create, offer, provide (sb with)

have

act as (esp. BrE), be used as, serve as

become

PREPOSITION

~ for

The conference provides a useful ~ for the exchange of views and ideas.

2 meeting at which people can exchange ideas

ADJECTIVE

open, public

The movie show was followed by an open ~ on editing techniques.

international, national

community

economic, political, social

discussion

Internet, online, web

Check out our online discussion ~.

VERB + FORUM

hold, host

We will be hosting a two-day ~ on childcare.

attend, go to

FORUM + VERB

take place

PREPOSITION

~ on

An international ~ on economic development took place in Brussels.

Leaving aside the differentiation between the two main meanings of the word which are presented separately in the collocations dictionary above and jointly in the language dictionary below (“forum” as a social phenomenon, that is, as a channel for communication, and the more institutional sense of “forum” as a meeting or organization), in the dictionary above we can find adjectives and verbs grouped together for easier reference and use, while in the dictionary below the words that collocate with the noun “forum” are mixed up and need to be picked up from the examples provided, a task that not many students will be willing to undertake. We can say that the systematization that the collocations dictionary offers (something similar can occasionally be found in some synonyms dictionaries and thesauruses) is key to facilitating what we are seeking, that is, a tool that helps students acquire new words and patterns more effectively.

for·um /'fɔ:rəm/ **noun [countable]**

1 an organization, meeting, TV program me etc where people have a chance to publicly discuss an important subject

forum for The journal aims to provide a forum for discussion and debate.

forum on the new national forum on the environment

2 a group of computer users who are interested in a particular subject and discuss it using email or the Internet

3 a large outdoor public place in ancient Rome used for business and discussion

Examples from the Corpus

forum

- The association began as a **forum** for sharing ideas about management problems.
- By focusing on major issues that loom ahead, they create a **forum** for anticipatory thinking.
- I want a **forum** to address the most serious problem facing the people of this state.
- A **forum**, or bulletin board, is a place where people can trade questions and answers.
- He has put forth his criticisms on paper, on the Internet, at community forums and during council meetings.
- Agreeing such aims will not be easy in any international forum.

- Fans may get chance to discuss the Seaside's ambitions as chairman Geoff rey Richmond is considering holding a public **forum** next week.
- To complain individually is not as successful as to complain within a unified forum.

forum for

- The United Nations should be a **forum for** solving international problems.

Many – though not all – of these resources are available on the Internet, but I'm not so sure that they are as effective as printed dictionaries, where the student can underline or write in pencil, or attach some tag, or use some marker, or which can be used as a book to read and study from, as my old professor used to do. However, even if there are published dictionaries of slang, I have to admit that few are comparable to the Urban Dictionary (<https://www.urbandictionary.com/>) that is available online. Here are some of the many dictionaries we can find on the Internet (Longman is definitely my favourite):

<http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

<https://ahdictionary.com/>

<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/>

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/>

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/>

I am certain – and hope I have also persuaded some of you to join me in that belief – that the proper, systematic use of some dictionary (be it of the thesaurus, synonyms and antonyms, idioms, collocations or general type) can be really useful to make the learning process of our students more effective and, needless to say, to make them gain confidence in their approach to those books they would most likely hardly ever have any spontaneous contact with.

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