In this issue...

ARTICLES
Professional learning in Australian ELICOS: An action research orientation
Creative writing in ELT

INTERVIEW
Ten questions for Jim Scrivener

REVIEWS
Motivating Learning
Bridge to IELTS
Mind the App

...more articles and reviews inside
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EDITORIAL

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

Anne Burns
Professional learning in Australian ELICOS: An action research orientation

Michael Carey & Ann Robertson
Preparing Papuan EFL teachers for the IELTS and Australian Development Scholarships

Barbara Craig & Sandra Pitronaci
Jazz it up, Teacher! Music Club promotes pronunciation, fluency and off-beat engagement in an ELT classroom

CLASSROOM TALK

Ceara McManus
Making meaning in spoken English: Intonation, naturally!

Jo Cummins
Creative writing in ELT: Helping students find their voice

Damien Herlihy
‘Demand-high’ teaching, ‘low-demand’ technology

Interview: Jim Scrivener
10 Questions for Jim Scrivener

REVIEWS

Audionote
Reviewed by Tim Dodd

Oxford Grammar for EAP
Ken Paterson with Roberta Wedge
Reviewed by Meredith MacAulay
Bridge to IELTS 81
**Louise Harrison & Susan Hutchison**
*Reviewed by Sara Houshi Deghati Fouman*

Digital Literacies 84
**Nicky Hockly, Gavin Dudeney & Mark Pegrum**
*Reviewed by Michael Griffiths*

Englishcentral.com 88
*Reviewed by Yaser Khajavi*

The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes 91
**Brian Paltridge & Sue Starfield**
*Reviewed by Karen Woodman*

Motivating Learning 94
**Jill Hadfield & Zoltán Dörnyei**
*Reviewed by Bethany Randell*

Smartphone apps for developing oral fluency 97
*Reviewed by Jessica Cobley & Becky Steven*

Teacher Research in Language Teaching 101
**Simon Borg**
*Reviewed by Philip Chappell*

Mind the App! 106
**Thomas Strasser**
*Reviewed by Kyle Smith*

**GENERAL INFORMATION** 110

English Australia Member Colleges 112

*English Australia Journal* Subscriptions 116

*English Australia Journal* Advertising 117
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Welcome to the first issue for 2014 of the *English Australia Journal*. There is great variety in this issue, with innovative and informative contributions to all three main sections. A big welcome also to Tamzen Armer, who joins the editorial team as Reviews Editor, and who has hit the ground running, ensuring we have a range of materials reviewed by professionals in our community.

In a serendipitous way, the three peer-reviewed articles in this issue each reflect, in their own way, the theme for English Australia’s forthcoming annual conference: ‘Quality: walking the talk.’ I interpret this concern as being focused on best practices in ELT, a concern that each of the authors addresses in their articles, by way of contributions to teacher-oriented research.

Anne Burns’ article ‘Professional learning in Australian ELICOS: An action research orientation’ provides a comprehensive overview of the highly successful action research project that she has been championing since its inception in 2010. Burns presents an overview of action research, how it has been implemented in Australian ELICOS, and how teachers have responded to their involvement in the research project. The program contributes significantly to delivering quality learning and teaching in our sector and beyond. Michael Carey and Anne Robertson present their study – ‘Preparing Papuan EFL teachers for the IELTS and Australian Development Scholarships’ – evaluating an IELTS preparation program for Papuan teachers whose goal is to study at postgraduate level in Australia. During the course of delivering this program, Carey and Robertson carried out a process of evaluation in order to inform future curriculum planning decisions for this and similar contexts. Finally, Barbara Craig and Sandra Pitronaci’s article provides us with a third example of teacher research focused on best practice, ‘Jazz it up, Teacher! Music Club promotes pronunciation, fluency and off-beat engagement in an ELT classroom.’ In response to findings from their institution’s Quality Assurance processes, Craig and Pitronaci set up and carried out a Music Club to promote several aspects of language learning for their students, not least of which involved pronunciation.
The quality of these peer-reviewed articles reflects not only the dedication of the authors, but the support of peer reviewers, each of whom has contributed their time to read and offer constructive suggestions for improvement. My heartfelt thanks to these reviewers, who are listed in the front pages of this journal.

Sophia Khan continues to provide us with an inspiring range of contributions to the Classroom Talk section. In this issue, we have a doyen of ELT methodology, Jim Scrivener, answering Sophia’s ‘Ten questions’. Other topics include creative writing, intonation, and technology for teachers. A range of materials has been reviewed by our professional community, including coursebooks, websites, teacher reference books and research-related books. A big thanks to the reviewers, supported by Tamzen Armer, who continue to provide us with the latest in what is now a highly complex array of language teaching-related materials.

We trust that you enjoy the latest issue of the journal and that you will consider contributing to one of the sections in the future. A Journal is only as good as its contributors, and to date, thankfully, we have a terrific group contributing to the journal’s quality.

In closing, thanks to the tireless efforts of our designer and print organiser, Derek Trow, to Sophia Khan for her meticulous copy editing, and to the ongoing support of the English Australia Secretariat. I hope to see many of you in Melbourne in September this year.

Phil Chappell
Executive Editor

Sophia Khan
Classroom Talk Editor

Tamzen Armer
Reviews Editor
Professional learning in Australian ELICOS: An action research orientation

Anne Burns

University of New South Wales

This article centres on the topic of teacher learning in professional development, involving a national action research program undertaken in the Australian ELICOS sector since 2010. It outlines the reasons the program was introduced and then describes its structure and framework. The main focus of the article, however, is on the responses of the teachers who have participated in the program since its inception, in terms of the professional learning generated through their action research experiences. Three major types of learning are identified: learning about teaching; learning about learners; and learning about engaging with and conducting research. As a way of further illustrating these dimensions of learning, a brief case study of the research undertaken by one of the teachers is also presented.

Introduction

If we start from the idea that creating knowledge is a practical affair, we will start not, as in traditional academic research, from an interesting theoretical question, but from what concerns us in practice, from the presenting issues in our lives. (Reason, 2006, p. 188)

Thank you so much for this amazing opportunity! (Teacher participant, 2012)

Conceptualisations of and approaches to language teacher education and professional development have changed dramatically over the last two decades, largely in response to both internal pressures within the field itself, and external pressures exerted by the dramatic spread of English language teaching internationally (Burns & Richards, 2009). The internal pressures have occurred through greater theoretical sophistication, for example, in understandings of the knowledge base required for teaching (Freeman & Johnson, 1998) and the application of critical and socio-constructivist theories to professional engagement (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). Externally, the impacts of the globalisation of ELT have been felt in government policies that have greatly widened the learner base, and produced greater demands for accountability and teaching
standards (McKay, 2012). Both of these pressures have heightened demands for higher levels of teaching qualifications, ongoing teacher education, and continuous self-development on the part of teachers.

Among these pressures, the notion of teacher learning, vis-à-vis teacher training or teacher development, has created changed views of the kind of opportunities felt to be important for greater teacher professionalisation (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). These include notions of reflective teaching, cooperative learning, collaborative teacher development, peer coaching and mentoring, teacher self-study groups, and the teacher-as-researcher, where the sociocultural practices and cognitions of teachers working in their own social environments can be examined and understood.

This article describes a national professional development opportunity whose underlying philosophy is compatible with the concept of teacher learning. Since, 2010, the Action Research in English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) Program (hereafter the Program) has been offered to teachers in this sector through the support of the ELICOS peak body and professional association, English Australia, and the UK-based international examination body, Cambridge English Language Assessment. I describe the structure and processes for this program, but in particular I evaluate the responses of the teachers who have participated in relation to what they believe they have gained from the program. I also provide a brief account of the experiences of one of the teachers in the project. As such, the article aims to provide a case study of the impact of this form of teacher learning on teachers’ professional learning and development.

**Literature review**

Leung (2009) argues that teacher professionalism emerges through both sponsored and independent professional development opportunities. Sponsored professionalism often takes the form of end-of-course standards to be achieved or the strategic aims of professional or peak bodies in relation to the kind of knowledge and skills to which they aspire for their teaching force. It is historically and politically located and mediated by particular educational and professional environments. Independent professionalism, he argues, is to do with individual teachers’ reflexive examination of their practices, their ‘willingness and capacity to turn [their] thinking (and action) on itself, thus making it an object available for self-examination’ (p. 53). He emphasises that for the increased vitality of the language teaching profession, teacher education programs should offer practitioners the opportunity ‘to develop a professional orientation that takes account of both sponsored and independent professionalism’ (p. 55).
Among the range of possibilities that exist for teachers to achieve the kind of reflexivity that Leung recommends, practitioner action research has increasingly emerged as one form that is widely advocated. In one of the first publications to illustrate international examples of teacher action research, Edge (2001, p. 6) opines, ‘I see the TESOL field as committed to a mode of operation for which the umbrella title, action research, is appropriate.’ Similarly, Richards (2003, p. 236) argues that ‘the most powerful form of research for the beginning researcher in TESOL is action research.’ More recently, action research has even been portrayed as entering the mainstream of research that can inform the field of ELT: ‘action research has come of age in second language scholarship’ (Denos et al., 2009, p. ix).

Action research is a form of research conducted by participants in a social situation, who are at the same time both active agents and investigators of their own ‘communities of practice’ (Burns, 2010; Lave & Wenger, 1991). In language teaching, action research is typically conducted by teachers wishing to explore in depth various aspects of teaching or learning in the classroom. It involves conducting a systematic, but dynamic process of research with the aim of gaining deeper understandings of practices within the classroom and enhancing the conditions for teaching and learning that already exist. The processes used for action research originated in the work of Kurt Lewin, sometimes called ‘the father of action research’, who undertook work on the social dynamics of groups and advocated a model of research as a spiral of steps, ‘each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action’ (Lewin, 1946, p. 38). Lewin’s approach is encapsulated in the following:

The research needed for social practice can best be characterized as research for social management or social engineering. It is a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action. Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice. (Lewin, 1946, p. 35)

Various iterations or ‘generations’ of action research (see Burns, 2011) have ensued from Lewin’s initial conceptualisations, including the technical-scientific (developing basic improvements to practice), the practical-deliberative (solving problems from a morally oriented perspective), the critical-emancipatory (critically addressing broader educational structures at the local level) and, most recently, the social-participatory (using social-emancipatory and actionist approaches for educational transformation). In the main, however, action research by many teachers, including language teachers, tends towards the practical, rather than the actionist or emancipatory (Borg, 2013; Burns, 2011; Crookes, 1993; Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2014).
Drawing on Lewin’s initial concepts, various models of the processes involved in action research have been devised, but one which has been widely used in the field of English language teaching is the iterative spiral recommended by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). This model consists of four ‘moments’, or fundamental phases, of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. While it may not fully reflect the complexity, dynamism and fluidity of the experiences of conducting action research (see Burns, 1999), it is a useful way to capture the essential processes adopted by action researchers. It is the model used in the Action Research in ELICOS Program.

- **Plan** – develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening
- **Act** – act to implement the plan
- **Observe** – observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs
- **Reflect** – reflect on these effects as the basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed action, [etc.] through a succession of stages.

(Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p. 10)

Action research is said to have a number of benefits for practitioners. These include contributing to a sense of professional efficacy, sustaining an inquiry mindset, engendering new and more effective teaching strategies, making contributions to student learning, challenging and extending personal professional development and developing the ability to think critically about teaching and to articulate personal philosophies (Seider & Lemma, 2004). At the same time, numerous factors deterring teachers from conducting research are recognised, including non-supportive school cultures, limitations to teachers’ awareness, beliefs, skills and knowledge, lack of time, heavy workloads, limited resources, lack of motivation and confidence, economic matters, including low salaries and lack of funding, and unsupportive leadership and educational policies (Barkhuizen, 2009; Borg, 2013; Burns, 1999). Moreover, action research still struggles to establish itself as a viable empirical activity, being critiqued for its conduct by untrained researchers, lack of rigour and reliability of methods, low generalisability, low quality of outcomes, and unclear ethical standards (see Burns, 2011). Despite these recognised tensions and controversies, the case for expanding teacher engagement in research as a way to ‘bridge the gap between formal qualifications and effectiveness in the classroom’ (Borg, 2013, p. 217) continues to grow, and the program described below aims to contribute to this orientation.

*The Action Research in ELICOS Program*

The Program was initiated in 2010 when Cambridge English Language Assessment
agreed to partner with English Australia, to sponsor action research as part of expanded professional development opportunities for teachers. I was invited to participate as the key reference person and facilitator to construct the Program, building further on principles of action research practice developed with the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) – see Burns (1999), and also features of good teacher research identified by Borg (2013). The aim was to initiate a pilot action research program to ‘equip teachers with skills to enable them to explore and address identified teaching challenges in the context of Australian ELICOS’ and ‘to share the outcomes of this research with colleagues and peers through publications and presentations’ (Burns & Brandon, 2013, p. 2). In addition, English Australia anticipated four key outcomes intended to build into one of the organisation’s major strategic goals of raising levels and quality of professional practice:

- direct professional development of the teachers involved
- development of teacher peer networks
- increased teacher engagement with research and academic researchers
- furthering of professional development by the teachers involved.

To initiate the Program, a call for expressions of interest from teachers was sent out nationally by English Australia. In order to make explicit from the outset what expectations there would be of participating teachers, it was explained that they would be involved in attending workshops, implementing an agreed action research process over six months with ongoing support during this time, writing interim and final accounts of their research for eventual publication by Cambridge English, and presenting their research in a colloquium at the annual English Australia Conference. At this stage it was by no means a certainty that ELICOS teachers would be enthusiastic about wishing to undertake practitioner research; the fact that 12 teachers put in applications for the first year was therefore an encouraging start (Burns, 2011b).

In conjunction with the English Australia Professional Support and Development Officer (PSDO), Katherine Brandon, I developed a plan for conducting the Program which was trialled in the first year:

1. **January:** Expressions of Interest (EOIs) were sought from teachers working at any accredited ELICOS institution around Australia. Although participation in the Program was voluntary, and teachers were able to express their own ideas about areas for research, approval was also required by their academic managers, including an assurance that the college was willing to support the teachers during their research.
2. **March:** Evaluation of EOIIs and selection of participants were completed by a Program Reference Group, which included two representatives of both English Australia and Cambridge English, and participating teachers were notified. Six teachers participated in the first year.

3. **May:** Workshop One (1½ days) was held in Sydney. The aim was to introduce teachers to the concepts and processes of action research, to refine the focus and develop possible questions for their various projects, and to decide on initial action plans for classroom investigation. Teachers would then implement their action research in their classrooms over a period of three months.

4. **July:** Workshop Two (1 day) was held in Sydney. The aim was for each teacher to provide updates on their research, identify further steps and sources of data as necessary, refine their action plans further in order to complete the projects, plan the writing up of the research, and discuss the colloquium presentation.

5. **Early September:** Participants submitted first drafts of their written research accounts. These drafts were distributed to Reference Group members who would determine the recipient of the English Australia/Cambridge English Action Research in ELICOS Award, one of the awards conferred each year by English Australia at their annual conference.

6. **Mid-September:** Workshop Three (1 day) was held the day before the annual English Australia Conference. Participants were able to share updates on their projects, particularly focusing on the outcomes, rehearse their presentations for the conference colloquium, and discuss the final accounts they would publish the following year in the Cambridge English journal, *Research Notes*. These accounts were to be submitted by early November.

From the participants’ perspective this initial plan worked relatively effectively and it has been sustained since the beginning of the Program, with some modifications. Participants from 2010 and 2011 felt that there was insufficient time between the first and second workshop to ‘get really into the research’, as one participant put it. Being conscious of the additional time required for action research (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2009; Nunan, 1993; Rainey, 2000) and not wanting to place too much additional pressure on the teachers (e.g., van Lier, 1994), we had attempted to minimise the length of the process and had not anticipated that teachers would wish to continue for longer. Their feedback suggested, however, that it took time to arrive at the specific focus of the research and to delve in sufficient depth into the new teaching strategies and reflective observations involved. Consequently, the Program now
begins in early March and participants from the third and fourth years have welcomed this longer timespan.

Following other feedback, we also looked for improved ways for participants to remain in contact, given that they were working at great distances from each other in different parts of Australia. Our attempt in 2011 to set up a blog was not successful; there were few posts and participants reported that they found the technology difficult to use. Therefore, in 2012, we initiated a wiki where the teachers and we could easily post general project information, teaching and research suggestions, samples of teaching material being used, and recommendations about resources, technology and professional readings. Although it began a little slowly in 2012, in 2013 the wiki was used extensively and with great enthusiasm. A further change involved introducing individual Skype chats between the first and second workshops, so that participants and I could be in contact about how the research was progressing and where to take it next. Typically these chats provided new research directions and ideas, developed as a result of our interactions. Regular email contact with all the participants further complements these other ways of communicating.

One other change to the program has been to introduce ‘themed’ research areas for classroom exploration. In the first two years of the program, teachers selected topic areas across a very broad range of ELICOS teaching and learning priorities. However, based on feedback from teachers, centres and other stakeholders across the ELICOS community, the 2012 program focused on classroom-based assessment, while in 2013, the focus was on integrating classroom assessment and the teaching of speaking. Within themed areas, teachers are free to follow interests reflecting their own and/or their teaching centre’s needs, as the areas selected by the 2013 participants show:

- Harnessing formative feedback for oral skills development
- Using Web 2.0 technology to improve feedback on spoken academic texts
- Preparing students to answer connected speech questions on the Cambridge English TKT ‘Knowledge about Language’ module
- Preparing students for a spoken academic presentation in six hours
- Using Web 2.0 technologies to enhance speaking fluency
- Encouraging students to diagnose and resolve their grammar problems in speaking.

The introduction of themes has allowed for more targeted dialogue about relevant
theoretical concepts and the literature related to the topic, and useful exchanges of materials and resources. As one 2013 participant commented, ‘there always seemed to be overlap between projects which meant that sharing of ideas . . . was of benefit to all participants.’ In addition, it has created a body of practitioner research accounts that intersect with each other. This means that other interested teachers from the ELICOS sector can go to the written accounts to get ideas for practice within a specific pedagogical area.

**Teacher participants**

Since 2010, 32 teachers have participated in 24 action research studies (with 11 more teachers commencing six studies focusing on reading in 2014), conducted either individually or by pairs working in the same centre. Their professional experience has ranged from 1 year to 20 years of teaching, with formal qualifications also ranging from completion of initial qualifications, such as CELTA, to graduation from specialist master’s programs. Entry into the program is determined by the clarity and relevance of the topics proposed by the teachers, in relation both to their own classrooms and students’ needs, and to the wider ELICOS sector. Two very important features of participation are that it is voluntary on the part of the teachers, and that they commit to sustaining the research across the duration of the yearly program.

**Teacher responses to the Action Research in ELICOS Program**

Data have been collected from teachers progressively since the beginning of the Program, in the form of written evaluative feedback from each workshop (henceforth TE), dialogic interactions recorded during workshop discussions (henceforth TD), and written summaries and project reports (henceforth TR) that include the teachers’ reflections on their experiences. The data below, drawn from these different sources across different years, show that teacher responses to their involvement in the Program have been overwhelmingly positive. In making this claim, it is important to sound a note of caution, in that the data were provided to the author, who was the facilitator on the program, and to the PSDO. However, given the fact that the usual dynamic amongst each of the projects groups was robust and open, and was encouraged to operate in this way, we had no reason to suppose that the data constituted anything other than the teachers’ frank responses. In order to provide an analysis of these responses in terms of teacher learning, I focus on three of the major themes that have emerged: learning about teaching, learning about learners, and learning about engaging in research.

**Learning about teaching**

Numerous comments relate to learning more about teaching, in particular the
development of skills and knowledge about teaching in general and about one’s own teaching practices in particular. Participants indicate that their ways of thinking about teaching have become more sophisticated, analytical and focused and that they evaluate more closely and critically the links between theories in the field and how (or even whether) these could be implemented in their own contexts.

I’ve improved my teaching skills, and I have more knowledge of learner autonomy and goal setting theories. (TR, 2011)

I’ve looked closely at how I teach speaking as well as at existing courses and curriculum at my centre. (TR, 2014)

I went back to teaching approaches . . . old theories, new theories, all the labels. How am I going to label it and so on? I realised it actually doesn’t matter – you are using the best methods you can to do it. (TD, 2010)

The focus of thinking had been centred on debates about explicit versus implicit grammar teaching. I have since learnt that students are unconcerned about these arguments, but they have strong views regarding error correction, interaction and activity type which need to be heard. (TR, 2012)

Participants point also to the greater depth of critical reflection that emerges during their research, in contrast to previous, more superficial ways of thinking about teaching practices.

As a teacher I think I’ve developed my skills in the classroom at an accelerated rate. I’ve gained an appreciation of how to improve as a teacher. (TE, 2012)

Action research allowed me to make deep observations that some of my teaching strategies and philosophies were not helpful for my students. (TR, 2011)

Deeper reflection may also be tied to gaining more substantial, evidence-based insights into previously taken-for-granted practices.

One of my most significant reflections is how much I’ve learned about my own teaching; general assumptions about what is ‘correct’ should always be interrogated. (TD, 2013)

The action research provided me with objective data and the incentive to consult literature, which allowed me to reflect on and evaluate my assumptions. (TR, 2012)

It seems that engagement in action research inquiry stimulated shifts in teachers’ learning and practices, which were mediated by opportunities for deeper
understanding of teaching as practised in their own contexts (Brookfield, 1995).

**Learning about learners**

Learning about teaching is closely interconnected with learning about learners and also appreciating the centrality of learners and their learning needs in effective teaching practices. Concepts of learner-centredness were redefined and recontextualised through enhanced consultation with learners, and many of the teachers refer to greater openness to integrating learner participation and learner perspectives into their practices.

We continually asked questions from a learners’ perspective in order to proceed. [Action research] allowed us to re-examine learning and reveal the importance of a student-centred pedagogy. (TR, 2013)

My students have discovered that they really can set their own progress goals. It’s brought home to me how important it is that the students decide. (TR, 2011)

Through this process, I have learned to listen more carefully to student ‘voices’ and consider both their motivational and learning outcomes. (TE, 2010)

[I have a] better awareness of students’ needs and attitudes. (TE, 2012)

There is also greater appreciation of the knowledge, skills and learning preferences learners bring to classrooms.

It was enlightening for me to find out what students believed about their learning and abilities. (TE, 2012)

I’ll keep the lines of communication open with students to better inform my teaching. (TR, 2010)

I also became aware of how rarely students have a chance to express their views, even though it seems obvious that doing so can impact on their motivation and performance level. (TR, 2012)

In more recent conceptualisations of learner-centred teaching, the notion of ‘pedagogy for autonomy’, involving four key components of reflection, experimentation, self-regulation and negotiation (Vierra et al., 2008), has been foregrounded. The orientation supported by Viera et al. also includes the recommendation that teachers ‘become analysts of their own practice and critical informers of the educational community’ (p. 233). The responses of the teachers involved in the Program fall in line with this recommendation, suggesting that their research assisted them to take more systematic steps towards ‘deep’ integration of greater learner autonomy.
into their classroom practices. More importantly, these insights can be shared with learners and with colleagues through the outcomes of their research.

**Learning about engaging with and conducting research**

For many of the teachers, the Program is their first entry point into research engagement outside formal study and is initially often accompanied by feelings of uncertainty, or even anxiety. As one participant put it, ‘This was my first experience of doing research over an extended period of time. I was unsure how it would progress’ (TR, 2014). While others involved in the Program have responded similarly at the outset, by the end of the Program it is clear that confidence and knowledge have grown substantially. Participants more frequently make comments such as, ‘This action research process has been an enlightening experience’ (TE, 2010), ‘My experience of undertaking this action research process was illuminating’ (TR, 2011), and ‘This research has been a remarkable journey for us and for our students’ (TE, 2012).

For some the Program results in greater appreciation that research can be linked in a relevant way to teaching and to the classroom:

- It’s a wonderful opportunity to look at research in a practical way. (TE, 2012)
- What I found significant about embarking on this action research was that it put my teaching assumptions under the spotlight again. (TR, 2011)
- The important aspect for me was to extract the best from the practices, methodologies, and pedagogies I was familiar with but to take my own students and teaching issues as the starting point. (TD, 2011)

Other forms of learning relate to developing skills to undertake research through the opportunity to engage directly:

- I’ve gained practical skills relating to how to set up and run a research study and I’m more familiar with AR as a research methodology. (TE, 2010)
- We have learned about different ways to gather good sources of information and feedback from our students . . . including composing explicit survey questions, conducting interviews, designing Likert scales and collating and interpreting data. (TR, 2013)

A further dimension of learning involves the trigger action research provides for (re-)engaging with published research studies and evaluating their relevance for one’s own practice.
[I ended up with] more knowledge of learner autonomy and goal setting theories and research skills. (TD, 2010)

This project has helped me develop my own ‘Personal Commandments’ based on my reading of Dörnyei and Csizer (1998) and also on Oxford and Shearin’s (1994) suggestions for sustaining motivation. (TR, 2010)

I widened [my] definition to mean the achievement of the specific goals identified by the students. As Freeman and Long point out (1991, p. 157), ‘only quite young children seem to be capable of native-like attainment, even after many years of target language exposure.’ (TR, 2011)

Others refer to how undertaking action research contributes to their ongoing professional development as teachers.

I look forward to undertaking further action research in the future as a means of continuing my professional development. (TR, 2012)

Action research has pushed us both out of our comfort zones and made us try new methods and resources and overcome weaknesses in our teaching. (TE, 2013)

Our daring journey of action research has contributed to our growth as teachers. (TR, 2014)

For others the Program provides the confidence to continue pursuing a research pathway.

I have been very interested in doing a PhD for some time. Perhaps this project could be the basis of that. (TE, 2010)

My research has raised many questions for further investigation . . . A continuation of this research could monitor changes in student awareness and autonomy through a longitudinal study. (TR, 2012)

Several of these comments suggest that the Program had a catalytic effect on the teachers’ sense of professionalism. It appeared to generate a more investigative stance on practice, embedded within the realities and practicalities of the classroom. There are also suggestions of wanting to root actual practices more reflexively within key ‘theories of practice’ (Burns, 1996) that underpin the field. Perhaps even more importantly, however, for some the experience of the Program appears to have triggered the confidence and the desire to pursue research at a higher level. In this respect, the experience of action research can be said to have had a ‘developmental’
or ‘transformative’ effect, as visualised in recent concepts of teacher education and learning (e.g., Leung, 2009; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

**Case study: The Program and professional learning**

In order to illuminate teacher learning generated by the Program at a personalised level, in this section I provide a short case study of the research carried out by Laura McCrossan, the winner of the first Program award.

Laura joined the 2010 pilot program. She taught a high level General English class (CEFR B2/C1) in a private language college. Her classroom situation was characterised by new enrolments in the class every week and by attendance of some students for only three to four weeks. Initially troubled by the volatility of this situation and its impact on her research, after discussion with other participants Laura treated this situation as ‘the reality of my classroom’ and therefore an inevitable factor. In her first written account, she described the impetus for her research:

> Over time I discovered, through conversations with my students, that many of them felt they had plateaued and this perceived lack of progress was a source of frustration and waning motivation. I wanted to research the link between progress and motivation, and whether taking charge of their own progress would have an effect on their motivation and their perception of progress.

In order to tackle this situation, Laura asked the students to set themselves progress goals. She asked each of the 19 students she worked with over the six-month period to outline how they were going to achieve their goals and how she could assist them. She then developed a variety of activities to help the students. She found that goal-setting was a novel experience for many of the students: ‘In some cases the student and I refined their goals due to their unrealistic nature. The students reported that the process helped them make progress and in many cases increased their motivation’ (McCrossan, 2011, p. 8).

To investigate the effects of her teaching actions she utilised questionnaires, open interviews, and class discussions. What is notable in Laura’s use of these techniques for systematic data-gathering is that, rather than being an end in themselves, they were used deliberately to feed back into the practices she wished to develop in the classroom: ‘The information I gained from the questionnaires and interviews enabled me to tailor the course to their individual needs and follow up on their progress goals’ (p. 8). This interaction of action, investigation, data-gathering and analysis, and further action typifies the reflexive nature of action research.

Laura reported that the majority of the students noted a clear link between setting goals, making progress and enhancing motivation. She also suggested that the research
would have a longer-term impact on her teaching: ‘I now intend to install [this teaching intervention] as a permanent feature of my class’ (p. 11). Her reflections on her participation in the Program highlight again the three themes identified earlier (p. 11):

My experience of undertaking this action research process was illuminating. I learned a great deal about my teaching style and how I related to my students. More importantly, I learned more about my students, the way they learn and what aspects of learning are important to them. I also realised how much can be gained through conducting short interviews with students and I will also use them in the future where time permits. The importance of establishing students’ trust through this medium cannot be underestimated and becoming aware of students’ individual goals is imperative for both teacher and learner.

Although Laura was one of the youngest and least experienced teachers to join the 2010 pilot program, her comments suggest substantial professional growth. She went on to present at local staff development events and two national conferences, and made plans to enrol in a DELTA course.

Discussion

Carter and Halsall (1998) argue that research-oriented organisations are characterised by collaboration and communities of research where teachers work with each other to explore areas of common interest, a point worth noting by organisations wanting their staff to become more research active. Similarly, Johnston (2009) argues that collaborative teacher development (CTD), such as that underpinning this Program, plays a vital role in options for teacher professional development and is being recognised as a central component of effective educational processes and outcomes. However, he cautions that without institutional support, such professional development will not thrive, even when teachers might try to seek such opportunities. He argues moreover that institutional support must be of two types: logistical and financial support; and moral support:

The former might take the form of small grants, travel money, opportunities for reduced teaching loads, and so on. The latter, moral support is if anything even more important: Principals, directors, chairs and administrations generally need to recognise the worth of CTD, to understand the importance of what their teachers are doing, and to accept the consequences. (p. 246)

These considerations have been central to this Program from its inception. By assisting ELICOS teachers to explore their teaching within a structured and nationally sponsored professional development initiative, English Australia has been creating a teacher learning environment conducive to sectoral, institutional and personal professional growth. In this respect it is worth noting that not only has the Program
received an International Education Association of Australia Excellence Award for Best Practice/Innovation (2013), but that the model has been adopted by English UK, with support from Cambridge English, for the initiation of a new Program from 2014.

This is not to argue, however, that action research can thrive only in large and well-sponsored programs. Individual schools can also take the initiative in developing an action research culture; in doing so, some of the key lessons learned in this Program (and in its predecessor AMEP program) could be productively drawn upon:

- promote the benefits of doing research to teachers, learners and the school more generally
- invite voluntary participation by teachers in action research
- clarify the scope and duration of the program and the specific commitments required of teachers
- enable teachers to focus their research on their own interests and concerns, even when these may lie within broader strategies of school development
- provide structured opportunities for teachers to discuss their understanding of research, develop their personal research skills, and plan ways to conduct their research
- allocate resources in terms of time (e.g., teaching release), access to materials and availability of relevant literature
- enable access to systematic support and mentoring through internal facilitation or relevant external workshops
- promote the research as it progresses within the school, among staff, students and parents
- encourage teachers to identify clear outcomes that will have application for other colleagues, and for school curriculum development
- provide opportunities for dissemination of the research, through oral presentations, visuals (e.g., posters), and written accounts
- encourage teachers to present their research beyond the school (e.g., local and national professional development meetings) and provide resources for them to do so.
Conclusion

This article has described the main process underpinning the Action Research in ELICOS Program, and has analysed what learning about practice teachers appear to have experienced. This orientation links with current interests in language teacher education to devise practical ways to support teachers to become reflective practitioners and lifelong learners about teaching (Burton, 2009). The findings from this Program suggest that action research provides a productive means to achieve such a goal.

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References


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Preparing Papuan EFL teachers for the IELTS and Australian Development Scholarships

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This study evaluates the success of an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) preparation program for 14 Papuan EFL teachers conducted in Papua Indonesia. The program aimed to familiarise the teachers with the IELTS, enhance their test readiness and confidence, and increase their capacity to reach the Australian Award Scholarship’s English proficiency requirement of IELTS 5.0. Preparation materials developed by the first author were used in face-to-face, email and self-study modes. Adjustments to input were made during program delivery based on participant feedback, investigator observation and reflection. Two evaluative instruments were used: two practice IELTS tests delivered during the program and one official IELTS test conducted post-program; and a post-program participant survey on key aspects of the program and the participants’ degree of self-perceived test readiness and confidence. Lessons were learnt concerning the provision of offshore test preparation in a remote developing country which may assist in the design of similar programs.

Introduction

Education capacity building is a substantial undertaking for many developing countries and the countries that aid their development. Governments of developing communities, such as the Indonesian province of Papua, view proficiency in English language as the pathway to international mobility and advancement in educational capacity. However, quality English language instruction is in short supply in Papua due to several factors: geographical remoteness, the high costs of accessing private tuition and the lack of proficient teachers in the public system.

The current international development literature diverges in its view on the role of English language in development contexts. In certain contexts, the risks of embedding English within a development model outweigh the benefits – see (2011)
for a comprehensive review of the negative impacts. Among the positive roles of English identified by, three are particularly relevant to this study in Papua province, Indonesia: ‘facilitating international mobility, unlocking development opportunities, and accessing crucial information’ (2011, p. 11). The end goal of the program outlined in this paper was to provide the Papuan participants with access to an Australian university learning experience, thereby increasing their English language discipline and pedagogical knowledge, with the ultimate intention of developing human resource capacity and advancing Papua’s schooling system towards international standards.

To assist developing countries to improve the quality of their public sector human resources, the Australian government established the Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) program, rebranded in 2013 as Australia Award Scholarships (AAS). AAS is administered by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). The purpose of the scholarships is for people from qualifying countries to gain knowledge and skills ‘to drive change and contribute to the development outcomes of their own country’ (AusAID, 2013). The scholarships are available to those employed in government and non-government sectors to study mostly at postgraduate level in Australia. The acronyms ADS and AAS are used interchangeably in this article.

To apply for AAS, applicants must first sit an English proficiency test, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test. IELTS is a test of English for academic and vocational purposes managed jointly by three partners: University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, the British Council and IELTS Australia: IDP Education Australia. The test, consisting of writing, reading, listening and speaking components, is designed to measure ‘the language ability of candidates who intend to study or work where English is used as the language of communication’ (IELTS, 2003, p. 3). Achievement of IELTS 5.0 qualifies the participants to apply for the highly competitive ADS. However, the problem for participants in remote regions like Papua Indonesia is that they do not have access to the IELTS test, or to a course to prepare them for the test in the first instance. This paper reports on a preparation program with a group of 14 Papuan English teachers that was designed to bridge this gap.

Upon entry to the AAS program, funding is provided for additional pre-course English (PCE) language study with a contracted English language provider in Indonesia, the Indonesia Australia Language Foundation (IALF). At the end of this in-country IELTS and Academic English preparation course, awardees sit a final IELTS test that determines whether their proficiency meets the entry requirements for their postgraduate program of choice at an Australian university. For example, Australian master’s programs usually require an IELTS score of 6.5.
The IELTS preparation program in this study was an enabling program, in that it enabled the participants, who had previously undertaken a short 10-week course in TESOL methodology at the authors’ university, to study IELTS preparation for the first time. The post-program IELTS test conducted in Papua also offered participants the opportunity to fulfil the AAS IELTS requirement. This opportunity would not otherwise have been available to them without the expense of funding their own English study and travel to sit an IELTS test at an institution outside of the province.

The objective of this program evaluation study is not to draw conclusions on the success of the program through a comparison of the methods of instruction with the quantitative test and survey evaluation instruments. This type of evaluation can be done more effectively using an ethnographic research design to qualitatively analyse the discourses of instruction and the behaviours of participants (Mickan & Motteram, 2008). Instead, this study focuses on the following objectives:

- to evaluate the factors that contributed to and impinged upon the test readiness and confidence of the participants
- to identify issues with conducting test preparation in Papua associated with the physical learning environment in Papua.

**Pedagogical approach**

The preparation program was flexibly delivered in the sense that the outline could be changed as the program progressed to cater for the needs and wants of the learner cohort. This mode of delivery, accompanied by a monitoring and evaluation process, allowed an action-learning approach to be taken. This informed the *in situ* modification of the program in response to the various skills, knowledge, and English language development needs that surfaced over the program.

The main resources used during the program, *IELTS in Context: Book 1* (Carey, Ruston, & Scales, 2004) and *IELTS in Context: Book 2* (Carey, Ruston, & Wajnryb, 2005), were developed by one of the course instructors, the first author. *IELTS in Context Book 1* was used for the first two weeks of face-to-face instruction covered in this report and for the following three weeks of self-study before the candidates sat the test three weeks later. *IELTS in Context: Book 2* was provided as an additional resource for self-study up until the participants sat the test.

*IELTS in Context* was developed over three years of collecting, trialling and refining resources through action research. It is informed by the social constructivist theory of post-Vygotskian scholars in second language research (e.g., Lantolf and Thorne, 2006), privileging authentic texts within a Communicative Language Teaching Approach (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The curriculum design integrates test-taking
skills with contextualised topics. The course is designed to help students develop their communicative competence through the use of authentic texts such as listening materials taken from radio news programs by the Australian Broadcasting Commission and reading materials sourced from newspapers, magazines and books, reproduced with permission from the copyright holders.

Course activities are contextualised into weekly topic units and are designed to encourage pair and group work, requiring cooperation between learners. A focus on fluency tasks encourages learners to develop their confidence in speaking through roleplays. The course also contains judicious use of focus on form through grammar-, pronunciation- and vocabulary-focused activities. The coursebooks contain common cooperative and communicative tasks (Willis & Willis, 2008), e.g., jigsaw (split reading) tasks, structured discussions and dictoglosses that are repeated throughout the 16 topic units in both books. Sociolinguistic features such as sociocultural pragmatics, turn-taking, and discourse markers are included in speaking preparation materials to build confidence through providing strategies to deal with communication breakdowns and misunderstood/misheard examiner questions.

Another feature of this IELTS preparation course is the focus on building vocabulary in key topic areas to enable the participants to comprehend vocabulary they encounter in the reading and listening sections and to access and correctly use vocabulary in the writing and speaking sections. Without fluency, accuracy and predictive skills in vocabulary use, and vocabulary size and depth of understanding above a certain threshold – suggested by Nation (1993) and Adolphs and Schmitt (2003) to be 3000 word families to speak proficiently, 6,000-7,000 for listening – students cannot be expected to perform well in the IELTS.

As well as acquiring new vocabulary, past experience with the Papuan students showed it is often necessary to re-teach vocabulary that the participants had previously learnt incorrectly. The reason for incorrect vocabulary learning can be attributed to a number of factors, but the most common causes amongst Papuan students appear to be learning word lists solely by translation (when often there is no one-to-one relationship) and learning English words and expressions without a context provided (Nassaji, 2003). To maximise and consolidate the learning of new vocabulary, topics are sequenced to allow for a cohesive flow of themes and vocabulary from one topic to the next, e.g., Language – Education – Employment – and so on. This contextualised, cohesive approach to vocabulary learning in IELTS preparation provides opportunities for participants to ‘recycle’ vocabulary (Hayes & Watt, 1998) and to make lexical inferences to generate meanings for unknown words they encounter in context (Deschambault, 2012).
In the preparation program, test-taking skill development involved the sequential and scaffolded introduction of test skills integrated with the four language skills. An important strategy embedded in the design of the coursebooks is development of the skills to enable fluency and speed, delaying a focus on accuracy until after fluency and speed is attained. This approach was informed by studies on reflective and impulsive learning styles (Ehrman, 2003) that demonstrate that impulsive learners (those who do not monitor their accuracy as much) are more fluent. Reflective language learners tend not to develop fluency as they attend too heavily to their accuracy. A fluent student who makes relatively few careless errors is referred to as a ‘fast-accurate’ impulsive learner (Ehrman, 1996, 2003) and is the type of IELTS candidate who is likely to perform more successfully in production tasks.

The program

Participants

The participants were junior and senior high school English teachers: six males and eight females, competitively selected on merit by the provincial government (based on an interview with criteria of attitude, pedagogical knowledge and English proficiency). They were from different regions of the Province of Papua in Indonesia: Jayapura (n=7), Timika (n=4), Biak (n=2) and Merauke (n=1). All of them held undergraduate degrees from Universitas Cendrawasih (UNCEN) and were employed by the regional government bodies in their provinces as English teachers.

English skills needs analysis, assessment and feedback methods

Before commencing the program, a needs analysis was conducted to ascertain the targets for the participants’ English language and test-taking knowledge and skills development. Data collected during the previous 10-week TESOL methodology program at the University of the Sunshine Coast (Papuan Master English Teachers’ Program) were analysed to anticipate the participants’ language needs. The main areas identified for targeted development were writing, reading and listening, in that order, while speaking, their disproportionately most proficient skill, was also to be developed, but with a focus on maximising performance through test-taking strategies.

The reason for the initial focus on writing was that it had been identified previously as their weakest skill. During the Papuan Master English Teachers’ Program, an IELTS Task 2 writing task (a 250-word academic essay) was given to the participants, but the participants did not perform this task with a requisite level of proficiency to assess their writing above IELTS 2.0. None of the participants wrote more than 100 words in the 40 minutes allocated. This can be explained by the participants’ admission that they had never written an essay in English, nor had they been taught to write in this genre.
An initial face-to-face instruction component of the program was conducted in Jayapura, Papua over two weeks during which time the 14 participants took part in two major activities:

- IELTS test familiarity activities and development of the four English macro-skills and vocabulary through eight five-hour workshops and two hours homework per night

- IELTS practice tests, using retired specimen materials (Cambridge, 2009), conducted under IELTS test conditions on the first and second Friday of the course by a former IELTS examiner (the first author) and an accredited IELTS administrator and clerical marker (the second author)

Participants received group and individual feedback on their reading, listening, speaking and writing tests on the following Monday. After the face-to-face component of the program, two additional tests were provided for the participants to practise at home during the three-week period leading up to the official IELTS test.

Providing repeated test practice under exam conditions is controversial when the focus is on what Cohen (2006, p. 308) describes as candidates developing ‘test wiseness strategies (i.e., strategies for using knowledge of test formats and other peripheral information to answer test items without going through the expected linguistic and cognitive processes).’ However, as long as instruction does not involve showing participants ways to usurp the test format, practicing a small number of tests can provide familiarity with the format; without such practice, the lack of familiarity with the test might interfere with a test candidate’s linguistic performance.

In addition to the writing performed in the Friday practice tests, the participants submitted two writing tasks, weekly, written without test time constraints, during both the face-to-face and self-study periods of the program. During the three-week self-study period the participants emailed their writing to the instructors. The writing samples were returned to participants with coded feedback on language use and structure, that is, codes were used to annotate the texts with the type of error, rather than a correction of the error, allowing the participants to identify and correct the error themselves (Bitchener & Ferris, 2011). The participants were then required to resubmit each writing test after they corrected the coded feedback.

**Evaluation methods**

Several methods were used to evaluate the aforementioned program activities and other data collection techniques used in this study. The other techniques included observations of the physical learning environment and learner behaviour noted by the researchers, and a post-program participant questionnaire. A key method of
analysis of the practice tests involved critical reflection on the participants’ test-taking strategies, based on participants’ verbal self-reports and researcher observation (Cohen, 2006). The study objectives, data collection methods and analysis techniques used to evaluate the participants and the program are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Study objectives, data collection methods and analysis techniques used to evaluate the participants and the program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study objectives</th>
<th>Activities and data collection techniques</th>
<th>Methods of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To evaluate the factors that contributed to and impinged upon the test readiness and confidence of the participants.</td>
<td>• Two IELTS practice tests were conducted at the end of Week 1 and Week 2;</td>
<td>• Critical reflection on test-taking strategies, based on participants’ self-reports and researcher observation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• An official administration of the IELTS test was conducted three weeks after the face-to-face delivery of the program;</td>
<td>• Analysis by comparison of the practice test results with the official test results;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A post-program participant questionnaire*.</td>
<td>• Analysis of the participants’ attitudes towards aspects of the program, their test readiness and confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To identify issues with conducting test preparation in Papua associated with the physical learning environment in Papua.</td>
<td>• Observation of learning behaviours and physical conditions within the IELTS preparation classroom;</td>
<td>• Analysis of how the physical learning environment impacts learner behaviour;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Two IELTS practice tests conducted at the end of Week 1 and Week 2.</td>
<td>• Analysis of how the available facilities for test practice impact learner behaviour.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The questionnaire was written in English and Bahasa Indonesia and administered anonymously through the partner organisation (Willi Toisuta and Associates) support staff so that respondents felt confident and secure in responding truthfully (Appendix 1).

IELTS practice test results

The IELTS practice tests can only be viewed as indicative of the proficiency level of the participants at the commencement of the program as the tests were not official IELTS tests. More importantly, what the tests revealed was the relative strengths and weaknesses of the participants’ four macroskills and, based on participant verbal reports on their test-taking strategies and observations of the test administration, they also revealed issues with the participants’ approach to the test. Based on this, iterative modifications to the program could be made to cater for the issues that surfaced.
A comparison of the first and second IELTS practice tests suggested improvements in the groups’ overall IELTS scores (Table 2), with some statistically significant increases (Wilcoxon rank sums test) in listening (0.9 of a band; \( Z = -2.772; p < 0.05 \)) and reading (0.5 of a band; \( Z = -2.658; p < 0.05 \)). The participants’ speaking scores remained unchanged between the two tests. The group’s writing score increased by a mean 0.5 of a band, but it was not a statistically significant change. The first test and the ensuing group feedback session identified some areas for improvement, so extra face-to-face and homework tasks were devoted to writing to respond to student needs.

In particular, the participants had not applied the advice supplied regarding three important writing test strategies:

- attempt Task 2 of the writing first, as it is weighted more heavily
- structure the Task 2 essay in the Western style recommended to them
- spend 5 minutes planning the essay and 5 minutes proofreading for errors.

As shown in Table 2, significant overall improvement of 0.5 of a band score (from 4.5 to 5.0) was made by the participants between Practice Test 1 and Practice Test 2 (Wilcoxon signed ranks; \( Z = -2.585; p < 0.01 \)). Ten out of \( N=14 \) participants demonstrated an ability to achieve a global 5.0 IELTS in the second test. One participant scored a global 6.5 IELTS with a minimum of 6.0 in all sub-bands except for listening, which was a 5.0.

Table 2: Mean individual sub-skill and global IELTS scores and band score gains for the practice tests and the official IELTS test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Practice Test 1</th>
<th>Practice Test 2</th>
<th>Official Test</th>
<th>Gain Practice 2 minus Practice 1</th>
<th>Gain Official minus Practice 2</th>
<th>Gain Official minus Practice 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IELTS official test results

Three weeks after sitting the second IELTS practice test, the participants sat the official IELTS test conducted by a visiting IELTS examiner from IALF Bali who ran the test in the same venue in Jayapura, Papua, in the Provincial Government office, with the same audio equipment as had been used for conducting the second practice test. The participants, who were predicted to score 5.0 or above based on their second
practice test, did actually perform as expected. Out of the four candidates who were not predicted to achieve a global score of 5.0, only two did not achieve a 5.0.

The candidates improved their listening and reading scores between the second practice test and the official IELTS test (Table 2), which contributed to a significant global mean improvement of 0.3 of a band score in the group between the second practice test and the official IELTS (Wilcoxon signed ranks; \( Z = -1.998; \ p < 0.05 \)). The overall improvement of 0.8 of a band score between the first practice test and the official IELTS test was also statistically significant (Friedman test; \( \chi^2 = 17.33; \ p < 0.001 \)). However, this comparison between the practice tests and official test needs to be viewed with caution.

**Test readiness and confidence**

The post program questionnaire revealed the majority of respondents (12) believed that they faced no communication barriers during the program. Two candidates stated that sometimes they had difficulties due to their lack of vocabulary. All of the candidates believed that their English had improved, as had their test-taking skills, albeit only slightly for the majority of participants, but the majority also perceived that they needed more time to prepare for the IELTS, preferably at USC in Australia, where immersion could assist in their development of English proficiency.

In relation to the participants’ perceived level of English and test-taking skills improvement, the majority of respondents reported that the program had improved their skills slightly in all areas in the two-week face-to-face component of the program (Figure 1). One participant believed that their speaking skills had improved a lot and one reported no development in their writing.
Figure 1: Participants’ perceived level of English skills improvement.

When asked what they predict their official IELTS scores would be (Figure 2), the majority (n=12) reported an expected global score of 5.0 with the lowest expected sub-band score being in listening and the highest score achievement in speaking. Two participants expected to achieve a score below 5.0 for reading and writing, and three expected a score below 5.0 for listening.

Figure 2: Participants’ prediction of their IELTS scores.
The participants were asked to rate the practice tests and each of the English language exercises and methods to ascertain their effectiveness in enhancing their preparation for the test (Figure 3). The majority rated these activities as excellent or good with the most highly rated activities being ones that focused on language development rather than test-taking skills and practice.

![Figure 3: Participants’ rating of the practice tests, skills exercises and methods.](image)

Finally, the participants were asked to estimate their perceived level of understanding and skills regarding the IELTS test format, assessment criteria, and test-taking strategies upon completion of the program (Figure 4). Thirteen out of 14 participants estimated their level of understanding and skills as moderate.
Figure 4: Participants’ level of understanding, knowledge and skills regarding the IELTS test format, assessment criteria, and test-taking strategies

Discussion

Band score gain

A limitation of the study design is the face validity of the comparison made between the two IELTS practice tests of writing and speaking and the officially administered IELTS writing and speaking tests. The first author’s IELTS accreditation as a rater of writing and speaking had lapsed by several years, so there is a possibility that his ratings for these test components may not conform with current rater standards. However, the validity of the two IELTS practice reading and listening sections is not as compromised because the tests were official IELTS tests that had been retired recently and they were administered and marked by a then accredited IELTS administrator and clerical marker (the second author). In addition, the second practice test and the official test were conducted in the same venue, using the same device to play the listening materials to ensure the validity of the test construct, so the statistically significant global gain of 0.3 between the second practice test and the official test can be considered as the most valid measure of gain. However, these results should still be interpreted with caution because the band score gain found in this comparatively short 60-hour program (40 hours face-to-face plus 20 hours of homework and an additional unknown number of self-study hours over three weeks) is slightly larger
than studies of band score gain solely using official tests commissioned by IELTS.

The first study of IELTS band score gain (Brown, 1998) found that nine IELTS preparation participants gained an average of 0.9 of a band on the Academic Writing module (from 4.3 to 5.2) in 10 weeks. In 2002, the IELTS partners set an enduring often cited benchmark in the industry when they recommended that ‘. . . individuals can take up to 200 hours to improve by one IELTS band’ (IELTS, 2002, p. 22) but they also cautioned that this rate of band score gain was affected by learner characteristics such as age, motivation, first language and educational background and gains were said to vary with level of proficiency.

A larger scale study commissioned by IELTS (Elder & O’Loughlin, 2003) with 112 participants from four institutions, totalling between 100 and 120 hours of preparation reported an average gain of 0.6 of a band score. The results suggested that ‘for both the global score and for each of the separate sub-skills it is easier to move up from one step to another at the lower end of the IELTS rating scale’ (p. 226). Another IELTS-commissioned study by Green (2005) found, for the writing component of IELTS, that the ‘200 hour equals one band score’ recommendation could not be upheld. Green found that the amount of time spent on test preparation is an unreliable predictor of band score gain. Both the Green (2005) and Elder and O’Loughlin (2003) studies concluded that lower-level participants made faster gains than higher-level participants, suggesting that above IELTS 6.0, it is more difficult for participants to make fast progress through intensive preparation. This suggests that gains could have been made by the Papuan participants from sub-5.0 up to 5.0 in this short, intensive program, but it would take much longer to achieve an IELTS of 6.5. The experience of the participants in this study who went on to study at IALF Bali is that the gain they needed to reach IELTS 6.5 for entry into a master’s course required more than the 6 months (for entry at 5.5) or 9 months (for entry at 5.0) of PCE allotted as part of the AAS.

Test readiness and strategies

Taken together, the survey responses in Figures 1 to 4 suggest that after the two week face-to-face component of the preparation program, most of the participants felt confident in their ability to achieve IELTS 5.0. However, issues with the participants’ test-taking strategies were still observed during the second practice test, so these issues were discussed with the participants during feedback sessions.

A feature of the IELTS reading and listening tests is that careful attention to detail is required with regards to spelling, grammar, and word choice; an answer that may be substantively correct will be marked wrong if there are any errors in these areas. Many participants lost marks for poor spelling, wrong grammatical forms (e.g.,
using the singular instead of the plural), and adding superfluous information. Some participants also failed to heed or misinterpreted test instructions (e.g., ‘Write NO MORE than TWO words’) or made errors in copying their answers from the test paper to the answer sheet.

An issue specific to listening was the tendency for participants to rely on ‘bottom-up’ processing skills, instead of activating ‘top-down’ schema during the introduction to each part of the listening test. The participants remarked that this strategy, over-reliant on listening for key words contained in the listening test question, was one that was ‘drilled into them’ and they also taught it as the main strategy for their students to prepare for the National English Language Test, which consists solely of a reading comprehension test. Other factors also impacted on participants’ listening results: the tendencies for participants to make errors that can be attributed variously to a lack of vocabulary, the failure to apply their knowledge of spelling and grammar to produce the correct forms of words on answer sheets, and insufficient attention to the details of the test format.

The participants had consistently lower scores in the skills of reading and writing compared to speaking. This is in line with international comparative literacy tests conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2004), which has noted that the level of reading and writing literacy within Indonesia is well below the mean of OECD countries.

The physical learning environment in Papua

The participants self-identified listening as the skill that was most difficult to improve upon. It was also a difficult skill to work on in the teaching environment in Papua, given the amount of ambient noise and the poor acoustics in the teaching room because it contained hard reflective surfaces such as tiles instead of carpet. This is presumably more suited to the dominant teacher-centred transmission style of teaching adopted in Papuan schools, where essentially, only one person speaks at a time and most often that person is the teacher. While the participants could hear the instructors thanks to the use of microphones, it was impossible for the participants to listen to other participants’ comments, unless they were sitting close by. This made it virtually impossible to have whole class discussions and discouraged participants from working collectively.

It also proved difficult to find a room that was suitable as a test environment. The teaching room was unsuitable because of its size, the tile flooring, and position near to the road, which caused ambient sound to reverberate and created a high signal to noise ratio. The first practice test was held in a more acoustically dampened language lab of a local school, but this was also unsatisfactory because of the level
of external noise and the setup of the room, which did not meet IELTS regulations regarding the provision of adequate writing space for the candidates and supervisory access for the exam invigilator.

The second practice test was held in the Papuan provincial government building; while not a conventional exam space, it did at least provide a quiet environment, although it would be necessary to inform those usually in the vicinity that an exam is in progress so that no interruptions occur. Following the recommendations from this program, the location for the official IELTS test was also conducted in the Papuan provincial government building.

Conclusions

This paper has evaluated factors that contributed to and impinged upon the success of an IELTS preparation program held in Papua in July 2010. The strategy of providing practice tests under mock IELTS test conditions is not one sanctioned by IELTS. However, it provided the participants with an authentic experience of the test and the results and feedback provided have contributed positively to the participants’ self-assessed test readiness and confidence. These tests also provided the program convenors with a clear picture of the participants’ needs, which translated to the ability to tweak the program input in a timely manner. The participants’ survey feedback on the course materials provided descriptive data indicating that these materials assisted in the development of the participants’ test readiness and confidence.

These factors alone have not been the sole contributors to the successful outcomes and impact of this project. At the time of writing, 7 out of the 12 program participants who scored IELTS 5.0 have received scholarships. One of these participants graduated from the Master of TESOL Education in 2012, two others graduated in semester 1 2013 and four are currently enrolled in this program. The participants, who were selected on merit of being motivated teachers and language learners, have demonstrated substantial perseverance over the past three years to start from a base of not being able to write a 250-word IELTS essay to graduating from an Australian university with a master’s degree.

The program revealed some important insights for English language teachers planning to provide offshore test preparation in a remote developing country. First, it is important to gather as much information as possible about the participants, not only about their base English proficiency, but also about each individual participant’s level of motivation, previous language learning experiences – particularly their preferred learning styles, as elicited in the post-program questionnaire, and the
obstacles present in the physical learning environment. While we had some idea of these factors through our contact with the Papuans when they studied with us previously in Australia, we were not completely prepared for the challenges that confronted us. Second, we found that the flexibly delivered, dual teaching strategies of communicative language activities and test practice under mock IELTS conditions were particularly well-received and effective in providing the test readiness and confidence the participants required to reach their learning goals, and the requirement of IELTS 5.0.

In recognition of the difficulties faced by aspiring ADS applicants in remote areas, since this program ran, ADS Indonesia has introduced the English Language Training Assistance (ELTA) program (http://australiaawardsindo.or.id/) in four priority provinces of Indonesia, including that of Papua. The ELTA program is open to all eligible candidates who have an IELTS-equivalent proficiency of 4.5 to 5.0.

Acknowledgements

This program was funded by the Papuan provincial government, the University of the Sunshine Coast, and Willi Toisuta and Associates. We would like to thank the International Projects Group (IPG) leaders: Emeritus Professor Merv Hyde, Dr Bill Allen and Suzanne Burford for supporting this program and Professor Robert Elliot for facilitation of their entry into the master’s program through additional English training. The Papuan IELTS Preparation Program was a component of a larger four-year sequence of IPG capacity building programs awarded an Office of Learning and Teaching Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning in 2012 ‘[f]or stimulating systemic educational reform in Indonesian Papua through a unique, outcome-driven teacher education program for students within an Australian university.’
References


APPENDIX 1

Papuan IELTS Preparation Program Survey, June-July 2010

Post-course questionnaire

Tujuan angket ini untuk mendapatkan gambaran tentang perkembangan belajar bapak/ibu sekalii setelah mengikuti program ini. Jawablah pertanyaan di bawah ini sejujurnya dengan memberi tanda √ atau mengisi jawaban secara lengkap agar kami dapat memberikan layanan yang lebih baik di masa mendatang.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to get a picture of the development of your study after taking part in the program. Answer the questions below honestly by putting a tick √ or filling out a complete response so that we can provide the best service possible in future programs and courses.

1. Jenis Kelamin (gender)
   □ Laki-laki (male)  □ Perempuan (female)

2. Umur (age)
   □ 19-22
   □ 23-29  □ 45-64
   □ 30-44  □ 65 tau lebih (or older)

3. Pendidikan tertinggi yang telah diselesaikan? (the highest education level achieved)
   □ Diploma (diploma)  □ Sarjana (BA)
   □ Sarjana Muda (3 years diploma)  □ Pasca Sarjana (postgraduate)

4. Berapa lama anda menjadi guru?_________ tahun (length of teaching experience)

5. Apa jabatan anda sekarang?(your present post)
   □ Guru bidang studi (classroom teacher)
   □ Guru inti (coordinating teacher)
   □ Pengawas (supervisor)
   □ Kepala sekolah (principal)
   □ Lainnya (others): ________________________________
6. Bagaimanakah tingkat kemampuan IELTS anda setelah mengikuti program ini?
(perceived level of IELTS skills improvement after taking part in the program)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ketrampilan (skills)</th>
<th>Sangat Bagus (a lot)</th>
<th>Bagus (some)</th>
<th>Sedang (slight)</th>
<th>Kurang (not at all)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Listening</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Speaking</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reading</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Writing</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Test taking</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Bila discore, berapa nilai yang mungkin anda peroleh saat Test IELTS nanti? (scorenya adalah 1 -9)
(What band scores do you predict you will get in the IELTS test? (1-9))

8. Menurut anda, bagaimana dengan aspek-aspek yang anda miliki setelah mengikuti kegiatan ini?
(How would you rate the following aspects of the program)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ketrampilan (skills)</th>
<th>Sangat bagus (excellent)</th>
<th>Bagus (good)</th>
<th>Cukup (fair)</th>
<th>Kurang sekali (poor)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Course book</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teaching</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Support from teachers</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teaching facilities</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Accommodation facilities</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Meals</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Berikan komentar lain apabila diperlukan
(Please provide some additional comments if you have any)

10. Bagaimanakah menurut anda efektifitas program dari masing-masing aspek dibawah ini?
(How would you rate the effectiveness of the following aspects of the program?)
11. Berikan komentar lain apabila diperlukan

*Please provide some additional comments if you have any*

12. Bagaimanakah tingkat ketrampilan anda saat ini di bidang berikut ini

*currently perceived level of mastery in....*

| Self-assessment of your knowledge, understanding, and skills related to: | Ratings |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Low | Mid | High |
| a. The IELTS test format | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. IELTS test assessment criteria | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. IELTS test taking strategies | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Catatan (Note):

1-2 = kurang (*little knowledge/ skills*)

3 = cukup (*enough knowledge/ skills*)

4-5 = banyak (*A lot of knowledge/ skills*)

13. Apakah anda mengalami kesulitan komunikasi selama mengikuti kegiatan ini?

*Did you face any communication difficulties during the course?*
□ Ya,  Alasan (why): ____________________________________________

□ Tidak,  Alasan (why): ____________________________________________

14. Apakah anda merasa program ini sesuai dengan harapan anda?

(Do you think that this course has met your expectations?)

□ Ya,  Alasan: ____________________________________________

□ Tidak,  Alasan: ____________________________________________

15. Bidang pembahasan apa saja yang anda sarankan untuk kegiatan ini? Sebutkan kalau ada (What additional topic areas would you suggest for this training, if any?)

16. Mohon masukan/komentar yang dapat menguatkan atau meningkatkan program ini (Please provide any suggestions that would help us strengthen or improve this program)

17. Berikan komentar lain apabila diperlukan (Please provide some additional comments if you have any)

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Jazz it up, Teacher!
Music Club promotes pronunciation, fluency and off-beat engagement in an ELT classroom


Macquarie University English Language Centre

In a time when students are looking for value for money and English language providers are competing against cheaper options offshore, what can we, as regular teachers, be doing to energetically ‘value-add’ to our regular programs in a stimulating and pedagogically rewarding way? Through quality assurance processes at a university English language centre, data have emerged regarding student perceptions of their own improvement in pronunciation and fluency through voluntary participation in a Music Club run during class time. The aims of the club are simple: to improve students’ pronunciation and fluency and to foster a sense of community by increasing contact with other students through a variety of music-based activities. Results have shown encouraging links between student enjoyment of learning through music-based activities and student perceptions of their own language development, and before-and-after surveys show Music Club to be a highlight of students’ learning, not only improving pronunciation and fluency but also addressing sociocultural needs.

Introduction
Music Club at the University English Language Centre (a large university English language centre in northern Sydney, herein referred to as the UELC) evolved from the belief that the skills students apply when listening to and singing songs could enhance second language speaking skills. The main goals were to improve language learning, in particular fluency and pronunciation, and to foster a sense of community through the medium of a club which met together regularly. To ensure student-centredness, student perceptions of their learning needs were sought in order create lessons which were relevant in their eyes. The authors recognise that this is not, and does not pretend to be, empirical research on second language acquisition. Rather, it offers insights which might inform classroom practice and shape improvements on the student experience. The data generated by the simple, start-of-course needs
analyses and end-of-course quality assurance surveys on student perceptions of their improvement have led to findings that, besides perceived linguistic gains, sociocultural needs were also met, such as enhanced social confidence and expanded friendship groups.

**Music in second language learning**

The literature on the effect of music on second language learning is modestly established. Recent studies have promoted the use of music in the English or second language classroom in order to heighten student engagement and to promote more effective language learning. The use of songs and song texts in the classroom is common (Shen, 2009; Trinick, 2011), interesting studies have been carried out on musical aptitude and pronunciation (Milovanov, Huotilainen, Välimäki, Esquef, & Tervaniemi, 2008), and musical aptitude has been considered in relation to success in foreign language learning (Zybert & Stępień, 2009), as has language learning being enhanced by melodic information (Schön, Boyer, Moreno, Besson, Peretz, & Kolinsky, 2008). Recent contributions to the *English Australia Journal* include Hildred (2011, p. 55), who argues for a balance between the learning experience and having fun, claiming that music can be the ‘happy medium’; Baleghizadeh & Firoozbakht (2011, p. 63), who consider music to be a ‘permanent teaching aid [that] not only facilitates listening comprehension, but also enhances enjoyment and adds a new level of interest in students’; and Sweeting (2011, p. 65), with the admirably bold assertion that ‘the usefulness of songs for English language instruction is unquestionable, especially as songs are a good medium for helping learners activate their musical intelligence to improve learning.’ An interesting study that focused on listening repetition and song likeability in Taiwanese EFL learners (Beasley & Chuang, 2008) found a moderate positive correlation between learning perceptions and learning outcomes, and language awareness and pronunciation has been explored by Kennedy & Trofimovich (2010).

This paper, with particular focus on the link between singing and pronunciation, arose from a desire to better understand our own students, apply some of the above notions to our context, and to re-evaluate and reflect on the students’ perceptions of these activities and of their own learning.

**The Music Club experience**

**Structure of Music Club**

Music club holds in balance the learning needs of the students and practical constraints of a large university centre. Its structure evolved alongside students’
linguistic goals and the emergence of sociocultural goals. Once a week, for the second half of a 4-hour lesson, the General English students at the UELC leave their regular English classes and are redistributed into Oral Skills classes according to oral/aural ability. These graded classes focus on fluency and communicative accuracy, and there is an optional class for those who also need or want to have extra work on pronunciation. It is this class which slowly morphed into ‘Music Club’, growing out of a desire to address pronunciation issues in a more innovative and lively manner. As Music Club developed, it also became a vehicle for attending to some of the centre’s weaker areas as identified in the 2011 ELT International Student Barometer (English Australia, 2012). These areas included a need for a greater sense of community and more opportunities to meet other students and to practise English language skills.

In order to optimise student engagement, the learning environment of Music Club is quite different to the traditional English language class. The physical layout of the classroom, the sequencing of the various stages of each lesson, the balance of individual and group contributions, the pace and the energy all contribute to a positive and engaging learning environment where students’ perceptions of their learning are sought and valued.

The key elements of Music Club are:

- opt-in membership with controlled numbers
- desk-less classroom
- elicitation and inclusion of musical material that is of interest to students
- focused listening activities
- modelling and repetition of breathing and vocal exercises, phoneme drills and upper body and facial muscle warm-ups
- rhythm games and activities
- small-group, workshopped rhythm pieces and singing
- whole-group song workshoping and performance
- community focus: modelled social interaction and inclusive dialogue generation through
  - jam sessions
  - shared morning tea (often an Australian-themed affair)
  - meaningful, conversation-rich activities
- teacher commitment to taking ownership of group dynamic, building energy and fully immersing themselves in all activities.
In order to adequately help students with individual pronunciation work, the numbers for Music Club are limited to a 20:2 student-teacher ratio. Activities are established via modelling, and as students practise, teachers roam to check and work individually on specific pronunciation needs.

Selection of activities

At the beginning of each 4-week program, students are asked to rate themselves in an entrance survey according to various aspects of pronunciation – rhythm, stress, key phonemes, and general pronunciation skills/ability. While it is acknowledged that self-assessment is not always a robust research method, a self-rating scale was chosen as a reflective tool to encourage students to monitor their own learning. Furthermore, based on student responses, each session of Music Club is designed to address areas which students have identified as those of weakness for them. With a broad structure which remains the same from week to week (morning tea > warmer conversational activity > listening/creating/games and activities/implicit teaching > singing) and a significant emphasis on listening and singing, each lesson is planned by drawing on the teachers’ skills and on various music-related texts. The activities combine a number of different learning styles and require different types of participation, and include vocal warm-up exercises, chants, dance/movement, running dictations, drama, group creative tasks, rhythm games and activities and explicit teaching on linking, stress and rhythm, which is done with the aid of lyrics.

Measuring the effectiveness of Music Club

Students are required to complete a course evaluation as part of the UELC’s regular quality assurance measures. For Music Club, this evaluation consists of specific questions targeting perceptions of pronunciation of phonemes and word and sentence stress. The information contained in the course evaluation is helpful for the teachers in terms of teacher and course development, and is also an opportunity for students to reflect upon their own learning. For this reason, as part of the course evaluation, the students are again asked to rate themselves according to the same aspects of pronunciation that are part of the entrance survey. Students are also given the opportunity to make comments about the club – why they joined, what they enjoyed and how they would like to improve it. By comparing the entrance survey and the course evaluation, some broad conclusions have been drawn concerning the students’ perceptions of their own learning.
Evaluation

Evaluation methods
The data derived from the entrance survey and course evaluation, while focused on quality assurance and not intended to address a specific research question as such, have nevertheless provided some insights into students’ perceptions of their own learning and of the possible correlation between the positive affective impact of Music Club and students’ sense of improvement in their pronunciation.

Students were asked individually to rate aspects of their experiences in Music Club on a Likert scale of 1-5, and to respond to open-ended questions. The pre- and post-course self-evaluations were the only forms of assessment, as the focus was to gain an understanding of student perceptions.

Data evaluation
In the course evaluation, most students showed positive perceived gains across all phonemes, consonant groups and in rhythm and stress. When asked how Music Club helped with their general pronunciation (where 1 is ‘Not at all’ and 5 is ‘Yes, a lot!’), 84.61% of students gave a rating of 4 or higher. When asked how Music Club had helped with their fluency, 76.91% gave a rating of 4 or higher. When students were asked to select the activities they enjoyed the most at Music club (choosing as many as they liked), listening to music was the most popular activity, with 100% of students selecting this option, followed closely by eating morning tea and singing (both 92%). Pronunciation activities and talking with others also rated very highly (both 84.6%).

Figure 1: Self-perceptions – entrance and exit.
Figure 2: Self-perceptions – entrance and exit (cont).

Figure 3: Self-perception of improvement in general pronunciation and fluency.
Figure 4: Most enjoyable aspects of Music Club.

Student comments

The comments made by students provided further insights into their perceptions of their own learning and of the possible correlation between music and impressions of improvement in pronunciation (note that the student comments below have been transcribed verbatim).

In the entrance questionnaire, students were asked why they joined Music Club. Responses included a love of music, a demand for pronunciation practice, interest in playing a musical instrument, referral by a classmate, making new friends and improving conversation skills.

I like music! I love it! And I wanted to special things, also I hope to learn pronunciation in class!!

I think is a good way for you improve you pronunciation

Because I like Listening to music and I thing singing class keep me Listen and speak very good Englist

Class maite said “Music Club, very fun”

To improve my listening and my speaking and know new friends, make conversation

When asked which specific speaking skills students would like to improve, responses included pronunciation, conversation, listening, fluency, and talking to new people:

Yes I think that this class is very useful to me. I want pronunciation and conversation skills

I think singing is speak quick. good for my voice and listen quickly
talk to people who you don’t know
In the course evaluation, students were asked what they enjoyed most about Music Club, and responses included social interaction and more opportunities to speak English:

- Interact with each other so I could know all my classmates in music club
- It’s more chance to speak in English than GE [General English] class

In terms of overall experience of Music Club, results were very positive:

- Music club made me funny! I really liked the music club
- I can have a conversation with another classmate. It was good experience
- I can talk with many international students who I don’t know and I can make a lot of friends
- This class is so interesting and I really love music club teachers and I could enjoy with another class friends

Regarding whether the class helped improve their pronunciation, again, comments were positive:

- Yes. They gave some activities about pronunciation and accent
- Yes, it has. Teacher often teach us English music and correct us pronunciation

**Discussion**

Music Club blends elements of classwork with other different and carefully chosen elements. It is constantly evolving, it fosters a sense of community, student reactions are reflected on, and student requests are incorporated where possible. By bringing all these aspects together, a whole new dynamic has been created in what we have come to know as Music Club, with high levels of overall satisfaction being reported by both students and teachers.

Results have suggested a possible correlation between the students’ sense of improvement in their pronunciation on the one hand, and the sense of community, the activities and affective states on the other. The importance of affective states coming to the fore is not unlike the findings of other studies. Shen (2009), for example, affirms that ‘using English songs in EFL classrooms can successfully bring about affective learning through providing a harmonious classroom atmosphere’ (p. 90), and that ‘listening to songs can knock down the learner’s psychological barriers, such as anxiety, lack of self-confidence and apprehension as well as fire the learner’s desire to grasp the target language’ (p. 94). Students’ self-perceptions of pronunciation improvement, their comments on their enjoyment of music club, the friendly atmosphere, the possibility of making new friends, the pronunciation
activities, the interesting games, and the overall good experience seem to attest to the positive affective impact of a non-conventional class and of music itself.

The developers and teachers of Music Club have been able to note on an informal level that the act of producing something together, which requires co-ordinated and highly engaged participation, seems to also bring students closer together. There is an immense overall sense of fun, engagement and excitement, with students even returning early from their break after regular class so they can eat, chat, play and sing. Uninvolved students beg to be allowed in, and Music Club has become an arena for talented students to show off their skills. At the end of Music Club sessions, students often stay behind to play guitar, huddling in corners with friends to carry on with music-making, and others leave the session humming and singing down the corridor. Most satisfyingly, students who have been unengaged in regular classroom activities have opened up and grown in confidence as certain sociocultural needs have been met, reinforcing the importance of the role of community as a teaching and learning tool. In such a community, students’ and teachers’ expectations differ from those of the classroom, and social interactions and speaking opportunities take on a different dimension, breaking out of the semi-scripted, at times predictable interactions and the agreed roles we play in the traditional classroom.

One of the most notable aspects of our results has been that a number of issues that the 2011 ELT Barometer (English Australia, 2012) highlighted as being weak both nationally and in our centre (extra opportunities to practise language skills, extra language support, non-classroom activities for learning English, making new friends) seem, according to the student feedback, to be being addressed by Music Club. Our analysis of the data seems to show that these needs are also, to some extent, being met.

Limitations

It is important to remember that this is not rigorous empirical research and that the data we are examining are somewhat serendipitous in nature and relatively sparse. While highly informative for our teaching, they are quality-assurance driven. They do not address a research question and are merely initial indicative findings from a small sample of students. Consideration is being given to undertaking more formal research in this area in order to obtain more accurate data.

Conclusion

As shown by the literature, much consideration has been given to examining the links between music and language, and the positive effects that this may have on the language learning and acquisition process. The Music Club program at the UELC had
the initial aim of exploring the notion of student perceptions of their learning, with a focus on pronunciation, novel activities and social interaction. It was felt that taking time out from regular classroom activities to offer Music Club, where the approach taken was that of learning through musical and physical engagement, could lead to worthwhile outcomes for students.

The program has been deemed successful in that, through the quality assurance evaluations and analysis of results, students perceived to have experienced modest gains in their pronunciation. They also felt that the program provided opportunities to build a stronger sense of community through more social interaction and speaking opportunities. These were also needs that students referred to in the 2011 ELT Barometer (English Australia, 2012), and results show that, to some degree, Music Club has met them.

**Practical considerations for teachers**

Music Club has been a way for the teachers at the UELC to teach in a more innovative and creative way, to meet student needs, and to engage with students on an enjoyable and meaningful level. Costs have been minimal, while the value-adding has been significant – student feedback has been highly encouraging.

The data show that the activities deemed most enjoyable by students are easy to provide: listening to music, sharing morning tea, and singing, followed closely by pronunciation activities and talking with others. Of utmost importance and practical relevance to ELICOS teachers is the fact that Music Club does not require teachers to have a music teaching background. We feel that anyone can teach Music Club – it simply requires a little creativity and dedication, access to YouTube, and, if possible, some basic guitar or piano chords (students can often provide these).

It is our sincere belief that all ELICOS centres could value-add through small, modest programs like Music Club, where outlay is negligible, and return for both students and teachers is substantial.

**References**


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Making meaning in spoken English: Intonation, naturally!

Ceara McManus

When I ask my students what their goals are in English, I usually get the same list of objectives across all levels:

- to pass the test
- to get to the next level
- to express myself more clearly.

Naturally these goals can be achieved through a range of activities including more reading and writing, along with building understanding of why we use particular grammar structures to express particular things. But there is an extra element in spoken English: the students’ understanding and use of intonation. The teaching of intonation is a sticky area for some teachers. Despite the fact that it appears on many speaking exam criteria sheets, it is often left out of classroom activities because it is so hard to define. Although textbooks try to simplify it, that doesn’t always help. This article will look at characterising intonation, and some activities designed to not only to raise students’ awareness of this important aspect of pronunciation but also to increase their confidence in using it.
**How can intonation be defined?**

Some textbooks try to keep to basic formulae such as ‘going up at the end of a question’ – but we all know that in Australia, for example, that isn’t necessarily true; some speakers go up at the end of every sentence, which can be very confusing for English learners. Perhaps textbooks tend to oversimplify as a result of theorists not coming to a single agreement on what defines intonation. However, one area researchers appear to agree on is that it is about making meaning and expressing emotion and intention. I would like to propose a recipe that is simple to teach and simple for students to use, and which personalises their English. It consists of just four ingredients: stress, pitch, volume and pace.

**How can stress, pitch, volume and pace be explored in class?**

While a grasp of vocab and grammar is a step towards students expressing themselves accurately, getting the right feeling and the right intention is based on their making meaning with their voices. This will vary from person to person; for example, some people speak more loudly when they are angry while others speak more quietly; some people’s voices get higher when they are frightened and others get lower and softer. From experience, by giving students opportunities to experiment and letting them discover their own English voice, they can get closer to making meaning. The following activities are designed with this in mind. They explore the concept of using stress, pitch, volume and pace to help students to express themselves more clearly.

**Activity 1: Warmer/awareness builder**

Write *Hello* on the board and, in groups, ask students to find three different ways to say it. Help them to see how they can change the intention and emotion of what they are saying without changing the words. This activity (adapted from Counihan, 1998) also works well with other commonly spoken expressions, such as, *How are you?* It is very effective with both low- and high-level students.

**Activity 2: Reading aloud and reflection**

This activity builds awareness of making meaning through intonation, but also develops confidence in interaction. It is a starting point for a more interactive and communicative approach to teaching oral skills.

Encourage students to build vocabulary and ideas by keeping a journal of newspaper cuttings. Students cut out an article that interests them and they write a reflection on it. Students prepare to read aloud their newspaper article (or a paragraph from it, if time is lacking), followed by an individual, ‘presentation-style’ reflection on the written text. The rationale for starting with reading aloud, in this case, is to move from more restricted practice towards freer expression. In a pre-written text, the
context is set and can serve as a model.

Before, during or after the ‘reading aloud’ stage, copies can be given to the rest of class and a different approach can be given to different texts, for example:

- students can guess in advance where stress should occur
- students can highlight where they heard the stress and pitch change
- teachers can pre-teach stress and pitch patterns
- teachers can reflect with the class what the reader could have done better to make the passage more meaningful.

Naturally, the approach(es) chosen depend on the level of the students, time available, and the confidence of the teacher and the students.

When the student who reads the passage presents his/her reflection, they should be encouraged to use as few notes as possible in order to move away from ‘reading-aloud mode’ and closer to natural speech. The rest of the students are encouraged to ask follow-up questions. These group discussions can be recorded and watched again to examine the group’s use of intonation, and teachers can guide students to reach a more natural spoken rhythm.

This activity can also be carried out using songs, poems or film reviews depending on the interests of the teachers and students and the requirements of individual schools.

**Activity 3: Roleplays**

Based again on the principle of working from a model, roleplays can draw students’ attention to how changes in intonation express the mood and emotions of speakers. First of all, students are given a script from a film clip or excerpt of a TV program, which they can then watch. While watching, the students take notes, indicating stress and changes in pitch, pace and volume and then practise the script in pairs or groups.

Alternatively, I have had great success giving students a script and asking them to experiment with the meaning and the moods by changing their pitch, pace, stress and volume. I play music conveying different moods in the background and ask the students to act out the roles according to the mood of the music. It can also be effective to assign each group a single ‘ingredient’ to focus on, for example, only volume or only pace.

**Activity 4: ‘Make your point’**

This activity is aimed at building confidence and interaction skills while building awareness of pitch changes – in this case, pitch fall for new information and fall-rise for shared information along with a shift in stress to make a point.
Students are placed in groups A to D. Each group is given a picture of a person (this can be cut out of a magazine but should not be somebody famous or someone who they know). In their groups, students negotiate the details of this person such as their age, job, and personality. The groups are then broken up and re-formed so each group includes at least one student from each original group. Every group is now given the pictures of all of the people. While Student A holds up the picture of Person A, the rest of the group is free to express the details they believe describe the person while the representative of the group must try to encourage the group to agree on their original description, while trying to use pitch fall for new information and fall-rise for shared (but contested) information. For example:

Student B/C/D: We think that she is 12 years old.

New – pitch fall

Student A: Really? We decided she was at least 14 years old

New – pitch fall

She looks older than 12.

shared - pitch fall-rise

CONCLUSION

The beauty of these activities is that they are easily adapted across courses and programs using the materials required. I hope they assist in the creation of confident and successful communication for your students.

REFERENCES


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Creative writing in ELT: Helping students find their voice

Jo Cummins

Writing is often something that students seem to struggle with and something they are keen to improve. There are many students who can hold a confident conversation but will struggle to write a paragraph. In particular, students who are studying in English-speaking countries, who might have jobs and English-speaking friends and need to communicate regularly in English, often have a higher level of speaking, listening and even reading, than writing. However, if the point comes where they want to study, take an exam or move up the work ladder, then the weaknesses in their writing will quickly be exposed. Obviously, there are many aspects of writing that teachers need to focus on: the finer points of grammar, how to structure sentences and paragraphs, even basic spelling – but using creative writing can add an extra dimension to writing. By allowing students to explore the writing process in a more creative way, we can give them confidence in their own writing and also encourage them to enjoy the process. Some may argue that creative writing isn’t something that students will need to do in ‘real life’, but we need to think about how many of the tasks that we give students are used in real life and how many are just tools to develop skills that they will need. Students want to be able to write emails, tweets, Facebook updates, blog entries and text messages, as well as essays, reports and application forms. All of these will be easier if students are comfortable with formulating ideas and getting them on to paper in a way that is interesting and others want to read.

How creative writing can help

Just as we teach pronunciation but don’t expect students to lose their accent when speaking English, we should also teach them to write correctly while allowing them to keep and develop their own authentic writing ‘voice’. It is also a way to work on many transferable and important skills in a way that is both fun and interesting; for example, you can study brainstorming, planning and organising skills, as well as editing skills and sticking to word counts. It also encourages the idea of creative and critical thinking: rather than trying to work out what is the ‘right’ answer, their writing has originality as its target; rather than trying to work out how they should write, creative writing helps students to find their own style and gives them confidence in their own ideas. Creative writing can help to relieve the pressure that students
often feel to turn out perfect, error-free writing; it encourages them to take risks with language and push the boundaries of what they know as the focus moves more to the content than to the form. I have seen students really struggle to find the right word for a creative piece, in a way that they wouldn’t in a more informative piece of writing – they want to create just the right ‘picture’, as opposed to just transmitting information. Similarly, in a creative piece of writing they often focus more on the way a text fits together, the way ideas are ordered and the subtleties of the grammar they are using.

Another thing which I believe to be important with creative writing is that the students have an audience, so it is a good idea to publish or share their work in some way, whether this is displaying it on the walls, publishing it on a class blog or website, reading it to the class or just swapping it with a partner so they can read each other’s work. It is also of great benefit for the teacher to be involved, to share his or her own stories or poems with the class. Sometimes sharing a creative work can be quite nerve-wracking but if you share this experience with your students, it can help foster a closer and more open relationship with your class, and show them that you are not expecting them to do something you are not prepared to do yourself.

**Putting it into practice**

So, how can we start introducing creative writing into the classroom? There are many genres, forms and activities you can experiment with, but here are a few ideas to get started with.

**Give it a twist**

Perhaps the easiest way is to take the writing that we might normally do and try to find a way to make it more interesting. For example, rather than writing about what they did at the weekend, they could imagine what another classmate did at the weekend and write a fictional account of that. Or, rather than writing their own life story, they could interview their partner and write his or her life story, which they could then continue into an imaginary future. Even mundane tasks like writing a letter of complaint can be given a twist, with students thinking of unusual complaints for each other to write a letter about and then swapping letters to write appropriate (or amusing) replies.

**Try some poetry**

One thing that often has surprisingly good results, particularly among students who often struggle with writing (for example, students from the Middle East) is writing poetry. Very short-form poems with strict rules, such as haikus, can actually enhance creativity by focusing on the exact words, ideas and the rhythm of the language.
Students can also produce an original and polished piece of writing relatively quickly and easily. Some students love to write rhyming poems too. This can also be a great way to work on pronunciation, word and sentence stress and can be used as a tool to work on presentation skills.

**Find some flow**

A nice way to help students to recognise what a good, coherent, flowing piece of writing looks like is to give them something that isn’t any of these things. Write or adapt a very short piece of narrative or descriptive text omitting all the adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions and descriptive verbs and nouns, leaving a very boring text full of short sentences. Students then identify why the text doesn’t ‘flow’ and decide what is missing before trying to rewrite it to make it more interesting. They can then compare what they have written with the original text (if you have adapted it) or you can write a version for them to compare with.

**Picture stimuli**

A stimulus is important to start the creativity flowing, and pictures work particularly well at all levels. One picture activity is to give all class members a picture of a person and ask them to build up a character profile. You can then pair them up, ask them to think of a situation where their characters might meet and then imagine the encounter that might take place. Collaborative activities like this can help to move writing away from something that is a solitary, silent activity into something that is much more lively and communicative. Another collaborative activity with pictures is to give students, in groups, three to four random pictures from newspapers and magazines and ask them to imagine how these pictures could be connected in a newspaper article. They can then write and edit the article together. If you have students who enjoy working with technology, then Storybird (storybird.com) is a wonderful website to explore, with lots of beautiful pieces of artwork which students can write stories to accompany.

**CONCLUSION**

Creative writing may not be successful with every class or with every student. Like all activities, something that works well with one class may well fall flat on its face with another. However, it is possible that you will find that creative writing is beneficial to the students and classes where you may not necessarily expect it to be, so my advice is to give it a try – you may be presently surprised by what is produced. Overall, perhaps the most important way creative writing helps students is to give them a sense of achievement. Even at low levels, creating something that only they could have written, which comes from their own feelings and ideas, can be very motivating.
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As always the education industry is dealing with change, whether it’s from chalk to whiteboard markers, overhead projectors to data projectors, or computers to smartphones. With each passing technology we mourn some aspect of it; if only you could still drag a piece of chalk down the board to get your students’ attention! But we adapt and move on . . . or do we? At times it can seem there is little or no uptake of technology tools in the EFL/ESL classroom and the majority of these innovations end up bouncing around in a few professional learning networks on the fringes of the language teaching community. Admittedly some tools do take time and effort to implement effectively, turning off some teachers, but there are some tools that are instantly accessible and require few or no tech skills. This article is about digitising our educators and bringing more into the fold with low-demand technology which can be used now, to ‘demand high’ from students.

If you haven’t heard about demand-high teaching, it basically means challenging your students more in the classroom with micro-demands. These demands are placed ‘in multiple ways, moment by moment, in every lesson, by adopting a different attitude (ie, expecting more) and by use of a range of small teaching and learning interventions’ (Scrivener & Underhill, 2012). This concept weds nicely with a range of low-demand technology tools that can run in the background on your computer while teaching your class. They don’t involve student accounts or a lot of familiarisation time and can offer the potential for deeper learning. So to illustrate this concept I am going to introduce four, simple accessible tools and show how they can be used to demand more from your students.

Setting up your low-demand technology toolbox

With the advent of the omnipresent ‘cloud’, wherever you go now you can always take the weather with you – or your bookmarks, in this case. I use Google to store my favourites but you can use your favourite browser. I set up my bookmarks according to skill and when I arrive in the classroom, I log into my Google account and open all the websites I need in the background of my computer so I can easily flick to them and make a micro-demand on my students (see Figure 1).
Tool 1: WordSift

Let’s start our journey with WordSift (www.wordsift.com) which is a tool that extracts the key words from an article and visually represents them using font size and colour. If you cut and pasted Scrivener and Underhill’s article ‘Demand more from students and they will learn more’ into this tool, it would come up something like this:

Figure 2: Screenshot showing how WordSift analyses an article.

It has identified the key words and now you can look it at through different filters such as high frequency words, the Academic Word List or according to specialised fields. Also you can click on any of the words and below the box it will show related images, videos, a visual thesaurus and the sentences from the article using that word. Some steps we can take here to demand more from our students and engage more deeply with the text could be to get students to write a short paragraph about the article using the words above or make a drawing of it. Alternatively, have students vote on three words they want to explore more, put them into the visual thesaurus and students try to determine which are the most closely related words or best pictures for that word.
Tool 2: Macmillan Dictionary

The humble dictionary is worthwhile to have ready and I prefer the Macmillan one (www.macmillandictionary.com) because it gives accurate phonemic spellings and shows high-frequency words using a red star system. For example, if students have voted to explore the word *demand* more fully after seeing the example sentences and images on WordSift, get them to write their own definitions from the context, spell it out using the phonemic chart, or predict if it is a high-frequency word or not. Check their answers by showing the definition and phonemic spelling in your online dictionary.

Tool 3: Just the Word/Netspeak

Get students to explore further by having them predict collocations for a given word. Just the Word (www.just-the-word.com) shows the collocations that are found around a word, organises them into parts of speech, and gives a measure of how strong the combination is, as well as sample sentences from the British National Corpus. Netspeak (www.netspeak.org) works in a similar way but you have a bit more flexibility in your search as you can use the question mark before, in between and after words to find relevant collocations. Try giving each student a different collocation to analyse such as ‘high demand’ or ‘low demand’ and get them to come up with some general usage rules for that collocation (they can use their own device to do this).

![Screenshot of Just the Word showing collocations for ‘demand’](image)

*Figure 3: Screenshot of Just the Word showing collocations for ‘demand’.*

Tool 4: Socrative

This tool is probably the most difficult one to negotiate but still doesn’t require any student accounts. Basically, it’s a real-time formative assessment tool which requires

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**Volume 29 No 2**

**ENGLISH AUSTRALIA JOURNAL**

65
at least two devices. It works best with a data projector and computer room or students using their own smart devices (if you don’t have enough, put students into pairs). Students go to the Socrative home page (www.socrative.com) and put in the room number from your teacher account. The easiest way to use it is to ask an oral question as in Figure 4 below. For example you have just explored the collocation of high and low demand and you want to get a snapshot of the whole class’s ability in using that collocation rather than just checking it off with the high achiever at the front. Students can put their sample sentences into Socrative, which show up in real time on a data projector. You can then analyse the sentences, look for common errors and students can vote on which sentence is their favourite. You can also ask students an exit question on their opinion of the lesson or what concepts they want to explore more in the future. This tool has a range of uses which I find can really engage a class, so have a play around some time.

![Figure 4: Screenshot of Socrative using short answer option.](image)

**CONCLUSION**

All of these tools are simple to use and can augment your teaching in different ways. You don’t need to use them all, or all of the time, but have them waiting and ready for a demand-high moment which can push your students to engage with the materials more. With these easy-to-use tools you can demand more from your students and yourself, and improve your digital literacy in the process.
REFERENCES


Damien Herlihy is opening his own language school in Thailand and runs a ‘teaching with technology’ website (www.tecsquared.com) which offers e-learning solutions, advice and tips. Along with Zeke Pottage, he won the English Australia Award for Action Research in 2012 and he has a strong desire to obliterate the silos of teaching through collaboration and technology.

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There are very few English language teachers out there who haven’t at some point borrowed from, consulted, or pored over Learning Teaching (Macmillan, 1994/2011), so in this issue’s ‘Ten questions’ we are delighted to be joined by its author and methodology guru, Jim Scrivener. Jim has been involved in teacher training for many years and is currently Head of Teacher Development for Bell International. Among the many popular resources and textbooks he has authored are Classroom Management Techniques (Cambridge, 2012) and Teaching English Grammar (Macmillan, 2010). Along with Adrian Underhill, he recently put forward the idea of Demand-High ELT, which is just one of the many issues explored in this enlightening interview.
1. What was it that first attracted you to ELT?
I grew up within what seemed to me a very dull, limited, suburban environment. I understood very little of the outside world but I knew that I wanted to learn more about it – and I was absolutely certain that I didn’t want to do that just by taking two-week holidays in exotic places. I wanted to live locally and be, as far as possible, a local. I had two very specific images in my head: one was me growing my own food in rural Africa and the other was me having a drink in a stand-up ‘workers’ bar in the Soviet Union. Two slightly unusual ambitions!

Teaching seemed to be the best way of achieving either of these aims – and teaching English was the easiest subject to get into doing. So, as an entirely untrained teacher, I got a position as a volunteer with VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) in a very rural school in Kenya, taught excruciatingly poorly for two years and grew my own corn, which was promptly all stolen by colobus monkeys as soon as it got ripe. Not very many years later, after coming back to the UK and getting an initial training certificate, I got a post in the USSR, as one of only about 10 Brits allowed to live and teach in that country under the Anglo-Soviet cultural agreement. So, I achieved my two life ambitions fairly early on and have been floundering for a new purpose ever since!

2. Of the books you’ve written or worked on, which is your favourite and why?
I don’t know about favourite, but I’m quite excited about Classroom Management Techniques (Cambridge University Press, 2012) because I think it addresses some important practical issues about teaching in a way that hasn’t been done before, and which is quite independent of whatever methodology you use. I now believe that classroom management is much more important than method. Many teachers are very familiar with some basic classroom management stuff (like moving chairs around and planning your board) but there is another level, to do with making sure that everyone is involved and equally challenged and that your class does not just fly at the speed of the fastest two or three students. I’ve tried to gather a range of very practical ideas that can help a teacher change the whole nature of their teaching, just by trying out a few very small techniques – small tweaks to what they do.

3. What would you say lies at the core of being a ‘good’ teacher?
That’s a big question and a hard one to answer. But I think I know the thing that really helped me become a decent teacher. When I’d taken my initial training course and had my first (real) ELT job, I begged every teacher who could put up with me to let me in to watch their classes. I had a reduced timetable which was meant to allow extra time for planning but I used up those slots to observe lessons. While I stole lots of great ideas and handouts and general ways to approach things, the most important thing I noticed
was who the teachers were in class, their manner and the atmosphere they created. I think I’ve since spent a lot of my career studying this, in everyone I observe, the very unsuccessful teachers as much as the very successful ones.

So, my personal answer is that at the core of a good teacher, I usually notice a sort of openness, a willingness to take feedback and take account of it, to live the lesson as a human more than as a teacher, to be reasonably honest and straightforward, to try and feel what it must be like to be a student while at the same time also being prepared to nudge, shock, challenge and pull the rug out from under them. This sort of guideline sounds so thin and harmless in writing but it’s infernally difficult to really do in class.

It’s not just about being friendly and humorous and fun. It’s about taking risks, intervening in ‘muscular’ ways and being prepared to be real rather than role-playing ‘real’. The interesting thing (despite most of my writing being on methodology) is that methodology makes surprisingly little difference to being a good teacher. It’s who you are and how you are and how everyone relates together and how you as a teacher engineer those successful relationships.

4. Which area of typical teaching would you most like to see change in, and why?

I am one of these unrepentant teachers who see some real value in grammar teaching as it is done in our familiar, sequenced coursebooks. Scott Thornbury regularly makes entertaining criticisms of such teaching (e.g., *English Australia Journal* 28.2, pp. 73-74) but the grammar syllabus has survived for a reason. It does have a graspable building block function in language learning even if it is nonsense and has no scientific basis. Even having read all the avalanche of criticism it provokes (some by my younger self!) I still want to stand up for it. So, I’d like to get away from the prolonged arguments about syllabi and approaches and start to put more energy into some very basic questions about how to teach whatever we teach in a more thoughtful, deeper, more challenging, more engaging way.
5. **What would you suggest as effective ways to address CPD (continuing professional development), either at an individual or an institutional level?**

I think I come back to observation again. The best advice I can give to any school is usually to build in lots of time for developmental, non-evaluative peer observation. It’s the one thing that changes everything else. You can immediately feel the difference between a school where everyone is terrified of anyone else seeing them teach and one where people are dropping in all the time. Observation, once you have got past the initial fear factors, helps everyone to improve. Observation can also build into longer programmes of CPD – e.g., getting teachers together and letting everyone suggest practical, personal, very small-scale CPD projects to work on with peer observation, feedback, support, guided reading and later reporting back (e.g., ‘I want to experiment with giving feedback rather than praise to student responses to questions’). You don’t need a seminar programme! The teachers can do it all themselves.

6. **Recently, together with Adrian Underhill, you put forward the idea of ‘Demand-High ELT’, which has caused a great deal of debate within the language teaching community. What is it that makes this concept so inspiring and yet so controversial?**

I’m probably not the person to say why it might be controversial. We have really just asked a few questions of teachers, like ‘Are you really challenging your learners?’ and ‘How do you know?’ Admittedly, when we launched it, we did set out to provoke a little. We reported on our experience of observing lessons – and described what seemed to be some very common features of contemporary ELT worldwide: classes that involved lots of what teachers felt ought to be there (e.g., pairwork, group work, fun, games, running around, discussion, eliciting, etc.) and yet much of it leading to little recognisable upgrade – no real sense that learners were going away with anything substantially more than they came into the room with. We also noted a lot of over-praise and somewhat generalised encouragement rather than informative feedback that might help a learner actually improve.

So Demand High is a suggestion that, maybe ELT has got itself into a bit of a dead-end and that we have become over-concerned with the surface entertaining features of what we do and have perhaps lost sight of what helps people learn more and more effectively. In my view, the things that do this are (a) real personal engagement and (b) challenge that nudges and supports and helps learners move one step beyond where they are. Is it possible that many teachers nowadays lack the confidence to really push or challenge their students?
7. How do you think teaching will change in the next century, particularly given the rise in m-learning, blended learning and so on?

The advent of peer-to-peer networking – ‘sharing’ in common parlance – nearly killed the music and film industries, and they have had to learn to adapt. The advent of e-book readers and tablet computers has closed local bookshops all over the UK and decimated book sales. Publishers are still trying to work out how to adapt. The revolution that will change teaching is still ahead of us. Computers will do more than give us animated exercises and coursebook pages on our interactive whiteboards. We will, likewise, have to adapt. I am convinced that many of our future students will be avatars in virtual worlds. Don’t write off the virtual world experience just because early implementations have been dodgy and early adopters have lost faith and deserted. This is only Phase One. The real revolution is still ahead of us. And it will be a major shake-up.

8. Which ELT book has had an impact on you recently?

I’m going to name a book that has already been mentioned by Adrian Underhill in your last issue. It’s the book that gathers together a summary of the ideas of Caleb Gattegno and it is a real thought-provoker. It’s called How We Learn and How We Should be Taught by Roslyn Young and Piers Messum (Duo Flumina, 2011) and right now it’s the best thing you can buy on Amazon. It might really make you review and question all that you know about teaching. Over the years I have been influenced by the Silent Way but I have sometimes found Gattegno’s writings to have elements of genius mixed with a large smattering of bonkers. I spent most of my reading of his Science of Education Part 1 (Educational Solutions, 1987) screaming angrily at the book – and never got to Part 2. However, this new book has gone a long way towards changing my mind. I need to re-read it and then re-read it again while making a mind map or something. It’s one of those books.

9. Can you tell us about any of the projects you are working on at the moment?

I’ve just finished my ‘wonderful’ Visual Grammar Volume 2 (Richmond Publishing, forthcoming). It’s a student grammar workbook but with diagrams and illustrations to help learners grasp the points. Well, that’s the marketing blurb, anyway. But in fact I think that the really interesting thing about the book is that, while it is organised by traditional grammar points, it splits up items by their uses. I never really understood how a student was expected to grasp all the uses of, say, the present simple, when they were typically all crowded into one left hand page. So, for example, in Level 1 of Visual Grammar, I have separated out the uses so that there are more than 20 short units on the present simple focusing on each use, one by one. It feels much more manageable to me and I hope that students will find it easier to grasp.
10. What advice would you give to a new teacher starting out?

- Teaching isn’t telling.
- Teaching isn’t showing a slide show.
- Teaching isn’t entertainment.
- Ask yourself: will every learner in my class get some sort of tangible language upgrade – at their own level – from my lesson?
- Don’t plan – but prepare thoroughly.
- Keep your lesson options open, minute by minute. Live the live lesson – by listening, pushing, giving careful informative feedback, encouraging, nudging, manipulating, asking ‘Say it better!’; pulling the rug out from under their feet; laughing together; enjoying it yourself and learning yourself all the way through.
- Find ways to speak/listen/react/be as close to the real you inside the classroom as you can comfortably be.
- Learning is itself fun and engaging. Don’t let this get lost as you add on extra ‘games’.
- Inveigle your way into as many other teachers’ classes as you can to observe. Steal stuff but also breathe in who they are and how they achieve what they achieve.
- You can teach the same materials again and again and fine-tune them – but never teach the same lesson twice. And when you start getting bored, throw your whole stock of carefully prepared materials away. Start again. This will transform your teaching.

Jim Scrivener is a freelance writer, teacher, trainer, speaker and consultant. He also works as Teacher Training Ambassador for Bell. He’s best known for his ELT methodology books, such as Learning Teaching (Macmillan, 1994, 2005, 2011), Teaching English Grammar (Macmillan, 2010) and Classroom Management Techniques (Cambridge University Press, 2012). Along with Adrian Underhill, he initiated the idea of a more challenge-rich, engagement-rich, learning-centred teaching known as ‘Demand-High’.

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The average over-taxed EFL/ESL student in a university lecture has been given a recent leg-up with apps for their smartphones and tablets which both record lectures and allow simultaneous note-taking for later review. But this is just the beginning with Luminant Software’s Audionote app; this synchronising tool also adds inter-textual functionality. That is, a student can record a lecture and simultaneously take notes in the app and later, when reviewing his or her notes, the student can tap on any written note and be taken directly to the corresponding point in the lecture. This saves them the effort of re-listening to an entire lecture to find a key point. These notes also highlight during playback with the corresponding audio. This visual and auditory inter-textuality is likely to appeal to students of varying learning styles and help them to find and recall the contexts in which their note-taking applies. While students may be the main target of this app, opportunities exist for teachers to use the app on smartphones, tablets or laptops in the classroom to provide written feedback on their students’ speaking and later send these files onto them. Alternatively, teachers may wish to put the app to more personal use, such as recording professional development presentations or conference sessions for their own review.

The Audionote app has a simple interface, without the bells and whistles of major competitors in the recording apps market. The app has two main screen views: a ‘folders’ screen view for organising recordings, and a ‘new note’ screen view in which to record. To begin a recording, the user simply needs to install the app on a smart device or laptop computer, select the new note icon (+), name the note and press
the red record button. At this point a teacher could, for instance, record a student discussion or presentation activity and type feedback notes knowing that the app will synchronise both. These notes can be edited and developed further in the app after recording; for instance, teachers can attach photos, images or even another audio message of advice for the student. Teachers can also create learning activities, such as reflective learning tasks, below their feedback notes in order to better engage students in the audio and feedback notes. I found that this helped students to better notice language and engage in feedforward. These Audionote files can then be shared with individual students or the class via email and cloud storage.

Audionote also makes it easy for teachers to prepare templates for common language activities prior to recording. For instance, I prepared a ‘Tutorial Discussions Template’ with the main section headings (Introduction, Body, Conclusion), assessment criteria and weightings (Task Completion /5, Pronunciation /5, and Vocabulary /5, etc.) and their descriptors before recording. This template gave my feedback notes a text structure into which I could type additional feedback comments either during or after 'live' recording, not to mention saving time when recording similar activities with other students. Although notes can be written freehand with the pointy end of your finger instead of typing, it would be worthwhile investing in a quality stylus pen for this purpose. I am occasionally reminded of the perils of inadequate stylus pens when signing for my registered mail!

But Audionote’s beautiful simplicity, especially for an EFL/ESL learner, is very occasionally its downside. For instance, whilst there are some functions to change pen colour, doodle in freehand and add shapes such as squares, circles and lines, the app still does not allow the user to tab or type directly inside these shapes to add text, or to bold, italicise or underline text. There are also some compatibility issues when, for instance, a user creates an Audionote file in an Apple-compliant device but then sends it to another user who has an Android-compatible version of the app. From my iPhone, however, I was able to troubleshoot this problem by asking students with Android phones to open the Audionote app on their laptop or personal computer instead of their hand-held device – not ideal but functional at least.

The Audionote note-pad and audio recorder is available from both the iTunes Store and Play Store at no cost in the Lite version (less functionality), and at a current cost of AU$4.99 for the fully functional version – the main difference being that the free Lite version has a 10-minute maximum recording capacity and limited file sharing and exporting options. The fully functional version allows users to record over any duration and later share this recording via email, Wi-Fi or cloud storage with any user who has at least the free Lite version.
The *Audionote* app breaks new ground for recording technology on smart devices with the potential to give teacher feedback a more permanent home in the pockets of students. It is also a multi-sensory experience that may assist students of varying learning styles to better notice and engage with language and teacher feedback. The preservation of these recordings over time allows both EFL/ESL teachers and students to review language use and trace its development.

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I am often asked by my EAP students to refer them to a ‘good’ grammar book for extra practice and support – but I am often at a loss for suggestions as many of the mainstream grammar books are written with General English purposes in mind, with a focus on conversational English. This means, of course, that the examples and contexts used do not model the language needed for EAP students nor do they address some of the typical learner errors of a non-native speaker attempting to use the language for university tasks. Oxford Grammar for EAP attempts to fill this gap.

It is an ambitious effort, aimed at upper-intermediate learners and above (CEFR B1-C1). Within its 223 pages, this self-study book deals with 20 different grammatical areas deemed important in EAP. These range from discrete structures such as tenses, passive voice and relative clauses to broader strategic language areas such as cause and effect language, cohesion, paraphrasing and hedging. While the chapters focus particularly on language for written tasks, some of the examples are designed to feature spoken language for use in presentations and tutorials.

Oxford Grammar for EAP has a lot to offer. Similar in structure to a typical grammar
book, it is user-friendly. Beginning with contextualisation of the language point, learners are asked to identify the form and function. This is followed by an informative one-page overview of the chapter, which highlights the relevance of the target language in an academic context. Chapters are divided into short sections or ‘Studies’, with explanations and examples, each followed by an exercise in which learners can check their understanding immediately. The final part of each chapter, ‘Challenge Yourself’, includes a variety of longer exercises, combining the language from the different sections.

Oxford Grammar for EAP is very comprehensive in its coverage of the target language. Chapters are subdivided so that they offer a range of structures and variety, potentially enabling learners to write with more complexity and precision. For example, the excellent section on paraphrasing is broken down into different strategies including identifying words which do not change, and the use of reporting verbs, synonyms, and changes in word-form and structure. Clear explanations are given with examples; in this case, original and paraphrased texts are analysed and compared.

However, several of the chapters seem overly comprehensive, offering more information than is necessary or appropriate. For example, in ‘Tense Review’, the past perfect received the same amount of attention as present simple and present perfect, though corpus research shows that the past perfect is less commonly used in academic texts. Other chapters gave equal coverage to both recycled and newer structures.

Overall, I felt there was too much content, and that some learners could have problems prioritising the material. For example, there are three separate chapters on verb patterns, phrasal and prepositional verbs and collocation, with six pages for each chapter. While this language is important, it might be more effective to simply raise learners’ awareness of such patterns and teach students to consult a dictionary when appropriate. I would have liked fewer chapters with more focus on language that is less familiar to these higher-level learners, such as participle clauses. A revision of clause and sentence structure focusing on student errors could also be a useful addition, as EAP students often make mistakes when attempting more complex language.

As promised, the examples used in the presentation and practice exercises are appropriate and authentic, and many model the use of referencing conventions. A wide range of subject areas are represented including business, science, information technology and the arts. Learners work with engaging texts on traditional and timely topics such as international adoption, the Olympic Games, the electric car and
telemedicine. There is the potential, though, that such a diverse range of topics in a single chapter could detract from the aim of the exercises and lead to information overload. This is particularly true of the ‘Check Yourself’ exercises, which are essentially lists of decontextualised, unrelated sentences. However, this problem is lessened by the passages in the ‘Challenge Yourself’ sections, which are complete paragraphs, some of which are accompanied by colour photos, adding interest and context. The highlighting of words from the Academic Word List with corresponding glossary boxes also helps the user to deal with unknown lexis, and is a unique feature to help build vocabulary whilst practising grammar.

The most popular aspect of Oxford Grammar for EAP for learners will undoubtedly be the extensive practice. There are between 12 and 14 exercises for each chapter, including gap-fills, transformations, error correction and, in some cases, a more open-ended task, such as paraphrasing entire paragraphs. The last exercise in each chapter offers the opportunity to write a short text of 100-200 words using the target language. There is a complete answer key for all exercises, including model texts for the writing tasks. This is a valuable, and often rare inclusion.

While many of the exercises provide important and meaningful practice, others focus almost solely on form as opposed to usage or meaning. For instance, learners are asked to choose the correct form of the passive or to write a set of safety procedures using ‘as many passive structures as possible.’ There is little concept-checking of why the passive voice is used and practice in choosing between the passive or active is absent. Also, some of the exercises are rather complicated and tedious.

Oxford Grammar for EAP is a useful grammar resource and is certainly more appropriate for EAP than any ‘grammar-specific’ title I have come across thus far. There is something here for learners of all fields and there is a wealth of appropriate models of academic language. Though some of the chapters should be worked through selectively, most of them provide useful and more extensive practice than in many other resources. Oxford Grammar for EAP would be a welcome and unique addition to self-access centres for Academic English students.

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As there has been a recent increase in the number of students sitting the IELTS test, the demand for new IELTS-focused materials has grown. Among the IELTS resources on the market, it is often easy to find a variety of textbooks specifically designed for advanced level learners, while there don’t seem to be many course books targeting pre-intermediate/intermediate IELTS candidates. *Bridge to IELTS* has addressed this gap in the market and is intended for students at bands 3.5-4.5.

As it targets students at lower levels, *Bridge to IELTS* understandably covers more general topics such as ‘Family’, ‘Home’, ‘Festivals’ and ‘Teamwork’, but it also includes some more academic-sounding topics, for example, ‘Conservation’ and ‘Design’, as the authors have endeavoured to switch between units about academic/university life and general English. This might be a good time to point out that the book does not address the General Training Module, except for in a few writing exercises hidden at the back of the book.

The text is divided into 12 units. Each unit contains a wide range of IELTS tasks targeted at the variety of question types, explains a specific grammatical structure in a clearly shaded brown box, and covers exercises focusing on developing listening, speaking and reading skills as well as providing extensive writing practice. In short,
it covers all of the material any beginner level student will need for IELTS success. In this sense, the textbook is thorough and varied.

The back of the book has a ‘Writing bank’, linked in with the lessons, which gives guided practice and model answers for typical tasks such as describing graphs. This is followed by an ‘Assignments’ section, tied in with the units, that provides communication activities and encourages more interaction between learners. *Bridge to IELTS* also includes a ‘Grammar reference’ section, providing grammar summaries and extra activities. These cover forms typically needed for the IELTS Writing paper, such as adverbs, comparison, passives, countable/uncountable nouns and a range of tenses. The book finishes with audio scripts and a page of irregular verbs.

*Bridge to IELTS* does not focus on exam practice but on skills development. It puts particular emphasis on writing skills, which I believe are essential as most students claim they get lower scores in the IELTS Writing paper. It is worth mentioning that although the book works towards test preparation, it also focuses on study skills, such as keeping vocabulary records or using reference materials, which are easy to understand and simple to apply. The textbook also includes a section entitled ‘Living IELTS’, which contains strategies for developing and sustaining conversation in a natural way and using the key language effectively in the Speaking Test.

*Bridge to IELTS* adopts a guided, step-by-step approach to tasks so that lower-level students are gently introduced to what is needed in the IELTS exam. There are shorter reading passages and listening tasks with IELTS-type questions to familiarise students with what to expect in the exam. One strong feature of the book is the ‘Bridge to IELTS’ boxes, which are positioned cleverly within units to provide practical and relevant advice on how to tackle IELTS task types. Another bonus of Harrison and Hutchison’s work is the ‘Review’ sections, which revisit grammar and provide learners with an opportunity to consolidate their knowledge of vocabulary. It is also worth noting that a key feature of the book is the procedural approach to grammar that eliminates wordy explanations. The grammar is concise enough to be clear and to suit lower-intermediate students practising and picking up new language in class.

However, there are a few shortfalls while going through the book. The first is that it does little to explain what students need to do to raise their scores. Another problem I had with the book was that although all the language could be used by students in the exam, almost none of the points covered are my priorities with lower-level IELTS classes. In addition, the ‘Speaking’ sections in the book are not divided into preparation for Part One, Part Two and Part Three of the IELTS Speaking Test, making the potential uses of the language presented less clear. In addition, note that the
textbook is intended primarily for classroom use and is not suitable for self-study as the audio CDs must be purchased separately and the answer key is in the Teacher's Book.

On the whole, although *Bridge to IELTS* would be less effective without a class to practise with, it seems to be an excellently written book and, as Harrison and Hutchison point out in the book’s introduction, it is an ideal entry-level resource that can be used for learners who want to take an IELTS preparation course in the future.

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Technological advances in recent decades have led to numerous changes in the ways we communicate, learn and teach, regardless of whether we have embraced this change or derided it. With these technological changes, new skill sets are also required. One notion that is often discussed is digital literacy, sometimes referred to in plural form to emphasise the many components contained within it. Wikipedia, the font of all wisdom in the technology age, currently defines this as ‘the ability to effectively and critically navigate, evaluate and create information using a range of digital technologies.’

The book *Digital Literacies* claims to be ‘the first methodology book to address not just why but also how to teach digital literacies in the English language classroom’ and notes the need for ‘educators and students alike’ to devote time to this topic (back cover). Interestingly, the book also covers how to develop digital literacies in environments that have limited technology. Having personally seen all three of the authors present on this topic at various English Australia events over the last few years, I was interested to see how it would transfer into a methodology book.

The repeated chapter title formula of ‘From X to Y’ is an obvious indicator of how the authors have attempted to assist the linear development of the reader’s knowledge. Helpfully, key concepts or definitions are glossed throughout the early chapters of the book to ensure their salience. Discussion boxes are spread similarly and range from basic questions a technophobe may ponder (e.g., What hardware and software do I need?) to topics technophiles should consider (e.g., How can we promote digital safety and privacy?). Early chapters are embedded with well-placed digital annotations (e.g., QR codes and shortened URLs). While this may seem unusual or gratuitous, they are incorporated into the lesson activities in a later chapter, thus giving the reader
an opportunity to develop their own digital literacies beforehand. The book is well referenced throughout and makes use of the standard sources such as books and journal articles but also the more technologically inclined sources like blogs and popular digital media. The depth of the referencing illustrates the authors’ desire for readers to further explore topics.

Digital literacies are defined by the authors as ‘the individual and social skills needed to effectively interpret, manage, share and create meaning in the growing range of digital communication channels’ (p. 2). The authors state that someday in the future, digital literacies will be ‘so enmeshed in our routine language and literacy practices that we’ll barely notice them anymore’ and they make a strong case for digital literacies claiming that if we continue with a traditional print-medium approach to language teaching, we ‘short-change our students on their present and future needs’ (p. 2). They lay out 17 different digital literacies based around four areas of focus; language, information, connections and (re-) design. Readers should be familiar with many of the literacies in the first two categories (e.g., print literacy, texting literacy) but may find the remaining two unfamiliar (e.g., network literacy, remix literacy). Technophobes and readers seeking to improve their understanding of technology should enjoy this chapter.

The second chapter focuses on how digital literacies can be integrated into lessons. The authors explain this through two frameworks: Mishra and Koehler’s TPACK and Puentedura’s SAMR. The TPACK model (Technological, Pedagogical and Content Knowledge) is used to explain to teachers, who are deemed to be pedagogical and content experts, that technology enhances but does not dominate their current knowledge. The SAMR model (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification and Redefinition) compliments the TPACK and illustrates to teachers that classroom tasks can be enhanced or transformed by technology.

The remainder of this chapter is designed much like an ELT activity book. It contains a series of grids that allow the reader to find lesson activities via the desired digital
literacy or tool. Some features of this section are extremely helpful and should assist teachers in their decision-making process when lesson planning; for example, each activity lists the language focus (grammar, vocabulary, functions, macro-skills), variable options depending on the type of technology available or the proficiency of the teacher or students (no-tech, low-tech, high-tech) and any inherent risks with the digital nature of the activity. However, readers should not expect step-by-step guides for each digital tool. Some personal learning and preparation on the part of the teacher will be required for these activities. If required, activities may include a tech support section that directs the reader to an appropriate website, usually a help or FAQ page. Activity worksheets are available online in PDF format, as is the answer key (http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9781408296899/). This feature is very helpful for busy teachers. Unfortunately, one criticism of this design is that if students access the files directly, they are unable to type into the files, meaning students and teachers are still bound to printing paper copies.

The third chapter is very useful for academic managers or course designers. It discusses different approaches that can be used when integrating digital literacies into a syllabus. Each discussion includes a worked example that takes the reader through the decision-making process. Next, there is a discussion of important factors to consider when choosing activities for different levels and contexts. The transformative effect of technology is revisited again in a discussion of how classroom tasks, or even the learning space itself, can be changed. The chapter is rounded out by two more discussions on teaching in places where technology is limited and assessing students’ digital work, particularly through the use of e-portfolios.

The final chapter focuses on how teachers can extend their knowledge about digital literacies. By including a whole chapter on this topic, the authors reinforce their opinion that educators as well as students should devote time to developing their digital literacies. The sections on action research, personal learning networks, writing a blog, social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter) and aggregators (RSS feeds, Scoop.it and Flipboard) are useful here. By using any or all of these tools, and the advice in this chapter, readers should find themselves developing their own digital literacies. Again, some readers may want more guidance, but the authors are clearly encouraging readers to engage in their own personal learning.

Overall, this book is a solid purchase for a teacher or academic manager seeking to start exploring or improve their understanding of digital literacies. If the linear developmental approach of the book is followed, readers will gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the topic. ELT centres should also find this book a useful addition to their professional development collection. The activities included are engaging and successful in assisting students in developing their digital literacies. However, there is a danger that some classroom teachers may rush into the book looking for a lesson to
use immediately, thus overlooking the overarching concepts and developmental aims. In short, the content of this book should enable teachers and students to develop their digital literacies and gives teachers solid guidance on how to teach them.

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Many websites have been designed to help learners improve their English. One of these websites is *English Central*. It aims to teach English in context through videos and therefore focuses predominantly on listening and pronunciation skills, along with vocabulary and spelling. Writing is considered peripherally and reading is also practised to some extent through subtitles on the video files. *English Central* has a wealth of materials and options, which make it user-friendly and effective. It is of use to both language teachers and learners and can be used for self-study as well as in the classroom.

To use the website, you first need to register for a basic account. This is free but allows access to only three or four videos a week. Upgrading to a premium account costs $15 a month but gives unlimited access to the materials and options. After registration, you can simply log in using your username and password and have access to numerous video files on different topics.

The videos are one strength of *English Central*. They are of a high quality, with the content ranging from news broadcasts, through to animation, music and movies. Due to the variety of themes included, it is easy for teachers and learners to find topics of interest. In addition, videos are classified into categories such as Academic English, Business English or Travel English, as well as into beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels, making it easy to select a video appropriate to level and need. The site has also allocated a section to five English-language video ‘channels’ such as VOA (Voice of America), AERA English TV, and See Britain. This option is very useful to learners in that they can become familiar with news, scientific materials and other subjects through English. The videos feature mainly American or British English; however, depending on the topic of the video, other varieties, including Australian English, may appear. They are generally less than three minutes long, making them manageable for learners at all levels, and as they are updated regularly, teachers and learners are unlikely to become bored of this resource.

Each video contains three tabs, namely ‘Watch the video’, ‘Learn the words’, and ‘Speak the video’. Learners can first watch the video with subtitles that can be switched on or off. I suggest that for the first time listening, users switch off the subtitles and listen
carefully. This can increase their sensitivity to sound and consequently improve their listening. Then, for the second time, they can switch the subtitles on and check the words which they couldn’t understand the first time simply by clicking on them. The next tab allows users to type in the missing vocabulary according to what they hear (the words are presented in context not as isolated words). In addition, there are some vocabulary exercises and quizzes that learners can benefit from. Finally, they can record themselves speaking (reading aloud the subtitles of videos) and have their voices compared with the originals. Learners receive feedback on the correctness of their pronunciation from the software, which gives them a speaking score based on stress, intonation and other speech elements, and which shows their progress over time. They can repeat the sentences again, correcting their mistakes, to improve this score.

For further pronunciation and vocabulary practice, two parts of the site have been specifically devoted to courses for these skills. The pronunciation section focuses directly upon how to pronounce English sounds but it is not available for basic account members, who will have to upgrade to gain access. You can practise your spelling in the vocabulary learning section of the site, as well as check the meaning and pronunciation of new words and phrases. When you type a word incorrectly, you are not allowed to continue until the mistake is corrected. The words, again presented in context, are from videos you watched previously.

Another part of the site is dedicated to courses for which the user must upgrade to a premium account. These courses contain specific video lessons encompassing different areas such as Business English, Idioms and Expressions, Conversation, and Media English. Additionally, premium users will receive weekly reports on their pronunciation progress.

Receiving emails regarding new videos and topics is another advantage of English Central. Registered users receive regular video lesson emails based on the type of their registration. These emails inform the user of important, interesting or popular video files, which may be recent or sometimes relevant to the news that week. It is interesting that they are sent based on the users’ interests as determined by the latest videos they have watched. Moreover, there is an English Central blog where users can find the latest news about the site. The blog is helpful in that learners can access guidelines on how to use the materials effectively, information about recent developments on the website, others’ views of the site, and sign up for webinars on how to use the website effectively.

For teachers, one of the most beneficial parts of English Central is a section where practical suggestions are provided on how to use the materials and videos in classes, how to solve problems using this site and how to select appropriate videos for their students. If interested teachers participate in the webinars on how to use the website effectively, they can also get insightful feedback on their classroom practice.
The only real shortcoming of *English Central* is that, beyond spelling, it does not directly address writing skills, or reading skills for that matter. However, this may well be beyond the scope of the site software and administration. I would highly recommend *English Central* to language learners and teachers in both EFL and ESL contexts, in particular those who are interested in learning or teaching listening and pronunciation skills. It can serve as an effective supplement to students’ homework and as a good self-study resource. Due to its online nature, it may be of particular interest to younger language learners who enjoy learning online. *English Central* can be regarded as one of the most up-to-date and effective video-based sites to support the learning and teaching of English.

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English for specific purposes is a critical, but often under-researched, area in the fields of TESOL and Applied Linguistics, so the publication of a collection on this topic is a very positive development for those who work and/or research in the area. As defined in *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*, ‘English for specific purposes (ESP) refers to the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language where the goal of the learners is to use English in a particular domain’ (p. 2).

Due to the large diversity of possible topics that could be included under ‘ESP’, the *Handbook* provides a broad overview of the field, with sections specifically oriented to teachers, administrators and/or teacher educators (‘ESP and language skills’, ‘ESP and pedagogy’), as well as to researchers (‘Areas of ESP research’, ‘Research perspectives and methodologies in ESP research’). With this diversity, there should be something for almost every reader. In general, the chapters provide summaries of key issues on their topics, and provide a good starting place for readers interested in that area of ESP. Written by experts from around the world, the topics covered in the *Handbook* include most that a reader would expect. These topics include the history of English for specific purposes, which provides an overview for those new to the field. For teachers and those involved in ESP pedagogy, there is the section called ‘ESP and language skills’, which provides overviews of ESP research and/or pedagogy in the
main skill areas (speaking, listening, reading, writing, as well as vocabulary). These chapters vary somewhat in terms of their content. For example, the listening and speaking sections provide a number of teaching strategies in addition to a review of the research, whereas those focusing on reading and writing are more theoretically focused. Also of interest to teachers and researchers are the chapters on specific areas, including English for academic purposes, English for science and technology, English in the workplace, business English, legal English, aviation English, English for medical purposes, English for nursing, thesis and dissertation writing, and English for research publication purposes. These topics are not usually taught in most TESOL education programs, but many teachers may find themselves teaching English in work contexts, or preparing students for specific jobs, where linguistic, cultural and paralinguistic issues are very context-specific and (often) genre-specific. For example, in Australia, there is an increasing demand for medical practitioners (nurses, doctors, etc.) many of whom now come from overseas. The chapters on English for nursing and medical purposes both outline key issues, while also suggesting some resources and strategies. Similarly, the section on ESP and pedagogy covers how issues such as needs analysis and curriculum development, genre, assessment, and technology can be explored in ESP contexts.

For researchers, and teachers interested in research, the final section focuses specifically on research perspectives and methodologies in ESP research. The chapters include areas such as corpus studies and intercultural rhetoric in ESP, as well as critical perspectives on and ethnographic approaches to research in this field. New to some may be the work on gender and race, or the idea of multimodality in ESP. The final chapter explores the future of ESP research, which will be of interest to researchers, and any graduate students (or potential graduate students) looking for a possible thesis topic.

As noted above, some of the chapters do not include ‘how to teach’ material, although they may provide good references for additional resources. Also, some chapters may be difficult for non-specialists to understand fully, with some assumed knowledge and terminology, and for some topics, such as technology, some references seem to be a bit old (which is, not surprisingly, a frequent dilemma with this topic). As a reference book, however, the Handbook would be of practical use to teachers or academic managers who are frequently called upon to develop or teach diverse ESP courses, especially in areas in which they do not have expertise themselves.

The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes is available both in hard copy and in electronic mode via an app from Wiley-Blackwell. At the time of writing, there is an approximately AU$40 difference in price between the hardcover (AU$231.95) and the e-book (AU$189.99). I found the Wiley-Blackwell app for the e-version rather
clunky. It works on a page-by-page function, and unlike an e-book, it doesn’t allow you to expand the type easily, or ‘turn’ pages by touch. Given that something like this would most likely be used more for reference than general reading, I would imagine the hard copy would be preferred by most readers. However, the e-version may appeal to readers who would want to make frequent reference to the material while on the go (e.g., researchers, graduate students, teachers), or for students, if used as a textbook. Whatever the preferred format, *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes* would make an excellent addition to school or university collections. It could also be an excellent textbook for a dedicated course on ESP in a teacher education program.

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If you would like to write a review for the *English Australia Journal*, please contact the Reviews Editor: reviews@englishaustralia.com.au
Motivating Learning

JILL HADFIELD & ZOLTÁN DÖRNYEI

Routledge, 2013

REVIEWED BY BETHANY RANDELL

‘Motivation . . . the desire to reduce the gap between the present and ideal selves’ (p. 12).

Motivation is crucial in language acquisition, and Zoltán Dörnyei, Professor of Psycholinguistics at Nottingham University, has dedicated much of his career to motivation research. His 2013 book, Motivating Learning, written in collaboration with Jill Hadfield, a Senior Lecturer in English and Applied Linguistics at Unitec and author of numerous resource books for EFL teachers, posits a theory: in second language acquisition, a student’s intrinsic motivation can be strengthened by constructing a ‘vision’ of an ‘ideal L2 self’ (p. 3) and, when counterbalanced by an ‘ought-to L2 self’ (p. 3) and reinforced through a series of activities, this visionary L2 self is a powerful learning tool, and an achievable goal, the pursuit of which can be a pleasurable, rich and satisfying experience. This hypothesis is a new and exciting one for teachers. In Motivating Learning, Hadfield and Dörnyei marry theory with practice, offering 99 practical activities to develop and foster the ‘ideal L2 self’.

The book is divided into four main parts: ‘From Research to Implications’ discusses current research on the topic and outlines implications for classroom practice; ‘From Implications to Application’ focuses on transforming research outcomes into classroom practice; ‘From Application to Implementation’ details how teachers might apply the activities in their classrooms; and ‘From Implementation to Research’ offers suggestions for professional development projects and action research. The meat of Motivating Learning is in the second part, ‘From Implications to Application’. This is broken down into three chapters: ‘Imaging Identity – my future L2 self’, ‘Mapping the Journey – from dream to reality’, and ‘Keeping the Vision Alive’. Chapter 1 deals with creating the ‘ideal L2 self’ vision; Chapters 2 and 3, designed to be used congruently, provide activities to assist students in realising and sustaining their ‘visions’.

Motivating Learning details a range of ‘programs’ teachers can use to bring activities
into the classroom: due to time constraints, I did not embark on a ‘full program’ (p. 286), instead opting for a ‘time-constrained program’, modified to suit my class. Firstly, students were introduced to the concept of the ideal L2 self; they then built their vision, and balanced it against reality. In the next phase, students transformed their visions into language learning goals, and they were simultaneously introduced to activities designed to sustain their L2 visions throughout the course. I saw the former as micro-tasks where students got into the nitty-gritty of what they needed to do to achieve their goals, and the latter as macro-tasks to keep their ‘big picture’ L2 vision vivid in their minds.

I introduced students to the concept of the ideal L2 self, and we agreed that this was an interesting idea that we should trial alongside the coursework. Students constructed their visions, making notes of shared goals, and where L2 aspirations differed. I was surprised by the richness of their visions; these encouraged me to be more sympathetic to their overall learning aims, rather than simply focusing on syllabus requirements. For my students, it was an exciting change from typical activities, and they were surprised and happy to find that they shared various goals. This provided a good base for framing group activities; students also identified points of contrast between their academic L2 selves, and their personal L2 selves, and wrote about this in their journals.

From the outset, students kept a journal/homework book in which to do tasks and reflections related to the program. I collected these journals and provided feedback. The journals provided a space for private student-teacher dialogue. Students commented they had never previously been able to share their thoughts with their teacher, and that they found this useful because a) they received feedback on their aims, not only their marks, which helped them be realistic about their learning expectations, and prevented disappointment with their learning; and b) they recognised learning as a process. For me, it circumvented impossible questions like ‘Teacher, how can I improve my English?’ and ‘Teacher, when will I speak English perfectly?’ The journals also gave me an insight into how well the students were coping...
with coursework. I got a sense of who was struggling and who would need extra support to achieve personal goals and desired course outcomes.

Hadfield and Dörnyei suggest that once some activities have been initially scaffolded in class, they can be done for homework. For more confident students, this was achievable, but less so for weaker students, who sometimes did not do homework tasks, or needed to email me for guidance. Teachers should bear this in mind when considering a similar program. Some students, however, were very motivated by the trial, doing these tasks instead of other set homework as they were ‘more interesting’. I took this as both a comment on the syllabus and evidence of ‘the procrastination self-barrier’ (p. 86)!

Motivating Learning is well suited to EFL/ESL teachers looking for more insight into motivation, and the resource could be employed in a variety of EFL/ESL contexts, from General English to Exam Preparation or EAP courses. However, it is important to have a holistic understanding of how the activities work – I would not suggest ad-hoc, unplanned use. Also, applying this approach in language schools with a weekly turnover of students poses challenges for syllabus integration. With long-term groups, activities can be integrated into the course, or adapted for completion outside the classroom (e.g., through journals or online). This would require ‘back-end’ management from teachers, but would go some way to solve the potential problem of having motivation activities cannibalising class time. Activities are pitched at pre-intermediate to advanced level students with different learning styles and, depending on delivery, would be suitable both young and adult learners; my class of young adults loved the concept of sending ‘secret notes’ (p. 230). Activities could be adapted for elementary or other learners with special requirements. However, as in any teaching situation, context is everything; teachers must have solid knowledge of both the syllabus and the students in order to scaffold activities in an appropriate way.

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Finding effective and motivating ways of developing oral fluency is a challenge that we wanted to address in our classrooms. As teachers, we have found it difficult to pinpoint resources that target our students’ oral fluency. In class, we tend to use board games, surveys, roleplays and structured presentations for fluency practice. These activities, in our opinion, just skirt around the issue of fluency development and do not provide sufficient intervention.

In order to get our students speaking confidently, we explored some free apps to work on pronunciation, to measure our students’ oral fluency, and to provide means of formative feedback before their final speaking assessment at the end of term. We found that our students had different types of smartphones, mainly Androids and iPhones, so it was important to find apps that could either be used on both types of phones, or alternative apps for each type of phone. We used them to measure speech rate (words per minute) and the use of non-lexical fillers and interjections.
Automated apps

Speak English Correctly for Androids
We tried out an automated speech recognition app called Speak English Correctly (for Androids only) that types out what the speaker is saying. This application enables students to type a word or phrase, and listen to either its American or British pronunciation. Students then practise saying the word and the app records their pronunciation and types out the word it identifies.

This appears to be a multipurpose app but it has its drawbacks. Firstly, students found it demotivating to see their accents so badly misinterpreted by this automated speech recognition app. We acknowledge that this application would not be appropriate for students with major pronunciation issues. Another disadvantage was that it was very energy consuming and drained the battery very quickly.

Speech Count for Androids
We tried the free Speech Count app, an automated Android app for measuring speech rates in words per minute. This app can record a student’s rate of speech for a few seconds, stopping when they pause, and then proceed to display a table of the student’s speech rate against that of the ‘average man’ and ‘average woman’. After using this app in our speaking activities, we concluded that it was very limited in range and only measured students’ speech rate as either 60 words per minute or 120 words per minute. This was not a good gauge of speech rate. Through observations in our class we felt that this automated speech recognition application did not pick up every accent, and tended to give false readings. We found that this was demotivating for the student, and we would not recommend this app.

Manual apps

Hitcounter for Androids and ClickCounter for iPhones
Having discounted the automated speech recognition apps, we turned to looking at exploring fluency with free apps involving human raters on both Androids and iPhones. The tap, tilt or shake Hitcounter app for Androids was used in conjunction with a smartphone timer to count a student’s words per minute. This was a comfortable app to use because we could switch to shaking the phone if we were tired of tapping/clicking to count the words per minute.

As an alternative, we tried ClickCounter for the iPhone, which worked well with a smartphone timer. This app only has a function for manual clicks to register word counts, so there is no option to switch to shaking or tilting the phone instead of clicking. To use these apps, we sat beside one of our students and had them talk for one minute on a specific topic. While they were talking, we counted their words per
minute, not counting silent pauses, fillers, interjections, or repetitive speech. We took their word counts at the start and end of each term, and students generally increased their speech rates, which was a good source of motivation.

**AhCounter for Androids and iPhones**

Instead of narrowing our focus on speech rate alone, we also wanted to measure other aspects of fluency with technology. When one of us discovered the free AhCounter app on Apple’s top 20 best app list, we realised this application mirrored an activity previously taught from an FCE text book which involved ‘ticking off’ instances of *ah, um* and *er* (Wyatt, 2002, p. 148). We found using this smartphone app to be very engaging for our students and a better way of providing formative feedback. This app allows students to record their non-lexical fillers (such as *ah, um* and *er*), interjections (*and, but, so*) and repetitions in a speech or presentation.

To use this app, we involved our students in a peer evaluation activity where they spoke for one minute on a selected topic and counted each other’s non-lexical fillers, interjections and repetitions. The major advantage of this widely available app was that we could set up a peer evaluation system, which was fun and engaging for students. It records the speaker’s scores, which can then be emailed to the teacher. As mentioned this app is free, easy to use, and practical as well as available for both Android and Apple operating systems. It can also be found in the Amazon app store.

We used this app with an intermediate level class and were surprised at how much the students picked up about each other’s fluency idiosyncrasies, and how well they got to know their classmates on a deeper level. This app would be useful for intermediate levels and above.

**SpeakApp for Androids**

The SpeakApp integrates the AhCounter, a timer and suggested ‘table topics’ to use in a presentation. This free Android app, developed for Toastmasters International, has a wide range of suggested topics, although the English is not perfect in all of them. These would be great for the busy teacher, or for students’ independent learning. We see that it has good potential for students to use to prepare presentations and practise for speaking tests. This app is more popular than the AhCounter because of its wide range of features.

**CONCLUSION**

We would recommend using apps for developing fluency to those who want to explore an efficient means of intervention in their speaking fluency classes. We found that using apps can make a lesson more engaging than the traditional means of developing
fluency with board games and role plays. However, automated speech recognition apps for measuring speech rates were inappropriate for our purposes because they did not accurately record our students’ speech rates or pick up accents accurately. Also, to our surprise, students commented on their preference for a face-to-face interaction rather than an automated service. The most suitable apps for exploring fluency development require human raters and peer-evaluation activities. The ones we would therefore most strongly recommend are the AhCounter and SpeakApp.

REFERENCES


Jessica Cobley and Becky Steven are ELICOS teachers at the University of Western Australia Centre for English Language Teaching, Perth. They won the 2013 English Australia Award for Action Research for their project on using Web 2.0 technologies for fluency development.

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Teacher Research in Language Teaching
A critical analysis

Simon Borg

Cambridge University Press, 2013

Reviewed by Philip Chappell

Teacher Research in Language Teaching explores the paradox of the documented evidence of the value of language teachers conducting their own research, versus the low numbers of those actually doing it. Simon Borg has approached this through a combination of theory and practice, by examining the challenges facing the development of the professional language teacher as someone who should be engaged in research. As he explains in his introduction, the attraction for him of combining his interests in teacher education, research methods, and teacher cognition was enough to motivate his six-year study of 1,700 language teachers and managers practising ELT around the world. This book, then, is an extensive account of this major study of what teachers and managers believe about teacher research, how they go about doing it, and how they engage with others’ research when reading it. The conclusions and implications are of serious concern for all involved in the field of ELT.

The idea of language teachers conducting their own research, often in their own classrooms, is not a new one, and its positive benefits have driven investigations by many teacher educators in many areas of the world (Allwright, 2005; Burns, 2010; Farrell, 2007; Freeman, 1998; Richards & Farrell, 2005, to name just a few). Borg’s contribution to the field is his systematic, critical analysis of language teacher research (henceforth referred to as LTR), developed across several key themes, ranging from definitions and the current status of LTR, teachers engaging with and in research (by reading it and doing it), the relationship between LTR and teaching quality, teachers’ and managers’ beliefs and attitudes toward LTR, and finally, supporting LTR projects and teachers’ engagement with LTR.
Borg sets the scene by defining LTR as the systematic investigation by teachers of their own professional practice in order to have a positive impact on their students’ learning. Early in the book, he reports on what language teachers and managers consider to comprise research (using a range of scenarios), and also what they consider to be good research. A striking finding here is that although most have a fairly traditional view of what constitutes research, there was great variance in actual definitions. This suggests the need for greater understanding of the nature of research and its usefulness for teachers and managers. The suggestion ‘to discuss and clarify their understandings of what research is and how its worth can be judged’ (p. 71) is undoubtedly a worthwhile undertaking. Academic managers should heed this advice, perhaps in a collaborative venture with their staff.

The next chapter deals with the kinds of research teachers read, how often, and what impact they feel it has on their practice. Unsurprisingly, there is found to be a disconnect between the research and teaching communities, with teachers looking for, but often not finding tangible take-outs from what they read. Indeed, the relationship between research knowledge and teaching is, as Borg notes, complex, and an area that several other educators have puzzled over, for example, Freeman and Johnson (1996) and Spada (2013). Fortunately, Borg pursues this conundrum and reports on several initiatives designed to increase teachers’ engagement with research in mainstream education, for example by making it more directly relevant and the discourse more accessible. However, these initiatives are yet to be seen in ELT, which is a significant opportunity for both the research and the teaching communities. As Borg concludes, we have a lot of work to do in understanding the research–language teacher relationship, and it is incumbent upon both communities to undertake this work. There are many good ideas offered to get the ball rolling.

Moving on to teachers actually doing research, Borg offers plenty of useful data on the extent of and reasons for engaging in research activity, and reasons for not doing so. Reporting on the kinds of LTR done by those language teachers who claim to be engaged with research, Borg draws the reader into the teachers’ professional lives with an abundance of quotes from these teachers. We are offered insights into the teachers’ perspectives of the research they do, which is largely ‘private, reflective, pedagogical, evaluative, informal’ (p. 123). This contrasts with earlier findings that
research was viewed more traditionally, suggesting that teachers may not recognise that the work they are doing is valuable LTR activity, or at the very least valuable professional development activity. The majority who do not engage in LTR activity remain unconvinced of the feasibility of doing so. Borg reports many reasons for these feelings, which is useful information for academic managers and teachers alike to reflect upon in their own contexts.

The paradoxes introduced earlier in the book come to light in the chapter reporting teachers’ and managers’ perceptions of the value of LTR for improving teaching quality. Of 100 teachers surveyed in one organisation with schools in many countries, 72% agreed that ‘teachers who read and do research also teach more effectively in the classroom’ (p. 127), yet as we learned earlier, few of them engage in their own LTR. A far smaller percentage of managers agreed with this statement (54%), and almost half of the managers (49.6%) stated they thought teachers doing research was unimportant or only slightly important (p. 134). Borg systematically reports on the positive, neutral and negative perspectives of both teachers and managers, again making good use of illustrative quotes, concluding that greater understanding of the scope of both research activities and professional development activities is needed in order to take LTR engagement forward to levels that can sustain language teacher development. Misconceptions abound, as reported in earlier chapters, and Borg cautions against the restrictions these misconceptions can place on the language teaching profession. While he has argued that he is not privileging LTR over other professional development activity, it is clear that LTR has the potential to have a dramatic positive impact on the profession.

Of course, many teachers and managers will argue that despite all the perceived benefits of LTR, the day-to-day demands of college life prevent any meaningful teacher development activity from taking place (Chappell & Benson, 2013). The final empirical chapter of the book deals with this issue, and in doing so, underscores the harsh reality of the challenges of engaging time-poor and often hourly paid teachers in additional work. Managers were reported in a brighter light, seeing the creation of stronger research cultures as positive, while teachers’ beliefs and attitudes toward research were seen as a hindrance. Borg concludes that ELT faces a noteworthy challenge in order to develop research cultures within its teaching institutions. This is a challenge that we all need to take ownership of in order to facilitate greater LTR in schools and colleges. Borg outlines several key initiatives outside the confines of formal study, such as the NCELTR and AMEP research programs in Australia, the English Australia Action Research in ELICOS Program (see Burns’ article in this issue), and several others. He concludes the book with a chapter bringing the various themes together and offers concrete strategies for promoting LTR engagement. This final
chapter is a well-crafted conclusion and recommendations section to end the book with a positive voice, and some starting points for those wishing to take things further.

All in all, Borg has offered the ELT and TESOL teaching and research community a theoretically robust, empirically rich, yet highly practical account of not only his own research in the area of LTR, but, as each chapter provides a literature review of its respective theme, also a comprehensive landscape of the state of play in LTR. I highly recommend the book for professional language teachers, academic managers working in ELT, language teacher trainers, academic researchers, and senior school administrators, each of whom would do well to suspend their own beliefs and attitudes toward LTR while engaging with this captivating book. We are all implicated in the need to further professionalise language teaching in our own contexts, in our own small way. There is now plentiful evidence that supporting language teacher research is a positive step in that direction.

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2014 represents an obscure but interesting anniversary for educational technology: 30 years since Cleborne D. Maddux first described the ‘Everest Syndrome’, the belief that technology should be utilised in education simply ‘because it’s there’ – a belief which can lead to ‘ill-advised educational practices’ and a wider backlash against educational technology (Maddux, 2005, p. 21).

Maddux’s concerns remain valid today. In this reviewer’s opinion, there are abundant examples of technology used in education with little added value for either students or teachers. On the other hand, there also many examples of what Maddux refers to as ‘Type I applications’: applications of educational technology which enhance traditional ways of learning and teaching (e.g., students using mobile devices to record, replay and reflect on their spoken English). For Maddux, Type I applications are valid and to be encouraged, but it is Type II applications – those which facilitate new and more effective approaches to teaching and learning – that will ultimately determine the long-term impacts of educational technology. Maddux’s simple taxonomy provides a useful framework for evaluating Thomas Strasser’s *Mind the App*! Are the activities presented in the book of Type I, Type II or neither? Is a strong case made for the use of technology in language teaching or is it used in the activities simply because it’s there?

*Mind the App*! is intended as a ‘complete introduction’ (p. 8) for teachers to Web 2.0 apps – that is, applications such as Facebook, YouTube or VoiceThread, which allow users to upload, download, share and interact with content rather than simply read, watch and navigate through pages. Strasser has attempted to keep the appeal of the book as broad as possible, but a significant number of the activities described
would seem to be most suitable for teenagers or young learners. For example, the ‘Once upon a time . . .’ activity has learners using PiratePad to collaboratively write a fairy tale, a genre which is arguably of little relevance to adults.

Across five chapters (‘Teacher Tools’, ‘Visualisation’, ‘Collaboration’, ‘Audio’ and ‘Writing’), Strasser presents a large array of Web 2.0 apps with step-by-step instructions for teachers. The clarity of Strasser’s instructions is the book’s major strength: occasional lapses aside (such as the suggestion that teachers ‘use Flickr for copyright-free images’ when in fact, most images on Flickr have attribution requirements as a minimum), they are extensive and well-supported by screenshots; the accompanying website also has instructional videos if further assistance is required.

Such attention to detail reflects Strasser’s obvious enthusiasm for educational technology: an enthusiasm that is certainly infectious but borders on evangelical at times. In his introduction, Strasser claims that familiarity with the ‘best’ apps ‘makes a balanced, multi-methodological approach possible’ (p. 10) and describes Web 2.0 variously as interactive, creative, collaborative, fast, authentic, popular with students, motivational, democratic and environmentally-friendly. However, none of these bold claims are satisfactorily elaborated on or supported by references to peer-reviewed literature. This kind of uncritical advocacy is unfortunate. Firstly, it risks putting off teachers who remain cautious and sceptical of educational technology. Secondly, it oversimplifies the benefits and challenges of using technology in the classroom and this may lead to unexpected and unnecessary frustration for those teachers who are keen to experiment.

A further consequence of Strasser’s enthusiasm is the sheer number of Web 2.0 apps presented in the book – around 50. Making use of such a wide range of tools might be reasonable over the course of a year (for instance, teaching language in a K-12 context); in the context of a 10-week ‘intensive English’ course, too much time could easily be taken up with teachers and students familiarising themselves with the technology.

All this creates the impression that the kind of teacher envisaged by the author is one who spends a great deal of time focused narrowly on the next Web 2.0 app he/she is going to use, possibly at the expense of the students and their learning. It suggests an overemphasis on the means rather than the ends, which is also apparent in the lack of clearly articulated language learning objectives. Each lesson does have a ‘focus’ but these tend to be along the lines of ‘interpreting and creating visual input’ or ‘working collaboratively on online texts’ and perhaps relate more to digital literacies than language learning.
For these reasons, teachers who are particularly interested in developing their students’ (or indeed their own) digital literacies will likely get the most out of Mind the App! Nevertheless, teachers looking for Type I applications of educational technology may also find Mind the App! a suitable starting point. What is certainly missing from Strasser’s book are any Type II applications – anything that is likely to facilitate fundamental changes to pedagogy – but this is possibly more a reflection of the fairly unsophisticated state of educational technology in ELT currently. There are opportunities to leverage technology in order to bring about new approaches to teaching and learning, at least once the industry moves beyond the classroom tinkering of individual teachers and begins to evaluate at a deeper level how technology can assist learners to achieve language learning outcomes. Readers interested in such an evaluation, however, will need to look elsewhere.

REFERENCE


Kyle Smith has worked as a teacher, academic manager and curriculum developer in the ELICOS industry since 2001. He is particularly interested in teacher development and innovations in curriculum design. He has lived in the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia and Europe.

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Advertisements are submitted in full colour and are published in greyscale in the hard copy of the *English Australia Journal*, and in full colour in the online version. Advertising rates include publication in both hard copy and online:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF AD</th>
<th>DEPTH</th>
<th>WIDTH</th>
<th>COST (GST included)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FULL PAGE</td>
<td>205mm</td>
<td>130mm</td>
<td>$550.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 PAGE</td>
<td>100mm</td>
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<td>$330.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Please note**

1. These rates are for advertising space ONLY.
2. Copy must be submitted in the correct size (i.e., be able to fit WITHIN an area of the above dimensions) as a digital file.
3. The preferred format for files to be supplied is a high resolution PDF (include trim marks).
4. A design service is available at extra cost. Advertisers wishing to make use of this service should contact the English Australia Secretariat.
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