

# Final Thesis Bachelor's Program

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Orlando Rodriguez

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## Essay on Today's Educational Reality in Uruguay:

- How to improve the quality of our teaching.
  - The teaching of values in early schooling so as to favour a deeper interest in students in learning.
  - The teaching of Social Skills to achieve better social interaction.
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School of Social and Human Studies

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“Education does not mean teaching people what they do not know. It means teaching them to behave as they do not behave ... It is a painful, continual, and difficult work to be done with kindness, by watching, by warning, by precept, and by praise, but above all - by example.”

John Ruskin

When I embraced this unparalleled profession - that of being an educator - almost thirty years ago, I set off in the utopian search of what the basics to successful teaching are. I was also inspired by the idea of making myself a personal profile in the teaching profession.

The following are, so far, my insights of what I consider to be essentials to bear in mind in order to successfully achieve the goal of teaching. I do believe and support that successful teaching is based on three cornerstones:

1. **A resilient and appropriate learning environment** - which results from a friendly, tolerant and constructive atmosphere - where students feel they are the central concern in the process.
2. **A social responsible educator, with a positive attitude**, a conscientious person who is aware of the vital role he plays in the lives of their students and the responsibilities that being an educator bring along.
3. **a thorough knowledge of the target subject, plus the necessary knowledge on methodology, pedagogy and didactics.**

The following factors, which apply to both teachers and learners, will help construct **a resilient and appropriate learning environment**:

- Teaching skills for life. Previous training, when going into the profession, enables teachers/ educators, in the best of cases, to have the minimum knowledge and ability to undertake their jobs. But, new data, technological development, and social changes, soon make that minimum knowledge and ability obsolete. Interactive processes, such as setting goals, conflict management, communication and problem solving - basic abilities - will make teachers' jobs more efficient and will strengthen teachers' self esteem.
- Setting clear and firm boundaries and objectives. We generally believe freedom, creativity and growth - outstanding goals - require few or no restrictions. Teachers feel much more self-confident when they clearly know the boundaries and duties they have to deal with. In fact, creativity and growth are only possible when expectations are fair, and equally valid for everyone.
- Being able to enrich bonds with fellow teachers (reflexive teaching, cooperative learning, action (team) research) Significant interaction among fellow teachers should be favored. Work groups promote affective relationships, and a sense of belonging among teachers. At the same time, students will be exposed to examples of cooperative learning.
- Showing support and affection in the classroom and school. The best reward for educators comes from the inner satisfaction that they are playing an important role. They then, need feedback from supervisors and peers, that tells they are doing a good job. Silence may be taken as a sign of failure. Supervisors need to understand their observations and encouragement are very important for those being supervised, and do their best to give relevant and clear feedback. A positive response from the community and an attitude of respect and appreciation among colleagues should be favored.
- Establishing and transmitting high expectations. If educators get the message that their prime role is to control behavior, and that all it's expected from them is, finishing the yearly curricula satisfactorily, educational excellence and the

construction of an appropriate and resilient learning atmosphere are impossible. When high performance educators generate animosity instead of admiration or inspiration, high expectations and educational excellence weaken.

- How do we promote high expectations? There's no better motivation for educators than the conviction they serve to a cause that goes beyond themselves and their inherent roles. This happens when they share, as respected members of the school staff, a common goal and the objectives to achieve such goal. In everyday practice, this means working in teams, sharing tasks, promoting diversity of roles, and encouraging individuals to make contributions in aspects that exceed their specific roles. High expectations require educators devoting the most time to their duties, i.e. those related to the learning of their students.
- Setting opportunities of meaningful participation. Most educators have a lot more to offer to the school than the usually expected roles. Resiliency is favored when educators are granted opportunities to contribute with their abilities and energy in their work place (a kindergarten teacher can be a good musician, or a principal has exceptional ability to tell stories) Educators need to learn new skills and take part in stimulating activities.
- Schools need, first of all, to create a supportive learning environment, where opinions and mistakes are respected and everyone is given a chance to learn, to favor a resilient learning atmosphere.

***Bibliography:*** Resiliency in Schools - Nan Henderson, Mike N. Milstein (2003)

2) **A social responsible educator, with a positive attitude.**

The attitude of the teacher definitely influences student success. A positive attitude in the classroom is essential. Teachers need to be and feel confident that their students are capable of learning the target language. Moreover, through a constant positive attitude, teachers are able to pass on to their students the concept that with a positive attitude and through hard work any personal goal can be achieved. Thus, teachers would be extending their teaching beyond their classrooms, and be teaching "for life." Teachers, within the boundaries of their classrooms, and through their attitude/approach to teaching, can foster or hamper, not only successful language acquisition, but also prepare, their students for the biggest challenge of all: life. Teachers should always keep in mind that they are, besides teaching another language, teaching and assessing their students' potential for the real test of life. We are skill-seekers and skill-developers. Teachers within the boundaries of the classroom are also social actors, a role that shouldn't be ignored.

3) When considering the third cornerstone: a teacher with **a thorough knowledge of the target subject, plus the necessary knowledge on methodology, pedagogy and didactics**, I am going to outline the basics of what I have learned and have worked for me throughout these years.

For a start I will start by saying that, unlike what many teachers believe, in essence change is not necessarily negative. Change definitely challenges us to re-shape our values and commitments. It certainly creates new openings and helps us expand our professional horizons.

No doubt, we live a tremendously liberating time for teachers and educators. The ball is in our court. I think it's time for us to play really hard.

I am attracted by the ideal vision of teachers being informed about the various kinds of successful practice and each being simultaneously engaged in investigating their

own way, to create an emergent ... "NEW PROFESSIONAL WHO STAYS RESPONSIVE TO CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES."

**And circumstances involving teaching do change enormously nowadays.**

But, are we willing to follow the steps to become that kind of professional?

**First**, we need to generate a team that allows us, teachers, to share this ongoing trend of **COOPERATIVE LEARNING**. To preserve our **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**, we must guard against "exploratory teaching" from becoming simply another topic heard only on seminars, workshops and conventions, and willingly, get our hands real dirty.

**Then**, we need to understand such concepts as: "**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE & ACTION (TEAM) RESEARCH.**"

**REFLECTIVE PRACTICE** means that of never taking things for granted. Paradigms are falling faster than we can notice it.

"LET'S NOT CHANGE WHAT IS WORKING WELL"

"WE MUST DO EVERYTHING IN CLASS TO RETAIN STUDENTS' ATTENTION"

That's how we have been taught, isn't it so? The first is often the reason why teachers fail to understand why students are not motivated enough in their classes. Therefore they lose interest in learning. That is because, for example, they ignore that a key factor to hook students in both attention and learning is better achieved if the teachers perform in a positive emotional environment.

The fact that emotions not only play an important role in the recall of episodic events, but also drive attention and create meaning is often ignored.

"...what is working well." **For whom? For my students or for me?** This should be a hitching question to reconsider what we are doing.

The second paradigm tells us that we have often spent hours planning lessons, adding expansions and creating activities to keep our students' attention!

According to Jensen (1997) "Getting and keeping students' attention should be the exception, not the rule. Teachers should use short, focused, diverse activities, followed by diffused activities, such as reflection." Two key elements: novelty and variety.

Multiple Intelligence and most recent studies of **Brain and Memory** - which will be referred to later - tell us that neither intelligence nor the memory are single constructs, they are not a fixed thing or a singular skill. I believe these Brain-based research applications when really put into classroom teaching will make a dramatic difference in the coming years.

Teachers are, no doubt, the key figures in the EFL learning process. Their influence is fundamental to their student's progress or lack thereof. The fact that "to achieve the desired result in teaching English, i.e. guiding students to its successful learning/acquisition, teachers have to be aware of and adhere to certain essentials," is often ignored by many EFL teachers. They also need to take crucial factors, such as classroom atmosphere into account. These issues are the central focus of this introspective piece of writing.

**What are the Essential Qualities for an EFL Teacher?**

Being skilled at using the target language is definitely not sufficient for English teachers, nor is the fact that they must be able to use appropriate teaching techniques. Techniques are methods of teaching that necessarily include classroom behavior or classroom activities and procedures, which employ specific strategies selected by the teachers to achieve their objectives after planning. Although language competency and teaching techniques go hand in hand in enhancing teacher effectiveness in the classroom, that's not always enough. Yet, many times skill/mastery is the only criterion used to select candidates for teaching English. My observation is based on the personal and perhaps controversial belief that there's definitively no significant correlation between a teacher's own language competency and the language achievement of his/her students. On the contrary, besides having

an appropriate knowledge of the language, and being familiar with and able to adapt and employ a variety of teaching techniques, English teachers must have, among other capabilities, a positive attitude.

The attitude of the teacher also influences student success. A positive attitude in the classroom is essential. Teachers need to be and feel confident that their students are capable of learning the target language. If, for example, a teacher assumes that half of the class is incapable of acquiring a passive voice/the subjunctive for any reason, and looks down on them, students will not learn the grammatical form. Moreover, through a constant positive attitude, teachers are able to pass on to their students the concept that with a positive attitude and through hard work any personal goal can be achieved. Thus, teachers would be extending their teaching beyond their classrooms, and be teaching "for life."

Remember, to teach is to touch a life forever. We may come to the conclusion that teachers, within the boundaries of their classrooms, and through their attitude/approach to teaching, can foster or hamper, not only successful language acquisition, but also prepare, their students for the biggest challenge of all: life. Teachers should always keep in mind that they are, besides teaching another language, teaching and assessing their students' potential for the real test of life. We are skill-seekers and skill-developers. Teachers within the boundaries of the classroom are also social actors, a role that shouldn't be ignored.

The ability to design an effective lesson plan is also crucial to successful learning. Elements such as variety and novelty should also be considered in our planning to make classes appealing for our students. English teachers need to educate and train themselves on how to design an everyday plan that is tailored to reach the needs and abilities of all their students.

Educational aims of the lesson must be clear, and activities should be selected to contribute to the realization of those aims. Lesson objectives should be stated in terms of what the student will be able to do as a result of that instruction, that is, according to student capability. These objectives must specify a goal in terms of student learning and skill. For example, that the students will be able to answer yes/no questions using the present progressive.

#### We Should Teach for Every Student's Mastery

Another vital method that every EFL teacher should consider is to organize his/her instruction so that all students are given equal opportunities to learn the content. Teaching for mastery therefore implies a creative and responsible use of a variety of styles. Since students learn in different ways, as a result of their learning styles and intelligence capacities, the strategic introduction of new and varied techniques may help students overcome a specific learning shortcoming. For instance, you may expect your class to master the use of the subjunctive; techniques must be utilized to reach the eye-minded, ear-minded student, and those who learn by developing their own generalizations. This approach should also bear in mind there should be activities that cater to the cognitive, affective and the kinesthetic domain of our students, as well. Likewise teachers must give a chance to and help the students who are hesitant to express themselves for fear of looking foolish, as well as those who are always eager to express themselves, and are often full of errors.

#### Classroom Management - How?

Teachers at all times must maximize available class time and maintain discipline. This must be in a close relation to ages of the students, the physical environment and the purpose of the instruction. For example, independent work, pair-work, small group conversations, interest group conversations and student-led drills will contribute to a smooth functioning of a class. We need to emphasize the too often ignored fact that when students are actively involved in a class which is set at their linguistic level and which takes into account their interests and backgrounds, they

will at the same time, be so busy learning the language, that discipline will, to a large extent, take care of itself. Therefore, being able to handle and organize the classroom means a greater probability of success in implementing teaching plans, and achieving successful learning/acquisition thereof.

#### Classroom Atmosphere

Classrooms are extremely complex places with teachers making moment-by-moment decisions to translate their plans into action while they attempt to maintain a friendly, tolerant and constructive atmosphere. The fact is that, unlike other classrooms, students struggle to learn through a second/foreign language instead of their primary language. Students have to deal with reading, writing, listening, speaking and thinking, when possible, in a language other than their native tongue. And this is what makes the ESL/ EFL classroom so complex to manage, thus requiring special attention.

Friendly atmosphere - This must always be a major teacher's concern and characteristic of a classroom. Students need to feel that the teacher cares about what they are doing and going through, and that he/she is doing his/her best to help them learn effectively while developing their proficiency levels. Students definitely learn better when they are in a caring, welcoming, non-intimidating learning atmosphere. Students should be able to express themselves openly, without fear of embarrassment in front of their peers when corrected.

Tolerant atmosphere - Another crucial characteristic is tolerance. Students should feel that the class is a place where mistakes are tolerated, where teachers understand and make their students understand that, given the nature of the class, progress will be slow. That moving from one stage to another takes time and students should not be upset when making mistakes, making mistakes is part of the process of learning. Similarly, teachers should not be discouraged when their students do not use accurately what they have been teaching.

Constructive atmosphere - By providing challenging activities where students work hard and are provided with equal opportunities for using English, teachers will favor a place where students are encouraged to do more and use the language all the time. Students in the classroom need to feel encouraged to use what they have learned and to recognize their effort is valued. Class atmosphere is affected by the teacher's attitude and behavior. Teachers should make it clear that each individual member of the class deserves attention, whatever his/her level of achievement. Students should be equal in the eyes of the teacher and receive equal opportunity to participate and receive feedback on their performance.

By creating a class with such features, teachers will be favoring a resilient class, where students will feel they are the central concern in the process.

So, in order to start talking about successful teaching or improving the quality of our teaching, let's start by describing what ELT is, in other words, try to outline what our job is.

#### An Introduction to English Language Teaching

"English is a language spoken and heard, written and read everywhere: in music and movies, classrooms and airports, newspapers and email. Everyone knows what English is... or do they? I will begin by exploring how linguists look at language and will also examine the "native / non-native" distinction that is often made when talking about speakers of English. I will then look at how English language teaching is different from other subjects taught in school. And finally, I will try to examine the role of memory and intelligence in language learning."

## English and English Language Teaching: An Introduction

At first it might seem almost silly to begin a thesis on English Language Teaching (ELT) by asking, "What is English? What is ELT?" Some would say: What foolish questions! Almost anyone can teach English, especially "native speakers." You just walk into a classroom and teach it.

And of course, everyone knows what English is, especially nowadays when it is found in every nook and cranny of the world. English is a language. It's a language that has funny sounds, strange grammar, and weird spelling. It's also the language of Shakespeare and Hollywood. But most importantly, English is the language we teach.

### Where do we start?

Before we begin to talk about the everyday classroom concerns, let's start by examining some of the assumptions that we bring to our classroom. If these assumptions are misplaced, we start our teaching from a position of weakness rather than strength.

### How Linguists Look at English

Linguists are people who commit their entire professional lives to the scientific study of human languages. They have devoted considerable time and attention to studying different and long-term claims made about English.

It may surprise us to discover that although there may be grains of truth in each of those statements, all of them are quite misleading if not downright wrong. Yes, English is by far the most global and international language in today's world. However, it is not number one, at least as far as native speakers go. That honor belongs to Mandarin (Chinese).

Compared to any single language in the world, you can make a strong case that English has funny sounds, strange grammar, and weird spelling. But linguists are quick to point out that depending on your examples, you can argue that any one of the world's six thousand languages are odd compared to any other.

### Universal grammar

It might seem odd that linguists claim that essentially English is no different from any other language. For almost a century, however, linguists have noticed that the more deeply they study individual language contrasts, the more their commonalities become apparent.

In modern times, this viewpoint has been included under the term universal grammar (UG). Contemporary language theorists engage in debates about the nature and extent of universals among the world languages. However, they are in general agreement that all human languages (in contrast to all other forms of animal communication) contain a core of basic principles. These are found in every human tongue, in spite of the many superficial differences there are.

In a way, linguists are saying that just as people around the world differ in their superficial appearance (height, weight, skin color, etc.), so too do languages contrast in the sounds, words, and grammatical patterns they contain. But just as all Homo sapiens have identical skeletal structures, so too do all the languages in the world share a common linguistic core of rules or principles.

### A "black cat" or a "cat black"?

English and Thai, for example, differ in their word order for nouns and adjectives. However in both languages (and indeed in all human languages), noun phrases have a key word (a noun) which is modified by an additional word (in this case, an adjective). Thai happens to be a noun first language ("dog big") whereas English is a noun second language ("big dog"). This pattern is found in other grammatical structures.

### Why people can learn new languages

This claim that all languages are intrinsically alike has profound implications for those of us in ELT. Consider, for example, a commonly overlooked fact. The majority of people around the world know at least two languages, especially if we define languages broadly enough to include mutually unintelligible "dialects" like Cantonese and Mandarin or Catalan and Castilian Spanish.

Many of us, English teachers are probably one of these people if we tend to typify the majority of the world's ELT professionals. We know English very well and we might be a speaker of another language such as Spanish, Japanese, Vietnamese, or Russian. In fact, English may very well be our third or even fourth language.

So here's a question that should challenge teachers: if languages are indeed so very different, how did you ever learn a second, third, or even fourth language so well? The answer to this question is based partially on this rather fuzzy, highly theoretical, but very important notion of universal grammar.

Yes, there are many differences among languages. However, with lots of exposure, practice, motivation, and hopefully good teaching, you can become fluent in other languages because you can rely on a number of linguistic universals which all languages share.

### Implications for teachers

No linguist today is claiming that we should teach universal grammar in our foreign language classrooms. However, it should be comforting to you as an ELT practitioner that the language you teach is not some non-human invention like Martian! There are many underlying commonalities between English and the mother tongue(s) of your students. They, like you, can eventually pick this language up because they are human and, quite fortunately for all of us, so is English!

### Who is a "native speaker" of English?

Another clarification is necessary at this point. It is true that the English language originated in England, and thus was the language of Shakespeare, and centuries later, also the language of Hollywood. However, English is owned by neither the United Kingdom nor the United States of America. In fact, one can claim that there is



at least one nation on every one of the seven continents in which English is the national language and is spoken by a significant number of native speakers. And speaking of "native speakers," many specialists in ELT have written about the problems of defining this term in today's world, where English is the international medium of communication.

Here are some problems with "native" / "non-native" distinction we should consider:

### Majority vs. Minority

The vast majority of the world's English users are "non-native" while so-called "native speakers" of English are part of a clear minority.

### Dialects of English

There's no such thing as a single variety of the English language. Multiple varieties of English exist: British English, American English, Australian English, Canadian English, etc.

### Criteria for classifying someone as a non-native speaker

There are many highly educated individuals who are fully bilingual but speak with a foreign accent (Kofi Annan, the leader of the United Nations, for example). Is the criterion for "native speaker" only accent or does it depend on overall fluency, literacy skills, vocabulary knowledge, etc.?

Sociolinguists have even considered using a continuum to classify entire nations of English users. Countries where English has historically predominated (like New Zealand or Canada) are called inner circle nations. Countries where English is an official language and is found along side other national languages (like Nigeria or India) are called outer circle nations. Finally, the majority of nations around the world (like Korea or Ecuador) are part of an expanding circle because English plays an important role despite its minority status.

### A critical period for learning

So let us accept that when we classify English users, there is a wide range of abilities stretching from very limited and extremely "non-native" competence at one end, to exceedingly competent "native like" use at the other. If this is all true, however, is there any linguistic evidence which distinguishes between completely native and not completely native?

Several decades of second language acquisition (SLA) research, suggest that there is indeed one way in which native speakers of any language can be distinguished from highly competent non-natives. This research supports the existence of a critical period (CP) for learning a second language. The idea is supported by the fact that after a certain age, probably around puberty, no one can learn a new language perfectly without some limitation.

Like any theory, there are several versions and some disagreements. However, based on almost four decades of consistent research findings, it seems, the only critical period constraint on becoming a "native speaker" is that if anyone learns a new language after puberty, regardless of how hard and long they try, they will always speak that language with a foreign accent. Thus, this person will always sound like a "non-native." This, then, is the only legitimate use of the labels native and non-

native speakers from my understanding of all the second language acquisition evidence.

### The implications of the "critical period" for ELT

Even though this is only one area of second language acquisition research, the critical period actually has some profound implications for ELT practitioners.

First of all, the claim is only for speech, and more than that, a very narrow aspect of speech: what you sound like. Therefore, the critical period theory does not claim that no one can pick up an excellent pronunciation of a new language if they do not learn it as a child. Millions of English learners have learned most of their English in school as teenagers and university students. Yet you speak English clearly and fluently, despite having a non-native accent. Even if your non-native accent is quite prominent, it does not necessarily impede intelligibility and comprehension. And of course, there are no foreign accents in anyone's written English. Again, we can think of many sports stars, movie actors, and public figures that are completely articulate in English, despite the fact that they speak with a non-native accent.

### Pronunciation and speaking

This observation has a direct implication for those of you responsible for teaching pronunciation and speaking skills. You can always improve on accuracy, fluency, and intelligibility in a second language. But our goal as pronunciation teachers should not (and, in fact, cannot) be to turn our students into "native speakers." After all, our students are just like anyone else: they want to be able to communicate effectively in English, but *in their own voice*.

In summary, you can always help your students with their speaking skills. And as long as they are intelligible and fluent in their spoken English, who on earth cares whether they speak with a non-native accent! It's all well as far as the magic of communication takes place.

### When do we introduce a foreign language?

There is another area where critical period research is of direct relevance to ELT. This concerns the very complex question of whether or not there is an optimal age to introduce a foreign language. Because this is such a huge issue concerning educational policies in so many nations today, we will deal directly with this topic in later lessons. However, we see that research and theory, which seem so remote and removed from our everyday classroom practices, can sometimes be directly relevant to our work as ELT practitioners. And these issues should be a guiding star in your continual growth as an ELT professional.

### How is English language teaching different from other school subjects?

Let's turn now to English language teaching and look specifically at how it differs from other school subjects. Although all countries throughout the world have traditions of teaching languages as an academic course (whether the national language or foreign tongues), there is actually something quite odd about this practice.

As someone who has spent hundreds of hours studying English in school, you may have always thought that ELT was really not that much different from teaching other

scholastic subjects like geography, algebra, or world history. Students in English, like in other classes, listen to the teacher talk, take notes, and try to memorize the material, do their homework, and take tests. But what you are teaching in your English language class is actually quite different from other subjects. I will try to explain what I mean.

### Special schools and programs

The first point to consider is the fact that wherever you go, you will find special schools and intensive programs devoted entirely to the teaching of English. It is very rare, however, to find schools and intensive programs which are focused completely on the teaching of geography, algebra, or world history.

Granted, you will find cram schools which help high school students prepare for specific parts of the national or university entrance examinations. Many of these cram schools also prepare students for the English sections of these exams as well as others, such as the *Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)*.

Aside from these cram schools, though, you will almost never find schools teaching biology, physics, economics, or sociology. Every major city in the world, though, has special schools for young people and adults to study English. In Japan, for example, almost every YMCA offers classes in English (as well as other languages), but none offer classes in the academic subjects I just listed. English is very different from most subjects taught in school in this respect.

### More than just facts

The second point concerns the way in which English is actually very similar to certain school subjects such as art, sports, or music. Classes on these subjects are available to interested young people and adults outside of academic institutions much like many English classes are.

Like learning to play a sport or an instrument, learning English (or any foreign language for that matter) involves much more than acquiring facts, absorbing knowledge, or solving problems. It is a skill that requires observation, modeling, practice, and eventually performance.

In this sense it is exactly like learning to hit a tennis serve, to paint a picture, or play a violin. It is only because of historical and cultural traditions that foreign language instruction and English language teaching ended up as academic subjects and are taught in the same way as history, mathematics, and psychology.

### The implications for teachers

If learning a language is much closer to learning artistic, athletic, or musical skills than it is to learning an academic subject, what are the implications for those of us in ELT? Obviously, we can't rewrite history, reinvent culture, or revamp educational institutions.

Of course, if you teach English in a language school or for some other private enterprise, it might be possible for you and your colleagues to think about innovations that would approach ELT more as a skill than a classroom subject. For

example, it might be possible to conduct classes outdoors or in conjunction with classes in music, art, or sports.

But if you are like most teachers, you are confined to a traditional institution and to a typical classroom. So what can you do? This question in more detail will be matter of exploration in the future.

### Three Different Kinds of Memory in ELT

Psychologists talk about three kinds of memory or knowledge. When it comes to school subjects, students and teachers tend to dwell on only the first type and ignore the importance of the other two.

Declarative memory - What we most commonly think of when we talk about education is declarative memory. This is the storing of information such as the names of countries and their capital cities, or the times tables in math. In this sense, learning a language is no different. A large part of your memory for English is naturally devoted to remembering vocabulary, a classic illustration of declarative knowledge.

Procedural memory - Unlike the academic subjects, skills like art, music, sports, or language also require a second type of recall referred to as procedural memory. Using this "how to" knowledge, violinists are able to finger various notes in rapid succession. Basketball players can sink a basket while compensating for their body moving through space.

The productive skills of speaking and writing demand the same type of procedural memory from a language user. You must know how to form the mouth, lips, and tongue to produce a certain sound. You must also know how to hit the right keys on a keyboard to spell out the proper sequence of letters or words.

The regular academic subjects taught in schools rely almost exclusively on declarative memory. However, as an English teacher, your students must also learn from you the procedural skills of speaking and writing. Like art, sports, and music, this type of memory requires a very different kind of learning in which practice, not just rote memorization, plays an important role.

Episodic memory - In addition to declarative and procedural knowledge, many psychologists claim that we possess episodic memory. This is the recall of an experience rather than a fact or a procedure. It is a holistic snapshot of an event (often a traumatic one) which happened in the past. We tend to recall not simply where we were, but what we were doing and who was with us. We may even remember where that person was sitting and what they were wearing when we heard, for the first time, about the event.

Episodic memories are, of course, not always about unhappy situations. They also play a significant role in the way humans share and appreciate their common culture. This is why poems, songs, proverbs, jokes, and especially stories are remembered so well and are passed on from generation to generation, even among oral cultures which have no system of literacy to permanently record these episodes.

Helping students to remember - Just as we are inclined to ignore procedural memory, we also tend to forget about the importance of episodic memory as teachers of a

"subject" like English. We often think of English as a subject to be memorized like dates in history or elements in chemistry. But besides depending on declarative and procedural memory, English language learning is greatly facilitated by episodic memory.

Linguists who study first language acquisition have discovered that chunks of language in the mother tongue which little children learn via songs, chants, or parts of a story are valuable building blocks to the more rapid acquisition of new words and grammatical patterns.

Songs, jokes, poems, and stories have been part of language teaching for centuries. In contrast to the view of many, these activities aren't just for fun or to be used as a reward at the end of class. They are integral to the formation of new episodic knowledge. This knowledge, along with declarative and procedural memory, can equip your students with three different and effective ways of remembering the English you teach.

For now, and according to research, believe it or not, you are closer to the violin instructor than you are to the history teacher.

Wherever you teach English, you enjoy both a wide range of opportunities and a daunting set of challenges because you are teaching much more than a subject. You are helping your students acquire a skill, one that surpasses even art, music, and sports in difficulty and importance.

Whether you are a "native" or "non-native" English speaker, whether you teach children or adults, whether you work in an inner, outer, or expanding circle nation, the English language skills which you will pass on to your students will literally open up any world to them. Indeed, it will open up the entire world.

We should be encouraged to think of English language teaching as a continuum of situations. For example, in one classroom, students might have a minimal need to use the English they learn (say elementary students in an expanding circle nation). In another class, learners may need to be very proficient in English (say health professionals working in an inner circle nation).

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### Professional Development

In my many presentations to English language teachers locally and a few abroad, one issue that has come up repeatedly is the desire for opportunities to engage in professional development. Many teachers feel that this is somehow an extremely difficult task or even an unachievable task because of their busy schedules or lack of resources. I will present my ideas on what professional development is, why it's important and give some examples of how teachers can effectively incorporate professional development practices into their daily classroom lives.

I will also try to distinguish between professional education, training and development, and focus on change-oriented aspects of growth and development. Stating what it is *not* may appear to be a somewhat negative way to define a word, phrase or concept, but this can be a useful way of clarifying what professional development is and is not. One of the most common confusions is between *education*, *training* and *development*. The three terms are often used interchangeably although there are some important and fundamental differences among the three.

“You can train me, and you can educate me, but you can't develop me - I develop”

*Education* and *Training* is something that can be presented or managed by others. *Teacher Education* and *Teacher training* have to do with language teaching and teaching itself. *Training* can also be defined as: 'the acquisition of a particular set of skills to complete a specific task'. Training usually has clearly marked starting and finishing times. For example, when we completed our initial training to become teachers, there were fixed and predetermined dates for the course to begin and to end. With training, we should think of 'how and 'what'. For example, 'How do I teach this particular grammar point?' or 'What do I do if the students don't understand what I'm trying to teach them?'

In contrast, *Teacher Development* is something that can be done only by and for oneself.” It certainly means change and growth. As Underhill points out, “it's becoming the best kind of teacher that I personally can be.” *Development* does not usually have fixed and predetermined start and end points. It is a constant and continuous process. Training focuses on the *product* (the skill set to be acquired) while development focuses on the *process*. In development, we should think 'why'. For example, 'There are many different ways to teach this particular grammar point. Why have I chosen this way?' or 'Why don't my students understand what I'm trying to teach them?'

So, what is Professional Development? It is important to be clear on the distinction between training and development. Both are essential, but they are not the same. However, this does not answer the question: "What is professional development?" When Kathy Bailey and David Nunan were looking for a definition for their book, they came across the definition given by Dale Lange in 1990:

'Teacher development' is a term used in the literature to describe a process of continual intellectual, experiential, and attitudinal growth of teachers. Lange also referred to: "continued growth both before and throughout a career". He explained that "the intent here is to suggest that teachers continue to evolve in the use, adaptation, and application of their art and craft" (Lange, 1990).

This definition is interesting because it refers to so many different sets of relationships.

Growth is intellectual, experiential and attitudinal.

Time periods: Throughout the career: before, during and after (continuous)

Activity types: Use, adaptation, and application.

In addition to these relationships, Lange also referred to the relationship between the art and the craft of teaching.

Art versus science of teaching - As we progress in the profession, we often ask groups of teachers in different settings whether they think English language teaching is more of an *art* or more of a *science*. This is a kind of 'trick' question, as it is both! It is, however, a good way to help teachers start thinking about what they mean when they talk of 'teaching'.

Many branches of science are focused on generating rules that predict the behaviors of atoms and molecules. These rules may be thought of as having the same function as the grammar of a language. Art, where the outcome is usually unpredictable and not known in advance, may be thought of as a language lesson - no matter how much you plan and prepare you cannot predict exactly what will happen.

A bit more about Professional Development - As Dale Lange's definition captures so many different relationships; I think it is well worth breaking it up into smaller pieces. This way we can look in more detail at the different meanings contained within it.

Continuous process - Lange refers three times to the notion of development being an on-going, continuous process ('continual', 'continued', 'continue'). This repetition highlights the fact that with development there is a beginning, but there is no end. It also highlights the constant and lifelong nature of development.

Growth - Let us now look at the first relationship in the Lange definition (intellectual, experiential, and attitudinal). This raises the question: What is *intellect*? One possible and powerful way to answer this question is to use the effective 'body as metaphor' approach. The intellect is represented as the head (conscious, deliberate thoughts)

But what about *experience*? Experience (the hand) may be thought of as 'accumulated wisdom' based on three different sets of learning: learning from our mistakes, learning from our successes, and learning from each other.

Lastly, *attitude* can be thought of as a set of values, beliefs and behaviors. It can be represented by the heart.

To sum up the body metaphor, the three different areas of growth can be thought of in relation to professional development: the head (what we think), the hand (what we do), and the heart (what we feel).

There no doubt that for powerful professional development, we must engage in all the above mentioned three levels.

## Characteristics of Professional Development

If we look carefully at the many different relationships within professional development, we can identify some of the key aspects of professional development based on seven characteristics:

- Awareness
- Stepping back to get a better view
- Decision making
- Choice making
- Responsiveness
- Flexibility
- Change-oriented

Each of these seven characteristics is related to the other. For example, being more *aware* of what is happening in our classroom is often the result of *stepping back* from what we do everyday. This allows us to see more clearly what is and is not happening. As we become more *aware*, we become more able to explore our *choices* and carefully consider our *decisions*. We see how we can *respond flexibly* to bring about *changes* in our students and in ourselves.

Changes from Professional Development - Change is the essence of all growth, and positive change is essential for all development. But what is it that changes in professional development? Based on 30 years of interactions, presentations and conversations with English language teachers from different parts of the globe, I think I have humbly identified what I believe to be the six main areas of change.

Knowledge: of ourselves, of others and of the relationship between ourselves and others.

Understanding: Of our actions and motives, and the actions and motives of others.

Beliefs: About language, teaching and learning.

Perceptions: Of the purpose and reasons of our thoughts and actions.

Attitude: In terms of how open we are to different ways of being and seeing.

Awareness: Of the opportunities and the constraints within us and around us.

A good exercise for young teachers would be to ask them to complete the following statement in their own words using no more than 50 words:

"When I hear the words *professional development*, I think of ..."

Later ask them to compare what they wrote with Lange's definition. Ask a colleague - who they know well and trust - to complete the same statement. Compare their statement with theirs. Look for areas of similarity and areas of difference between the three (theirs, their colleague's, and Lange's).

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Other topics related to Professional Development, teachers training programs should include are:

- Why is Professional Development Important?
- Keeping a Journal
- Peer Observation
- Team Teaching
- Mentoring
- Peer Coaching
- Action (Team) Research
- Teaching Portfolios

The next step in my thesis will be an introduction to Task-Based Language Teaching for I give a crucial role to this important approach to language teaching, what it is, how it developed and how it fits in to a broader curriculum framework, and, most importantly, how it works in the classroom. I will be including lots of examples from teaching materials that have been written over the years. But I will also introduce the concepts and principles that underpin this useful approach.

#### Approaches to Language Curriculum Development

First, I want to provide a context and a framework for task-based language teaching, by looking at how it fits in to a broader curriculum picture. The first thing I want to do, then, is to set out my understanding of the concept of 'curriculum'. In doing this, I will introduce and define some key concepts and terms. These include syllabus, methodology, assessment and evaluation. I will also look at two different philosophies or models of education - the 'transmission' model and the 'experiential' model. Finally, I will look at how the concepts of communicative language teaching and task-based teaching are related.

Hopefully, at the end of this explanation teachers would be able to:

- Describe the key elements in *curriculum design*
- Define the following terms: *syllabus design*, *methodology*, *analytical approach*, *synthetic approach*, *assessment*, and *evaluation*
- Explain the difference between a '*transmission*' and an '*experiential*' approach to education
- Explain the difference between *traditional* and *communicative* approaches to language teaching

#### The Nature of Curriculum Development

The concept of *curriculum* is a large and somewhat messy one. Many books have been written about it and educators are not in agreement about what it means.

Traditionally, a curriculum will specify all of the planned learning experiences that an educational institution will make available to its learners. Such a plan needs to specify three things: 1) the content that learners will acquire, 2) the learning experiences through which they will acquire the content, and 3) the outcomes of the learning process. There should be some justification for the content that is selected.

Additionally, the content and learning experiences should be graded and sequenced so that teachers and learners know what is to be taught first, what second and so on.

*Content selection, justification and grading* belong to the field of *syllabus design*.

Selecting and sequencing learning experiences is known as *methodology*, and determining outcomes belongs to the area of *assessment* and *evaluation*.

(Note: *Assessment* refers to the tools and procedures for determining what learners can and can't do, while *evaluation* has to do with making overall judgments about the effectiveness of a program.)

#### Key Aspects of Curriculum Planning:

Syllabus Design (relating to content)

What? Selecting

Why? Justifying

When? Grading

Methodology (relating to learning processes)

How? Enacting

When? Sequencing

Assessment/evaluation (relating to outcomes)

How well? Assessing

How effective Evaluating

Traditional approach - In the *traditional approach* to language curriculum development, language was seen as a body of content to be mastered. The syllabus consisted of graded lists of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation items. These were specified as a first step in the curriculum development process. Learning tasks and exercises were then designed to facilitate the learning of these language items.

Communicative approach - However, in the mid-1970s a different view of language began to emerge. According to this view, which came to be known as the *communicative approach*, language was seen not as a set of grammar rules and vocabulary to be memorized, but as a tool for expressing meanings. As we will see, this new view had profound implications all aspects of the curriculum.

#### Two Approaches to Language Syllabus Designs

There are many different approaches and methods in language teaching. However, most of these evolve from one of two starting points. Generally speaking, the point of departure is either:

- 1) an analysis of the target language to be taught or ...
- 2) a consideration of the communicative needs of the learner.

Underlying these two points of departure are two interesting different concepts of the nature of language. The first sees language as a body of knowledge; the second sees it as a tool for communication.

Around thirty years ago, the British applied linguist David Wilkins drew our attention to these two different orientations. In his ground-breaking 1976 book entitled *Notional Syllabuses*, he argues that curriculum developers had a basic choice when starting out to design a new language program. They could either start with an analysis of the target language, breaking it down into its different components, or they could begin by specifying the communicative situations that learners would encounter in using the language. Wilkins labeled the first approach '*synthetic*' and

the second approach 'analytical.'

So let's take a look at what Wilkins meant.

Synthetic approach - In a synthetic approach, "different parts of the language are taught separately and step by step so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of parts until the whole structure of language has been built up." (Wilkins, 1976:2). The approach is called 'synthetic' because, in order to use the language for communication, the learner has to *synthesize*, or reconstruct, the different elements that have been separately presented. Items to be taught are selected because they happen to be there in the language rather than because they meet actual or potential communicative needs.

A wide range of methods are underpinned by the synthetic approach. These include the traditional grammar-translation method, based on grammatical analyses and the translation of sentences/texts, as well as the very different audio-lingual method, which engages learners in drills for memorizing and manipulating grammatical structures.

Analytic approach - The contrasting approach begins, not with a prior analysis of the language, but with an analysis of the communicative needs of the learner. This approach is called 'analytic' because learners are confronted with naturalistic 'chunks' of language which they have to analyze or break down for themselves. According to Wilkins, a detailed analysis of the language prior to teaching is not necessary following this approach, in which the syllabus is organized according to the purposes for which learners are acquiring the language.

As with synthetic syllabuses, a wide range of methods can be found in the language teaching literature that subscribe to the analytical approach. These include content-based instruction (Brinton, 2003), project-based pedagogy (Ribe and Vidal 1993, Rudolph), and task-based language teaching (Nunan, 2004). Apparently these methods all share one thing in common - the starting point for designing materials and courses is something other than an inventory of sounds, words and grammar.

Content-based instruction draws on subject matter from other subjects on the school curriculum such as mathematics, history or geography.

Project-based pedagogy is organized around large-scale projects such as 'organizing a school excursion', 'organizing a newsletter' 'applying for a job', or 'buying a house'. (These can be thought of as 'super' tasks.)

Task-based language teaching is organized around the 101 things we do with language in everyday life such as buying a coffee, asking a friend to pick up some dry cleaning for us, writing a resume, booking an airline flight, arranging to see a movie with a friend.

The organizing principle for all of these methods is some non-linguistic unit of analysis.

Previously, we looked at two different approaches to language syllabus design: synthetic and analytic. When it comes to methodology (how we select and organize learning experiences for the classroom) there are also two competing approaches to Methodology. Some will be surprised by the fact that these two approaches have been around for many years in the educational literature.

Transmission model - The first approach is known as the transmission model of learning. The word 'transmission' captures the philosophy of the approach. 'To

transmit' is to send something from one person or place to another. So this approach involves sending something, in this particular case knowledge, from a teacher to a learner. The teacher knows - the student doesn't. The teacher's job is to recreate the knowledge in the mind of the student. The philosophy leads naturally to a teacher-centered classroom in which the learners are passive recipients of input fed into them by the teacher. Language classrooms predicated on this approach are characterized by rote learning, memorization, and repetition.

Experiential model - The alternative view is that the transmission approach simply doesn't work, that if someone is supposed to learn, then they have to do the learning for themselves. This approach is known as experiential learning. The role for the teacher is to create the conditions through which this can happen. Again, the label 'experiential' gives a clue as to what the essence of the philosophy is. Learners learn through active experiences in the classroom - 'learning by doing'. This philosophy leads to learner-centered classrooms in which learners acquire skills (rather than memorize facts) through hands-on experiences. Methodologically, students will engage in role plays, simulations and other active learning tasks. (For a comprehensive overview of this approach, see Kohonen, 1992.)

Summarizing, we have looked at some broad background issues that will provide a framework for considering task-based language teaching. I began by considering the concept of curriculum, suggesting that the concept encompasses content selection and grading, the selection and sequencing of learning tasks and activities, and the development of instruments for assessment and evaluation.

I have drawn some fairly stark contrasts in this explanation: traditional versus communicative, synthetic versus analytical, transmission versus experiential learning. In reality, most language programs are a mixture of these different elements. The difference between them is one of emphasis.

Below I have summarized some of the key contrasts that were drawn.

Comparing Traditional and Communicative Approaches to Language Pedagogy

	<u>Traditional</u>	<u>Communicative</u>
<u>Theory of language</u>	Language is a system of phonological (sound), lexical (vocabulary) and morphosyntactic (grammatical) rules.	Language is a resource for creating and exchanging meanings between individuals and groups.
<u>Theory of Learning</u>	Habit formation, memorization and other means of internalizing rules.	Activities involving real communication, simulating in class language performance out of class - 'learning by doing'
<u>Syllabus Design</u>	The selection and sequencing of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary items from target language systems.	The selection and sequencing of communicative tasks that learners will undertake in real-life communication.

## Methodology

Drill, memorization,  
repetition.

Role plays,  
simulations of out of  
class communication.

Task-based language teaching is in essence, an approach to pedagogy based on an analysis of the things that people do with language rather than an inventory of grammatical and lexical items.

Since in recent years, and based on the fact that the Task-based learning approach clearly presents its advantages over the more traditional Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP) approach (\*), a debate has developed in my country over which approaches to structuring and planning and implementing lessons are more effective, I will try to provide a comparative overview between both.

(\*) Some linguists claim that a fourth phase: Transfer, should be considered to make it work properly. PPP approach is still widely used unsuccessfully in many English Language Teaching institutions in my country.

## Presentation/ Practice/ Production (PPP)

During an initial teacher training course in my country and surely in many others, most teachers become familiar with the PPP paradigm. A teacher performing a PPP lesson would proceed in the following manner:

- First, the teacher **presents** an item of language in a clear context to get across its meaning. This could be done in a variety of ways: through a text, a situation build, a dialogue etc. The teacher would also use visual aids, drawings or even translation to bridge the gap to understanding.
- Students are then asked to complete a controlled **practice stage**, where they may have to repeat target items through choral and individual drilling, fill gaps or match halves of sentences, complete multiple choice exercises or true/ false ones. All of this practice demands that the student uses the language correctly and helps them to become more comfortable with it. Students sometimes are asked to fill in open-ended drilling exercises containing the target item, in a semi-controlled practice/stage.
- Finally, they move on to the production stage, sometimes called the '**free practice**' stage. Students are given a communication task such as a role play and are expected to **produce** the target language and use any other language that has already been learnt and is suitable for completing it.

## The problems with PPP

It all sounds quite logical but teachers who use this method - and exercise a reflective practice - will soon identify a few problems with it:

- Students can give the impression that they are comfortable with the new language as they are producing it quite accurately in the class. Often a few lessons later, though, students will either not be able to produce the language correctly or even won't produce it at all.
- Students will often produce the language but overuse the target structure so that it sounds completely unnatural.

- Students may not produce the target language during the free practice stage because they find they are able to use existing language resources to complete the task.

### A Task-based approach

Task-based Learning offers an alternative for language teachers. In a task-based lesson the teacher doesn't pre-determine what language will be studied, the lesson is based around the completion of a central task and the language studied is determined by what happens as the students complete it. The lesson follows certain stages.

#### Pre-task

The teacher introduces the topic and gives the students clear instructions on what they will have to do at the task stage and might help the students to recall some language that may be useful for the task. The pre-task stage can also often include playing a recording of people doing the task. This gives the students a clear model of what will be expected of them. The students can take notes and spend time preparing for the task.

#### Task

The students complete a task in pairs or groups using the language resources that they have as the teacher monitors and offers encouragement.

#### Planning

Students prepare a short oral or written report to tell the class what happened during their task. They then practice what they are going to say in their groups. Meanwhile the teacher is available for the students to ask for advice to clear up any language questions they may have.

#### Report

Students then report back to the class orally or read the written report. The teacher chooses the order of when students will present their reports and may give the students some quick feedback on the content. At this stage the teacher may also play a recording of others doing the same task for the students to compare.

#### Analysis

The teacher then highlights relevant parts from the text of the recording for the students to analyse. They may ask students to notice interesting features within this text. The teacher can also highlight the language that the students used during the report phase for analysis.

#### Practice

Finally, the teacher selects language areas to practise based upon the needs of the students and what emerged from the task and report phases. The students then do practice activities to increase their confidence and make a note of useful language.

### The advantages of TBL

Task-based learning has some clear advantages

- Unlike a PPP approach, the students are free of language control. In all stages they must use all their language resources rather than just practicing one pre-selected item.

- A natural context is developed from the students' experiences with the language that is personalized and relevant to them. With PPP it is necessary to create contexts in which to present the language and sometimes they can be very unnatural.
- The students will have a much more varied exposure to language with TBL. They will be exposed to a whole range of lexical phrases, collocations and patterns as well as language forms.
- The language explored arises from the students' needs. This need dictates what will be covered in the lesson rather than a decision made by the teacher or the course-book.
- It is a strong communicative approach where students spend a lot of time communicating. PPP lessons seem very teacher-centered by comparison. Just watch how much time the students spend communicating during a task-based lesson.
- It is enjoyable and motivating.

### Conclusion

PPP offers a very simplified approach to language learning. It is based upon the idea that you can present language in tidy little blocks, adding from one lesson to the next. However, research shows us that we cannot predict or guarantee what the students will learn and that ultimately a wide exposure to language is the best way of ensuring that students will acquire it effectively. Restricting their experience to single pieces of target language is unnatural.

A challenging exercise to assign young (and long-time) teachers would be that of selecting a textbook that you are currently using or that you are thinking of using or adopting. Most textbooks are a compromise between 'traditional' and 'communicative' approaches. Challenge them to see how many exercises and tasks they can find that exemplify the descriptions presented. Ask them to complete the following table.

	<u>Traditional</u>	<u>Communicative</u>
Theory of Language		
Theory of Learning		
Methodology		

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Framework for Task-Based Learning' by Jane Willis, Longman; 'Doing Task-Based  
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Next in my thesis I will propose what I call Practical Ideas for the Adult EFL  
Classroom

The purpose of this proposal is to help teachers evaluate their teaching style and to focus on how they can create a meaningful and successful learning environment for their students. To do this, I will discuss instructor and student motivation, and we'll explore what makes for a successful classroom experience overall. We'll also look at the role of planning and choosing appropriate activities for each class. And finally, we'll examine principles and strategies related to reading, writing, listening and speaking, as well as grammar, pronunciation, applications, and assessment that you can incorporate into your classroom teaching.

Personalizing Your Instruction - The purpose here is to, basically consider the importance of reflective practice and teaching, help them reflect on your own teaching and to consider how you can incorporate and personalize new ideas into your classes. I will try to describe what successful English language teachers do in their classrooms. We'll also look at some of the approaches and methods used over the years to teach English.

What might an ESL/ EFL classroom look like?

One student's experience

Jisong Kim has recently moved to the United States and hopes to work toward a degree in business from a well-known university. In the future, he wants to start a small company and conduct business between Korea and the U.S.

Jisong attended school in Seoul and learned some English, but not enough to participate successfully in an American university. He knew that to enter a college in the U.S. she would need to pass the TOEFL test and so he enrolled in an intensive English program.

Jisong was surprised as he started studying in the various classes. The teachers often shared experiences about their lives, encouraged students to speak about themselves, and discussed various issues.

Jisong found himself working in groups and thinking about how to solve life's problems as well as learning new vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. A few classes were a little noisy and students would speak up without raising their hands. In some classes, students were prompted to stand and walk around the classroom. In others, teachers even participated as students.

English language teaching

There are various approaches that can be applied to *English language teaching (ELT)*. In each classroom, there are unique challenges and no two classes are the same.

Instructors who believe they can teach their classes from session to session in exactly the same way ignore the most important aspect of language learning: learning a



language is a developed skill and not merely a culmination of vocabulary, structures, and syntax.

Like those who learn to speak in public or play a sport or a musical instrument, second and foreign language learners learn at various rates because of their past experiences and abilities. Good teachers take these variables and many others into consideration as they craft their lessons to meet individual needs in each of their unique classrooms.

### Types of programs

There are many types of *ESL* (English as a second language) and *EFL* (English as a foreign language) programs for adults throughout the world. Some are described below. Within a program (or even the same class), it is common to find students who come from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds with different learning goals, skills, and experience.

### Intensive English programs (IEP)

Jisong chose to attend an intensive English program because he wanted to study in a university quickly. The international organization *TESOL* says that IEP programs "exist to provide language instruction for those, who, for whatever purpose, need or desire to acquire English in a relatively brief but intense period" (*TESOL's (\*) Intensive English Programs Interest Section, 2005*).

(\*)*TESOL: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages* is an international organization that sets standards, conducts research, and encourages the improvement of English language teaching throughout the world.

There are intensive programs all over the world. The classes in these programs change based on students' needs. They offer *curricula* incorporating the four skills, grammar, and pronunciation, and are often divided into separate classes. They require concentrated practice and study. Some intensive programs are harbored in universities. Others are independent, private institutions.

### Undergraduate programs

Undergraduate programs in places such as Canada and the U.S. that offer English as a second language also divide out the skills and require homework. In addition to taking classes in their major, students whose native language is not English often have to take courses in a university's ESL program. These classes are designed to help these learners perform well academically.

### English for specific purposes (ESP)

The international organization *TESOL* says that ESP programs are "designed to meet the unique English language needs of students and working adults in specific areas of study and employment by providing special training beyond that which is normally acquired by the average English speaker" (*TESOL's English for Specific Purposes Interest Section, 2005*). In other words, ESP classes typically concentrate on specific language used in a particular context (for example, in medicine).

### Adult Education (Adult Ed)

Adult Education programs are generally found in countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia. Instruction consists of helping students improve their overall level of English so that they are able to survive in their new environment.

### Classroom universals

Given the wide range or variety of programs, instructor experience, and student variables, describing a "typical" ESL or EFL classroom becomes quite a difficult task. However, there are a few aspects that should be universal.

- Both the instructor and the students should be actively engaged in the experience.
- The instructor should be aware of students' needs and flexible enough to address those needs in each lesson.
- Students should have opportunities to use or experience the language in a meaningful, realistic, or real-life context.
- There should be a transparent purpose for every activity from the first moment to the end of the class.
- The students should know the teacher as more than an authority, but accept him or her as a facilitator and co-learner.
- The classroom should be a model for future experiences outside of the institution.

### What is a successful teacher?

Let me exemplify by using a fictitious character.

Andrew Thorpe is an instructor in an undergraduate program. He teaches three nights a week and looks forward to every moment he spends with his students.

He prepares carefully, thinking about the individuals in his class. Andrew's classes are always full and students do well and anticipate their class with Mr. Thorpe. There is a long waiting list for Andrew's conversation course. What makes Andrew's class so popular? Why are students so successful in his class?

Andrew's supervisor asks these same questions and takes a special interest in his class. She observes him regularly and arrives to the following conclusions:

1. Andrew is happy to be in class. He loves his students and has a good attitude. He has fun!
2. Andrew listens to the students. He knows them. He knows each of their names and is truly concerned for them and their success. He calls on each student by name during every lesson.
3. Andrew shares his personal experiences with his students and encourages students to do the same.
4. Andrew is well prepared. He has a complete lesson plan that he shares with the students and he puts an agenda on the board every day. Students know what they are doing and where they are going.
5. Everything that Andrew does in the class has a purpose. He makes each lesson meaningful and applicable to students' daily lives. Learners are encouraged to take risks with communication in and out of the classroom.
6. Andrew has certain expectations of the students. They understand why he gives them the work he does. Andrew challenges his students and helps them to understand that they are responsible for their own learning, which means that to the extent that they participate and do the work, they will find success.
7. Students in Andrew's class learn that every form of participation will help them learn. The most important thing that students learn (according to Andrew) is how to learn. The most important thing they gain is confidence in themselves to perform.
8. Andrew keeps current with new methodologies and approaches and doesn't restrict himself to one or another. He selects activities that take into

consideration the learning objective, students' needs and learning styles, and his own teaching style. He uses a variety of activities in each lesson.

9. Andrew carefully assesses student performance every moment of the class. He's a good observer and recognizes when he has to change direction. He is flexible.

The following checklist outlines the roles and responsibilities of a teacher. Which ones describe you?

### THE SUCCESSFUL INSTRUCTOR

- I enjoy teaching.
- I know my students' names and evaluate their needs.
- My students know me and who I am beyond the classroom.
- I have objectives for every class and prepare a well-crafted lesson plan.
- I don't waste my time or my students' time in class with things that are not useful.
- I challenge my students and they know what I expect from them.
- I teach my students the value of participating and taking responsibility for their own learning.
- I teach within a context that is meaningful to the students and can be applied to their own lives.
- I am always learning new ways to teach and I apply what I learn to the classroom.
- I observe my students and assess their performance so I can make adjustments to my lesson plan when needed.

#### The role of the teacher in the classroom

Instructors themselves determine the teacher's role in the classroom. They set the tone and are the initial authority that students look up to. The instructor's personal goals, attitudes, values, and dedication should be highly visible to students. Learners respond to sincerity with sincerity, integrity with integrity, organization with organization, and responsibility with responsibility. In turn, I believe, they respond to negative attributes often with those same negative characteristics.

#### An Introduction to Methods and Approaches

Mr. Solari, the instructor of a large class in an intensive English program, tells his students about his experience getting a traffic ticket one day. He talks to the students about how he spoke to the police officer, shows the class his ticket, and tells them how he was very nervous. The police officer asked him many questions. To clarify and exemplify, Mr. Solari writes the following dialogue on the board:

**Mr. Solari:** Yes, officer, what can I do for you?

**Police Officer:** What is your name, sir?

**Mr. Solari:** Matthew Solari.

**Police Officer:** Were you in a hurry?

**Mr. Solari:** No. Was I speeding?

**Police Officer:** Yes, you were going 20 miles over the speed limit.

**Mr. Solari:** I had no idea.

**Police Officer:** Can you give me your license please, Mr. Solari?

**Mr. Solari:** Sure, here it is.

Mr. Solari acts out the entire scene and then asks another student to do it with him. Then the students practice the dialogue together. Later, Mr. Solari teaches students how to form questions based on what they practiced.

### Language teaching methods

The activity above is an example of the *Direct Method*, first used at the turn of the twentieth century. It reflected a shift from a rigid translation approach where students read literary passages and translated them into English or other languages, and dissected the language into small pieces with no attempt at communication or speaking.

Even though many of the *methods* or *approaches* developed over the years were often designed in reaction to previous ideas, you'll find that the pendulum swings back and forth. Many times, new ideas are the complete opposite of the old ones. At other times, they are very similar.

Some of the recent debates about how to teach language have included:

- whether to teach grammar *inductively*(\*), *deductively* (\*\*), or not at all.
- whether to focus on the language itself or on situations, tasks, and *speech acts*.
- whether students should focus on the mechanics of the language, the purpose of the language, or only the meaning of the language.

(\*)inductive-grammar instruction: an approach to teaching grammar in which the teacher presents examples of the structure in context and lets the students discover and generate the rule(s) themselves.

(\*\*) deductive-grammar instruction: an approach to grammar instruction in which the teacher presents a rule first. Following this instruction, students are given exercises to do that give them practice with the target structure.

### Methods and approaches, then and now

As mentioned earlier, a good number of approaches and methods have been introduced over the last thirty years. To discuss each in its entirety would be a task for a full course on Methodology. For this purpose, I have included brief descriptions of some of the more prominent ones and are listed below.

The first chart gives a short explanation of the methods used in language teaching, starting when they were introduced and ending with the audio-lingual era that became popular around the time of World War II.

After the Audio-lingual Method lost some popularity, a new direction in language teaching became predominant and many approaches (listed in the second chart) were promoted. However, most of the historical methods in the first chart are surprisingly still used today. They are: Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method (also called Berlitz), Reading Approach and Audio-lingual Method.

Mind you, these charts are not intended to be comprehensive. They are intended only as an introduction to different methods.

<b>HISTORICAL ELT METHODS AND APPROACHES</b>	
<b>Method or Approach</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grammar Translation Method  (especially common from the 16th to 20th century, and still used in some places)	No attention is given to listening or speaking skills. Focus is on translating literature.
Direct Method - (still used in Berlitz schools worldwide)	Grammar is taught inductively. <i>Realia</i> is used. Dialogues are used. Everyday vocabulary is introduced. No translation is provided.
Reading Approach	Focus is on translation of texts and reading skills only. Only grammar that is needed is introduced. Vocabulary is given priority.
Audio-lingual Method  (Based on the behaviorist theory)	Language is considered a series of building blocks of vocabulary and structures. Focus is on drilling. Memorization and mimicry are common. Error correction is important. Pronunciation is emphasized. Context is important. Grammar is taught inductively.

The second chart reflects several approaches and methods that have been introduced since the late 1970's. These approaches are diverse and some of them have been used in very specific environments. Only a brief sentence that, I think, best describes the most unique element of the approach or method is included.

<b>RECENT COMMUNICATIVE APPROACHES AND METHODS</b>	
<b>Method or Approach</b>	<b>Description</b>
Natural Approach	Students acquire new vocabulary through different experiences.
Total Physical Response	Students respond to commands (such as "stand up" or "sit down.").
Situational Language Teaching	Sentence patterns are drilled in situations such as "at the bank" or "at the market."
Topic-Driven Approach (sometimes associated with Project-Based Learning)	Students choose a topic and the instructor provides structure and vocabulary.

Cognitive Academic Language Approach	Students learn content related to a specific subject, and in the process they learn the language.
Whole Language Approach	The four skills are integrated together in all activities with no skill given preference. Focus is on meaning and using authentic texts in instruction.
Task-Based Learning	Success in performing a task is emphasized over focus on the language.
Language Experience Approach	Reading and writing skills are taught through personal learner experience.
Silent Way	The instructor is silent most of the time. Focus is on having learners figure out how to use the language on their own with minimal direction from the teacher.
Suggestopedia	The instructor incorporates techniques to reduce student stress and inhibitions while presenting new conversations, language, etc.

### Methodology and Eclecticism

**Maria:** Can you go to the store? We need some things.  
**Edgar:** Yes, I can.  
**Maria:** Can you help me make a list?  
**Edgar:** Sure.  
**Maria:** We need a can of beans, two loaves of bread, and three bottles of water.  
**Edgar:** That's it. We need a can of beans, two loaves of bread, and three bottles of water, right?

Mrs. Pappas, the instructor, asks students to repeat the dialogue above in a *choral drill*. The whole class responds enthusiastically. The instructor livens up the experience with different props or *realia* (\*). She skillfully generates interest in the two characters of the dialogue by referring to the picture of the people and walking around the room acting out the dialogue with different students.

(\*) *realia*: real objects (such as maps, household items) used in the classroom as props.

The presentation continues as she incorporates *backward build-up* (\*) and later *substitution* (\*\*) *drills*. Students are A then B, then B then A, and then A and B. Pronunciation is emphasized and all the students work on the dialogue until they successfully mimic the instructor and finally memorize the exchange.

(\*)backward-build-up drills: a drilling technique in which students learn a phrase or sentence by repeating the last word and then adding to it with one additional word at a time (for example: *things*; *some things*; *need some things*; *We need some things*.)

(\*\*)substitution drills: a drilling technique in which students are prompted to exchange key elements of a phrase or sentence with a different word or structure

#### A historical perspective

In the activity described above, we see that Mrs. Pappas has incorporated the Audio-lingual Method. This particular approach was developed in response to an earlier Reading Approach, which had been developed in response to the Direct Method. The Direct Method had been designed in apposition to the Grammar Translation Method.

Chomsky's transformational generative grammar (1957) eventually began to challenge the idea held by the audio-lingual enthusiasts and *behaviorists* (\*) of the day. They believed that language learning involved putting together a series of discrete items to make a whole. They also felt strongly that memorization and mimicry of language were the teaching strategies which would yield the best results.

(\*)behaviorists: psychologists who accept the notion that observation of human behavior is the only legitimate area to research. Focus is on how humans respond to stimuli, while emotional considerations are not considered.

Chomsky suggested that acquiring a language was a creative process not void of meaning but dependent on it. This new view of *language acquisition* opened the way for a barrage of ideas, approaches and methods, many in protest to the last.

Many methods, at a time, claimed to be the ultimate answer to all language instruction. What this attitude too often failed to take into account, though, was the diversity of student backgrounds, needs, learning styles, cultures, etc. that exists in most second language and foreign English language classrooms.

#### A textbook example

A well-known linguist and researcher once wrote:

"I had the opportunity in the early 1990's to spend a little time with an author of a popular textbook series. His audio-lingual textbooks for adult programs and high schools had started losing their popularity and they would, despite his great enthusiasm and persistence, eventually lose their standing as the main texts in many schools.

Another competing series incorporating a similar methodology was in a fresh and new second edition. It was dazzling educators, taking center stage in an increasingly competitive market. It was time for my friend to write a new edition.

He was asked to adapt the "tried and true" approach he used in his textbooks in order to reflect new more communicative approaches. But my friend resisted. I will never forget his words: "Students learned with my book all through the 80s. It was popular; it worked; students and teachers loved it. Why should I change it?"

Even though I had recently completed my Master's degree in TESOL and was well versed on the seemingly unending approaches and methods of the day, I had to admit that he had a point."

### So, Which approach or method should we use?

Every published method or approach has yielded some positive results by educators somewhere at sometime. Among all the methods are teaching strategies and ideas that can be incorporated into the classroom. These should be tested and tried in individual classroom settings when they best suit the learning experience.

As we stated earlier, the purpose of this description is to help instructors better evaluate their teaching styles and to focus on how they can create a meaningful and successful learning environment for their students.

Because each of us has a bias to one approach or set of ideas, it is not wise (nor is it really possible) to specify which will work best in each class we plan to teach. Rather, I will attempt to stimulate the teacher's own creative thoughts so she/ he can develop a personalized approach to instruction. Therefore, it becomes extremely important to become acquainted with all approaches and methods so that we have a balanced picture of the ideas that are available.

The best teachers are those who are open to new ideas and don't adhere exclusively to one method or another. Eclecticism may be the best way to approach our classrooms. This suggests that we work to meet our students' specific needs by choosing the best approaches for each activity. In doing so, we incorporate all we know into a learning experience that will be most beneficial to our individual students.

### What We've Covered so far.

The description intended to provide teachers so far, with information about the role of the instructor, teaching methodologies, and classroom universals in an ESL or EFL setting.

We've also read about an effective teacher named Andrew Thorpe and looked at a checklist of teacher roles and responsibilities. Andrew, of course, is a fictitious teacher created to illustrate the characteristics of a good instructor. One should not assume that it's necessary to be just like Andrew to be a successful teacher.

The methods and approaches following were presented to help teachers start thinking about what works for them and their students. As mentioned in this last bit, I stressed the need that teachers should strive to find what works for them and to look for ways to be more effective in the classroom.

Ultimately, instructors should take time to reflect on their teaching, asking themselves questions such as:

- In which ways am I already an effective teacher?
- What can I do to strengthen these skills and become a better teacher?

This presentation aims at offering teachers the opportunity to reflect on their current practices, to explore new ideas, and to discuss their thoughts and experiences with others. They should find this presentation beneficial to the extent that they open their minds to new ideas and try them in the classroom. In the last part of this section: Practical Ideas for the Adult EFL Classroom, I've listed specific articles or parts of articles that I think can help generate ideas.



I hope that teachers will try new approaches and strategies with an expectation of success. Remember: someone, somewhere has had success using these and you might eventually experience this as well.

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For the simple reason that it would be impossible, due to lack of space and time, to cover each and all of them, I am just going to mention other inherent topics to Practical Ideas for the Adult EFL Classroom that I think should necessarily be addressed in any ELT professional training course:

Motivation; Long and Short-Term Planning; Classroom Activities; Listening Activities; Speaking Activities; Reading Activities; Writing Activities; Grammar and Pronunciation Activities; Application Activities; Assessment Activities and Reflection.

This next section which I call *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading* aims at helping teachers learn more about the techniques and methods usually used in teaching reading in an ESL or EFL environment. My presentation will try to guide teachers in thinking through key issues that will help them to become a more effective teacher of reading." Teaching reading is perhaps one of the most important things that a teacher of English as a second or foreign language can do.

The development of reading skills in language learning is very important and teachers should be able to identify at least five reasons why teaching reading is essential. Teachers will also be better prepared to explain their students and others why it is worth including reading in a language curriculum."

### **The Importance of Reading - Why strong reading skills matter**

How important is it that language learners gain strong and effective reading skills? Most teachers are probably going to answer that it is very important, correct? But, why? Why do many language teachers believe that reading is the skill that their students need in order to be successful learners? These are important questions that we will consider together. I believe that being a skillful reader is important. Learners who have strong reading skills are able to direct their language learning more effectively. With strong reading skills, learners can read and then talk with others about what they have read. They can also listen to a speaker discuss something they've read about and can understand the person better. When learners have strong reading skills, they have something that they can write about. I do believe that learners' self-confidence increases and that they are willing to take more risks in their learning.

### The role of motivation

We will consider later the role of motivation and reading, but let me just mention here that motivation plays a key role in helping learners to become successful readers.

When learners recognize why they are reading, they are often more interested in and focused on what they have to do. When they understand that reading is an important skill to develop, they are more motivated to become better readers.

### Building bridges to oral communication

Hernandez (2004) conducted a research project titled "Building Bridges to Oral Communication" with learners in Costa Rica. One of her objectives was to determine if using reading as a foundation skill would increase students' active vocabulary and allow them to participate more fluently in oral communication activities.

At the start, Hernandez involved her students in a variety of activities that helped them to prepare for the speaking exercises. She reported that:

- 96% of her students felt that the listening and reading activities increased their active vocabulary.
- students' conversations were richer in content.
- by using readings and explicit strategy instruction, her students became more autonomous learners.

### Conclusions

But, all skills considered, can we say that reading is the most important language skill for learners to master? When you think about it, reading provides learners with material that can be used in conjunction with all of the other skills. For example, when learners have access to meaningful reading content, they can then utilize this to communicate with others. These meaningful conversations will in turn motivate learners to continue reading and using the material in their discussions.

I challenge teachers to talk to a group of learners and to ask them which skill they feel is the most important in helping them develop the other skills. I think you'll find that most of them would say reading is the most important.

### Helping Students See That Reading Is Important

If language learners have strong reading skills, they then have access to meaningful content that can be used in listening, speaking, and writing. But how do you go about it and help your students see that reading is important and can also be enjoyable?

### Students who don't like to read

I have had some learners in my classes who told me that they did not like to read in a foreign language. They often qualified their statement by telling me that they didn't like to read in their first language either.

Take Alexia (\*) for example. She is a high-beginning learner of English as a foreign language. She studied English for five years before enrolling in an intensive English program in my class.

On the first day, she said in an almost blunt and defiant tone of voice, "I don't like reading. I don't even like to read in my first language, and I don't think I'm going to like this class." Alexia didn't realize it at the time, but she had given me a challenge.

I took my time working with Alexia and the other students in class, helping them to see how valuable it was to develop strong reading skills. I didn't want to just talk about the importance of doing this; I wanted my learners to actually experience for themselves the joys of fluent, efficient reading.

(\*) Fictitious character

#### Getting to the problem

Many times, students do not like reading because they have never experienced the pleasure that comes from it. I think it is important to find out what our learners' interests are and to introduce them to books and other texts that relate directly to their interests.

If students like sports or music, for example, then introduce reading activities that allow them to learn more about the lives of their favorite sports heroes or musicians. If they're passionate about cooking and the culinary arts, familiarize them with the concept of restaurant reviews, and so on.

#### "i - 1"

In addition to learning more about students' interests, I think it is a good idea to give them reading material that is just a bit below their language level and to begin reading it with them. I liken the selection of reading material that is just a bit below students' language level to "i - 1." This idea is based on *Krashen's (1981) input hypothesis (i + 1)*.

Krashen's input hypothesis (\*) suggests that you want language instruction to be just above the level at which learners currently are (defined as "i + 1"). You do not want to use very difficult material because this discourages learners. This could be likened to i + 5.

(\*)Krashen's input hypothesis (i + 1): Krashen's input hypothesis suggests that one acquires language by receiving comprehensible input (the "i" in the equation). This input should be easy enough for learners to understand, but should also challenge them (the " + 1" in the equation) without being too difficult.

Likewise, Krashen suggests that learners will not feel stimulated and challenged and therefore, they will not grow and improve in their language development if the material is too easy. This could be likened to i - 5.

At an i - 1 level in reading, though, students will not be overwhelmed by vocabulary and will be able to develop fluency as well as confidence in reading.

#### Suggestions for selecting and using texts

Below are some of the things that you can do to motivate learners to read more.

#### Choose an appropriate text.

Choose something that you know is just a bit below the learners' reading level. Sometimes the reason that students do not like reading is because the only things

that they have been asked to read were so difficult that it was impossible for them to enjoy the material.

#### Read to the class.

One thing that I have done with great success is to read to my students. On many occasions, I've walked into a class with an interesting story and sat and read it to the students. I told the group that all they had to do was listen. When we read with our learners, we can engage in discussion and generate excitement about the material.

#### Don't over test.

Perhaps another reason why some learners do not like reading is that teachers over test them on what they read. In many books and reading curricula, students read a page of material that is then followed by several pages of "reading comprehension tests." It's possible to discourage the development of strong reading skills if we are too anxious to see whether students have understood what they have read.

#### Make reading enjoyable.

I think teachers should feel challenged to make reading enjoyable to students. I will refer to this idea when we discuss *extensive reading* (\*). This provides learners with an opportunity to select material that interests them and to read for pleasure. For now, though, let me just say that while assessment is useful, it's also important to focus on the joy of reading and learning.

(\*)extensive reading: reading longer texts primarily for enjoyment and general understanding.

As learners have positive experiences, they'll see that reading can be very satisfying. I have had students like Alexia approach me at the end of a term and tell me that they believed their first language reading skills had improved because they had developed strong foreign language reading skills.

#### Helping Administrators See That Reading Is Important

It can be difficult to convince people that reading is an important skill to develop. Sometimes the most difficult individual to convince is the program administrator. Some feel that reading is not a productive use of precious classroom time.

I believe that part of the responsibility of a good teacher of reading is to provide administrators with evidence that real learning happens when students have strong reading skills.

Later we will discuss how to teach reading strategies. We will also address the role of lesson planning and selecting appropriate materials. I will try to provide with input that could be useful in helping an administrator understand the importance of teaching reading.

But first, though, let me highlight three additional things that you can do to demonstrate for your program administrator that reading instruction is important.

1. Work on developing reading skills in the classroom. In doing so, we help students to become better readers and to acquire skills that they will be able to transfer to other learning contexts.

2. Encourage learners to track their progress by keeping ongoing reading rate and comprehension logs. Share this information with your administrator. These logs are often the best evidence for teachers and administrators alike that students are making progress and becoming better readers.
3. Identify three or four of your learners who are making significant progress. Have them meet with your administrator. In many language programs around the world, learners are clients who pay money for classroom instruction. If administrators have evidence from the learners themselves, they will see how important it is to continue a reading program.

#### Administrators are supportive

Even though it may be difficult to convince administrators that reading courses are important, I do not want to suggest that they are not concerned with the growth and development of language learners. Many administrators care very much about students' well-being and growth.

As teachers, we should look for opportunities to share with administrators the progress that our learners make when they have developed strong reading skills.

#### What makes a good teacher of reading?

Let me identify four things that you can do to be an effective teacher of reading and to encourage your students to be more actively involved in becoming better readers.

##### 1. Be enthusiastic

I think one of the most important characteristics a teacher of any subject can possess is enthusiasm. Although there are times we may feel overwhelmed by all of the responsibilities that we have as educators, it is still important to be enthusiastic in the classroom. I believe that it should be easy for learners to see in our faces and our actions that we are happy as teachers and are enthusiastic about teaching reading.

##### 2. Be prepared

Prepare yourself by making sure that you know what to do in order to teach reading. It's incorrect to assume that because you can read, you can teach others how to do it. Teachers should take a course or read a book that provides the foundations for the effective teaching of reading. Instructors should then develop their own philosophy for teaching this skill. With a carefully developed philosophy, you will understand and be able to explain why you want your students to do certain activities.

A list of books that you might want to consider as you prepare yourself to be a better teacher of reading, is provided at the end of this section.

##### 3. Read

Be a reader yourself. Make sure that you are taking advantage of good books and sharing with your students what you are learning when you read magazines or newspapers. Often a simple introduction like, "As I was reading the newspaper this morning..." lets learners know that you value staying current on news events and do so by reading.

Another thing that I have done to show my students how much I enjoy reading is to share with them what I am reading in my second language. Currently, this is the "Harry Potter" series in Spanish. I have not read any of the books in English and have used the series as a way of putting myself in the shoes of my learners. I want to

remember what it is like to be asked to read thirty minutes each day in another language. I want to remember the joys of reading and understanding without using a dictionary. I want my students to know that I love to read.

#### 4. Seek improvement

Finally, we should continually seek to improve what we do in the classroom. We should also be attending conferences and sharing with other teachers what we are learning.

The desire to improve is a characteristic that will help you become a better teacher of reading. I have heard many students say that they know that a teacher is using the same materials in the class they are taking that a sibling or friend took a few years earlier. We need to look for opportunities to build on what we've taught. We should also try to vary our instruction to meet the needs of the class we are currently teaching.

I have listed three resources in the bibliography at the end of this chapter that you might find particularly helpful as you seek to improve yourself as a teacher of reading.

- Aebersold and Field (1997) help us understand that simply being a reader does not mean that we are qualified to teach reading. They provide explicit suggestions for how to teach learners to engage in meaningful reading.
- Anderson (1999) outlines an approach to reading based on the acronym ACTIVE. This approach integrates six elements to help teachers improve reading instruction.
- Grabe and Stoller (2002) help us see the connections between reading and research so that we can make informed decisions about what we do in the classroom.

#### How do I establish reading as the core skill?

If you believe that reading is an important skill to develop, it is *your* responsibility to place reading at the core of what you do as a teacher.

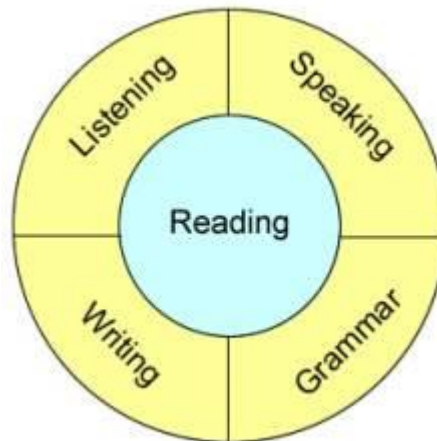
Perhaps you teach in a program that is not divided into separate language skills like listening/speaking, reading, writing, and grammar. Maybe you are in an integrated-skills program where you work on the development of all of the skills at the same time. Even within this instructional setting, you can make reading the core skill.

#### Placing reading at the core of instruction

We looked briefly at research that Hernandez did in Costa Rica. She found that by using reading as the core skill that she was able to help learners build bridges to stronger oral communication skills.

After I learned more about how to better approach the teaching of reading, I like to visualize it as below. This approach invites us to see how reading can stimulate the growth and development of each of the other language skills.

Figure 1. Placing reading at the core of instruction



#### Applying the concept

Review the material that you have in your curriculum and select appropriate material that students can read. Next, place the readings at the center of your lesson planning and identify the skills that naturally emerge from the reading passages. For example, pull out relevant grammar points that learners can be explicitly taught. In this way, you have placed reading at the core. Everything that you are doing in the lesson builds from the reading and leads naturally into the other skills.

A resource that may help you as you continue to think about how to place reading at the core of your curriculum is the third edition of Stephen Wilhoit's text, *A Brief Guide to Writing from Readings*. The text focuses on improving writing skills but uses readings as the foundation for the writing.

Reading really does provide a window to other learning opportunities. When reading is the core skill in our planning for classroom instruction, we can help learners gain knowledge and skills that will last well beyond the class we are currently teaching.

In this part, I have addressed the importance of reading in English language teaching. We looked at ways that you can explain to students and administrators what makes reading development so valuable. We also examined steps that you can take to become a more effective reading teacher. And finally, we explored how making reading the core skill in a curriculum can help students improve their reading skills and develop strong abilities in other learning contexts.

#### Where do I get more information on Teaching Reading?

The following are suggested to teachers who are interested in placing reading at the core of instruction as Follow-up Reading:

Aebersold, J. A., & Field, M. L. (1997). *From reader to reading teacher: Issues and strategies for second language classroom*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Anderson, N. J. (1999). *Exploring second language reading: Issues and strategies*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

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We talked about placing reading at the core of instruction. An excellent exercise for teachers to verify what we have been discussing, is to select a reading passage that you could use with a group of learners and answer the questions below.

- As you go through the reading passage, which skills (listening, speaking, writing, grammar) naturally emerge from the text?
- How could you use the reading to introduce these other skills?

Other relevant topics/ issues on *Teaching ESL/ EFL Reading* to be covered on any ELT Professional Development Course: The Role of Motivation in Reading/ The Foundations of L1 and L2 Reading/ The Need for Intensive Reading/ The Need for Extensive Reading/ The Role of Vocabulary in Reading/ The Value of Teaching Comprehension Skills/ The Importance of Reading Rate/ The Need for Teaching Reading Strategies/ The Role of Lesson Planning/ The Need to Select Appropriate Materials/ The Role of Testing Reading Skills.

The purpose of this final part, *Teaching Lexically*, aims to change the way teachers think about language and to help them put new insights to practical use in your classroom. I do hope they will come to see the relationship between grammar and vocabulary in a new light and will be suggesting ways in which they can develop how they teach language and skills, deal with speaking in class and handle correction.

By doing so they will gain a general understanding of what it means to teach lexically. We will explore core ideas such as *collocation*, *colligation* and *fixed expressions*. We will also try to get an introduction to the role of grammar within lexical teaching."

What is difficult about learning languages? What is the most difficult language to learn? Many people would probably cite languages like German or Japanese because of difficulties with grammar and/or the alphabet and written forms. Other people might point to the difficulty of pronunciation. These kinds of difficulties are the focus of most second or foreign language courses, which organize themselves around the gradual introduction and practice of grammar and vocabulary building.

Over the years, the methods of teaching the syllabus of grammar plus single words have changed considerably. In the past, we would say that much was done through translation or through listening and repeating. More recently, communicative techniques have come to the foreground. However, what has remained dominant is the view of language and the idea that we need to learn grammar rules and then add in words.



### Why is Teaching lexically important?

When you teach lexically, you stop thinking about grammar and words being separated entities. As we will see later, you can use many different methods to teach lexically (translation, repetitive drills, dictation, speaking tasks and role plays) but the content of the course and the way you present and explain language to students needs to change.

So what do we mean when we say you should stop thinking about grammar and words as being separate? To explain that, I am going to try to work through a number of questions and problems.

### Question 1. What does grammar mean? What are we teaching when we teach tenses?

We shall see as we work through these examples that much grammar actually has no logical explanation. Things are often the way they are because that's the way we say them. Why do we follow *want* with *to do* and not *doing*? Because we do!

However, just consider for a moment those aspects of grammar which may be a matter of choice and which do indeed carry meaning - for example, tenses. What actual meaning do they carry?

- Perfect tenses essentially have the meaning of 'before' (before now, the present perfect), before another time in the past (the past perfect), before a point of time in the future (the future perfect, will have + past participle)
- Continuous tenses essentially signify that something is or was unfinished/ going on (either now or at another point in time)
- Past forms tend to show something is either in the past or is impossible or, in certain circumstances, to show you're being polite

Now consider how much time teachers spend teaching those tenses relative to their worth in terms of meaning. We certainly wouldn't consider spending so much time teaching the words 'before' 'unfinished' or 'past'.

Central to teaching lexically is the saying/ adage: 'With words and no grammar you can say a little, but with grammar and no words you can say nothing at all!'

### Question 2. What is the most difficult language for babies to learn?

The answer is of course that all languages are *equally* difficult or easy. Irrespective of the relative grammatical or phonological difficulty of a language, children learn their mother tongue at the same rate. The immediate implication is that children cannot start from grammar rules as a way of learning a language.

### Question 3. How do children learn the irregularities of grammar?

English-speaking children tend to start speaking by using *go* and its past form *went* correctly. However, they might later enter a phase where they will often generalize a rule for forming past tenses and start saying things like *goed* and *putted*. The implication is that children must learn *go* and *went* as separate words within typical expressions. Furthermore, they intuitively reject the 'rule' in favour of the way they hear language used.

Question 4. Which sentence is wrong in the following exchanges? Why?

A: Do you want to go to that Thai restaurant in town?

B: Sure. I've been wanting to go there for ages.

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A: Do you fancy going to that Thai restaurant in town?

B: Sure. I've been fancying going there for ages.

The final sentence in the second exchange is obviously incorrect. For those who have only learned language through grammar rules, it may come as a surprise that this is the only incorrect sentence. Surely *want* can't be used in a continuous form! But, of course, it can and is. So why then can't *fancy*? The answer is that there is no reason. We just don't use *fancy* in this way. The implication is that grammar rules are not as generative as we would like to think. What is 'correct' grammar depends on the words we are using in their particular context. (This tendency of words to go with particular bits of grammar is sometimes called *colligation*.)

Question 5. Why can we say the economy has **grown**, but not that it has **increased**?

It is quite possible that in some languages the words *grow* and *increase* have the same translation. There is no reason why one is preferred over the other in this case - it just is. There are countless examples of these 'marriages' of words.

- We *watch* TV rather than *see* TV.
- We have *straight hair* and draw a *straight line*.
- We say it's *absolutely boiling*, *really boiling* or *very hot*, but we don't say it's *very boiling* or *absolutely hot* - though *really hot* is OK!

These combinations of words are called *collocations* and there are no rules to govern why certain words *collocate* and others don't. That's the way we generally hear them. And that's how they need to be learned.

Question 6. How is it possible for us to finish each other's sentences?

This may be an annoying habit and perhaps one that we shouldn't encourage! However, the fact that we can finish someone's sentence correctly points to the fact that there are many fixed, predictable chunks of language that we store.

Indeed, this is how many fill in the gap exercises and exams work. If you gave a native speaker a Cambridge First Certificate exam, for example, they would probably be able to complete 80% of the multiple choice exercises without looking at the choices given - simply because they know and can recall the whole strings of words. These strings of language such as *It's up to you*, *Better late than never*, *I'll give you a hand if you like*, *It comes in handy* and so on are sometimes described as *chunks*. They're also called *fixed* and *semi-fixed expressions*.

Teaching Lexically: Putting It Together

What I hope many teachers realize through these examples is that just as we generally don't learn grammar from rules, we don't construct a great many sentences by building from a single word. You can observe this yourself by noticing how language is used.

During the 1980's corpus linguistics provided some further insights into the way grammar and vocabulary are interdependent. Corpora are essentially large banks of 'used' language. Texts from books, TV and radio programmes, films, newspapers, lectures, meetings and casual conversation are transcribed and fed into a computer. Software then analyses all this language.

Corpora have revealed two important things:

- 1) Written and spoken language are often quite distinct, making use of different vocabulary and structures.
- 2) 80% or so of spoken language is made up of just 3000 words, but these words are combined in tens of thousands of collocations and chunks that we use over and over again.

These chunks are not simply idioms, such as *He smokes like a chimney*, but are more often semi-fixed expressions such as *I haven't seen you for ages* or *Long time no see*. This also makes sense in terms of the first language learning that we mentioned earlier in Question #3. Children can learn chunks in context as 'words' irrespective of the difficulty of the grammar. It also makes sense in terms of how fluent speakers behave. They cannot always be creating new sentences just from scratch. It would simply take too long!

#### What Teaching Lexically Means to Us

For us, teachers, teaching lexically should mean:

- Putting collocation and chunks and typical examples of grammar as the main focus of teaching and learning rather than rules and their application.
- Noticing how language is used in texts and the chunks and collocations classroom texts contains.
- Noticing and thinking about how you use language yourself whether you are a native or non-native speaker teacher.
- If asked a question about a word or structure, giving the most probable examples of usage (in chunks or sentences or dialogues) rather than merely possible examples to illustrate a rule. To get to that, you need to think of *when* you would say an expression, *why* you would say it and *who* you would say it to.

The next topic should be to continue to look at the lexical approach and dive into the practical uses of it in the classroom.

An interesting assignment for teachers to exercise reflective teaching.

Look at one or two different elementary level course-books and the way they deal with these two areas of vocabulary and grammar: the parts of the body and the past simple. Then think about these questions:

1. Is the vocabulary taught as single words or within sentences?
2. Are there any examples of substitution tables in the book? How probable are each of the forms (I, you, he, she, etc. / negatives / questions)?
3. How probable are the examples that are given in any practice exercises on the vocabulary or grammar? Ask yourself when you might say them, why you would say them and to whom.
4. If any of the examples are fairly unlikely, can you think of examples that you would be more likely to say?

You could also analyze other areas of vocabulary or grammar at other levels in a similar way.

Other necessary topics to be considered in regard to *Teaching Lexically* :

Noticing Language/ Teaching Vocabulary/ Teaching Grammar/ Speaking Tasks/ Correction/ Using Reading Texts in Class/ Using Listeners in Class/ Pronunciation/ Teaching Writing/ Taking Revision and Recycling Seriously/ Teaching Lexically and the Non-native-speaker Teacher.

Finally, I would like to give a close look at what is going on in today's world with regard to the teaching of social skills and a proper set of principles/ values in learning environments and the development of alternative instructional strategies to achieve such goals.

Although most researchers and practitioners have focused on methods, approaches, strategies and techniques to improve the language development of English students, very little has been said or done about the need of developing instructional strategies to help teachers improve the teaching of social skills and values to our students.

Why is there such a need?

We could write entire books on the subject so as to give enough foundations to justify the need of teaching both appropriate social skills and values to our young ones - in whichever educational setting - to promote adequate social insertion. I definitely support the idea that students will become more successful citizens by adequately learning the required skills for social lubrication and interaction. Let us mention some of the relevant researches and studies written so far on the subject:

- Socially Responsible Teaching: Professor H. Douglas Brown of San Francisco State University, California, July 2001, in his article "TESOLers for Social Responsibility: Guidelines for your Classroom" declares what he considers are our Social Responsibilities to be included in our teaching:
  - A. Teachers are responsible for creating an atmosphere of respect for each other's opinions, beliefs, and cultural diversity ( I see your point, but ... ) Opinions can be expressed freely. All ideas are welcomed.
  - B. Teachers are responsible for giving Ss opportunities to learn about important social/ moral and ethical issues and to analyze all.

- C. Teachers are responsible for creating sides of an issue, therefore enabling Ss to make informed decisions and think for themselves and authentic social environment to prepare Ss for the outside world.
- D. Teachers are responsible for helping Ss to take responsibility for their own learning, and their own empowerment.
- E. Teachers are responsible for facilitating full, active, collaborative classroom participation.

Why is Social Responsible teaching necessary? Because the concept of Critical Language Pedagogy - as proposed by Douglas Brown and others - challenges teachers to engage students in critical thinking on controversial issues. Based on the fact that in recent years the English-Teaching-Language profession has witnessed a stark increase in the number of articles, chapter, books, and presentations on the critical nature of language pedagogy, Brown warns us about the fact that language teachers are told, for instance, that they should “embody in their teaching a vision of a better and more humane life” (Giroux & McLaren, 1989, p. xiii). “The crucial issue here,” as Pennycook stated in 1999, “is to turn classrooms into place where the accepted canons of knowledge can be challenged and questioned” (p. 298; see also Pennycook, 1999; Edge, 2003).

This call for teachers to act as agents for change is not new. More than thirty years ago, Postman and Weingartner (1969) shook to the grounds some educational foundations with their best seller, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. It is ironic to see that more than 35 years later social, political, and communications systems around the world are still by and large the voices of bureaucracy and political and economic status quo. Brown suggests that we language teachers should take up such issues in our teaching:

1. To subvert the assumption that language teaching is neutral, sterile, and inorganic.
2. To subvert the assumption that language teaching has nothing to do with politics and power.
3. To subvert the assumption that we teachers should avoid sensitive topics or touchy issues in the classroom, touchy issues like global planetary stewardship, war, violence, and homosexuality, touchy issues like hate, prejudice, and discrimination.

Critical language pedagogy holds that learners of the English language must be free to be themselves, to think for themselves, to behave intellectually without coercion from a powerful elite (Clarke, 1990, 2003), and to cherish their beliefs, traditions and cultures without the threat of forced change (Edge, 1996).

- Teaching Social Skills & Competence: Researchers have found links between children’s social deficits and delinquency, school drop out, and substance abuse in adolescence (Greene et al. 1999, Parker & Asher, 1987) and mental health problems in adulthood (Cowen, Pederson, Babigian, Izzo & Trost, 1973; Strain & Odom, 1986). Guralnick (1990) defined social competence as “the ability of young children to successfully and appropriately select and carry on their interpersonal goals” (p. 4) Howes and Matheson (1992) defined children’s social competence with peers as behaviour and cognition that reflect successfully social functioning with peers. According to this researchers, a critical period for social development (and that of values and principles) is the 6 to 8 age span (Dodge, Jablon, & Bickart, 1994; Flavell, 1977) We need to be well aware that children at this age start developing friendships, a sense of belonging and they feel as though they are fitting in at school, thus motivating to learn social skills to be seen and

accepted as equals among peers (Mc Cay & Keyes, 2001/ 2002). They are motivated to pursue goals and feel a sense of accomplishment. Furthermore, in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) suggestions are made that learning is a social process and that (successful learning of) social interaction is important for cognitive development. Vygotsky viewed human beings as meaning-makers. Mahn (1999) stated that Vygotsky believed that a child co-constructs meaning through social interaction. Vygotsky insisted that a child's development is influenced by the social and cultural activities the child experiences and in which he or she grows up.

An individual achieves his or her actual level of development through independent problem solving; however, he or she will need guidance or collaboration from an adult or a more capable peer to reach the potential level of development. This concept, no doubt, underlines the interdependence between individuals and the social processes in co-constructing knowledge (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Interactions with other children and with adults are definitely the primary vehicles children have developed for learning about the world around them.

In early childhood education, ever since Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), founder of the kindergarten, social play is viewed as a means to foster and enhance language and cognitive, social, and emotional development (Ivory & McCollum, 1999). This is true for all children, regardless of their development level or their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Play is then, an essential ingredient in early childhood programs, and it enhances every aspect of child development (Berk, 1999). Since the 1960s, development theories of Piaget, Bruner, Dewey, and Erikson have become popular worldwide.

Peer acceptance is a powerful predictor of current and later psychological adjustment. Research and studies show that social behavior plays a critical role in causing a child to be liked or rejected (Berk, 1999). For instance, popular children have very positive social skills, they communicate with their peers in sensitive, friendly, understanding, and cooperative ways and are appropriately assertive. On the other hand, rejected children display a wide range of negative social behaviors. Social play and peer imitation are thought to be basic development processes to facilitate learning social skills.

CWPT (Classwide Peer Tutoring), a peer mediated teaching approach is a fantastic way to evaluate social interaction behavior and promote the learning of social skills. CWPT is a specific form of peer-mediated instruction that encourages children to learn from each other, facilitated and supported by the teacher. CWPT was originally developed to improve the academic performance of children from low socioeconomic, culturally diverse backgrounds in the United States. In the past 20 years, CWPT has been widely used in general and special education settings. It has worked well for children from diverse backgrounds and different developmental levels.

Unlike other forms of peer tutoring that typically involve an older or more capable tutor for a younger or less capable tutee, CWPT involves reciprocal tutor-tutee pairs in the same classroom or age group. During the CWPT process, every child has an equal chance to be a tutor and a tutee. The process involves procedures such as the following: selecting instructional content and materials, pairing all students into tutor-tutee partners, regularly changing tutor-tutee partners, immediately correcting errors and giving points contingent upon

performance, arranging the whole class into two teams competing for higher total points, posting individual and team scores and socially rewarding the winning team (Greenwood, Delquadri & Carta, 1988)

Areas covered by CWPT included reading, assorted other language abilities, and mathematics (Chun & Winter, 1999) Unfortunately very few empirical studies have been done in general education settings on the relationship between CWPT and social interaction. Most studies, adoption and implementation have been carried out in ESL acquisition educational settings.

Kreimeyer & colleagues (1991) developed what they called the **Social Interaction Observation System (SIOS)**, which I am briefly going to refer to. They designed 15 social interaction behaviors to observe, that might occur during free play time (child initiated activities) in classroom environments. These (behaviors) are divided into positive, passive, and negative.

The positive ones are:

- Child engages in positive interaction with peers.
- Child engages in association and/ or cooperative play.
- Child engages in positive linguistic interaction.
- Peer(s) initiate interaction toward child.
- Child responds positively to peer initiation.
- Child initiates interaction toward peer(s).
- Peer responds positively to child's initiation.

The passive ones are:

- Child engages in a nonplay behavior.
- Child engages in a solitary play.
- Child engages in parallel play.
- Child makes no response to peer initiation.
- Peer make no response to child initiation.

The negative behaviors are:

- Child directs negative behaviors toward peer(s).
  - Child responds negatively to peer initiation.
  - Peer(s) responds negatively to child's initiation.
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- **Resiliency in Schools:** Resiliency is the ability to spring back from and successfully adapt to adversity. An increasing body of research from the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and sociology is showing that most people - including young people - can bounce back from risks, stress, crises and trauma and experience life success. Social scientists who study human behavior have coined the term Resiliency to describe three types of phenomena: 1) The positive outcome observed in children who live in high risk contexts, such as chronic poverty or parental drug addiction; 2) The keeping of personal capacities in conditions of long-term stress - during marriage breakage of parents - for instance; and 3) The capacity of recovering of trauma, particularly from the horror of civil wars and death camps. In all such situations researchers identified a common core of individual predisposition and support resources in big families and community that seem to transcend ethnical, geographical and social frontiers. Teachers and school were among the protective factors frequently detected in children in the Kauai's study, who managed to

overcome from multiple scenarios of poverty, perinatal stress, parental psychopathology and family dysfunction (Werner & Smith, 1992).

From primary to secondary and (college) tertiary education resilient children found a favorite educator that turned out to be a positive role model for them. Most longitudinal studies of resilient children show that they like school, whatever level - preschool, primary or secondary - and they turn it into “a home outside their home” - a shelter to their family dysfunctional setting.

Resiliency comes from a child's external and internal resources. Their external resources consist of what they have. Their internal resources consist of who they are and what they can do.

A child has:

- People that they trust.
- Structures and boundaries for their safety.
- People who set examples of how to behave. These are called role models.
- Encouragement to do things on their own. This is called being autonomous.
- Access to health, education, and social welfare services.

A child has a sense of who they are from how they are treated by other people. A child is more likely to be resilient if they:

- See themselves as lovable and appealing.
- Are able to do kind things for others and show concern.
- Are proud of themselves.
- Are able to take responsibility for what they do.
- Are filled with hope, faith and trust.

A child is more likely to be resilient if they can:

- Communicate.
- Solve problems.
- Manage feelings and impulses.
- Understand how other people are feeling.
- Establish trusting relationships.

Steps can be taken which actively build a child's resiliency. This is done by nurturing the internal and increasing the external resources available to them. This may involve:

- Providing a safe, nurturing environment.
- Spending time listening to and playing with the child.
- Teaching a child how to communicate.
- Allowing a child to make mistakes.
- Involving the child in day to day activities and routines.
- Praying with the child.
- Trusting and valuing the child.
- Using experiential learning in schools.

The key places where children and young people develop resiliency are in the family and at school.



The challenge here is to start a defined and thorough study on how to adopt and implement Social Responsible teaching, CWPT teaching approach and a Resilient Education throughout the nation's critical infrastructure. These cannot be expected to evolve in a loosely environment. They must be holistically specified, designed, implemented, and tested if they are to operate successfully.

We need to go no further than the nearest classroom in our area, in either the public or private educational system, to find students already bitten by life, students who already know they are nobody. But luckily one teacher can make a difference in students' lives. Incidentally it is that one teacher that can help those students feel that they are somebody.

Orlando Rodriguez.  
[orlandor@adinet.com.uy](mailto:orlandor@adinet.com.uy)