ELTWeekly

India's first weekly ELT eNewsletter

Volume II, Issue#52

PUBLISHERS

TARUN PATEL   BHASKAR PANDYA   KAUSHAL KOTADIA   RAJESH BHARVAD

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Dialogue dictations as communicative activities: A four skills task

By **David Ockert**

Quick Guide

Key words: group work, large group, dialogue, dictation, four-skills

Learner English level: All

Learner maturity level: All

Preparation time: 10-15 minutes

Activity time: Depends on number of students and materials

Materials: Print of a reading text or passage

Introduction

This activity works great with large groups because it requires the use of all four language skills in an exciting, interactive, and low-pressure competition. Furthermore, this activity works great with managing large groups of false-beginners (Norris, 1993). Research shows that Japanese learners of English like to work in groups (Ockert, 2005), but may have feelings toward the efficacy of the task that may differ from the teacher's (Burden, 2005). However, recent research shows that male students of specific majors prefer moving about the classroom while completing tasks (Ockert, 2006). This task works best in a classroom where tables and chairs can be moved.

Preparation

Step 1: Choose a short reading text, one that preferably works as a review lesson before a quiz, as this activity recycles vocabulary, grammar, reading, and listening skills.

Step 2: Since students will be working in groups of three or four, create enough copies so that each group gets one copy of the chosen text.

Procedure

Step 1: Divide your class into teams of three. Each group should consist of one reader/speaker (RS), a listener/speaker (LS), and a listener/writer (LW). If it is not possible to have exactly three students per team, double up the LW role.

Step 2: Review phrases necessary to carry out the activity. For example:

How do you spell that?

What does that mean?

Would you say that again?

Huh?!

Slow down.

You're talking too fast.

Step 3: Instruct all of the teams to stand up and arrange the room to have the same number of desks and chairs along opposite walls, as there are teams. For example, if there are nine teams, there should be nine desks and chairs on one side of the room and nine desks and chairs on the opposite side.

Step 4: Have the students position themselves around the room as follows: The RS sits at a desk, the LW sits at an opposite desk, and the LS waits in the center of the room between them.

Step 5: Have all of the LWs get a piece of paper, an eraser, and a pen or pencil.

Step 6: Distribute the reading print to the RSs and assign each team a different part of the text. This prevents each team from working on the same material.

Step 7: Explain and demonstrate what the activity involves: It is the LSs' job to listen to the RS, and as quickly as possible get to the other side of the room and repeat what he remembers to the LWs, taking as many turns as necessary to complete the task. Remind the students that the LS may not read the material that the RS reads from. It is the task of the RS

to read clearly so as to be understood, and the task of the LS to remember and repeat to the LW as accurately as possible. Any communication problems must be worked out at the place where it occurs. For example, the LWs cannot communicate directly with the RS if they do not understand; instead, they must work with the LS (and yes, they will shout across the room, especially if they see their classmates progressing more quickly). The goal of the task is for the LWs to complete the process of getting an accurate transcription of the original text.

Step 8: Once all of the teams have transcribed their section of the text, it is time to change roles: the LS become the RS, and the RS changes places with the LW.

Step 9: After the roles have been rotated, assign each team a new part of the text to transcribe.

Step 10: Repeat the activity as described in Step 7.

Step 11: Continue rotating group roles and sections of the text until each group has had a chance to transcribe it completely. For larger classes that require more than one student in the LW role, continue changing as often as necessary to complete the activity.

Conclusion

By taking advantage of students' natural desire to be active and intellectually engaged human beings, this activity harnesses that innate energy and directs it toward a clear goal utilizing solid pedagogical foundations: the four skills, pragmatic speech acts, fluency, pronunciation, a bit of time pressure in which to express themselves, and a boisterous "real world" atmosphere. It works great with large groups because it helps manage the students in a goal-oriented activity that uses all four-language skills in an exciting, interactive, and low-pressure competition. Give it a try; your students will love it!

Author Bio

David Ockert was born in Michigan, USA. He has a dual-major BA in Political Theory and Constitutional Democracy (PTCD) and East Asian Studies (Japanese) from James Madison College, Michigan State University, and a MEd in Curriculum, Instruction & Technology in Education from Temple University. He is the author of An Introduction to Academic Writing (ISBN 4-9902048-4-0) and An Introduction to PowerPoint Presentations (ISBN 978-4-9902048-5-3) and several journal articles. His research interests range from student

motivation, motivational orientations, learning strategies, and their relationships between specific classroom activities, either traditional or communicative task-based, to educational system development. He can be contacted at davidockert1@gmail.com.

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Video: Cambridge IGCSE English: An Experiment in eAssessment

University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) explores new technology to assess speaking and listening abilities for Cambridge.

Watch the video at http://eltweekly.com/more/2010/03/52-video-cambridge-igcse-english-an-experiment-in-eassessment/

Research Paper: Application of Web Resources for English Language & Literature Teaching

By **Dr.R.Gandhi Subramanian**, Reader (Retired), Postgraduate & Research Department of English, Government Arts College (Autonomous), Coimbatore-641018.

This paper intends to present a discussion on ways to apply web resources for effective teaching of English Language and Literature; how far the multimedia resources are used in our colleges and universities; suggestions to improve teaching of English Language and Literature by using multimedia as an innovative tool and also some of the problems encountered while introducing multimedia as a tool for imparting education.

Multimedia uses combinations of text, graphics, sound, video and animation controlled, coordinated, and delivered on the computer screen. Multimedia encourages inter-activity involving the user to get actively engaged in the presentation of information but not to remain a passive observer.

Multimedia affords communication of information in a more effective way and it becomes an efficient, useful and result oriented medium for delivering instruction. The learner uses shorter learning time and retains information effortlessly. "Multimedia, defined, is the combination of various digital media types such as text, images, sound and video, into an integrated multi-sensory interactive application or presentation to convey a message or information to an audience." (Agnew, Kellerman & Meyer, 1996).The conventional system uses the (text) book as the basic material evolving gradual improvement and addition of structures and contents. This does not offer much scope for student participation and involvement and results in the same dull lectures repeated year after year without any addition or improvement, whereas in teaching/learning with multimedia, the printed text takes the back seat allowing the audio/video materials to play a major role. Multimedia instruction encourages need based changing of the content structure and allows self-paced and interactive exposition a realistic and distinct possibility. Multimedia data-base uses whatever comes handy with a rich variety of audio visual content enriching the subject by making it an experience alive and immediate. In this connection it is important to realize

that a change in the mind set of teachers and authorities is a must where they will be willing to experiment with multimedia methodology of teaching with a view to making the process of teaching/learning a pleasant experience for the stake holders. They must also have a critical ability to analyze and decide what is best for our students in a given environment.

Though Internet has been used by teachers for nearly forty years, one has to realize that multimedia and Internet are merely tools and as such they cannot replace the teacher; they cannot interact with the teacher/learner and by themselves they cannot add to the process of teaching/learning experience. H.Gardner states:

> The new technologies make the materials vivid, easy to access, and fun to use, and they readily address the multiple ways of knowing that humans possess… Clearly a marriage of education and technology could be consummated. But it will only be a happy marriage if those charged with education remain clear on what they want to achieve for our children and vigilant that the technology serves these ends.

Hence it is obvious that flexible, easy-to-adopt methods of delivery be devised by the teachers making use of multimedia an experience of enthusiastic involvement for the learners. The learners develop a liking for learning through multimedia since there is an active participation and involvement for them. It is a fact that "the teaching presentation, topics and texts have been well received by students", states Lloyd Davis in "Teaching Literature through Flexible Learning". In course of time even the slow learners give up their hesitation and naturally join with the mainstream. Multimedia products (BBC packages on Shakespeare and the like) remain limited in the sense that they can be consulted and searched but not reworked by the students. Such packages offer authoritative view points and answers but do not encourage critical questions. Internet on the other hand may not provide answers to a set of questions but provide connections to information, images and details. An innovative and imaginative team of teachers/learners can play an important role for making application of multimedia and Internet an exciting tool in English Language and Literature teaching. The team consisting of students, guided by the teacher will have the advantage of using Internet for collecting the relevant materials for their project, do research, exchange notes and also evaluate each other's work as their project progresses.

The anonymity of individual students and different groups involved with the same project can also be maintained. Internet and the multiple formats communicated over the World Wide Web offer several new and exciting avenues to present and share information. The scope automatically increases for student participation and teacher-learner interaction. Use of multimedia enables information to be shared/conveyed quickly to all concerned and sustains their interest for learning. Multimedia can keep the team focused and alert to the project on hand. Computer oriented multimedia can help the technical, analytical and research skills of the learners and recording the input of the learner provides a method to evaluate the individual learners scientifically and objectively. This evaluation can be initially started by the teacher and in course of time the teacher assumes the role of a coordinator allowing the learners to make objective assessment of individual's and the teams' contribution for the development of the project. Multimedia tools can consist of print and non-print media texts such as the books, magazines, journals and news papers on one hand and audio/video tapes and equipments, films and filmstrips, news films and the like on the other. After the team acquires a certain level of efficiency the programmes recorded by the team can become the source material for succeeding batches of students and in course of time it becomes a reality that the Department (of English) has its own multimedia library which can be used by the other departments as well.

Language Laboratories equipped with computers and multimedia have become a reality in universities, colleges and even in schools. To have a Language Laboratory is a mandatory requirement in the Engineering Universities in Tamilnadu. Arts and Science colleges have commenced the process of establishing Language Laboratories in their institutions to help the non-English medium students from the rural areas. With Language Laboratories becoming a part of the Language learning environment, it would be better for the teachers/learners to familiarize themselves with certain common terms used:

Hypertext is a text providing a network of links to other texts 'outside, beyond and above itself', making possible a dynamic organization of information through links and connections. It involves multisequential and multilinear writing.

E-Book being the shortened form for Electronic Book is a conventional book available in the digital media.

E-Mail is mail sent/received using electronic media and Internet.

Power Point Presentation is a presentation technique to attract the audio-visual attention of the audience.

They should be aware and capable of using Internet, E-mail and connected facilities. It would be useful if they can handle audio and video recording equipments.

Use of multimedia for effective teaching of English Language: By using multimedia the basic language skills such as listening, reading, comprehension and writing can be nurtured. An audio tape or CD played with 'surround sound' will have a telling effect on improving skills of listening and comprehension. A video cassette or Digital Video Disc (by also involving the sense of sight) will have an added impact in improving the skill sets of the learners. Incidentally they learn proper pronunciation and stress as well. Children of pre KG classes grasping the nursery rhymes quickly and more easily when exposed to the use of audio/video cassettes/ discs comes to our mind as an obvious example.

Vocabulary of the learner can be increased by a simple device capable of flashing words on a screen. Each word is flashed on the screen for ten seconds and the students are asked to write sentences using the word. A maximum of ten words can be flashed during a session and incidentally the students improve their vocabulary quickly and the increase in vocabulary levels is retained by the learner for a longer time.

This can be further modified to suit the students' requirement. A small picture depicting a scene will kindle the creative instincts. It will be an interesting observation for the teacher to note that each of the students has come out with an individual and sometimes even a unique reaction/story of his/her own. Such methods of teaching help the students to face interviews with confidence and react properly in a real situation. The purpose of teaching vocabulary, writing sentences, completing a short story, report and dialogue writing and the like as a part of the language skills to be learnt by the students will also be fulfilled. An innovative group can develop dialogue writing into a group discussion. By making use of simple multimedia instruments such as microphones, assigning different roles to students and the teacher many dialogue writing situations will not remain dull and lifeless on paper but will be transformed into situations throbbing with life, excitement and reality. Allowing a group discussion on similar lines will make even the shy and hesitant to come forward to present their view points overcoming their initial passivity. As a group the students are exposed to learning multimedia technology, project planning and execution, stages of development of the project, experiments/observations/field trials made during the project and these leading to reliable data based results being ably and effectively presented with

multimedia tools. With whole-hearted and active involvement of the learners, the language classes get transformed from uninspiring and boring lectures into a place throbbing with life, learning with enthusiasm and bubbling with youthful activity. The opportunity kindles the latent Leadership Qualities and nurtures able and well-informed leaders. A more resourceful team can attempt video graphing the dialogues and group discussions and the recorded material can becomes an indigenously made resource material for future students. Mock interviews prepare the students to face their future interviewers with a positive mind set. Teaching language with multimedia can go beyond the classroom when students practice as debaters and public speakers what they had learnt earlier in the classroom. Debates can also be modified as mock Assembly/Parliament sessions, making it a training ground for future parliamentarians and also enlarging the expectations for their elected representatives by the public. Extra curricular and co-curricular activities such as NCC, NSS, Rotaract and Leo clubs and the like are society oriented. The multimedia exposure of the students combined with their youthful enthusiasm will result in educational programmes such as Adult Literacy, AIDS awareness, Basic Health and Hygiene, Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and many more reach the masses more easily through a more attractive medium.

Teaching with multimedia provides a realistic approach to learning, leads to lateral thinking and multi-dimensional approach, multi-disciplinary learning, team work and improved communication skills. This also provides the learners the opportunity to be active participants without remaining passive learners of the contents taught. Agnew et.al mention, "Student-created multimedia projects are beneficial, in addition, because they often involve substantial work, open-ended assignments, theme-based activities, and knowledge and experiences that the students draw from a wide variety of sources."(p.9). Students "achieve high self-esteem", increase their ability to function as self made and independent learners, learn to think quickly and differently and develop their abilities of "problem- solving and decision-making". (Agnew et.al, 1996). An innovative teacher can think of various possibilities of preparing students as commentators, critics, writers, editors, amateur actors, graphics/animation artists and people playing many other roles with nonchalant confidence and efficiency. Some of the projects on the drawing table of the students will have the pregnant possibility of maturing into schemes/inventions that may alter the fate of mankind and improve its life style.

More can be added to this section but suffice to remind ourselves that one of the definitions mentions language as thoughts. The refinement of thoughts/language fruitions as literature. Without a language strong in its basics, grammar, usage for thousands of years and

experience resulting from generations of observations no literature is possible. Thus the transformation of a refined, cultured language into rich literature is a natural process of evolution of mankind. In other words language and literature are closely associated twins and any attempt to differentiate the two as different entities will be a futile exercise. This also reminds us of the older concept of teaching/learning 'Language through Literature.'

Multimedia for teaching Literature: At the outset, one has to realize that genuinely good literature has no barriers of language, geographical boundaries, race or time. In other words all great literatures are concerned with the welfare of man and mankind and hence the well known legends have the most common themes of Love and Valour. The gifted have presented the experience of mankind and also the lessons they had learnt by observation in their Literatures. Parallel and identical themes unite Ramayana and Maha Bharatha with the legends of Greek and Latin. Valmiki, Thulsidas, Kamban and Vyasa on the one hand and the Greek and the Latin creators of Europe on the other never had the possibility of seeing, meeting, hearing or reading the works of each other as they were separated by time, space and language though their literatures speak with one voice leading to Archetypes of Literature.

As early as late sixties resourceful teachers used LP records and film strips as instructional aids for teaching drama and poetry. Some of Shakespeare's plays such as Hamlet available as LP records were played in the class room. Similarly T.S.Eliot's "Waste Land" read by the poet himself and played in the class room was immensely appreciated by the students of English Literature. Some other films based on Shakespeare's plays made effective impression in their minds.

Use of multimedia for teaching literature implies changes in teaching methodology from the traditional text based teaching/learning to text-plus-multimedia methodology. The teachers are provided with an opportunity to refresh their own understanding of the text in the process of teaching/learning. Through multimedia a new and attractive approach more preferable to the conventional methods is offered. This is more challenging and interesting than the text book based teaching/learning developed on verbal approach. The learners have an opportunity of interactive/inter-group study of authors, texts and critical texts using multimedia available in (God's) plenty. Group tasks involve collaborative studies and collaborative learning. The individual contributions made by different members of the group and coordinated by the teacher become the products of the entire group. The natural competitive instinct of the learners propels them for more lively participation and making

new contributions. The learners go through a wide range of experiences, comprehensive interpretation, understanding and evaluation of the text.

Use of multimedia also leads to multi-disciplinary and cross cultural approach and the man-made mental barriers and prejudices get eliminated with the learners completing their task as better human beings. This beautiful transformation – very much the crying need of the day – takes place as the learners share their resources, admire the abilities of the members of the group and gradually realize that every one is gifted in some way or other. A member who may not contribute much by his studies may contribute excellent pictures/paintings/photographs and other visuals for a better presentation of their product. This artistic talent of the individual not previously known to the other members but revealed only now draws instantaneous appreciation and recognition.

A student oriented teacher would not stop with informing the students that a nightingale is shy, nocturnal and non-Indian but will give additional information on how people waited for many nights to record the song of a nightingale and will try to play the recorded song of a nightingale, making the experience different, informative, and interesting. Just a photograph, better a video unfolding a vast field of blooming daffodils, swaying gently in the breeze shown to the students prior to the teaching of Wordsworth's "Daffodils" can make all the difference between a lecturer sweating to explain the mood of the poet (the mood of the students always remaining a varying factor) and an enthusiastic teacher making the class lively and memorable.

Many of Shakespeare's plays are available in Videos and in shortened versions. Use of such multimedia aids before commencing the teaching of a play and periodical replays of the relevant scenes from the play will make the classes more interesting and lively. The teachers can also try to find visual aids on plays like The Glass Menagerie, Winslowe Boy, Death of a Salesman, All My Sons and possibly many more. Students provided with an opportunity to see, listen, comprehend and appreciate the play fall in love with such innovative methods of teaching and they realize that learning can be pleasant and rejoicing too. An innovative team of teachers and learners can produce plays/ parts of plays such as the Trial scene in The Merchant of Venice, abridged versions of Glass Menagerie, Death of A Salesman, and many more in English and even in local Languages so that the process extends beyond the classroom. Importance of Being Ernest has been successfully played by teams consisting of college teachers and students. With the cooperation of students/staff from the Department of Visual Media these can be brought out as video versions.

Films such as Troy, Helen of Troy, Hercules, Hercules Unchained and audio/video recordings of one act plays present the possibility of understanding the text in a totally new dimension. Films based on Julius Caesar, and Antony and Cleopatra are more informative and bring the characters live before the students by their specialised visual and sound effects. Some of the greatest novels such as A Farewell To Arms, The Old Man and The Sea, War and Peace and many more like The French Lieutenant's Woman shown as films will have a greater impact than many hours of lectures. Thakazhi Sivasankaran Pillai's Chemmeen and R.K.Narayan's Guide made into films had a great impact on the international audience. Swamy and Friends, produced as a TV serial brought Malgudi to the drawing room of the audience.

Films on war demonstrate that in modern war there is no victor or loser as both sides lose heavily, their men and materials. Wars also result in untold, avoidable suffering of the innocent masses. Films showing the effect of atomic holocaust and the dilapidated waste of buildings and cities can make the students realize more the horrors of war than a hundred hours of lecture on the theme of futility of war. "The Longest Day", "Great Escape", "Battle of the Bulge" "Guns of Navorone", "Force Ten from Navorone", "The Lonely Frontier", "HMS Ulysses" and "One Who Got Away" were some of the memorable films depicting the World Wars and the post-war world. The films based on Nazi aggression causing suffering to millions of people will make the dictators think not twice but two hundred times prior to making any wrong moves! The photograph of an eight year young girl running naked revealed the chilling horror of dropping Napalm bombs on the defenseless civilians. A photograph of a hand clutching the iron fence (only the hand clutching desperately remained, all other parts of the body of a once living man or woman being completely vapourised due the intense heat caused by Napalm) published in 'Life' magazine fetched not only the best war photograph award but also brought to one's mind the horrors of war-machine where everyone becomes "expendable". The cluster bombs and mine fields on the land and on the high seas kill and maim years after the wars have ended.   Films like Kurukshetra in Malayalam prove that terrorism used as a tool by the hard-line war mongers create more havoc than the war, and terrorism combined with war can be demoralizing on the fighting troops and also remind the brutal fact that the soldiers who had sacrificed their "today" for our "tomorrow", have been conveniently forgotten, unsung and unremembered. Films on Ramayana, Mahabharatha and The Bible have sustained the interest of viewers at all times.

Contemporary Scenario of English Language and Literature teaching in our Colleges and Universities: Having explored some of the possibilities of using multimedia resources for effective teaching of English Language and Literature, it is necessary to have an objective analysis at the prevailing scenario of English Language and Literature teaching in our colleges and universities. An unbiased observation will reveal that much has been discussed; resolutions passed and promises made but more remain unimplemented. Many governments though they do not openly acknowledge the truth, have nurtured a hatred for English Language, resulting in false promises for betterment of teaching the language resulting in non-implementation of even the easy-to-implement schemes.

Most of the appointments in colleges and universities connected with framing policies and decision making have been filled by people for their political leanings but not for their academic achievements or contribution to knowledge. Even the so called Autonomous colleges do not have much scope for autonomy. Such colleges are 'advised' to toe the line of the powers that be. In the academic councils, senates and syndicates there is always a representative of the Government and such an environment does not encourage experimenting with introducing new and innovative syllabi or teaching methodology. Combining research with teaching is invariably discouraged under a highly illogical premise that these two are totally different entities which can never go together.

With all these restrictions not much change has taken place in the Language Departments of our colleges and universities. In most of the universities the Department of English has been established only after prolonged pleadings with the authorities. The realisation that one cannot do without English in any field has dawned on the people only recently. This has resulted in giving importance to the nurturing of basic language skills in the learners and this in turn leading to the appreciation of literature.

A cursory glance at the syllabi of English Language and Literature for students enrolled in under graduate courses and students enrolled in under graduate and post graduate classes for specializing study of English Literature reveals that almost all of them follow the same pattern not allowing much scope for nurturing the creative skills of teachers/learners. Again most of the universities have a distribution of 70:30 or 65:35 or 60:40 for the literature-language based questions. Most of the universities have a system where marks ranging from 15 to 25 % have been allotted for Internal Assessment. The same texts with minimum or no changes are recommended year after year by different Boards of Studies. Even the so called

Language Laboratories remain dusty and idle with the costly equipments there not even being touched and the rooms kept under lock and key. (Probably with the key thrown out and conveniently forgotten!)

Unit based syllabus which offers a lot of flexibility for not teaching/studying certain texts, combined with the pressure of completing the syllabus in time prior to the commencement of terminal examination induces examination oriented and passing percentage based teaching/learning. Most of the self financing colleges paying a pittance as salary for their teachers also serve as a non-incentive even for the sincere teachers.

These practical problems for teaching/learning of English Language and Literature and effective ways to encounter and overcome such problems will also have to be discussed and right answers elicited to make the process of teaching/learning English Language and Literature a pleasant experience for the stakeholders.

Summary: Beginning the presentation with an invocation, the introductory part dealt with multimedia and the relevance of use of multimedia for effective teaching of English Language and Literature. Some definitions also have been given.

The next part dealt with making use of multimedia as a tool for teaching English Language and how an innovative teacher can make Language learning highly interesting.

A brief feature explaining the close link between language and Literature had been given followed by suggestions for making use of multimedia for teaching/learning Literature.

An attempt to present the existing conditions in our colleges and universities for teaching English Language and Literature has been made with the earnest hope that it will ring bells in the thought process of powers that be. A sort of analysis of the English syllabi existing in various universities has also been made.

With the powers that be and educationists on the mood to realize the importance of teaching English Language and Literature, it is hoped that such conferences involving experts, students and teachers of English, will fruition in changes for growth and betterment of all the stake holders.

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The author gratefully acknowledges all the contributors whose concepts and ideas on the role of multimedia in teaching which might have proved useful for preparing this paper.

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The author can be contacted at: (+91) (422) 2315038; (+91) 94437 09681;

E-mail: pancharishigothran@rocketmail.com

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News: Sleep learning: Learn a language a week – you must be dreaming!

Suppose it were possible to learn a new language, keep fit or stop smoking by sleeping on it? Literally.

The theory of sleep learning or "hypnopaedia" was kick-started by novels like Brave New World. Here, having been played a George Bernard Shaw broadcast while asleep, a Polish-speaking boy is able to repeat it verbatim (and, presumably, with an Irish lilt) following morning.

Thus inspired, companies started marketing sleep learning courses, usually endorsed by "leading psychologists". In one advertisement, a woman claims that, by playing Spanish tapes during sleep, at the end of just one week, she was in negotiations with a Venezuelan ambassador.

Read the complete news by visiting http://eltweekly.com/more/2010/03/52-news-sleep-learning-learn-a-language-a-week-%E2%80%93-you-must-be-dreaming/

Article: 'Teaching English As a Foreign Language With Social Responsibility'

By **Larry M. Lynch**

Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Are you conserving and recycling water? As EFL, ESL or foreign language teaching professionals we ultimately have a responsibility to our learners, our adopted communities and ourselves as a form of social responsibility. We can quite easily, quickly and responsibly incorporate global, regional and local social issues into our class sessions to provide our language learners with an outlet for their English as a foreign language or other foreign language communicative skills. Pollution, crime, the environment, global warming and terrorism are all available topics of concern regionally and locally worldwide. Take water conservation for example.

It's Raining But No One's complaining

It's raining this morning but no one's complaining. Why? It's because our city, Cali, is running out of water. Oh, officials aren't really completely up in arms yet, neither are the people, however, the signs are all unmistakably there. Water outages occur each week. Water pressure is low and at times what comes out of your tap at home isn't even fit to water the plants with. Not only is the water "unpleasant" overall, it's discolored, smells bad and contains sediment I'm not sure I even want to have identified. A couple or so years ago, city water service was interrupted when not one but two – count 'em – two dead bodies were discovered in the city's water service reservoir. We won't go into that at this time though.

But back to the rain, folks. Usually the rainy season here is what most people consider to be the Winter, the months of December, January and February. During that time we'll have moderate to heavy rainfall almost daily, mainly at night. During those months conventional wisdom causes you to constantly carry a collapsible umbrella or risk a sudden drenching at virtually any hour of the day or night. December 2009, January and February of 2010

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though were very different. We go practically no rain at all for weeks on end. Gardens withered, ornamental shrubs turned brown or just plain dried up. The grass was gone for all intent and purposes. This is a tropical climate you see, and the weather is warm to hot year round. No rain, no water – a problem for everybody. So when the rains finally came this month, no one complained.

Thousands of Gallons of Water Being Wasted

Walking down the street, I consciously noticed the thousands of gallons of water being wasted. Rain ran in torrents from rooftops. It dribbled in droves from balconies and porches. It flooded gutters and pooled in small ponds where storm drains were clogged with debris. Rain ran in rivers down culverts to nowhere. What a waste, I thought. Just think, if only half or a third of the businesses, schools and institutions and private homes channeled their rain runoff into storage containers, there would hardly be any "water shortage" in this city. The same is quite likely true of many cities worldwide as well.

An Accidental Water Conservation Discovery

It was sort of by accident we truly discovered the value of water conservation and recycling. When we put a plastic barrel under a downspout to collect the rainwater for watering the plants in the yard, it was such a help we soon added a second large covered container in the back. This collected water was used to wash clothes, flush the toilets and do general house cleaning. At first I was absolutely stunned at the quantity of water used to wash, then rinse (twice) a load of clothes. We started collecting the last rinse water from the washing machine to use for cleaning, flushing toilets and mopping. As a matter of fact, the rinse water even already had a little soap still in it contributing even more to our savings. Two more large rain water collection containers were added beneath downspouts in the back of the house, mostly used as "utility" water. Our water and sewer bill plummeted by nearly 70%. Now who in the world is going to complain about that?

The water company, that's who.

Why is Your Water Usage So Low?

A water company service truck arrived one afternoon without notice.

"Why has your water usage suddenly gotten so low?"

They wondered, then asked – and not all that politely either. After showing the two men our rain water collection, recycling and conservation measures, they nodded in agreement that we weren't doing anything illegal, confirming that the water meter had not been "tampered with" and reluctantly congratulated us on our efforts. Naturally, I related the whole experience to my English as a foreign language learners who soon spread the word. They continue to comment in class on changes that they and their families have made – or not, and what the outcomes have been. Most are realizing some substantial savings which often get funneled into beer and aguardiente consumption. But then that's another story.

And speaking of stories, what's yours? Are you conserving and recycling water?

Prof. Larry M. Lynch is an EFL Teacher Trainer, Intellectual Development Specialist, prolific writer, expert author and public speaker. He has written ESP, foreign language learning, English language teaching texts and hundreds of articles used in more than 120 countries. Get your FREE E-book, "If You Want to Teach English Abroad, Here's What You Need to Know" and English language teaching and learning information at: http://bettereflteacher.blogspot.com Need a blogger or copywriter to promote your school, institution, service or business or an experienced writer and vibrant SEO content for your website, blog or newsletter? Contact the author at the above blog address for more information.

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India's first weekly ELT eNewsletter

Article: Google and the lexical approach

"Google is special among search engines in that it has become a starting point for enquiries and data searches of all forms. As most of this data is linguistic, it deserves special attention from language teachers, but until now, search has been largely ignored by most course writers.

In this article I give several practical examples of how you can use Gffoogle, combined with a lexical approach to teaching, to enrich your class material with authentic examples, as well as building learner autonomy.

Google and lexis

Lexis, as most of you will know, is simply another term for 'vocabulary'. The Lexical Approach treats language as a series of prefabricated lexical chunks. Its methodology puts grammar in second place to vocabulary.

The approach I will outline here is based on inputting 'lexical chunks' (strings of vocabulary or phrases) into Google's various search functions to find samples of real world text. These are split into different types.

How Google treats language

This is a little complicated. What you need to know is that…"

Read the rest of article by visiting http://eltweekly.com/more/2010/03/52-article-google-and-the-lexical-approach/

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1.   Papers / Articles: All articles should be computerized using double-spacing, including tables, references and footnotes. Submission of manuscripts should be done in electronic more only. Electronic version of the article/research paper should be e-mailed to the Editor, ELTWeekly at info@eltweekly.com.

2.   Abstracts: An abstract in approximately 200 words should assist the article.

3.   Abbreviations: No stops are needed between capitals e.g. ELT, IELTS.

4.   Figures and Tables: Tables should be numbered sequentially with Arabic numerals.

5.   Notes: Notes should be consecutively numbered and presented at the foot of the page.

6.   References: References in the text should follow the author-date system. The complete reference list should be given at the end of the article. They should be in alphabetical order.

7.   Book Reviews: Book reviews must contain the name of the author and title / subtitle of the book reviewed, place of publication and publisher and date of publication.

8.   For Event Submissions: Please submit your event details at least 30 days prior to the event.

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> Its really a wonderful vision. Its very useful to the teachers' community. Thnnk you very much. – **G. NAGESWARARAO**

> Dear Tarun and the team
>
> thank you for being so prompt in sending us the new issues. It is great to learn about teachit & english Next.
>
> regards - **Dr. Ravi Bhushan**

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