

FELT Newsletter

The Forum for English Language Teachers

8 Darley Court, Palatine Square, Arbour Hill, Dublin 7.

feltireland@hotmail.com

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CONFERENCE REPORT

1999 MATSDA Conference

REFLECTIONS ON THE MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE HELD IN THE TRINITY INSTITUTE 15-16TH JANUARY 1999
 – BY OUR CONFERENCE CORRESPONDENT

Members of MATSDA had such a good time in Dublin two years ago that they decided to have their 1999 conference here, notwithstanding the fact that it was mid-winter, and that there was something closely resembling snow on the ground, at least some of the time.

While the local delegates shivered and huddled close to any available radiators, in time-honoured teachers' room fashion, the **Argentinean delegates** admired the quality of the sunlight and the glorious views across Dublin Bay, debating the hoary question 'what colour is the sea?' Nobody mentioned **James Joyce** as a colourist!

The talks and workshops were extremely varied, ranging from the highly traditional preposition to the cutting edge innovation of the Internet. The high point was undoubtedly **Jim Wingate's** session on story telling, so *would someone who was there please write us an article and share the experience* so that we all know what we missed!

Placement tests are generally regarded as a refined form of medieval torture, but in unduly elegant surroundings **Dave Allan** persuaded us – or allowed us to persuade ourselves – that they could be friendly to both students and teachers. We agreed that placement tests were always a compromise between time, money and philosophy, but that with proper planning this did not have to be a bad thing. Dave left us with the radical thought that perhaps learners could be allowed to place themselves, a notion suggested by **Mario Rinvoluceri** in the Teachers' Club a few years ago. This is something we need to look at in more detail.

Mike McCarthy is by now expected to be both entertaining and informative, and this occasion was no exception. He spoke on 'Genre in spoken language' in the context of constraint and creativity. He pointed out that the creative element or ludic function has not been subject to such detailed study;

Contd. Page 2

Hard Words

Sesquipedalophobia

n. The unnatural fear of long words

Phrases to be used & their Real Meanings

Does not tolerate fools gladly
 (Has a foul temper)

Roguish sense of humour
 (Psychopathic practical joker)

Lives life to the full
 (Is usually drunk)

Lives life to the full but always has time for the family
 (Is usually drunk and then rows with the wife)

Never forgets his origins
 (Maintains his regional accent)

Well rounded human being
 (Plays golf at least five times per week)

Voice of reason, arbitrator and moderator
 (Indecisive, sycophantic creep)

Wide range of interests
 (Lecherous)

Loved by his staff
 (Adulterous lecher)

Has time for colleagues and friends
 (Has no work to do and they help him home from the pub)

Regarded as an enigma
 (Regarded as totally insane)

Familiar figure to all departments
 (So absent minded he has to ask to find his way back to his own office)

Reputation as something of a wit
 (Exhibits a psychopathic cackle when telling a joke)

Despite his many commitments
 (Has an excessive list of pubs that are open all hours)

Displays a characteristic, youthful enthusiasm
 (Has fits of uncontrollable rage if not able to watch his favourite cartoons on TV)

Will be sorely missed by colleagues
 (Owes considerable sums to the coffee, Christmas and birthday pools.)

See Page 8 for Ideas on using humour in the EFL classroom.

MATSDA contd. from Page 1

In particular, metaphor in spoken language remains largely unexplored, and even communicative language teaching leaves out the 'talking to one's self' 'thinking talk' that takes place in much task-related language.

Seth Lindstromberg claimed never to have given a talk to more than four people – certainly many more than that gathered to take part in a session which ended up raising more questions than it could answer. Starting with the question 'how many prepositions are there?' (about 130, depending on your definition [don't let your students find out!]), we moved through a discussion of spatial relationships and how they could be analysed, to a brief look at how well (or badly) a selection of course books deal with teaching prepositions.

The Matters Series was seen as weak on prepositions per se but good on collocations; **True to Life** is good in parts, with the visual dictionary pointed out as a good idea which needs more development; and the **Cobuild** series corpus gave good coverage but fell down in the associated tasks. The session drew to a close with the posing (but not solving) of the problem: why can you say 'on the piss' but not 'on top of the piss'? Suggestions on a postcard, please.

Philip Prowse persuaded us all that writing readers for CUP was a skill within our grasp (perhaps someone would like to send us a sample of their work in progress), and **Jill Hadfield** conducted a fascinating session on designing materials using nothing more than a couple of clothes lines and a roll of wrapping paper.

Who says that ELT stops at the kitchen sink!

Gronia de Verdon Cooney
Conference Delegate

Quality



Success

Before Christmas, EAQUALS, the European Association for Quality Language Services, sent over a delegate, Richard Rosner, who addressed the trainee inspectors for ACELS' new model inspection scheme and year round schools about the importance of quality in providing language services.

His experiences working with EAQUALS, which inspects in several different countries and not being limited to English language services, had many interesting parallels with the new model inspection scheme being introduced by ACELS this year.

A number of schools took this opportunity to investigate the EAQUALS scheme, and this is to be lauded. Ireland is now, more and more, being viewed as *the* quality English language learning destination. Schemes such as this, and the sterling work of MEI promoting Ireland can only improve the image of Ireland abroad.

As part of the inspection scheme which takes all aspects of school life in to account, EAQUALS' inspectors look at administrative procedures, complaints procedures, as well as looking at the promotional materials used by its members.

EAQUALS also has a number of charters to which EAQUALS schools must adhere. Perhaps of particular interest to teachers and others working in EL institutions is the **EAQUALS Staff Charter**, reproduced here. It is to be hoped that all quality EL service providers in Ireland would adopt initiatives such as these.

All members of EAQUALS uphold the EAQUALS Staff Charter:

1. The contracts of all staff working for EAQUALS members are governed by local labour laws, and by national contracts where these apply.
2. Members provide fair terms and conditions of employment in the context of the relevant local or national standard, in the following areas: a) salary; b) length of contract; c) working hours and teaching hours per week d) paid holiday entitlement; e) sickness, maternity, family and compassionate leave; f) pension and severance pay arrangements, where relevant; g) unpaid leave of absence.
3. Members have clearly specified procedures for dealing with staff grievances and disciplinary problems.
4. Members employ administrative staff and academic staff who have appropriate training, qualifications and experience according to national norms for the work in question.
5. Members provide all staff with appropriate workspace and the facilities for them to carry out their duties effectively, as well as relevant opportunities for training and development within and outside working hours.
6. All staff in member schools/institutions, whether full or part time, are issued with written contracts or letters of agreement specifying the terms of employment under the main responsibilities of the post, the procedures available for dealing with grievances, and the procedures to be followed in the event of disciplinary action.
7. Members undertake to keep their staff informed about the status and ownership of the school, and of the organisations and associations it belongs to.

BOOK REVIEWS

P ANORAMA 1

FELICITY O'DELL / CUP 1997

STUDENTS' VIEW BY

Jerome Ackermann, Dorothee Franz,
Hernando Lacalle, Rachel Moreau
& Chika Sone

APPEARANCE

Panorama 1 strikes you immediately because of its friendly and colourful appearance. It is easy to look at, and the pictures and cartoons are new and interesting. The spaces for filling in the blanks is enough (some of us don't agree with this), but if the margins had more space it would be much easier to write down some notes. It's a pity that the pages are so cramped and that a few typing mistakes lead to confusion.

CONTENTS

Each unit catches your interest with topical subjects. There are various topics, some of which are interesting for students and some are not so interesting. However, when we start on the unit we can get interested and finish reading it. It's easy to read the instructions – we don't have any problems at all. The exercises aren't boring. We would prefer a CD to the tape, because the sound is better and also it's much easier for the teacher to find a unit, we think.

It's impossible to do some exercises on your own because you can't check your answers without the teacher's book. Maybe it would be a good idea to give the right answers to the exercises on the last pages. We also think that the key phrases in each unit should be added in an appendix at the end of the book.

FINAL COMMENT

There is a good variety of exercises including team work, discussions, reading and listening, and we especially enjoyed listening to the tapes with their different contents. We've appreciated working with this book.

P ANORAMA 2

FELICITY O'DELL / CUP 1997

A TEACHER'S VIEW

BY Tania Harada

If a balanced, stimulating and reasonably up-to-the-minute textbook for advanced learners is on your list of classroom requirements, you need look no further than **English Panorama 2** by Felicity O'Dell.

In the same way that **Panorama 1** (reviewed above) is designed for students at post-FCE level, No. 2 caters for those at the post-CAE stage, although it could not be called a CPE preparation course.

Panorama, as the name suggests, offers a wide range of topics which go some way towards encompassing the infinitely broad spectrum of learners' needs and interests. The units, 22 in all, cover areas such as poems and songs as well as the IT revolution and current affairs, to name but a few.

This global approach to themes and

topics works well in the context of the course, as each unit is set out in a similar way, and this structure serves to create an easy-to-follow format. Each section is clearly and colourfully marked, so that locating and dipping into whatever you require is a simple matter.

All the skills are adequately covered in each unit, and the examples cited throughout the book are clear and authentic. Pictures and photographs too, are not merely superfluous decoration but have relevance to the various texts and tasks they illustrate.

One feature of each unit that can be a somewhat tedious class activity, but is nevertheless very useful and practical for learners individually, is the 'Study Skills' section, which provides practical suggestions and exercises on how to learn, say, vocabulary more effectively.

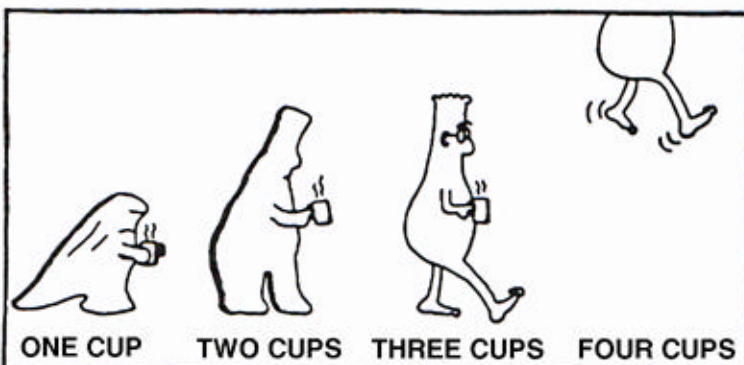
All in all, **English Panorama 2** is to be recommended for use in an advanced class, as it makes for a good base from which to explore in more detail the various topics it presents in such a creative yet methodical way.

Performance & Productivity in the ELT Staffroom

YOUR HAPPINESS AND
JOB PERFORMANCE ARE
INFLUENCED MORE BY
COFFEE THAN BY ANY
OTHER FACTOR



NO COFFEE





Test of Interactive English

WHAT IS IT?

- * A new test being developed in Ireland
- * Capitalises on the local environment
- * Quick certification
- * Available at all levels
- * Council of Europe 6-level marking scheme

WHO CAN DO IT

- * Suitable for both long- and short-stay students
- * Business-course students
- * 1-1 executive clients
- * Summer course students
- * Long-term students preparing for other exams

THE COURSE

- * Based on authentic activities and materials
- * Negotiated by teacher and student
- * Involves books, news media and mini-projects
- * Fits in with modern trend towards task-based learning
- * No set syllabus - no new course books

THE EXAM

- * 30-minute oral test
- * 2 candidates & 2 examiners
- * 1-hour written test
- * 1 prepared task & 1 unprepared task

WHAT'S NEXT?

We are now recruiting teachers to train as examiners for this exam.

If you have recognised TEFL qualifications, and 3 years' classroom experience, and would be interested in taking part in the training sessions, please send CV and covering letter outlining your background to:

ACELS, 36 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2., marking the envelope TIE.

Ph.: (01) 676 7374

Editorial

Participation

I hope you will agree that this second edition of the FELT newsletter is significantly lighter and brighter than the January edition. Thanks go to all those who have submitted material to us. **We urgently need further submissions** - papers, class plans, jokes, cartoons, teaching materials, anecdotes, news, views or anything you like.

Remember, it is up to all FELT members to do their bit. Do let us know what you would like to see in future editions. In addition to our postal address on the front page, we now have an e-mail address for those of you who are wired. Any electronic submissions should be in Microsoft Word 6/95 or Text Only formats to —

feltireland@hotmail.com

Naturally, the FELT newsletter is circulated to all FELT members. In addition, this second edition has again been circulated widely to schools in order to allow as many teachers as possible to read it - but this cannot continue indefinitely. Enclosed with this edition is a photocopyable FELT membership application form - membership only costs £10 - for this you get this newsletter, occasional parties, talks by our own home-grown talent on areas of interest and occasionally by big names from abroad too! Most importantly, though, it gives us all the chance to meet each other, share ideas and experiences and discuss the day to day issues that concern us.

New Hopes for the TIE

There is growing dissatisfaction among many with the level of service provided by Trinity College London for their oral examinations. It is estimated that between three and four thousand juniors take the exams in Ireland each summer. At long last it looks as if there is a realistic alternative for students and teachers - the TIE,

or Test of Interactive English, a wholly new Irish examination.

The TIE group, a small dedicated bunch of volunteers who have been working with ACELS over the last three years, are now looking for candidates to be trained as TIE examiners. FELT would urge all EL teachers with the required experience to apply - it is not every day that the opportunity presents itself to be trained in something as specialised as this.

Mary Towers

A social event for the members of RELSA and MEI was held recently in the Mercer Hotel in Dublin where keynote speeches outlining a vision for the EFL industry were given by **Tom Reidy**, Chair of RELSA, **Mary Towers**, Chair of MEI and **Margaret McGahon** the ELT Promotions Executive with Bord Fáilte. A special presentation was made to **Mary Towers** in view of her years of hard work promoting Ireland abroad.

FELT would also like to join with RELSA and MEI in expressing its appreciation to **Mary Towers** for her tireless hard work on behalf of us all, giving selflessly of herself in the promotion of Ireland at language travel fairs, agents' workshops and in other fora.

It is certain that her commitment to quality ELT in Ireland has opened up new markets for all of us, such as South America, Asia and the Pacific Rim, and this will have a lasting effect on all in our profession.

RELSA & MEI Merger

In the last issue of the FELT Newsletter, January 18th last, there was a comment on the subject of the proposed RELSA/MEI merger. It was suggested that some smaller schools were afraid that annual subscriptions to RELSA could increase significantly. While it is no doubt true that the new merged organisation will cost more

than the current RELSA subscription, it looks likely to be a worthwhile investment for those smaller organisations with fewer resources available to them.

We at FELT would welcome any merger between RELSA and MEI if it leads to improvement and strengthening of the Irish ELT industry - the natural consequence of which would be a wider variety of students coming to Ireland and thus greater job security for EFL teachers here.

We hope that the comments in last month's Newsletter have not damaged our relationship with MEI and RELSA, or any other body, and we look forward to a fruitful relationship with all of them in playing our part in assuring a quality oriented EL industry in Ireland.

Letters to the Editor

Dear FELT,

No one seems to be writing any letters to you...

Yours etc.
A. R. Eader

Would someone please write us a bleedin' letter... -Ed.

The views expressed in the FELT Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Executive Committee of FELT. We make every effort to ensure all information presented is accurate and correct and we welcome any corrections. All contents copyright of FELT, except where expressly stated.

Reading Theory and the Four Skills

by Ciarán McCarthy

Introduction

In the first section of this paper we shall look at how helpful it is to treat, at a theoretical level, the four language skills separately from one another. In the second section, we shall imagine, and briefly describe, a small group of L2 learners in a specific classroom context giving a discursive commentary on how we could set about focusing on the development of the group's proficiency in reading skills.

Treating the Four Language Skills Separately from One Another

There is a growing realisation among EFL teachers that the overt processes involved in language - the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking - which have been, in the past, "treated somewhat in isolation, in fact have so much in common with each other, that it makes much more sense to treat them holistically", (Wray & Medwell 1991:3). It has been noted that the links between reading and writing, for example, have been emphasised to such an extent that it is now normal to see them referred to as "literacy" (ibid.:3). Similarly, the term "oracy" is commonly used to denote the skills of speaking and listening.

This is no doubt true, even unavoidable, in the practical classroom situation. However, I would argue that to look at the four skills individually, in order to look for parallels between the processes is in theoretical terms, far more useful for those who strive to learn from these theories and use them in a constructive way. Thus, the sum of the parts may be greater, and more practically helpful, than the whole.

Each of the "four skills" is itself composed of component sub-skills. Grabe (1992:50-3) notes six in particular in the case of reading. These are: 1) the perceptual automatic recognition skill; 2) linguistic skills; 3) knowledge and skills of discourse structure and organisation; 4) knowledge of the world; 5) synthetic and critical evaluation skills; 6) metalinguistic knowledge and skills. It is arguable that these sub-skills are, to a greater or lesser extent, also sub-skills of writing, speaking and listening. This suggests that basic strategies used are similar, if not exactly the same, in each of the four skills. However, since the four modalities impose different constraints, at many different levels, on each occasion that they are called upon, they encourage a unique emphasis on particular combinations of strategies on each occasion.

In reading, the notions of "bottom-up" and "top-down" processing, (also known

as "outside-in" and "inside-out" processing), are not without their problems. Consider this sentence (Wray & Medwell 1991: 98) "iF yuo aer a fluert reodur yuo will hve on pRblme reOdnng ths sNtnce". A purely bottom up strategy, which is essentially a code-cracking activity, simply cannot account for the comprehension of this sentence. Top-down strategies must come into play in order that the reader may find "meaning" in these symbols.

There is a clear parallel here with listening skills. An analogous situation for EFL students who have only ever heard standard R.P. English spoken, would be when they find themselves listening to a speaker from inner-city Dublin; indeed, this is a difficult task for many native English speakers; however, meaning may still be found by both groups. It is normal for language learners to report that they do not catch every word spoken, but that they, nonetheless, manage to understand the meaning of the sentence. Conversely, it is also common that the language learners report that they "understand" every word, but that they do not grasp the meaning of the sentence.

Stanovich (1980:36) "questioned the hypothesis-testing models" and rejected them "because they require[d] implausible assumptions about the relative speeds of the processes involved". Oakhill & Garnham (1988) assert that while good readers, and, by extension good listeners, may indeed "have greater contextual awareness, they do not, in fact, need to use it" and Samuels and Kamil (1988: 32) sum this up by saying that "if a skilled reader can generate predictions, the amount of time necessary to generate a prediction may be greater than the amount of time the skilled reader needs to simply recognise the words".

So, a total reliance on top-down processing, while initially attractive, may later lead to some practical and theoretical conclusions that are less than satisfactory; for example, that the language learner does not need to develop much conscious knowledge of the features of written language, because the clause, or even the sentence, would be the most significant linguistic units, rather than the word. This is particularly problematic in reading theory, as L1 studies in phonological awareness, by Goswami (1994) and others, have clearly linked early ability to segment words into their constituent phonemes with later reading proficiency.

Stanovich's (1980) interactive-compensatory model, while not universally accepted, seems to account for the major problems encountered by purely top-down or bottom-up approaches to comprehension, because "process[es] at any level can compensate for deficiencies at any other

level" (ibid.:36). So, it seems that comprehension, of written and spoken discourse, relies on a symbiosis of top-down and bottom-up strategies.

Thus, the perceptual-automatic recognition skill noted by Grabe (1992) above seems psychologically real and theoretically plausible, both in terms of Stanovich's model, and of Underwood's (1982) assertion that "attention can only be diverted to higher-level activities, such as comprehension, when lower-level activities have become skilled through practice". "Though recent findings... [by Danks & End (1985) and Lund (1991)] on language processing... are still tentative, they suggest that basic strategies focusing on the most important words in a text for example, and activating background schemata are the same in listening and reading... However, since the two modalities impose different processing constraints, they encourage the emphasis of different strategies" (Strodt-Lopez: 1996:35-6). Thus, listeners tend to rely more on top-down processing, from "background knowledge to the particulars", while readers tend more towards bottom-up strategies, from "the particulars of the text to background knowledge" (ibid.:35-6).

I believe that in recent years teachers and materials designers have concentrated mainly on developing the top-down skills for both reading and listening (See Paran: 1996). This seems to be the case because, while justifiable in theories of L1 skills, they have failed, to some extent, to recognise that the situation is somewhat different for L2 learners, as they have to "compensate for the lack of good linguistic skills" and for "the lack of well-developed automatised skills" (ibid.:29).

Similarly, it is also true, to some extent, that there has been a lack of bottom-up support for the production skills, writing and speaking, because in recent years, with the advent of communicative language teaching, there has been an unnecessarily strong, though perhaps not surprising, emphasis by teachers and materials designers on communication at the expense of accuracy, perhaps due to misconceptions about what is involved in the communicative approach (See Thompson: 1996).

By looking at any one of the skills, reading in this case, we can see a microcosm of all the skills. We have noted how some of the more important sub-skills of reading are present in each of the other three skills. We have seen how the only difference is in their emphasis. It is my belief that in giving the L2 student both as much input and practice as they can reasonably manage, and a strong metalinguistic awareness, we, as teachers give the student the tools to learn a language proficiently. It is in equipping the student with both declarative knowledge, as well as the

procedural knowledge, that they not only listen to the music, but also appreciate its subtle intricacies.

A Small Group of L2 Learners in a Specific Classroom Context

In this section of the paper, we will consider some practical ways of aiding a particular group of students, in becoming more proficient readers. This imaginary group consists of about ten or so European students, of varied nationalities, in their early to mid-twenties. Let us say that they are of upper-intermediate standard. They are in Ireland on an intensive four week course; this course consists of four hours tuition daily, and two two-hour workshops each week. On the other days, there is an extensive, and carefully structured, social and cultural programme, which they are free to, and do, participate in. This group will be familiar to many EFL teachers as they are the backbone of many schools in Ireland.

One of the most important initial tasks for any teacher is the task of knowing his clients. The notion of needs analysis is absolutely central. Even with as few details as we have outlined above, there are certain things that we can assume about this group. First, given their age group, it is reasonable to assume that many of them will be students; their needs in English will most predominantly lie in the area of reading. University systems in Europe, unfortunately, are dominated by the grammar-translation method of language teaching, where, as often as not, English is only taught as a means to accessing literature, be it classical, technical or otherwise. Any of the group that actually work, will almost certainly be trying to improve their English, as a means of improving their job prospects or job performance; their needs will be much broader, but, nonetheless, the skills in written language are likely to be of most concern to them, as the written form is more formally bound than the spoken form.

Second, given the age group of our clients, they are almost certainly attending the course of their own accord. Had they not been so motivated, they could have spent two weeks lying on a beach somewhere sunny, drinking piña colodas, and not using their brains. It is also worth noting that the clients have opted for intensive courses, over and above the already taxing four hours a day tuition.

Third, the group is European. This means that they will all be literate; in Europe, so commonplace is literacy, in fact, that the students will probably have no thoughts on the subject beyond the idea that everybody is able to read and write. In terms of their English, being of upper-intermediate level, their skills in English language literacy are probably quite proficient in certain ways.

This does not mean, however, that they are infallible. In other ways their L2 capabilities are severely restricted.

While the clients' individual learning styles and preferences, their past experiences in learning language, their linguistic aptitudes, their personalities, perhaps even their views on life, are probably all quite different, they now find themselves on a (reasonably) level playing field, culturally, linguistically and in many other ways too. It is this that the teacher must take advantage of.

All of the group will experience problems with reading, though it is probably true that they will have had, in some cases, several years tuition, and practice, in reading English. It is for the teacher to facilitate the strategies necessary for each client to solve his or her own problems. In approaching a text on an unknown topic with a class, it is often extremely beneficial to make additions to the text: adding pictures, a title, or perhaps even a short summary at the beginning. This permits, and even forces, the individuals to build up some hypothesis or schema, of what the text is likely to consist of. This aids in top-down processing.

On the other hand, we also need to encourage bottom-up processing, and on occasions, this is may be achieved by pre-reading exercises; for example, a short brainstorming session by the class, after reading the short summary suggested above, can often yield a whole whiteboard of material, without any intervention by the teacher. In this way the "collective consciousness" of the class may be tapped and focused.

Study aids are another useful aid to comprehension facilitation. Activities such as note-taking, underlining, summary writing and so on, can all help the student to reinforce what they have learned. However, they play a very helpful dual role: that of comprehension fostering and comprehension monitoring simultaneously.

Often, it can be helpful for the teacher to teach metacognitive strategies overtly, if not obviously. A common method of doing this in EFL is the "teacher think-aloud" method. A simple idea, where the teacher, or better still, the student, simply solves the problem at hand by going through it mentally, step by step, but voicing these steps all along.

An extension of this is the notion of reciprocal teaching and has been in the communicative classroom for many years, and has proven itself to be an extremely effective way of fostering the strategies of questioning, clarifying, summarising and predicting; this too is both comprehension fostering and monitoring, and is particularly good at fostering a "collective consciousness".

The hallmark of this form of instruction is the lack of passive inattention, that often accompanies reading. Here the students take turns being the "teacher" being interactive with his or her students. For example, a number of students read some short passages aloud, and then the "teacher" asks questions, and leads a discussion, on the text. All the students are expected to "chip-in" whenever they can. At upper-intermediate level this can get quite noisy. The "teacher" asks for clarifications on any of the points raised and finally, the "teacher" summarises the section of the text, and makes predictions about what is likely to occur in the following sections. Reciprocal teaching is not only very effective, but it is also very popular with the students, too.

Conclusion

Why does it work so well? There are four main ideas behind it - scaffolding and then learner autonomy, which, surprisingly, are not actually at odds with each other, but rather complimentary; active involvement and not passive inattention, and feedback. It is in becoming acquainted with these ideas, consciously and sub-consciously, in declarative and procedural terms, that the learners in our imaginary group may flourish.

With these skills, they may recreate this experience, even when reading alone; it is only by doing this that they may develop their proficiency in the skill of reading. In this very simple classroom procedure we can see some of the theory outlined in Section One of this paper put into practice, though given the space constraints of such a short paper, it is hard to do any justice to the notion that the development of a group's proficiency in any one skill is closely linked to the development of the strategies and sub-skills embodied in all of the four skills.

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©Ciarán McCarthy

Ciarán McCarthy, is an EFL teacher and General Manager of the Salesian English Language Centre in Celbridge, Co.Kildare. He is currently studying part-time for an M.Sc. in Education & Training Management in DCU.

Just For Laughs!

Three EFL students are walking down the road to their remedial listening comprehension workshop.

"It's windy" says the first.

"No it isn't, it's Thursday" says the second.

"Me too." says the third, "Forget the listening, let's go for a drink!"

Submitted by Bernadette Kelly

REDMOND, WA (API) --- MICROSOFT (MSFT) announced today that the official release date for the new operating system "Windows 2000" will be delayed until the second quarter of 1901.

- Why was the hearse horse hoarse?
- Because of the coffin.

Heard on 98FM

Using Humorous Material in the EFL Classroom

Jokes and Puns can be an excellent resource for reading comprehension practice. One way of doing this is by having the students match two or more parts of a joke to make up the whole. You can follow these simple steps: Collect a group of suitable jokes and riddles and make a copy of them.

1. Cut up each joke into two or three parts.
2. Hand out one part of a joke to each pupil.
3. Ask the pupils to walk around the class and find the pupil or pupils with the other parts of their joke.

A True or False Activity

It was the accepted practice in Babylonia 4,000 years ago that for a month after the wedding, the bride's father would supply his son-in-law with all the mead he could drink. Mead is a honey beer, and because their calendar was lunar based, this period was called the "honey month" or what we know today as the "honeymoon".

Before thermometers were invented, brewers would dip a thumb or finger into the mix to find the right temperature for adding yeast. Too cold, and the yeast wouldn't grow. Too hot, and the yeast would die. This thumb in the beer is where we get the phrase "rule of thumb".

In English pubs, ale is ordered by pints and quarts. So in old England, when customers got unruly, the bartender would yell at them to mind their own pints and quarts and settle down. It's where we get the phrase "mind your P's and Q's".

After consuming a bucket or two of vibrant brew they called aul, or ale, the Vikings would head fearlessly into battle often without armor or even shirts. In fact, the term "berserk" means "bare shirt" in Norse, and eventually took on the meaning of their wild battles.

In 1740 Admiral Vernon of the British fleet decided to water down the navy's rum. Needless to say, the sailors weren't too pleased and called Admiral Vernon, Old Grog, after the stiff wool grogram coats he wore. The term "grog" soon began to mean the watered down drink itself. When you were drunk on this grog, you were "groggy", a word still in use today.

Many years ago in England, pub frequenters had a whistle baked into the rim or handle of their ceramic cups. When they needed a refill, they used the whistle to get some service. Hence the phrase "Wet your whistle".

These are all suggestions - they may or may not be true...

Internet Resources for EFL Teachers

Here's a short list of internet addresses which may be useful to teachers. As with so much of the internet, there may be masses of junk to wade through before you find anything of interest or use. Anything marked with an asterisk has been recommended as good!

If you have an ELT site of your own, or would like to recommend one not mentioned here, please let us know. Check some of the URLs out and send us your comments and we will publish your ratings in the next edition.

*The Internet TESL Journal
<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/>

*Dave Sperling's ESL Café
<http://www.eslcafe.com/>

ELT News & Views
<http://www.eltnewsandviews.com.ar/>

IATEFL
<http://www.iatefl.org/>

The Linguistic Funland
<http://www.linguistic-funland.com/>

The TESOL Net
<http://www.tesol.net/>

The TEFL Professional Network
<http://www.tefl.com/>

*Longman ELT
<http://www.awl-elt.com/>

The ESL Centre
<http://user.aol.com/eslkathy/teacher.htm>

Seryoga's English Language School
<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/3537/langframe.htm>

*Games & Songs
<http://eslgames.com/>

The Aardvark
<http://www.ilcgroup.com/aardvark/>

ESL Resources
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/esl/ESL-teacher.html>

Links and Resources for ESL
<http://www.educ.wsu.edu/esl/professionallink.html>

Planet English
<http://www.planetenglish.com/>

T-Man's TESOL Page
<http://web.nwe.ufl.edu/~thompson/>

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