UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

# The Language Scholar

# Editorial Board


## Editorial team: The University of Leeds, UK

Chief Editors: Bee Bond and Kazuki Morimoto

Commissioning Editor: Rasha Soliman

Journal Managers: Jenna Bodin-Galvez and Natasha Rust

Social Media/Web Editor: Valentina Ragni

## Editorial Advisory Board

Alan O'Leary, Director of Research and Innovation, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, University of Leeds, UK

Alexander Ding, Centre for Excellence in Language Teaching, University of Leeds, UK

Bettina Hermoso-Gomez, Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies, University of Leeds, UK

Bev Back, Classics, University of Leeds, UK

Chiara LaSala, Italian, University of Leeds, UK

Hanem El-Farahaty, Arabic, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Leeds, UK

Haynes Collins, Languages, Cultures and Societies, University of Leeds, UK

Martin Thomas, Director of Student Education, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, University of Leeds, UK

Matthew Treherne, Head of School, Languages, Cultures and Societies, University of Leeds, UK

Melinda Whong, Language Centre, University of Leeds, UK

Ruth Payne, Linguistics, University of Leeds, UK

Sofia Martinho, Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies, University of Leeds, UK

# The Leeds Language Scholar Journal

The Language Scholar is an open access and peer-reviewed journal. Its main objective is to provide a platform to promote the scholarship of learning and teaching languages.

Contributions are welcome from practitioners, researchers and students who are involved in language education. Areas of particular interest to this Journal are theories and practices for language teaching and education, including language teaching approaches and methodologies, intercultural communication, the psychology of language learning, research-led teaching, student-led practices, communicative strategies and experimental teaching.

The Language Scholar is hosted by the Centre for Excellence in Language Teaching within the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies at the University of Leeds. It considers international contributions in multimedia formats, in and about any language (including ancient languages). It aims to provide a space for the development of scholarship in language education, and to provide a platform for pieces which highlight the potential of multimodality to enhance communication, including a supportive and developmental approach to peer review.

Alongside the annual printed issue, the Language Scholar's digital space hosts and showcases contributions, facilitating the sharing and exchange of ideas. Submissions can be sent to the journal at any time, although there will be deadlines announced for specific printed issues.

If you would like to get in touch or submit a piece, you can contact us on the journal's email: **languagescholar@leeds.ac.uk** or Tweet us at **@LangScholar**

## Contents

Editorial ..... 1

Papers ..... 3

Culture A, B or C? The Experience of an ODL Module Designer ..... 4

Gruesome grammar? Maybe not? ..... 19

Language for Law: A Beginner's Mind ..... 33

Scholarbits ..... 43

Enhancing L2 skills through independent learning: the case study of an Italian E-magazine ..... 44

Manifesto for the Scholarship of Language Teaching and Learning ..... 58

Reviews ..... 61

Towards a learning culture; developing a culture that learns. A review of the 2018 Annual ISSoTL Conference. ..... 62

# Editorial

Bee Bond and Kazuki Morimoto

We would like to welcome you to Issue 3 of the Language Scholar; the first issue under a new, enlarged editorial team. As we have worked together to get to grips with the processes and constraints involved in running a journal, we have collectively been reflecting on both the operational complexities and the overall purpose of the work we are doing.

So, we would like to open this editorial with an acknowledgement of the enormous effort that has gone in to initially setting up the Journal and putting together the previous issues. I think only now do we fully appreciate the amount of work that Bettina Hermoso-Gomez, Sofia Martinho, Antonio Martinez-Arboleda and Carolin Schneider did to set the whole thing up. We hope that we are remaining true to their ideals and principles as we take the Journal forward.

With a new group of people now working on the Journal, there have been inevitable changes as we work to consolidate and clarify the focus of the Language Scholar. I think we are now much clearer that we are looking for submissions that relate to the teaching and learning of languages in particular. To this end, the whole Editorial Team have written a Manifesto that outlines in full the way we consider scholarship of, in and around the learning and teaching of languages. Whilst strongly written, the basic premise covers the five principles of all Scholarship of learning and teaching, as outlined by Felten (2013), that it should be: 'inquiry focussed on student learning; grounded in context; methodologically sound; conducted in partnership with students; appropriately public'.

We have also re-focussed some of the submission requirements. However, we remain committed to the principle that we will accept work in multiple languages and different formats and genres. The only constraints on this are our imaginations and (more mundanely) the platform we are using to publish your work. Therefore, although we do specify word limits for more traditional paper submissions, we are open to reasonable suggestion to break these; although the platform may struggle with embedding certain forms of technology, we will work with you to find a satisfactory solution that does not diminish the message you are trying to convey. We are interested in 'the uncertain, the unfinished, the relational – in short, the human – aspects and processes of scholarship and the phenomena at the heart of learning and teaching' and acknowledge that traditional academic customs of writing do not always allow these kinds of stories to be told (Cook-Sather, Abbot and Felten, forthcoming).

We hope that this Issue 3 demonstrates some of these commitments and principles, whilst maintaining and continuing the excellent work of the previous Editorial Team. More importantly, we hope that you find the submissions that make up the issue both interesting and informative, and leave you with something to think about.

**REFERENCES**

Cook-Sather, A., Abbot, S. and Felten, P. forthcoming, 2019. Legitimating a reflective writing in SoTL: 'Dysfunctionality of rigor' revisited. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*. **7** (2)

Felten, P. 2013. Principles of good practice in SoTL. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*. **1** (1). pp 121-125

# Papers

# Culture A, B or C? The Experience of an ODL Module Designer

Haynes Collins

University of Leeds: School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

**ABSTRACT**

It is generally accepted that Open Distance Learning (ODL), in forms such as massive open online courses (MOOCS), has the potential to disrupt (or even revolutionise) higher education. However, opinions as to whether this disruption will be positive or damaging vary given the many competing interests in an ever more competitive and changing higher education landscape. This article explores my experience designing an ODL module (or MOOC) in intercultural studies in 2017-2018 for the FutureLearn platform and the University of Leeds. Several conspicuous questions emerged during the process including whether the ODL platform is incompatible with pedagogical approaches to intercultural studies in particular and humanities subjects in general, whether the lack of face-to-face communication and interaction between students in ODL courses is a significant loss, and whether criticality can be retained in an introductory course offered on an ODL platform. These issues also reflect a larger concern that the disruptive features of ODL courses are a further example of the neoliberal marketisation of higher education which positions ODL as offering greater 'value' and 'efficiency' for management than face-to-face teaching. It would be wrong to take an all-encompassing Luddite stance against ODL and digital modules and naïve to image a future in higher education which does not include digital tools and variants of ODL. However, there is an urgent need for more realistic consideration of the implications for increased ODL provision in a precarious higher education environment.

**Keywords:** massive open online courses (MOOCS), open/online distance learning (ODL), marketisation of higher education, intercultural communication, critical university studies (CUS)

**INTRODUCTION**

One recent workday morning reading emails I noted that the accustomed number of automatically generated messages from FutureLearn had arrived in my inbox which usually indicated that I had new 'followers' for the course for which I was a tutor. On this occasion there was a different email from FutureLearn which was sent to remind me that the online access to the digital course which I helped design was to expire soon and continued access would require an upgrade for a fee of £72. I noted the irony of the situation, but realised that the message was simply computer-generated and I

was not actually expected to pay for continued access to a course which I helped to write. However, on further reflection, I began to see the email as symptomatic of some of the deeper problems I experienced designing the course and with Open/Online and Distance Learning (ODL) in general.

This article, which brings together the fields of intercultural education and digital learning, explores my experience in 2017 and 2018 of designing an ODL module for the FutureLearn platform and the University of Leeds. An analysis of the development of a module on intercultural studies through a digital platform offers an alternative narrative to micro-managed messages and success stories increasingly made about the value of ODL within Higher Education (HE). Additionally, I locate these discussions within the growing field of Critical University Studies (CUS) which interrogates neoliberal practices within the wider HE context and questions the increasing prevalence of managerial metrics and market ideologies (see, for example, Moorish 2018 for an overview of CUS).

The emergence of ODL and massive open online courses (MOOCs) within HE has raised a number of issues which are both practical and epistemological in nature. These issues and my experience designing the module contributed to my conflicted opinion about ODL which continues to evolve. While I have tried to keep an open mind, this article should nonetheless be read as cautionary tale against overestimating the value of ODL and against underestimating a number of issues including the resources required to design an ODL module and the epistemological consequences of this form of HE. It is important to state at the outset that the staff I worked with in designing the module were kind, committed and enthusiastic and that criticism in this article is not directed towards any individual, but is purely a reflection of what was a fraught experience which provoked questions regarding increased ODL provision within HE. This article is also limited to the design phase of the module and does not extensively address the subsequent delivery of the module which raised its own set of issues.

My connection to the ODL module began in 2016 when the initial 'Discovery Theme' Leader for 'Languages and Intercultural Understanding' suggested that a module in intercultural communication should be designed to support the theme and as part of the University's outward branding the module should be a digital one. University of Leeds readers will be familiar with Discovery Themes which are part of the UG Curriculum Enhancement Project (CEP). According to the student-facing University website description, Discovery Themes 'reinforce the value and interest of your degree by offering the opportunity to broaden your learning and pursue your own personal interests, while developing skills that will help prepare you for life at University' (University of Leeds 2018a). Given the intricacies involved in designing an ODL module and its ambiguous reception within HE, the project was slow to gain substantial momentum. For my part, I was both reluctant and sceptical, as were other colleagues, particularly in the face of optimistic statements

about the benefits of ODL including the chance to provide learners with the opportunity to 'engage, collaborate and learn in creative ways' (University of Leeds 2018b). However, in 2017 after receiving a number of reassurances regarding the value of the project and workload recognition, I committed to designing the module having very little idea of what I was about to face over the coming months which can best be described as a challenging, somewhat frustrating and extremely time-consuming process.

In considering the results of this experience, I recognise that some aspects of the project were positive including the personal learning which took place in the creative process, the previously mentioned collaboration with kind and generous staff within the digital team and the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues right across the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies (LCS). Moreover, I continue to see ODL as having some potential for making education more inclusive to a range of users such as those in continuing education and I accept that this is a growing form of delivery which is not going to simply disappear.

However, and to put it bluntly, there is no way to mask the fact that designing an ODL module is an arduous process which should provoke questions about teaching and learning within HE, work-load considerations, intellectual property rights and the degree to which MOOCS and ODL are truly inclusive. All teaching staff working in HE, including those engaged in language teaching, would do well to be aware of the growing presence of ODL, particularly as at one point MOOCs were being touted as the future of teaching which included predictions of 'an avalanche' of high-quality, low-cost mass-scale online courses which would be at the forefront of a strategic and radical reform of HE' (Barber et al., 2015). It is fair to question the desirability of this type of future particularly given that MOOCs and other forms of ODL may serve as a catalyst for a substantially reduced teaching staff with less face-to-face interaction between tutors and students and students with each other. Thus, an open and frank consideration of both the value of ODL and MOOCs as well as the possible dangers they present is an important exercise and the following section explores this growing debate.

**THE UNEVEN TRAJECTORY OF MOOCS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES REGARDING ODL**

Writing in 2014 just a few short years after the introduction of MOOCS, Robert Zemsky noted, 'They came; they conquered very little; and now they face substantially diminished prospects' (2014: 237). Part of Zemsky's assessment regarding diminished prospects takes account of the early promise which some suggested MOOCS held, including the New York Times which in 2012 proclaimed it to be 'the year of the MOOC' (Pappano, 2012). Zemsky's primary criticism of MOOCS was their boundedness and lack of connection to other parts of the university curriculum. In this respect,

Zemsky (2014: 237) saw MOOCS as reflecting the 'fractured nature of college curricula' and he compares colleges and universities to upscale restaurants where 'customers can order anything they want in whatever order they find convenient' resulting in what he describes as 'a recipe for both educational and financial failure' (2014: 242). These criticisms chimed with moves by some university staff to resist the increase in MOOC provision such as at San José State University where teachers refused to use a Harvard professor's edX MOOC in their classes for fear of offering 'cheap online education' in a 'pre-packaged form' thus rendering themselves 'glorified teaching assistants' (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*: 2013).

Yet, it would be a mistake to consider MOOCS as a single monolithic and clearly defined entity which can be assessed in a simple meta-narrative as either successful or unsuccessful. McClure (2014: 273) points out the many variations and adaptations of MOOCS which include BOOCS (big), LOOCS (little), SPOCS (targeted access and small) as well as other forms of online delivery including 'flipped classrooms' and 'blended learning' which all fall under the umbrella of online digital learning. The intercultural studies module that I helped design is in fact an example of this last category where the module was offered to both University of Leeds students (who also had some in-person teaching) while simultaneously being offered to off-campus learners.

McClure presents a much more positive account of the potential which MOOCS and ODL offer particularly through their ability to consider 'wicked problems' such as 'climate change, income inequality or generational succession' through the democratization of platforms and ability to reach communities (2014: 281). Moreover, there are numerous examples of creative online modules that span an impressive range of topics from 'Digital Storytelling' to 'Understanding Dementia' and 'Buddhism & Modern Psychology' (Porter, 2015). Zemsky's above claim of diminished prospects also fails to recognise the continual growth of MOOCS which were estimated in 2016 to be offered by more than 500 universities in over 4,200 courses with 35 billion students enrolled in 2015 (Bothwell 2016, 3). However, this growth is not necessarily a barometer for success as class sizes in the thousands of students can raise questions about the extent to which any meaningful interaction takes place between learners and academics. This reality may partially explain the very modest completion rates of just 7% as reported by the Times Higher Education study in 2013 and just 4% as seen in a University of Pennsylvania study (Guerriero, 2014).

Clearly, questions remain regarding MOOCS and their future may lie in smaller and targeted ODL courses offering learning potential through blended and interactive approaches. MOOCS and smaller ODL courses may also increasingly be used as a reference material which one can dip in and out of without the expectation to progress from start to finish. Much of the potential hinges on the degree to which true 'openness' is provided by both MOOCS and other forms of ODL which could, in theory,

provide alternatives to traditional education and allow greater inclusivity in HE provided costs to users are kept low. Given rising student loan debt and increasing costs in tuition fees, many are looking to ODL in its various forms to provide an alternative to costly higher education. These include what have been dubbed HARVARDS (Highly Accessible Rigourous, Very Affordable and Recognised Degrees) whereby an entire degree programme can be offered via ODL at a fraction of the cost of comparable campus-based learning (see Sharrock, 2015 for the example of Georgia Tech and more recently, Coughlan, 2018 for the University of London) and 'unbundling' where modules are no longer tied to entire degree programmes requiring full on-campus learning. However, criticism has been voiced regarding the lack of transparency surrounding the business models between HEIs and online educational service providers. Kroick (2013) argues that 'recent deals struck with public universities reflect a business strategy that has little concern for the accessibility of education'. The lack of transparency of the business module sits awkwardly alongside the reminders via email and prominent positioning on the learning platform of the opportunity to upgrade.

It is difficult to imagine anyone within the University countenancing the prospect of announcements flashing up in University lecture halls offering students the possibility to 'upgrade' their module and receive 'bonuses' such as increased engagement with their written work, increased access to teaching staff or hard copies of lecture handouts. Yet, the upgrade option which provides for long term access to FutureLearn courses is an accepted facet of the platform's interface. Given the current rate of fees for HE in the UK combined with the increased marketisation and neoliberal forces in operation, it is justifiable to be sceptical about just how free and open ODL courses will continue to be and how far removed the expansion of the 'upgrade model' into other University activities truly is. The anxiety about the corporate and neoliberal influence on educational systems is, of course, not new and a rich vein of literature exists starting perhaps with Thompson's 1970 study of Warwick University 'Ltd.' (see also, for example, Fairclough, 1993; Philipson, 2001; Molesworth et al., 2011; Collins, 2017). However, the advent of ODL potentially allows a new avenue for neoliberal ideas to be touted in the form of modernisation, freedom of choice and convenience ('access to education anytime and anywhere'). While these benefits should not be dismissed in their entirety, it is necessary to be attuned to the implications that these supposed values may be concealing. These above concerns are not exhaustive and others emerge below through the consideration of my personal experience in the module design.

**PRACTICAL PAIN: ENTERING INTO A TIME VORTEX WITH A 'QUEUE BREAKER'**

My starting point at the beginning of the course design process was admittedly sceptical, but because I knew very little about ODL modules I wanted to keep an open mind. My scepticism

reflected a general epistemological anxiety around whether an ODL module was an appropriate platform to teach my subject, intercultural communication. I was particularly worried that the course format would privilege a banking approach to knowledge within a behaviourist 'teach and test' framework. While these anxieties never fully went away and at times crystallised into an understanding of the competing tensions and incompatibility of the project as a whole, my main concern once the planning, writing and filming started was simply the sheer amount of time which the project required. This is not intended to be a tale of woe decrying the amount of work it takes to design an ODL, particularly given that I am surrounded by colleagues working at a rate which exceeds expectation and belief. However, what never ceased to amaze me and my fellow contributors was the degree of resources required to design what was essentially a 10 credit module.

The shape of the module design followed a set template where the module was divided into what were confusingly termed 'courses'. Each course, in theory, equated to 10 hours of learning following a prescribed pattern. For the Intercultural Studies module, there were 5 courses of which 3 were designed by me, and 2 by other colleagues. Once completed, the module was offered to University of Leeds students and distance learners via the FutureLearn platform. The time requirements for the project were never fully spelled out and I did not entirely comprehend the extent of work required, despite meeting what seemed to be an endless succession of new people associated with either the project directly or who were part of the online and digital learning unit. In August, approximately 10-12 hours were dedicated to face-to-face meetings to talk through a course outline with a member from the digital team. This produced a course skeleton which bore faint resemblance to what was actually produced later. Moreover, it was the first chance to encounter the course design templates which were essentially user-unfriendly boxes to be filled with 'content'. Much of the time spent during these summer months felt somewhat directionless and could have been more efficiently dedicated to writing the course materials or 'scripts'.

My colleagues and I were adamant that we did not want to be met with tight deadlines once the term commenced in September. Unfortunately, this is exactly what happened. While we were certainly not unenthusiastic about writing the courses, the deadlines came at a particularly busy time and there were constant reminders of the need to finish things quickly. As one contributor put it: 'It felt a bit like being constantly hit over the head with a hammer.' The time limits also meant the ODL module became regarded as a 'queue breaker,' as other pressing deadlines including teaching and supporting existing students often had to be pushed back so that another script could be written for the ODL project. We were eventually offered a chance to slow down the process in November 2017, but by this point we were motivated by the prospect of finishing the courses.

These tight deadlines also ensured that evenings, weekends and holidays became dedicated to writing and editing scripts for each course. Again, this is not to present a work-shy narrative, but to stress that anyone considering undertaking ODL design should be prepared for a significant input of time.

**EPISTEMOLOGICAL ANGST: A GLIMPSE INTO A DYSTOPIAN HE FUTURE?**

While there was clearly a degree of practical pain associated with populating pages and pages of templates with 'content', the real burning questions concern the future role of ODL in HE in the face of marketisation and neoliberal forces. These concerns manifested themselves most noticeably in three particular areas. They are firstly, the incompatibility of ODL with pedagogical approaches in discursive subjects within humanities, such as intercultural studies and intercultural communication; secondly, the erosion of the value of being together, and thirdly, the loss of criticality through, for example, the editing and marketing of the courses.

**Interculturality and ODL: Real Engagement is Expensive, MCQs Are Not**

Interculturality and the ODL template are not natural allies. The field of intercultural communication has, in my own opinion, made advancements towards a more liquid and critical understanding of culture which represents 'a shift from a focus on content and competence in dialogue to relationships and capability for dialogue grounded in ethics' (Phipps, 2014: 122). Intercultural environments are, as Stokoe and Attenborough argue, diverse contexts where 'culture is never just "culture" but is always "culture in action" and where much of that action is performed in and through the various identity categories that people invoke during local and contextually specific forms of social interaction' (2015, 89). This takes account of the need, in Piller's words to analyse, 'who makes culture relevant to whom, in which context for which purposes' (2011: 5). This also includes a critical analysis of how the notion of 'cultural understanding' can itself become packaged and commodified (Dahlen, 1997).

A focus on the dialogic co-construction of culture which emanates from all social interaction stands in clear contrast to culture seen as a collection of 'cultural facts' about particular people and places which can then be tested in a series of questions at the end of each activity. This tension between trying to adapt a problematising and critical approach to intercultural studies to the FutureLearn platform was apparent at a number of pressure points. One particular source of friction was the use of MCQs and 'type form' questions to test intercultural 'knowledge' in a format similar to compulsory courses on 'Manual Handling Safety' which University of Leeds readers will be familiar with. To some extent, this approach served to invalidate the course. Instead of concluding each theme or activity with a more open dialogue, the course used a template which tested learners via

MCQs and other 'type form' questions which then generated pre-programmed feedback on the answers. The questions appeared to suggest a 'right' or 'wrong' response which created a sense of closure and offered no right of reply from the learner. More problematic was that these questions lacked any specific context which is crucial to influencing choices made during social interaction. Questions and answers were pre-programmed and responses were automatically processed by algorithms without any deliberation or discussion. Where there was some opportunity for learners to produce a lengthier answer to a question, learners' submission of their response received the following automatic message: 'Your answers have been perfectly sent'. This is regardless of what type of answer the learner supplied (even a nonsensical answer received the same reply).

A key ingredient in interculturality is that knowledge can be advanced through dialogue allowing for a consideration of multiple vantage points and fine-grained understanding of context. However, in the ODL course, learning was largely rendered a faceless and automatic exercise with limited right of reply and done via a template which considers clicks as a form of 'learning' and with 'content' broken into small, separate chunks which are limited to 5 minutes maximum viewing or reading time. This has the effect of creating a very linear, disconnected set of ideas which are not explored at any substantial depth which, although hosted on a web platform, discourages a more web-like or rhizomatic approach to learning. For the sake of balance, it should be acknowledged that the digital platform did make use of interactive learner technology such as padlets and a discussion forum which offered a degree of active exchange, but these tools were not used to their full potential. It is conceivable that these and other digital tools could be used to support a more active and critical form of ODL which encourages increased dialogue provided they were given greater emphasis.

It is important that teachers consider whether this model is suitable for their own (or any) fields of knowledge and whether this model is a future vision of education which should be subscribed to. Behind this learning template is the allure of efficiency offered by pre-programmed responses generated by algorithms. Additionally, the course template also suggests a misplaced 'badging approach' to interculturality and learning whereby someone is seen to be interculturally competent through selecting the correct MCQ, completing the course and gaining a certificate. A more productive approach takes into account the continuous daily need to carefully reflect on our social interaction and how we and others are positioned through both discourse and power. In this last sense, interculturality is never complete and course materials (or 'content') is but a mere starting point for dialogue, not an end product to be tested.

Finally, I was struck by how many of the tensions that took place during the design process reflected those which emerged in the anthropologist Tommy Dahlén's study of intercultural trainers in 1997 in the US where the notion of intercultural communication was being commoditised by 'intercultural

trainers' (1997: 177). Dahlén's ethnographic account noted the over-simplistic approach to intercultural training models, particularly as a more nuanced view could undermine a paradigm which stressed 'cultural differences' as real and significant barriers. These barriers justified the need for trainers who could help customers overcome potential cultural differences, thus further justifying their position and serving their vested interests. In this framework, the users of intercultural trainers (or 'customers') 'need to be persuaded that *culture is* a *significant*, identifiable factor behind the conflicts and misunderstandings arising in their interactions with particular others' (1997: 177, emphasis mine). Dahlén's recognition that the notion of culture must be kept 'significant' for the consumers of intercultural commodities is particularly relevant as it can deter approaches which offer a critical suspicion of narratives of cultural difference and solid cultures. Throughout the process of designing the module, I felt as if I was both designing a 'product' while also fighting against both a learning template and approach that made nuance and criticality difficult, with the editing and marketing of the course underpinned by a paradigm where 'understanding national cultural differences' was kept both as an enticement to potential learners to join the course and as a way of seeing and ordering the world.

**Face-to-Face Communication or Clicks: The Value of Being There**

A second consideration which is pertinent, but not limited to the field of intercultural communication, is the belief that we learn to be together by being together. The value and learning that comes with human contact, face-to-face exchanges and through what Massey (2005) terms 'thrown togetherness' should not be underestimated. One of the rewarding aspects of teaching is reacting to the unexpected and the unplanned and this is possible through the opportunity to communicate and interact with students and to encourage learners to bring in aspects of their own beliefs, values and commitment. To observe when students are struggling or when they are flying with confidence is part and parcel of the alchemy of teaching. Teaching is both provocative and reactive and being together in a physical space where you can observe the level of learners' engagement is important. In place of face-to-face contact, FutureLearn learners often interact with a one-size-fits-all template which includes pre-programmed answers and responses written by 'content providers' with learning activities designed for an unknown audience. The attempt to include more interactive learning opportunities such as a discussion forum is a step in the right direction but not an adequate substitution.

The one-size-fits-all template relies on a blocking, scripting and reduction of 'content' into small bite-sized segments which are artificial, non-dialogic, and lack spontaneity. It also suggests a 'banking approach' to teaching and learning, an epistemological framing of knowledge as a collection of 'facts' and a 'teach and test' template. This performance-based competencies approach to education

resonates with Thomson's critique of a 'master narrative' with a 'distribution of knowledge-as-a-thing, where outcomes are privileged over purposes and processes, and learning is assumed to proceed in the same way for all' (Thomson, 2013: 170). This approach may lead to a 'cost effective' future for education, but it is also one where real engagement suffers. Unfortunately, real engagement is expensive.

**Replacing Criticality with Marketing and Spin**

The marketing and editing of the course material raised further questions regarding the ability of ODL to retain criticality in its courses. With regard to marketing, there was clearly an attempt to promote the course through references to culture which were incompatible with the aims and objectives of the course. While one of the course aims was to problematise the view of the world as a series of bounded, distinct and homogenous 'cultures', the marketing attempted to promote the course through this very framework combined with a celebratory approach to cultures which lacked criticality. An example of the disjointed approach between the marketing and the course aims were the visual representations which were frequently suggested by marketing to promote the courses. These were often artificial images from Shutterstock such as a Japanese businessman bowing and a 'Western' businessman reaching out to shake hands or tourists takings selfies in front of the Eiffel Tower which presented a world view that was largely incompatible with the course aims. This disjuncture even spilled over into the realm of my digital profile. An internet search for my name (a narcissistic exercise which I do not often perform) now produces a top hit with the line: 'How do cultures interact and affect each other?' While this is not exactly scandalous, it is also not how I would personally frame social interaction or 'cultures' and this line which, was reproduced from the course marketing material, now forever links my digital profile to a marketing strapline.

Another issue was the marketing suggestion to change the original name of the course to a new course name (e.g. Cultural Studies) which did not even match the field of the course. New course names were simply suggested through sampling analytics measuring what produced the most internet hits. A further example of the mismatch between the marketing (and platform) and the course objectives concerned the objective of asking learners to critique 'consumer culture' and 'communication saturation.' Given that much of the communication learners received was computer generated, offered limited real engagement and was packaged in a commoditised form with upgrades, the course itself became a perfect example of what learners were being asked to critique.

To compound matters, the course materials written by myself and colleagues went through the Digital Team's editing process which at times resulted in the intended meaning being changed to

one which was the obverse of the original intention. This was not a result of malicious intent, but an oversimplification of a message to be conveyed to an invisible audience. For example, attempts to challenge social practices were at times rendered into what sounded like a celebration or recommendation that these practices should be adopted. It also resulted in inconsistency. In one of the initial courses learners encountered the term 'host culture' which is challenged through the suggestion that it is unhelpful and nebulous, only for this term to be inserted in the course mate rials for another activity later in another course. The effects of this were not only demotivating, but it resulted in selecting a least damaging option in the final editing processes and accepting difficult compromises. All of this was done with very tight deadlines looming.

What was being erased by the marketing and was lost in the editing process was both criticality and learning potential. While the endless hedging of academic writing can at times result in annoying jargon, hedging often goes hand-in-hand with a cautious and nuanced approach which is important in the consideration of interculturality and in understanding complexity. For example, when introducing a notion such as 'cultural appropriation', learners need to be given the opportunity to examine its conceptual strengths and weaknesses regardless of my own position which largely sees the notion of transcultural flows as a more accurate reflection of cultural practices. Thus, the different connotations between a video script which states, 'Dreadlocks *could arguably be seen by some* as a form of cultural appropriation' versus 'Dreadlocks *are* a form of cultural appropriation' is significant. The second option renders the statement a *verdict* or a *fact* to simply be digested. Moreover, as this is a sentence to be digitally captured as part of a lesson, it suggests that it is also my own position and it eliminates the potential for learners to critically analyse the efficacy of the concept. Too often this later style of presenting learning material as a series of facts was chosen as a way to 'simplify' content which resulted in eliminating the learning possibilities for students and creating a false impression of my own position. These are just some of the examples of how criticality and learning potential were lost.

**WHAT ODL POTENTIALLY CAN OFFER: SOME POSITIVES**

This piece should not be seen as a categorical denial of any value in ODL and the issues covered above may to some degree be influenced by disciplinary concerns related to the field of intercultural studies. There are clearly positive aspects of ODL and potential for engaging learners across the world. I have been impressed by some of the online discussion which has taken place on the course by learners from a wide range of locations, although the lack of knowledge about these learners or face-to-face interaction with them reduces this advantage. Additionally, the courses have attracted interest from a group of universities which see the digital material as having the potential to act as a

catalyst for facilitating face-to-face dialogue between students who are starting a year abroad programme. This discursive approach is a much more compatible one for intercultural education.

The opportunity for collaboration between colleagues is another benefit which ODL provides. The ODL team includes animators who are able to creatively illustrate points in ways that are much more visually appealing than the standard Power Point slide. The ability to record discussions or interviews which can be used in course materials provides a very useful pedagogical resource. This also allows course designers to digitally capture the experience and expertise of a range of University staff and students to be used for teaching and learning. The ability to send a camera into the community can convey examples from everyday life from outside the confines of the University, although this benefit is limited by the constraints around copyright and image rights and the very cautious approach taken by ODL to critiquing corporate discourses. These advantages, along with the ability to attract a diverse range of learners, are all important and offer considerable potential. This is one of the reasons why it would be a mistake to completely dismiss ODL. However, it may be what ODL is seen to offer in the eyes of management, such as a 'leaner' University with lower costs through 'staffing efficiencies', which are what ultimately drive the University investment in ODL.

**CONCLUSION: IS IT JUST ME?**

I started the process of ODL module design with an open mind, but the gradual unfolding of understanding resulted in a much more sceptical position. The initial stages included trepidation and anxiety over an inability to gain a bird's eye view of what the ODL design process entailed and what the finished product would look like. Once the reality began to emerge, serious issues became apparent. While the practical workload could be described as very substantial given the amount of meetings, planning, inefficient processes and demands on producing content, the real concerns went much deeper than a sheer sense of worry about hard work.

These concerns are broader ones which question the role of ODL in HE and specifically relate to areas such as how ODL templates affect the approach to teaching and learning, the ability of ODL to retain criticality in its course material, the substitution of face-to-face engagement to one mediated by algorithms and the neoliberal model of HE as exemplified by 'upgrades'. This is not by any means an exhaustive list of concerns and teachers who are employed to teach languages may also want to reflect on the implications of increased ODL activity particularly with the addition of other forms of digital language learning tools such as Rosetta Stone. I have also increasingly noted comments suggesting MOOCs on academic writing to be a better option than a more expensive campus-based pre-sessional course. An important question in this debate is what teachers offer in the classroom

setting where face-to-face learning takes place within a community of learners. What do teachers offer which cannot be replaced by an algorithm?

Not everyone's ODL experience will be similar to mine and some of my concerns could be much less relevant for another discipline. There are aspects of the ODL course which I believe are very good and can engage learners, particularly where other staff and students made contributions. There also appears to be a great deal of momentum behind ODL which includes some creative and innovative approaches to module design. These apparent successes resulted in my own self-questioning regarding the validity of my objections. I frequently began to question whether I was being too sensitive or whether or not I was simply out-of-step with the rest of the University. McClure's position has been helpful where she argues that, '[t]he critical issue for HEIs is to make MOOCs useful before MOOC technology turns into competitive weapons wielded against them by someone else' (2014: 270). That sense of usefulness has to include an ability to retain the critical edge which should be at the heart of HE. It is clear that there is a need for an open debate regarding the role of ODL within the University which includes issues such as transparency in the business model, workload, non-negotiable templates and processes. It should also take account of theoretical concerns such as the importance of retaining criticality in HE and what counts as real engagement in teaching and learning. However, given the current momentum behind ODL, the lack of an engaged debate seems eerily disquieting.

**Address for correspondence: h.collins@leeds.ac.uk**

**REFERENCES**

Barber, M. Donelly, K. and Rizvi, S. 2013. An avalanche is coming: Higher education and the revolution ahead. *Institute for Policy Research.* [Online] Available from: *https://www.ippr.org/publications/an-avalanche-is-coming-higher-education-and-the-revolution-ahead*

Bothwell, E. 2016. Moocs can transform education – but not yet. *The Times Higher Education.* July 21, 2016.

Collins, H. 2017. Interculturality from above and below: Navigating uneven discourses in a neoliberal university system. *Language and Intercultural Communication.* **18**(2), pp. 167-183.

Coughlan, S. 2018. University offers fully fledged science degree online for £5,650. *BBC.* [Online] Available from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-43288793

Dahlén, T. 1997. *Among the interculturalists: an emergent profession and its packaging of knowledge.* Stockholm: Department of Social Anthropology.

Dervin, F. 2011. A plea for change in research on intercultural discourses: A 'liquid' approach to the study of the acculturation of Chinese students. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses.* **6**(1), pp. 37-52.

Fairclough, N. 1993. Critical discourse analysis and the marketization of public discourse: The universities. *Discourse and Society.* **4**(2), pp. 133-168.

Guerriero, M. 2014. A MOOC mystery: Where do online students go? *The New Yorker.* February 28 [Online] Available from: https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/a-mooc-mystery-where-do-online-students-go

Kroik, P. 2013. MOOCs are going to ruin your college education, *MIC*. [Online] Available from: https://mic.com/articles/56163/moocs-are-going-to-ruin-your-college-education#.EQ4xnHK61

Massey, D. 2005. *For space.* Los Angeles: Sage

McClure, M. 2014. MOOCS, wicked problems, and the spirit of liberal arts. *The Journal of General Education.* **63**(4), pp. 269-286.

Molesworth, M. Scullion, R. and Nixon, E. eds. 2011. *The marketization of higher education and the student as the consumer.* London: Routledge.

Moorish, L. 2018. Can critical university studies survive the toxic university? *Academic Irregularities.* [Online] Available from: https://academicirregularities.wordpress.com/2018/06/08/can-critical-university-studies-survive-the-toxic-university/

Pappano, L. 2012. The Year of the MOOC, *New York Times.* [Online] Available from: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/04/education/edlife/massive-open-online-courses-are-multiplying-at-a-rapid-pace.html

Philipson, R. 2001. English for globalisation or for the world's people? *International Review of Education.* **47**(3-4), pp. 185-200.

Phipps, A. 2014. They are bombing now': Intercultural dialogue in times of conflict. *Language and Intercultural Communication.* **14**(1), pp. 108-124.

Piller, I. 2011. *Intercultural communication: A critical introduction.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Porter, S. 2015. *To MOOC or not to MOOC: How can online learning help to build the future of higher education?* Amsterdam: Chandos.

Sharrock, G. 2015. Making sense of the MOOCs debate. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management.* **37**(5), pp. 597 – 609.

Stokoe, E. and Attenborough, F. T. 2015. Prospective and retrospective categorization: Category proffers and inferences in domestic, institutional and news media interaction. In: Fitzgerald, R. and Housley, W. eds. *Advances in membership categorization analysis.* London: Sage, pp. 51-70.

The Chronicle of Higher Education. 2013. An open letter to Professor Michael Sandel from the Philosophy Department of San Jose State U. [Online] Available from: https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Document-an-Open-Letter/138937

Thompson, E. P. 1970. *Warwick University Ltd.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Thomson, P. 2013. Romancing the market: Narrativising equity in globalising times. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Policies of Education.* **34**(2), pp. 170-184.

University of Leeds. 2018a. *Broadening: Expand Your Academic Horizons* [Online] Available from: https://leedsforlife.leeds.ac.uk/Broadening

University of Leeds. 2018b. *The Digital Education Service* [Online] Available from: https://digitaleducation.leeds.ac.uk

Zemsky, R. 2014. With a MOOC MOOC here and a MOOC MOOC there, here a MOOC, there a MOOC, everywhere a MOOC, MOOC. *The Journal of General Education,* **63**(4) pp. 237-243.

# Gruesome grammar? Maybe not?

Maria Chiara La Sala

Italian, University of Leeds: School of Languages, Cultures and Societies,

**ABSTRACT**

One of the most common challenges for tutors and learners of a second language is teaching and learning grammar. This article considers the two main ways of teaching grammar: deductively or inductively. By doing so, it provides an insight, which informs how both approaches can be used to stimulate student understanding and active use of grammar structures.

**Keywords**: grammar, writing skills, translation, feedback, deductive approach, inductive approach

**INTRODUCTION**

As part of the Modern Foreign Language Teaching and Learning curricular reform in the 1980s, grammar teaching was often replaced by the communicative approach, in an attempt to 'get pupils talking' (Grenfell, 2000: 4). As a result of this policy, accuracy was not a priority and errors were tolerated. However, more recent debates have led to the recognition of the need to focus on grammar. Grammar is important and learners seem to focus best on grammar when it relates to their communicative needs and experiences (Savignon, 2001: 125). This article will deal with different methods and approaches to teaching grammar based on my personal experience of teaching Italian as second language across all levels of proficiency. This part will be introduced by a short review of main approaches to teach second language (L2) grammar.

**REVIEW OF MAIN APPROACHES TO GRAMMAR TEACHING**

Grammar is described in terms of morphology and syntax. Morphology affects the word structure, whereas syntax includes: phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs. For the purpose of this article, grammar is: "The system by which the words and the morphemes of a language are organized into larger units, particularly into sentences […]" (Trask, 2013: 121-2).

Grammar is an enabling skill as its acquisition enables learners to process and produce correct sentences, in both the spoken and written form. However, grammar is not always the part of language that tutors want to teach or students want to learn. Teaching a set of rules and forms successfully depends on how tutors put that information across in the best way to suit learners and facilitate cooperation. Grammar can be taught in two main ways: deductively or inductively. A

deductive approach means that learners receive information on language rules, which they subsequently apply to specific language examples and reinforce through practice exercises. In an inductive approach, learners have a more active role in discovering the grammar rules. They are usually provided with a text that includes the target grammar and, by exploring that text, they try to obtain the grammar rules (Ellis, 2006: 83-107).

The distinction between 'focus on 'Form' and focus on 'Forms' is also useful to understand the different ways in which grammar can be approached in the classroom. Sheen (2002: 303) draws attention to Long's definition of focus on 'Form' and focus on 'Forms'. While the former refers to drawing '… students attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication', the latter refers to the traditional teaching of discrete points of grammar in separate lessons (Long, 1991: 45-46, in Sheen, 2002: 303).

The learning of grammatical structures can also happen through corrective feedback on erroneous linguistic forms (Ellis, 2016: 413). This method has a great potential to enhance student understanding of grammar structures and the importance of L2 learners' understanding of feedback is receiving a great deal of attention in the discussions amongst language tutors and practitioners.

**PRACTICAL WAYS TO TEACH GRAMMAR**

Higher Education needs to prepare students to perform academic-type tasks based on language accuracy as well as to develop communicative competence. Grammatical and communicative competence can be treated separately in some teaching and learning situations. However, grammatical competence is a very useful skill in communicative contexts:

Grammar exists to enable us to 'mean', and without grammar it is impossible to communicate beyond a very rudimentary level (Nunan, 1995: 153).

More recent studies support the view that 'for the development of communicative ability, research findings overwhelmingly support the integration of form-focused exercises with meaning focused-experience' (Savignon, 2001: 125). In the following sections, I will focus on different techniques to teach grammar based on my own experience as a language tutor. My own practice shows that these strategies can be helpful as they offer solutions to the quandary of choosing between a 'deductive approach' and an 'inductive approach'. A combination of both approaches is not only possible but also desirable to enhance student understanding of grammatical structures.

**Explore similarities and differences between L1 and L2**

Extensive research has been done in the area of mother tongue interference on the target language. Oral and written productions of second language learners show plenty of evidence of errors that can be traced back to the mother tongue (Khansir 2012, Richards and Schmidt 2002, Corder 1976). However, the mother tongue can support a learner of L2. The more aware learners are of the similarities and differences between their mother tongue and the target language, the easier they will find it to adopt effective learning and production strategies. Informed teaching can help students to become more attentive to important categories in the second language which have no mother-tongue counterpart.

The following table, aimed at exploring the equivalent moods to the Italian *passato prossimo* and *imperfetto* in English, is from the grammar slides developed to teach Italian grammar at intermediate level at Leeds University. From the table, it can be seen that a deductive approach is used to explain the equivalence. Learners are taught rules and given specific information about the language. Through this 'traditional' and explicit instruction, learners are able to notice the difference between the structures of their first language and those of the target language.

*Table 1: Equivalent past tenses in Italian and English*

**Passato prossimo e imperfetto: tempi equivalenti in inglese** (Table created by Dr Alessio Baldini, Lecturer in Italian, Leeds University)

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

| ITALIANO | INGLESE |
|---|---|
| PASSATO PROSSIMO (*ho preso*) | PRESENT PERFECT (*I have taken*)<br>SIMPLE PAST (*I took*) |
| IMPERFETTO (*prendevo*) | PROGRESSIVE PAST (*I was taking*)<br>*WOULD* + INFINITIVE (*I would take*)<br>*USED TO* + INFINITIVE INDEFINITAMENTE (*I used to take*)<br>SIMPLE PAST (*I took*) |

The value of this type of table is that it supplies explicit technical explanation on a structure that would be quite challenging to grasp though inductive learning — and extremely time-consuming!

However, this deductive activity on its own would not be enough to ensure that students have a full understanding of this grammatical point. More inductive tasks are required to achieve this objective. Therefore, in my language seminars, I have included students' blogs as a follow-up activity after the introduction of a new grammatical point. As part of the preparation for written seminars, students are asked to find their own material on a specific grammatical point and post it on the Virtual Learning Environment. Posts are analysed and discussed during the following written seminar. Students are encouraged to explore similarities and difference between their mother tongue and the target language through this activity. They do this by identifying constructions that do not have the exact equivalent in the target language as well as by recognizing when the mother tongue and the target language operate in the same way. Students are given this kind of instructions to prepare the task:

- Find a 50 words passage in Italian showing the use of *passato.remoto* vs *imperfetto*, *passato prossimo* vs *passato remoto*. You could choose a passage from a novel or from the reading list of one of your content modules.

- Find a 50 words passage in Italian with examples of '*congiuntivo trapassato*' and its use in secondary clauses. You could choose a passage from a novel or one of your content modules.

The following screenshots illustrate some examples of students' posts:

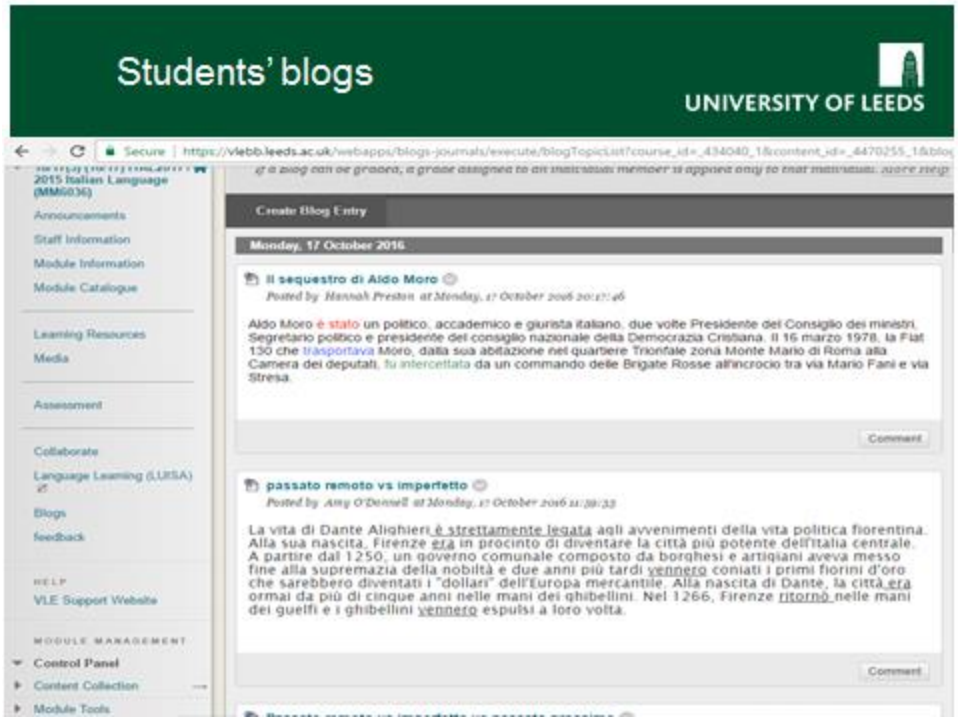



*Figure 1: Screenshot of students' blogs*

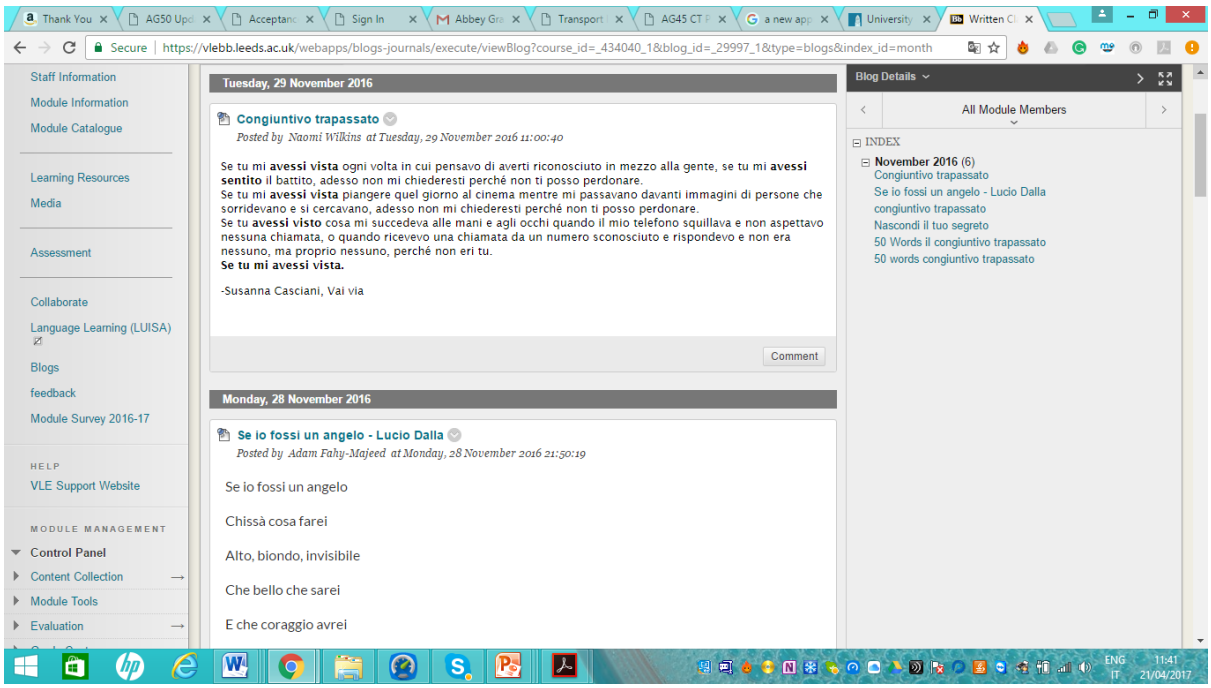



*Figure 2: Screenshot of students' blogs*

This exercise is very well-received, with a high number of students contributing and very positive feedback from them. The following comments are from the informal feedback on the module given by students enrolled in 2016-17:

The things I enjoy:

- Gaining deeper knowledge of Italian grammar
- Getting further in the grammar and learning more vocabulary
- The use of the blog on the VLE
- Blog research
- Really enjoyable oral and grammar classes, engaging with teachers and other students

The comments show that students enjoy learning grammar and that they regard the blog activity as a valuable exercise to consolidate their knowledge of a grammatical point. From a pedagogical point of view, this task allows learners to reformulate their understanding of structures over time, to locate structures in a meaningful context and to work independently.

**Translation tasks to enhance grammar awareness**

Translating is another activity that allows tutors to use both deductive and inductive approaches in grammar teaching activities. This exercise is particularly productive when carried out with advanced learners who are dealing with complex grammatical constructions. The first component of the final-year written language exam of the Italian degree at Leeds University consists of a translation paper of two literary or journalistic texts: one from English into Italian and one from Italian into English. Written language seminars, therefore, aim to consolidate language skills, through the translation of literary and non-literary texts.

Through translation, learners have the opportunity to learn grammatical structures by noticing specific characteristics of the TL as well as the correspondence between TL features and their MT equivalents. Studies on translation (George 1972, Cooke 2010) demonstrate how this task can be an effective way of reflecting on morpho-syntactical features. The reflection on morpho-syntactical features thorough translation tasks, however, does not have to happen under the constant guide of the tutor. A deductive approach could be used as a first step, where learners are initially given information on language rules and subsequently asked to translate texts targeting those specific grammatical structures. This more traditional approach, however, can be combined with one that promotes student engagement and encourages learners to notice certain structures.

My own practice of using translation in the teaching of Italian as L2 allows me to highlight the following activities as a way of engaging student active participation and reflection on morpho-syntactical features:

- Comparing in groups individual attempts to translate the same text: this activity gives the opportunity to discuss challenging grammatical points and possible ways of tackling them.

- Using peer discussion as a way of improving the first attempt to translate a passage: this activity is useful not only to consolidate acquisition of language structures but also to understand that the learning process can happen independently. Learners are able to appreciate that they do not need constant guide and attention from their language tutor to make progress.

- Listing mistakes by grammatical categories by comparing individual attempts against good model translations.

Indeed, these peer feedback activities encourage students to participate actively in the process of acquiring and consolidating specific grammatical structures (Sambell, McDowell and Montgomery 2012; Smith, Cooper and Lancaster 2002). Tutors do not need to assume a scholarly role and can evaluate best options and solutions in a collegial way in the class. They can encourage students to reflect on new possibilities, by selecting the best version and giving reasons for a particular choice.

The students' general feedback on the language module allowed us to understand how they engaged with the translation activities:

<u>The things I enjoy:</u>

- Translation passages
- Translation classes: correcting the translations in class
- Good discussion on grammar points that come up in translation passages, student led
- Translation seminars: awesome format: practical, real life experience. Flexibility and creativity encouraged

These comments show that the students regard this exercise as very useful for the enhancement of their grammar skills and that translation offers an opportunity to tackle grammar issues in an enjoyable and constructive way.

**Writing tasks to enhance grammar awareness**

This section is about how writing tasks can be used to enhance grammar awareness. As for the tasks discussed in the previous sections, a combination of more traditional approaches, where the teacher gives specific instructions and more creative ones, where learners are given the opportunity to notice and resolve problems independently, has proved to be an effective strategy in language seminars.

The second component of the final-year Italian written language exam consists of two-hour essay paper. The essay titles are based on general topics as well as on more academic subjects found in the content modules available in the final year. The reason for giving students the choice to write on a more academic subject is twofold: 'to encourage them to work on language at a more sophisticated level and to motivate them to make more use of the bibliographical sources in Italian which are provided, but often neglected, for content modules' (Santovetti: 2017: 8). This point is backed up by a student comment on the strategies she used to improve her writing skills. She advised less experienced students to: 'read Italian academic material and try and notice trends and phrases that demonstrate how native Italians write'.

Zamel's article, widely quoted, though written long ago, has studied the effect of writing on L2 learners and has concluded that it is an excellent way of bridging the gap between theory and practice (Zamel, 1987). Writing provides tutors with the opportunity to support learners in the development of grammatical skills in several ways. Here I present possible strategies to consolidate morpho-syntactical structures through student written language production. Although these strategies are teacher-led, they also enable learners to apply their knowledge and think critically in order to enhance their understanding of a grammatical issue.

Tutors can target specific grammatical structures by giving learners instructions to include them in their writing, with the purpose of consolidating them and putting them into practice. These grammar structures need to be selected according to the grammar topics included in the course outline and also covered in seminars or lectures dedicated to the explicit teaching of grammar. My experience shows that this activity can be a very beneficial exercise for advanced learners, who need to demonstrate a clear appreciation of the nuances of vocabulary, syntax and grammar in their writing. Recently, a student commented on the usefulness of this task as follows: 'It has helped me to create a few stock phrases that are grammatically correct and adaptable to different subject areas to be used in practice essays'.

Engaging students with examples of good writing in the target language is another important strategy. Students will have to notice the good structures and evaluate them. Examples of good writing will also serve as a linguistic support for the student and provide models for good constructions to be used in the target language. A similar activity is to expose them to examples of 'less good' writing in the target language and suggest that they identify problematic constructions as well as to improve them.

Editing and revising written production helps students to identify and correct problematic constructions. This revision can be successfully carried out after being exposed to explicit grammar instruction aimed to rectify specific problems. For example, if frequent errors of the same grammatical nature are present in the written production of several learners, a mini-lesson can be presented on the topic, using examples of student writing. The following list is a collection of students' phrases in essay writing, containing preposition mistakes:

*Table 2: Collection of students' phrases*

| Students' phrases | Correct form |
|---|---|
| • Simbolo per la ricchezza<br>• Ho potuto ricordare me stesso<br>• I lati positivi sull'apprendimento<br>• È difficile di imparare una nuova lingua<br>• Mettere barriere con i paesi che la Gran Bretagna commercia | • Simbolo di ricchezza<br>• Ho potuto ricordare a me stesso<br>• I lati positivi dell'apprendimento<br>• È difficile imparare una nuova lingua<br>• Mettere barriere con i paesi con cui la Gran Bretagna commercia |

Students are asked to edit their own writing after group discussion on this particular problem. The following comments indicate how this activity has also helped students to develop autonomous language learning strategies outside the classroom:

- Write short essays, get them checked by an Italian tutor, and rewrite them with corrections.
- Before the essay exam, look at all of your previous essays and make a note of every single mistake that you have made and attempt to understand the corrections.

Other studies support the view that combining grammar instruction with the revision of writing tasks makes grammar more meaningful and helps learners to put grammar in context:

> Integrating grammar instruction into the revising and editing process helps students make immediate applications, thus allowing them to see the relevance of grammar to their own writing (Chin, 2000:1)

**Formative feedback to enhance awareness of grammar structures**

Ellis (2006: 84) argues that grammar teaching can be conducted by means of corrective feedback on learner errors when these arise in the context of performing some communicative tasks. Formative feedback provides students with the opportunity to analyse and be critical of their own production. However, for feedback to have a positive effect on learners, it is also important to highlight those moments when they have performed well in a specific task. Feedback starts being meaningful if,

through it, learners get a better understanding of the gaps in their knowledge and can take subsequent, specific actions to improve their performance. Therefore, feedback cannot be reduced to a passive task where students are presented a prescriptive list of errors and then asked to rectify them. Students need to engage actively with the process of receiving feedback (Elwood and Kenowski 2002, Falchikov 2005). Student participation can be facilitated if students' work is marked against clear assessment criteria and if students can relate their grade to those marking criteria. Another issue in understanding feedback can derive from a lack of understanding of the specialized terminology used in the marking criteria.

Encouraging learners to engage with the criteria and the terminology used to describe different levels of performance increases understanding of feedback and, hopefully, retention of target structures. Certain activities and exercises can be undertaken in class to facilitate this process. Peer assessment and self-assessment help students develop understanding of the criteria and the terminology commonly used by tutors. Peer-marking is useful as students do not work in isolation and have the opportunity to work in pairs when commenting and analysing their written production against the marking criteria. Self-assessment, i.e. analysing individual work against the marking criteria, also

provides learners with an opportunity to reflect on their own production and to take conscious decisions throughout their learning process. Reiss (1983, in Ellis, 1995: 550) found that students achieving high standards in second language productions were able to describe their approach to a specific task since they had developed a metalanguage for doing so: "try to practise the new tense while speaking". Weaker students' accounts were more vague and inaccurate: "keep going over it" or "study it until I understand".

An extract from a peer-marking activity follows. The purpose of this activity was to encourage students to engage with the marking criteria used to assess their own written language production. The extract shows the written comments from one group of students to a peer and includes students' corrections as well as their comments on how to improve the syntax and the vocabulary. The table demonstrates how learners have organized the peer-marking feedback according to three categories: grammar, discourse and lexicon. This categorization is based on the criteria used in the language module to evaluate formative and summative written language work. Furthermore, the comments reveal students' conceptualization of 'grammar', 'discourse' and 'lexicon'.

*Table 3: Peer-marking feedback*

| Grammar | Discourse | Lexicon |
|---|---|---|
| Prepositions: 'dipende della' should be 'dipende *dalla*'.<br><br>Subjunctive: 'le persone pensano che le nuove tecnologie possono…' should be 'le persone pensano che le nuove tecnologie *possano*…'<br><br>Subjunctive + se: 'se si tratta di …la probabiltà sembrerebbe…' should be 'se si *trattasse* di… la probabiltà sembrerebbe…' | Syntax: syntax was a constant problem in this essay – sentences were often too long and convoluted, and had evidently been translated literally from English constructions. In many cases simpler solutions should have been used. Word choice also contributed to poor syntax.<br>-- 'è pieno di problemi… come quella [Guerra] di Iraq, ad problemi famigliari, come storie di padre che hanno ammazzati i suoi figli neonati, e anche dei disastri naturali come la tragedia recente che è sucessa nelle fillipine.' I struggled to decipher this sentence in order to find a solution for it, but we could agree that it needed shortening and the relationships between the clauses clarified with better structure and choice of prepositions | Speaking of stories in newspapers, '*notizie*' would have been a better word choice than 'storie'.<br><br>We did not think it was necessary to write 'figli neonati' when just '*neonati*' would have sufficed.<br><br>We were unsure if 'una mancanza complete di conflitti' was the best word choice – perhaps 'una mancanza *totale'* would have been better. |

The activities discussed in this section encourage students to reflect on their own performance and to improve it. A subsequent task that could be introduced is to ask learners to look at their own writing tasks performed over a period of time and identify recurrent problematic constructions. The

next stage would be to rewrite an improved version of the same tasks. In this way, understanding of feedback would lead to an improvement in written language production.

**CONCLUSION**

This article recognizes that teaching and learning L2 morpho-syntactical structures can be a challenging activity. However, mastering them is necessary to achieve near-native competence. Poor grammar skills impede linguistic creativity and hamper communication.

This article has presented several techniques to enhance grammar skills in learners of a second language. Also, it has argued that tutors do not have mutually exclusive choices, such as deductive approach versus inductive approach. A combination of more and less traditional strategies is an effective way of triggering grammatical awareness in learners of a second language. Students are more likely to be successful learners if the explicit teaching of specific linguistic forms is combined with activities that encourage them to notice these forms. Formative feedback activities can also elicit active student participation.

An awareness of these issues will help language tutors to incorporate a methodology that takes into account student learning needs and leads to improved student progress and pleasure in 'gruesome grammar'.

**Address for correspondence: m.c.LaSala@leeds.ac.uk**

**REFERENCES**

Baldini, A. [No date]. *Italian grammar tenses*. Unpublished.

Chin, B.A. 2000. *The Role of Grammar in Improving Student's Writing*. [Online] Available From: http://www.uwplatt.edu/~ciesield/graminwriting.htm

Cook, G. 2010. *Translation in Language Teaching: an Argument for Reassessment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Corder, S.P. 1981. *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 1-25.

Corder, S.P. 1976. The Significance of Learner's Errors. *1RAL*. **5**, pp. 161-170.

Ellis, R. 2006. Current Issues in the Teaching of Grammar: An SLA Perspective. *TESOL Quarterly*. **40**(1), pp. 83-107.

Ellis, R. 2016. Focus on Form: A Critical Review Language Teaching Research. *Language Teaching Research*. **20**(3), pp. 405-428.

Elwood, J. and Klenowski, V. 2002. Creating Communities of Shared Practice: The Challenges of Assessment Use in Learning and Teaching. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. **27**, pp. 243-256.

Falchikov, N. 2005. *Improving Assessment through Student Involvement: Practical Solutions for Aiding Learning in Higher and Further Education*. London: Routledge Falmer.

George, H.V. 1972. *Common Errors in Language Learning: Insights from English*. Rowley: Newbury House.

Grenfell, M. 2000. Modern Languages — beyond Nuffield and into the 21st Century. *The Language Learning Journal*. **22**(1), pp. 23-29.

Griffiths, C. 2004. Language-Learning Strategies: Theory and Research. *Occasional Paper N.1.* [Online]. Available from: http://www.crie.org.nz/research-papers/c_griffiths_op1.pdf

Haight, C. Herron, C. and Cole, S. 2007. The Effects of Deductive and Guided Inductive Instructional Approaches on the Learning of Grammar in the Elementary Language College Classroom. *Foreign Language Annals*. **40**, pp. 288-309.

Khansir, A.A. 2012. Error Analysis and Second Language Acquisition. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. **2**(5), pp. 1027-1032.

Long, M. H. 1983. Does Instruction Make a Difference? *TESOL Quarterly*. **17**(3), pp. 359-382.

Nunan, D. 1995. *Language Teaching Methodology. A Textbook for Teachers*. New York: Phoenix ELT.

Reiss, M. 1983. Helping the Unsuccessful Language Learner. *Canadian Modern Language Review*. **39**, 257-266.

Richards, J. C. and Schmidt, R. 2002. *Dictionary of Language Teaching Applied Linguistics*. London: Longman.

Sambell, K. Mc Dowell, L. and Montgomery, C. 2012. *Assessment for Learning in Higher Education*. New York: Routledge.

Smith, H, Cooper, A, and Lancaster, L. 2002. Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Peer Assessment: A case for Student and Staff Development. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*. **39**, pp. 71-81.

Santovetti, O. 2017. Redesigning a Language Module for Finalists to Enhance Grammar Acquisition. *Language Scholar*. **1**. [Online] Available from: https://languagescholar.leeds.ac.uk/redesigning-a-language-module-for-finalists-to-enhance-grammar-acquisition/

Savignon, S. 2001. Communicative Language Teaching for the Twenty-First Century. In: Celce-Murcia, M. ed. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, pp. 13-28.

Sheen, R. 2002. 'Focus on Form' and 'Focus on Forms'. *ELT Journal.* **56**(3) pp. 303-305.

Trask, R.L. 2013. *Dictionary of Grammatical Terms in Linguistics*. London: Routledge.

Zamel, V. 1996. Writing: the Process of Discovering Meaning. *TESOL Quarterly*. **16**(2), pp. 195-209.

# Language for Law: A Beginner's Mind

Chris Pajak

University of Leeds: The Language Centre, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

**ABSTRACT:**

This short paper attempts to outline some of the difficulties in designing a content-based presessional course, "Language for Law." It touches on the notion of the novice practitioner and how this is ultimately a position of some confusion and vulnerability. It examines how a practitioner may attempt to develop expertise both through engagement with the EAP literature, and through the inheritance of institutional knowledge and practices. The paper then goes on to highlight some of the issues that can arise when surveying the existing literature, and how these, combined with the tendency for institutions to revert to skills-based syllabuses, may limit the practitioners ability to make principled decisions around language content. This is considered within the context of law, and the article aims to show that in this particular context, these difficulties are to some extent magnified by a lack of knowledge, not just of EAP, but the subject of law itself. In particular, this short piece aims to show how this lack of understanding of law makes a sound interrogation of epistemological and discourse practices difficult, and in turn hopes to encourage a commitment to professional development to address the challenge facing EAP practitioners stepping into new academic disciplines.

**Keywords:** EAP; Practitioner; Professional Development; Law; Language; Course Development

**INTRODUCTION**

This is a short piece which hopes to outline and discuss some issues around developing a content-based presessional course in language for law. That is, a 6 week course aiming to teach both language and academic skills to international postgraduate students through law based texts and tasks. This article is written with an emphasis on my own experience, a 'novice' EAP practitioner and hopes to outline some of the challenges of the primarily 'solitary endeavor' of designing a course (Ding and Bruce 2017:111). It attempts to highlight how a lack of expertise and prevailing practices within an institution can mean that difficult decisions regarding the nature of course content are not always as principled as they could be. In fact, it is a twofold plea for the creation of good language-centric materials and the focus on professional development which might enable this.

As a practitioner met with the challenge of developing a new course in a new discipline, an obvious starting point is needs analysis. As Bruce (2017) points out, 'EAP is a discipline that is famously

needs-driven.' Unsurprisingly, of particular interest here are the students' target needs regarding language. Assessing these needs involves operationalizing two areas of expertise. Firstly, an ability to interrogate law's disciplinary practices and, secondly, the capacity to unravel and unpack the numerous features constituting the genres which are written and read in law. A solid and sophisticated assessment of target needs, at least in terms of writing, should presumably involve an insightful and systematic genre analysis. It would also involve the development of a corpus to help marry lexico-grammatical features to the array of functions or moves that have been highlighted in the genre analysis. Clearly, to develop the above and have an appropriate level of discourse competence, EAP practitioners need both a broad knowledge base of their own discipline (Bruce, 2017) and the tools to enable them to step in and study or analyse authentic texts from a target discipline (Candlin, C.N., Bhatia, V.K. and Jensen, C.H., 2002). However, novice practitioners rarely have these tools and knowledge. This is partly because the route to EAP work is often circuitous which means knowledge can be developed in a rather ad hoc way (Alexander, 2013) which can leave the practitioner feeling somewhat deskilled. This inevitably has consequences for course design and in particular what language should be placed at the forefront of those courses. What follows is an outline of some ways a practitioner may attempt to address this issue, the first being to take a turn to the literature.

**THE LITERATURE: A COPING STRATEGY**

The loss of certainty when embarking on the design of a course in a new discipline can be disorientating and destabilizing and one way of seeking some stability, and some language to teach, is to engage with research as a coping strategy (Ding and Campion, 2016). In relation to law there are four streams of literature which may be useful. EAP in a generic sense, ESP, EOLP (English for Occupational Legal Purposes) and also EALP (English for Academic Legal Purposes). Needless to say, this is a particularly extensive body of work. This volume of reading presents a number of challenges in itself. It is time consuming, and without experience or a good working knowledge of the terrain it is difficult to understand the relevance and salience of much of the information. This is particularly true in terms of language for law. As Bhatia (1987) has outlined, language for law is a broad church. Genres encompass a range of spoken and written texts across professional, academic and pedagogical settings. While this is interesting, frustratingly they actually provide little real benefit in terms of writing materials. This is mainly because there is a wealth of literature solely concerned with EOLP, which while interesting and offering useful pointers in legal thinking and how to write some professional genres (Legal Memoranda, etc.), actually offers little concrete help in how and what to teach students that are pursuing the *academic* study of law. This is more explicitly explored in English for Academic Legal Purposes (EALP). However, this still provides little constructive help.

Although written some time ago there is still some relevance in Feak and Reinhart's (2002:21) suggestion that 'the lack of informed research in academic legal English continues to pose challenges in curriculum and materials development.' This may be because, in terms of language and writing, nearly all of the research omits close analysis of the legal academic essay. This is perhaps due to its rather 'protean/ amorphous' nature (Weber, 2001: Belcher, 2004:169). The sheer number of rhetorical options in essay writing makes it difficult to unpack a pattern of moves revealing an obvious and teachable range of functions and language that can be taught effectively. Since in the context in Leeds/Law, nearly the entirety of students' assessment will consist of the long essay, this blind spot is unhelpful and is perhaps an example of how the EAP and EALP literature can at times miss what should be one of its intended aims, to speak to the practitioner, and in turn drive course development.

This does not however mean there are no resources. In fact, there are writing guides for native speakers, Foster's (2007) How to Write Better Law Essays being a particularly good example. This guide helps make explicit the expectations of the discipline and what a good law essay is expected to look like. Unlike almost anything in the EALP literature, it makes use of student models and provides some demonstration of how knowledge is organized discursively and how it's presented critically in law, very useful for the non-law specialist in EAP. They are also written for students, so are practical, which in turn lends itself to material development. However, there are a number of disadvantages. Only a small part of this book focuses on the actual discourse of the subject. It is a very small well of information to draw enough materials for a summer long course. It is also targeted at undergraduate students and, although some basic rhetorical functions are clearly expressed, there is much that is left unexplored. For example, there is no indication of what range of lexico-grammatical features operationalize these functions. The guide is simply not written from that perspective. Despite this, for a novice EAP practitioner, they do add to any growing understanding by providing some explanation of why legal academic essays are written in a certain way. However, there is no guidance as to what language is important, or useful, or how it could be employed effectively.

Putting to one side the possibility that subject experts in law are already providing more practically applicable materials than EAP practitioner/researchers, the above highlights that the time consuming and rather complex process of surveying the literature can often be unfruitful and ultimately discouraging. It is not news to mention that teachers often struggle to see the relevance of research in teaching (Borg 2007) and in this case this comment may tentatively be broadened to include much of the relevant existing literature in EALP. So, when searching for solid ground from which to make principled decisions about courses, and the language that goes in them, this body of literature can feel like a hindrance rather than a help.

With the difficulties of engaging in the literature and perhaps, in the novice practitioner's case, a slightly shaky knowledge base, it is therefore comforting to lean on institutional norms. In fact, in some ways what happens in a particular institution *is* the knowledge base. It is inevitable that this will then influence subsequent course development. This has many benefits, not least a guarantee of some quality and the passing on of knowledge hard-boiled through experience. Unfortunately, it becomes problematic when this is less of a homage to excellence but a need to "reproduce existing practice" (Ding and Campion, 2016:557). This can mean a move away from language towards a focus on skills if institutional restraints mean presessionals are rather limited in terms of time, perhaps a UK-wide problem in EAP (Turner, 2004). In law, one problem with this is general academic skills only partially map onto legal skills. For example, there are a significant range of 'skills' which relate to sources of law and navigating these areas (see Finch and Fafinski, 2013). Taking referencing in law as an example, it is simple to say referencing is important, a given; it is also a fairly straightforward task to discover that OSCOLA is the system used. In this sense the skill is transferable, we can talk about plagiarism and synthesizing sources too, perhaps argumentation in conjunction with referencing. However, what is less obvious is how strongly this is interwoven with other aspects of legal skills and the creation of knowledge in law. There are fundamental differences, the nature of the sources being one example. Primary sources are statutes and cases. This includes the voices of judges and dissenting judges which are often quoted. In this sense the language *is* the law. Secondary sources are academic articles. In both cases all voices are intertextual and speaking to one another in some way while deeply embedded in the legal system. A concrete entity which embodies legal thinking. The way this structural difference bleeds into the language, legal argumentation, and the epistemological concerns of students demonstrate that an understanding of referencing as a general skill is insufficient. So, even if as a failsafe the course designer focuses on skills, there is a lot of 'content' knowledge that is obscure for those with an EAP background which directly affects the discourse of the discipline.

One other point to make regarding the teaching of skills in the local situation- in this case Leeds- is that students are already taught on a compulsory module in the law school, 'Postgraduate Legal Research Skills'. This touches on referencing, good scholarship, as well as making academics' expectations of what constitutes good legal writing explicit. Consequently, the presessional course should avoid an excessive focus on skills or at least be sensitive to any limitations within the local context. Partly because it is straying into an area where teachers lack knowledge, but also to avoid replicating what is already traditionally taught on the law course. Again, this leaves a small, but not unimportant, language shaped gap for the EAP practitioner to squeeze into.

If we do want to sharpen the focus on some language, which language should be prioritized? The limited time frame imposed on presessional teaching requires that close consideration be given to frequency, range and learnability when selecting which academic English is to be taught. However, without a principled analysis of student writing from a needs analysis, what exactly this language is is problematic. One way of making this decision is teaching language through texts. So, useful language will be revealed in the texts which students read. This can provide two learning opportunities; one for direct learning of useful language and the other as a way of modeling good language learning. This is undoubtedly vital for students' further studies but problematic in other ways. One being notions of specifity. On the law course in question, the topics chosen to develop students' knowledge of case law are statutory interpretation (homosexual partners' rights) and the balancing act between freedom of speech and privacy. As at least 90% of the students on the presessional in Leeds will go on to study International Business Law, the opportunities to introduce topic specific vocabulary, or the threshold concepts it carries, are limited. Another issue may be that language is selected because it's easy to identify. For example, when reporting the court's decision, the verb 'held' is used. This is undoubtedly useful, but it is very easy to identify the "move." It is simply referring to a primary source. Teaching "the court said," is conceptually simple and it may be something students could quite quickly discover themselves. A further problem may be caused when the vocabulary and phrases that are taught are text led. The language chosen is unsystematic. The texts cannot cover all salient features. Some areas may be under-exemplified while others may not be featured at all. Further, the majority of the required reading is not necessarily good student models, rather professional writing or judges conveying their judgments in cases. This means the language can be overly complex, obscured by difficult content, or interesting features may be more rarely exemplified. A final consequence of this approach is that language mined from texts may not be recycled or taught effectively, students are often not asked to actually work with the language in any way but simply to highlight and record. This may be because it is difficult to design good activities which reactivate language in the context of the discipline or because of time restraints it is easier to place this part of the learning process under the umbrella of autonomous learning.

Another more systematic way of teaching language from text is to focus on models of student writing. In terms of language for writing, this is often more helpful than the majority of texts read by the students. However, this is also problematic. Returning to the literature, the majority of research into student's legal writing, however informative, focuses on a particular type of undergraduate writing in law: the problem question (Howe, 1990, Weber 2001, Bruce, 2002). This is where students are asked to assess a scenario and apply the relevant law. Perhaps one reason why this is well covered is precisely because it has a very exact structure and clear functions and so lends itself to

analysis. Regardless, postgraduate students at Leeds are not required to write problem questions. There has been one piece of excellent work on semi-technical language in student's legal writing (Maher, 2016). This corpus-informed research highlights a range of language from student writing in law, primarily relating to referring to sources and language which allows writers to take a position in the text. This *is* useful. It can certainly be added to a syllabus which is then given some face validity for students wisely expecting some explicit language instruction. However, as Bruce (2017) has highlighted, applying "micro-level findings" into specific genres is problematic without the required pragmatic knowledge. So, to apply these findings effectively they have to be understood within the broader context of the target genre. Not knowledge the novice practitioner will always have. It is also only the beginning of the process of writing materials. There is much more work to be done to be able to contextualize this language, not simply list it, to harness it to content so the students are motivated by it, and to design activities so they are motivated to reuse it.

Another broader problem in terms of language selection is considerations of specificity and how decisions are affected by expertise in the target disciple. The debate appears to rest on whether teachers should or shouldn't teach content, and if they do teach it, whether they may be outside their remit. However, this misrepresents an important part of an EAP practitioner's role. Expertise should include a working knowledge of the target discipline's epistemology (Bruce, 2017) and in law to understand this fully, you need to understand the system of law and have some experience of how the law develops in certain areas. In other words, content. As Candlin et al (2002:314) stress, 'legal concepts and the language that expresses them form a dense, precisely interwoven texture which blurs the distinction between language and content. Moreover, in law, language does not always simply serve as the vehicle to express the subject matter; on occasion it actually constitutes the subject matter.'

Understanding something of the law is hugely helpful when considering material and making some of the choices outlined above. So, when selecting language, and hopefully the functions that they help students perform, teachers need to know how these fit into the specific epistemological tradition. In some subjects this may be more readily apparent, however in law, there are very specific ways of thinking, reasoning and understanding. As Feak and Reinhart (2002:21) note 'successful adaptation is dependent on the instructor's having some familiarity with the conventions of academic legal discourse in particular and the legal system in general.' Unfortunately, this is, and has to be, a slow process (Davies, 1987). One that Davies suggests takes undergraduate students the majority of their studies. For the EAP practitioner this process is lengthened by the fact that their analysis only includes a small selection of texts, and is complicated by the lack of engagement in some of the breadth of reading and hard thinking involved in written assessments. If we are

expected to equip students with the literacy of their discipline, then it appears obvious you need to have more than a superficial awareness of what that entails. If the teacher is not expert in the subject, but an expert in EAP, then perhaps they would have the tools to construct a good corpus and work this data in tandem with a profound, principled genre analysis. However, as has been previously discussed this is not always the case. As Swales (1986:18) observes, 'there must be an apprenticeship to the genre.' And in law understanding genre is as much about the content, community and its discourse, as about simply understanding the text. So, although not expected to be content experts, it is difficult to see how an EAP practitioner can do their job properly without some fairly deep engagement in subject specific discourse and content. Of course, the benefits of this are numerous, one being that developing understanding allows practitioners to engage in literature and research more effectively and efficiently and also, in terms of agency, it allows the practitioner to engage with and question academics in the law school more productively and precisely.

**THE DEVELOPING EAP PRACITIONER AND AGENCY**

Clearly one way of supporting developing expertise is building good relationship with the law academics. As Addison and Crowe (1992:480) suggest, language teachers will need the support of the legal academics throughout, as without this co-operation, the materials are likely to miss the mark in some aspects. Asking for this support and asking the right questions can be a rather intimidating task. To approach these interactions on a level footing, the EAP practitioner needs to raise their game significantly. It could be argued that in EAP there is a significant expertise which allows for a balancing of power in the relationship with a subject specialist. As Ding and Bruce (2017:3) suggest 'specialists in the subject disciplines (that EAP students aim to enter) are not discourse analysts, and that investigating and understanding disciplinary language use (shaped by epistemology, practice and genre) requires specialist theory and analytical methods drawn from applied linguistics.' However, this is not always the position of the novice practitioner and arguably, in law, the academics do have a deep understanding of disciplinary language. It's their trade. Of course, being able to collect systematic data would enable us to ask the right questions and develop the agency to drive decisions. In Leeds, the materials are chosen by the law school, then the EAP work is done from these texts and tasks. If there is some lack of confidence or understanding from the EAP practitioner, it can make it harder to push for adjustments or changes to materials, or even be aware of particular issues, until the course has been taught a number of times. This makes control of the conversation around course design complicated and importantly, the lack of control, or the lack of feelings of control, can significantly affect one's willingness to engage in the process at all. For an EAP practitioner wanting to move beyond this rather demotivating position they may have

to invest in developing their expertise. Not to be an expert in content, but an expert in how content is constructed, and perhaps alongside this, develop some interest in the discipline too. Clearly if we expect EAP tutors to be subject specialist we are on shaky ground; working with a physics department, for example, would transform what it means to be an EAP practitioner in terms of moving away from language and into content, but this should not prevent some effort, especially in a subject such as law, which is complicated but certainly not beyond EAP teachers.

So, even though novice (apprentice) practitioners may acquire good knowledge through experience and institutional norms, when moving towards specificity this understanding can be put under severe stress. To cope with this, and to try and inform and lead decisions, it is imperative to engage in a broad range of literature, despite its limitations, and in the discourse of the discipline being entered into. Then the aggregation of this research and practice can accumulate into a more solid, substantial understanding, and each can in turn offset the potential weaknesses of the other. Perhaps, as a result, this may enable the practitioner to get back, or closer to, the intellectual endeavor of teaching language (Turner, 2004) and to remain motivated and engaged enough to drive decisions, course development and their own professional development. In this sense, academic Law is an opportunity to do a "purer" form of ESP and to develop expertise. It also means that decisions can be grounded in a theoretical and professional context. Even if when finally made, those decisions are not actually too far removed from the original, less informed ones.

**Address for correspondence: c.pajak@leeds.ac.uk**

**REFERENCES**

Addison, W. and Cownie, F. 1992. Overseas law students: Language support and responsible recruitment. *Journal of law and Society*. **19**(4), pp.467-482.

Alexander, O. 2013. The leap into TEAP: The role of the BALEAP competency framework in the professional development of new EAP teachers. *Professional and Academic English: Journal of the IATEFL English for Specific Purposes Special Interest Group*, **42**(2). Reading: Garnet Education.

Belcher, D.D. 2004. Trends in teaching English for specific purposes. *Annual review of applied linguistics*. **24**, pp.165-186.

Bhatia, V.K. 1987. Language of the law. *Language Teaching*. **20**(4), pp.227-234.

Borg, S. 2007. Research engagement in English language teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. **23**(5), pp.731-747.

Bruce, I. 2017. *EAP.* BALEAP ResTes- Knowledge and the EAP Practitioner: a symposium, 28 January, Leeds University.

Bruce, N. 2002. Dovetailing language and content: Teaching balanced argument in legal problem answer writing. *English for Specific Purposes*. **21**(4), pp.321-345.

Candlin, C.N., Bhatia, V.K. and Jensen, C.H. 2002. Developing legal writing materials for English second language learners: Problems and perspectives. *English for Specific Purposes*. **21**(4), pp.299-320.

Davies, M. 1987. Reading cases. *The Modern Law Review*. **50**(4), pp.409-431.

Ding, A. and Bruce, I. 2017. *The English for academic purposes practitioner: Operating on the edge of academia*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ding, A. and Campion, G. 2016. EAP teacher development. In: Hyland, K. and Shaw, P. eds. *The Routledge handbook of English for academic purposes* .Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 571-583.

Feak, C. and Reinhart, S. 2002. An ESP program for students of law. In: Orr, T. ed. *English for Specific Purposes*. Virginia: TESOL, pp. 7-24.

Finch, E. and Fafinski, S. 2013. *Legal skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Foster, S. 2006. *How to write better law essays: Tools and techniques for success in exams and assignments*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Howe, P.M. 1990. The problem of the problem question in English for academic legal purposes. *English for specific purposes*. **9**(3), pp.215-236.

Maher, P. 2016. The use of semi-technical vocabulary to understand the epistemology of a disciplinary field. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. **22**, pp.92-108.

Swales, J. 1986. A genre-based approach to language across the curriculum. *Anthology Series,* SEAMO. **15**, pp. 10-22.

Turner, J. 2004. Language as academic purpose. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes.* **3**, pp. 95-109.

Weber, J.J. 2001. A concordance-and genre-informed approach to ESP essay writing. *ELT journal*. ***55***(1), pp.14-20.

## Scholarbits

# Enhancing L2 skills through independent learning: the case study of an Italian E-magazine

Patrizia Ronchetti

Sabrina Casarin

Leeds Beckett University: School of Languages

My experience as tutor of Italian L2 starts in Italy, in a company in Umbria, teaching Business Italian to some German managers. At that time, I worked as a journalist, but I still followed my studies as a linguist. I have been living in the UK for 14 years now and right here I had the chance to develop my skills as teacher of L2 and most of all to try different tools to make the lessons more efficient and interactive. Leeds Beckett University has represented not only my place of work but also the fertile ground where to mix my passion for teaching and journalism. All tutors know how difficult motivating our students could be and to be able to find new ways to transmit the language studied as L2. I noticed that students struggled to get involved in writing activities: tasks were too short, too similar to other texts or even blank. There was lack of will but most of all, lack of motivation.

The idea was to create a magazine on-line (available inside the platform of Leeds Beckett University) written directly by the students in level B2-C2, giving them the possibility to choose the material and the way to write an article. The result is something unique, based on each student's experience.
I will show the impact of this idea on the learning process but also in the emotional approach of a student studying a second language (confidence in writing in a second language, lack of barriers in the speaking tasks).

**Keywords**: L2 e-magazine, research, flipped learning, learner engagement

# Enhancing L2 skills through independent learning: the case study of an Italian E-magazine

*Patrizia Ronchetti*
*Sabrina Casarin*
School of Languages,
Leeds Beckett
University

*"Welcome to the first number of Andiamo!*
*It is with great pleasure that we present the new edition of our on line magazine, completely renewed and mostly written by our students.*
*The passion for Italian language and culture andfor the writing is the starting point of this idea that we have developed in 2012 and that we do not want to interrupt.*
*You will find various articles with curiosities, interviews to Italian people.*
*Thanks to all who supported us and to our precious students/collaborators".*

Patrizia Ronchetti
Sabrina Casarin

# Multilevel Class

# The classroom

- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Fluency
- Typical expressions
- Interest in different topics
- Self learning

BUILDING BRIDGES

**in a Mixed-level class**

## How to engage students?

Motivation
Interest
Active participation

→

Emotional engagement
and responsiveness

## The idea

*A magazine written directly by the students to enhance the 4 skills in a more interesting, engaging and personal way.*

*A tool able to inform, update and extend the topics of interest in the target language.*

*The idea of the magazine wants to work in the perspective of "satisfying language learning outcomes"* (Dörnyei, Z., 1990)

## Steps

1. The topics are chosen and agreed by the class
2. Groups (or individual students) start building up the content of their article
3. The draft of the article is given to the tutor
4. The draft is given back to the students for final correction
5. The magazine is ready to be edited
6. 2 editions during the academic year

*"Magazines are a particularly practical source of material to study"* (Gethin, A. and Gunnemark, 1996).

# All skills involved

The students will use their creative and writing skills along with a revision of grammar (error analysis)

Students will work in group, developing their listening skills and sometimes using videos/listenings to deepen their topics

The students will read articles and material and work on vocabulary

The creation of an article will involve a group discussion/debate where the students will express their ideas and opinions

# *Topics*

- Cultural events
- Lifestyle
- Current affairs
- Curiosities
- Direct experience

“The important contribution of the students represents the strength of their engagement in the study of the target language and the involvement in writing as a tool for learning and development” (Ferris D., 2008).

COME SI AIUTA LA NATURA IN ITALIA

Ci può la natura? Andrietti in Italia a vedere? È Parco è un luogo meraviglioso per la biodiversità grazie alla sua situazione e al numero degli habitat diversi.

Purtroppo ha una difficile riproduzione per l'atteggiamento verso la natura, in particolare gli uccelli, tra quelli che la amano, e non sono motivo. Abbiamo la caccia da regole (come nel Regno Unito) c'è molto affetto. Non leggo che è finalmente sulla Direttiva dell'Unione Europea.

L'Italia è una delle rotte importanti per la migrazione degli uccelli dall'Africa all'Europa settentrionale. I cacciatori spesso ai migratori mentre stanno attraversando il Paese, specialmente al sud, e di nidi i bracconieri prendono in trappola i piccoli uccelli – per i ristoranti. Quindi sono le tradizioni forti che appartengono a una cultura profondamente radicata con qualche eccezione drastiche dove esiste rifiuto.

Però c'è un'organizzazione che lavora per gli uccelli – LIPU (Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli). È l'equivalente italiano del RSPB e è sede italiana del "BirdLife International". I suoi dipendenti sono impegnati a cambiare la cultura dentro una rivoluzione pacifistica.

Ci sono statistiche natura – i cambiamenti stagione, letteratura.

Vorrete saperlo? Ci una divisione, LIPU LR, che sostiene quella italiana e può diventare un membro per 20 sterline all'anno. Visita il sito web http://www.lipu.it/ per i dettagli.

Chissà, può darsi che trovera il materiale per una valutazione del futuro.

Il sitoweb di LIPU (Italiana) http://www.lipu.it/

Sophie Tompkins

ITB/RDX

Un gufo – trattato LIPU



È ITALIA: UN PAESE FELICE?

Gli italiani amano il loro paese – il vino? Sì, amano il cibo italiano, il mare, il sole, la moda etc. Ma sono veramente soddisfatti della propria vita? Secondo il Rapporto Mondiale sulla Felicità 2017, pubblicato dalla Sustainable Development Solutions Network l'Italia è meno felice di Paesi molto meno benestanti – per esempio Guatemala, Colombia, e Uzbekistan.

Il rapporto classifica 155 nazioni e si basano su sei variabili: reddito, libertà nelle scelte di vita, assenza di corruzione, speranza di vita, sostegno sociale e generosità. L'Italia si è posta al 48esimo posto, il più basso dei Paesi comparabili in Europa come la Germania (16esimo posto), il Regno Unito (19), e la Francia (31).

Quali sono i paesi più felici del mondo e perché? Non è una sorpresa che i Paesi del Nord Europa si trovino tra le prime dieci posizioni. La classifica mette il Norvegia al primo posto, seguita da Danimarca, Islanda, Svizzera, Finlandia, Paesi Bassi, Canada, Nuova Zelanda, Australia e Svezia. Tutti questi Paesi sono fondati su un sostegno sociale per tutti e un alto grado di fiducia nella società e nel governo.

Cosa rende infelici gli italiani allora? Secondo il Fatto Quotidiano una causa è la diminuzione giovanile e la conseguente preoccupazione per il futuro.

Un'altra causa potrebbe essere la presenza di corruzione. Raffaele Cantone, presidente dell'Autorità nazionale anticorruzione, dice che "La corruzione incide su ogni cosa, su ogni aspetto della vita, anche sulla felicità. La felicità dipende anche dalla maggiore fiducia dei cittadini nelle istituzioni".

Il rapporto ha mostrato una cosa positiva per lo in confronto al rapporto del 2016 l'Italia è aumentata di due posti, un miglioramento che dà speranza.

Alvaro Zorfan ITB/RDX

### *LA TERAPIA GENETICA OGGI*

Stiamo per varcare la soglia di un nuovo mondo medico, quello della terapia genetica per quasi tutte le nostre malattie, o stiamo entrando in un incubo di errori fino a oggi non previsti? Oggi gli scienziati e i medici hanno gli attrezzi per cambiare sia la struttura che le funzioni dei nostri geni alla ricerca delle nuove cure per le malattie intrattabili o poco trattabili, fra cui il cancro, la fibrosi cistica, l'emofilia e perfino la sindrome di Alzheimer.

### COME SI AIUTA LA NATURA IN ITALIA

Ti piace la natura? Andresti in Italia a vederla? Il Paese è un luogo meraviglioso per la biodiversità grazie alla sua situazione e al numero degli habitat diversi.

Purtroppo ha una cattiva reputazione per l'atteggiamento verso la natura, in particolare gli uccelli, tra quelli che la stimano, e non senza motivo. Sebbene la caccia sia legale (come nel Regno Unito) c'è molta attività fuori legge che è fondata sulle Direttive dell'Unione Europea.

### PROBLEMA CON L'IMMIGRAZIONE A GORIZIA

250 immigrati sono arrivati in 20 giorni nell' agosto 2017 a Gorizia e hanno continuato ad arrivare dal Nord ogni giorno. Loro sono tutti uomini. Chi arriva a Gorizia non fugge da territori di guerra ma da altri Paesi Europei dove non gli è stato riconosciuto lo status di rifugiato politico.

## The Proficiency students' voice

As a student at beginner and intermediate level I was given copies of "Andiamo" to read; the articles had largely been written by the tutors. Now that I am at higher level I really enjoy taking part in this project (A.L., C2)

As the class was asked to work in groups to produce articles that would be of interest to students of these levels, I felt a progress in our learning; although obviously the grammar and vocabulary would be checked it was very pleasing to think that we could write at a sufficiently high level for our work to be published in this magazine (L. Tompkins, C1)

# Teaching mixed-level classes

- Different abilities in the same Level
- Interaction between different levels
- Strategies:
-

1. positive learning environment
2. supportive learning environment
3. teach learners how to learn
4. Variation of activities
5. Grouping
6. Scaffolding
7. Enthusiasm

*Richmond Publishing. Teaching a mixed ability class. http://www.richmondelt.com/international/resources/handbooks for teachers.htm [Accessed 20 May 2011]*

## Grouping: Use a range of interaction patterns

INDIVIDUALLY

PAIRS

GROUPS

Grouping should CHANGE, giving them the opportunity to work with different learners.

Use activities in pairs or groups, in which -

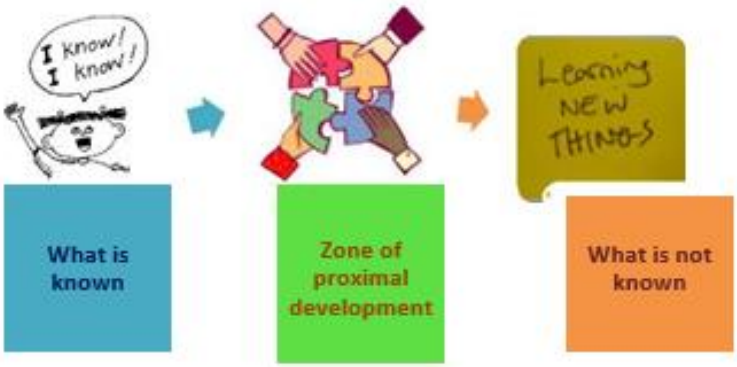
- more confident students work together
- more confident students work with less confident ones

*Tomlinson, C. (1999) The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners. Alexandria: ASCD.*

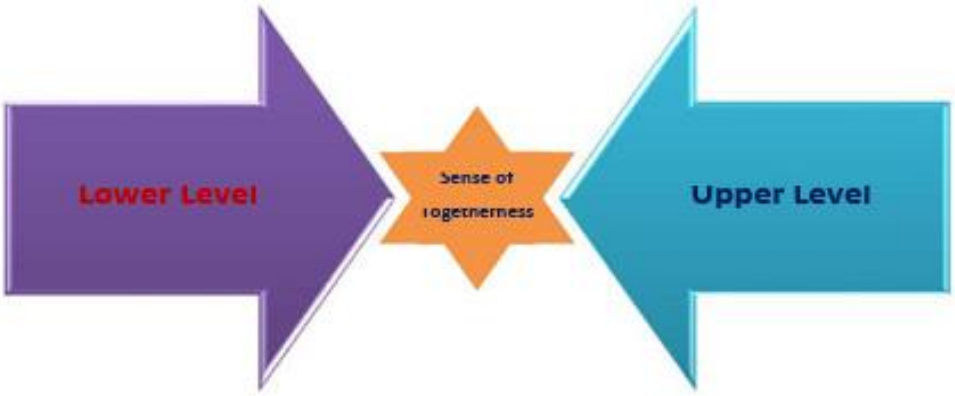
| | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|---|
| **Group of homogeneous students** | Students work at their own level, to their full potential. Competition between them could stimulate improvement. Gives space to personalize more the activity. | This way to group the students may create division among the whole class. |
| **Group of heterogeneous students** | Mutual help and cooperation. Students can stimulate each other: stronger students feel confident and can correct the weaker. Weaker students are challenged, but find a model in their peers. Development of self-evaluation skill. | Stronger students could feel bored, while weaker ones could feel inadequate. So, these activities should be short. |
| **Mingling activities** | The interaction with many students results cohesive for the whole class, and creates a cooperative atmosphere, encouraging cooperation and peer questioning. Upper levels can revise, while lower can consolidate. | It may be chaotic if there isn't a set time. |

## SCAFFOLDING

**Building a bridge between what is known and what is potentially possible to know together**




Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.




Enthusiasm: this attitude is contagious, so spread it! Encourage the students, engage them emotionally.

## *Benefit for students....*

Practice the four skills
Enrichment of the vocabulary/accuracy
Organizational skills in the target language
Group work and exchange
Self esteem

## *...and tips for tutors*

Error analysis
Discover new topics
More interaction with students' interests

## *Outcomes*

- Development of motivation
- Stimulation of creativity and curiosity
- Interest in research
- More interaction
- Memorization of words and expression in the use of independent learning (Sanaoui, R., 1995)
- Self confidence in L2

"*Engagement with the real, through work based learning can help students to nurture their own creativity*" (Mulligan, 2010)

## *Looking ahead...*

- *More variety of contents (interviews) and more pages*
- *More suggestions (help from constant feedback)*
- *Improving the graphic*
- *Find a platform to expand our project and building a bridge with other institutions here and abroad*

Grazie!

## References


- Ferris D. (2008), Response to students writing: Implications for second language students, Taylor and Francis E-library
- Dörnyei, Z. (1990), Conceptualizing Motivation in Foreign-Language Learning. Language Learning, 40: 45–78.
- Sanaoui, R. (1995), Adult Learners' Approaches to Learning Vocabulary in Second Languages. The Modern Language Journal, 79: 15–28.
- Gethin A., Gunnemark E. (1996) , The Art and Science of Learning Languages, Intellect Books
- Mulligan (2010), The Assessment, Learning and Teaching Journal, number 8, spring 2010, Leeds Metropolitan Univeristy
- Race P. (2007), The Lecturer's Toolkit, a practical guide to assessment, learning and teaching, Routledge
- Richmond Publishing, Teaching a mixed ability class. http://www.richmondelt.com/international/resources/handbooks_for_teachers.htm [Accessed 20 May 2011]



Email

P.Ronchetti-Middleton@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

S.Casarin@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

# Manifesto for the Scholarship of Language Teaching and Learning

Alex Ding

Centre for Excellence in Language Teaching, The Univeristy of Leeds, UK

Jenna Bodin-Galvez; Bee Bond; Kazuki Morimoto, Valentina Ragni; Natasha Rust; Rasha Soliman

The Language Scholar, The University of Leeds, UK

In this short piece, we, the editorial team of the Language Scholar along with the Director of the Centre for Excellence in Language Teaching, would like to outline a new manifesto for the journal. This manifesto, which we fully expect to evolve and develop in conversations with the language teaching community, represents our commitments and understandings of what we are trying to achieve with the Language Scholar. It outlines how we understand the scholarship of teaching and learning languages, and the role the Language Scholar has in shaping, enacting and promoting these collective understandings. Most importantly, it is an invitation to you to comment on, contribute to, extend, critique and question this manifesto.

- We aim to actively combat tired and unhelpful tropes and metaphors that perpetuate notions of divides, gaps, incommensurability and suspicion between research and practice, theory and experience, and researchers and practitioners. In doing so, we see scholarship as a vehicle for all actors in language education (including students, researchers and practitioners) to contribute to a collective exploration and understanding of the many complexities of language teaching and learning. We believe scholarship, and this journal, should embrace multiple perspectives on teaching and learning and promote an inclusive community with a common aim of both understanding and improving language education in diverse contexts for all actors engaged in teaching and learning.
- We aim to promote and demonstrate that scholarship is about impact. This encompasses: impact on language educators (their beliefs, identities, professionalism, skills and competencies, philosophies, praxis, pedagogies, agency, understanding of micro-meso-macro structures and cultures); impact on students (their learning, engagement, proficiency, autonomy, motivation, literacies, intercultural and socio-political perspectives) and impact on people, policies and practices (assessments, concepts of syllabi and curricula, communities, community engagement, leadership, mentoring).

- We promote scholarship that is governed and driven by ethics. More specifically, a scholarship ethics of humility, fallibility, care, curiosity, inclusiveness and truthfulness. We recognise and embrace diversity in perspectives, participants, contexts, challenges, experiences and expertise on scholarship, methods and methodologies, theoretical and ideological commitments, and purpose(s). An ethics of rigour must govern all approaches, genres and perspectives.
- We encourage scholarship that is collegial, collaborative and conversational, but also critical, combative and cautious. Scholarship should open up rather than close down dialogue. Scholarship works to improve teaching and learning rather than create generalised norms to follow. In this vein, we see scholarship as not only (welcome) accounts of successful scholarship endeavours but also accounts of endeavours which proved puzzling, less successful or failed. Scholarship is also about sharing and learning from these endeavours. We need to reconceptualise teaching 'failures' and 'problems' from remediation to episodes worthy of investigation, analysis and public discussion. And, aligned to this, we promote the idea that scholarship is also about taking risks, failing, experimenting and being open to change.
- We abide by the maxim that students deserve the best knowledge and understanding we can muster when teaching. Scholarship of teaching and learning embodies that maxim and we encourage all language educators to contribute knowledge and understanding in the public domain. This maxim is encapsulated by two citations:

  > '[T]he core values of professional communities revolve around the expectation that we do not keep secrets, whether of discovery or of grounded doubt.'
  > Schulman, 2000:50.
  >
  > We develop a scholarship of teaching when our work as teachers becomes public, peer-reviewed and critiqued. And exchanged with members of our professional communities so they, in turn, can build on our work.'
  > Schulman, 2000:49.

- We believe that scholarship, unbound by normative constraints, provides the potential for exploration of a variety of genres, languages, modalities, forms and styles. These should be chosen because they best represent the communicative/scholarship purposes and ideas of the author(s). Scholarship must resonate with the intended audience(s) and we believe that,

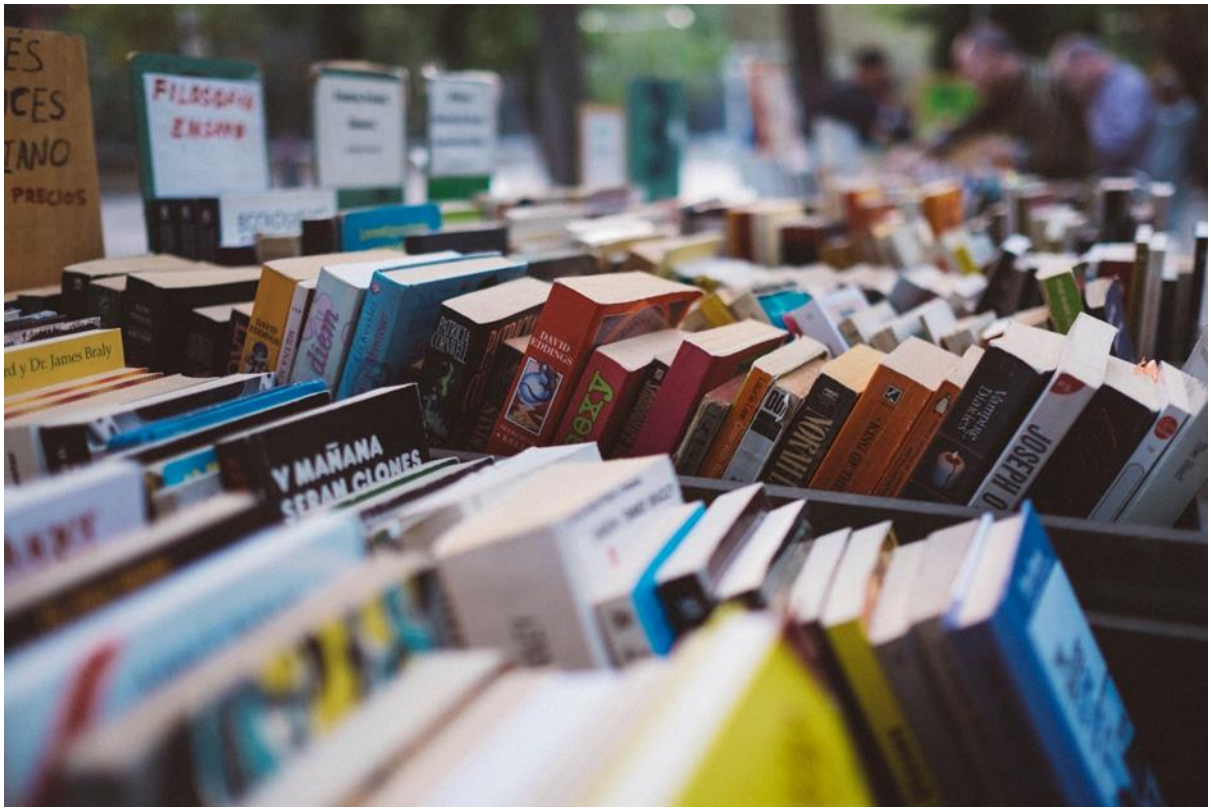
if scholarship is to resonate, then multiple approaches to communicating this are to be embraced.

- We believe that scholarship is a powerful tool for language educators (especially practitioners) to enhance their knowledge and understanding. Engaging in scholarship contributes to greater professional autonomy, enabling new professional identities to emerge; it allows for development and transformation of praxis. Most of all, we believe that scholarship has the potential to enable language educators to actively shape their educational contexts rather than be shaped by circumstance, others and powerful ideologies and structures.

**REFERENCES**

Shulman, L. S. 2000. From Minsk to Pinsk: Why a scholarship of teaching & learning? *The Journal of Scholarship of Teaching & Learning*. **1**. pp 48–52.

# Reviews



# Towards a learning culture; developing a culture that learns. A review of the 2018 Annual ISSoTL Conference.

Bee Bond

The University of Leeds: The Language Centre, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies.

The ISSoTL (International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) Conference was held in Bergen, Norway from 24th – 27th October 2018. Whilst not a conference that focuses on language education specifically, the connection to the overarching goals of the Language Scholar are clear. The stated aim of the conference, with the theme 'Towards a learning culture' was to open 'a space for discussions about the collegial, cultural, interprofessional and interpersonal dimensions of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning'. This resonates with many discussions currently underway both within the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies (through the Centre for Excellence in Language Teaching, or CELT) and the wider University and Higher Education in general. Moreover, as with many international conferences, language and communication were an important thread running throughout. Key concepts of scholarship, pedagogy and the need for 'scientific' rigor within both were all identified as holding very specific but differing meanings across the multiple languages spoken by conference attendees; language, the role it plays and the impact it can have in an increasingly internationalised higher education landscape was touched on in many of the sessions I attended. This understanding and acknowledgment of linguistic, cultural and contextual differences ensured a conference that was incredibly welcoming and inclusive of all, and that discussion around the kind of work people were doing was thoughtful and considered.

In fact, acting with thoughtfulness, and the consequences of not doing so, was one of the key themes of the conference. Elizabeth Minnich provided a powerful and thought-provoking Key Note Plenary on Thursday morning. Having authored philosophy books and papers such as 'Transforming Knowledge' and 'Teaching Thinking' it was easy to see why she was invited to speak at this conference. Her plenary drew from her new work, 'The Evil of Banality: On the life and death importance of thinking', which she claimed was the culmination of 50 years of 'field work philosophizing'. She related her own field to that of SoTL, arguing that in philosophy as in SoTL, you begin with no particular method in mind; you get puzzled a lot, often to the point of obsession, and you find 'thinking friends' to practice with. You practice with these friends as you work toward illuminations (or BFOs – blinding flashes of the obvious!), not proof. Throughout her plenary, Minnich highlighted the importance of thinking; suggesting that 'being awake but not aware' is where humans become ordinary or banal and, following on from the work of her mentor Hannah

Arendt, that this banality can be the root of collective evil. Thus, her argument is that by acting with awareness, by thinking, puzzling and questioning our practices, we ensure that we are not only human but are also humane.

Whilst the rest of the conference focused on much more practical areas of scholarship, this theme of questioning and thinking carefully about the work we do was a red thread running throughout the whole conference.

The other, slightly more light-hearted, but equally memorable session I am choosing to highlight here was a two-part workshop. This resonated with me in relation to way a Language Centre often needs to operate to persuade others to collaborate, and how powerful those collaborations can sometimes be in effecting change. 'Guerrilla Leadership and Culture Change in Higher Education: An International Perspective' was facilitated by Heather Smith, Claire Hamshire, Rachel Forsyth, Jessica Riddell and Paul Taylor. By running the first part as a 'fringe' event from a hotel bar, the tone was set for the argument that leadership in HE can work outside the norm. Paul Taylor (University of Leeds) suggested that leadership needs to draw from Paulo Freire's ideas of social justice grounde d in hope, whilst Heather Smith (University of Northern British Columbia and Dalhousie University) argued that to enact change in HE, leaders needed to 'be more Che'! Thus, taking Che Guevarra and his guerrilla warfare tactics as inspiration, participants were encouraged to work in the wild zones, to become more agile and to organize differently. We worked together to create a Guerrilla Leadership Manifesto. Answering questions such as 'Where are the contested territories?'; 'Who are your allies?' (STUDENTS!) 'What are your strategies?', we were encouraged to think differently about who might or might not be our 'enemies' in achieving desired outcomes (QA came out very well in this, much to the surprise of many!). The facilitators were clearly having a great time whilst running the two workshops, serving us coffee (!) out of a balaclava-clad tea-pot and all wearing combat t-shirts. Despite this, the message was clear: that leadership needs to 'push back against profound insignificance'. In other words, it needs avoid becoming banal and unthinking.

*Copyright: Taylor, P. @Paulfryorkshire 23 October 2018; Twitter.*

For an overview of the breadth of topics covered, it is probably best to direct you to the conference website: https://www.issotl.com/issotl-2018-conference . One aspect of the conference that stood

out particularly was the wealth of open resources that were generously shared by all participants. Many of these are also available on the conference website.

The next ISSoTL conference (9-12 October 2019) will be held in the USA, in Atlanta; the theme is 'SoTL without Borders. Engaged Practice for Social Change'. There is also a EuroSoTL conference from 13-14 June 2019. This is held in Bilbao and, for the first time, presentations can be given not only in English but also in Spanish with translators available. This highlights the diverse and rapidly growing international community of HE practitioners who have a deep interest in academic development and student education, and the determination of the ISSoTL organisation to work towards being as inclusive of all as possible. These conferences are a great place for novice presenters to find support and encouragement; they allow you to expand your horizons beyond disciplinary borders and find a wider context for your own scholarship. They are also incredibly welcoming, so are a great place to find some new, international 'thinking friends'.

**Address for correspondence: b.bond@leeds.ac.uk**