

Volume 3 **Issue 1**

Spring 2021

ISSN 2747-9862

ICC Journal



ICC

the international language association

CONTENTS

From the editor		3
Conference news	ICC-Languages Conference June 5th	5
 KEYNOTES		
Götz Reuter	Oral examinations in Germany	8
Marina Peluso	Enhancing Human Complexity: The tacit mission	16
Claudia Garcia	Gratitude” positive impact in education	22
 WEBINARS		
Geoff Tranter	A Comedy of Errors	44
Ian McMaster	Authenticity in Language	53
 TEACHING TIPS		
Russell Stannard	Teacher Training Videos	56
Vasiliki Santaridou	Class after Covid?	58
Luke Prodomou		
 REVIEWS		
Why study Languages?	Gabrielle Hogan-Brun	62
How Spies Think	David Omand	64

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to ICC Journal Vol 3 Issue 1, our journal for practising teachers. I'm enormously pleased to read the exciting and often provocative ideas and teaching practice in the first of our three journals this year.

Our keynote articles have a strong methodological and philosophical orientation. Götz Reuter focuses on testing language knowledge with oral tests rather than written, Marina Peluso reflects on the role of semiotics (she studied under Umberto Eco, the famous author and semiotics expert) in education and in branding. She also introduces a really interesting function I wasn't familiar with, user design experience. Finally, Claudia Garcia looks at the importance of gratitude in the classroom and shows how it can be used to maintain student motivation and help them maintain a positive attitude which will help them succeed.

Our Webinars in April and May were exceptionally thoughtful and provocative. Geoff Tranter's 'A Comedy of Errors' discussed how native speaker and non-native user errors in various forms can be used as a way of identifying and correcting the message not just the language, and also provide a lot of fun in the classroom. A wonderful follow-up to his webinar which we reported on in ICC-Journal 2 (3). Ian McMaster, Editor in Chief of Spotlight Business Magazine, questioned the concept and use of authenticity, both in business and politics and the use of authentic materials in language teaching. All well and good he argued but, in many cases, 'textbook' language may provide a better model. "The teacher's job is to reform not replicate it,"

In Teaching Tips I'm especially delighted to welcome Russell Stannard to our pages. Along with Michael Carrier, Russell is the best simple explainer of teaching practice using online techniques and his award-winning website, www.teachertrainingvideos.com, is outstanding and always comes to the rescue!

And as schools have restarted and while Covid-19 has receded or continues, depending on who you listen to, Vasiliki Santaridou and Luke Prodromou's record of and comments on the impact of the re-opening of schools and students' comments is enlivening. As Luke wrote, historic famous and radical educators from Jean Jacques Rousseau to Neil Summerfield would be turning in their graves.

Two reviews, this month, Gabrielle Hogan-Brun's '*Why Study Languages?*' and David Omand's '*How Spies Think*'. '*Why Study Languages?*' is a brilliant presentation of what language learning can do for students both personally and career-wise, offering motivation for students and tired teachers alike. '*How Spies Think*' by Sir David Omand, former Head of Britain's GCHQ is a fascinating insight into developing critical awareness and problem solving skills based on the

experience of the intelligence gathering services. And if you are interested in politics there are lots of fascinating stories.

So, lots to read and enjoy and indeed learn. Dip in, browse and read whatever takes your fancy.

Of course, we'd love to hear from you and if you have ideas you'd like to publish we'd love to hear from you. Contact me at barrytomalin@aol.com and I'll reply immediately.

Have a great summer and see you in September!

THE ONLINE ICC CONFERENCE

On June 5th we are holding our second online annual conference on

Learning Language and Teaching in a New Era.

The conference begins at 10.15 (BST) with a plenary by Frank Heyworth of the European Centre for Modern Languages and continues with presentations and discussion on how learning and teaching might change as Covid-19 recedes. Here's the programme.

<p>10.15 –11:15</p> <p>Plenary</p>	<p>Frank Heyworth European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe: The Future of Language Education – Lessons to be Learned from the Pandemic</p> <p>The Professional Network Forum of the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe carried out a survey in February in which teachers and other language professionals were asked to recount and assess their experience of teaching languages during the pandemic. There were 1735 responses to the survey from 37 countries around Europe. The team coordinating this initiative is now analysing the data from the questionnaire, using corpus analysis to explore the input in open text to questions (among others) related to the challenges raised by the pandemic, but also the positive factors which can be drawn from it. In my talk I will present the results of the survey and some ideas on ways in which approaches to language education will be impacted by the pandemic.</p>
<p>11.15 -12:00</p> <p>Session 1</p>	<p>Dana Kampmann: Building Community in Online Classes</p> <p>The move to online classrooms has created many new challenges in teaching and learning. One of these challenges is creating connections between the teacher and students as well as amongst the students. This interactive workshop aims to share strategies and stories to better build online learning communities.</p>
<p>12:00 –12.45</p> <p>Session 2</p>	<p>Claudia Schuhbeck: The learning cycle: Holistic learning approach</p> <p>Learning methodologies from a humanistic and constructivist perspective propose that we are naturally capable of learning. The organization of a sequence focused on the educational objective plays a critical role in constructing, acquiring, and applying knowledge. Within teaching, the teacher needs to consider that a learning process is fundamental. It establishes a relationship between a learner's performance at each stage of the process and the achievement of the stated goal. The learning cycle requires a series of techniques that can be used in all its phases, but their variety will enrich the learner's experience of the target of study. The combination of techniques motivates students to experiment at each stage of the cycle with their learning process. It also helps them to develop their reflections and concepts about what they have learned. On the other hand, the process provides the teacher with a guide for action to establish an effective path towards achieving the educational objective. In this presentation, you will identify the main elements of the phases that make up the learning cycle, which can be used in face-to-face, virtual or blended</p>

	learning classes.
12.45 –13.45	Lunch break
13.45– 14.30 Session 3	<p>Geoff Tranter: Strategies for Activating and Involving Everybody - Not Only, but Especially in the Online Classroom</p> <p>For teachers, it is often a challenge to ensure that every learner in the group is actively involved in the lesson, especially in larger groups. This applies equally to face-to-face teaching and the digital classroom. The aim of this practical session is to show a few techniques that can be used to keep (almost) everybody active throughout the lesson - regardless of whether the emphasis is on reading, listening, speaking or writing. Most of the techniques can be used from A2 upwards.</p>
14.30 –15.15 Session 4	<p>Angélica Martínez: Contributions of Neuroscience to Language Learning</p> <p>Derived from the experience of English teaching, and the observation of students' learning patterns, this paper reviews some Neuroscience principles applied to the second language teaching-learning process. In this context, we identify Neuroscience as Educational Neuroscience, which study constitutes a relevant and powerful tool for teachers. It starts with an introduction to the subject, proceeding to an overview of Neuroscience findings related to the way we learn, and an overview of the brain-compatible learning principles. Then, the application of these principles to class planning and classroom issues will be analyzed. It is concluded that besides the search for the best didactic strategies, teachers should build awareness of the importance to study the brain and its functions as the foundation to develop methodologies more compatible with the way our brains learn.</p>
15.15 –15.30	Coffee break
15.30 -16:15 Session 5	<p>Silke Riegler: Blended Learning in Adult Education – is it worth the hype?</p> <p>In an increasingly digital world online learning has finally found its place in adult education. The advantages are obvious and so are the challenges of setting up a program that benefits students and teachers alike. In this talk, I will look at the benefits of using Moodle, a free and open-source learning platform, with university students. Based on my own experiences as a course developer for the Virtual University of Bavaria, an online university open to all students studying in Bavaria, and as a university lecturer, I will show examples of my own Business English blended learning courses, which can easily be adapted to any adult education scenario. I will discuss my experience with a blended approach, share my successes and challenges during the development and teaching process. In addition, I will encourage you to think about how to implement my framework into your own teaching context. By the end of the talk, I hope to have sparked your interest in the topic and maybe you will transform from tech sceptic to tech addict in the classroom.</p>
16.15 –17.00 Session 6	<p>Neil Anderson: Mind the Gap: Maximising Meaningful Communication Online</p> <p>Despite online and face-to-face teaching representing different modes of delivery, when it comes to motivating students to communicate, the problems remain similar: the need to scaffold, support and motivate learners through, for instance, providing clear goals to stimulate</p>

	interaction. This interactive talk will review these general principles and examine practical tools and techniques for encouraging students to communicate meaningfully online.
17.00 –17.45 Session 7	<p>Dr. Edith Huerta Trejo: Flexible learning in the face of pandemics: The case of the Gestalt University in Mexico</p> <p>Prolonged school closures during COVID-19 have been a challenge for students, teachers and parents. Today, many countries are planning to reopen schools in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Social distancing measures probably make that distance learning remain at least partially part of our daily lives. The substantial distance restrictions necessary for reopening and reducing the number of students per classroom by approximately 30% make "hybrid education" models a possible solution. During this presentation, a change in the educational model of the Gestalt University in Mexico to face the pandemic challenges will be described.</p>
17.45 -18.00	Farewell

Not long till June 5th!

To join the conference contact Ozlem Yuges (ICC-Languages Coordinator) at ozlem.yuges@icc-languages.eu

KEYNOTES

Oral examinations at the *Berufliches Gymnasium Hamburg-Harburg (BS 18)*, Germany.

A reflection on communicative performance after six years of experience.

Götz Reuter

You cannot not communicate.

Paul Watzlawick, Axiom 1

Approach

The oral exam as a didactic supplement to English lessons is not new. While in some German states the exam has been established at *Gymnasiums* (grammar schools) since at least 2005, e.g. in Saxony, *Berufsschulen* (vocational schools) have been offering the comparable standardized KMK Foreign Language Certificate Interaction Exam (KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat) for more than 20 years. At our school, the *Berufliche Schule Hamburg-Harburg (BS18)*, the vocational grammar school has been working with the oral exam as a written exam substitute since 2014. We have been successfully carrying out the KMK Foreign Language Certificate Interaction Exam since 2008. Against this background, we as the English department of the *Berufliche Schule Hamburg-Harburg* can perhaps draw on more than just initial experience and perhaps take a look into the future. With the following remarks we are aware that although our work is theory-based, we can only provide a practical excerpt from the heterogeneous examination landscape of German federal states with its different types of schools.

The "Oral Examination" Concept - a Summary

The exam can be offered as an exam substitute or as part of a final secondary school exam (e.g. in the "Abitur", German A-levels) on theoretically all levels of the Common European Framework of Reference. The examination proceeds in phases and the two examiners, interlocutor and assessor evaluate the verbal competences of the mostly two examinees, taking into account intersubjective standards (Rating Scales). While the assessor evaluates according to the categories (a) communicative action (b) linguistic flexibility/coherence/cohesion, (c) vocabulary, (d) sentence melody/accenuation/pronunciation and (e) degree of task completion, the interlocutor provides the (f) overall impression.

We only test at B2 level and if there is an odd number of examinees, we prefer a group of three rather than a single exam candidate. In total, a pair exam lasts 30 minutes, divided into 20 minutes core exam and 10 minutes assessment phase. After a warm-up phase, the core exam includes both dialogic and monologic

components. Verbal and visual stimuli serve as speaking prompts. In a period of approximately three weeks prior to the exam, English teachers prepare their students for the exam in terms of form, content, and language. The aim is to improve the spontaneous verbal communication skills of our mostly 16 to 18-year-old students.

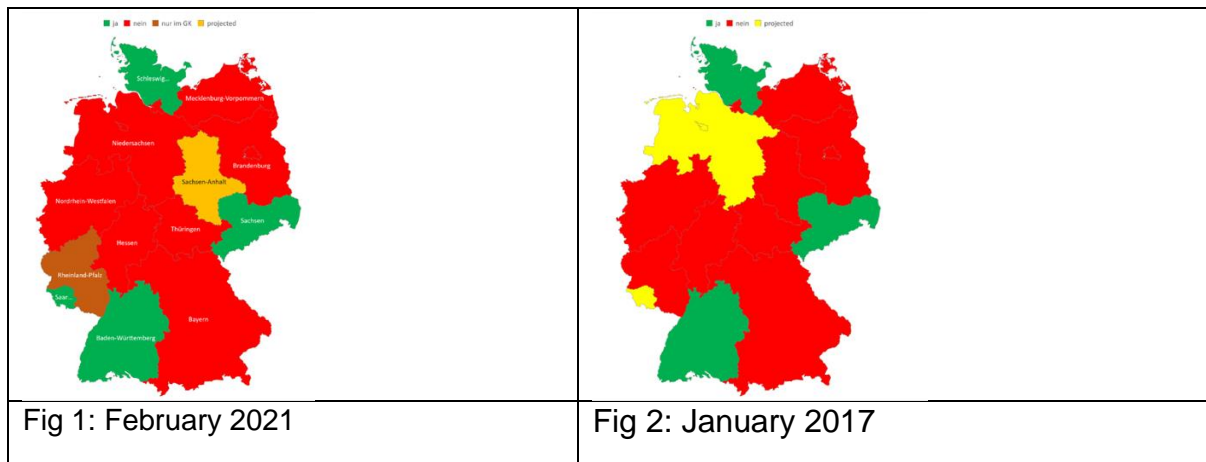
Oral exams in the German states - a snapshot

Each federal state in Germany has cultural sovereignty and can thus independently determine its educational policy according to Article 30 of the Grundgesetz (Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany). As a voluntary association of the Länder (states) without legislative authority, the Kultusministerkonferenz (Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs) coordinates, among other things, educational policy, which can subsequently be implemented in a binding manner under state law.

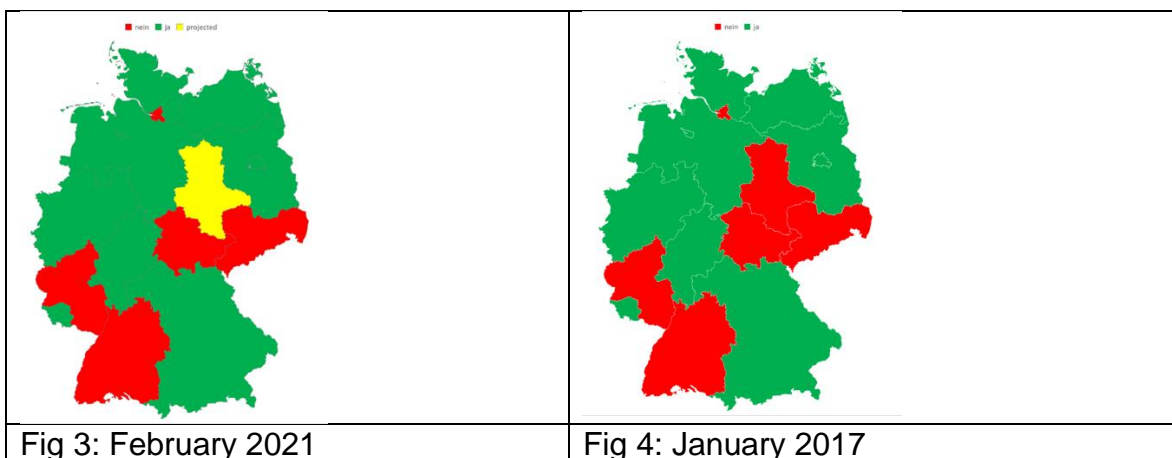
With the “Länder Agreement on the Common Basic Structure of the School System and the Overall Responsibility of the Länder in Central Questions of Educational Policy”, the Länder have decided to ensure comparability of the Abitur by establishing common educational standards, a pool of Abitur tasks and the harmonisation of the structural framework of senior classes (Article 30 (2), resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder of 15 October 2020, which entered into force on 19 February 2021).

Against the background of this clear objective, it is perhaps interesting to see to what extent the federal states have so far been able to implement the oral examination as part of the Abitur (final secondary school examination) or as a compulsory examination substitute in upper senior classes. The following maps show the results obtained from two cross-state online surveys of professional representatives (2017 and 2021):

The oral exam as part of the final secondary school examinations (Abitur)



The oral exam as a substitute for a written exam



The states of Saarland, Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein are particularly noteworthy in this regard. While Saarland and Schleswig-Holstein offer the oral exam both as an exam substitute and as part of the university entrance qualification exam, Saxony has had this tradition since 2005 and offers this exam not only for English, but also for French, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Czech and Russian.

Positive aspects

Years ago didactic experts criticised the traditional teaching of modern foreign languages, which has its roots in Latin didactics (Deeg 2014, p. 12) and in which oral parts were already insufficient in regular classes. An oral examination therefore seemed to us to be a sensible and necessary addition, because otherwise, against our better judgment, we only formally valued written performance and as a school we did not keep in line with the latest developments in subject didactics.

After six years of experience with this alternative form of examination, we would like to emphasise first of all that the assessment effort is considerably reduced. In the first year, the examiners worked intensively on the subject matter, and the preparation time for the teaching and examination phases was correspondingly high. From the second year onwards, the organisational workload of the head of the English department was reduced to an estimated six hours per session. The preparation included the writing of two covering letters and the creation of an examination schedule, which had to be revised from time to time due to individual requests and shifts in the timetable. Now all other examiners are only marginally involved in operational planning (Reuter 2019). We revised the assessment grids as Rating Scales after the second year, and we are thinking for the coming exams about replacing them by workable checklists.

Perhaps this aspect of the considerable workload reduction can be illustrated by the following comparison of the time required for a two-hour English exam correction in the upper school with “the burden” of the speaking exam:

Written exam (writing task) (90 minutes) Speaking exam	Time/ students	Oral exam (30 minutes for two students)	Time/ students
Text selection (approx. two hours/ 20 students)	6 minutes	Preparation of individual pair examination (20 minutes/2 students) (verbal prompts or visual prompts)	10 minutes
Preparation of the tasks and the horizon of expectation (approx. two hours/ 20 students)	6 minutes	Preparation of the tasks (20 minutes/2 students)	10 minutes
Correction (Language assessment 45 minutes, content assessment 45 minutes hours)	90 minutes	Performance speaking test: 30 minutes (incl. assessment) / 2 students	15 minutes
Total net	102 minutes	Total net	35 minutes
Break time between exams	10 minutes	Half an hour break after three exams (3x 30 minutes) With 20 students => 90 minutes break With a total of 90 minutes break approx. 5 minutes break per student	5 minutes
Total gross	112 minutes	Total gross	40 minutes

Fig 5: Time load: Written versus oral exam

In addition, the integration of the oral exam as a substitute for the written exam in the senior classes has the following positive effects:

1) In the instructional and preparatory time before the exam, examinees concentrate on improving their verbal competence, which, in contrast to those tested in writing, have a different qualitative level. For example, neither receptive exercises nor tasks for text production or mediation can reproduce active listening combined with spontaneous questions plus reaction or criticism expressed directly to what is said in such an accurate and interactive way.

2) In addition, the students also improve their interpersonal skills, as some strong ones help the weaker ones, who are thus able to reduce linguistic inhibitions and in doing so develop their spontaneous action and communication skills. Certainly, the distinction made here between verbal and social competence is not a sharp one, but it is intended to represent the diverse facets which this different form of testing allows students to develop.

3) In the vast majority of exams, marks have either improved over written performance or have remained at previous levels. In rare cases, grades have worsened. Here we would like to emphasise that in today's modern world of work, a renunciation of verbal competences, combined with their compensation by written performances, is no longer acceptable. Our school also takes this educational idea into account.

4) We believe that by more agreements, cooperation and joint testing a closer basis of trust has been created within the English department, which ultimately benefits the students. In other words, the days of the teaching "lone wolf" are over and joint agreements combined with occasional humor relax our work within a formally dense set of rules and regulations.

Difficulties as a challenge

Of course, every concept also has disadvantages which must be dealt with as a participant. An unreflective adoption of innovative ideas leads to dangers not to be underestimated, which teachers have certainly encountered at some point in the course of their professional lives. These include, as has long been described in literature (Nolan, 1991), that well-functioning and proven processes in school should not have to submit to "change for the sake of change itself", that new ideas can flood a department working at the edge of its staff capacity, or that countless new ideas coexisting in an erratic and uncoordinated way, without a guideline connecting them or synergies being released (i.e. "the grasshopper syndrome").

After six years of examination experience, however, the difficulties of this formerly innovative concept are reduced in our case to the following points:

1) The oral exam as a written exam substitute binds students to a certain methodological-didactic structure during the preparation period, which is then reflected in the exam that follows. This can lead to the actual guiding idea of the exam, namely to simulate a real conversation situation that can spontaneously develop in qualitatively different ways, strongly impressed and leading to the repetition of previously memorised speech patterns. For it is not only for regular teaching that professional didactic experts rightly emphasises here: "ein Erstarren in Routine ... ist zu vermeiden" (Thaler 2018, p. 195), translated as "the danger of being stifled by routine should be avoided".

2) The content can remain superficial due to the time-limited phases of only circa five minutes within the examination time, so that a profound examination of the topic cannot take place due to the given examination structure. Here we would like to emphasise that the internal examination structure at our school is only a planning basis, which we can change during the examination; if necessary we can also cancel a phase within the 20-minute core time without substitution. As an example, let us provocatively ask whether examinees can discuss the facets of climate change in a role play with differentiated language and content within only five minutes.

3) Teachers who are not assigned to an examination year are additionally burdened in terms of time as assessors, as they work during the examination in a period not determined by themselves and outside of their regular teaching duties. Alternatively, they could use this time to correct other examinations of their own classes at home. This is countered by the fact that they will benefit from the solidarity of other teachers in another examination year. At our school, there were no misunderstandings in this respect.

Outlook

No concept is perfect. We at our school also have to face up to possible future challenges and want to further optimise our oral examination. To this end, the following considerations are possible:

1) Designing the speaking impulses differently or in a more differentiated way is an option. Small video sequences that give rise to a controversial conversation could perhaps simulate a real situation in a better way. Didactic support would be desirable here.

2) The rating scales could be replaced by a checklist as a measuring instrument. Lukácsi (2020) criticises this within such a context.

"Despite their popularity, rating scales can lead to construct irrelevant variance, score inconsistencies and occasional misclassification."

In this respect, too, an accompanied comparative model test would be possible at our school.

3) In addition to the written tasks in the general university entrance examinations, oral examinations in modern foreign languages would also have to take place nationwide. The monitoring of these examinations by an external supervisory authority such as the Institute for Educational Quality Improvement (IQB) in Berlin is conceivable. The IQB is an academic institute that supports the sixteen states of the Federal Republic of Germany in improving and assuring the quality of its educational system.

Certainly, we are still far away from an equally weighed assessment of speaking and writing in formal examinations. However, the core curricular implementation of compulsory oral examinations, at least as a substitute for written examinations, in all German states would be a first important step in this direction, which, in the context of established educational standards, would mean a further approximation towards attaining comparable teaching content in German schools. Our school is making its humble contribution to this.

Götz Reuter

Hamburg-Harburg Vocational School, www.bs18.de

Bibliography

Deeg, Christoph (2013): Thesen zur Mündlichkeit im Englischunterricht des Gymnasiums – Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft (?). In: Mündlichkeit fördern und bewerten, Anregungen zur Differenzierung im kommunikativen Englischunterricht, hrsg. von C. Edelhoff/T. Schmidt, Braunschweig.

Lukácsi, Zoltán (2020): Standard setting and internal validation of a novel approach adopted for assessing speaking. In: Training, Language and Culture, Vol. 4, Issue 4, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moskau.

Nolan, Vincent (1991): The innovator's handbook. Problem Solving, Communication and Teamwork, o.O.

Reuter, Götz (2019): Sprechprüfung statt Klausur: Wie sich schriftliche Korrekturen vermeiden lassen. In: Pädagogik, 71. Jahrgang, Heft 11.

Thaler, Engelbert (2018): Balanced Teaching. In: Wirksamer Englischunterricht, hrsg. von V. Reinhardt/ M. Rehm/ M. Wilhelm, Baltmannsweiler.

https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2020/2020_10_15-Laendervereinbarung.pdf. Last accessed 04 March 2021.

<https://www.kmk.org/aktuelles/artikelansicht///laendervereinbarung-ueber-grundstruktur-des-schulwesens-und-gesamtstaatliche-verantwortung-in-kraft-ge.html>. Last accessed 04 March 2021.

Enhancing Human Complexity: the tacit mission of semiotics and UX design

Marina Peluso

This article is about how I managed to change my life during the pandemic. I am not telling you this story because I think I did something special, but because along this journey I have learned an important lesson about what to be a User Experience Designer really means: enhancing and not simplifying human complexity. In understanding this, I wanted to acknowledge how important have been, for me and for what I have accomplished so far, all the persons that trusted and sustained me along the journey.

New Year's Resolution

At the beginning of 2020 I had very clear new year's resolutions. Then the Covid19 pandemic hit our lives and I had to make a choice, bet on myself and work towards my goals or just give up and wait till the storm passed, sitting on my sofa. The point was, I didn't have a really comfortable sofa (and I didn't think it was worth buying one).

Being in lockdown is the only thing that hasn't changed since March 2020. I changed house, I changed job and I moved into a country that is not even in the EU anymore. Even though everything looked stagnant and steady, I managed to turn my life upside down.

At the beginning of 2020 I realised that there were a few things in my life that I wanted to achieve and that it was too early to give up.

This was what my list looked like:

- Leverage my research skills in my daily job
- Have a more defined role as a UX Professional
- Reduce work related stress

Just writing down this list made me realise how far I was from my goals, and that I didn't know where to start from in order to reach them. Furthermore, there was a voice in the back of my head, which has accompanied me all the way through the journey, saying, "You'll never get there".

After one month I had made very few steps forward, and then the pandemic hit our country and the world. As a consequence, I become even busier at work, and stressed and scared.

The outbreak of the pandemic was disruptive. Our daily routine was overturned, but worst of all, the Virus, became the only topic of discussion. Uncertainty was taking over. The only way we could slow down the infection rate was to slow down the pace of our life. We had to stay at home. We had to practise social distancing. That was our duty and social responsibility.

My dreams were slowly fading away.

Fear is natural...

In early March 2020 we were in a very sad situation. And scary too. During the first wave of the pandemic you could perceive fear all around; fear of things we couldn't control; fear for our loved ones, fear about our future, Fear about our economy. fear for our democracy. fear of being alone, and of missing something, the hugs of our friends and family, the spring that was about to explode outside while the city remained silent. Activities left behind. Hobbies and sports that used to keep us alive, habits we thought we could not do without, everything was paused.

We were all totally out of our comfort zone. And the first reaction was, of course...panic!!!

...handling is human.

Being in isolation is not funny, I have to admit. I was going out only once a week to buy some food at a nearby supermarket. I was living alone. I wasn't meeting my mum or my sister (not to mention friends). I had to stop my swimming training (I used to train four times a week, and it is like the only thing I keep on doing whatever happens in my life). I was on smart working, which turned out to be a total nightmare of endless working days and weekends, with never-ending exhausting and useless calls. Though, after fifteen days I was not feeling scared any more.

I should have been depressed, anxious and scared. Instead, I started feeling energised, hungry, and focused. On the very first day at home, I realised that I could not change what was happening all around me, but I could make choices about how to handle my new life, how to interpret it, how to judge it. And I decided I wanted to make the most of it.

"What if" or the power of framing

Things always get worse before getting better. In fact, the very first day at home I felt like a tiger in a cage. I cleaned up the whole house, I went out on a big grocery shopping spree. I was also stopped by the police (who scared me a lot). When I got back home I thought: "OMG, how will I bear all these days alone at home? I will just go mad". And I went mad. I went mad immediately, I started

hating everyone, even myself for not having done this or that. Fear for the future and regret for the past came all together. Bad thoughts prevailed.

At the end of the day, I was exhausted and sad. In that moment I realised I didn't want to spend another day like that. But how? I started to think about how I could reframe the situation I was experiencing.

What if I were on a solitary trip on a sailing boat? *What if* I were an adventurer exploring the world? Would have I accepted all those changes in a different perspective? In that precise moment, everything changed, and I started to see all the opportunities I had to take advantage of that situation. So I started to plan.

As if I were a solitary sailor, I set up the direction and a daily routine to keep my boat on course, being aware I was not able to control the wind but I could handle my sail and myself in order to reach my destination. Suddenly, a new world opened before my eyes, and I was able to see things I couldn't see before.

At that precise moment I started to discover many little things about myself that helped me to grow and improve.

The importance of constraints

I had to design my own daily routine. I had a lot of constraints to be taken into account (a global pandemic, prolonged working hours, etc.), together with my own personal motivation, needs, challenges and behaviour, with the aim of helping myself to end up at the end of the lockdown in a better position to achieve my goals. This was definitely a UX challenge.

So, what, you ask, is UX? It's an acronym and it stands for User experience (UX) design. UX design is the process that design teams use to create products that provide meaningful and relevant experiences to users. This involves the design of the entire process of acquiring and integrating the product, including aspects of branding, design, usability and function. It supports user behaviour (e.g. language learners) through usability, usefulness, and desirability provided in the interaction with a product (teaching process, a syllabus or an exam). Usually applied to designers and manufacturers it applies equally to teaching and group management in a classroom or online.

I started writing down all the steps and intermediate goals I should have gone through and for each of them I applied the "How Might We" framework to come up with all the small daily tasks and behaviour I could try in my routine to reach each milestone. Some of them were very small and detailed, but all together they helped me make big changes.

As I encountered each hurdle along the way, I had to tweak it into an opportunity. There were things I couldn't touch. I couldn't work less, I couldn't go out with

friends to relax, I couldn't swim to stay healthy and not feel distressed. Therefore I focused on the things I had the power to modify.

Working from home could be clearly an opportunity but I needed to create space for studying and for exercising. So, instead of waking up half an hour before work, I set the alarm 3 hours earlier. This also meant that in the evening I had to go to bed early, which turned out to be a very good habit because there was not much to do after dinner apart from obsessing about how wretched our lives were at that moment. I also reduced the hours spent on social media and on Netflix. This meant I had almost 4 hours a day I could dedicate to myself and to achieve my objectives. 4 hours a day plus the weekend. I realised that time was not an issue and this gave me enough confidence to believe I could make it.

I started studying to obtain a formal UX qualification, reading Interaction Design books, listening to podcasts by well-known UX researchers and designers. I started practising English whenever possible, listening to the radio and taking part in online book clubs. I created a roadmap to develop my portfolio and prepare my CV. I started to apply everything I was learning in my daily work, acquiring confidence in myself.

After a month of trial and error my daily routine was so effective and efficient that I decided I could be available for free consultancy for small entrepreneurs struggling during the pandemic. It was time to go out into the wild and test myself outside the comfort zone of my daily job.

4 months later

4 months later I had finished a Qualification in UX Research from the Interaction Design Foundation, I got into UCL to attend a prestigious Master's in Human-Computer Interaction in London and I was half way to my Diploma in UX Design.

In the meantime, I was advocating Design Thinking and UX Design in the company where I was working at the time, doing my best to create successful digital health services. Nevertheless, I started to realise that although we were making great steps forward to include UX in our process, if I wanted to grow as a UX Researcher I needed to be in an environment where I could learn from others and I could practise research more easily.

It was time to move. During the summer holidays I started networking on LinkedIn, while drafting my UX Portfolio, so I could test several versions of my CV with peers and recruiters. By the end of August I had spoken to several people from different digital companies looking for UX Researchers in UK. I was mainly trying to understand how I could demonstrate I had the skills and experience to do the job. Again, I was already applying a UX Research approach, and the right methodology always produces good results...

6 months later

After 6 months since the first lockdown and just few days before the announcement of a second lockdown, I found myself on a flight to Manchester. A new job was waiting for me, a new country and new challenges to face, new problems to be solved. My dreams were becoming a solid and concrete reality.

And so? Is it all about method?

No. Absolutely not. And probably this is the most important lesson I learned in the past 12 months. It was not thanks to the method that I kept working towards my goals but it was thanks only to the love, the support and the practical help of the most important people in my life; the evening calls with my friends, the unconditional love and support of my family, the cheering and the comfort that all of them provided every time I was about to crash.

If I had not been surrounded by Love, no methods could have helped me. This made me reflect about what UX Design is about.

Here is what I have learned.

I am a method person. I love thinking that there is a process, a recipe to guarantee good results. This is the reason why I chose to study Semiotics, with Professor Umberto Eco at the University of Bologna in Italy. Semiotics is the signs of signs. It's how we interpret words, images and messages in different ways according to our own background and experience.

Founded by the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure and developed by thinkers such as Roland Barthes, it is a method to describe how humans transform and manipulate meaning. In other words, a framework to explain human complexity.

Nevertheless, I also acknowledge that what makes the flavour of a dish great (given the same ingredients) is the hand of the cook. The cook's expertise, passion and team, make the difference as does or her own interpretation of the recipe, together with the cooking process. (This is why I love cooking and eating, but this is another story).

What I learned along this journey is that designing for complex problems, tasks or context is not something that can be done only by following a fixed process. When I see articles and posts talking about *"The 6 step process to improve your product now"* I always view them with a degree of suspicion.

This is one of the issues related to the diffusion of Design Thinking and Agile frameworks. The way in which the methods are described, does not highlight enough the fact that these processes cannot epistemologically be considered

scientific because their implementation is highly dependent on the human actors that have to execute them. Nonetheless they have been proven to be efficient. How is that possible?

Looking at this paradox, I noticed that it is not much different from the one described by Carlo Ginzburg in his popular essay "Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method". For those less familiar with semiotics and epistemology, Ginzburg, in this short and clear piece of writing, defined the nature of a third paradigm between hard sciences and humanities, which connects together disciplines like Medicine, History and Language Sciences. What unites these different disciplines is the importance played by clues (symptoms, signs) and what Ginzburg called the abduction process, an ability that allows human beings to leap from the known to the unknown.

This was a real epiphany in my journey. One year ago I thought that to succeed in this job I needed to learn how to use a design tool. Today I've understood that is by far more important to learn how to embrace diversity and how to practice inclusiveness. This highlights how crucial it is to be a decent human being to become a good designer and how soft skills are as important as technical ones.

This is where UX Design becomes important to teachers and to education. It emphasises the importance of developing interpersonal skills not just knowledge transfer.

So skills such as active listening, and mindfulness are important design features in teaching, in training and, indeed, in educational management.

Finally, as a semiotician, I have also understood why I have been so naturally attracted by UX Design and why I feel a great sense of achievement in being acknowledged as an UX Professional. It is because I can leverage my passion for human complexity and enhance it, taking it into account when designing digital products and services.

I could not be more grateful to all the people that helped me becoming the person I am.

Finally, to all education managers and teachers reading, this is my advice for you. If your aim is to create delightful and positive learner experience and stand out in the market, start by cultivating and celebrating human values in your classroom and in your company.

Connection, care, respect, love and kindness are the key.

Gratitude: Positive impact in educational contexts

Claudia Garcia

Introduction

In this paper, I will explore the following question: What are the benefits of encouraging gratitude in the classroom? Firstly, I will provide a brief overview and conceptual analysis of how gratitude is generally understood. This analysis takes into account psychological, pedagogical, ethical, philosophical and spiritual views. Subsequently, I address the overall benefits of gratitude in individual and social human development. Afterwards, I present some recommendations from different scholars to develop gratitude, in which a series of practices converge and are associated with other variables such as the human meaning given to gratitude in different contexts. This is followed by a presentation of some positive effect of systematically promoting gratitude, specifically in the classroom. Finally, I present a personal reflection and conclusion on gratitude from a spiritual point of view.

Overview of gratitude

Through the vision of my spiritual experience, gratitude is a practice that requires will and effort and discipline. Every day there are opportunities to be grateful for what life has to offer. One of the expressions that people often use in everyday life, and it is learned first from a language, is "thank you." In the educational field, fostering gratitude is one of the values that schools seek to develop in students. The major religions highlight its importance, encourage its

practice, include it in prayers and offer rituals for its performance. Gratitude has been studied for centuries from religion and philosophy, and approximately since the last century from pedagogical education, general psychology, and, more recently, from positive psychology. The latter is focused on the investigation of the internal positive forces of human potential to obtain a better understanding of people (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

From an educational perspective, the development of gratitude can positively reshape the brain, allowing us to see all that is good in the classroom and the world, improving the lives of adults and students in a powerful and transformative way (Griffith, 2016). From a general psychology point of view, gratitude occurs through interaction among people and their perception of reality (Moyano, 2011). Among the various topics of positive psychology, two of them currently attract the community's attention, and these are happiness and gratitude. Gratitude implies a balanced view of the experience's positive and negative aspects (Moyano, 2011). In life's circumstances, a grateful response can be an adaptive psychological strategy, that is, an ability to adapt to such circumstances and an essential development for the person to interpret everyday experiences positively (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). Under this vision of positive psychology, gratitude or the ability to be grateful, allows people to recognise past or present positive aspects that have caused benefits, giving a pleasant meaning to existence.

Unlike other feelings, gratitude is not just an impulse. Gratitude requires a system of ethical values, where the concepts of giving and receiving are

resolved, as well as a renunciation of the egocentric view of life (Watkins, 2013). Ethically, gratitude is a moral virtue that denotes good behaviour (McCullough, Kimerldorf, & Cohen, 2008). This conception forces the person to be grateful for the generosity received. According to this conception, acts of generosity and being thankful are necessary prescriptions based on social customs and ingrained traditions (McCullough et al., 2008). This definition of gratitude as moral behaviour obliges one to be grateful for the benefits received (Watkins, 2013). For example, parents are morally obliged to care for and feed their young children. The role of social customs in giving rise to these obligations determines diverse forms of gratitude expression in several cultures. However, in this experience, there is a reciprocal exchange guided by emotions and moral affections with a tendency to cooperate (Watkins, 2013). Considering the above, it can be argued that appreciation is not the same as gratitude, because gratitude is more in-depth and is what motivates a person to be thankful. Gratitude, which is the simple way the heart responds to the fullness of life, goes beyond creed, age, vocation, gender, or nationality. The practice of gratitude can be taken as a universal ethic, capable of leading people peacefully into a new era of equitable sharing of natural resources and care for the environment and society with future generations in mind.

Gratitude is understood as a social value since it reveals other related values for coexistence, such as recognition of the other, sense of belonging, collaboration, positive leadership, reciprocity of gifts or abilities, fidelity, loyalty and friendship (Seligman, 2003). In this sense, gratitude is necessary and

beneficial for interpersonal human relations in all contexts: family, work and culture. In this social context, gratitude necessarily implies an exchange between two persons or groups of persons and requires that both groups take turns in giving and receiving (Weiner, 1986). Reflecting on the above, this exchange has as its objective and final benefit the achievement of a cooperative and supportive society among the individuals that are part of it. To live in gratitude is to have a spirit of generosity and trust that replaces the spirit of suspicion and resentment that prevents a peaceful transition to a more just society, where people can share the world's goods.

From the moral philosophy point of view, gratitude demands that we be grateful for the benefits received. Gratitude, from a moral perspective, denotes a permanent state of appreciation and recognition of the generosity of others (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000). Under this meaning, gratitude can be understood as an obligation. If it is an obligation, it no longer functions as a social good because it remains empty for spiritual purposes. After all, the only activity that is essential and sufficient for spiritual life is giving thanks (Ryan, 1999). Giving thanks is always an acknowledgement of life as a gift, as a given good. Thus, authentic gratitude already speaks to a sense of honesty and an open attitude to beauty and goodness (Ryan, 1999). Therefore, gratitude teaches us to value everything that exists, including the natural world with its innumerable animals, plants and minerals.

When there is gratitude for past and present experiences, the judgments of what is considered right or wrong are transcended. Rey, Pena, & Neto (2020)

point to gratitude as a strength that shapes the virtue of spirituality or transcendence. From the spiritual perspective, thanking God or the Supreme Being every day for the infinite offered blessings, opens the way for more blessings to come (Price & Teutsch, 2017). Spiritual religious and non-religious people practise a form of gratitude for transcendent order, and they thank God for the gifts and blessings they have received. According to Emmons (2007), prayers of gratitude are fully supported in religious scriptures. He states that there is no religion on earth that questions the importance of giving thanks to God, because every time someone prays, gratitude is generated. Hay (2008) mentions that all human beings have an experience of or understand how to pray in some way. Prayer can be an attitude of communication with God that lasts all day during continuous or interrupted moments. However, praying is to have discipline; it is recommended to have the discipline to do it in everyday life in a structured way (Price & Teutsch, 2017). Gratitude offers a common language for dialogue between believers and non-believers, as both can appreciate the value of being grateful.

Being grateful does not mean denying the pain. However, when one transcends the pain or anger by being grateful in spite of an awkward situation, it is possible to open up infinite possibilities to go forward towards more happiness and more fulfilment (Emmons, 2007). Gratitude teaches us to value what one has, and thus can be a starting point to chase away fear. A person cannot be a victim and be grateful at the same time, so gratitude can considerably diminish negative feelings. I would like to conclude this section by reflecting on the words

found in the Psalms, as we are invited to thank God wholeheartedly for all that we have received (Psalms 9:1, NRSV).

Effect of gratitude.

Gratitude has incredible benefits for those who practice it. Cultivating gratitude helps to nurture emotional well-being and regulate stress and has a positive impact on physical health. On a spiritual level, cultivating gratitude helps to be close to God and to value all that has been created for personal and collective growth. According to Gottlieb (2013), gratitude is part of spiritual virtue. The development of these virtues helps to face the challenges of life. Such practice must be conscious and constant in order to achieve spiritual enlightenment. People who practice gratitude are happier and can focus on benefits, even in difficult situations (Gottlieb, 2013). In this sense, grateful people hardly ever give space for negative feelings such as regret, resentment or envy. They are capable of feeling gratitude, precisely because they choose to see the best in people and keep it in their memories.

Gratitude has been associated with better physical health parameters. From a mental health perspective, it has been associated with outcomes such as higher levels of positive emotions, life satisfaction, and pro-social behaviours (Tala, 2019). From the perspective of people who cohabit with someone who practices gratitude, they are reported to be happier, more pleasant to share, and generally considered more optimistic, trustworthy, and helpful (Emmons & Stern, 2013). When gratitude is expressed, complaints and regrets are put aside, and by focusing on maintaining an expectant state that all the best will happen in life,

health is strengthened. When there is gratitude, there is a mental expansion and spiritual evolution, on the other hand, when there is a grievance and focus on lack, there is a process of constriction (Emmons & McCullough, 2004). According to Fredrickson (2001), muscle contraction shuts down the respiratory, lymphatic, and immune systems, and with it, the mood drops. He also states that mental tension creates muscular tension and that gratitude loosens and softens the central nervous system. In other words, the human being feels less likely to be grateful if there is a contraction, and that can lead to a swift growing circle of ungratefulness. However, when appreciation is integrated as an essential part of life, things that were previously thought impossible to achieve are beginning to become more accessible and the visualisation of enjoying new experiences and goals becomes more effortless.

Gratitude in education

Gratitude is one of the most appreciated and respected values in education. From a pedagogical perspective, it is never too late to learn. Therefore, learning to be grateful can be part of any educational program and for any age in the student body. Teaching gratitude at any educational level contributes to better self-esteem, harmonious collaborative work and improved learning (Howells, 2012). Based on the above, it can be said that learning to be grateful brings well-being and recognition to the students. It is important to consider that, like all other values, thankfulness is taught by example. Therefore, grateful and considerate teachers will be better able to foster that feeling in students.

Grateful people are happier because they are satisfied with what they have. Sincere gratitude breaks down the barrier of pride and opens the door to humility (Emmons, 2007). When a person feels shaken by the strong winds of change intended to threaten mental well-being, one can take a different view by changing the basis of thinking to the spiritual, that is, by recognising the omnipresence of divine goodness (Fillmore, 1986). Such a change leads to a state of calm and hope. When there is gratitude, it is easier to empathise with spiritual identity. Gratitude also opens the door to abundance. Praise and thanksgiving have the power to increase the experience of good (Emmons, 2007).

Finally, it should be reflected that the moments of gratitude show that everything can be a gift. The development of gratitude includes the awakening of intelligence, willingness, and emotions (Seligman, 2003). By receiving and giving thanks for a gift, interdependence is created with the giver, and then it is easier to access the feeling of unity and more appreciation. When it is discovered that everything is a gift in life, the intellect will learn to recognise it, and consequently, feelings develop an appreciation and full attention to the liveliness of the world (Shankland, 2016). Gratitude, therefore, far from being just an emotion, is an attitude towards life that makes people have better self-esteem and a greater sense of personal worth. Gratitude increases ethical awareness, improves bonds with others, helps to cope with stress and adversity, inhibits unfavourable comparisons with others, encourages adaptation to new circumstances, and helps combat negative situations.

Gratitude practice

Gratitude, like any other type of emotion or moral act, can be trained and reactivated. People need to focus on seeing the positive aspects and not just the negative ones. One should learn to be grateful for the little positive and good things that happen. In this way, a feeling and aptitude of more gratitude towards life are opened within oneself, of valuing more what one has, than what one lacks. Developing gratitude requires will and discipline, like any other activity, so continuous practice produces physical and emotional benefits. Grateful people can see the positive even in moments of suffering, valuing integrating them into the experience of life and inner wisdom.

Moyano (2011) suggests that when someone finds something for which that person is grateful, that person should maintain that feeling of gratitude for 15 to 20 seconds, as the body will undergo several subtle and beneficial physiological changes. Among those beneficial changes are decreased stress levels and a strengthened immune system; improved blood flow; harmonised heart rate; and deeper breathing, which increases the amount of oxygen to the tissues (Moyano, 2011).

The practice of gratitude is a way to make an attitudinal and emotional change towards the positive. If there is any illness, gratitude creates a benevolent and loving force that is healing. Hay (2008) points out that at the beginning of the practice of gratitude, it has to do with being grateful for something. It awakens us, and from this awakening, we can try little by little to

create an emotional state or predisposition to be grateful, without needing a particular motive or stimulus (Hay, 2008).

Blessing is also a good practice to develop gratitude as it connects the people with their spiritual path. The comprehensive view from the heart shows that everything is a blessing; therefore, the heart's most natural spontaneous action is to thank and bless what has been received (Steindl-Rast, 1984).

Shinran, the founder of Shin Buddhism, believes that gratitude should be the basis of the force that moves life (Barclay & Kawamura, 1978). This awakening and awareness transforms our way of living, being with people, and with all things. Gratitude, he points out, is a way of breaking down the ego and becoming more spiritual.

One practice that Gottlieb (2003) comments on is to be present and aware of both the good things and the bad things. He states that we turn away and close our eyes to our reality because of life's challenges. To lead a spiritual life, however, means to appreciate that God gives us the capacity to appreciate the happiness and suffering of ourselves and others (Gottlieb, 2003). The above means not focusing energy on avoiding seeing the bad in the world, but having gratitude and empathic capacity to use spiritual virtues and face the challenges. However, I believe that in order to contemplate life as it is, to be present in the world and at the same time to cultivate the spiritual virtues, such as gratitude, it is necessary to have a place where one has security and tranquillity. Seidel (2014) describes that place as a sanctuary, which is not an escape from the world but

represents the possibility of establishing that connection with everything that exists.

Having a sanctuary helps the practice of silence because the person feels safe. One of the ways to exercise gratitude is to quiet the mind, being silent, and repeating "thank you," over time one can add thanks for something specific until the person consciously and heartily thanks for everything important at that stage of life (Larsson, 2014). The shrine invites everyone to carry out another practice of gratitude, which is to pray. For hundreds of years, all religions have promoted specific prayers of thanksgiving. Today, even spiritual people who do not belong to any religious practise prayers of gratitude. In general, practising gratitude by praying brings people closer to God and keeps them focused on all that God has done, including providing relief at specific times of trial.

A gratitude journal is another recommendation for keeping a written record of how God appears in the acts of everyday life (Collier, 2019). Keeping a gratitude journal helps to remember all the good things that happen daily in life, and helps to reflect on the hidden benefits of the challenges of existence (Carr, 2016). Letters, diaries, or videos are what Howells (2012) recommends to develop and practice gratitude in students of any educational level, since the key to these activities is to identify rewarding experiences and consider how and why they happened. Based on my experience in the field of young adult education, writing a gratitude journal is a practice that is encouraged in students, bringing them many benefits in their value formation process.

Finally, it is essential to reflect on the words of the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul insists on the renewal of minds to leave the conformity of a worldly pattern of materialism, comparison and anxiety (Romans 12:2, NRSV). Renewing the mind means continuously thinking about what is true, pure, noble, right, lovely, admirable and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8-9, NRSV). It means remembering the mighty works as well as the standard and everyday blessings of God. It also means following up on answered prayers, even, or especially, if they are not answered in the way expected.

Gratitude in the classroom

Gratitude is the ability of individuals to empower themselves to be grateful, to be able to recognise the gifts received by a benefactor (Lamees, 2015). According to Alarcón (2009), in the classical psychoanalysis theory, this concept acquires meaning because of the passive-active positions of acting because the actions lived passively during childhood are actively repeated during adult life. Alarcón (2009) also affirms that if the child received satisfaction, pleasure, care, and respect as a person, then such attitudes actively could be performed in the form of gratitude as an adult. This psychological process is relevant because it is during the school stage that the student receives and practices behaviours and values inside and outside the school. These behaviours and values positively or negatively influenced the individual. For example, the media tends to encourage grievance and victimisation, and according to Chozen Bays (2011) many times, and for many people, the mind is magnetically attracted to the negativity. For many adult learners, obsession with the negative can create depression and

anxiety. To work with gratitude is to find good things in everyday life, and through being aware of those good things, students are encouraged to be grateful.

It is always a good time to practise gratitude. It is essential to learn from the first years of school training and continue practising it during all levels of education. Above all, at the university level, gratitude is a feeling that brings with it a sense of happiness and well-being, which can be transferred to other people, enhancing interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, which is key to the success of learning and later on of working life (Garcia-Ramirez, 2014). In my experience with college students, the practice of gratitude has supported them in recognising that having the opportunity to learn is a gift and motivates them to have better results and then share that knowledge in the workplace.

Gratitude can be considered necessary to develop humanistic teaching; since its cognitive-emotional character facilitates the acquisition and construction of knowledge (Griffith, 2016). Likewise, gratitude improves interaction and reciprocity between teachers and students, within a context of positive interdependence and intrinsic motivation (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000). At any level of education, the key to this achievement is the reciprocity of gratitude between teachers and students during the teaching-learning process.

Participation in this process should be based on love, kindness and social intelligence to reach the pro-social well-being of the participants (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006). A shared and cooperative benefit should be sought as a reciprocal exchange guided by emotions and moral affection to achieve integral well-being (McCullough, Kimeldorf, & Cohen, 2008).

The sense of gratitude carries the feeling of happiness and well-being, which can be transferred to other people by enhancing interpersonal relationships. In the classroom, gratitude can be made intentionally through specific activities to generate feelings of gratitude. Many teachers expect students to thank them for their work. However, education is a teaching-learning process in which both teachers and students are equal, and there is only one provisional role difference (Garcia-Ramirez, 2014). When teachers conduct gratitude practices, they serve as role models for the students. Howells (2012) comments that all levels of education, gratitude practices in schools resulted in improved interpersonal relationships, better school performance and improved overall student well-being, including motivation.

Griffith (2016) suggests some of the school practices for the development of gratitude in school are having a gratitude journal to write anecdotes of relevant events, writing thank-you letters to classmates and school staff, and making collages of family values and organizing support teams within the community. Another strategy that Howells (2012) suggests is to integrate gratitude into every subject. That integration can be done through metacognition practices or with extracurricular tasks that involve activities that encourage the reflection and awareness of gratitude. Other useful practices that Shankland (2016) comments on are sharing stories of growth within the classroom, encouraging students to perform acts of kindness, role-playing to understand situations of others, and doing activities where family members are involved. Reflecting on these activities, I can see that an important key is the participation of both students and

teachers and the constant practice of some kind of initiative that makes gratitude evident and conscious in everyone's minds.

Considering the overall benefits of practising gratitude, fostering gratitude has positive effects in the classroom at all levels of education, impacting both; the school performance and the lives of the students. Gratitude brings physical and emotional benefits; with gratitude, students' socialisation skills are increased (Howells, 2012). In the long run, this makes them better people because they can value themselves and value others. When students are encouraged to be grateful, a positive attitude is created. Developing gratitude in the classroom, besides strengthening this value, contributes to banish feelings and attitudes with negative connotations (Griffith, 2016). Based on the above, it could be considered that when students of any level of education are invited to reflect on why they are grateful and to whom, positive thoughts and feelings are encouraged to provide well-being. In essence, developing gratitude in the classroom is a simple, rewarding task with satisfactory results. By carrying out this process, the students can understand the true meaning of "thank you."

My approach to gratitude

As an educator, I believe that the development of gratitude is an important key to students' formation at any level of education. I also believe that such practice should begin with personal practice to guide students in their process. Within my spiritual path as I pursue my education, I perform various practices to awaken and maintain the spiritual virtues that Gottlieb (2013) mentions. Among these practices are prayer, physical exercise, meditation, reflection and

community service. The role of spirituality as a thread of integration for my work and my life is based on the practice and reflection of these spiritual virtues. However, for my spiritual path, gratitude is one of the spiritual virtues that I practise most today. I do this because I believe that there is a vital link between gratitude and generosity, and the practice of these virtues has given me a steady connection with God.

Throughout my schooling, and at almost every educational level, I have been blessed to receive generous acts from my teachers and their orientation in identifying and developing the value of gratitude. In the educational context, gratitude and generosity go hand in hand since it is important to teach students at any educational level that generous acts result in feelings of gratitude. Both gratitude and generosity are concepts that reflect the excellence of personal character and, in a way; they are complementary (Carr, 2016). In fact, the relationship between these two concepts begins with an affective process of "giving" goods, advice or help to others without expecting any reward. In other words, generosity is a pro-social behaviour that aims to promote the well-being of another person, called the beneficiary (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006).

Furthermore, gratitude makes it morally obligatory to thank the generous person, because it involves committing to that generous person, in a sense, for the benefit received (McCullough, Kimeldorf, & Cohen, 2008). Likewise, satisfaction and emotional tranquillity are experienced when the benefit received is reciprocal. Under these concepts, it is possible to infer that for many people, generosity is an action loaded with intentionality and that it seeks to return the

benefit made by the benefactor. However, there is, in this experience, a reciprocal exchange guided by emotions and moral affections with a tendency to cooperate (Carr, 2016).

Recognising and appreciating the generosity of someone who offers help does not mean that the recipients are indebted to that person. I believe that gratitude is based on the generous action of a giver and the moral, but a not legal, commitment that the beneficiary acquires by receiving a good or a favour. According to my experience, it is essential to emphasise that the giver's action must necessarily be generous and that it is not a matter of giving a benefit in search of rewards since the generous act does not seek to acquire creditors for selfish satisfaction.

As I practice generous acts, it gives me a sense of purpose to learn. I have also seen how performing generous acts can instil hope in students as well. I try to nourish my spirituality not only with discipline but also with generous acts. For me, there is a fine line between gratitude and generosity. In fact, at times, I have the opportunity to be generous that I have felt grateful for the opportunity to give. In my life, gratitude has come in many different forms. Through family and school in the early years of my formation, there was an approach to thoughts of gratitude. There have been lapses after an illness or a problematic situation, after which regaining stability, I have undertaken conscious actions in gratitude for my recovery.

Because I am in constant contact with university students and parents, I have found that developing gratitude in school is a must. In my experience as a

student, it was in classes where teachers included gratitude-building activities as part of the program, that I felt most confident and able to learn. Likewise, in school or work moments where I have distanced myself from reflection on gratitude, thoughts of anguish and depression have emerged. Based on the above, and according to my experience, it is necessary to have a personal and school plan, as well as defined actions to exercise gratitude. Life challenges represent opportunities to be better, and with the constant practice of gratitude, coping skills are acquired to face challenges. In the same way, the constant practice of gratitude has made me value everything I have and everything that God has given me, including the marvellous possibility to share with students the benefits of gratitude and practices to develop it.

Conclusion

In a general context, gratitude increases overall well-being, and in the field of education, it improves academic performance in learning and helps consolidate a humanistic education. In my view, gratitude and generosity are linked. People are generous when they are happy and grateful for what they have. Our troubled culture makes that people look to the future to see what they lack, and look to the past to see what was not accomplished. Gratitude helps people to focus the attention on the present and see what exists inside and outside. Being grateful is not a conformist attitude; on the contrary, gratefulness generates prosperity out of gratitude.

Grateful people also have higher levels of control over their circumstances, personal growth, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Grateful

people have more positive ways of dealing with the difficulties they experience in life, being more likely to seek help from others, reinterpret and learn from the experience, and spend more time planning how to deal with problems. Grateful people also have fewer negative coping strategies, being less likely to avoid problems, deny their existence, blame themselves, or cope with problems through substance abuse.

Both desires, to compensate and to be compensated, are natural in human beings. The imbalance between giving and receiving creates inequality and debt. If people honestly look at themselves, they discover that it is a natural part of the human condition to want to give back or compensate for what they receive from others. In the same way, wanting to be compensated when giving is part of human nature. It is good to observe that process without judgment and compassionately to sense that as a natural expression of the human being. When people discover the flow of this give-and-take, it is possible to be open to gratitude with more spontaneity.

The development of gratitude in the school context is crucial as it awakens emotions that support improved academic performance. For the students to show gratitude, the teachers must enable reciprocity and intentionality in the teaching-learning process. If it is considered that the practice of gratitude produces general well-being, then it can be concluded that this practice within the school produces school satisfaction, which will be reflected in the academic and social progress of the student.

Authentic and sincere gratitude opens the door to better health and fosters good relationships with oneself and others. The most immediate spirituality, accessible to all, seems to be giving thanks for the experience of loving, the beauty of the landscapes, what it is learned in suffering, or the mere fact of being. Gratitude is always an act of kindness that is at once receptive because it recognises and accepts the beauty and goodness of existence. At the same time, it is an active act, because it extends to what it considers good and beautiful. Likewise, gratitude, like love, cannot and should not be selfish. It is an act of humility that first involves emptying the ego to appreciate that which one is grateful for without the contamination of self-interest.

In summary, gratitude can be perceived as a feeling. So the ultimate goal in practising gratitude is to feel it deliberately as much as one can because it is the strength of that feeling that accelerates the magic in life. That means that if one increases the feeling of gratitude, the results in life will expand to match that feeling. The more sincere the feeling, the more sincere the gratitude and the faster positive things will manifest. It only takes a little practice to incorporate gratitude into everyday life. Therefore, in a school context, it is essential to structure a plan to develop gratitude. Gratitude is one of the most appreciated and respected values in education. Learning to give thanks or appreciation brings well-being and recognition to students, so it will help them be happier and face life's challenges, knowing that everything has a reason for personal and spiritual growth.

References

- Alarcón, R. (2009). *Psicología de la Felicidad: Introducción a la Psicología Positiva*. Lima, Peru: Ed. Universitaria.
- Barclay, H.B., & Kawamura, L. (1978). *Religion and Ethnicity*. Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Bartlett, M., & DeSteno, D. (2006). Gratitude and Pro-social Behavior Helping when it Costs You. *Psychological Science*, 17(4), 319-325.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2006.01705.x>
- Biblia by Faithlife. (2019). The New Revised Standard Version. Retrieved from <https://biblia.com/books/nrsv>
- Carr, D. (2016). *Perspectives on Gratitude: An interdisciplinary approach*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Collier, E. (2019). *Morning Gratitude Prayer: Gratitude Journal a Daily Appreciation for Girls Commanding Life Journal for Anxiety and Depression*. Traverse, MI: Independently Published.
- Chozen Bays, J. (2011). *How to Train a Wild Elephant: And Other Adventures in Mindfulness*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications.
- Emmons, R.A. (2007). *¡Gracias! De cómo la gratitud puede hacerte feliz*. Barcelona, Spain: Ediciones B.
- Emmons, R.A., & Crumpler, C.A. (2000). Gratitude as a human strength: Appraising the evidence. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 19(1), 56-69. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2000.19.1.56>
- Emmons, R.A., & McCullough, M.E. (2004). *The Psychology of Gratitude*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Emmons R.A., & Stern R. (2013). Gratitude as a Psychotherapeutic Intervention. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 69 (8), 846-55.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22020>
- Fillmore, C. (1986). *Christian Healing*. Columbia, NY: Unity School of Christianity.
- Fredrickson, B.L. (2001). The role of positive emotion in positive psychology: The Broaden and Build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218-226. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3122271/>
- Garcia-Ramirez, J.M. (2014). *Selección de indicadores para la evaluación de la excelencia docente en la Universidad de Trent (Canadá)*. Retrieved from <https://digibug.ugr.es/handle/10481/30350>
- Gottlieb, R.S. (2003). *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gottlieb, R. (2013). *Spirituality: What It IS and Why It Matters*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Griffith, O.M. (2016). *Gratitude: A Way of Teaching*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hay, L. (2008). *Gratitude: A Way of Life*. Sydney, Australia: ReadHowYouWant.
- Howells, K. (2012). *Gratitude in Education: A Radical View*. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

- Lamees, A. (2015). *The Power of Gratitude*. Sarasota, FL: First Edition Design Pub.
- Larsson, L. (2014). *The Power of Gratitude*. Svensbyn, Sweden: Friare Liv AB.
- McCullough, M.E., Kimeldorf, M.B., & Cohen, A.D. (2008). An Adaptation for Altruism The Social Causes, Social Effects, and Social Evolution of Gratitude. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17(4), 281-285. Retrieved from <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/pdfs/GratitudePDFs/4McCullough-AdaptationAltruism.pdf>
- Moyano N. (2011). Gritud en la psicología positiva. *Psicod debate*, 10, 103-117. <https://doi.org/10.18682/pd.v10i0.391>
- Price, M., & Teutsch, D.A. (2017). *From Gratitude to Blessings and Back*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Tala, Álvaro. (2019). Gracias por todo: Una revisión sobre la gratitud desde la neurobiología a la clínica. *Revista médica de Chile*, 147(6), 755-761. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0034-98872019000600755>
- Rey, L., Pena, M., & Neto, F. (2020). *Protective Resources for Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents*. Laussane, Switzerland: Frontiers Media SA
- Ryan, M.J. (1999). *Attitudes of Gratitude: How to Give and Receive Joy Everyday of Your Life*. Boston, MA: Conari Press.
- Seidel, J. (2014). Meditations on Contemplative Pedagogy as Sanctuary. *The Journal of Contemplative Inquiry*, 1 (1), 141-147. Retrieved from <https://journal.contemplativeinquiry.org/index.php/joci/article/view/10>
- Seligman, M.P.(2003). *La auténtica felicidad*. Barceloma, Spain: Vergara
- Seligman, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive Psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55 (1), 5-14. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.5>
- Shankland, R. (2016). *Les Pouvoirs de la Gratitude*. Paris, France: Odile Jacob.
- Steindl-Rast, D. (1984). *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer: An Approach to Life in Fullness*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Watkins, P.C., (2013). *Gratitude and the Good Life: Toward a Psychology of Appreciation*. Berlin, Germany: Springer Science & Business Media.
- Weiner, B. (1986). *An attributional theory of motivation and emotion*. New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

ICC-LANGUAGES WEBINARS

‘A COMEDY OF ERRORS’ Geoff Tranter

March 23rd 2021.

You can hear the full recording on ICC-Languages Webinar archives.

In the second of his webinars on the use of humour in language learning and teaching Geoff used the title of a Shakespeare play, ‘A Comedy of Errors’ to examine how mistakes in the use of language from various sources can be used as a learning and teaching resource and as a way of having fun in the classroom.

As Geoff wrote, in his introduction to the webinar, everybody makes mistakes, even in their first languages. But in the EFL classroom, errors should not simply be considered a sin. Teachers can and should help their learners to learn from mistakes – and not only their own! Sometimes, we learn even more effectively from mistakes made by other people, especially when the mistakes cause amusement. And in EFL we can also use to full advantage errors made by the so-called ‘native speakers’. It’s LOL all the way. Lots of Laughs, Lots of Language and Lots of Learning. The fact is that we remember funny mistakes and how to correct them more than we remember more formal grammar and vocabulary. Even more, we can use mistakes to encourage creativity by asking what people meant to write and then correcting what they actually wrote to match their intentions.

So why are errors such a useful classroom resource and where can we find them? Geoff identifies eight reasons; memory, creativity, fun, a positive classroom atmosphere, learning how to play with words, practising grammar and learning vocabulary and, finally, appealing to the emotions through humour. But how do we find suitable examples? Go on the Internet, Geoff suggests, and find them via Google. Choose examples which suit the level of your class and also the topic they are studying. Even in CLIL classes, finding and using appropriate examples or errors in signs can be a great way of enlivening a class and encouraging creativity.

Geoff identifies a number of appropriate categories of errors; signs, announcements, howlers, Malapropisms, funny letters, Spoonerisms and mistranslations. He also identifies punctuation errors, and the use of corporate jargon and media headline, providing examples of each category.

Signs and announcements

Signs and announcements in hotels or shops and restaurants can be very misleading. For example, *'Lifts to someplace else'* is totally misleading. What does it mean? *'Lifts to all floors'*? In a Polish restaurant an advertisement read; *'As for the tripe served here, you will be singing its praises to your grandchildren on your deathbed.'* Tripe is an international dish, a type of vegetable, but it also means *'rubbish'*. Maybe the writer should have substituted *'food'* for *'tripe'*. The same goes for retail outlets. For example, a travel agency in Barcelona in Spain displayed this notice outside. *'Go away'*. Maybe they meant *'Go on holiday'* or *'go on tour'*. *'Go away'* on its own simply means, *'leave and don't come back'*.

Although funny and instructive for language students, these can also be useful for students studying hospitality and tourism, learning how not to make errors and to check with a native speaker or a fluent non-native speaker before posting the announcement or notice.

Teaching activity

Geoff explained that in correcting such misuses of language the teacher should focus on the message first and then on language correction to convey the message correctly or more appropriately. A useful sequence of questions Geoff asks is:

1. What did the notice intend to say?
2. What did it actually say?
3. How can you correct it?
4. Discuss. What do you think if you see a notice like this?

For example, outside a US gas station with its own restaurant or *'diner'* attached the garage owner put up a notice saying, *'Eat here and get gas'*. *'Gas'* is US English for *'petrol'*. Very clear except that associated with food the word *'gas'* can mean *'breaking wind'*. So, the owner wasn't saying *'You can eat here and fill up your car with gas (petrol)'*. The message was *'our food will make you break wind'* which is not what you or he/she would want.

The aim of the exercise is to get the students to recognise the problem and then correct the message.

Ambiguity is the reason for humour

For example:

'When you breathe you inspire, when you do not breathe you expire'.

True, maybe, but what did the speaker intend to say? He/she meant *'inhale'* (to breathe in) not *'inspire'* and *'exhale'* (to breathe out) definitely not *'expire'*.

Here's another one.

'Acrimony is what a man gives his divorced wife'.

'Acrimony' means anger and conflict. This may well be true but what the speaker really wanted to say was '*alimony*' (the money given to the divorcee as part of the divorce agreement).

Choosing the wrong word makes the message ridiculous and it is important to ask, what the speaker intended to say? Can you correct the message? And finally teach the meanings of the words confused and show how they are used.

Howlers

A howler is a stupid and obvious mistake. It often occurs because users choose the wrong word with the result that the sentence looks or sounds completely ridiculous.

Here are some examples. The correct word is in brackets.

'A Christian can have only one wife. This is called monotony'. (monogamy)

'A man with two wives is called a pigamist.' (bigamist)

'A virgin forest is a place where the hand of man has never set foot'. (a place where man has never been).

'A triangle with an angle of 135 degrees is called an obscene triangle'. (obtuse)

Classroom activity

These can be used very successfully in a CLIL class where the use of the wrong term can be both amusing and misleading. This is an excellent way of creating a lighter atmosphere in the class. It can also be used as an exercise in dictionary work. Get the students to find the distinction between the correct word and the incorrect word used.

Malapropisms

A malapropism is the misuse of a word by confusing it with a word that looks or sounds similar. The name comes from a character named Mrs Malaprop in a play by the British 18th century playwright, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, 'The Rivals'.

Here's an example.

Two people greeting each other:
'Deleted, I'm sure'. (Delighted)

'No matter how mad someone is at you they will always forgive you but don't take it for granite'. (for granted)

US President, George W Bush, was famous for his misuse of language.

Here are two examples.

'I can only speak to myself'. (for myself)

'Rarely is the question asked: is our children learning.' (are our children learning?)

As well as correcting the message and the English used, statements by politicians and celebrities can lead to discussion of politics and political opinions which can be an interesting and useful activity in CEFR B2 and C1 level language classes.

Sports can also be an amusing and revealing source of humour and language learning. Look at this example.

'That's the fastest time ever run, but not as fast as the world record'.

Also:

'Don't tell those coming in the final result of this fantastic match but let's just have another look Italy's winning goal'.

Once again, the key is to ask, what did they intend to say? What did they actually say? What is the misunderstanding and how would you correct it?

Funny advertisements

When small businesses put adverts for their products or services in local magazines or even in shop windows, in order to save money they use as few words as possible. This often leads to humorous misunderstandings. For example:

'Used Cars! Why go somewhere else to be cheated? Come here first!'

'Remember! You get what you pay for and at Hub Furniture Store you pay less'.

Or in a pharmacy:

'Try our cough syrup. You will never get any better'.

And one small ad:

Available, French speaking secretary who speaks floorless English. (flawless)

Classroom activity

This can be a very useful exercise as students can work in groups to discuss the writer's intention and what they actually said and then rewrite the advert to get the message across correctly while using as few words as possible. They process and think about the words and that goes into the long-term memory. They remember it.

Funny letters

Published letters and also notices in professional journals can make mistakes which are quite amusing. Parish church magazines can be quite amusing as the notes are quite often written by members of the congregation and may be unintentionally misleading.

Spoonerisms

These are named after the reverend Dr Spooner, a 19th century Church of England vicar, who tended to transpose initials or sounds of words by accident, as in *a blushing crow* instead of *a crushing blow*.

Classroom activity

A fun classroom activity to give students examples of spoonerisms and ask them to correct them.



Mistranslations

If you have a translation class these are warnings. When you use advertising slogans and translate the slogans into another language you can make big mistakes. Here are two examples.

An American T-shirt maker in Miami printed shirts for the Spanish market which promoted the Pope's visit. Instead of "I saw the Pope" (el Papa), the shirts read, "I saw the potato" (la papa).




Pepsi's "Come Alive. You're in the Pepsi Generation" translated into Chinese as:
"Pepsi Brings Your Ancestors Back from the Grave."

You can find lots of examples of mistranslations on the Internet.

Punctuation

Punctuation can change the meaning of a sentence. Here is an example. A teacher wrote the following statement on the board and asked the students to punctuate it. Notice how the males and the female students in the class punctuated the sentence differently, yielding different meanings. This slide shows how important commas can be in interpreting meaning.

An English professor wrote the words:

"A woman without her man is nothing"

on the chalkboard and asked the students to punctuate it correctly.

All of the males in the class wrote:

"A woman, without her man, is nothing."

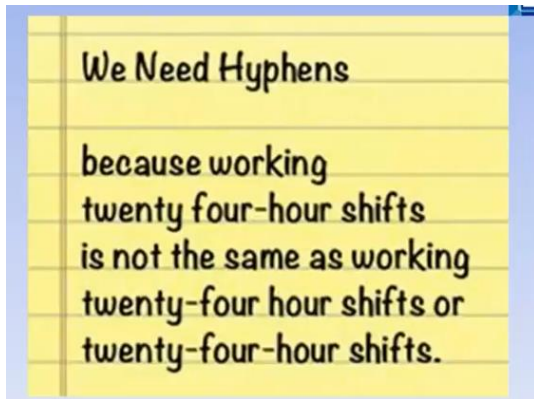
All of the females in the class wrote:

"A woman: without her, man is nothing."

Punctuation is powerful.

Students, especially from CEFR Level B2 upwards, need to understand commas but normally, have little motivation to do so.

Hyphens are even more important. Defining the length of shift in a workplace is completely different. Depending on how you hyphenate. *Twenty four-hour shifts* means twenty shifts of four hours each, *Twenty-four hour shifts* is twenty-four shifts of one hour each and a *twenty-four-hour-shift* means a shift lasting a complete day.



Spelling mistakes

Spelling mistakes offer great opportunities for developing critical awareness and learning how to correct errors. In these adverts the mistakes are not always obvious.

Classroom activity

Get the class to identify the errors and suggest corrections.



Here are the answers.

'God does not make mistakes'.

'Mind the step'.

'Mini doughnuts'

'No smoking allowed'.

And

'Thank you for your patience'.


Jargon

Corporate jargon may use perfectly correct grammar and vocabulary but the register is wrong. This makes it difficult to understand in everyday English, which is why people sometimes call corporate jargon, gobbledygook, meaning nonsense because of the use of abstruse terms.

Classroom activity

Turning corporate jargon into everyday English can be a useful classroom activity. The slide below gives a list of examples labelled a) – e) and everyday English equivalents numbered i) – v). The students' job is to match the jargon to the everyday English statements. This can be a very useful exercise in corporate business English classes.

Jargon



Can you interpret these famous sayings which have been gobbledygooked?

- a) It's important to effect the verbalization of concepts through the utilization of unsophisticated terminology.
- b) Precipitation entails negation of economy.
- c) Whoever expresses merriment subsequent to everyone else expresses merriment of most superior quality.
- d) Pulchritude is not evinced below the dermal surface.
- e) Exclusive dedication to necessitous chores without interlude of hedonist diversion renders John an unresponsive fellow.

Answers:

i) Speak simply.	ii) It never rains but it pours.
iii) He who laughs last laughs best.	iv) Beauty is only skin deep.
v) All work and no play makes John a dull boy	

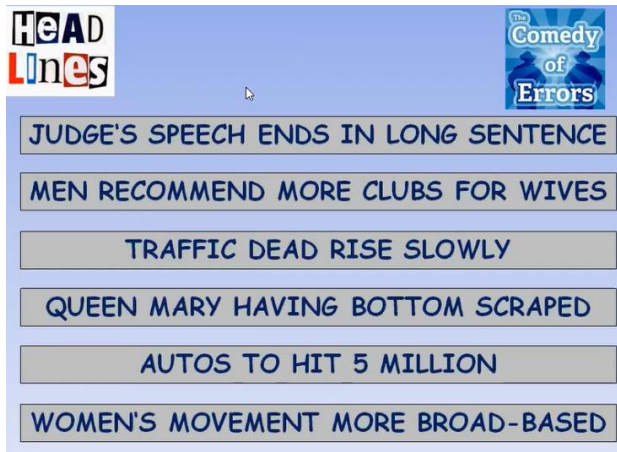
You can find good examples of jargon on YouTube.

Headlines

Finally, we should not ignore headlines in newspapers and magazines. The need to write a story summary in a few words that attracts the reader's attention can lead to misleading statements because in order to optimise space they leave out prepositions and verbs.

Classroom activity

A good classroom activity is to present a headline to the class and ask what the headline is saying, what is in the article and how could you put this headline into a full sentence? A very popular classroom activity.



Conclusion

It's not just language learners who make mistakes. As the examples show, many are made by native speakers. To bring it all together, we need to understand that mistakes are an important part of the learning partnership. Students are often afraid of making mistakes. We should never be afraid of making mistakes but we should be afraid of not learning from them. The motto of the class is mistakes are expected, inspected and respected. Mistakes are an important way of learning.

Authenticity in Language

Ian McMaster

Ian McMaster is Editor in Chief of Business Spotlight Publishing, Germany. This webinar was recorded on April 22nd 2021. Watch the recording and the accompanying slides on www.icc-languages.eu/Webinars.

Authenticity is everywhere in business books and articles nowadays. Leaders and other professionals are urged to “be more authentic” or “be themselves”. But what exactly is authenticity? In his webinar of April 22nd Ian McMaster discussed various dimensions of authenticity in relation to both language and leadership. The reason that Ian McMaster got interested in Authenticity in Language Teaching a year or so ago was that he and Steve Flinders wrote an article on it in Business Spotlight Magazine. (“Questioning Your Self” by Ian McMaster and Steve Flinders, Business Spotlight issue 7/2020)

The Oxford Dictionary identifies authenticity as of undisputed origin and not a copy, based on facts, accurate or reliable. The argument is that much of the language used in textbooks is contrived and does not accurately reflect how native speakers use the language in practice. A more recent criticism of ‘textbook’ English is that it doesn’t reflect the way non-native speakers use English either, speaking, writing and in the media. This is very much a result of the English as a Language Franca (ELF) movement. ELF argues that ‘Textbook’ English is contrived. The key question is does the language we teach help people communicate effectively?

This leads to what is described as the ‘authenticity paradox’. The advantage of authentic speech is that it offers naturally-occurring language, particularly good for listening practice. The problem is that the authentic language may be terrible and isn’t communicatively effective. A lot of natural communication is actually about miscommunication and misunderstanding. It is almost impossible to communicate in a way that can’t be misunderstood. Although it is good practice to listen to and understand naturally occurring language, it doesn’t necessarily provide a good model for language use. Marianne Williams made this point in an article in Applied Linguistics Journal in 1988 when she wrote about business meetings. She said, “*On reading the transcripts, the real meetings were almost unintelligible. The language contained a large number of unfinished sentences, false starts, overlapping utterances, interruptions and fillers, such as ‘um’, ‘er’ and ‘you know’. A large proportion of the language contained comments, jokes, quips, repetitions, and asides. Some of the sentences were not grammatically correct.*” (Williams. M. 1998 “Language Taught for Meetings and Language Used in Meetings: Is there Anything in Common?”, Williams, M. 1988, Applied Linguistics, 9 (1), pp. 45-58.

So can we improve on authentic communication? Bob Dignen, formerly of York Associates, wrote that if authentic communication is mostly poor communication, part of the teacher's job is to reform it and not replicate it. It may be that carefully chosen 'textbook' language may be more appropriate than the language actually used. In some cultures talking over each other is quite acceptable but in other contexts it may be regarded as very rude. As an example, 'Yes, *but...*' is a common way of interrupting and talking over someone in a meeting but a 'textbook' English way of interrupting such as, "*Excuse me, but could I say something here?*" might be a lot more appropriate and might be more communicatively effective. This doesn't mean we should ignore what happens in the 'real' world. Corpus work, collecting what people say, can inform us but, as teachers, we can sometimes provide a better model. By choosing carefully what we teach we provide 'intelligent artificiality' – a model which can help people communicate better.

Authenticity in leadership

If authenticity is about being based in facts and of undisputed origin, not a copy, how do we convey it? Charles Hampden-Turner of the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM), defined authenticity as what lies between people. He said that to be authentic you must communicate with others what you think and what you feel without disguise or tactical cunning. The ILM specified eight dimensions of authentic leadership:

- Self-awareness
- Conversation
- Ethics
- Integrity
- Supporting
- Aligning values
- Challenging
- Building trust

Expressing your personal opinions is an important aspect of authenticity in leadership and the Harvard Business Review wrote that authenticity is about expressing the real you. "*... if people feel they're not getting access to the 'real' you — to a full and complete accounting of what you know, think, and feel — then you probably have an authenticity wobble*". ("Begin with trust", Frances X. Frei, Anne Morriss, *Harvard Business Review*, May–June 2020)

Reasons to be inauthentic

The fact is that in the information age we are deluged with 'image' and false or doctored information and the authenticity of our leaders is ever more frequently called into question. One of the reasons for inauthenticity is to '*fake it until you make it*'. Hide your real feelings until you are successful and feel able to express

them freely. This is the subject of a very successful TED talk by Amy Cuddy. If you are in a situation where you feel that you are having to learn how to be successful, act as if you have mastered it even though you haven't. In other words, fake it until you make it (act as though you were authentic until you actually are successful). Is acting out inauthentic behaviour or is it about adapting until you can cope with new situations? It is no accident that RADA (The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, the prestigious drama school in London) offers a course for business leaders in how to act so you do not reveal your true feelings and can act the part of being confident, assertive and empowered. Some actors change their personalities and adopt alter-egos as stage personalities. One was the pop star, Beyonce, who adopted the title of Sacha Fierce (her third album) as an alter ego to adopt the showbusiness performance personality she wanted. This involves self-distancing between what you really are in your private life and your professional appearance. The Dolly Parton challenge, named after the world famous US folk singer, refers to how she changed her visual image according to which social media platform she was featured in visually.

Conclusion

It may be that the word 'authenticity' is inauthentic in an ELT context. What is clear is that standard ELT taught communication may be generally appropriate and useful, particularly in business communication environments. What authentic texts can offer us is the opportunity to understand how the language is used by native speakers and develop their understanding but also their critical awareness and discourse analysis skills. Lastly, we need to understand that many people, especially in public life, 'invent' an image to manipulate public opinion according to the context. Authenticity needs more thought.

References



FOR MORE INFORMATION

ARTICLES

- "Artificial intelligence is a totalitarian's dream: Here's how to take power back", Simon McCarthy-Jones, <https://theconversation.com>
- "Begin with trust", Frances X. Frei, Anne Morriss, *Harvard Business Review*, May-June 2020
- "Chief executives should welcome an end to the era of 'authenticity'", Andrew Hill, *Financial Times*, 25 March 2019
- "It has never been easier to launch a new brand", *The Economist*, 23 January 2020

- "It pays to be yourself", Francesca Gino, *Harvard Business Review*, February 2020
- "What businesses can learn from the arts", *The Economist*, 12 December 2019
- "Why people vote for politicians they know are liars", Stephan Lewandowsky, <https://theconversation.com>

BOOKS

- *Against Authenticity: Why You Shouldn't Be Yourself*, Simon Feldman (Lexington Books)
- *The Authenticity Project*, Clare Pooley (Pamela Dorman Books)

- *C(O)RE — Or: The Boaching Guide to Career Success*, Bo Graesborg (KDP)

- *How to Think More about Sex*, Alain de Botton (Picador)

- *On Not Being Someone Else*, Andrew H. Miller (Harvard University Press)

ORGANIZATION

- *Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM)*, www.institutelm.com

TALK

- "Your body language may shape who you are", Amy Cuddy, TED, www.ted.com

TEACHING TIPS

Making videos for Teacher Training **Russell Stannard** **www.teachertrainingvideos.com**

After teaching languages at Warwick university Russell Stannard started his own company making explanatory videos on how to use technology in language teaching. It is deservedly a brilliant success and, as an acknowledged 'incomputerate' (my technological equivalent of innumerate), his are the clearest, most informative and most practical teacher training videos I have come across on how to use technology in teaching.

You can access Russell's site at www.teachertrainingvideos.com. Don't wait. It will be really helpful.

Russell writes, 'TeacherTrainingVideos.Com was originally developed in response to teachers asking me how to use certain technologies when teaching. I decided to record myself using these technologies and produce step by step videos that were easy for teachers to follow and practical in nature.

I put these videos on a website and later I also added them to a YouTube Channel. The website was an overnight success and within one year I had won one of the biggest awards in the British University calendar the 'Times Higher Outstanding Technology Award'. That was followed 2 years later by the British Council ELTons Technology Award.

The success of the website is its simplicity and the fact it is free. I figured I could make my money through the publicity I received from the videos and would therefore never have to charge for the videos themselves. This is still the case 14 years later. In fact, the videos are now so popular, that I receive a small income from the fact that videos are also loaded onto my YouTube Channel. On YouTube I have about 60,000 subscribers and the website receives a 1000 visitors a day.

It is a no fuss website. There is nothing else but videos around the use of technology in teaching with a focus on language teaching. I keep to a rule that I only make videos about tools I have used in my teaching or teacher training. Very occasionally, I come across an outstanding tool that I immediately make a video about even before I start using it myself but this is rare.

No-one believes me but I am definitely a technophobe. I am not particularly interested in technology. I use it when it helps but I hate using technology for the sake of it. I don't have hundreds of apps on my phone, I never play computer games and it always takes me a while to learn a new technology. I don't use

much technology in lessons either. I like what technology can do for students outside of the classroom, hence my interest in the Flipped Classroom. In class, I want my students to collaborate and work together and I don't need technology to do that.

The philosophy of the website has changed. My focus these days is on a group of core technologies that can really impact on teaching and learning. I don't use 100s of technologies in my own teaching. I focus on the key ones and I learn to use them well. I find that the better I learn a technology, the more creative I get with the technologies. I am always thinking about teaching and learning and how I can be more effective and I am only interested in technology when it can contribute to me being a more effective teacher.

Recently, I have started learning Polish and it has given me a new perspective on my use of technology. I really can see how useful YouTube is but I have also realised I need a strategy when watching the videos. I have also fallen in love with Podcasts. I can be walking around town, listening to Polish stories and getting loads of additional input. However, I have also realised that taking notes on a computer doesn't make sense to me and I still like writing on paper with a pen!

So, what is the one outstanding technology I would recommend? That is easy. It is screen cast technology and if you want to learn about it watch the video below. 15 years ago, I wrote an article where I said this is the 'best technology ever' for teachers and students and I still believe that today.'

https://www.teachertrainingvideos.com/advanced_ideas

Class after Covid?

Vasiliki Santaridou and Luke Prodromou

Back to the classroom

What students think about going back to the classroom after months of the 'glassroom...'

An English teacher writes:

'This week, the government sent us back to school arguing that the 'pandemic cannot stop education'.

While the figures for Covid cases keep rising, the Minister for Mis-education thought it fit to send us into the most contagious environment, according to the experts: secondary schools with classrooms crowded with careless (potentially) Covid-spreading teenagers.

Since early November 2020, at high school level, we've taught classes online, in the 'glassroom'. Now, the students are back in class where we started the year, way back in mid-September: with masks and constant reminders to stick to the rules: 'do this, do that...don't, don't, don't'.

The students are in a truculent mood: They are very restless and undisciplined. Only half of the class are wearing their masks properly, The rest have them under their nose or don't wear a mask at all, although the head of the school has provided them with free masks.

The progress I had made online in getting some of the quieter ones to participate is now being squandered as peer- group pressure incites even the quieter students to be un-cooperative and cheeky:

'Miss, why are you wearing two masks?' 'Are you afraid of us?'

'Miss, the Covid-thing is a myth'.

'Miss, have you given us a good grade?'

'I can't breathe, Miss!'

They don't seem to realise I am genuinely concerned about getting infected. It's all a bit of a joke to them.

Anyway, my main aim is to survive, not only the pandemic but the nerve-wracking unruly atmosphere of the class. My double-mask means I can't breathe well and the students can't hear me clearly, either.

I resort to my tried and tested discipline-friendly technique.

First, I warn them that if they don't behave and produce some English I'll give them a poor mark – using exams as a weapon, something I would normally never do; but I'm getting desperate and I feel my health is at stake.

Secondly, I ask the class to do some writing – always a good way to calm the beast in a class.

The task: I instruct them to write a sentence or two about how they feel about coming back to school after 3 months of online teaching.

I use their answers to conduct a dictation (another very discipline-friendly technique) and then to use the results to hold a discussion about 'where we are now'.

Here are some of the things they wrote (errors corrected – as I plan to re-use this material as reading comprehension).

1. 'I missed school (my friends, teachers and even some annoying people but I'd love to keep one thing from webex: like sleeping more and having lessons under the bedsheets - and so warm!'
2. 'School is just as boring as I remembered it; apart from seeing my friends again, there is a chance for me to learn something here that I wouldn't be able to learn online'
3. 'Lessons are better in class: we learn more, it's easier to understand the lesson. I like seeing my friends in the flesh and not through a glass'.
4. 'I hate having to get up at 6.30 to be here and I hate wearing the mask; but the lesson is more enjoyable when we can see each other.'
5. 'I am bored; I want to sleep; I want to take my dog for a walk and go for a stroll with my friends'.
6. 'I feel sad'.
7. 'I enjoyed the online lessons but I prefer the 'natural' classroom.'
8. 'I feel awful; I didn't want schools to open; it's nicer being at home.'
9. 'We feel weird being back at school, but also happy.'
10. 'I was bored at home so I'm happy now'

11. 'Face-to-face lessons are better.'
12. 'I am glad we are taking break from quarantine, but I think we will be in lock-down again soon.'
13. 'Online didn't work for a lot of us because we had a poor connection and no microphone.'
14. 'I prefer the classroom though some kids misbehave. Online lessons don't work because most kids do other things(lying in bed, eating, working) – at school, whether we want to or not, we do things which are good for our future'.
15. 'I was pretty indifferent at first, but now I feel very excited and positive to get the chance to experience the beautiful feeling of learning and communicating on normal terms – I hope that the day we go back to online lessons is far away because I want to be in touch with real people for as long as possible'.
16. 'I believe I learnt much more online because I wasn't distracted by chatting to my friends and messing around all the time. Things at school are worse now that the government measures are stricter and students react. We're happy because we are with friends again, but sad that we cannot embrace, kiss or play; the situation is tragic. Patience, till we close again'.
17. 'Online classes mean you can go to the toilet as often as you like and eat whenever you like. A lot of kids were also more motivated to take part and so they got better marks; I hope we close again'.
18. 'At first, I felt ecstatic, but now I feel insecure because of the newer Covid-variants and the worrying shortage of vaccines in Greece and the rest of Europe'.
19. 'I feel exhausted by so much online learning'
20. 'I feel anxious these days because we have tests but I hope schools stay open'
21. 'I'm surprised schools open so soon; and I feel security measures are not good enough. I'm afraid I'll contaminate my parents and relatives.'
22. 'I would prefer the schools close because Covid cases will double – the situation is worse like this because we're all going to catch it and die...including Mitsotakis and Karamanlis...(government Ministers).'

Luke's comments:

There seems to be no rhyme or reason for the government's decision to re-open secondary school: teachers in state-schools are being thrown into a very contagious environment- crowded classrooms of teenagers who often refuse to wear their masks properly and where physical distancing is non-existent ...

The rules which apply to retail shopping and the public sphere in general suddenly and arbitrarily do not seem to apply to public sector secondary education: there are as many as 25 burly teenagers cramped into a small space of 15 square metres...whereas in shops the rule for physical distancing is one person per 15 square metres. Thus, the health and lives of secondary school educators are at risk.

The head of the Intensive Care Unit at a major hospital in Thessaloniki, Dr. Nikos Kapravelos, has condemned the opening of the schools as an 'undoubted mistake' and the product of exerting political pressure on the panel of experts advising the government. *'They (the government) are playing with fire; they are sowing the seeds of future catastrophe: the situation is made worse by a lack of vaccines and laxness regarding physical distancing'*.

The claim that going back to school is a return to normality is a fallacy because the situation now is highly abnormal: it's not face-to-face teaching but mask-to-mask; you can't conduct education behind masks with the constant fear of infection and under constant prohibitions in a cramped space.

In memory of:

Rousseau (Emile)

John Dewey (Democracy and Education)

Paolo Freire (Pedagogy of the Oppressed)

Maria Montessori(The Montessori Method),

Dorothy Heathcote (Drama for Learning) and

A.S. Neill (Summerhill)

who must all be turning in their grave...

REVIEWS

Why Study Languages?

By Gabrielle Hogan-Brun

Published by London Publishing Partnership (2021)

Reviewed by Barry Tomalin

Why study languages? Hang on, we're language teachers, aren't we? We know why we get our students to study languages. It's our job and our students need to do languages to pass exams. All true to a degree, but this is a really well-written and presented, illuminating and informative primer on how language learning can enhance students' (and our) lifestyles, brain power and even influence our lifespan. In short it is a great way of motivating tired teachers and bored students by helping them understand why multilingualism is good for you, building enthusiasm about and commitment to language learning.

Gabrielle Hogan-Brun teaches at Kaunas University in Lithuania and in seven chapters she takes us from the rationale, why study languages and why multilingualism is good for you to how and where to study to get best results in one's life and career. The book ends with a brief personal record of the author's own language journey and an appendix of useful notes and references to follow up.

Writing primarily for students, Hogan-Brun identifies three key points at which language study is significant. One is obviously second language learning at school. A second is language learning at university either as a language degree or as a component of another university course and third, as something that happens in your professional or social life – partnering a foreigner who speaks a different language, working in another country or in a foreign organisation.

She highlights the importance of educational trips abroad, sadly restricted due to Covid-19, and the way in which language learning acts as a gateway to other cultures. The experiences she describes of students on educational trips to Portugal and Spain can serve as interesting short authentic English texts for language study and cultural awareness. She explains how a student studying German increased his knowledge and understanding of international politics and how another student, interested in Karate, learned about the influence of Japan culture on karate and martial arts. An important feature of the book is portraits of language learners, some famous in different walks of life and some students on the threshold of their careers and how they used language learning to enhance their understanding and appreciation of culture.

Another important factor in language learning is how it improves your general lifestyle. Hogan-Brun cites evidence that language learning exercises your brain more, improves your reasoning skills, develops your overall brain power and can

improve your lifestyle and longevity as a result. All this, as well as developing your communication and critical thinking skills, your ability to build relationships and boost your employment opportunities in international companies and organisations. So, the message is learn another language for a better life.

Another positive feature of the book is Hogan-Brun's ability to talk directly to the reader helping us feel more involved in the narrative and in the learning process it describes so clearly. Not only does she use the examples of celebrities in different professions but also ordinary people who have achieved extraordinary things as a result of their understanding and use of language. One example is Adul Sam-on, the only speaker of English in a group of thirteen young people trapped in a cave in Thailand in 2018. You may remember the story as headline news at the time. When the English-speaking rescue team arrived and shone their torches into the cave it was Adul who fulfilled the role of interpreter between the rescuers and the children trapped in the cave amid the rising water of the monsoon, which helped the rescue team save them.

There is a tendency to think of English as the international language of business and communication. In fact only about 20% of the world's population speaks English, most, as we know, as speakers of English as a foreign language. In fact, French, Spanish and, of course, Mandarin Chinese are enormously important worldwide and studies of the number of languages used in cities worldwide led to the coining of the word metrolingualism by Alastair Pennycook and Emi Otsuji. Many countries have not one but four or five official languages. Hogan-Brun cites evidence to show that 7,000 languages are spoken on the planet, of which 2,500 are in serious decline and that more than half the world's population speaks just 23 languages. Unesco's *Atlas of The World's Languages in Danger* estimates that a language dies somewhere on the planet every two weeks. 'Survival' warns that half the world's languages currently in use could die off by 2050. The key point that is that our language, whatever it is, is not the best and that we must avoid 'language othering'.

Whatever language you are teaching, *Why Study Languages?* will give you interesting scenarios to use as the basis of classroom activities, inspiring stories from role models, showing how language learning helped their careers and examples of how language learning stimulates the brain, improves health and longevity and improves overall academic skills. Use this to motivate your students – and yourself if you need it!

How Spies Think

Ten Lessons in Intelligence

By David Omand

Published by Penguin/Viking 2020

Reviewed by Barry Tomalin

Oh no, not another spy story! No it isn't, actually. It is an analysis of how to think and how to analyse and solve problems. The background is international intelligence gathering and it is a fascinating story, very well presented and well written by Sir David Omand, former head of Britain's GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters). For practising teachers and researchers it offers a fascinating insight into problem solving strategies which can be of value in solving problems in classroom management, testing and assessment and assessing research information and results.

To cut to the chase, the key strategy examined in the ten chapters with notes and an index is SEES, a model for analytical thinking. SEES is an acronym. S stands for Situational Awareness (How we know what is happening and how). E stands for Explanation (why we see what we see and how we assess the motivations of others). The second E in SEES stands for Estimates (how to forecast what will happen and how to question assumptions). Finally, the second S looks at future issues that might pose challenges in the future. So, in summary the four SEES are:

1. Situational awareness
2. Explanations
3. Estimations
4. Strategic notice

In everyday language the four key questions when any issue arises in intelligence or in our everyday working lives are:

1. What's happening?
2. What's the explanation?
3. What will/might happen?
4. What might we miss due to a too narrow focus or lack of imagination?

Given his profession, Omand uses examples from international politics ranging from the Cuba crisis in 1962 to the present day. But he also applies other concepts which will be of interest to teachers and researchers.

One of these is the Bayesian approach to inference developed by an 18th century British theologian, the Reverend Thomas Bayes. Bayesian inference introduced the notion of conditional probability. Commonly used in statistics and in data collection it is an important part of the Information revolution in information

gathering. The key to Bayesian inference is that it helps people assess the reliability of the information they receive and be open to the dangers of manipulation and outright fraud.

The second E, Estimations, examines objectives and motives. This is particularly important in intercultural understanding. Motives can be easily misread if there is a misreading of the cultural background of the person you are dealing with. Even more dangerous is the practice of accusing another of negative traits which are actually aspects of your own character. As Omand points out, he is sure a similar situation exists in our institutions too. The danger is we may go for solutions we like rather than analysing them objectively. To infer meaning we need to understand the context in which something is said or an action undertaken. A useful strategy recommended by Omand is the Heuer table, developed by Richards J Heuer, which helps set out different hypotheses to explain a situation and helps identify hypotheses and judge reliability. Below is an example of what such a chart might look like.

EVIDENCE	SOURCE TYPE CREDIBILITY RELEVANCE	Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2
Evidence 1			
Evidence 2			
Evidence 3			

Omand, 2020 P 60 (adapted)

Source Type indicates where the information comes from. *Credibility* and *Relevance* can be identified at 3 levels, *low*, *medium* and *high*.

The value of using an assessment chart like the Heuer table is it identifies the assumptions in the discussion and might offer a good reason to challenge assumptions and draw different conclusions.

Chapter 3 explores the third letter of SEES, the second E. The second E stands for estimations, what you think or predict will happen as a result of a decision to act or not to act. There is a tendency to focus on positive outcomes and to ignore negative outcomes and those who predict them. This is known as the *Cassandra effect* after the name of the daughter of King Priam of Troy who predicted disaster if the Trojans brought inside the city walls the wooden horse left outside by their Greek enemies. The 'Trojan horse' led to the destruction of Troy. To

avoid this situation, Omand suggests a 'probability yardstick' used by the NSA (National Security Agency) in the US to assess levels of probability of something happening. The yardstick illustrated below lists the possible outcomes and the percentage likelihood of a particular outcome

Figure 2 The Probability yardstick

Almost no chance	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Roughly even chance	Likely	Very likely	Almost certain
Remote	Highly improbable	improbable	Roughly even odds	Probable (probably)	Highly probable	Nearly certain
01-05%	05-20%	20-45%	45-55%	55-80%	80-95%	95-99%

Omand, 2020 P 81

Chapter 4 addresses the final letter is SEES. The final S, once again, stands for Strategic Notice and addresses the issue of anticipating events.

Omand uses the examples of the Icelandic volcano explosion in 2010 whose ash emissions clogged the skies and grounded aircraft travel and also terrorist attacks in Europe. The question is how can strategic notice forestall surprise? There are always warnings but we too often become aware of the warnings after the event rather than before.

Omand offers a new technique for spotting dangers and preparing for them before they happen with a strategy used by the UK Security and Intelligence co-ordinator. It is called CONTEST and it identifies a strategy for recognising and preparing for threats. The stages of CONTEST are presented in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 CONTEST

ACTION	Risk	=Likelihood	X Vulnerability	X Impact
Action to take		Pursue Prevent	Protect	Prepare
				- Manage initial response - Shorten period of disruption (Resilience)

Source: Omand (2020) P 97 (adapted)

CONTEST offers a practical approach to risk management assessment which can be a useful classroom exercise based on current affairs but also as advice for business professionals learning a foreign language.

Throughout the book David Omand refers to how strategies developed and used by intelligence services can also be used successfully in everyday life in the office. He points out how CONTEST has been adopted by leading corporates as a way of managing risk. In the corporate world it is known as horizon scanning. He also explains the three levels of risk that governments, corporations and individual business and families may encounter.

Level 1 is exogenous risks, risks which come from outside but affect lives and businesses. Covid-19 is a good example of an exogenous risk.

Level 2 is inherent risks, risks which are part of business, such as accidents,

Level 3 is investment risks, risks associated with investment in new technology (particularly relevant in the Information age), or a new venture.

The secret is in real life to be prepared beforehand by practising periodic impact assessments and exercise contingency plans. In the classroom this can also form the basis of project work and discussion. At the personal level one can even discuss what to do about lost keys and what should do if you lose them.

As this review suggests, the four SEES can also provide a useful basis for language practice exercises through the study of critical incidents and news articles and broadcasts. The three strategies illustrated suggest a good extension exercise, especially when working with authentic materials based on current affairs.

Chapters 5 to 8 illustrate the 4 SEES with references to intelligence crises as examples. Chapter 9 explores one of the greatest issues for intelligence gathering and for all of us, the problems posed by targeted advertising and information management by big data and the leading Internet companies. The value of this to teachers, apart from the study and application of the four SEES, is that the intelligence issues Omand describes are wonderful examples for helping students at B2 level and upwards develop critical thinking skills and critical awareness.

In short, although not written explicitly for teachers, *How Spies Think* is a really useful primer on thinking skills and political stories for study and discussion in class from a very readable and acknowledged expert in the intelligence gathering and analysis field.



ICC Journal



 **ICC**
the international language association