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HUPE Newsletter No. 1 • February 2014



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear HUPEzine readers,

A new HUPE Magazine is in front of you. I really hope you'll enjoy reading it, as well as be a part of its creation. Our intent was to give you a magazine which will be important for both, personal and professional development of English teachers in Croatia and abroad. So, if you have any ELT articles which you would like to publish, let us know. We are here for you! In this issue, you can read about the anxiety in the foreign language classroom, three ways a MOOC (*Massive Open Online Course*) can help your writing and about using psycholinguistics in teaching English.

Of course, don't forget our own Annual Conference in beautiful Opatija, which has been announced here, as well. Please, check our website regularly for any further information you might need. The Board hopes to see you all there. All the forms are available online.

Other forthcoming ELT events will be announced in our HUPE Newsletter on March 5. If you are a HUPE member and you have information that you would like to share, the address is hupe.newsletter@gmail.com.

Stay well, teach well. As always.

Yours,
Lidija

Impressum

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Contributions:

The best way to support your association and the HUPEzine is to write to us and send us your contributions. All contributions should be submitted on a CD or by e-mail. Please note the document name clearly on the CD. The deadline for the next issue is: 20 May 2014.

Write and send your contributions to the HUPEzine editor Lidija Branilović. Please, be sure to write your name, surname and affiliation / institution and address at the beginning or end of the text.



CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

Dear Colleagues,

The 22nd Annual HUPE Conference will be held in the Grand Hotel Adriatic, Opatija, 25 - 27 April 2014 under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Croatia, Mr Ivo Josipović.

We would love to welcome you there and provide you with a memorable experience both professional and of the beautiful town of Opatija the Pearl of the Adriatic.

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We look forward to greeting you in Opatija in April 2014.

HUPE Board

Anxiety in the foreign language classroom

Vito Paoletić

Teachers know never enough. It is because of this saying that two years ago, as a teacher of English and German with some experience, I decided to join an online course organised and supported by the British Council. By instructing teachers in over a dozen of units with as many topics, the course aimed at issuing to the participants a Certificate in secondary English language teaching.

It is on that course that I first read in-depth about anxiety in the foreign language classroom. My interest in this topic was triggered off when, in the unit that deals with „Errors and mistakes“, in one of the articles suggested in the readings section, I came across Stephan Krashen's statement: „Motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety all affect language acquisition.“ Of these three factors affecting the acquisition and, I would add, even more the learning of a foreign language, I chose to briefly research into the field of anxiety (also referred to as apprehension). In this article I will first try to outline the problem of foreign language anxiety (from now on FLA) by explaining how it can be recognised and what its causes may be; in the second half of this brief paper I will suggest some activities that can be used by both teachers and/or learners to get rid of this terrible feeling that acts as an additional hindrance in the demanding process of language learning. Most of the content of this account were drawn from the extensive reading of the references listed below, and from my personal teaching experience.

First of all, FLA should not be regarded and dealt with as though it were a disease. It is nothing else than the manifestation of the everyday anxiety that people may experience when they have to face a challenge: deliver a speech in front of an audience, go to a job interview, or being interviewed by the media. In these situations, speakers tend to be captured by thoughts about how well they will perform, and hence the content of their utterance somehow becomes less important and less interesting to the speaker. Just think of how many times you have found yourself in the embarrassing situation of not being able to remember just a word or somebody's name: these incidents are due to communication anxiety, which is an umbrella concept under which also FLA is to be found.

Unfortunately, learning a foreign (or even a second) language can be for many students an unpleasant, almost frightful experience. In the foreign language classroom, students are constantly being elicited to participate, to share their opinions, and are thus constantly being examined and assessed. Testing is omnipresent in the foreign language classroom: this apprehension and pressure on students to perform well in the foreign language classes caters for a lot of anxiety, which is very counterproductive for the learning process. It is out of doubt that relaxed and self-reliant students benefit from the foreign language class more than their anxious classmates. However, how can a teacher spot a student that is not simply embarrassed by some task or question, but who is actually affected by FLA? During an “anxiety attack”, students have reported feelings of worry and dread; they have trouble concentrating, sweat, experience heart palpitations, and tend to become forgetful even if they have invested a lot of time in learning. To sum up, anxious students suffer from symptoms that are both of physiological and of psychological nature.

The references I explored do also attempt to give reasons or factors that lead to FLA. It has already been mentioned that foreign language lessons are on the top as for number of tests and assessment tasks: this causes of course fear of negative evaluation. Besides this, many students, depending on the teaching culture of their context, fear the person that is usually the only fluent speaker in the class, i.e. the teacher; however, the evaluation and/or criticism from their classmates is even more frightening. Of all the skills taught and practiced in the foreign language classroom, anxious students perceive speaking as the most essential but also most demanding skill; many students tend to classify mistakes as big failures, and not as obvious and natural incidents in the process of language learning. Sometimes, they are not realistic at all and compare their skills with those of native speakers, which is of course very disappointing and causes a loss of motivation: it is the teacher's task to make clear that no-one is expected to produce native-like language utterances and above all native-like pronunciation. Learning a language is, as teachers may confirm, a never-ending process.

Fear of testing is also a very common reason for FLA: here anxiety tends to show up after the written test, when students usually think back and realise that they have made some mistakes while taking the test, due to their nervousness and lack of concentration. Here, the teacher can help by structuring the test in accordance to what has been drilled and agreed upon with the learners, leaving away tricky questions and unclear tasks, which

would cause students to waste a lot of time and energy, without bringing any benefit neither to them nor to the teacher. Students may get nervous when they notice a specific question format that they are not familiar with, even if the grammar topic it puts forward or the language skill it requests to be applied has been dealt with extensively. D. J. Young (p. 429) claims that "in language testing, the greater degree of student evaluation and the more unfamiliar and ambiguous the test tasks and formats, the more the learner anxiety is produced."

Due to anxiety and even fear, some students skip class entirely in an effort to alleviate their anxiety (see Horwitz p. 127): this is true above all for older secondary school students. Although this has not been mentioned yet, it is obvious that the perception of the teacher does also account for many symptoms of anxiety. Sometimes, there are students who do not even understand the teacher and the instructions and hence tend to almost "disappear" by sitting back during lessons, which is much easier in larger classes. Here, the teacher needs to spot this problem and to attempt to solve it. What the teacher should not do is intimidating the students, which is a method many teachers think will help students become motivated to learn the foreign language. Here, I would like to quote D. J. Young (p. 428), who states that "Instructors who believe their role is to correct students constantly when they make any error, who feel that they cannot have students working in pairs because the class may get out of control, who believe that the teacher should be doing most of the talking and teaching, and who think their role is more like a sergeant's than a facilitator's, may be contributing to learner language anxiety."

What can be done to prevent or reduce FLA? Anxious but self-reliant students, if they want to help themselves, should try out some "self-talk" and keep repeating to themselves such encouraging phrases as "Just relax", "Just do it", "I can do it", "Take a deep breath", and similar. Teachers, on the other hand, after "diagnosing" FLA*, can choose some of the following activities that, according to Mihaljević Djigunović 2002, a professor of English linguistics at Zagreb University, Croatia, should help students to calm down and get rid of that terrible feeling that arises because of FLA.

1) Release from irrational beliefs: this is a classroom activity in which the teacher helps students to understand their "fears" in this way, the single student can see that (s)he is not the only one fearing something. This activity is thought as a group therapy to fight each other's fears.

2) Secret talks: in this activity, students are asked to write a letter with their fears to the problem page of an imaginary magazine. They sign the letter with a code and it is answered by a group of other students that act as a psychologist. In this way, according to researchers, the actual fears of the students should be unveiled.

3) The mistake jury: this activity aims at making students understand that there is nothing tragic about mistakes. Mistakes are natural and obvious incidents in foreign language learning. Students, in groups, over a few weeks, are asked to monitor and record mistakes that come up during class and some invented ones. Mistakes are then evaluated by a jury that gives points as for the degree of fun, originality, communicative impact and so on.

In addition to these, there are many more activities that can be taken into consideration for releasing students from FLA. Most experienced and inspired teachers will for sure have theirs, too. The purpose of this short introductory article was not to present an exhaustive research in the topic of FLA: for this, much more space and time would be required; its aim was to show that teachers need to watch out for signs of language anxiety in their classrooms and they should also allow themselves some time to do some readings in this psychologically interesting and pedagogically important issue, which should not be neglected. So, dear colleagues, take FLA seriously and do not disregard it.

* FLA, after being discovered, can even be measured. To do this, Horwitz (1983) developed a survey known as Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS).

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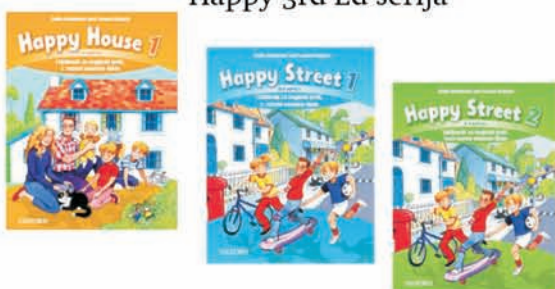
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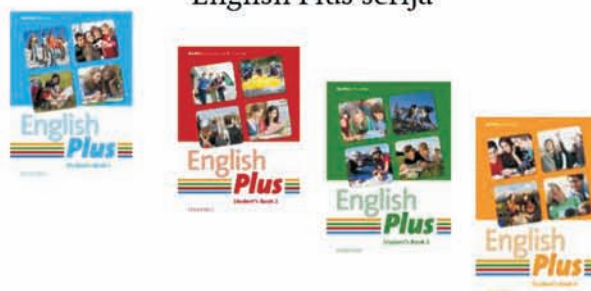
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BORROWED FROM:
ELTA Newsletter October 2013

Take your students down the garden path - using psycholinguistics in teaching English

*By: Nenad Jovanović,
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen,
the Netherlands*

Key words: psycholinguistics, garden path, sentence, syntax

“To take someone down the garden path“means to deceive someone, to lead them into believing something is true, before they realize they were misled. There is a special kind of sentences which can do the same. They are known as the garden path sentences. When we start reading them, we are led to believe one interpretation is true, however, by the time we get to the end of it, we need to redefine our own understanding of the whole sentence and often read it once or twice more. Only then are we sure that we fully understood the actual meaning of the sentence. These sentences exist in most, if not all, languages. Due to the nature of English, where many words can simultaneously be used as nouns, verbs or adjectives, where there are many homophones and homographs, this language is particularly rich in various forms of garden path sentences. Psycholinguistics, as a branch of science investigating how we comprehend and produce sentences, has been interested in the research of these sentences and how and why they are sometimes difficult to discern.

An example of a garden path sentence is “The old man the boat. “ At first, when reading this sentence, we believe that the old man is the subject, the person who does something in the sentence, but then we realize something else is happening and we need to read it again before we finally realize that “the old“ are the subject and the word “man“ is actually the verb. The meaning of the sentence is that people who are old are in charge of rowing or controlling the vessel.

The reason why EFL teachers should be interested in this is the fact that garden path sentences are so common, and yet, can cause problems even for native speakers. One can find garden path sentences in most daily newspapers, especially in the headlines, and in other written materials, such as blogs, online forums, magazines or books. Furthermore, these sentences can be a fun and engaging way for students to learn that many words in English have several meanings, they can learn proper pronunciation, punctuation, and their overall awareness of the language could be developed.

Very often, improper punctuation can cause a sentence to be a garden path. For instance, “Fat people eat accumulates“is a sentence which has no commas, so we are led to believe fat people are the subject. If this sentence was written as: “Fat, which people eat, accumulates. “ there would have been no problems in understanding it properly. A teacher can provide several of these sentences to her students and have them put proper punctuation. This type of garden path sentences is particularly good for learning and revising relative clauses, reduced relative clauses and relative pronouns.

As mentioned earlier, the garden path effect is most common in written language, because when we speak, we make small pauses in places where commas should be and the proper intonation helps us understand the sentences better. A teacher can put students into small groups and provide several of these sentences. Their task would be to read them out loud properly, so that there is no garden path effect noticeable, and students from other groups can understand them.

With higher-level students, a teacher can have them go through newspaper titles, magazines and other online media and find sentences which they think can be classified as garden path sentences.

As a follow up to these activities, or as a separate one, a teacher can provide her students with many English words which can serve as nouns, verbs, adjectives and other parts of speech, give some examples, and have them create their own garden path sentences.

These are some of the ideas which could help students understand the English language better, and they would be able to tackle the problematic garden path sentences when they come across them.

Here are some examples of garden path sentences which can be used in the classroom. Can you understand all of them easily? Many more can be found on the internet.

- Fat people eat accumulates
- Mary gave the child the dog bit a Band-Aid.
- The dog that I had really loved bones.
- We painted the wall with cracks.
- I convinced her children are noisy.
- The girl told the story cried.
- The horse raced past the barn fell.
- While Anna bathed the child sat on the bed.
- While the man hunted the deer ran into the woods.
- The cotton clothes are made of grows in Mississippi.

Nenad Jovanović graduated from Belgrade University in 2008 at the department of English language and literature. After graduation, he worked in private language schools in Belgrade. His primary group of students were teenagers. He participated at several ELT conferences, and presented at most of them. He also presented at British Council in Belgrade in 2012. Same year, he presented at CUP summer school in Vrnjačka Banja. Since September 2012, he has been studying clinical linguistics at both the University of Groningen and Potsdam University. He is expected to get his M.A. in 2014.

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THREE WAYS A MOOC CAN HELP YOUR ONLINE (WRITING) COURSE

Vedrana Vojković Estatiev, prof.

MOOCs are almost certainly turning out to be one of the most discussed topics of the year. However, this article is not about the overall impact of MOOCs (whether they spell the end of higher education as we know it), but rather an overview of how an ordinary teacher can implement certain features of a MOOC to enhance their own online (writing) course.

I have been teaching a course called *Writing in English* to undergraduate communication science students for the last four years. Until last year I worked in a traditional classroom environment, attempting on occasion to introduce elements of blended learning into the lessons. I thought wikis in particular lent themselves well to practicing writing skills, so my classes used a wiki to share resources and do certain writing assignments. However, it was not until I moved abroad last semester that this became an almost fully-fledged online course.

The university was supportive if a little skeptical regarding the concept of e-learning. It was agreed I could teach part of the course online, which was a considerable leap of faith considering their initial assumption that the teaching would be done via Skype. While Skype certainly has its merits as an online teaching tool, I wanted to design a course in the Moodle LMS (Learning Management System) as I had previously had the opportunity to see how it worked and believed it was very well suited to my purpose.

Soon after the course had begun, I found myself wondering whether I was doing a satisfactory job. While it is natural for a teacher to gauge students' reactions and their level of satisfaction with the class, it is much easier to observe this in a face-to-face environment. In class you immediately see how the students feel and can respond accordingly if an activity is not working, it can be modified or cut short. Conversely, if students react enthusiastically, more time may be allotted for the activity or it may be repeated in a future lesson. In an online course, on the other hand, it is more difficult to ascertain how students feel. They are highly unlikely to tell the tutor this unprompted, and the end-of-course survey may provide the first useful feedback.

It was at that point that I decided I would really benefit from observing another online course, preferably one on writing skills, and seeing how it compared with my own. I had been planning to enroll in a MOOC for several months in any case, and, luckily, *Crafting an Effective Writer: Tools of the Trade* was just starting on Coursera. Overall, I was more than satisfied with the cost-benefit ratio as my only investment was time (my internet bills remained the same), and it proved to be an excellent means of professional development. I have to emphasize that my primary focus was not the course content, but the way that this content was structured and presented, in which I was arguably not a typical MOOC student.

There were three course components which I believe have the potential to enhance any online (writing) course. They are presented here in the order they were introduced to students in the MOOC.

1. An introduction to online learning

The first week of our five-week MOOC was devoted to explaining what online learning entails and how it differs from classroom-based learning. Many of my fellow MOOC students were unhappy with this as they had attended other MOOCs, knew what to expect and wanted to proceed with the course content. From a methodological point of view, however, the idea appeared to have some merit. The media and numerous education experts keep telling us that children and young people today are technologically savvy and have enjoyed referring to them as "digital natives" ever since Marc Prensky coined the term. As a result, I expected

everyone under the age of 25 to be able to jump into an online course with no preparation or guidance. It turned out, however, that not a single one of my students had ever attended an online course before. They were unfamiliar with Moodle and Mahara (the e-portfolio we used) and did not automatically know, for instance, how to display journal entries on their walls or what the rules of good practice in forum posts are. The orientation period need not last a week, but a course conducted entirely online is not quite the same thing as a Facebook account and I think any online training can only proceed more smoothly if the tutor ensures that everyone is aware of the basics. I believe it is particularly useful if this is done online so that everyone can refer back to these basics (as in the MOOC I attended).

2. Videos

The use of videos has often been criticized in articles on MOOCs, but as this was our only opportunity to see the tutors and hear their voices, I perceived the videos as playing a humanizing role quite important in a course with 24,000 students! My own course contained a classroom component, which meant that the students had met me and knew I was more than just an avatar in Moodle. Also, the group was small enough for me to interact with each student and provide feedback as we progressed through the course. Consequently, I did not consider recording a video; there seemed to be no real need in a writing skills course. However, watching the MOOC videos prompted me to record and upload an end-of-course video. At the time, I viewed it merely as an experiment, but at the end of the semester the feedback from some of the students was that this was the part they had enjoyed the most because they could hear my voice and it made them feel as if they were in a 'real' class. I would subscribe to the notion that a judicious use of video 'starring' the tutor can contribute to making the students feel more at ease in a new learning environment.

3. Peer review

The concept of peer review in MOOCs has been perhaps most widely condemned of all. I also felt doubtful of how effective it would be and was initially quite reluctant to participate in peer review activities. In the MOOC I attended peer review was a potential minefield for an additional reason native and non-native speakers were required to review each others' work. Language proficiency (surprisingly!) was not a course requirement and judging by the forum posts some students were at an intermediate level (B1), so it was obvious that the term 'peer' was being stretched to the breaking point. Nevertheless, I put in the required effort in the peer review activities, and as we progressed from one week to the next I became aware of how much one could learn from this approach even in a situation that was far from ideal. One of the reasons MOOC peer review is so often criticized is that very few students take it as seriously as a tutor would, leaving the majority with inadequate feedback on the assignments they have worked hard on. In a traditional online course, where the number of students is far more manageable, peer review can be invaluable. At first I felt uncomfortable incorporating it into my course because it is quite difficult to let go of the preconceived notions of the tutor having to read and assess all the assignments. A little voice in my head said, "Well, they expect you to! You're the tutor, after all! If you start relying on peer review, students will take you less seriously." But today, as teachers increasingly take on roles other than the traditional one of simply dispensing knowledge, it is incredibly important to make students in a writing course aware that they can and should: a) write for an audience other than their teacher, b) be able to think critically and reflect on the work of their peers, and c) give thoughtful and constructive feedback to these same peers. I believe that peer review can be a highly effective tool to help students achieve these goals, and in a traditional online course, if some students are not taking it as seriously as they could be, the tutor unlike in a MOOC can intervene and point them in the desired direction.

These components can be applied to other online courses, not just ones on writing skills, while peer review can also work very well in a traditional classroom. Since this article was first published, I have had the opportunity to include all three in my course (this semester with a different group of undergraduates), and have seen a considerable increase in learner participation as well as positive feedback.

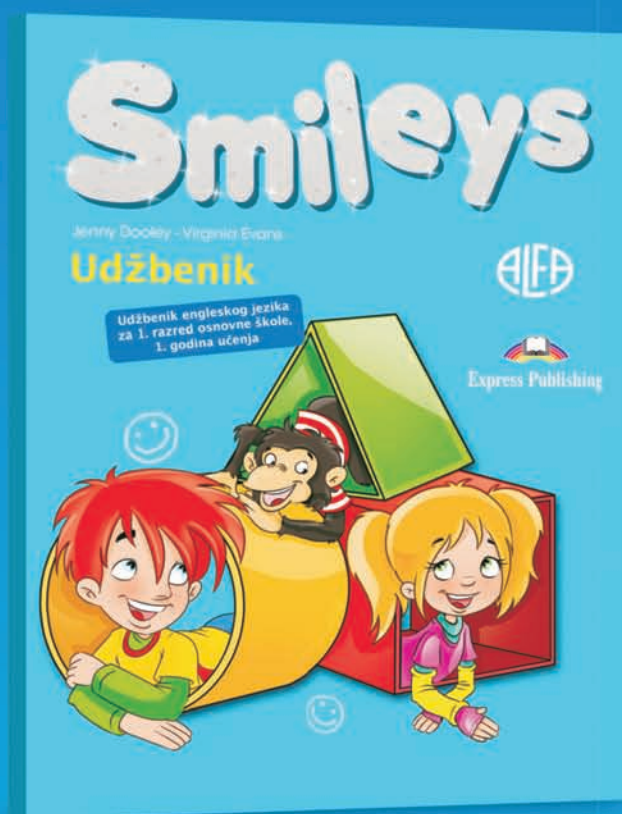
**MOOC Massive Open Online Course*

This article was first published in a similar format on the BELTA blog.

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