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Croatian Association of Teachers of English

HUPE
inspire
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HUPE*zine*

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SPECIAL EDITION

HUPE 29th International Conference

Valamar Poreč November 12-14 2021

Editor's Note

Dear readers,

It has been quite a year, so we offer you quite an edition to go magazine.

What's quite something about this year (and the previous one) apart from the new edition of HUPEzine?

An outbreak of Covid19, earthquakes, online classes all over the country and a special association that tried its very best to unite English teachers and let their voices and problems be heard and shared. A very first online Conference that gathered us all although technology took over and we all probably dreamt of a live Conference somewhere on the seacoast. It's not about the workshops (as you repeated I don't know how many times) but about coffee breaks, chit-chats and meeting in person those who truly inspire you.

Yet, after the earthquake in Petrinja you showed once again why HUPE is the next best thing. Donating money to help our colleagues was by far the most beautiful gesture anyone could imagine. HUPE doubled it and, together, we accomplished the impossible just by showing the care and support for those among us. A very special thank you to all who have participated in our quick but efficient action for our dear colleagues.

Let's go back to our online Conference. HUPE established Hall of Fame to give honour to teachers who have been inspiring us in the last decade or two. We are glad that you were present at the ceremony for the most part. Hope to see you all live in November!

As you have concluded by now, there are many interesting things to read about in this issue starting with the online Conference details and announcements and ending with the What's new in ELT section. This time, I'll not announce the articles because I truly believe they speak for themselves. Do go through the complete issue and enjoy!

Anita Žepina, HUPE editor

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 1 May 2021.
Write and send your contributions to the HUPEzine editor. Please, be sure to write your name, surname and affiliation / institution and address at the beginning or end of the text

28th HUPE international conference

Dear members, speakers and HUPE friends,

Thank you for attending our first ever online, 28th HUPE international conference. As mentioned in the brochure, our motto in 2020 has been
"Everything will be fine in the end. And if it's not fine, then it's not the end."

This challenging year has forced us to change our plans but has also taught us to adapt to new circumstances. We are grateful for all your support it truly means a lot to us.

Our 28th conference was once again organized in cooperation with the Education and Teacher Training Agency (AZOO), with help from our publishers, sponsors, and partners. We were happy to see that more than 500 participants joined us during the three days of the conference.

Despite not seeing you in person, we have tried to prepare a rich programme consisting of talks, presentations and workshops covering a wide range of topics. We live in a challenging period and it was also challenging to organize all the details this year due to constant unplanned changes. What we have planned from the beginning was evening program, where we invited you to have fun, relax a little bit and enjoy a Scavenger Hunt, 9090 Quiz and win a prize; we also organized a photo contest, various quizzes and raffle. The program included MiCAL Film screening, in partnership with the British Council and we once again thank Nigel Bellingham, Director of the British Council for their kind cooperation.

The Publishers' promo area took place each Saturday and our partners and leading publishers, Pearson, Profil Klett, Školska knjiga and Oxford University Press, presented their latest editions of ELT books aimed at making your teaching up-to-date and more enjoyable both for you and your students.

On the second Saturday, all active HUPE members had the chance to take part in our Annual General Meeting where the HUPE Executive Board and Supervisory Board members informed you of all that happened over the course of the year. Team HUPE is especially proud of the HUPE Hall of Fame and the celebration of our or 26 unforgettable HUPE members. It was very emotional for all of us and we were moved to see and hear our colleagues speak of HUPE and their teaching days with great love and pride. We also introduced our new Short story competition for your students were both you and your students will have a chance to win terrific prizes. The results will be published on Valentine's day.

Our great supporters, the Australian Embassy also offered great prizes, which included a boomerang and a selection of Australian wines. Three lucky and smart winners were surprised by the abundance they had received. Thank you once again, Australian Embassy and Daniel Emery, Australian Chargé d'Affaires to Croatia.

Our 28th Annual HUPE Conference offered 28 sessions/workshops and you chose the top three. HUPE proudly awarded Dora Božanić Malić, Jayne Bowra and Mia Šavrljuga for these three best workshops.

May spring bring us new beginnings and a live conference planned for November 12-14 in Poreč.
And remember:
"Everything will be fine in the end. And if it's not fine, then it's not the end."
Thank you!

Anita Jokić, president and Team HUPE wish you all the best!

AN INSPIRING EXPERIENCE OF A SLOVENIAN COUNTRY SCHOOL

In this article, I would like to share our inspiring experience of the implementation of the Comenius Project to our small country school in Poljane Valley, situated in the heart of Slovenia. Our pupils, who had not had many opportunities to speak English outside the school and had traditionally been quite shy when speaking English in the classroom, thus gained confidence and easiness when communicating in this world language. Not only did the project help our students to broaden their horizons and global awareness, but it also promoted the same values among our teachers.

Keywords: unique learning experience, foreign language, cultural exchange, country school, Comenius assistant
by Barbara Levstek

INTRODUCTION

I am a teacher at a small country school in the village of Poljane, in the heart of Poljane Valley. Many of our students live on farms and have no real contact with another culture or even a foreign language. The language teachers had been strongly aware of that fact for a long time, so we had been trying to find some alternative pedagogical approaches for our school children – to give them a chance of overcoming their caution, fear and intolerance for diversity in all aspects of life. But, how do we address such a sensitive challenge in the best way?

The Comenius Project (Lifelong Learning, Comenius Assistantship) allows international cooperation and exchanges in the field of primary education. Therefore, in this project, we saw an opportunity to get an assistant from abroad. A Comenius assistant would be able to bring wider dimensions to our school – like language and culture. Besides, we wished the assistant to bring English closer and to make it more familiar, especially to pupils, who were not in contact with English outside the school.

A Comenius assistant is a future teacher of any school subject, who has completed at least two years of study for the teaching profession, or a future teacher who has already completed studies but has not yet been regularly employed as a teacher. The host school provides her or him a mentor, who monitors her or his progress and acts as a contact person.

OUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

The assistant should take part in all levels of primary education, in as many subjects as possible (beside languages), e.g. in history, geography, civics, chemistry, biology, music, art and sports lessons. Our objective was to take part in all fields of school life – compulsory and

A brief biography

My name is Barbara Levstek. I live in Škofja Loka, a small town in Slovenia. After graduating from high school, I studied at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana where I completed my studies in Slovene and French. I am a teacher at Poljane Primary School in Poljanska Valley, where I have been teaching for 23 years. I proofread texts, and I am also a rhetorics teacher trainer. I like to travel and I am a fan of hills, cycling and good domestic and foreign literature.

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optional classes, extra-curricular activities, various activity days (dedicated to culture, science, sports, technology, etc.), after-school classes, projects, celebrations… Since a kindergarten is attached to the school, the assistant would also be introduced to younger children. We would also integrate the assistant into our way of life outside school by including her or him in the family life of the mentor or any other member of staff, getting her or him acquainted with their peers as well as with the life and work of the local community. Moreover, we would present the whole project in the local media.

However, our primary objective was to help our pupils with the awareness of English as an international language and encourage them to be more relaxed and self-confident at communication. One of our main aims was also to broaden our pupils' horizons, giving them a stronger sensibility and feeling for diversity and tolerance in the world. The assistant would present her or his own culture, mother tongue, history, and other important information.

THE ENGLISH TEACHER FROM POLAND

Finally, a Polish English teacher, Miss Aleksandra Pudełko, joined us for 10 months.

The language teachers had previously explained the entire Comenius project to our teaching staff and students and in that way had completely prepared everyone to accept the foreign teacher.

Miss Aleksandra adapted to her role and the new school surroundings in no time at all. At first, she was mostly involved in English lessons, but soon she took part in other subjects – Slovenian, German, school journalism, theatre club, history, geography, civics and ethics, biology, chemistry, physical education. When themes were appropriate, she also joined class meetings introducing her background and life in Poland. She attended our branch school; she was involved in working with students with special needs and on some special school days (culture, sports, science). Her ideas were fresh and innovative because of her experiences, knowledge and interests. She was always willing to lend a hand, creative and extremely positive. She introduced the "European" dimensions into all aspects of school life. She was also involved in some other projects (UNESCO, Eco-School and GTP); occasionally she also met the kindergarten children. She refreshed the pupils' community meetings and helped present the Comenius project to the local media.

Miss Pudełko herself chose diverse topics and discussed them with our students and teachers, e.g. teaching Polish, comparing Polish and Slovenian grammar, translation, European studies and film education. Above all, we all learnt a lot about Polish culture and, last but not least, about Polish cuisine. She even prepared some Polish national dishes for teachers to taste, which she had previously cooked at home.

All the activities Miss Pudełko carried out had been planned. That was also the case with integrating her in the everyday life of young people in our country (school, entertainment, movies, music) by the mentor and other

teachers. We introduced her to our families, friends, relatives, etc. So, she experienced at least a little bit of our way of life at all levels. As Miss Pudełko is an incredibly nice and pleasant person, as well as a very professional teacher, she was accepted by everyone. Thus, gradually our socialising was growing beyond the school environment. We were happy to know and have a person with strong pedagogical knowledge and skills. Her contribution and help during English lessons were of great importance. The pupils were offered the possibility to talk to Aleksandra in English – her natural, warm and encouraging attitude towards children helped them a lot. Step-by-step, they were discovering that they understood more than they had thought before and, moreover, that they were understood. Thus their courage and self-confidence were increased. Miss Pudełko was patient, creative and she always provided positive feedback to our pupils.

Getting to know an assistant teacher was, for many pupils, their first contact with a foreign person, so it also supported global awareness.

WHAT WERE THE BENEFITS FOR OUR PUPILS?

Our pupils gained a great number of benefits from the Comenius project. They met with new forms of teaching methods and approaches. Motivation to learn foreign languages increased, the classroom atmosphere was relaxed, and the pupils used English with greater ease. They became more confident and fluent in speaking English, they learnt about other school systems, habits and people across Europe, especially in Poland.

Finally, pupils are regularly in contact with a foreign person and in this way, they get authentic information about a foreign culture. They can thus encounter multiculturalism in person. Our pupils are more confident now, their knowledge has increased and their experience has become wider – they communicate with greater ease. The Comenius assistant is even more interesting for smaller country schools. In larger cities, students have more opportunities to meet foreign people and communicate in a foreign language, while in the country this is more difficult. However, it can be a great privilege for every school.

DID WE ACHIEVE OUR GOALS?

The project brought a European dimension to our school – one of the greatest advantages of the Comenius project is the awareness of multiculturalism. The school year we hosted a Comenius assistant enriched our school life, brought a lot of positive impulses, new mentality, fresh ideas and creativity. It stimulated pupils' and teachers' curiosity, broadened everyone's horizons and increased our interest in the assistant's native country. However, we have since been even more aware of the importance of our own culture.

For all of us, it was also a chance to become aware of how easy it is to make friends with people from other countries. The school staff are satisfied and grateful for being encouraged to speak English daily.

This is a shining example of how the programme promotes cultural exchange and a unique learning experience about foreign language. And in my personal opinion – it was one of the best and the most beneficial projects that our school has ever done.

WHY SAY YES TO VIRTUAL MOBILITY

Goran Podunavac i Marijana Kuna

Since the students and employees of Elementary School Popovac didn't travel to Norway in April this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, they have decided to give virtual mobility a chance.

Instead of searching for a possible excuse, the students took the tasks seriously and used the possibilities of technology for learning and socializing during the fourth, and also the last, mobility of the Erasmus+ project "Kids Against Plastic Pollution".

Two schools from Bergen and Odda took care of a diverse programme from the 7th to the 11th of December 2020. Together with the Norwegian hosts, students from the Romanian Tulcea and Manavgat in the south of Turkey also played a big part, as well as the young people of Baranja mentioned earlier.

The first day of the collective online meeting started live with the opening ceremony and once again reminded them how much progress the schools have made since the beginning of the project implementation. Six students from each country presented what they did in their schools from September of 2018 until now and what plans they have for the future regarding the continuation of the battle against plastic pollution.

As a cultural segment with which they decided to represent Croatia and Baranja, the students chose the folk dance "Little Apples". The Romanian folk motif embroidery on canvas, the importance of coffee in Turkey, and the representation of the Norwegian cultural flavour through photographs of cities followed by the musical background of the school band were presented in the afternoon live broadcast.

One of the activities of the day was a discussion on plastic pollution at the level of each school separately. The students agreed that it is essential to continue educating their friends, family, and the locals even after the project has been carried out.

"TO SAVE THE ENVIRNOMENT WE RECYCLE, DRIVE ELECTRIC CARS AND USE FEWER PLASTIC BAGS. THEN WE GO CRAZY ON BLACK FRIDAY. WELL DONE PEOPLE."
— HERMAN

"NO MESSAGE IN THE PLASTIC BOTTLE. THE MESSAGE IS PLASTIC."
— VANJA

"YESTERDAY, I WENT TO GROCERY SHOP TO FIND FOOD WITHOUT PLASTIC. I DIDNT'T EAT THAT DAY."
— DANIEL

"ONE PIECE OF PLASTIC CREATES A LONG-TERM PROBLEM."
— IVA

"EXPERTS SAY IT'S CRITICAL BUT NO ONE EVER LISTENED THERE IS SO MUCH TO DO BEFORE PLASTIC EATS US TOO... "
— RALUCA–ALEXANDRA

"MOST PEOPLE. BIG WORDS. NO ACTION."
— SINDRE

Considering that due to epidemiological measures larger gatherings are not allowed in Croatia, instead of all students of the school, twelve 1st grade students headed to an environmental clean-up action with their teacher Ivana Vrbek Mesić. Besides Popovac, eco-friendly primary school students from Kneževo, together with their teacher Lidija Štimac, also found different kinds of garbage, from paper to bulky waste. In their actions, they clearly said: "Don't leave anything but your footprints in nature!" Clean-up actions took place in all four countries.

On the third day of the videoconference, the emphasis was on the creative writing of short messages using the format "Skrifta på Veggen" (Writing on the Wall). The students came up with messages about sustainable development, plastic, and pollution.

"We enjoyed the process of writing strong eco-messages with as few words as possible. It was interesting to hear how our peers from other countries think. We all want for our voice to be heard more when it comes to plastic pollution," reported Ivano Rohtek, a 7th grade student.

Thursday was a day when students could enjoy the performance of gifted young musicians from Rothaugen and Odda. The live broadcast was followed by a virtual meeting of six students from each school who were supposed to report on the clean-up action in their local community. In line with the given form, in which they wrote down the amount of certain kinds of waste, they informed the partner students of their findings.

On the last day of virtual mobility, prepared meals were shown from other countries, after which the voting took place for the best master chefs of the following specialities: Norwegian Salmon Pasta, Romanian mamaliga balls, Turkish karniyarik/stuffed eggplant and Baranja stuffed peppers. Afterwards, the students listened to five podcast shows on plastic pollution and talked via videoconference about the guests, their statements and mentioned issues, and the things they learned. Around 500 students with a competitive spirit, through games and entertainment, checked their knowledge by solving the quiz "Say NO to Plastic" and, with the award of certificates, the five-day virtual mobility was officially closed. Of course, all schools were grateful to the Norwegian hosts, who managed to prepare an excellent programme in this unusual period and to crown two and a half years of learning, good cooperation, and friendship exceptionally well. The slogan of the newest Erasmus+ campaign is "We're Stronger Together", which the students in the project "Kids Against Plastic Pollution" showed numerous times.

And while some wonder why engage in the implementation of virtual mobility in these very strange

How much plastic does the average European use annually?

2

323 Answers

▲ 59 kg

◆ 400 kg

● 130 kg

■ 100 kg

9/9

🔒 **kahoot.it** Game PIN: **3971810**

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times full of uncertainty and a dose of fear, computer science teacher Goran Podunavac and the school librarian Marijana Kuna say that they haven't regretted a single moment of it.

"The spotlight was on the young people, who proudly presented what they learned about plastic pollution. Together they accomplished changes in their environments. I am proud of the results and I am certain that there will be more opportunities for cooperation, which are accompanied by the greatly anticipated travels. We would all like to be in Norway these days, but virtual mobility is also an invaluable experience for our small school," says librarian Kuna.

"I was pleasantly surprised with students' activity, despite the work being done mostly during remote learning. They became more flexible and came to grips with various digital tools in order to, for example, record their podcast shows and culinary challenges. They established communication with their peers from partner schools without any problems and prepared digital quizzes and other materials together. We said "yes" to the virtual mobility and engaged almost all students, and not just six, which would be the case with physical mobility," teacher Podunavac notes.

You might have heard that doing project activities online instead of going to physical mobility is a "lost" mobility, but that blanket statement doesn't sit right for many reasons, such as achieving intercultural competences, linguistic skills, collaborative learning, media and digital skills, open-mindedness, teamwork, critical thinking and networking. Those are more than good reasons why these students and teachers said yes to virtual mobility and never even thought of throwing away a chance to be part of it.

Until the next collaboration and mobility (physical, blended or virtual), let's continue to be responsible, take care of each other and stay healthy because this dark winter will not last forever. Spring will come again. It always does.

Follow Kids Against Plastic Pollution on Facebook here, and on Instagram here.

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mjc-7uezacU&feature=emb_title&ab_channel=Osnovna%C5%A1kolaPopovac
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doLAA_y-77c&ab_channel=Osnovna%C5%A1kolaPopovac

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT

Davor Černi

The curricular reform that our school system is going through has set in motion a process of rethinking of our grading system. When you ask the teacher what the good sides of grades are, the usual answers are: transparency, motivation, results, feedback, progress and objectivity. At the same time, when we ask them what the negative sides of grades are, we get these answers: demotivation, stress, pressure, fear and parent pressure. So we see that grades can be seen as both a positive and a negative tool at the same time.

How did it all start in Croatia? According to (*dr. sc. Milan Matijević, Ocjenjivanje u osnovnoj školi, TIPEX, Zagreb, 2004.) the* first attempts at regulating the assessment process in our school system happened back in 1874 and 1888. This introduced an assessment system which didn't involve grades but just descriptive notes, and both students and schools were assessed. Progress in specific subjects was assessed with a 4 level scale from very good to inadequate. Since there were no grades, no arithmetic average was calculated at the end of a school year, but students did have to retake a year if they didn't get a passing note. In 1918 the system of grades (numbers from 1 to 5) was introduced into our education system and has been present ever since. There was an attempt in the 1960's of introducing a combination of grades and descriptive notes as assessment tools, but was abandoned quickly and after the 1970's and has only remained in some form only in the first 4 classes (razredna nastava) of primary schools. We can thus divide the grading system in Croatia into pre-1918 where we had around 80 years of assessment through descriptive notes and post 1918 which can now be seen as a period of over a hundred years of grading (or to say assessing students' progress with numbers from 1 to 5). In the 21st century, we saw a few major changes. The first one is connected to final grades which are now given only at the end of the year (half-term final grades have been abandoned). The second change was the shift towards the digitalization of assessment through the introduction of *e-dnevnik*. This is a digital platform where teachers record all the grades and notes they give to their students and is also as a portal which is available to parents and students themselves. The third and most recent change happened though a current curricular reform where assessment as a form of feedback was prioritised. Our school system is still highly dependent on grades (1 to 5) as they are still the sole criteria of transition from primary to the secondary level of education. I believe that all these facts are very important to take into consideration when planning any type of reform or a change regarding grading and(or) assessment within our school system.

The interest of society to reconsider and revive evaluation in education has increased, especially when the traditional curricula began to be seriously questioned *(SPECIFIC SCHOOL ASSESSMENT PEDAGOGIES)); Sevastian BLENDEA)*. So we can say that there is definitely a need for an open dialogue including all parties and experts involved in the process of assessment and grading and its results in our schools. Docimology as the art of assaying has been present around hundred years now and recognizes all these stepping stones that are a part of the assessment process: evaluation, internal evaluation, external evaluation, self-assessment, formative, summative, peer assessment, grades and feedback. Our system relies on a single grade report card. Teachers use different methods to round up this single grade (MODE - the most frequent grade, MEAN - arithmetic average, or sometimes it's just based on the impression teacher has of his/her students). Is a Standards-based report card something that we should consider (*S. Kišiček, PhD: Collaborative Learning: Providing Feedback & Assessment Practices – online*)? Guskey claims that true grading reform can't happen unless report cards show several grades for every student in every course. Croatian curricular reform has labelled and distinguished these two forms of assessment and thus has followed the current trends in education. As we all know these two major types of assessment are: Formative Assessment or as it is referred to as assessment for learning (an ongoing assessment that allows a teacher to track student learning on a daily basis…) and Summative Assessment or as it is referred to as the assessment of learning (snapshot of what a student has learned and retained at the time of the exam…).

The Croatian school system is still highly dependent on grades (1 to 5) and it will be very difficult to change something that has been around for over a hundred years. But it is not impossible and as Susan D. Blum (2017) suggests in her article "The significant learning benefits of getting rid of grades" hacking (*Sarr Sackstein: Hacking Assessment: 10 Ways to Go Gradeless in a Traditional Grades School*) the system and going gradeless is something that can help the whole process of change that we have set in motion. Dare to be a part of the change. Start a school project, in one subject or one class in all subjects, or if you are brave enough involve the whole school, without grades for a month. Invite advisors from the Education and Teacher Training Agency to take part in the project. Present and publish your results. This seems idealistic and, for many classes and many teachers, impossible. Here are some of Susan's thoughts on that: Going gradeless can be done in a class of any size and of any type, though students may find it alarming and unfamiliar. Some faculty use something called "contract grading," which still uses a traditional scale but puts some of the control in students' hands. You can provide opportunities for students to make choices, which allows them to find at least a tiny bit of intrinsic motivation even in the most conventional of courses. Some assignments (maybe small ones) can still be risk-free and contribute to intrinsic motivation, by being utterly fascinating, completely useful or fun. You can always offer low-stakes exercises that are perceived as enjoyable and not trivial, in any course.

I hope you'll find my words enough of a spark to start a discussion, to set in motion some sort of collaboration that results in ideas and actions that are going to help our students, teachers, parents and the system as a whole.

TWO DIGITAL FLOATIES TO HELP YOU SWIM THROUGH DISTANCE LEARNING AND TEACHING
(An overview of the Instagram Lessons Workshop from the 28th HUPE Conference)

Dora Božanić Malić

The focus of my workshop at the HUPE Conference last November was on two digital resources which I love to use. I hope this text will be of use to its readers.

Through the months in lockdown and distance learning, imposed upon all of us, Nearpod proved itself a lifeline for me. It allowed me to create meaningful content for my students based on their textbooks as well as track their progress. One of the biggest hurdles our students had to face in the past year is the one of self-regulation. Many of them possess a very low level of it and need to be monitored in their work. Nearpod offers just that.

Nearpod is a student engagement system in which teachers create lessons made up of slides and interactive content (games, quizzes, simulations, interactive videos, a collaborate board, etc.) Once a teacher creates a lesson within it, they can choose whether to let students go through it on their own (a "student-paced" option) or to set the pace themselves ("live participation" in which the teacher is in charge of the flow of the lesson). Students log in through a code, so there's no process of registration and the likelihood of them "getting lost" is diminished. Students may also join a lesson with their AAI@EduHr identities. All the lessons are stored in a "Library" and a teacher can start multiple sessions of a lesson so that the work of different classes is recorded in separate reports.

Students and teachers don't have the same view of a lesson. Students see what teachers prepare for them. Teachers have access to the "student's view", but also to reports, live responses and results. Originally, I used Nearpod as a substitute for a faulty projector because it enabled me to use the students' mobile phones as projectors and, as emotionally involved as our students are with their phones, a teacher can rely on that most of the phones in a class are going to always be functioning well.

Apart from slides here are some activities offered by Nearpod:

- "Open-ended Questions" enable students to answer a question or share an opinion in a longer form, either by recording their voice or typing. Their response is visible only to the teacher who may decide to share the response with the rest of the class if they feel that's appropriate.
- "Matching Pairs" and "Memory" are basically the same activity but the difference is in what is being matched. In a game of memory, a player matches two

of the same while in "matching pairs" a player is asked to match two items based on a principle (word + definition, word + image, two halves of a compound, etc.)

- "Poll" is self-explanatory. It's used to ask for students' opinions and a great tool for ice-breaking activities.
- "Collaborate Board" is a board alike Lino boards or Padlet. Teachers may also decide to moderate a collaborative discussion if they feel a post is inappropriate.
- "Flipgrid" is an app in its own right and deserves an article of its own. Its primary use is video class discussions.
- "Draw-it" is one of my favourites. I often use it at the end of a lesson and let students draw whatever they want. Students can also draw on a picture background (excellent for prepositions practice.

The second resource I presented was Instagram. Instagram is one of the most popular social networking apps at the moment and is a part of our lives and our students' lives. However, I'm not a proponent of starting class or students' profiles, because I believe the digital footprints of our students are already very big and there's no need to add to them further. What I like about Instagram as a teacher, is that it is an ever-growing library of resources and ideas. Here's a list of some of my favourite ones:

- Insta-poets like Rupi Kaur (rupikaur_), Attcus (atticusxo) or Samantha Jayne (quarterlifepoetry) regularly update their profiles with new poems and thoughts which can be used as warmers or coolers and may even inspire a student to create an insta-poem of their own. Also check out Amanda Gorman (amandacgorman), the US National Youth poet Laureate who amazed the world with her Inauguration poem. She is a superb wordsmith and an impressive young person – someone our students can look up to.

- Hashtags are tools for searching and researching microblogging sites. If you search Instagram through a hashtag you may find tips, information, lesson plans, solace and teacher-specific humour. I've used daily hashtags as inspiration for icebreakers. For example, inspired by #mondayblues I've asked my students to illustrate what burdens them by using a GIF, meme, song or a video. On a #transformationtuesday students may practice "used to" by contrasting past and present through photos. On a #fearlessfriday they may share an inspirational story.

- You may decide to follow a teaching profile like Edutopia or Teachers pay Teachers for inspiration, lesson plans, strategies and videos.

- Instagram is primarily a photo database and here are some of my favourite profiles:
  - Steve McCurry (stevemccurryofficial) is one of the most famous photographers in the world. You probably know his portrait of an Afghan girl for National Geographic.

- Ćiril Jazbec (ciriljazbec) is also a National Geographic photographer whose recent work included photos of a Himalayan school project on natural water storage (something that could be addressed in a lesson about sustainable development and ecology).

- National Geographic has a whole palette of different Instagam accounts. There's the original one (natgeo), but there are also country and region-specific accounts (for example: natgeohr) and field specific (natgeoyourshot – dedicated to photos of the National Geographic community, natgeowild – dedicated to wildlife, natgeoadventure with photos by sportspeople and adventure photographers, etc.)

- If you want your students to write a story, you might send them a link to a profile called timflachphotography (by Tim Flach) and instruct them to choose their character(s) among the fantastic animal profiles on offer. Once they've done so they can visit airpixels (by Tobias Hägg) and choose a setting for their story among breath-taking areal photos.

- If your current theme is food check out a profile called breakfastnbowls for wonderful pictures of food. Show your students a picture and let them write their own recipe. It doesn't have to be correct, it just needs to be theirs.

- Chinesewhiskers is a profile curated by a Dutch photographer Marcel Heijnen and as can be surmised from the name it is a collection of photos of cats in China and Hong Kong where shopkeepers and cats have developed a unique and mutually beneficial relationship. Chinesewhiskers is full of "Where's Waldo?" type of photos in which cats are difficult to find and their hiding places are wonderful for prepositions practice.

- Gregwilliamsphotography is a profile curated by Greg Williams an English photographer and film director who has worked for Vogue, GQ, Vanity Fair, shot photos for movie posters (for example James Bond) and worked with a gallery of A-list stars. His behind-the-scenes photos are candid, surprising and heart-warming. Your students will surely be inspired to write dialogues, captions and stories.

The two digital resources I've focused on are complementary in as much as one is a platform which engages students with content in a meaningful and outcome-oriented way, and the other one never ceases to provide more content which can be used to liven up our lessons. Nearpod is very user-friendly, but it did take some time for me to get used to its ins and outs in order to get the best out of it. Instagram is a treasure trove of teaching materials, with or without a hashtag to point you to them.

USING SONGS AND SONG LYRICS IN THE ELT CLASSROOM

A guide (and some advice) for both experienced and inexperienced practitioners

Chris Walklett

Lessons using music, songs and song lyrics are amongst the most memorable if not *the* most memorable lessons students will ever experience when learning English. I have no hard, physical evidence or quantitative data to support for this, rather this assertion is based on ELT practitioners' accounts of what former students have said to them and of what students have relayed to others about the songs that they came across in classes a number of years ago. Such accounts make it clear to me that songs used (well) in the classroom make an impression and this impression is a very deep and long-lasting one.

Further to this, songs are a great way to discuss all sorts of topics and hence are a really important resource and text type. They are an ELT tool with a deeply embedded ability to, not only get students learning an array of new language, but also to transform the classroom atmosphere. ELT practitioners seem to have forgotten what they have to offer and how best to employ them. In doing so, sadly they seem to have left songs behind on their ELT journeys. This short piece will examine how to promote non-formulaic classroom usage of this resource through the consideration of a number of golden rules i.e. factors that one should bear in mind when using this resource. These items will be outlined below and are in no particular order.

Care and consideration

Choose a song (or let your students chose one) with care and consideration, especially regarding its theme. When a suitable song is selected, familiarise yourself with it. Listen to it. I mean *really* listen to it. Sing along with it and get to know it and maybe watch the video too. Immerse yourself in the song, everything connected to it, and all it has to offer. Songs, good songs at least, have almost always gone through a lengthy creative process involving considerable time and thought. Be respectful of this and spend an appropriate amount of time preparing activities bearing this in mind. Too often, when preparing a song for classroom use, I have observed this part of the process is cut-short, a likely reason for many poor and basic materials that fail to do justice to the song or its lyrics.

Pay attention to the lyrics

As mentioned above paying attention to the lyrics is strongly advised, the lyrics being the main usable element within a song. The song lyrics will often be different from what you thought – creating what is known as misheard lyrics or *mondegreens* – so be prepared for a surprise or two. These mondegreens offer fantastic potential for classroom usage. As they can lead to phonetic analysis along the lines of *why did we think we heard what we did?* or *what is going on here with regards to issues of connected speech?* See the later section on phonetics for more on this topic.

The relevance of themes

Think theme, that is, think about the song's theme/s and what language emerges. Consider also whether it fits any subjects recently taught or topical/current events that may spark interest amongst your students. Alternately, you may wish to look for songs among online resources that fit into the subject area you wish to explore. The theme should almost certainly be the primary concern when choosing a suitable song.

Mood

Think about what mood the song evokes and plan associated activities with such things in mind. In our busy and stress-filled world, students may well appreciate the idea of sitting back and letting the music soak into them. Such activities can have linguistic outputs too - such as conjuring up adjectives that describe the mood of the song or drawing pictures of things the song brings to mind. This might work best with instrumental pieces such as classical, ambient, electronica or with music specifically made for meditational purposes.

Is the accompanying video needed?

Consider whether to employ the song's video or not. Perhaps the video sets the scene well, but maybe it doesn't and actually detracts from the song. Maybe the video works better with the sound down as some kind of lead-in for a closer analysis of the song. I strongly believe, however, that it is a fallacy that students always need a visual element when using this resource.

Order and staging

Think about what you are going to do with the song and in what order. Consider at what point you are going to get students to listen to the song, at what stage is it best to introduce the lyrics and when (and if) you are going to use the video? Instead of following any particular formula though, you should let the individual song and your teaching experience guide you to the activities that suit, and to the staging of these activities. Having said all this, staging is ultimately trial and error, so be prepared to learn from instances of use that went well as well as those that did not.

Linguistic possibilities

Think about what linguistic possibilities emanate from the song chosen. Are there any particular lexical sets in the lyrics, for example, that could be focused on? Are there any interesting tense uses? What about areas of pronunciation/phonetics that emerge? Ultimately, you need to decide what stands out linguistically from the song chosen and then what best to do with it.

Control the activities

Be prepared to be the boss (we could even say the *maestro!*) when using this resource, that is to say, practitioners need to exert some control over the activities, setting firm rules for what is done and when it is done. If your students just whip out their phones for the video and the lyrics this may invalidate future activities and thus, they may not be discovering the full wealth of possibilities inherent in the songs being used. However, ensure that you come over as more of a music freak than a control freak!

Be student-focused.

Take time to brainstorm ideas to suit *your students*. Thinking about what activities *they* will like and what activities will challenge *them*. You should also spend time thinking about how you can adapt what's in the song to your regular teaching style as well as your student's hopes and expectations.

Exude confidence

Use songs with confidence. Remember you are doing something your students will love and will also find memorable. Don't forget – songs are a fantastic text type with real pedagogic purposes. It just seems that in ELT/EFL we have disconnected with them in recent years – this is at least partially due to a formulaic approach evidenced through factors like the excessive use of gap-fill style activities.

As with doing anything worthwhile in ELT, producing materials from this resource takes time and effort. It may be thought that doing justice to a song and making the most of what it has to offer is easy but it is not - if it were, surely there would be more than just a handful of quality examples out there.

What might be helpful at this stage is if we break down ways of making our own quality materials, particularly concentrating on what to focus on as regards to skills.

Reading

Are the song's lyrics the only opportunity for practising reading skills? Well, they certainly shouldn't be. Other options exist such as finding or making your own reading texts – it actually doesn't take that long and it's worth remembering such resources are often reusable.

Writing

Don't make written activities emanating from songs overly long and boring. *Any* writing practice can be considered valid, even if just taking notes or brainstorming. Longer or more detailed writing activities could be implemented for homework or research to avoid affecting the flow of the lesson.

Speaking

Lots of spoken discussion should emanate from songs. In order to facilitate this, topics should be real, meaningful ones that could include focusing on personal issues, current issues and, if deemed appropriate to the cultural framework you are teaching within, or social justice related issues.

Listening

Finding appropriate listening texts is in theory quite a tough call. However, podcasts are plentiful nowadays, TED talks might well work and YouTube is always a possibility for additional related listening material. The main listening source though should always be the song itself. Try to use listening activities in different ways and for different purposes, focus on global listening sure, but also break things down – for detailed phonetic analysis - see below. Don't expect students to understand everything they hear – it doesn't work like that. And don't forget to *go beyond the gap fill.* Indeed try to avoid using gap-fills entirely.

Phonetics

Whilst very important, there is much more to phonetics than just phonetic sounds. Focusing on accent, pronunciation and connected speech are all activities that can, and should, be exploited. It is worth employing a phonetic chart such as that below produced for *Teaching Tracks, Top Ten* (www.teachingtracks.co.uk) to aid with the complexity of the English phonetic sound system.

Grammar

Analysing grammar *in-situ* i.e. dealing with whatever comes up when it comes up, is possibly the most suitable technique. Remember though that grammar is much more than just verb tenses.

Vocabulary

The most obvious focus for lexis within songs is also *in-situ*. Focus, for example, could be given to the lexical sets that emanate from the topic/s within the song, as well as a host of other possibilities.

To sum up, I would encourage practitioners to explore the wealth of possibilities that this resource offers. Songs are a great way to educate and enlighten learners of all levels, abilities, and backgrounds but not just in relation to language. They are also an ideal way to study the diverse perspectives of others so that a rounded picture of the world is offered through the eyes of our greatest educators - songwriters.

PostScript.

Theorists have a great deal to say on the use of this resource including cultural aspects which due to length have not been included here. For those who are interested in a summation of such thoughts, I would suggest consulting articles of mine such as *On (or off) Song?* https://www.hltmag.co.uk/apr19/on-or-off-song or *Express Yourself* - an article in the book *English for 21st Century Skills* (Express Publishing).

"REAL OR FAKE – ARE YOU MEDIA LITERATE?"

A Report by Jelena Spasić, ELTA Serbia Representative

I remember when I first applied to be the ELTA Serbia representative at the 28th HUPE Conference in April 2020 – it was a rainy November day and I imagined myself looking through a window of the beautiful Valamar hotel in Poreč, enjoying the sun rays reflecting over the dazzling Adriatic Sea of my childhood, and listening to the cheerful chattering of my colleagues as I rummage through the papers for my presentation. I dreaded the long and tiresome journey but was excited at the possibility to meet dear friends from all over, listen to renowned speakers from the ELT field, share ideas and experiences, and talk about the topic that was going to be the study subject of my Fulbright TEA program at the beginning of 2020.

Little did I know. The year 2020 came with a blast and changed everything for so many of us. Still, some things cannot change – the will and the desire to continue working, teaching, meeting and learning. As many other planned events, the 28th HUPE Conference went online and brought about all of the above imagery apart from one – there was not an actual hotel window to look through. Instead, we had a virtual one filled with numerous workshops, talks and presentations covering a wide range of topics. Around 150 participants got together on three consecutive Saturdays to share not only ideas and expertise but also to have fun and spread hope during the 28 (how symbolical) presentations.

I had my workshop on the third Saturday of the conference and it was my first time presenting at an online conference. During February and March 2020 I spent 6 amazing weeks at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio, the USA. I was part of the Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement (TEA) Program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. This prestigious program brings together teachers from around the world to attend academic seminars for professional development at host universities, observe and teach classes at local secondary schools and share expertise with teachers and students. For me, the program was a great opportunity to visit the USA for the first time and see firsthand the way teenagers and students are being educated. I have to admit that I was extremely satisfied with the program and everything that I learnt and experienced during my stay there.

The workshop "Real or Fake – Are You Media Literate?" is the result of the Media Literacy academic seminar that I attended at KSU and is intended for teenagers and their teachers. Media literacy, is generally defined as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms", is becoming more and more important for teenagers since they are exposed to a huge amount of information from a vast array of sources – social media, text messages, memes, viral videos, games, advertising (plus of course TV, radio, newspapers although they are not that important for teenagers). The statistics are overwhelming: American teenagers (13- to 18-year-olds) spend an average of about 6 hours on entertainment media, excluding time spent at school or for homework. Tweens (8- to 12-year-olds) use an average of about 4 hours of entertainment media daily. Regardless of the media, teenagers need to understand the importance of always asking themselves the questions of who created a piece of news they are sharing and why. Media literacy is tricky to teach and learn and the workshop proposes several, hopefully interesting, activities.

The first activity involves watching a short video (https://tinyurl.com/y4x4rvhh) about media literacy and writing down five key questions one needs to ask oneself when coming across different types of media. Once the students have the questions written, you can give them a new task

– compose a tweet of 280 characters (up to 55 words) with a piece of fake or real news, but when writing a tweet they have to keep in mind those five previously mentioned questions. Finally, the students read the tweets and discuss whether the shared news is real or fake.

The next activity can be done either online in Jamboards or in a classroom with simple pieces of papers – the teacher distributes the papers with the key words and the students need to put them under the correct heading, along the way discussing why some pieces of news are considered to be informing or propaganda.

Informing	Propaganda
Report	Appeal
Knowledge (to learn)	Influence
Enlightenment	Campaign
To describe an event	Advertising
Communication	Suggestion
Objectivity	Judgmental
	Convincing/ Persuasive
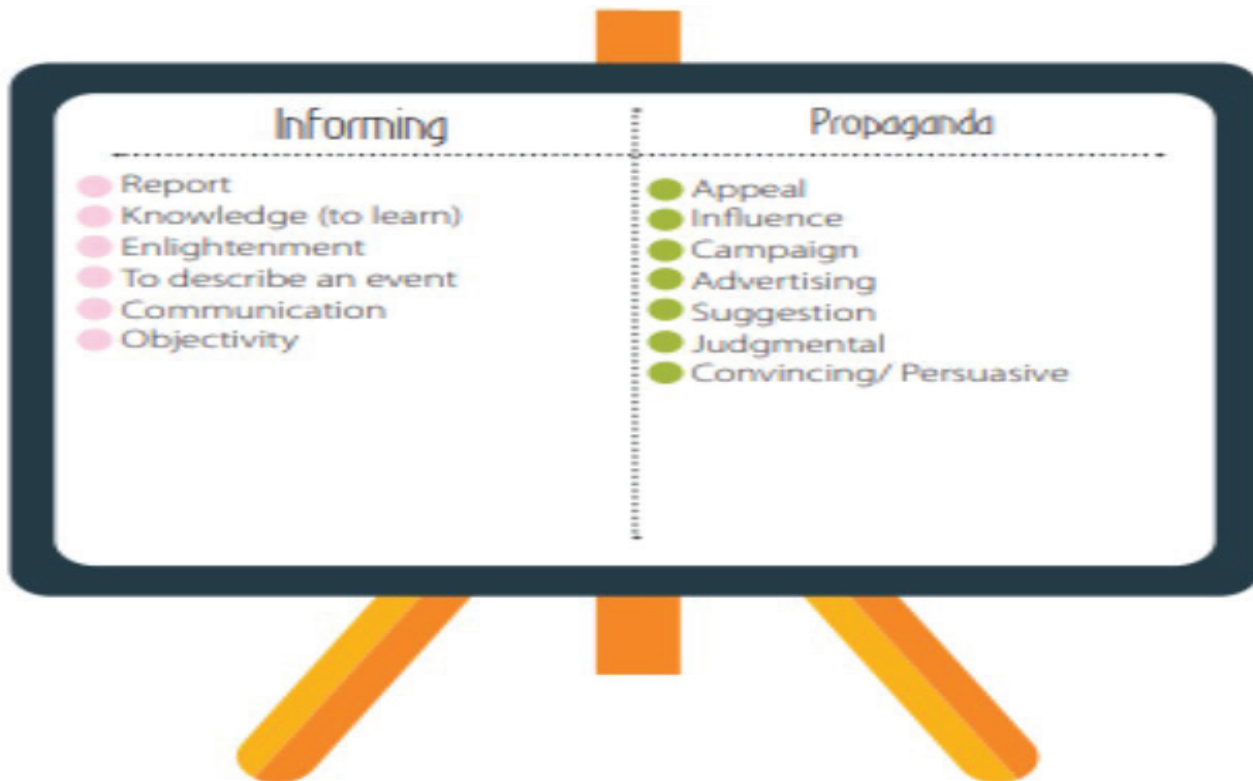
After the discussion, you can watch another short video (https://tinyurl.com/yy6wmkpq) which explains how false news is spread. Why is this important? Because:

• 31% of kids who shared a news article online later found out it was inaccurate or wrong.

• 22 million young people will be eligible to vote in 2021 and we need to prepare those young people to be critical consumers of the news.

Hopefully, these activities will clarify why it is important for teenagers to distinguish between informing news and propaganda. However, it is also important to help them develop critical thinking and provide an insight into how easy it is to manipulate the truth and spread misinformation. And what better way to do so, than to play a game which I wholeheartedly recommend: https://www.getbadnews.com/#intro. The goal of the game is to get as many followers as possible while building up bogus credibility, trying not to disappoint your supporters or tell obvious lies. The game is a lot of fun with a whole raft of discussions and persuasions, and I enjoyed playing it with my students every time.

The 28th HUPE Conference was a great event indeed and I am rooting for the next conference to

be a real one in a nice hotel right on the Adriatic coast. But even if it is not, count me in. ☺

A short bio

Jelena Spasic holds an MA in English Language and Literature and works as an English language teacher in a private foreign languages school "Oxford School" in Leskovac. She deeply believes in continuing professional development and has taken part in numerous conferences, Erasmus+ projects and seminars. She is a teacher trainer and an author/co-author of several workshops and accredited seminars. In 2020, she was one of the two teachers from Serbia that were chosen for the Fulbright Teachers in Excellence and Achievement Program. She is a nature lover, a bookworm and a movie buff with a secret passion for writing. She likes to travel and explore different countries and towns, along the way trying to contemplate upon diverse human nature through writing.

TEACHING LANGUAGE STRUCTURES THROUGH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Evelina and Sara Miščin

Introduction

When speaking about language teaching, grammar has always been the area which caused most disputes regarding its teaching. Wilkins (1976) mentions that in the 1970s language teaching syllabuses were organised in terms of grammatical structures, where grammatical rules were taught with controlled practice exercises.

However, sociolinguists such as Austin, Widdowson and Del Hymes (Norrington-Davies, 2016:16) insisted that language should be taught more naturally as its main purpose is to communicate.

Therefore, the aim of this workshop was to show some of the ways that grammar could be taught implicitly, particularly the areas which cause most problems to our students – that is, Indirect Questions, Conditional Clauses and the Present Perfect.

We started the workshop by asking teachers to finish the sentence 'When I think of grammar, I think of…' and we got something interesting answers from teachers which included a variety of emotions ranging from hatred to love. We also showed the answers obtained from the students – like 'I think of rules and tenses', 'I get bored', 'I think of my middle school teacher's pink pen crossing my mistakes', 'I am stressed' and so on which shows that with both teachers and students grammar provokes strong feelings, some of which are positive, but most are definitely negative.

In our research on grammar teaching, we have stumbled upon some interesting statements that we have decided to present to you and wanted to hear your opinion. The first one was 'Grammatical input helps learners fine-tune what they want to say' (Norrington-Davies, 2016). In our experience, students frequently ask whether a native speaker would understand their ungrammatical sentence and when we say 'Yes', they are willing to give up on learning grammar. However, we should emphasise that grammar is there to convey their message clearly and to avoid potential misunderstandings. One of the examples comes from English in air traffic control – 'We are at take-off' and 'We are taking off', where misuse of the sentence can lead to fatal accidents and in this case, grammar does really save lives.

Another statement was 'Grammar can help students use lexis more effectively' (ibid., p.21/22). It refers to semantically related words – for example, expel, release, discharge, check out. Not only do these words use different collocations, but the difference in use among these words can be explained in grammatical patterns, colligations. The first three verbs are used in a passive form (He was expelled from school. He was released from prison. He was discharged from the hospital) while the last one is used in an active form (He checked out of the hotel).

The last statement we used was 'Some students want to focus on grammar' (ibid., p. 24/25). If you teach in a high school, the most important thing for students is the Matura exam and since the beginning of the 4th grade the most frequent question is "Will that be on our Matura exam?". So, in order to avoid losing their interest, everything becomes a question on Matura. However, luckily or unluckily for some, there are no tasks on the Matura exam that explicitly test the knowledge of certain grammatical structures which would perhaps imply that there is no need to teach it explicitly as well. But when we think of it, there is something even more difficult on their exam. At the end of the reading part of the exam, grammar is tested without out students even noticing it – some of the structures that can be found regularly are conditionals, Perfect tenses, and relative clauses, so there is actually a significant need of teaching grammar in order for them to successfully pass the exam.

The never-ending question is if it should be taught implicitly or explicitly. All of the participants of this

workshop agreed that, as always in life, it should be a combination of both. Therefore, we wanted to show some of the activities for the implicit use of grammar.

Indirect questions

The first activities were connected with Indirect questions. A dialogue in Indirect speech from 'Forward 2' (2020) was shown where husband and wife discuss the questions their talented 9-year-old son, who was successful in painting, had been asked at the TV interview. The participants were supposed to change it into Direct questions to get the exact questions that were asked. Some of the answers we got were: "How old is Kieron?", "Are you surprised by the success of his paintings?", etc.

Reported speech

The usual mistake in reported questions that students make is keeping the same word order as in the direct speech. That is why the next activity proves to be particularly useful. The participants were divided into three groups with different tasks. The first group is at the doctor's office – a patient is English and has some stomach problems. The doctor cannot speak English, so the nurse has to do the interpreting.

In the second group, there are three persons – mum, class master and a daughter who is waiting outside of the school. The daughter was cheating at the exam and the class master called her mum. Mum has to explain to the daughter what the class master said.

The third group is at the pub. There are three persons – a girl, a boy and a bartender. The girl is Scottish, and the boy likes the girl but can't speak English. The bartender translates for him. This group's task was embraced the most enthusiastically by the participants who invented a very creative storyline for the three characters.

Present Perfect/Past Simple

Furthermore, we approached the topic of tenses and the second group of activities dealt with the difference in the use of Present Perfect/Past Simple. The participants were asked questions about places they have/haven't visited, the food they have or haven't tried and the things they have/haven't done. When they mention a place/food/things, they have to be interrupted by other participants and asked questions like 'When were you there? When did you eat it? When did you do it?' For example, one of the participants said she had eaten frogs so the other wanted to know more details by asking her questions like 'When did you eat frogs? What was it like?' and similar questions.

Conditionals

The last group of activities involved conditionals. Participants were again divided into three groups with different situations.

The first group is in a hot air balloon which is losing height rapidly and will soon crash because it is overweight. The people in the balloon are: a doctor, a president, a teacher, an influencer and an IT expert. One of them has to jump. People have to explain their importance and why they should stay on board using 'If I…'.

In the second group, Jessie and Brain are two students who applied for the college of architecture. Jessie was diligent and passed the entrance exam while Brian was lazy and failed. Brian is sad and speaks to Jessie about his past regrets. Therefore, the participants had to invent a dialogue again using 'If I…'.

In the third group, mark lost his passport at the airport and missed his flight. He was so desperate but then he met Susan. They fell in love and several months later, got married. The participants had to make sentences about how things could have been different.

Conclusion

The general opinion is that grammar should be taught implicitly the majority of the time, but that sometimes explicit explanations of grammar structures are necessary and indeed what students are asking for. However, grammar shouldn't be a goal in itself. The focus should be communication and grammar should be acquired through student-to-student negotiation about language through pair and group work.

The abovementioned activities could help students adopt grammatical forms without being explicitly aware of the rules. Still, there should be a balance between the explicit and implicit teaching of grammar. We emphasise the usage of texts and authentic materials, as well as the development of strategies and learner autonomy, which should be in focus.

References:

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TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING IN THE ESL CLASSROOM: DEVELOPING LITERACY ACROSS MEDIA

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At a time when the digital landscape is rapidly advancing, a major challenge in education is the development and teaching of literacy. Since interaction with digital technologies changes the way we work, play and communicate, thus it changes the pattern of intellectual development. Contemporary digital learners want to be engaged and play an active role in the learning process, therefore it is the teacher's task to challenge the traditional definition of literacy, which can no longer be limited to a critical analysis of media content.

Media and literacy

While connecting media and literacy, it is important to distinguish between terminologies related to certain forms of distribution of media content. Multimedia refers to one story that has different forms on one media channel, while transmedia refers to one narrative world, which unfolds a story world on different media channels. Ideally, each medium makes its unique contribution to the development of the story for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated experience. In this context, transmedia literacy can be understood as a set of skills, practices, values, learning strategies and content sharing strategies in the context of a new participatory culture.

Why storytelling?

Storytelling is considered to be an innately human activity, and as a fundamental element of human communication, it is used to make sense of the world around us. Stories are the basis of all human cultures, the primary means by which shared experiences are structured and understood and also they are our natural tendency to organize information and a way to make life meaningful. Contemporary storytelling through a variety of digital communication channels, enables participation in the narrative in a powerful and original way. As such it is becoming an addition to the school curriculum, since it is an excellent method for developing media literacy as well as digital literacy. Creating an environment for transmedia learning fosters experiential learning that requires engagement and turns students from passive to active participants in the teaching process. Students are actively using digital tools, but are also becoming culturally engaged, developing creative thinking and problem-solving skills.

Transmedia projects

Working with an authentic literary text

During the class, students read and interpreted Tom Hanks' short story *Welcome to Mars*, which was chosen as a literary text because of its authentic language and the plot where a teenager discovers that his father is seeing another woman. Due to the story's open ending and the main character's mixed feelings, the story evokes a strong emotional and moral response. After linguistic analysis and interpretation of the story, students were given the task of developing the story by selecting a suitable digital platform that includes image, sound, animation, etc., and to change one aspect of the original story through the perspective of the main or supporting character or via a different ending to the story. Students' digital works were assessed by using the Transmedia Narrative Rating Scale. To create transmedia extensions of the story, students used various applications: Instagram, Facebook, Diary, Diaro, Microsoft Paint, Strip Generator, Notebook, WattPad, Daybook, Pinterest, Ditty, Power Point and so on. While completing the transmedia assignment, students were provided with space for using digital tools to manipulate images and texts in an uncontrolled and dynamic process, thus creating an environment where they developed their socio-pragmatic competences by communicating creatively while using extracurricular digital language and expressing themselves to a wider audience.

Writing for an online newspaper

Students wrote a traditional form of news stories which they then developed by including features of transmedia texts (expanding the original story, engaging the audience, using digital tools). Students created their stories and posted them on the Padlet platform where a board was created for their posts so that later on they could comment on each other's stories. The participatory feature of transmedia texts was highlighted in this part of the assignment since the students engaged in discussions related to the news story.

USA presidential mock election project 2020

The project was carried out in association with the Croatian American Society (CAS). The aim of the project was to learn about the election process and the voting system in the USA as well as to compare the elections in Croatia and the USA. The size of the school determined which school is the largest state in terms of delegates and which school is the smallest.

The project consisted of two parts: information week and voting week where 36 schools from Croatia participated. Various digital tools and sources were used to prepare the students to vote and acquire new vocabulary related to the election process such as: Actionbound, Padlet, Mentimeter, Instagram, Facebook, online newspapers and YouTube links. The most interesting and engaging tasks for students were to create a post as the presidential candidate and as a supporter of one of them. During the voting week, official ballot papers were printed out and inserted into the ballot box which the students really enjoyed. All students involved in the project learned detailed information about the USA election system, democracy, political candidates, important issues, political parties, but also how to deal with fake news and the final results of the election.
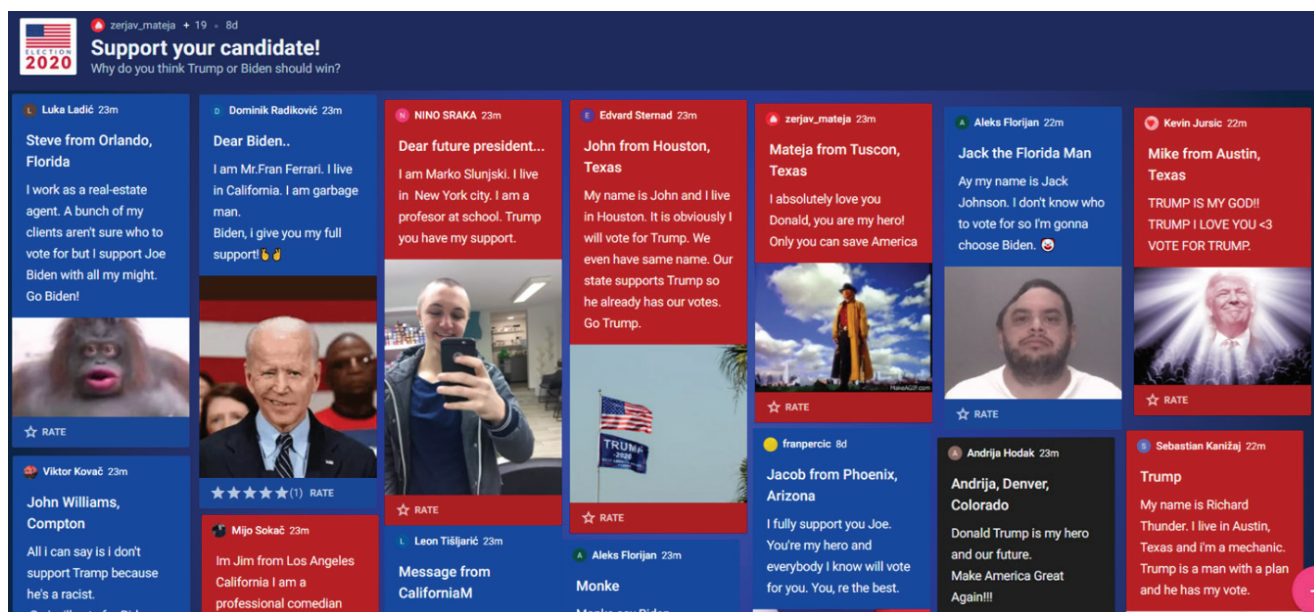
In the modern processes of convergence and digitalization, the use of digital tools and the sharing of information and communication through applications is part of a participatory culture that takes into account the characteristics of adolescent audiences who are no longer interested in one-way communication platforms. Transmedia literacy of teenagers is a prerequisite for success, not only in education and their future jobs but also in their communication skills. Developing a single story through multiple communication and information platforms opens up numerous opportunities to improve transmedia literacy. Since our students are experienced recipients of transmedia narratives such as *Harry Potter*, *Game of Thrones* or *Star Wars*, they are also skillful producers of creative digital content. Therefore, transmedia storytelling projects are a valuable tool in teaching a foreign language because they combine working on developing students' language competencies by using digital tools but they also foster the development of the main skills for success in the digital and networked world: creativity, innovation, problem-solving and productivity.

ONE PIECE OF PAPER

Karen White

Have you ever found yourself in the situation where you've had a wonderful lesson prepared using a DVD player or CD player only to find that the equipment doesn't work or isn't available? Do you need a lesson with little preparation that can be used both in the classroom and suddenly online? Do you need a break from spending hours preparing online lessons? Have you ever had to suddenly take over a class without having any time to prepare? The following ideas were spontaneously developed after I was faced with the last situation mentioned.

The ideas can be used in the classroom and online.

First of all, the students need a piece of A4 paper which they should divide into four, six or eight squares, depending on the size of drawing needed. Then the paper should be cut or torn so that each student has 4 – 8 pieces of paper. On each square of paper, they should draw an object. If doing the activity online or in a classroom where the students have to distance, the pieces of paper need to be larger and a darker colour felt-pen should be used for the drawings. These drawings are then used for the following activities.

Making stories

1. The students mix up their pieces of paper and place them face down on the table.
   Student 1 takes their top piece, turns it over and starts a story with the first picture. Student 2 continues the story with their top picture and so on.
   If picking up the pictures at random is too difficult for your students, get them to spread the pictures face up on the table. Then they can choose which picture they want to use next for their part of the story.
   Alternately, each student could choose their favourite drawing or drawings, so that each pair or group has 6 – 10 pictures for their story. These can then be used in any order. This is much more interesting than any picture story in a workbook.
   If you want to make it even more difficult, the students could be asked to put their objects in alphabetical order and then use them in this order for a story.

   The story could also be recorded on mobile phones or written down.

2. Another way in which you can use the drawings is to make dialogues. The pieces of paper are again mixed and placed face down on the table.

Student 1 takes the first piece and makes a sentence about the object drawn.
The other students have to ask questions.
For example: if the drawing is a cup, the first student might make the sentence: I drank a cup of coffee yesterday. The other students could ask questions such as: Did you put sugar in it? Where did you drink it? Did you drink just one cup?
The first student answers the questions.

Practising grammar

1. To practise various tenses, the students put the pictures they have drawn in a pile face down. The first student takes their top piece of paper, turns it over and makes a sentence in the tense being practised. The next student makes the sentence negative and the third makes it into a question. The fourth student has to answer the question.

2. To practise how different tenses are formed, the first student takes a picture and makes a sentence about it in the present simple. The next student repeats the sentence in the past simple and the next student in the present perfect etc.
   This is more fun than an exercise in the workbook because the students are making their own sentences with their own drawings. You will find that some students make up some very creative or funny sentences.

3. To practise asking questions, the students put the pictures they have drawn in a pile face down. The first student takes their top piece of paper, turns it over and makes a question to ask their partner or someone in the group. The other students do the same.
   Depending on the level of the students, they can use any tense they have learnt or you could decide which tense(s) they should use.

4. The drawings can be used to practise any tense but are especially useful for the past simple / past continuous. The first student takes two pictures from their pile and has to make a sentence using a past continuous form and a past simple form.
   For example: the two drawings are of a cup of coffee and a boat.

A possible sentence could be: I was drinking my cup of coffee when the boat sank!

The great thing about this exercise is that you never know which two drawings you will turn up and so the sentences tend to be far more interesting than those in a workbook.

5. The drawings can also be used for practising comparative and superlative forms.

The students put their pieces of paper face down in two piles. The first student takes a drawing from each pile and compares them. This can really get the students thinking.

To make it even more difficult, the pieces of paper can be put into three piles and compared. The great thing about this activity is that you never know what objects you will have to compare.

Alternately, each student can pick up a piece of paper from their pile and they then compare the two drawings. To make it even more difficult, each student has to compare the two drawings in a different way. For example: the two drawings show a sun and a house. One student could say: the sun is higher in the sky than the house. The second student could say: the sun is warmer than my house.

6. A really challenging activity is to make conditional sentences with the drawings.

The students put their pieces of paper face down in two piles. The first student takes a drawing from each pile and tries to make a conditional sentence with the two drawings.

7. These drawings can be used for practising most points of grammar.

Examples using a picture of a cup of coffee:

adjectives – Describe the object using an adjective. The coffee is hot.

adverbs – Make a sentence about the object and add an adverb. I'm drinking my coffee slowly.

passive – The cup was bought in Italy.

reported speech – Student 1: I drank a cup of coffee yesterday.

Student 2 to student 3: 'Student 1' said that he/she had drunk a cup of coffee the day before.

To really get them thinking!

1. The drawings are put into two piles. The first student takes a piece of paper from each pile. Now the student (or the whole group) has to find the differences between the two objects.

2. As above, but now the student (or the whole group) has to find the similarities between the two objects. This is often more difficult than comparing them.

3. As above, but the student must make a sentence connecting the two pictures.

These activities can produce a lot of fun. Students who may be weak in English but good at drawing, will suddenly find themselves being praised by their colleagues. Others who may have good ideas for stories but can't write in English so well, can also shine in the group as the pictures are discussed. These ideas can be used with all age groups, even adults, and with all levels.

VALAMAR
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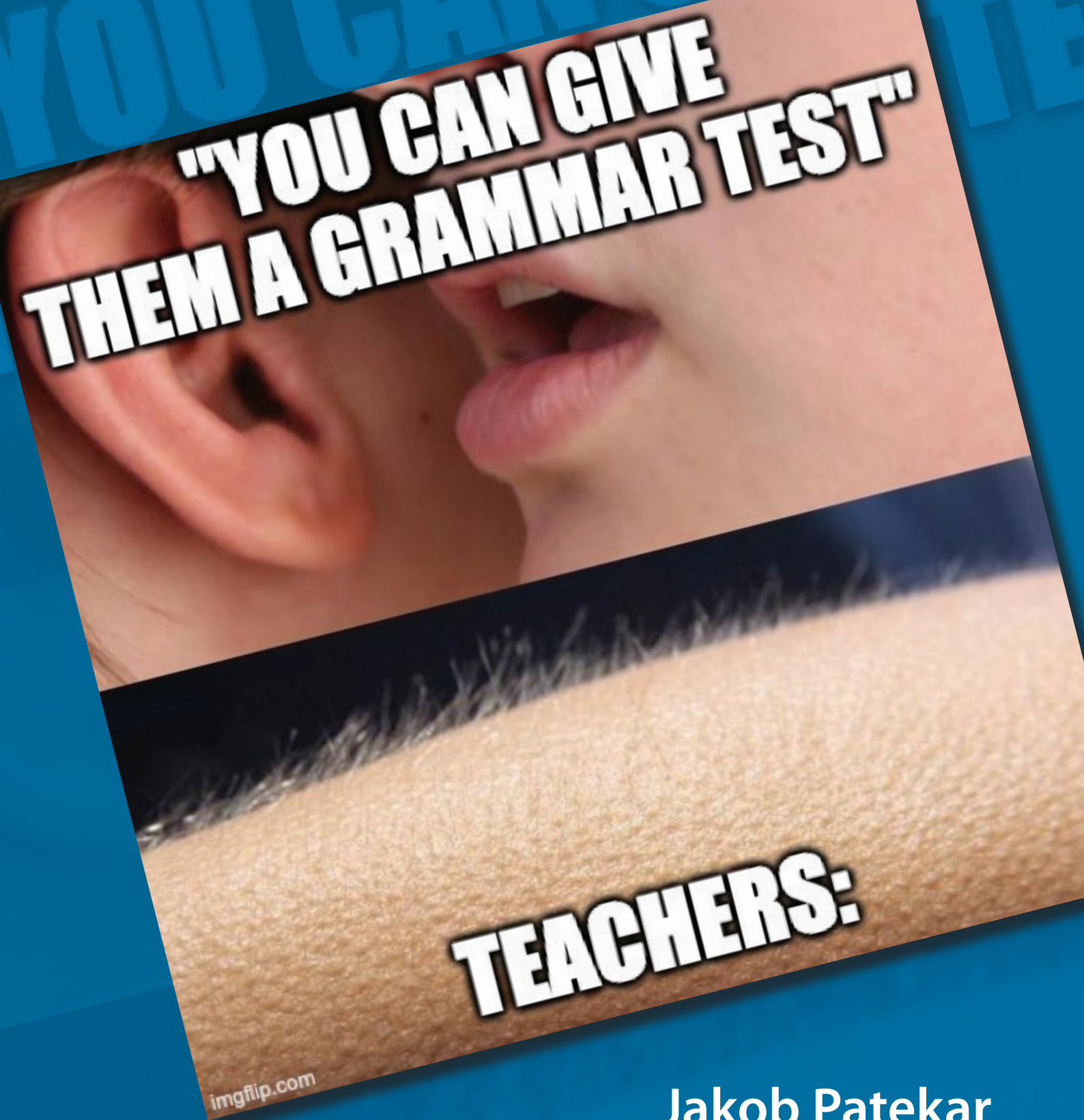
"YOU CAN GIVE THEM A GRAMMAR TEST"

TEACHERS:

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Jakob Patekar

Grammar Love

Grammar Love

Jakob Patekar

"**We want grammar! We want grammar! We want grammar!**", the teachers rioted in the Facebook group for Croatian ELTs in elementary school, incited by the questions about grammar teaching and testing a couple of their peers posted mid-February 2021. "Who took their grammar?" you might wonder. Well, with the new Curriculum of English in 2019, the rubric "language use", or grammar, disappeared from gradebooks, leaving four skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – as the sole elements to be graded. **You can, of course, still assess grammar**. If you want to give students a traditional grammar test, you can assess it formatively. If you want to test grammar summatively, that is, for a grade, you can (and should) do this by having grammar as an element in the criteria in the assessment of any of the four skills. Also, grammar can still be taught in any way it pleases the teacher (hopefully in a way that combines implicit and explicit instruction and the inductive and deductive approach). So, if you want to drill past simple into your students' heads through mindless and decontextualized tasks, so be it. The curriculum developers' rationale for assessing grammar primarily through the four skills was that students will undoubtedly have to show their grammatical competence (as well as other linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences) through these skills. This was and is, understandably, a tectonic change for numerous teachers, **a paradigm shift** if you will.

The main argument provided by the majority of teachers crying out for testing grammar is that **students will not learn it unless it is graded**. This is possibly the worst argument you can make. But let's take a step back. When grammar was indeed an element in the gradebook, many teachers would proudly say that it is the most important element of all four or five, which thus carries the most weight when deciding on the students' final grade. So this one element could drag your grade down in spite of the other three or four elements, which happened often as our students are pretty good at speaking English and not that bad in reading comprehension either. Thus, before 2019, teachers tested grammar vigorously – the majority of tests a student would take in a year were grammar tests – and final grades were in many cases primarily based on students' grammatical competence.

Let us remind ourselves at this point that two of the most popular tests of English language proficiency, IELTS and TOEFL, which are widely used by universities across the world as a reliable and trustworthy indicator of a student's competence in English, **do not test grammar directly**. In fact, these tests show what a student can do and understand in English. If such tests are good enough for Harvard and Cambridge, why aren't they for our teachers? It's not just the international tests. It's the **schools across the world** that assess their students' knowledge of foreign languages through the four skills: Denmark, Norway, Sweden, just to mention a few countries whose citizens rank high on the worldwide English proficiency index.

When some time ago I talked to my mentor about our teachers' obsession with grammar, trying to understand where this need to test it incessantly comes from, she had one word to say: power. **Grammar is power**. We were taught by grammar-focused (if not grammar-obsessed) teachers, and many of us had to memorize Quirk by heart in university (I kid you not). We know grammar. We know how to explain the rules, we know how to make a grammar test, and we know how to grade a grammar test – which is probably the easiest and most straightforward thing to do when it comes to assessment. Grammar is power because we know the rules and students don't. We feel at home with grammar. Grammar is our comfort zone, our go-to place. But you know what, grammar will not help you out there in the world, as I learned the hard way in the United States, Ireland, Kenya, Australia… What would've helped me was being more familiar with culture and the varieties of English. Grammar will rarely be the cause of a communication breakdown. In fact, studies with people from English-speaking countries have shown that what they find to be the most serious errors, that is, those that affect understanding the most, are lexical mistakes – not grammar mistakes. In other words, **native speakers care more about word choice** as opposed to grammar structures.

Let's get back to that half-baked argument we left in the second paragraph. If your students don't want to learn grammar because it's not going to be on the graded test, then **you have yourself a bigger problem**, and that is your students' motivation and their (mis)understanding of their roles in assessment. Saying that we should test grammar because otherwise it won't be learnt is like saying we should give candy to kids when they're being nice to each other, or otherwise they wouldn't do it. **Intrinsic motivation is key** in many, many long-term efforts, and numerous studies have shown that this is the case with language learning as well. Extrinsic motivation,

on the other hand, especially in the form of grades, has been shown to be **detrimental to the development** of competencies of different sorts. Just look at the flood of straight-A students in Croatia across all subjects – this happens because the students' parents are focused on the numbers, and not on knowledge or skills. We need to move away from this, and not pander to it by saying that students will not learn what is not graded. The paradigm needs to change, and we're the ones who have to do it. Motivating students is difficult, especially in high school, but it's not impossible. There is a reason why teaching is **one of the hardest jobs** in the world – we need to be skilled at so many things that it often becomes too much to handle, so we fall back on what we know best, what takes little effort, and that is grammar and teaching to the textbook. I completely understand this – I've done it many

a time. But if you think about it, teaching and testing grammar is so simple that a robot could replace you, not thirty years into the future, but today.

But let's for a moment entertain the notion that grammar as an element needs to find its way back into the gradebook and become, as my friend would say, **the fifth element**. If you, dear reader, are of this opinion, may I ask you, what makes grammar deserve this special status in relation to the other **twelve elements of communicative competence** as outlined in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Companion Volume* (see Chart 1 below)? What is the criteria you use to justify that grammar of all these elements deserves to have its special rubric in the gradebook? If you have a good answer, then by all means, let's bring grammar grades back.
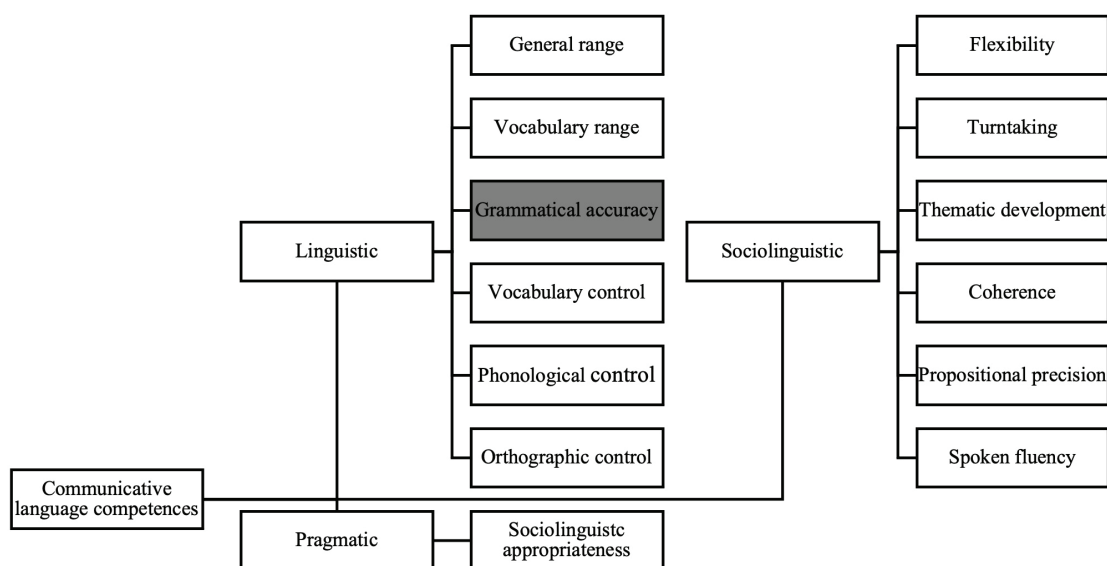
Chart 1. Communicative language competences, adapted from *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Companion Volume with Descriptors* (2018), my emphasis.

Designing communicatively-oriented tasks that target specific grammar items is no easy work. **The endeavor is daunting**, in fact. But it is daunting only if you are the only one doing it. Connecting with other teachers through ŽSV or HUPE, working as a team, would've made the whole thing much easier. Our group will make a communicatively oriented test for past simple, and yours will do it for future will. They'll do it for passive, we'll do it for the second conditional. Collaboration is key here, but it seems to be missing. Were you given sufficient training in designing communicatively-oriented tests? No. This is a major flaw in the system. But this doesn't mean that we must immediately go back to how things were because no one spoonfed us the solutions. Going back would mean **taking the path of least resistance**.

Communicative competence is so much more than the knowledge of grammar. English is huge – all the varieties, all the cultures, so many stories to hear and read, so many

songs to listen to and movies to watch, and discussions to have. And that is what counts – enabling students to **connect with other people no matter where they come from**. This is what English does. Being familiar with different customs, expressions, collocations, idioms will do wonders, while the ability to distinguish past simple from past perfect will matter little for the majority of our learners. They should still learn it, of course. And don't worry, those who want to know more will still have to memorize Quirk in university.

If you disagree completely with what I wrote here, that's okay – it's not easy to let go of the past, especially if you remember it fondly. But I ask you to try to entertain, if only for a moment, the idea that despite all the challenges it is possible to do things differently and still get great results. That perhaps, after all, it is possible to teach English without putting a grade on a grammar test.

Pushed Into Ted Talking

Lidija Šaravanja, Ph.D

One of my favourite students' activities in English language teaching / learning is speaking. The reasons for my affection are numerous, some of them are obvious, some reveal themselves only after some time and some retrospection. Regardless of the level of the language acquisition, speaking activities (as it should be) most often go along with a dynamic, motivating, encouraging and controlled atmosphere. Even though some unexpected unpleasant situations can come out from time to time (shy, insecure students, gap making, performing less than expected etc.), it is generally pleasant watching students make progress from one stage of learning to another. Of course, the pleasurable connotation is possible only in supportive, secure surroundings in which students feel safe and are not criticized beyond what they can handle. Being able to observe the progress revealed in spoken language is satisfying to a teacher because what else is more authentic than speaking when the question 'Do you speak English?' appears.

In this paper, I will try to present a speaking activity assigned to my primary school students in grade eight as well as support my choice of the activity referring to some relevant authors (Swain, Givon, Yang and Gernsbacher). The primary aims were to encourage my students to use vocabulary and grammatical features while practicing fluency, give them feedback for their speaking accomplishments and reflect on the aims I have set for them in the teaching process. Prior to commenting on the reasons, I will describe the way the task was introduced to the students.

Due to the lockdown, all the lessons and other school activities were organized online at the time. After doing all phases of the lesson on sports, which is a part of our school curriculum, my students were given a presentation about Ted talk. Ted talks and podcasts are short speeches on a subject one chooses supported with video content, which means that a speaker can use visual (and audio) background suitable for their topic and purposes. Since a great number of my students know about these terms and listen to such talks in their free time, this activity seemed like a good idea to motivate them to do their best. I made the presentation myself, bearing in mind the profile of my students and tried to avoid any possible misconceptions. The presentation introduces the notion of a Ted talk step-by-step, stressing some key ideas like *strong points, amazement with the topic, engaging talk, less familiar issues* etc. A lot of examples are used, some ideas are additionally explained with simpler constructions and expressions, while some are translated into mother tongue. Students were, as usual, invited to ask for more information or clarifications if necessary. The steps I asked my students to take are the following: choosing a theme they find very interesting and they know a lot about; writing down a couple of ideas they want to represent; doing a little research to find relevant information on the topic; thinking about the audience and planning how to address them (the class and the teacher) and motivate them to listen attentively; preparing slides with appropriate illustrations; rehearsing the speech and finally recording the speech and posting it in the class group. The activities that followed these steps were feedback activities. One of the ways of supporting my students was providing some representative Ted talks on similar yet different topics concerning sports in general, football in particular and reading. The talks I chose for them are available on YouTube, they can be watched at: bit.ly/SportBodyBrain, bit.ly/SportSport, bit.ly/FootballPhysics and bit.ly/ReadingMagic. When it comes to language, students were expected to use the known vocabulary (there was also specific vocabulary input throughout the lesson about sport, they were particularly encouraged to use it). Furthermore, having reached the end of primary education, where some language structures were learned cyclically, students were expected to be ready to give a prepared speech on a given topic using both proper vocabulary and grammar. Besides the thorough instructions, I provided them with a peer review chart and the rubrics I would use to assess their speeches. These guidelines for the process of preparation were supposed to aim the activities in the right direction. Students evaluated one another's speeches, answering eight questions. Seven questions were in the form of statements. They had to evaluate them on a scale from 1 to 5. There was one open question that was obligatory. The statements were: 1 The talk is clear and easy to understand. 2 It is interesting to listen to it. 3 The language used is correct. 4 I understand the points made in the talk. 5 The talk has the structure – a beginning, the main part and the conclusion. 6 The illustrations are well chosen. 7 I would like to comment on the talk with the speaker. The open question expected a critical approach to other students' talks, asking them how they think the talk could have been more successful. My assessment rubrics referred to fluency, intonation, good usage of vocabulary and grammar.

After giving an insight into how the speaking task was designed, I will reflect on the reasons why such a task was assigned to my class. The main idea was to encourage

students to extend their use of grammatical features and vocabulary. Assessing their speaking skills is also a part of enhancing the learning process. As mentioned earlier in the text, the target vocabulary had already been dealt with and a significant amount of grammatical structures had been cyclically processed. This makes it possible for the output activity (speaking) to become more fluent for the students because they start with what they are already familiar with. Swain (2005:471), distinguishing between learning from the input and learning from the output, says, 'Put most simply, the output hypothesis claims that the act of producing language (speaking and writing) constitutes, under certain circumstances, part of the process of second language learning'. Furthermore, he talks about three functions of output. The first one is noticing function, according to which the effect of learning appears to be far greater when learners notice their mistakes while producing the output rather than when they notice mistakes through the input. This is especially evident in the process of giving feedback. A part of the speaking task I gave my students was listening to other students' talks and assessing them according to rubrics that are previously mentioned in the text. These assessments, together with mine, made them aware of the gaps they were making. Peer review was primarily concerned with fluency, pronunciation, topic, whether or not the points were clear and the talk was easy to listen to and understand. My review handled vocabulary use and grammatical features more than theirs. The second function of output by Swain (2005) is the hypothesis-testing function, which, applied to the Ted talk task, means that students tried out new structures and / or vocabulary / collocations and tested if they were correct or not. The feedback they got from their peers and from me, even though not immediate, either approved of or commented on the parts of speech they tested in the output. This was also a way for the improvement of their speaking skills and language acquisition in general. The third function by Swain (2005) is the metalinguistic or reflective function. This involves communication about the language after the performance. The focus in such communication is on language in use and, again, the purpose is learning the second language.

Throughout my teaching experience, I have been used to preparing the basis for speaking activities, i.e. I will wait until my students have substantial receptive experience and knowledge of the language system before I assign a speaking task. This means that I will probably not push them to produce spoken or written language before I am sure they have processed the necessary vocabulary and structures. According to Givon, Yang and Gernsbacher (1990), learners can only concentrate on one demanding task at a time, and they initially learn vocabulary. Only after vocabulary recognition is largely automated, can they focus their attention on grammar. However, some researchers argue that the knowledge that students need in order to speak will not happen unless they are "pushed" to speak. Students often do not feel ready to speak until they are completely confident about their language skills, but the purpose of language input is for it to become the output. The idea behind it is that transition from language reception to language production does not happen by itself, it requires encouragement and "pushing". The whole range of situations, from a feeling of success when certain parts of speech are being approved of to commenting on mistakes made, contributes to the language acquisition.

This point of view does not imply a lack of preparation or a lack of comfort, acceptance or encouragement for the learners. Regarding the Ted talk task, the students were instructed on how to plan the talk and were given support. They had enough time to think about the given topic and to prepare what to say. They were also able to consult various sources about the topic and about the language they used. They were instructed to rehearse the talk before taping it and check all the assessment rubrics I shared with them. Planning helps language output because a lot of work is done before the speaking, so the performance can be more successful and a learner more confident.

This activity revealed the level of language maturity with my students, but it also addressed issues related to some other educational aspects. Students had to do some research of their own so that they could support their claims with certified information. They had to use their digital competences to make a short video and try out their rhetorical skills to give a speech. They were "pushed" to perform well enough to meet the expectations the task / teacher had set for them.

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TRGOS - an eTwinning School

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eTwinning is a community for schools in Europe. It is a part of Erasmus+, the European programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport. eTwinning is a platform for teachers so that we can communicate, collaborate and share knowledge with other European teachers. The main aim is to develop projects so that the students work in international groups. The teachers and students of Trade and commercial school "Davor Milas" in Osijek have been part of the eTwinning community since 2017 when I attended an eTwinning conference in Vienna.

The conference was held for the participants from the Danube Region. The main aim was to establish new projects between these countries. I was one of the two participants from Croatia. The conference was held at the "Bertha von Suttner Schulschiff" – a school boat with all the facilities a regular school has, and much more. Not only did the school boat have classrooms for designing or crafting, but it also had large sports facilities.

Firstly, we were educated about the eTwinning platform and according to our knowledge and skills, we were divided into groups as there were some experienced eTwinners, as well as new learners. We were later divided into teams after an activity where we expressed our interests as teachers and also the interests of our school. As my school is a trade school, my fellow teachers are interested in economy and entrepreneurship so I teamed up with teachers of similar interests. We made a sketch of our project and on the last day of the conference, we presented our project to the others. Then the project was approved by our national agencies, so we founded the project.

My first project was "21st Century Jobs – Learning and Succeeding Together" in collaboration with teachers from Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia and Turkey. The project lasted for a year and it prepared students for future jobs. It raised their awareness of new types of jobs and the cross-disciplinary and soft skills they needed to develop in order to be successful in their careers. The project aimed at identifying the factors which influenced students' choices. The students also explored the cultural heritage of their countries and conducted a survey about regional jobs which no longer exist. They learned about the present-day labour market and the mobility of people for economic reasons.

Another project founded at the conference was "DANMUN – Model UN for the Danube Region" intended for all the countries from the Danube region: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine. The aim of the project was to foster negotiation, critical thinking, leadership and communication skills.

After these projects, I founded or participated with my students in eight more projects. "The European Day of Languages" was a project in collaboration with partner schools from France, Italy, Poland and Portugal. The students answered the question "Why is it good to be a European citizen?" in English, Spanish, German and Italian with a translation into their mother tongue or English. Then they had to choose an answer from a student from another country and illustrate it. They could make drawings, paintings, photographs, videos... At the end of the project, there were exhibitions held at each school and the main exhibition in France which we followed by video conference. The main result of that project was a successful e-book of all the work.

"A Star Travels Through Europe" was a project in collaboration with partner schools from Armenia, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, North Macedonia, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and Turkey. It was a Christmas project where everything was related to the word "star" – for example, the students wrote poems and made cookies in the shape of a star. The end result was a story written by the students from all the countries about a star that visited all the countries that participated in the project.

"The Colour Of The Feelings" was a project in collaboration with partner schools from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Italy, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey. The main aim of the project was that the students express their feelings freely by drawing, painting, making snow angels, doing art on the smart board etc. It reduced their stress and anxiety level and they develop empathy to understand the feelings of others.

"The Great Debaters" was a project with a partner school from Serbia. The principal of our school founded the debate club so the students learned how to debate. There were a lot of activities related to debating in the project and the final debate between students from different countries was held through video conference.

"Culture and Photography" was a project in collaboration with partner schools from Albania, Greece, Georgia, Moldova, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine. The students learned how to make good photographs and they had a task each month: portraits, winter-themed photographs, black and white photographs, photographs of nature and street photography themed photos. In the end, there was an international collaboration and the students were able to recognize and acknowledge different lifestyles, places and cultures through photography.

"The Effect of Humanistic Words" was a project in collaboration with partner schools from Albania, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey. The project was inspired by experiments with plants. In this project, the students did an experiment with rice. They put rice into two jars and spoke only "good" or positive words to the first one and only "bad" or negative words to the second one. The experiment was designed to determine the effect of such words and to prevent bullying.

"Music in our City" was a project in collaboration with partner schools from Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Moldova, Portugal, Romania, North Macedonia and Ukraine. As I attended "Franjo Krežma"

elementary school in Osijek we decided to present his classical music.

All of these projects were successful so the dissemination was held in the media. All the projects were awarded the National Quality Label by the Croatian Agency for Mobility and Programmes of the European Union. Only projects that receive the National Quality Label in at least two different countries can qualify for the European Quality Label. Three of our projects were recognized at the European level and awarded with the European Quality Label: "21st Century Jobs – Learning and Succeeding Together", "The European Day of Languages" and "Culture and Photography".

Besides these accomplished projects, one of my students became the student eTwinning ambassador under my mentorship. He won the competition by doing the best work on the topic "Diversity". His role was to promote eTwinning for a whole year and to show to his peers why they should also participate in eTwinning projects. We were invited to the Erasmus conference in Zagreb where we celebrated 30 years of that successful programme and to an international eTwinning conference in Poland where he held a lecture and a workshop for teachers from various European countries.

I motivated my principal and fellow teachers to participate in eTwinning conferences so after all these accomplishments our school became an eTwinning school. I presented eTwinning to my colleagues and organized an eTwinning info day at our school. eTwinning teacher ambassador Nataša Ljubić Klemše came to our school to educate teachers about all the possibilities that eTwinning offers.

My students are now actively participating in our tenth project, "School for Life". I created the project to follow the new curriculum. The main aim is that students develop their communicational skills through the use of English and German in everyday situations by working on various topics. The project is cross-curricular and it will last for a whole school year. The project partners come from Poland, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy and Turkey. The students presented themselves, their school, city and country. We exchanged Christmas cards with all the other schools.

We started a new topic – sustainability (in society, environment, economy and culture) as that is this year's main topic on the eTwinning platform. We will address the topic "Our Planet" and its subtopics: weather, natural disasters, climate change, global warming, ecology and recycling.

The students will use various digital tools and work in international groups. As well as developing their communicational and ICT skills, they will also be motivated to learn foreign languages, develop creativity and meet peers from other European countries, as well as their culture and customs.

International Projects in Online Classrooms

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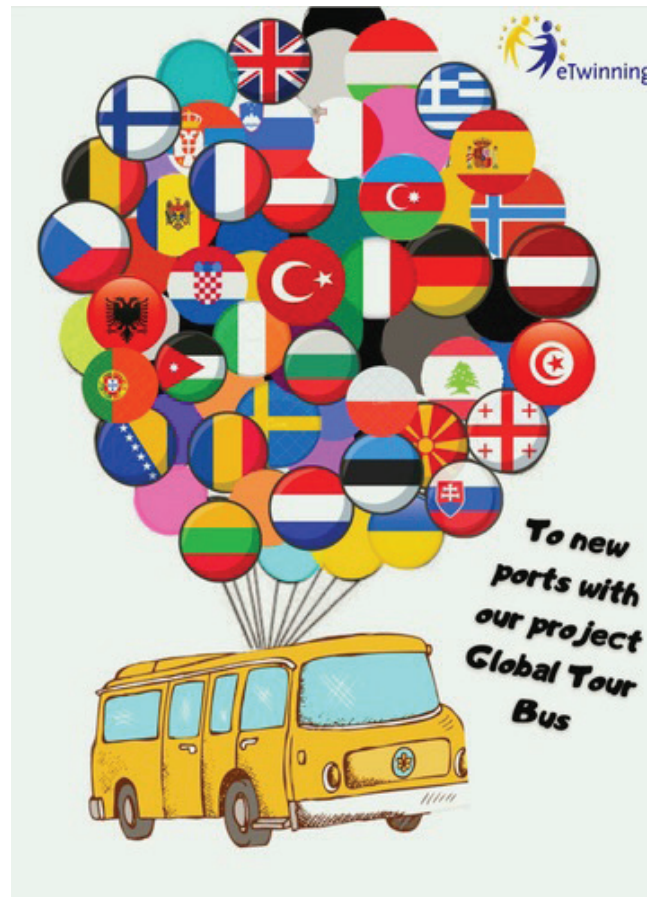marinelaboras@gmail.com

As we are still facing a Covid-19 pandemic and teachers around the world are trying to find new ways of teaching. As most of us are currently teaching online, one of the most successful ways for second language acquisition in the new era is using international projects in the classroom. As there are no mobilities under the Erasmus+ funded projects at the moment, eTwinning is the solution to our problems.

eTwinning is a community for schools in Europe. It is also a part of Erasmus+, the European Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, but all projects are conducted exclusively online. It is a platform for teachers so that we can communicate, collaborate and share knowledge with other European teachers. The main aim is to develop projects so that the students work in international groups and develop their skills.

The teachers and students of the Trade and Commercial school ''Davor Milas'' in Osijek have been part of the eTwinning community for years and we have been successfully working on eTwinning projects. We hold the eTwinning school title and also promote Erasmus+ programmes by organising events, such as eTwinning Info Day and Days of Erasmus.

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„Rukama stvori, srca osvoji."
Europe Volunteers!

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"Music in our City" was a project in collaboration with partner schools from Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Moldova, Portugal, Romania, North Macedonia and Ukraine. As I attended "Franjo Krežma" elementary school in Osijek we decided to present his classical music.

"School for Life" was a project in collaboration with partner schools from Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Poland and Turkey. We founded the project and it followed the new curriculum. The project was cross-curricular and the main aim was that the students develop their communicational skills through the use of English and German in everyday situations by working on various topics.

"Augmented Reality in the Classroom" was an international project about virtual reality with partners from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Georgia, Italy, Jordan, Lithuania, Moldavia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Spain, Turkey, Tunisia and Ukraine. Not just students, but also teachers, learned to use new technologies by using innovative digital tools such as JigSpaces, Merge Cube, Virtual T-shirt, 3D cards, Google 3D view, Quiver and CoSpaces.

All of these projects were successful so the dissemination was held in the media. All the projects were awarded the National Quality Label and some of them with the European Quality Label. We are participating in nine eTwinning projects this year: Europe Volunteers; Global Tour Bus; Me, Myself and I; eTwinninggreen4u; Our Culture is Our Identity; All Days Together; History and Bussiness; Organisms on Money and Croatian Eco-products. All of these projects discuss important topics, such as volunteering, culture, mental health and sustainability. In one of them (Global Tour Bus), teachers and students from 38 countries are actively participating.

"Europe Volunteers" is a project coordinated by our school with participants from different European countries. The main aim of the project is to promote volunteering among young people. The project was inspired by the work of our school's volunteering club "TRGOS". There are not just experienced teachers participating in the project, but also teachers new to the eTwinning platform. Not only students but also teachers gain new skills, among them digital literacy. They were first educated about the eTwinning platform and e-safety, then they presented themselves, as well as their school volunteer clubs. The official logo was chosen and there are numerous monthly activities, which are evaluated by monthly online teacher meetings.

There are numerous benefits of participating in international projects and they are cross-curricular, so they can be adapted to all school subjects. You could see through these examples of good practice that students develop not just their communicational and foreign language skills, but also organisational and IT skills. They learn to work in international teams and they develop their creativity. They gain 21st-century skills needed for "global" students and their future careers. Not only students but also teachers gain a lot from participating in eTwinning projects. We are motivated by other teachers and we also gain the skills needed for teaching future generations.

i-Learning

From an Empty Slide to a Video Lesson

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Believe it or not, last year was a very good year for being creative. If you wonder why, keep reading.

In August 2020, the Ministry of Science and Education started gathering teachers from all over Croatia, giving them the challenging task of making thousands of video lessons from scratch.

As far as the English language is concerned, annual performance curricula were created at the very beginning of September, spanning from the first year of primary to the fourth year of secondary schools.

The working group for English language is divided into two big teams – one preparing lessons for secondary, and the other for primary schools. The latter is further divided into eight smaller teams, each one for a different level. Although teachers create the materials on their own, peer collaboration is crucial. The members support each other by checking the first and all the following drafts as well as the final versions. This is an ongoing process, so busy teachers have been making video lessons on daily basis.

All the lessons are well thought through. They are self-contained units that can be used separately or as a part of a series of lessons under an umbrella topic. They offer the opportunity for an interactive, but rather flexible learning experience.

Each unit is based on the circle curriculum starting with learning outcomes. The tasks are clearly set. Students are encouraged to participate in all the activities. Wherever possible, the four Cs of education are incorporated, allowing students to develop their communication skills, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. Many tasks are gamified. A variety of formative assessment techniques are used at all levels. The lessons are SEN friendly.

Creating video lessons is hard work, but without the help and support of my diligent colleagues, it would be much harder.

Enjoy This Lovely Spring!

I'm the Easter bunny.
Every year I come to you.
Go 'n' look around the garden!
Try to find an egg or two!

You can find a painted egg or
a sweet delicious chocolate one.
Fill your empty baskets now 'n'
go 'n' have a lot of fun!

Happy Easter! Happy Easter!
Enjoy the eggs I bring!
Happy Easter! Happy Easter!
Enjoy this lovely spring!

Play Easter games with your friends!
Eat a lovely hot cross bun!
Enjoy the day your way!
Go 'n' have a lot of fun!

The purple egg is **on** the table.

COMICS IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the ways of using comic books in teaching English. Using comics in the classroom is a challenging way to add a new spice to language teaching. Comics can be used from beginner level to advanced level in various imaginative activities. Learning English through comics can be very motivating and can create a stress free and relaxing atmosphere in which students can express their ideas and opinions more freely. Comics are invaluable tools to develop students' abilities in reading, speaking, listening and writing. I would like this article to provide an encouragement for the teachers to invent new ways of exploiting comic books in their work with students.

Key words:: English language teaching, using comic books in teaching English, the activities for using comics, student's involvement

'Before man thought in words, he felt in pictures…. pictures tell any story more effectively than words.'
                                                              SONES, W.

1   INTRODUCTION

Are you looking for a new way to motivate reluctant readers and develop the comprehension skills of your students? Have you considered comic books? More and more teachers are finding that comics can be effective tools for teaching all language skills to students. I am one of them.

While comic books in the past were thought not to be challenging enough for students, actually the opposite is true. Comics are multidimensional because they combine both words and images. They can be used to teach a variety of things: character development, making

conclusion, commenting, comparing, dialogue, acting out etc. I agree with Rocco Versaci, who points out that 'comic books also help to develop much needed anallytical and critical thinking skills' (2000). In my opinion learning English through comics provides a relaxing atmosphere for students and gives them opportunities to express their creativity, imagination and self-confidence.

What does the term **comic book** mean? In his book 'Understanding Comics' Scott McCloud gives his definition of the word '**comics**': *comics (kom' iks) n. plural in form, used with a singular verb. Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/ or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer (1993).*

According to Chris Wilson, the author and editor of the site 'The Graphic Classroom', the comic book is the generalized genre of comic literature that uses both text and art in a sequential manner, and the graphic novel is a longer and more artful version of the comic book. It is a medium that combines the visual and verbal as do films and TV. Wilson's greatest goal is to develop a love for reading in all his students – the comic genre is one method to develop that love. I strongly agree with his opinion that students can benefit from comic literature because of the duality of text and art. There are details in the art, which can slow the readers down and help them absorb the meaning without having to struggle to decode every word. Students usually take less time to read alleviating a student' s need to rush through it. They can take their time and explore the colour, tone, character's mood, hidden details in the background, see the setting, and gain insight into the comics.They can even explore how a panel or page is put together and interpret it.

2   THE REASONS FOR USING COMICS IN TEACHING

It is obvious that there are plenty of reasons why teachers should use comics in teaching English:

- Comics contribute to **student's interest and motivation** because, according to William Marston, children have a natural attraction to comics. By

inviting comics into their classroom, teachers can take advantage of the 'fantastic motivating power of comic books.'(Haugaard, K. 1973.)

- Comics are fundamentally **visual media**. Because of their combination of pictures and words visual learners can benefit from them. This way the students can follow the story line step by step. This characteristic of comics also helps to increase motivation; and if a word, expression, or concept is accompanied by a picture, then the students will memorize and recall it more easily. This fact also contributes to improving **communicative competence.** In a comic book, life-like situations and expressions are used in spoken, colloquial language: for instance, idioms, reduced forms, and slang. In that way, they help students to deal with spoken language, preventing them from sounding bookish. Another advantage of the visual nature of comics is that they show the gestures and the body language of the characters. This contributes to the development of communicative competence, which includes nonverbal communication.
- Comic books are **authentic**, and using authentic material is very important in language teaching and learning. It has several advantages, among which is the fact that if students understand a genuine text successfully, that can motivate them a lot and build their confidence.
- Through comics teacher can introduce **popular youth culture** into his/her classroom more easily and effectively. In that way teacher acknowledges to students that he/she cares about their interests and recognizes the value of their contributions to the classroom community.
- Creating comics can develop **organizational and critical thinking skills**, from connecting ideas to editing an entire project. Making comics is writing because when students draw comics they also learn to write! Learing to write with comics uses skill sets of the entire brain including: the ability to pay attention, the ability to extract information, the ability to communicate ideas and emotions clearly, the ability to use both words and images to express student's own personality.

3 THE ACTIVITIES
Here I give few examples of the activities I often use in my work with students to illustrate how comics can be used in teaching and learning English successfully. My experience has shown that teenagers are very creative in their work with comics, and this fact will transform your classroom practice, just like it has happened to me.

3.1 MORAL COMICS

CLASS LEVEL: intermediate to advanced
GROUP SIZE: class, pairs, individuals
OBJECTIVES: to practice all language skills
TIME: 20-45 minutes

PREPARATION:
Find an interesting and instructive comic book (a short one – about two pages long) written in Croatian and make enough copies for your students.

IN THE CLASSROOM
1. Each student is given the copy of a comic book.
2. The students have to translate it into English, and write it down in their notebooks.
3. After about 10 minutes they are asked to read their translations. While they read it, the teacher corrects the mistakes.
4. The teacher gives students 5 - 10 minutes to read and prepare to act out their role in the comic book.
5. When they are ready, they can act out out their roles in front of the class.
6. For their homework, they can write an essay about the theme, the main characters, or the moral of the comic book.

3.2 THE RIGHT ORDER ACTIVITY

CLASS LEVEL: beginner to intermediate
GROUP SIZE: class, pairs, individuals
OBJECTIVES: to develop all language skills
TIME: 15- 40 minutes

PREPARATION:
1. After picking an appropriate story, draw 5 – 8 pictures based on the story or give your gifted students to do it for you. Put the pictures in scrambled order on a single page. If you want, you can also create a caption for each picture. Scramble these as well.
2. Make copies of the pictures for each student or group.

IN THE CLASSROOM
1. Give out the pictures, have students look at them, and ask if there are any questions.
2. In small groups have students predict what the story will be about and what order the pictures should go in.
3. Tell or read the story.
4. Have students put the pictures in the right order.
5. If you wrote captions for the pictures, have students associate each caption with the picture. For more advanced students have them write their own captions for the pictures.
6. Students tell the story to the rest of the class showing the pictures in the right order.

VARIATION
1. Divide students into groups and give each group a different story.
2. Each group plans and create 5 – 8 pictures (a comic book) based on their story. Each group member would draw one or two of the pictures.
3. Give pictures to other groups.
4. Have students in the other group listen to the story by the reader from the group that created the pictures and try to put them in the right order.

3.3 GUESS THE ENDING ACTIVITY

CLASS LEVEL: intermediate
GROUP SIZE: small groups, pairs, individuals
OBJECTIVES: to improve all language skills
TIME: 15- 20 minutes

PREPARATION
1. Find an interesting, challenging and short comic book and remove the last panel or two from it.
2. Make copies of it for each student or group.

IN THE CLASSROOM
1. Hand out the copies to your students.
2. Students are asked to continue the story and come up with an ending.
3. They have to write it down and after the correction they can act their own stories out in the class.
4. The class can vote for the best ending.
5. Finally the teacher will give the original ending of the story, and students can discuss the differences and similarities.

3.4 THE MISSING INFORMATION ACTIVITY

CLASS LEVEL: intermediate to advanced
GROUP SIZE: small groups, pairs
OBJECTIVES: to develop all language skills
TIME: 20 - 30 minutes

PREPARATION
1. Find an effective and instructive story with missing information.
2. Make enough copies of it for your students.

IN THE CLASSROOM
1. Organize your students into groups and give them copies.
2. The students' task is to figure out and discuss what might be missing from the text.
3. Give them a comic strip version of the text of that story. They have to fill in the blanks in the written story by describing what they see in the pictures.
4. As a follow-up activity they can act it out and continue the story as a role play.

3.5 TURN A SONG INTO A CARTOON ACTIVITY

CLASS LEVEL: intermediate to advanced
GROUP SIZE: pairs or individuals
OBJECTIVES: to develop creative use of language
TIME: 30 - 45 minutes

PREPARATION
1. Find an interesting song which can be easily turn into a cartoon.
2. Make enough copies of the lyrics for your students.

IN THE CLASSROOM
1. Organize your students in pairs and let them listen to the song.
2. Distribute the lyrics. The students are asked to translate the song and exchange their opinions about it and the message of the author.
3. Let the students draw a cartoon out of the song.
4. When they have finished, let them vote for the best cartoon.
5. Put the cartoons on the notice board in your classroom and enjoy the exhibition.

TURN A STORY INTO A COMIC BOOK ACTIVITY

CLASS LEVEL: beginner, intermediate to advanced
GROUP SIZE: individuals
OBJECTIVES: to develop creative use of language
TIME: depends on student's creativity and free time

This is my favourite activity which usually attracts my students a lot because they enjoy and have so much fun in drawing their own comic books. The students create their own miniature comic books based on the story we have already done in class or they invent their own story. After hard work student-drawn comics can be displayed on a class wallboard or printed in a school newspaper.
Thanks to my enthusiastic and hard-working students, who are extremely talented, patient, persistent and creative, I have a portfolio full of their cartoons and comic books. I am very thankful to them because I feel very proud of their work and the sense of fulfillment in my teaching.

Here is an example of the moral comic book about the Italian tale **'The Happy Man's Shirt'** . It is an example of **the Right Order Activity** :
I cut the comic book into six parts and divide my students into groups of six. Each student in a group is given the different piece of the comic book. They have to put the pieces into the right order in about six minutes. When they have finished, I check if the story is in the right order. Then the students are given the text of the story to read silently in about ten minutes. After that I give some questions written on the papers to each group to dicuss. I usually

give them about ten minutes to answer them. I monitor the groups and help them if it is necessary. Finally, they summarize their group's answers and opinions. For their homework, they can write the different ending of the story or an essay about the moral of the story.
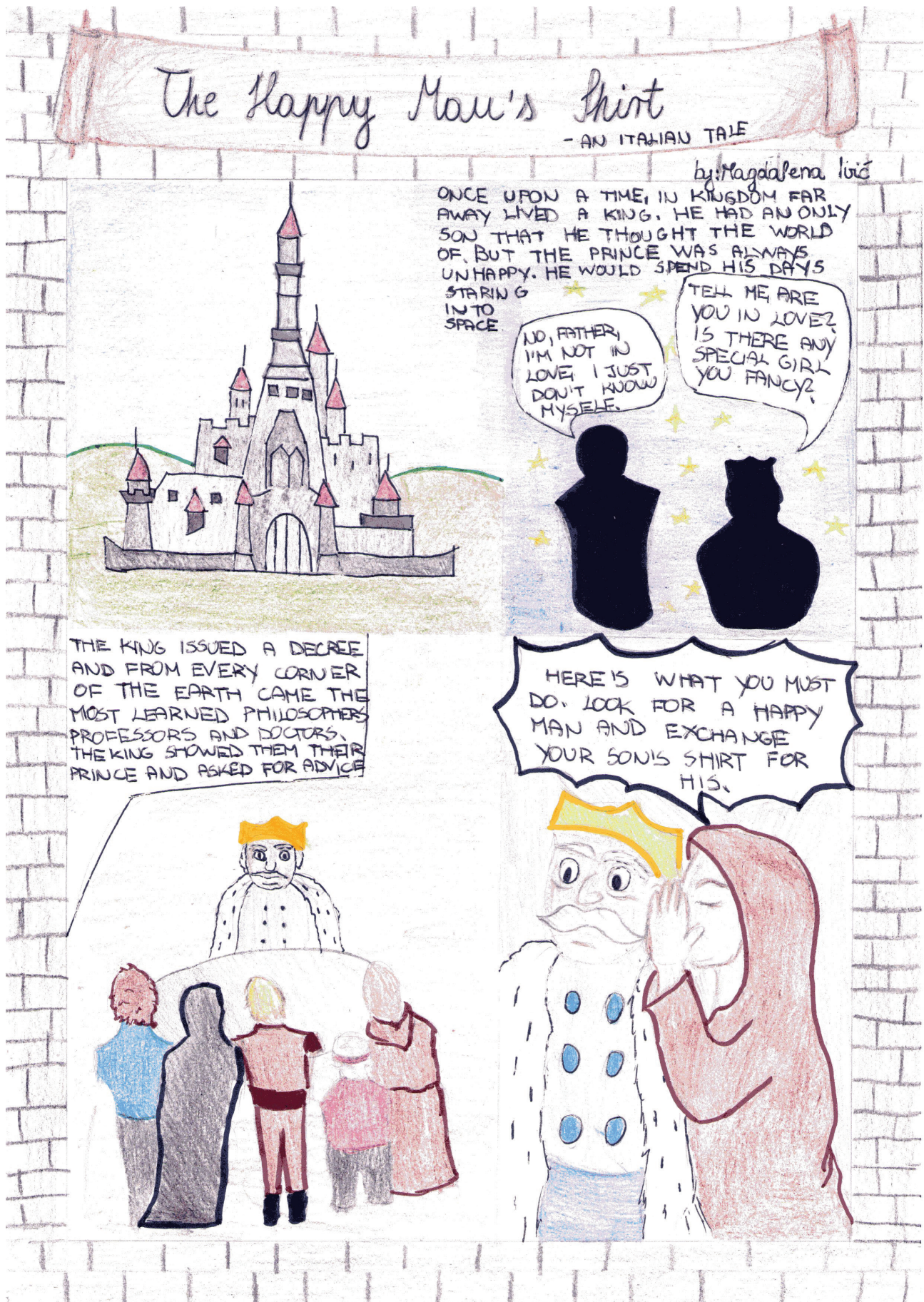

Figure 1: the first page of the comic book

Figure 2: the second page of the comic book

Figure 3: The third page of the comic book

4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, cartoons and comic books can be used to liven up your English lessons, and they are a wonderful way to reach a large variety of learner types and awaken interest in authentic vocabulary. My impression is that exploiting them for certain activities can be highly motivating and thought-provoking.

So, what are you waiting for, dear English teachers? Use comics in your teaching, and you will be rewarded!

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STRIPOVI U PODUČAVANJU ENGLESKOG JEZIKA

Sažetak

Ovaj članak se bavi načinima uporabe stripova   u podučavanju engleskog jezika. Korištenje stripova u nastavi je izazovan način da dodamo novi začin podučavanju stranoga jezika. Stripovi se mogu koristiti od početničkog   stupnja do naprednog stupnja u nastavi jezika uz pomoć raznih maštovitih aktivnosti. Učenje engleskog jezika pomoću stripa može biti motivirajuće i može stvoriti opuštajuće ozračje bez stresa u kome učenici mogu slobodno i bez straha izraziti svoje ideje i mišljenja. Stripovi su vrijedno oruđe za razvoj učenikovih sposobnosti u čitanju, govorenju, slušanju i pisanju. Željela bih da ovaj članak bude ohrabrenje i poticaj profesorima da pronađu nove načine korištenja stripova u svome radu sa učenicima.

Ključne riječi: podučavanje engleskog jezika, korištenje stripova u nastavi engleskog jezika, aktivnosti za korištenje stripova, učenikovo sudjelovanje u radu