MATEFL is an organisation run on a volunteer basis by teachers for teachers of English as a foreign language. It is dedicated to the professional development of its members by facilitating the sharing and exchanging of ideas and keeping abreast of new developments in the EFL world.
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Hello TEFLers,

Welcome to the latest edition of the MATEFL newsletter!

First and foremost, we’d like to say a big thank you to Jean Theuma, who for the last 5 years has done a great job of bringing us a very high-quality publication. We (Matt and Natasha) will be taking over from her, and have some very high standards to keep up.

As always, this issue is full of great stuff for you to sink your teeth into. To kick off, Alan Marsh will be offering his thoughts on 'The Image in English Language Teaching'—a new book co-edited by Kieran Donaghy and Daniel Xerri.

Then, Matt Done shares some practical ideas on ways to use one of the essential teaching allies—the dialogue! This edition also sees the first article of a new feature: 'Why not try...?’, which this time takes an in-depth look at the Cambridge CELTA course.

Natasha Fabri has something juicy for the techies among you: a special feature on 'Aurasma'—an augmented reality app ready to take the classroom by storm.

Theo Navarro then offers some thoughtful insight into how he goes about teaching writing, and Natasha continues the regular Vox Pop feature, this time focusing on TEFL trainers.

Last but not least, Jean Theuma sits down with Chris Walklett, who shares some of his thoughts on using songs in the classroom.

So, happy reading! Have a great winter, and we’ll see you in the spring!

Matt & Tash

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As recently as just three or four decades ago, the primary means of communicating knowledge and ideas was through the medium of books and the principle mode was the written word. The world has changed radically in this regard: although books and the written word continue to be an important medium and mode respectively in communication, there are now other media and modes through which our world is understood and represented. And in this new, multi-modal reality it is the visual image that has moved from being peripheral – either a decorative add-on or simply a resource – to a central role in communication.

The underlying premise of this collection of 18 papers, edited by Kieran Donaghy and Daniel Xerri and published by the ELT Council, Malta, is that the world of education needs to address and embrace this fundamentally changed scenario. The editors open their collection with quotations from two film-makers who have profoundly influenced those who create and represent meaning via the screen:

Throughout the history of education, communication has been at the centre of the experience, regardless of subject matter. We can’t learn (or teach) what we can’t communicate and, increasingly, that communication is being done through visual media.

Stephen Apkon, documentary film producer.

We must teach communication comprehensively in all its forms. We live and work in a visually sophisticated world, so we must be sophisticated in using all the forms of communication, not just the written word.

George Lucas, director of the Star Wars series of films.

If the visually sophisticated world is to be brought into the field of education, then two central questions need to be answered: what should be included in the curriculum/syllabus in order to help learners to understand and use visual media? And how should this content be taught? A further question readers of this newsletter might also ask is: How much of this is relevant to English Language Teaching in ELT language schools in Malta (and elsewhere)?

Interestingly, Donaghy and Xerri inform us in their Introduction that the English language curricula of a number of countries – including Canada, Australia and Singapore – have added two new skills, viewing and visually representing to the traditional communicative skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. To illustrate these new skills, the editors quote the Canadian common framework, which states that:

Viewing is an active process of attending to and comprehending visual media, such as television, advertising images, films, diagrams, symbols, photographs, videos, drawings, sculpture, and paintings.

Representing enables students to communicate information and ideas through a variety of media.

Questions that an effective viewer might ask themselves would include: What does the visual text show? How is it constructed? What assumptions,
interests, beliefs, biases and values are portrayed in the visual text? What is its purpose? To whom is the visual text directed? What does the visual text exclude? What is my reaction to the visual text? What causes this reaction? What personal connections and associations can I make with this visual text?

Clearly, these two new skills (of viewing and representing visual texts) need training and teachers will not be able to effectively teach these vital skills unless they themselves receive training in ‘visual literacy.’ In the near future it is reasonable to assume that these skills will be incorporated into national curricula throughout the world but for the moment they seem strangely absent from conferences and training courses for ELT teachers. Admittedly, digital literacy is receiving the attention it deserves but visual literacy in the ELT world needs to be more specifically addressed.

And this book attempts to do precisely that. Some papers will resonate clearly with ELT teachers in language schools, some a little less so, although the latter will certainly strike a chord with academics, teachers of academic English and teachers in mainstream education, where concepts of visual literacy are more easily combined with cross-curricular subjects in the formation of future citizens of the world, such as peace, human rights, respect for minorities, empathy training, and racial and sexual equality. However, ELT language school teachers here in Malta, with limited time and often specific linguistic objectives, may also find that classrooms can be places where, as Antonia Clare writes in her paper on the power of video, “aspirations and dreams should be developed, encouraged and cultivated.”

My own personal favourites? Well, perhaps this is not the place but then again, this is not an academic review so here goes!

I found Donaghy’s and Xerri’s Introduction particularly enlightening, and Ben Goldstein’s ‘A history of video’ in ELT took me back to my very own (sometimes comical and clumsy) beginnings with trying to use video in the classroom almost forty years ago!

I’ve already quoted from Antonia Clare’s powerful, thought-provoking paper. Magdalena Wasilewski’s ‘The power of image nation’ is engagingly practical and useful in its ideas for using students’ mobile phones and Pinterest.

Andrea Zakine also pursues uses of Pinterest. Tyson Seburn makes an interesting, thoughtful case for getting learners to source their own materials in order to engage more deeply with written texts and increase comprehension of concepts contained within them.

Chrysa Papalazarou draws on her experience with paintings in her sixth grade primary school classroom – she reports some heart-warming collaborative work as students write notes, keep journals, tell stories and respond to paintings.

Art and peace are skilfully woven together in a course for teenagers designed by Magdalena Brzezinska – lots of lovely, empowering, practical ideas here, too.

I was also impressed by Paul Dummet’s ‘The picture and the story’ – which highlights the link between images and stories and contains several practical ideas for developing ‘narrative intelligence’ – the skills needed to understand or tell a story.

Paul Driver’s absorbing paper focuses on four digital games not in order to promote gamification but in order to develop four key language skills.

Finally, a big thumbs up to Samantha Lewis and MATEFL’s own Jean Theuma who, in separate papers, discuss issues concerned with graphical novels, cartoons and comics and provide the reader with engaging, practical ways of exploiting these media for language development.

Admittedly, the selection above is highly personal and subjective and different readers may make different choices. But whatever your own preferences, you will find this collection deeply absorbing and frequently fresh and innovative. After having read all the papers, I feel that, at least conceptually, I’ve moved from a black and white, silent world to a world full of colour, sound and exciting possibilities.

Alan Marsh
The power of dialogues
Matt Done goes back to basics with dialogues.

Something I’ve always loved to do in class is use dialogues. They’re fun to prepare, fun to use, and best of all, they can be an extremely useful way to teach and revise language. In this article, I’ll be looking at a few different ways of using dialogues in class.

Revising language that you’ve already ‘covered’.
A lot of teachers, myself included, like to start Monday morning with a bit of revision of the language taught the previous week. This might take the form of a quiz, a game of ‘hot seat’, or simply doing a few gap-fill tasks.

Another great way to go over last week’s language is to embed some of it in a dialogue for the students to act out. Imagine that last week, you looked at the present perfect with just, for, and since, as well as some strong adjectives. A short dialogue containing some of this language might look like this:

James: Hi Mike, I’m going for a run. Want to join?
Mike: What, now? I’ve just got home from work! I’m exhausted!
James: Oh come on. You’ve been home since 3 o’clock!
Mike: Yeah but it’s the middle of August! It’s boiling hot outside!
James: Excuses, excuses. If you don’t feel like it, just say so!
Mike: Fine, I don’t feel like it!!

I usually get the students to read the dialogue to themselves first, imagining what it might sound like in real life. After this, you can assign a character to each student, and get them to read out the dialogues in pairs.

Encourage the students to ‘bring it to life’, rather than just reading it in a flat tone. The trick here is to try and write a dialogue that contains the language you want to recycle, but still sounds (somewhat) natural and not too awkward and contrived. This is a skill which takes some practice (and one which I’m still working on), but you get better with every attempt!

Inputting new language
Dialogues can also be really useful for teaching new language. Imagine that you want to teach your pre-intermediate students how to talk about future arrangements using the present continuous. An interesting way to do this would be to write a dialogue which contains examples of this language point. For instance...

Jill: Hey Miriam, fancy meeting up some time this week for a coffee?
Miriam: Sure, good idea. What about tomorrow morning?
Jill: Hmm, I can’t tomorrow morning. I’m meeting Amy. Can you make it on Tuesday?
Miriam: No, sorry. On Tuesday I have to take my mother to the airport. What are you doing on Wednesday?
Jill: Wednesday, let me see...oh, no, I can’t make it. I’m having lunch with my colleagues. Hey Miriam, are you free right now?
Miriam: Yes I am, actually! See you in 20 minutes?
Jill: Make it half an hour. See you soon!

You can lead in by telling the students who the characters are and what the situation is. Once you’ve done a bit of work on the dialogue itself by asking gist/comprehension questions, you can get the students to ‘notice’ the new language point. There
are a number of ways of doing this, but my personal favourite way is simply to tell the students to cover the dialogue, and then give them the same dialogue but with the new language gapped. The students then try and remember what goes in the gaps. You can then concept check the new language before moving on to controlled and ‘free’ practice!

Course books will often do the job of embedding a language point into a context for us. However, by doing it ourselves every now and then, we can tailor the dialogue to include things that our students are interested in, we can add language that we’ve already covered so that they can revise it, and we can sharpen our own planning and writing skills!

Again, a possible pitfall of this idea is that we might end up with very contrived dialogues containing 20 examples of the same language point. Writing a dialogue that contains some clear examples of a language point but that is still somewhat natural is a very difficult skill to master, but definitely a worthwhile exercise.

**Dialogue building**

A nice activity which combines grammatical accuracy with some speaking practice is dialogue building.

Before class, prepare a short dialogue (6-8 lines) containing language that the students know/half know. Draw the characters on the board, and set a context — for instance, on the phone, in a café, at the train station, etc. Aim to make the dialogue natural (but still manageable for the students).

Next to the first character’s picture, draw a speech bubble, and elicit the first line of the dialogue. You can elicit either by giving a prompt on the board (e.g. – What/wrong?) or by using gestures, facial expressions, miming, etc. Once the students give you what you’re asking for, drill it chorally and individually, then write it on the board (but don’t let the students write anything yet).

Now, draw a speech bubble next to the other character to indicate that he’s going to respond. Again, elicit the sentence either by writing prompts on the board (e.g. ‘sick’) or by miming (e.g. rubbing your tummy, miming feeling sick). Once the students give you the correct sentence (I’m feeling really sick), drill it chorally and individually, and then write it on the board.

Continue this process until you have the full dialogue on the board. Get the students to write it down and then get them to read it out in pairs. You could also get half the class to read one character’s lines, and the other half to read the other.

After the first couple of readings, delete certain words/chunks, and get the students to read again. This time, they will have to remember the missing parts from memory. You can keep deleting bits as you see fit – you can even rub off the whole thing if you think your students can handle it! Progressive deletion, as it’s called, is a great way of increasing challenge when using dialogues.

Dialogue building is a great way to practice speaking in situations which are predictable, such as at when exchanging money, booking a table, asking for directions, etc. This is because the students will already be familiar with the situation, and therefore, they will probably know the meaning of the language you’re challenging them to come up with. What they need help with is finding the right way to say it – and that’s where you come in!

**Dramatic dialogues**

Dialogues can also be used to get students to focus on intonation and word stress by ‘dramatising’ them. This (great!) idea comes from Lindsay Clandfield’s (2003) onestopenglish.com article.

Give the students a short dialogue, such as this one, and get them to read it together once. Students will probably read them out in a rather flat tone at first:

A: What’s your name?
B: Dave.
A: Where are you from?
B: California.
A: What do you do?
B: I’m a waiter.
Once the students have read it, give them a list of different ‘contexts’, for instance:

- You are at airport security
- You are in a police interrogation room
- You are in a disco, and one is trying to chat up the other etc.

The students then choose a context, and read it out accordingly, varying their intonation, tone of voice, facial expressions, etc. This can result in some very amusing dialogues.

Here are some more dialogues and contexts you could try:

A: I have something to tell you.
B: What is it?
A: I’m going to have a baby.
B: No.

- A couple who have been trying to have a baby for 3 years
- A 16-year-old girl talking to her mother
- A member of staff telling her boss
- A man telling his doctor (!)

A: Did you do this?
B: Did I do what?
A: This!
B: Yes.

- A parent talking to a child
- A guest at an art gallery talking to an artist

This is a great way to raise students’ awareness of how intonation and word stress affects meaning, and it’s also a lot of fun.

So, as you can see, dialogues are not only very enjoyable and engaging to use in class, but they are also very useful when it comes to teaching and practicing language. I hope this article has given you a few ideas!

References:
Lindsay Clandfield: Dramatic Dialogues on: http://bit.ly/2z9yyKa

Matt Done

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For any further information please contact Caroline Campbell, Alan Marsh or Jean Theuma at info@matefl.org
If you’re an English teacher with a TEFL certificate and are looking to further your career, teach abroad, or simply improve your classroom skills, then you should definitely consider doing the Cambridge Celta course.

What is the Celta?
The Celta, or Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults, is a world-renowned English language teaching qualification awarded by the University of Cambridge. It is designed as an entry-level course for people with no teaching experience, but is also very suitable for teachers who already have a TEFL and would like to give their classroom skills and employability a boost. The Celta has often been described as a ‘passport’ to the world, as it is internationally recognised and will give you a good chance of finding work overseas.

What is doing the Celta like?
This depends, to some extent, on the way you choose to do your Celta. You can either opt for the four-week intensive course, or, if this does not suit you, you can choose the part-time option which takes place over a greater number of weeks.

If, like most people, you choose the full-time option, then you can expect a fairly intensive (but equally stimulating) experience. Most days, you will arrive at your centre early in the morning and leave late in the afternoon. Your day will start with input sessions, where your tutors will train you in a number of areas related to language awareness and teaching methodology.

Because the Celta aims to develop your ability to teach in a learner-centred and communicative way, tutors usually practice what they preach, and sessions are lively and interactive.

In the afternoon, you will be asked to put what you learn into practice by actually teaching real volunteer students. You will generally teach for a much shorter time than you’re used to. While in language schools, most of us are accustomed to teaching lessons of 90 minutes, during Celta, the longest you will be asked to teach in one go is an hour.

While you teach, your tutor and course mates will sit at the back of your classroom and observe your lesson. This is not to put you off or catch you out – far from it! This is so that after you teach, you can get detailed and constructive feedback on your teaching.

Your tutor will tell you what you did well, as well as point out areas that you could still improve upon. This is perhaps one aspect of the course that some people find difficult. A good way to deal with the feelings of anxiety that often accompany being observed and evaluated is to understand the motive behind it – to help you get better at teaching.

Once you get home in the evening, the Celta will definitely still be on your mind. Firstly, you will have to prepare for your next teaching practice by writing your plan, finding pictures, preparing dialogues, brushing up your knowledge of the grammar you plan to teach, etc. You will also have to work on your assignments, of which there are three.

Things you might find hard
As mentioned before, one part of the Celta that sometimes gets to people is the fact that you are observed every time you teach. However, while you might feel a bit of stage fright to begin with, you will quickly realise that everyone is on your side. Also, as with everything in life, once you have been through the experience a few times it ceases to be quite as daunting!

You may also have heard people complain about the sheer volume of work to do.

Although it is true that the (4 week intensive) Celta is a full-time commitment, and you do have a fair
amount to get through, simply getting into a routine and sticking to it will help you complete everything on time. Try to do the work soon after it is assigned, and not let it accumulate. If possible, it is also a good idea to minimize the number of distractions in your life while you do the course – so turn off Facebook and get someone else to do the housework!

Things you’ll enjoy
Although many trainees will tell you that the Celta is a tough course, you will be hard-pressed to find someone who did not also enjoy the experience. You will obviously notice genuine improvement in your teaching, and you will go away a more skilled and knowledgeable teacher. For people who already have some qualifications and experience, the Celta will probably be an eye-opening experience, and you will look forward to getting back into a classroom to try out everything you have learned. The renewed feeling of confidence and vigour that the Celta can give you is very powerful indeed.

However, perhaps the greatest thing you will take away from Celta is the huge number of friendships and memories that you will form while on the course. Working closely with your tutors, fellow trainees, and volunteer students means you will develop very close bonds that may last a lifetime.

So, if you love teaching and are looking for a way to further your career and become a better, more employable teacher, an excellent next step would be the Cambridge Celta.

Here are some useful blogs and resources if you’re planning to take on this course:

Study CELTA:
www.studycelta.com/blog

Teaching House:
http://bit.ly/2zSyVWv

Sandy Millin:

Matt Done

Dingbats are visual word puzzles from which a well known phrase or saying has to be identified. They are derived from the board game that was devised by Paul Sellars. Try to guess the secret word or expression for these 12 dingbats. You’ll find the answers on page 22.
Teacher 2.0: exploring 21st century teaching.

Natasha Fabri introduces the wonders of Aurasma

I attended Pam Borg’s session on Aurasma in the MATEFL June seminar and was instantly hooked on the idea of using this app—thank you for the inspiration, Pam!

This is especially for all the Harry Potter fiends out there (and I’m sure there are many TEFLers out there who are):

Have you ever wished you could get your hands on a copy of the Daily Prophet?

Well, I have some good news for you! We now have a smartphone app that will give you something very similar! So read on if you want to impress your colleagues and students in class, and earn some brownie points from your Director of Studies too!

Terminology

Aurasma is not the simplest tool I have reviewed for this feature over the last 4 years, so it’s worth going over some basic terminology to help you get your bearings:

**Augmented reality** is a technology that superimposes a computer-generated image on a user’s view of the real world, thus providing a composite view. This is amply used in gaming nowadays. Does anyone remember the Pokemon Go fad in 2016?

An *Aura* is an Augmented Reality (AR) experience.

An **overlay** is the action e.g. image/video that is produced within a phone’s camera view when the user places their phone over a specific trigger (and keeps it there!).

A **trigger** is a screenshot or a specific image that will activate the overlay uploaded in the Aurasma app. When a trigger produces a video, it’s a good idea to use the first frame of the overlay video itself.

**What you will need:**
1. A smartphone;
2. The Aurasma app;
3. Paper/coloured pens (for basic triggers);
4. If you want to upgrade your images: a photo or video editor and/or Powerpoint;
5. A little bit of patience until you get the hang of it.

**Getting started**

The first step is to create an account on: https://studio.aurasma.com/register. You will also need to register on your phone when you download the app. I find the app is more practical than the website, so I will be mostly focusing on that.

When you log into your app account, it’ll automatically open your camera and start to scan for a trigger. You don’t need it at this stage, so tap on the A-shaped logo on the bottom of your screen. This will take you to the menu. You will find ready made and ready to use auras there to inspire you but let’s see how to make our own next!

**Create your own**

Tap on the plus (+) sign at the bottom of your screen. You will be prompted to choose an overlay from the library or from your own device. You may choose photos or videos from your phone gallery.

As soon as you have selected the overlay, you will be prompted to
choose your trigger. The trigger image must be clear with a defined border. The app itself will rate your trigger as you select it. If the slide turns to green, then it’s fine to use.

You’ll then be asked to name your aura and save it to either a private or public library. If you decide to keep the aura private, you will need to invite your audience using their email/SMS/Twitter or Facebook account info when you’re ready to use it in class.

**Uses of Aurasma in the classroom**

The great thing about this app is that your triggers can be a simple as a post-it note with a scribbled letter (ideally within a box-shaped border) or you can go a little further as I did with a screenshot of a video.

This is a good mix of low-tech/hi-tech that will suit most teachers who try it and needs minimum work for the students. All they need to do is download the app and point their device at the trigger.

These are some ways you can use the app in the ELT classroom:

**Go beyond the course book**

Use images from your school course book as triggers to play related Youtube videos as extra material. You can use programmes that download Youtube videos for offline use.

**Extra support**

Upgrade your own worksheets with ‘how-to’ auras. Record a mini-video tutorial for the grammar point you plan to do tomorrow (and reuse it any time you like!) or give extra information for the next assigned homework task for your IELTS writing task your students have been struggling with.

Do you have an eager student who always wants extra work and finishes before the rest of the class? Create a quick aura with an extra task to keep them occupied without disturbing the other students.

**Jigsaw reading/listening**

This is an excellent way to get your students’ working independently: give different pairs/groups of students access to different auras. These can be different parts of the same story/video/text/information or completely different material. Have students then piece the information together and/or relay information to their partners about what they saw.

**Get them out of their seats!**

Using this app can also mean ditching your IWB (i.e. smartboard) for a while. In fact, you don’t even need to be in class as long as the students have a Wi-Fi connection. Organise a scavenger hunt around the school (or even your neighbourhood) using objects as triggers to give them the clues they need to solve the puzzle.

**Interactive class notice boards**

Embed auras giving school/class information to your new students. You can even post a picture of yourself as a trigger to show your contact details or even a mini-introduction to any new student joining your class.

**Flip the classroom**

Once you feel comfortable with this app, show students how to create their own auras. Ask them to create their own auras by recording videos of themselves talking about a photo they took, or a picture of their city/their favourite celebrity etc.

If you have by now downloaded the app (and I really hope I’ve convinced you to!), please search for my channel: nfabri. You’ll need to tap on the ‘Follow’ option on the top right side of your screen. Then, return to page 11, open the app, and scan the image of the Daily Prophet and enjoy the aura I have prepared for you as a simple demo.

**Further reading/References:**

- A simple demo with a young learner: http://bit.ly/2yUI8Ab
- Natasha Fabri
The vast majority of teachers here in Malta are, primarily, teachers of General English; meaning that our primary concern is to help learners improve their overall level of English. With English proficiency being split into a person’s abilities in four systems (Grammar, Vocabulary, Phonology, and Discourse) and four skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing) us teachers have a lot of different things to consider when planning and delivering courses to our learners.

A typical General English course tends to include a heavy focus on grammar and on speaking practice, with vocabulary, reading, and listening being next on the list of priorities, and pronunciation and writing being “those family members we don’t talk about.”

However, in the context of being human beings living in the modern world in 2017, this approach has one critical flaw: people spend much more time writing in their day-to-day lives than they ever have before in the entirety of human history.

More and more people work in international environments, or conduct business globally, meaning that a lot of business communication (as well as social communication to help cultivate business relationships) happens in English. In their personal lives, people spend tons of time on social media writing status updates, tweets, comments, and forum posts, with a large number of these interactions happening in English and bridging people across the world. In our private lives most of us spend more time communicating through services like WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger than we do through traditional phone calls or even VoIP services like Skype. I mean, clearly writing is an important thing to teach.

How I used to approach writing lessons resembled the kind of writing lessons I had experienced at school:

Teacher sets homework; students do the work; teacher corrects the work and hands it back; students forget they ever did the work.

My students had no control over what it is they were writing about. They didn’t get any advice on their work until after the work was finished. I would write comments on their work, but they’d read the comments once and never look at the essays again. This worked for highly motivated and organized students at the end of their exam preparation courses, but it didn’t work for anyone else. The students didn’t like doing the writing, and I didn’t like doing the correcting as I knew it never amounted to much.

Discovering new approaches: I used to suck at teaching Writing.
Theo Navarro gets real about teaching writing.

...people spend much more time writing in their day-to-day lives than they ever have before in the entirety of human history.
Something had to change.

I had to force myself to understand that my learners, as individuals living in the 21st Century, need to be able to develop a variety of writing micro-skills in order be part of modern global society. The question was: How could I help them do that?

So I started reading more and set out to find a way to make things more impactful. I found lots of ‘tips’ telling me to do things like use a set of cheerful stickers as a code (‘wide grinning face’ = Fantastic work that I almost actually enjoyed reading, ‘smiley face’ = It’s okay but not worth putting up on the fridge, ‘sad face’ = I hated reading this and it definitely affects how I feel about you as a person) to make the learners care more about the feedback; or to use jazzy glitter pens instead of a red pen to make students more excited to read the comments (I don’t even know why I thought this would work, honestly); or to only write positive comments and not give any constructive feedback (because it isn’t like improvement is one of our goals, right?).

Needless to say, while that stuff was very ‘positive’, I was just putting lipstick on a pig. I still sucked at teaching writing, the only difference was that my students were throwing away essays covered in stickers and glitter and Zen affirmations instead of essays that looked like they were corrected by a sane adult.

It took me a while to stumble across something called the ‘Process Approach.’ Admittedly, my previous experience with trying out tips from the web left me skeptical, but I noticed that some pretty trustworthy people, like the British Council, were writing about it, so I reserved judgement, read some more, and it ended up blowing my mind.

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Basically, there are two main approaches to teaching writing. There’s the Product Approach, and the Process Approach. The Product Approach was basically what I had been doing all along, which I then found out is an approach that is best to use AFTER using the Process Approach. The most succinct way to compare them is the picture on the previous page from the British Council’s TeachingEnglish Twitter:

![Image]

Basically, the Process Writing Approach treats writing like a cycle. There are pre-writing, drafting, editing, and post-writing stages. When a teacher uses the Process Approach to teach writing, writing is no longer a solitary activity for the students, as the teacher and their peers are involved in the several stages between being assigned a topic and handing in a final piece of work (Harmer, 2004).

While the Product Writing Approach focuses on students working alone to produce a piece of work that’s comparable to a sample text they had seen earlier, the Process Writing Approach is more about spending time to hone the students’ micro- and macroskills. (For anyone who, like me, can’t memorise all the different macro- and microskills, here’s a handy link that I refer back to every now and again: http://bit.ly/2zSnk9U.

The Process Approach was a totally different way of doing things for me. Instead of serving as my students’ version of Simon Cowell, my writing lessons started looking a lot like all of my other lessons. I wasn’t just judging their performance, I was suddenly actually helping my students shape their ideas into words. My students started learning about things like genre and style. They discussed things like the logical order of ideas, and which linkers to use to link their ideas together. My students started LEARNING.

And that’s when it hit me. I didn’t suck at teaching writing, I had just never TAUGHT writing. What I had been doing before wasn’t teaching at all, it was assessing. Now, there’s nothing wrong with assessing your learners’ work; assessment is a vital part of the learning process. However, assessment comes after learning, assessment doesn’t replace learning. My writing lessons started to look a lot more like my speaking lessons, and all of us involved enjoyed them more.

Now, this doesn’t mean that I don’t use the Product Approach. The aim of this piece isn’t for everyone to throw down their Product Approach ways and decry them as enemies of the state of Learning. Like I said, the Product Approach has a lot more in common with assessment than it does with teaching, and we DO need to assess our learners.

As I had mentioned above, I think the Product Approach is fantastic to use when helping prepare learners for exams or tests. At the end of the day, every international English Language exam includes a writing component with a time limit that doesn’t allow for proper brainstorming or drafting, so our students definitely need to learn how to handle those situations.

The real magic for me was learning when to use each approach. When I know my students need to learn more about how the skill of writing works, we go the Process route; when I know my students need test practice or want to test their skills, we go the Product route.

Further reading:

Harmer, J. 2004. How to Teach Writing. Longman

Theo Navarro
Matt Done

How long have you been giving TEFL courses?
The very first one I did was back in June 2012. I remember because England were playing in the Euro later the same day!

How did you first get into giving TEFL courses? What has changed since you first started?
The school where I was working needed trainers, and I was totally up for it. I did a ‘train the trainer’ course, which, back then, was the main requirement to be a TEFL trainer (along with a decent amount of teaching experience, of course). I then shadowed a course, and that was it - I was qualified!

The main change from then to now has probably been the new regulations which have come into force. TEFL is only part of the picture now, with what with SEPTT, the CPD hours, etc. This doesn’t have an enormous impact on the delivery of the course itself, although we do have a responsibility to inform trainees of what the requirements are to get (and keep) their permit.

What do you like best about giving this type of course? What difficulties do/did you encounter?
Although I enjoy the whole experience of teacher training, I particularly love getting people to think about language in ways they probably never have before. A huge part of becoming an EFL teacher is learning to see English from the perspective of the learners, and this is an eye-opening and important process for trainees to experience. I really enjoy giving input sessions on teaching grammar and vocabulary, where we think about what different bits of language really ‘mean’, and then practice ways of communicating that meaning to learners. Although TELT takes care of the language awareness side of things, I still find it really satisfying to get trainees to put themselves in their learners’ shoes, and see English from a new perspective.

I think the tricky thing about teacher training is transforming people’s view of what a teacher is. Because of their own past experiences as students, a lot of trainees assume that job of a teacher is simply to stand at the front of the class and explain stuff. Breaking down that view and replacing it with one where the learners are the focus is quite tough, especially over such a short period.

If you had unlimited time and resources at your disposal what would you change in the current TEFL course format?
I don’t think I’d make any wholesale changes, but one which I definitely would make would be to include more sessions on basic classroom management. To survive in a classroom, teachers need a set of fundamental skills, such as the ability to give clear instructions, grade language appropriately, deal with student responses, round up activities, etc.

A lot of courses have a single session dedicated to classroom management, which, in my view, is nowhere near enough. If I had it my way, I’d drop a session on ‘using songs’ or ‘exploiting authentic materials’, and replace it with another on classroom management so that trainees can have more practice getting to grips with these key skills.

What one piece of advice would you give the newbie TEFL trainer?
Something I’ve found useful to keep in mind when planning input sessions is that ‘less is more’. Cramming sessions full of activities might mean you ‘cover’ more stuff, but probably won’t allow enough time for the all-important reflection stage.

I’d much sooner present fewer activities and ideas,
but explore them more deeply and allow sufficient time to talk about what the point of them is. Of course, it’s important that trainees try activities out for themselves, but time to reflect on them is equally crucial.

And, what piece of advice would you give a newbie teacher?
I think a good bit of advice for new teachers is to USE THE TEACHER’S BOOK! Planning lessons from a course book and following the teacher’s notes is another essential skill, particularly early on in a teaching career. Not only is it a good way to ensure that the students get enough work on the different skills and systems, but it will also take a lot of the guesswork out of the process.

In addition to that though, another really important bit of advice I’d give is to be yourself, and to find out as much as you can about who your students are as people.

Kevin Spiteri

Kevin is the founder of Tetra, a teacher training academy specialising in ELT. Over the last 19 years, he’s held several roles in ELT schools in Malta, England, Scotland, Hungary, and Turkey. After working as a Director of Studies for several years, he decided to focus on his true passion: teacher training. Kevin is currently researching the use of VR and STEM education in ELT.

How long have you been doing TEFL courses?
My first experience as a TEFL trainer was back in 2007 with EC Malta. I went on to design my own course in 2011 during my time as Director of Studies with Linguatime. More recently I have designed, set up and delivered TEFL Cert. courses in collaboration with a number of schools across the island including inlingua, am Language Studio, Sprachcaffe and Chamber College.

How did you first get into it? What has changed since you first started?
Being someone who never particularly found school as an engaging or fun experience I always took it upon myself to offer the exact opposite to my students. Getting into teacher training was just my way of trying to cultivate a new breed of teachers that would not only facilitate learning through the various methods and approaches available, but to try to introduce a culture that promotes learning through hands-on, fun, engaging and immersive experiences that break down the walls of the classroom.

Having attended a TEFL course myself quite a while ago (almost 20 years now!) my memories of the course are bittersweet. Although rewarding both from a personal and professional aspect I was never too keen on the prescriptive approach. I feel that TEFL courses today have more trust in the potential of what candidates can achieve in the limited amount of time allotted to these courses. I feel that we are truly helping in the development of professional teachers that can excel in the profession by tapping into their personal strengths and experiences that they bring with them to the classroom.

What do you like best about giving this type of course?
The thing that I like most is seeing the candidates in action during teaching practice particularly with bona fide learners. Seeing their hard work and dedication throughout the course come to fruition makes it all worth it.

If you had unlimited time and resources at your disposal, what would you change in the current TEFL course format?
Plain and simple, more hands-on teaching practice with bona fide learners.

What one piece of advice would you give the newbie TEFL trainer?
Come to the course with an open mind. What you will find is somewhat, if not completely, different to the type of teaching and learning that you were or are used to in mainstream education.
And, what piece of advice would you give a newbie teacher?

Enjoy it and bring your personality to the classroom. No two teachers are the same, in the same way that there is not just one right way of doing anything. Be aware that you are providing your learners with more than just a spot of English. You are providing them with opportunities that were never available to them before across all aspects of life, opportunities that will be life changing.

Rebecca Portelli

Rebecca has worked in ELT since 1996 and has taught in the UK, Spain, Australia and Malta. Rebecca trains teachers locally and has also delivered courses at BELL, Cambridge. Her interests include creativity in the classroom, integrating Literature into Language teaching and teaching reading skills and strategies. She is currently DOS at AClass Academy.

How long have you been doing TEFL courses?

I have been an EFL teacher and teacher trainer for over 20 years and have worked in various English Language schools around the world including Australia, the UK, Spain and Malta. I became involved with the local monitoring board who were updating their requirements for EFL teachers around 2005 and I think I started running evening TEFL courses in Malta in 2007 after I completed my DipTESOL. My training experience was extended when I taught teachers from Europe on Erasmus+ courses in the UK but I only give limited training sessions in my current role.

How did you first get into it? What has changed since you first started?

I first started running TEFL induction courses because the school I was working for required more teachers for the summer months and this way we got to know our new staff really well. I was lucky enough to have a team of really qualified, dedicated tutors working alongside me and I also sought guidance from my own mentors who were already running courses in Malta. The courses we ran were very similar to the TEFL courses that are run today, perhaps there was a bit less paperwork involved. It started with a syllabus which was approved by the then Monitoring Board (now the ELT Council) and still needs to be approved. Nowadays there are more restrictions and checks and balances, I think this is a good thing overall as it encourages trainers to keep a high standard.

What do you like best about giving this type of course? What difficulties do/did you encounter?

My experience of teacher training has been really positive. Although it is stressful at times because of the work load involved in preparing materials, it is an extremely rewarding experience. Overall participants are highly motivated and eager to succeed. One thing I recall which was a huge learning curve for me was simply moving away from planning lessons and materials for students to preparing TEFL material for teachers. Instead of content we were modelling how you do things in a classroom, and then stopping to analyse and reflect upon good teaching practice. Whether you are teaching TEFL or mainstream classes this is a useful strategy for trainers. In this regard it helped to have lots of classroom experience that I could draw from - and sharing ideas and pitfalls with participants and prospective teachers was a very positive experience.

If you had unlimited time and resources at your disposal, what would you change in the current TEFL course format?

I think there is scope for improvement in every training session and truthfully I don’t think I have ever repeated a session in exactly the same way twice. The format of any course is a structure. Trainers always have some flexibility in the choice of materials they select for the outcomes they wish to achieve. The TEFL course format which your school has chosen or designed must be approved by the ELT Council as well. There are a number of very specific requirements trainers need to fulfill but potentially you could adjust the course within that structural framework. One of the issues we struggled with was the balance of peer teaching (where participants teach each other) vs teaching "real" EFL students, as the dynamics when you are teaching one of your peers are obviously quite different. In some courses and with some schools it is possible to include "real" students, but sometimes the logistics are too challenging. I suppose ideally if I had unlimited resources this would be something I would like to see adjusted.
What one piece of advice would you give the newbie TEFL trainer?
I am going to broaden this question, and speak about training teachers in general and not specifically for TEFL courses. Also, I can’t limit my response to one piece of advice - sorry! Read lots of material for trainers, put the hours into creating your own material - and above all be brave, trust your judgement and try new ideas out on your colleagues to see if they work.

And, what piece of advice would you give a newbie teacher?
Probably the same!

Alan Marsh

How long have you been giving TEFL courses?
Including Celta and other TEFL courses outside Malta: about 26 years.

How did you first get into giving TEFL courses? What has changed since you first started?
The need to help and develop new teachers. When I started teaching TEFL courses here in Malta, I was already a Cambridge Celta accredited tutor. I helped design what developed into the first TEFL Cert. courses in Malta, using my experience on Celta and elsewhere. It was necessary to simplify and to make objectives less challenging than Celta because of the wider type of market targeted by TEFL Cert. courses.

What do you like best about giving this type of course? What difficulties do/did you encounter?
What I like best is observing participants transform (sometimes slowly and painfully!) from a traditional teacher-centred, transmissive mode of teaching to a more learner-centred, facilitative mode.

Difficulties occur when a participant finds it difficult to empathise with learners and/or to transform themselves from a traditional role model to a more facilitative one.

If you had unlimited time and resources at your disposal what would you change in the current TEFL course format?
Of course, we would all like to increase the Teaching Practice component. But that would dramatically increase the cost of the course (as TP is very labour-intensive) and would put it outside the affordability range of many prospective teachers, particularly undergraduates. The ELT market depends on there being enough teachers available so without this, the industry would probably collapse.

I think that at present there are probably too many items that need to be covered in a pre-service course of this nature. These could easily be reviewed and reduced.

I am pleased that the new legal notice ensures that trainers are properly qualified and experienced. Before the new law, trainers could train with limited hours and a Celta. This was highly undesirable because on a Celta course trainees receive basic classroom survival skills in a communicative context. But training others requires much deeper knowledge and much greater practical experience than a Celta provides. I would like the number of assignments to be reduced: the focus really should be on classroom teaching skills. Knowledge about the language is covered in TELT, for example, and shouldn’t really be a requirement of the TEFL Cert. course.

What one piece of advice would you give the newbie TEFL trainer?
Make sure you still teach standard general English classes; plus, get a Cambridge ESOL Delta or Trinity TESOL Diploma: they are classroom-based and give you the depth and width of grounded knowledge that you need. A Master’s in ELT is useful for research purposes but not really for training teachers in communicative classroom teaching skills.

And, what piece of advice would you give a newbie teacher?
Teach as many different levels and types of learners (eg different age groups) as possible. Attend relevant workshops. Learn another language so you can experience how it feels to be a learner of a foreign language. Sorry, that’s three things but I was quite brief!
Interview with: Chris Walklett
Jean Theuma asked the ELT musicman about integrating music in lesson planning.

Tell us about yourself as a language teacher. What is your background? Who and what do you mainly teach now?

I have been teaching for 22 years, starting off with working back to back 9 hour teaching days at various so-called ‘visa shops’ in London. Whether they were indeed that or not didn’t concern me too much as I learnt my trade there, and despite the long hours fell in love with EFL teaching early on. My teaching journey has taken me into amongst other areas; DOS work, examining for the all the UK’s main examining bodies, materials writing and teacher training.

I now lecture in History (with a cultural studies slant) as well as teaching more ESP focused Academic Skills classes at a well-known UK university. In the summer, I still manage to do some EFL/ELT teaching and examining wherever possible. As much as I love what I am currently doing, my heart is still very much in EFL.

My area of speciality is the use of songs and song lyrics in teaching, various talks can be found on the web including my exposé of changes in uses of and attitude to this resource. I am also very interested in social or real life English and have published various articles in this field the most recent of which is, believe it or not on swearing.

You have a fascination with using songs in class to teach English. Why do you think that songs work well in language learning?

That’s certainly right, I do have a fascination with using songs. I think they work in all sorts of teaching, but are particularly useful when teaching EFL/ELT. This fascination with what can be learnt from songs goes right back to my youth. It was my older sister who introduced me to a wide range of genres of music when I was not much more than a nipper really.

I learnt a lot about life from songs and their lyrics. I feel perhaps more than anything else they help you to get in touch with your emotions – the idea that there is somebody out there who feels like you and can articulate the way you are feeling is a strong one. This still exists for the young to some degree these days I suppose, but is not as all-encompassing as it was and lacks the unifying element that I feel music brought to my generation. Perhaps I shouldn’t, but this is something I worry about. For these things nowadays, young people perhaps most heavily rely on the internet and social media, which is really not the same thing at all. Perhaps, by bringing music back into the classrooms, we can promote this media as a way for our students to better understand their emotions or a means through which they can express themselves.

Songs work for all sorts of reasons. Alan Maley famously gave 10 reasons to use them namely; memorability, rhythmicity, performance/recitability, ambiguity, non-triviality, universality, playfulness, reactional language, motivation and interaction (1990, 93-95) and these still hold true. Certainly the rhythm and the repetition within songs aids memory. It can’t be only me that struggles to remember even basic poems, but can recall swathes of song lyrics: there is something going on here that is interesting and needs further exploration I feel especially if it is likely to lead to greater language acquisition for learners.

They are also an ideal text type due to their brevity. A songwriter’s skill is often in a song’s specific and unique perspective, or indeed the opposite, in their ambiguity - where it is the intention that the lyrics can mean different things to different people. You simply don’t hear the messages expressed in songs and song lyrics anywhere else. I would even go so far as to say (as I did in a recent Ted X talk) that in
recent times they have replaced poetry for social and political commentary and emotional connection.

EFL wise, songs are great for specific language analysis, be it lexical chunks, colloquial language, grammar in situ or phonetic analysis. In a word, they are authentic.

Which is your favourite song lesson? What happens in this lesson?

This is a bit like asking who your favourite child is, but here goes. Nowadays, in my Cultural Studies classes, when we are looking at the 1960s I look at songs for the way they reflect society. When we look at the 1980s, I have used, for theme and vocabulary at least, those with social commentary. Robert Wyatt’s Shipbuilding for instance with its exposé of the Falklands conflict’s effect on the working classes, and The Specials’ vision of urban decay in Ghost Town. And in particular The The’s indictment of Thatcher’s Britain in Heartland (51st State of the USA).

Theme-wise, I also like to use songs to present the other side of the coin so to speak. During the Queens’ Diamond Jubilee a few years back in a Social English class I did a lesson using the Sex Pistols punk anthem God Save The Queen - not to be provocative so much as to show that not everybody in the UK shares the same opinion. I have also employed thoughtful rap music – in a UK context this has included poet/rapper Scroobius Pip’s observations on modern life or the lesser known Ozmosis’ whose Imagine the Dreamer is John Lennon’s Imagine revisited for the modern age.

I am aware that I might not be answering the question, so pushed to pick one I will opt for Pink Floyd’s Money. I have used this song countless times in the classroom with my students, and explored the various elements of the song and its related activities. It is a great exposé of the world we live in which seems little changed since the early 1970s when this song came out: the theme is timeless, and the song (and the video too if exploited in the right way) are vocabulary rich, and full of idiomatic expressions. Students have really enjoyed activities based around this song and unrepentantly, I have even used it to try and ‘turn’ committed capitalists! Needless to say, it was one of my first choices for my upcoming book.

You have visited Malta twice for the ELT conference. What did you enjoy the most about your trips?

I have enjoyed both my trips to Malta and hopefully, many more trips to your wonderful island will follow.

What do I like about Malta - where to start? It feels like a home away from home, not just that everyone speaks such excellent English and drives on the right side of the road – the right side in this case, of course, being the left :) I also love the friendliness of the people, the climate, the food and the chance to see more red phone boxes than you can in the UK nowadays! On my two trips here
I’ve tried to see as much of Malta as possible, and this year even got in an overnighter in Gozo which was blissful.

I loved the hospitality and the vibe at the two ELT Malta conferences I’ve attended. The sightseeing trips and the social events that have been put on for our entertainment were so enjoyable it was easy to forget they were networking opportunities, and of course the talks and workshops were of an extremely high standard. As regards trips in Malta, my only advice would be to allow a lot longer for your journeys than the ‘as the crow flies’ distance might suggest!

**What future projects do you have lined up?**

At the moment I am putting the finishing touches on what will be, initially at least, an e-book. Loosely, it is a creative take on using this resource and outlines the sheer amount one can do with a song by offering staged lesson plans on a selection of very useable carefully chosen songs. It’s called *Teaching Tracks – Top Ten* and might be the first in a series if the reaction is good – so watch out for it! In addition to the e-book, there will be a supporting website for teachers. I hope this will be a significant step in the way this ESL staple is employed in the classroom. In addition but in a similar vein, a thematic book of songs is in the planning stage.

In terms of future talks and workshops, I intend to expand on the idea which I debuted at ELT Malta 2017, namely exploring the ways different ways in which lesson plans can be constructed, as opposed to somewhat thin and limited (often gap fill dominated) activities that currently exist. I also have in planning a presentation on the dangers of gap fills – “the gap-fill trap” as I have entitled it. Additionally I can’t help but think that rap music receives short shrift in ELT and plan to put a talk together relating to how this genre can be employed in the English language classroom.

Additionally, following this conference, I have been asked to contribute to ELT Council Malta’s latest publication - *English for 21st Century Skills*, which I am tremendously excited about.

A good place to keep up to date with my latest developments is my Facebook page, Creating uses for songs and song lyrics in ESL: [http://bit.ly/2idffVn](http://bit.ly/2idffVn)

I look forward to seeing you there.

**References:**


*The most important words you are ever going to hear!* Chris Walklett at TEDxUniversityofEssex [http://bit.ly/2yU3uxp](http://bit.ly/2yU3uxp)

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**Answer key for the Dingbats quiz on page 12.**

1 – Odds and Ends 
2 – Wise Guys 
3 – Long Overdue 
4 – Take from the rich and give to the poor 
5 – Barber 
6 – Who’s in charge? 
7 - Getting away from it all 
8 – Put the past behind you 
9 – The aftermath 
10 – Searching high and low 
11 – Count on us 
12 – Foreign language
Word search

Find the names of 13 famous authors in English literature.
Words in this puzzle appear horizontal, vertical, diagonal as well as backwards!

Created by Puzzlemaker at DiscoveryEducation.com
MATEFL events in pictures
Some images from this year’s summer sessions, held on the 24th of June.

Ian Scerri and Theo Navarro focused on fresh conversation class ideas. Theo also gave a session about teaching writing.

Kevin Spiteri spoke about language and cultural differences.

Matt Done’s session about ‘backwards’ lesson planning focused on enhancing communication.

Rebecca Portelli gave a session about exploring the reading process using literature.

Jean Theuma started a discussion about the implications of digital-age teaching.

Photos by Natasha Fabri