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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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CREATING ENVIRONMENT FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS TO USE ENGLISH

HOW CAN WE HELP ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS SUCCEED?

Summarized by Mach Buu Hien ⁽¹⁾

Helping English Language Learners Succeed



In order to create a successful learning environment for English language learners, it is essential to combine a multi-faceted approach and multiple resources. This includes the integration of curriculum content, instructional strategies, assessment techniques, cultural responsiveness, and community resources, which are all known as critical components of success.

First of all, the authors discuss the importance of how to approach the opportunities positively and productively and suggest strategies to create a motivating learning environment as well as provide instructional components which are beneficial for ELL (English language learning) students. Then, the authors also take into account the four vital components, incorporating instructional practices, resources, assessment techniques, and commodity connections as these aspects play a crucial role in the success of ELL students.

Choosing an Approach

It is crucial for educators to choose instructional approach to the native language of the students, and identifying students' native language as a benefit is of great importance. Some studies have found that creating spaces for students'

native language in academic settings has positive effective on ELL students (Collier, 1992; Bialystock, 2001; Nagy, Berninger, & Abbott, 2006). In other words, approaching the primary language, cultural background, and commodity experience of an ELL student is considered as one of the effective ways to assist instructors to acquire equitable access to educational experiences for ELL students.

Creating a Productive and Nourishing Environment

Building a positive learning community in the classroom is also important for the contribution of students' success. Particularly, teachers need to create a welcoming and trusting environment, which helps students feel more comfortable to participate in the classroom activities. For example, classroom discussions should be non-judgmental, but they need to be supportive, and team building processes should take racial, cultural and economic differences into thorough consideration. Teachers can help students feel welcome by decorating the classroom wall with historical figures and famous people from different cultures, including home life examples from various settings, featuring home and work life from textbooks and other resources, and

¹ From Ziegenfuss & et al. (2014). How can we help students who are English language learners succeed? Current Issues in Middle level education, vol.19, no.1, p.58-62. From <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1087693.pdf>

finally adapting teaching materials and activities to make it more authentic.

Instructional Practices

It is vital to recognize the level of language understanding for instructional practices. In order to enhance the quality teaching, various strategies should be used as below:

- Organizing instruction in innovative ways. The training duration will allow teachers to become more familiar with their students and build deeper trust among the students and the teacher.
- Protecting and extending instructional time. One of the ways to provide additional support and extend learning time is to offer supportive computer-based instruction, voluntary Saturday schools, and summer academics.
- Curriculum integration. Teaching integrated skills together with developing vocabulary building background knowledge should be emphasized.

Resources

A variety of resources should be available and accessible to teachers as well as students. Several resources can be used to support ELL students such as peer tutors, high school tutors, volunteer teachers, guidance counselor, social service volunteers, and so on.

Assessment Techniques

It is suggested to use various assessment methods which are likely to encourage high performance and provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge.

Community Connections

There should be a close connection between family and school. In order to acquire family and community connection, such activities as cultural days, parents as guest speakers, and volunteers from different backgrounds and language skills need to be included in the curriculum as this will enable students to learn more about language and culture.

PERSONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR SUPPORTING OUT-OF-CLASS LANGUAGE LEARNING

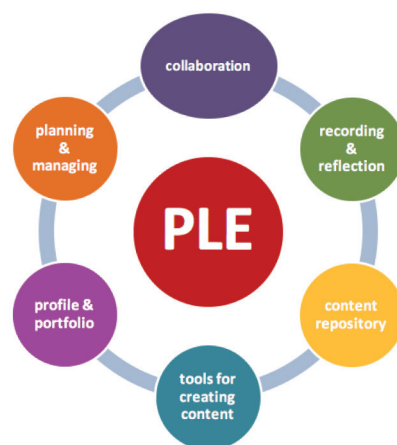
Summarized by Mai Thi Minh Tho ⁽²⁾

A personal learning environment, which is known as a learner-controlled environment, aims to develop learners' autonomy and prepare them for a lifelong learning. In order to achieve these objectives, the author analyzes important aspects that can help learners control their personal learning environment and simultaneously discuss benefits as well as strategies to monitor and support them for a more effective learning environment.

What are Personal Learning Environments (PLE)?

To create effective personal learning environments, learners have to combine numerous tools and resources that help them control their language-learning process. Some common tools can be selected such as collaboration, recording & reflection, content

repository, tools for creating content, profile & portfolio, planning & managing as these tools are beneficial to manage their learning process as below:



² Reinders, H. (2014). Personal Learning Environments for Supporting Out-of-Class Language Learning. English Teaching Forum, 52/4, pp.14-19. From <http://www.ijlt.org/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=118&id=500>

- Collaboration tools, such as Google+, Wiki, Instant Messenger (IM) programs or Skype can be used to help learners to connect with others and encourage them to work together on a project or discuss with each other.
- Portfolios & Profiles can help learners to collect evidence of completed work, more formal achievement course completions, grades, test scores etc.), and show and share their learning experience or personal information with others.
- Planning & Managing assist learners to set goals, create to-do-lists for short term actions, and check progress.
- Recording & Reflection tools such as writing journals or blogs allow learners to record and reflect on their work.
- Content repository or Tools for creating content consists of websites, videos, You tube, or Google drive

Teachers should spend more time to show the learners how to learn with it so that learners are open to interaction with the broader community, not restricted to the classroom. However, the learners' success will be varied due to some certain factors such as learner's willingness, ability to select resources, knowledge of how to use tools effectively.

Benefits of PLEs for teachers

PLEs not only help learners enhance their knowledge and skills for on-going learning development but PLEs may help learners achieve good learning outcomes in a long-term. Following is an example of how to integrate PLEs

Implementing PLEs in the language classroom

Extending the classroom with a PLE

Week 1: Provide a rationale, set clear expectations, give incentives, and provide training in the use of a PLE

Week 2: Get simply started, ask learners to tell 3 difficult things they encounter.

Week 3: Exchange problems in their learning, brainstorm possible solutions, group learners having the same problems.

Week 4 and 5: Let learners decide one topic/skill and develop a simple learning plan, give them an example of the learning plan you expect, monitor learners' activity and give feedback.

Week 6: Explain the need of monitoring their learning and accessing their progress, practice giving feedback in class, assign learners the task as homework.

Toward the end of course

Show learners e-portfolio tools and an example of a long-term learning plan. Have them complete their own learning plan and their e-portfolio to the course. Give detailed feedback to make sure students have a workable plan.

Implementing PLEs in the language classroom: Technical considerations

At the practical level, there is no need to learn how to use all those programs, but learners have to build the PLEs, because it's an advantage for learners to have extensive technical skills. This also allows learners to share as much information as they wish, and consider the information they want to share. Finally, the vast majority of the programs used in PLEs should be freely available online.

Implementing PLEs in the language classroom: Pedagogical considerations

At the pedagogical level, when implementing PLEs, it is important to examine some issues such as:

- Moving towards learner control by explaining the rationale of using PLEs;
- Monitoring personal learning by frequently giving feedback;
- Assessing learning with PLEs to acquire profound reflections on learners' learning progress and learn the amount of time they engage with their PLEs;
- Encouraging out-of class learning by using the collections of tools for self-directed learning

The impact of PLEs on learning and teaching practice

For teaching practice, teachers can get some information about their learners, learn things from them, as well as know their difficulties, their preferences and their backgrounds so that teachers may accommodate different learners' preferences.

In conclusion, teacher's role is more of a facilitator, and PLEs create more opportunities

MEETING EFL LEARNERS HALFWAY BY USING LOCALLY RELEVANT AUTHENTIC MATERIALS

Summarized by Do Kieu Anh ⁽³⁾

In this article, the author firstly defined and described authentic materials, and outlined benefits and challenges of using them in the English language classroom. Although there are numerous definitions of authentic materials by different scholars, Catherine Thomas simply defined that authentic materials are produced for real communication, and their purpose is to communicate meaning and information. In this way, authentic materials are beneficial because they connect the classroom with the outside world, and more importantly, they increase

learners' motivation. However, teachers can face such challenges of utilizing authentic materials as unfamiliar cultural content, difficult language, complex grammar structures, and time-consuming preparation. She suggested some solutions to overcome these obstacles including selecting locally relevant authentic materials to avoid materials with unfamiliar cultural content, adapting authentic texts in order to match your students' proficiency, discovering exciting ways to empower the students to do more of the work for teachers. Additionally, the author also reviewed The Input Hypothesis and the Output Principle to delineate why locally relevant authentic materials are an ideal source of comprehensible input for stimulating output from EFL learners. Finally, she offered suggestions for selecting and finding locally relevant authentic materials such as recipes, blog, magazine and tourism articles, and for planning activities appropriate for use with these materials.

STORIES AND FABLES FOR TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Summarized by Mai Thi Minh Tho ⁽⁴⁾

From the perspective, "all human beings have an innate need to hear and tell stories and to have a story to live by" (p.10), Harvey Cox believes that stories are invaluable for teachers to convey important principles and concepts. For this reason, the author suggests that stories should be used in language teaching and adapted locally to help people make connections between what is being taught and what is really happening in their own lives. Among the selection of 12 stories that the author used successfully in pre-service and in-service teacher training, it is suggested that three following stories should be used in a language classroom because they are relevant to our teaching context. Each of the following stories is included with a suggested theme to connect it to a teaching, training, or staff development situation.

Story 1: The Rocks

This is the story about a time management specialist who was asked to present on her specialty. To convey the meaning of how to manage the time effectively, she demonstrated by firstly filling the bucket with grapefruit-sized rocks, and then one at a time she poured pebbles, sand and water in the bucket. Every time she put these things in the bucket, the audiences were so surprised to realize how they were still able to fit in the bucket. What she expected the audiences to learn from her demonstration is if she did not put big rocks in the bucket first, she would not get them in at all.

The suggested theme of this story: Set your priorities, and do the most important things first.

³ Thomas, C. (2014). Meeting EFL learners halfway by using locally relevant authentic materials, English Teaching Forum, 52/3, pp.14-23. From https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/thomas_meeting_efl_learners_halfway_by_using_locally_relevant_authentic_materials.pdf

⁴ McCloskey, M. L. & Thornton, B. (2002). A Dozen Stories and Fables for Teacher Development. English Teaching Forum, 40/4. From https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/02-40-4-d.pdf

Story 2: Time to Fish

The story may be used when you facilitate project planning to encourage participants to consider what they really want to achieve. In the story, a rich businessman and a fisherman discuss how they set their goals for their lives. The fisherman just wanted to lead a simple and enjoyable life by catching enough fish everyday in order to fulfill his basic needs and responsibilities, such as feeding the family, sleeping late, taking care of the children, visiting his relatives, strolling into the village and having a drink with friends. Meanwhile, the rich businessman thought that the fisherman could make his life better by working harder to catch more fish, buy bigger fishing boat to make more profits from this bigger boat. Then, he could expand his business by selling fish directly to the processor to increase his profit and opening up a canning factory, move to the capital and maybe even later to another country to develop his business. In order to achieve this target, the businessman advised that the fisherman had to spent 15 years and when he became rich after selling his company, he could retire to a little village by the sea where he could sleep late, spend time with his wife and play with his children.

The important theme of this story: Be sure of your goals before you pursue them.

Story 3: The Sky is falling

The Little Sparrow (This version of the story was first told by Teresa McConlogue)

It was said that there was a brave knight riding through the wood on his horse. On his turn at the curve in the road, the knight saw a small sparrow in the middle of the road with its legs waving in the air. A thought coming to his mind that this sparrow might be a good dinner for owls, then he stopped and asked the sparrow. Surprisingly, the sparrow told him it was going to hold the sky so that it could prevent the sky from hitting the earth. The knight did not believe the sky was falling, and even if that was true, the sparrow could have never hold up the sky. However, the sparrow still strongly believed that it did what it could.

The suggested theme of this story: Even if a problem seems hopeless or too big to handle, we should never give up.

Conclusion

In fact, stories can be purposefully utilized in our training or teaching to make it more effective and meaningful. Hopefully, these stories are useful to tell, adapt, and to discuss with the teachers and students with whom you work.



NEWS

Training Workshop on Innovative Approaches in Teaching Content Areas in English for VNU-HCMC Lecturers at SEAMEO RETRAC

The SEAMEO Regional Training Center (SEAMEO RETRAC) in collaboration with Viet Nam National University – Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCMC) conducted two training courses on “Innovative Approaches in Teaching Content Areas in English” for 64 lecturers of VNU-HCMC from 09 November to 30 December, 2018. The courses aim to help participants be updated with the contemporary approaches, techniques, and practices in teaching content areas in English. After the training, course participants are able to design and create classroom activities to engage students in active learning, and be aware of available technologies and their creative application in teaching content areas.



The 54th RELC International Conference and 5th Asia-Pacific LSP & PC Association Conference in Singapore

The 54th RELC International Conference and 5th Asia-Pacific LSP & PC Association Conference will be jointly organized by SEAMEO RELC and Asia-Pacific LSP and Professional Communication Association. The conference aims to bring together academics, researchers and teachers of English to exchange and share their experiences, new ideas, and research findings in language education.

The conference theme will be focusing on dimensions of teaching and learning English in the digital era. As today's social contexts are becoming increasingly multi-lingual and multi-cultural, English is taught and learned as an international language for international purposes and intercultural communication. Increasingly, English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is used in educational institutions and its growing importance is seen in language practice and research areas such as EMI, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Professional Purposes (EPP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English Language Teaching (ELT).

54th RELC International Conference &
5th Asia-Pacific LSP & Professional Communication Association Conference

**Teaching and Learning of English for Academic, Professional
and Other Purposes in the Digital Era**

11 - 13 March, 2019 SEAMEO RELC, Singapore

Click here to register!

DETAILS • INVITED SPEAKERS • PROPOSALS • REGISTRATION • MORE INFORMATION

Time & Venue:

- Date: March 11 – 13, 2019
- Venue: SEAMEO Regional Language Center, Singapore.
- Website: <https://goo.gl/2y3HXa>

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2019 in Japan

The Asian Conference on “Independence and Interdependence” in language learning will be held on 16 – 18 May, 2019 at Toshi Center, Tokyo, Japan.



This conference provides opportunities to explore psychological, theoretical and practical aspects of language learning. Whether one’s focus is the impact of technology or the integration of emotions into the classroom, we can and must all rely on each other to best serve students and support them in becoming autonomous, independent language learners who can be successful in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. An international, intercultural, and interdisciplinary conference such as this brings us together; to surprise, support, and learn from each other.

Conference Themes:

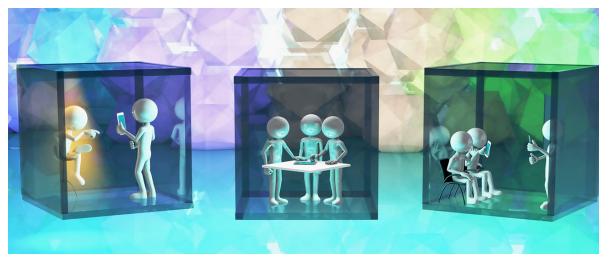
- The psychology of language learning
- Learner autonomy
- Technology enhanced learning
- Relationships between content and language
- Critical pedagogy
- Educational cultures, ecologies, and systems
- And, additional topics and streams listed in our abstract submission guidelines

Time & Venue:

- Date: May 16- 28, 2019
- Venue: at Toshi Center, Tokyo, Japan.
- Website: <https://acll.iafor.org/>

Online Training Course on Blended Learning Essentials: Embedding Practice

This course is offered by the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom, which is designed for the Vocational Education and Training sector to promote effective use of blended learning. Particularly, course participants will know how new technology will help them learn from experience, overcome challenges and develop their skills to discover the optimal uses of blended learning.



The course will cover the following topics:

- Using data from learners to help design more effective blended learning by enhancing conventional learning designs with digital technology methods.
- The use of digital tools for sharing learning design ideas and contributing to a community of practice in blended learning design.
- The role new technology can play in addressing the key challenges of the VET sector. The extent to which technology can help teachers give learners more and better learning support, while not increasing their workload overall.
- The use of technology to promote independent learning. How to develop and share a blended learning design in Moodle.
- Strategies for reducing the costs of innovation, including through the sharing and re-use of teaching ideas and by means of cross-institutional collaboration.
- How innovative solutions can be developed to match an organization's needs and ambitions. The importance of collecting evidence that demonstrates the value of blending learning and considering the views of learners.
- Approaches to analyze the costs and benefits of investing in blended learning. How to use an interactive planning tool, the Course Resource Appraisal Modeller (CRAM), to understand the relationship between the benefits of bringing in new digital pedagogies and the costs of developing and running them.
- Techniques and approaches that can be used to support a culture change towards blended learning within an institution.
- How to work with colleagues and external organizations to support professional development and embed blended learning practice.

By the end of the course, participants are able to:

- Apply new technologies in courses and learning opportunities to improve learner outcomes.
- Develop your own skills further and contribute to the VET sector's community knowledge of the optimal uses of blended learning.
- Identify ways in which new technology can contribute to solve key challenges in your learning context.

The course will start on 25 March 2019. For further details, please go to the website: <https://goo.gl/CS7cie>

FUN CORNER



Once upon a time, there lived two pigeons. They were husband and wife. They spend their day looking for food. In the evening they would come and rest on their favorite tree in the forest.

One evening, the wife returned home early. As usual she was waiting for her husband, when suddenly it started raining. She started to worry. "Where are you, my dear? You never get so late," she whispered to herself.

Just then she saw a bird-catcher coming towards her. In a cage he had a pigeon. It was her

husband. "OH no, what shall I do now" I wish I can help my husband, she said. She desperately tried to distract the bird-catcher by flapping her wings, but all in vain.

Soon, it stopped raining. "Brrr! It is so cold," said the bird-catcher. His clothes were wet. He decided to sit under the same tree where the two pigeons lived.

The poor wife sat by her husband's cage. And she started to cry. The husband said. "Do not feel sad, dear. We now have a guest. This man is shivering and hungry. He needs your help." Hearing this, the wife flew around getting dry twigs. She made a fire for the bird-catcher. Then she looked at the bird-catcher and said, "You are our guest, since I have no food to offer, I will jump into this fire. In few minutes I will become an edible item for you. You can eat me."

By now, the bird-catcher was overwhelmed by the hospitality of the humble pigeon couple. He at once stopped the wife jumping into the fire.

He opened the cage and set the husband free. "I have been cruel and selfish. I will never trap any bird in my net again," said the bird-catcher and went away. The two pigeons were happy to be reunited.

BELL THE CAT

There was a grocery shop in a town. Plenty of mice lived in that grocery shop. Food was in plenty for them. They ate everything and spoiled all the bags. They also wasted the bread, biscuits and fruits of the shop.

The grocer got really worried. So, he thought "I should buy a cat and let it stay at the grocery. Only then I can save my things."

He bought a nice, big fat cat and let him stay there. The cat had a nice time hunting the mice and killing them. The mice could not move freely now. They were afraid that anytime the cat would eat them up.

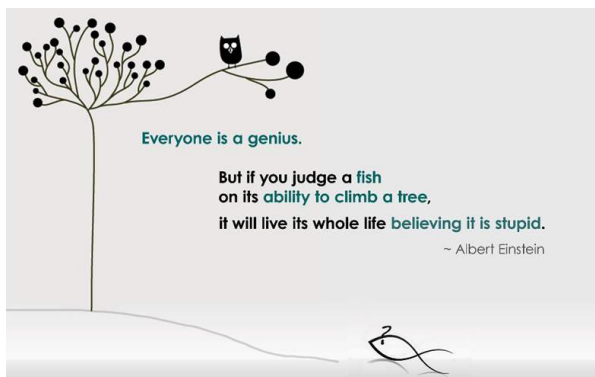
The mice wanted to do something. They held a meeting and all of them tweeted "We must get rid of the cat. Can someone give a suggestion"?

All the mice sat and brooded. A smart looking mouse stood up and said, "The cat moves softly. That is the problem. If we can tie a bell around her neck, then things will be fine. We can know the movements of the cat".

"Yes, that is answer," stated all the mice. An old mouse slowly stood up and asked, "Who would tie the bell?" After some moments there was no one there to answer this question.



EVERYONE IS IMPORTANT



The lion king was busy appointing various animals at different posts. The cheetah had been made the army commander because he was quick to think and the fastest runner. The wise elephant had been made the prime minister. Time passed by and other animals also got their posts. In the end only the rabbit, the tortoise and the donkey were left.

At this time, the animals started laughing. The zebra said, "The rabbit gets scared easily and the tortoise takes hours to move an inch. The donkey is a fool. They cannot get any post in the royal court."

But the lion king said, "No friends! Please don't tease them. All animals have different and unique qualities. The rabbit will be our messenger because he runs fast. The tortoise can hide and spy on the border posts. The loud voice of the donkey can be used as a bugle call. We must learn to respect everyone. "

Thus all the animals of the forest learnt a new lesson that day.

Source:

<http://www.english-for-students.com/The-Hospitality-of-The-Pigeon.html>

<http://www.english-for-students.com/Bell-The-Cat.html>

<http://www.english-for-students.com/Everyone-is-Important.html>

