

**LUCRĂRILE SIMPOZIONULUI DE
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“EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE:
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TEACHING ENGLISH”**

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TEACHING LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

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The application of learning and communication strategies to class is generally known as strategies-based instruction (SBI). Teaching learners how exactly they should learn has become crucial to the language acquisition process. Learners need to be aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and preferences; they need to be able to differentiate between strategies that work for them and strategies they work against them. Research has shown that learners tend to become discouraged if they consider that their lack of success derives from fixed, unchangeable causes (lack of aptitude, difficulty of the task), while knowledge of the fact that they have control over the learning process and that the outcome of their learning is not predetermined helps them maintain their positive attitude towards learning.

The methodological studies stress the importance of explicitly training students in learning strategies, since it may not occur to students that there is a variety of strategies they can choose from in order to conduct their learning. Learners need to be told overtly whether a certain strategy is likely to help them; they also need to be taught how to use it and how to transfer it to a new situation.

Studies have shown that students benefit from SBI provided that they understand the strategy itself, perceive it to be effective, and do not consider its implementation to be exceedingly difficult. In order to implement SBI effectively, three steps need to be taken into account: one involves identifying learner's styles and potential strategies, another supposes to incorporate SBI in communicative language courses and classes, and the last one requires to provide extra-class assistance for learners.

Incorporating SBI into the Language Classroom is the next step to be taken by teachers in the process of helping their students master the new language. Michael Grenfell and Vee Harris (1) point out a number of rules that should be taken into account when teaching learning strategies.

1. **Strategy instruction should be integrated into everyday lessons** in order to reinforce the relevance of the strategies being used. Nevertheless, the teacher should not assume that training students in strategy use will automatically lead to their development of communicative competence. Strategy instruction should only reflect a communicative view of the nature and purpose of language learning.
2. **The purpose of strategy instruction should be made explicit to the learners.** This would promote learners' engagement in task planning, execution and assessment. As a result, the range of strategic competence the learners bring to class will be expanded and the students will feel that they take control over the learning process.
3. **Strategy instruction should involve collaborative learning**, in order to share the consciousness of the other learners. Students need to brainstorm together how they approached a certain task, or model their own strategies for the others, or practise new strategies together either in pairs or in groups, or check each other's work. A portfolio project may be very useful in this respect, as it represents “an attempt to create a community of language learning practice in which learners had frequent opportunity to externalise in discourse to their instructor and themselves their own learning.” (2)
4. **Strategy instruction should be in the target language as far as possible.** With beginner classes, checklists can be accompanied by visual support, although the awareness raising and the evaluation would have to be in the first language initially.

(Since the aim is to have all the class participate in the discussion and reflect on their learning, the effort of explaining in the target language may deter students from contributing to the discussion.)

5. Strategy instruction should be geared towards the level and needs of the learners.

As far as the skill areas are concerned, some tasks and strategies are more or less demanding than others. Within listening activities, using inferencing to establish the meaning of a word may be easier than using inferencing to establish someone's attitudes on a debated topic. Cognate identification may be easier than working out the meaning based on grammar knowledge. As a result, the teacher may select some of the strategies needed by the learners before the learning cycle begins.

Teachers have an arsenal of methods that may help them identify their students' tendencies and establish the appropriate strategies that are required in the language development process. Strategy awareness and practice will then be embedded into teachers' pedagogy in more formal ways. For example, strategy awareness modules are already included in some textbooks as part of the curriculum. Techniques such as fluency exercises, rapid reading, communicative games, and error analysis can also stimulate students' practice of successful strategies if the teacher points out what strategies are being used within a particular activity and how that strategy triggers language development.

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- (1) As listed by M. Grenfell and V. Harris, *Modern Languages and Modern Strategies. In Theory and Practice*, Routledge, 2002, p. 103-107
- (2) Donato and McCormick, as quoted by M. Grenfell and V. Harris, *Modern Languages and Modern Strategies. In Theory and Practice*, Routledge, 2002, p. 105

TEACHING IDIOMATIC STRUCTURES WITH PRIMARY CLASSES

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When I first stepped into a primary classroom, I believed that teaching language meant teaching words. I focused on vocabulary lists, simple sentences, and repetition, convinced that these were the essential building blocks for young learners. However, as time passed, I began to realize that language is much more than isolated words and fixed rules. It is dynamic, expressive, and deeply connected to culture. This realization encouraged me to explore idiomatic structures—even with very young students.

At first, the idea seemed almost unrealistic. Idioms are often viewed as too abstract for children who are just starting to form basic sentences. How could a seven-year-old understand expressions like “it’s raining cats and dogs” or “break the ice”? Yet, I quickly discovered that children are naturally curious and surprisingly receptive to figurative language—especially when it is introduced in an engaging way.

I learned that teaching idioms is not about memorization, but about experience. For example, when I introduced the idiom “spill the beans,” I didn’t start with a definition. Instead, I told a short story about a child who accidentally revealed a secret about a birthday party. The students laughed and eagerly guessed what “spill the beans” could mean. By the end of the activity, they not only understood the idiom but were also excited to use it in their own sentences.

Visual aids became another powerful tool in my classroom. When teaching “it’s raining cats and dogs,” I asked the children to draw what they imagined. The result was a collection of funny pictures showing animals falling from the sky. This humorous activity helped them clearly see the difference between literal and figurative meaning. It also made the lesson memorable and enjoyable.

Role-play proved equally effective. I remember organizing a simple activity where one student had to “break the ice” in a new group. The child introduced themselves, asked a few friendly questions, and soon the whole group felt more comfortable. Afterward, we discussed what had happened and connected it to the idiom. Through this experience, students understood not just the meaning, but also the context in which the expression is used.

Of course, selecting the right idioms is essential. I tend to choose expressions that are simple, relatable, and connected to everyday life. For instance, idioms like “lend a hand” are easy for children to understand because they often help each other in class. When a student assists a classmate with homework, I can naturally say, “Thank you for lending a hand,” reinforcing the idiom in a real context.

Repetition is also important, but not in the traditional sense of drilling. Instead, I revisit idioms through different activities. We might sing a song that includes an idiomatic expression, play a matching game, or create short dialogues. For example, after learning “be on cloud nine,” students might act out a scene where they receive good news and express their खुशी using the idiom. These varied encounters help закрепить their understanding in a natural way.

One of the most rewarding moments as a teacher is seeing students become creative with language. I once had a student say, “I’m on chocolate nine!” instead of “cloud nine.” While not correct, it showed that the child understood the structure and was experimenting with language. Moments like this demonstrate that students are actively engaging with what they learn.

Naturally, challenges do arise. Some children initially interpret idioms literally and become confused. For example, one student once asked me, “Do animals really fall from the sky?” Instead

of correcting them directly, I encouraged discussion by asking, “Have you ever seen that happen?” This guided them toward discovering the figurative meaning on their own.

Involving parents can further strengthen learning. I often give simple tasks such as asking children to use an idiom at home or explain it to their family. One parent later told me that their child proudly said, “Don’t worry, I’ll lend a hand!” while helping in the kitchen. These small moments show how classroom learning extends into real life.

Over time, I have also realized that idioms support emotional development. Expressions like “be on cloud nine” help children talk about happiness, while “lend a hand” encourages cooperation and empathy. Language becomes not only a communication tool but also a way to understand and express feelings.

In multicultural classrooms, idioms can even build bridges between students. I sometimes invite children to share similar expressions from their own languages. For example, a student might explain an idiom from their culture that also describes heavy rain or happiness. This exchange fosters respect, curiosity, and a sense of connection among learners.

Assessment, in my experience, should also reflect this dynamic approach. Rather than relying only on tests, I observe how students use idioms in conversations, storytelling, or group work. When a child naturally says, “He spilled the beans!” during a discussion, I know that real learning has taken place.

Looking back, I no longer see idiomatic structures as an advanced topic. Instead, they are an essential part of early language education. They bring color, humor, and authenticity into the classroom, helping children understand that language is not just about rules, but about meaning and expression.

Ultimately, teaching idioms in primary classes is a journey—one that requires creativity, patience, and flexibility. Yet, it is also filled with joy and discovery. When children laugh at a funny expression, use it confidently, or even adapt it in their own way, it becomes clear that they are not just learning a language—they are experiencing it.

And perhaps that is the most valuable lesson of all: when language is taught with imagination and heart, it becomes something children truly live, not just something they study.

TEACHERS IN THE AI ERA

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Teachers will remain essential in the AI era, though their roles are rapidly shifting from being "transmitters of knowledge" to "learning architects" and mentors. While AI can create tasks like grading and lesson planning, it cannot replicate the human connection that is at the heart of effective education. Why do I think that teachers are irreplaceable? Well... Teachers can read subtle social cues, sensing when a student is frustrated, bored, or struggling with personal issues. AI lacks the capacity for genuine human empathy and cannot provide the emotional support necessary for social-emotional development.

Emotional intelligence and empathy are not just "soft skills" in teaching—they are the heartbeat of the classroom. While a curriculum tells you *what* to teach, emotional intelligence tells you *how* to reach the student.

A teacher with high emotional intelligence doesn't just see a sea of faces; they see individual emotional states. They notice the slumped shoulders of a student having a rough day or the subtle hesitation of someone who doesn't understand but is too afraid to ask. By empathizing with these silent cues, a teacher can 'rethink' the lesson, offering a moment of encouragement that re-engages a checking-out mind.

Learning is a vulnerable act. It requires students to take risks, make mistakes, and admit ignorance. Empathy builds a "safe container" where students feel seen and respected. When a teacher responds to a wrong answer with curiosity rather than criticism, they lower the student's stress levels (cortisol), allowing the brain's learning centers to stay open.

The famous saying goes, *"Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."* Empathy creates the trust necessary for influence. When a student feels a genuine human connection with their teacher, their motivation shifts from extrinsic (grades) to intrinsic (pride and relationship). This bond is the most powerful tool for classroom management.

Teachers with high emotional intelligence serve as living blueprints for their students. By managing their own frustration, admitting when they make a mistake, and practicing patience, they teach social-emotional skills by example. In a world of high-pressure testing, a teacher's calm and empathetic presence is often the most stabilizing force in a child's day. In the end, facts can be found on a smartphone, but wisdom, character, and confidence are grown through the empathetic lens of a great teacher. Teaching is often described as a labor of love, but for those in the classroom, it is more than just work—it is a unique source of profound joy and lasting satisfaction.

There is no sound more rewarding to a teacher than the collective silence of a class deep in thought, followed by the sudden "Aha!" of a student who finally grasps a difficult concept. That moment when confusion turns into clarity is electric. It's the visual spark in a student's eyes that reminds an educator why they chose this path: to be the bridge between the unknown and the understood. While many professions see immediate results, teaching is about planting seeds for a harvest you may never personally see. The satisfaction comes from knowing you are an architect of the future. Whether it's teaching a child to read, helping a teenager find their voice, or mentoring a college student through a crisis, teachers shape the characters and leaders of tomorrow. Knowing that a single word of encouragement could change the trajectory of a life is a powerful, humbling privilege.

One of the best-kept secrets of teaching is that the instructor often learns as much as the students. Young minds bring a raw curiosity and a fresh perspective that keep a teacher mentally sharp and emotionally engaged. This daily exchange of ideas prevents stagnation; it forces a teacher

to remain a lifelong learner, finding wonder in topics they have taught a hundred times before.

Ultimately, the joy of teaching is found in the relationships. It's in the former student who returns years later to say, "You believed in me when I didn't," or the quiet gratitude of a shy student who finally feels seen.

WHERE STUDENTS SHAPE THEIR OWN LEARNING EXPERIENCE

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In today’s educational context, students are increasingly accustomed to fast access to information and ready-made answers. While technology offers valuable support, it can also reduce opportunities for deeper thinking, imagination, and authentic communication. In the English classroom, where language should be actively used rather than passively received, this presents a challenge.

This paper explores how fostering *experience exchange*—through interactive, imagination-based activities—can re-engage students and encourage meaningful language use. By shifting the focus from consumption to creation, students become active participants in their own learning process.

In my teaching, experience exchange refers to the dynamic process through which students and teacher collaboratively construct meaning through interaction. Rather than simply receiving information, students are encouraged to ask questions, share ideas, and build on each other’s contributions. This approach transforms the classroom into a space of active exploration, where language is used as a tool for thinking and expression.

Two activities that consistently support this approach are “*I’m Thinking of a Story*” and “*Class Superlatives*”.

One of the most effective activities I use to stimulate engagement is a game I call “*I’m Thinking of a Story*.” In this activity, I take on the role of the storyteller, while students reconstruct the narrative by asking questions. Using key question words such as *who*, *what*, *where*, and *when*, students gradually uncover the elements of the story.

This process transforms students from passive listeners into active participants. Rather than receiving information directly, they must think critically, formulate questions, and collaborate to piece together the narrative. The activity resembles solving a puzzle, where each answer provides a new clue and encourages further inquiry.

I have observed that this task promotes spontaneous language use, as students rely on their own linguistic resources rather than memorized structures. It also supports the development of question formation skills, which are often underdeveloped but essential for real communication.

Importantly, the activity can be adapted to suit different proficiency levels. At lower levels, students ask simple questions and produce short responses (e.g., *Who is in the story? Where are they?*), while more advanced learners engage with more complex structures involving *why* and *how*, generating more detailed and nuanced exchanges.

“*Class Superlatives*” is a simple but highly engaging classroom game designed to revise superlative forms in a meaningful and emotionally positive context. It is suitable for students from 3rd to 8th grade and can easily be adapted according to the learners’ level. The activity combines grammar practice with social-emotional learning, encouraging students to recognize and appreciate

the positive qualities of their classmates.

The activity takes place in two stages. First, students brainstorm as many superlative forms as possible related to positive moral traits and personality qualities. Both short and long adjectives are encouraged, for example: *the kindest, the funniest, the most generous, the most helpful*. Only positive traits are accepted in order to maintain a supportive classroom atmosphere.

In the second stage, the first student receives a sheet of paper and writes a sentence about a randomly chosen classmate, following the model provided by the teacher on the board, for example: “Maria is the most generous in the class.” The paper is then folded and passed on to the next student. The activity continues until all students have participated.

“*Class Superlatives*” transforms a grammar revision exercise into a meaningful interpersonal experience. It reinforces the use of superlatives, enriches vocabulary, and encourages active participation from all students. At the same time, it promotes inclusion, strengthens class cohesion, and creates a positive and supportive learning environment in which every student feels valued and involved.

Through these activities, I have observed a noticeable increase in student participation, confidence, and willingness to take risks in communication. Students become more engaged when they are given the opportunity to contribute ideas rather than reproduce information.

While students are often used to quick answers and passive input, activities based on imagination and interaction encourage them to slow down, think, and express themselves more independently. The aim is not to reject technology, but to rebalance the learning process by preserving space for creativity and human interaction.

Experiencing exchange, as implemented through interactive and imaginative classroom practices, plays a vital role in fostering authentic language use. By encouraging students to ask questions, explore ideas, and construct meaning, the English classroom becomes a space of active engagement rather than passive reception.

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MODERN METHODS USED IN TEACHING VOCABULARY

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Modern methodology includes several methods. One of the most effective methods for presenting new language is the so-called “guided discovery”. Scrivener (2005) defines it as the teacher “leading people to discover things that they didn’t know they knew via a process of structured questions”. The teacher can also introduce a situation or context and elicit the language from the students. Suitable reading or listening activities can be used as a source of new language.

Another valuable method is the Test–Teach–Test approach, in which students discover what they already know, revise or learn something new, and then practise the new language. These methods are interesting, involving, efficient, and highly successful.

Vocabulary or lexis is a very important part of learning a language. However, what does teaching a word involve? What should a learner know about a word to be able to say, “I know this word”? Teachers generally agree that the important issues are its meaning(s), pronunciation (both individually and in a sentence), spelling, various forms (tenses, plural forms, etc.), uses (position in a sentence), connotations, and collocations. Of course, it is not necessary to teach all these aspects during a single lesson.

I will now consider some modern ways of teaching lexis. As suggested by Scrivener (2005), some of the most common methods in modern teaching are:

- match the words with the pictures;
- check the meaning of these words in the dictionary;
- match the words with the definitions;
- brainstorm words on a set topic;
- divide words into groups (e.g., food words and hobby words);
- label the items in a picture with the correct names;
- complete gapped sentences with words from a list;
- discuss a topic that will feature in the text;
- predict which words are likely to appear in a text.

In addition to these methods, teachers may also use:

- miming, drawing, or showing a flashcard to indicate the meaning of a word;
- using timelines or percentages to explain meaning;
- eliciting words through a short, preferably funny or personal dialogue or story;
- allowing students to infer meaning from context;
- using synonyms or antonyms;
- crosswords and riddles;
- translation, especially for abstract words or difficult verbs, preferably elicited from students.

These lists do not include all the methods a teacher can use. However, they can be employed in a variety of activities such as pre-teaching, listening for lexis, reading for lexis, and dictionary work.

Pre-teaching lexis can help students recall items they have encountered before as well as learn new words. Scrivener (2005) points out that “the main aim is to help ensure that the following activity will work because there will be fewer stumbling blocks of unknown lexical items”. He also notes that pre-teaching can be successfully used to practise words that are “useful in their own right”. In classrooms, pre-teaching appears to be both helpful and engaging.

Introducing and establishing the meaning of a new lexical item is not enough. According to

Scrivener (2005), learners need to meet new lexical items, understand their meanings, learn how they are used and combined with other words, practise using them, remember them, and finally recall and use them appropriately. This process can be achieved through a vocabulary lesson, whose primary aim is teaching and practising vocabulary rather than grammar or language skills.

As Broughton (2003) states, “A language item which is not contextualized is more difficult to remember and to use.” Therefore, it is important to keep new words in context. According to Scrivener (2005), a vocabulary lesson typically involves six stages:

1. Pre-teaching lexis;
2. Written practice of lexis;
3. Oral practice;
4. Reading to find specific information;
5. Further lexis work;
6. Communicative activity.

From a certain point of view, these stages correspond to those of the traditional grammar lesson: presentation (meaning, oral form, and written form) and practice (controlled, guided, and free). This procedure also supports Scrivener’s view that the ability to use language is more of a skill developed through practice than a body of information learned and then applied. Many educators agree that the most effective way of remembering vocabulary is by actively using it.

To sum up, the principles of modern methodology emphasize student-centred interaction and active involvement in the learning process. This shifts the teacher’s role from transmitting knowledge to facilitating learning. The teacher’s task is to select activities appropriate to learners’ needs, guide them through lessons, and encourage experimentation with language.

Modern methodology comprises a rich variety of methods that share common features: student involvement and a close connection to real-life situations. To be effective, these methods should follow one another in a logical sequence and maintain a balance between different aspects of language learning.

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BRIDGING THEORY AND CLASSROOM REALITY: BEST PRACTICES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AT HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

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In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), the relationship between theory and practice is both dynamic and essential. While pedagogical theories provide a solid foundation for understanding how languages are acquired, the classroom experience often requires adaptation, creativity, and responsiveness to real learners. As a high school English teacher, I have found that effective teaching emerges from the continuous exchange between methodological principles and day-to-day classroom realities. This essay explores key theoretical approaches in ELT and illustrates how they can be translated into practical, effective strategies through concrete classroom examples.

1. Communicative Language Teaching in Action

One of the most influential theories in modern language teaching is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. In theory, CLT encourages learners to use English in meaningful contexts rather than focusing solely on grammatical accuracy.

In practice, this approach can be implemented through task-based activities. For example, in a lesson with 10th-grade students on the topic of “travel and tourism,” instead of simply teaching vocabulary lists, I organized a role-play activity where students worked in pairs: one student acted as a travel agent and the other as a tourist planning a holiday. They had to negotiate destinations, budgets, and preferences using target language structures.

Although grammatical errors appeared, the emphasis was placed on fluency and communication. Over time, students became more confident speakers, demonstrating that meaningful interaction fosters both motivation and linguistic development.

2. The Role of Constructivism in Vocabulary Learning

Constructivist theory suggests that learners build knowledge actively rather than passively receiving information. In vocabulary acquisition, this means students should engage with new words in context and connect them to prior knowledge.

In my classroom, instead of traditional memorization exercises, I often use “word discovery tasks.” For instance, when teaching a unit on “environmental issues,” students were given short authentic texts about pollution and climate change. Their task was to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words using context clues, dictionaries, and group discussion.

Afterward, they created concept maps linking new vocabulary to causes, effects, and possible solutions. This approach not only improved retention but also encouraged critical thinking and collaboration, aligning theory with meaningful cognitive engagement.

3. Differentiated Instruction for Mixed-Ability Classes

Educational theory emphasizes that learners have diverse needs, abilities, and learning styles. In high school classrooms, where proficiency levels often vary significantly, differentiated instruction becomes essential.

A practical application of this theory can be seen in reading activities. When working on a text from the curriculum, I often prepare three levels of tasks:

- Basic comprehension questions for lower-level students
- Analytical questions for intermediate learners
- Critical thinking or opinion-based questions for advanced students

For example, in a lesson based on a short story, some students might identify characters and events, while others analyze themes or evaluate the author's message. This ensures that all students are engaged at an appropriate cognitive level, reducing frustration and encouraging progress for everyone.

4. Technology-Enhanced Learning and Student Engagement

The integration of technology in ELT is strongly supported by modern pedagogical theories, which highlight its role in increasing engagement and providing authentic input. However, theory alone does not guarantee effective use; careful planning is required.

In practice, I have found digital storytelling tools and online quizzes particularly effective. For example, after studying narrative tenses, students were asked to create short digital stories using presentation software or mobile apps. They combined images, narration, and text to retell a personal or fictional event.

This task not only reinforced grammar structures but also developed creativity and digital literacy. Additionally, students were highly motivated because the final product felt meaningful and shareable beyond the classroom.

5. Formative Assessment and Continuous Feedback

Modern assessment theory emphasizes formative assessment, ongoing feedback that supports learning rather than simply evaluating it. In practice, this means shifting from solely summative tests to continuous monitoring of student progress.

One effective strategy I use is “exit tickets.” At the end of a lesson, students answer a short question such as: *“What is one thing you learnt today and one thing you still find difficult?”* This provides immediate insight into their understanding and helps me adjust future lessons.

Another example is peer feedback during writing activities. Students exchange drafts of essays and use a checklist to give constructive comments. This not only improves writing skills but also develops their ability to evaluate language critically.

6. Motivation and the Affective Filter Hypothesis

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that emotional factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence influence language acquisition. In high school settings, where students may feel insecure about speaking English, creating a supportive environment is crucial.

To lower the affective filter, I often incorporate game-based learning. For example, vocabulary revision through competitive team games such as “word bingo” or “category races” reduces pressure and increases participation. Students are more willing to take risks in using English when the atmosphere is relaxed and enjoyable.

Additionally, positive reinforcement plays a key role. Simple encouragement, recognition of effort, and celebrating small achievements contribute significantly to student confidence and long-term progress.

Conclusion

The relationship between theory and practice in teaching English is not linear but cyclical. Theories such as Communicative Language Teaching, constructivism, differentiated instruction, and affective learning provide essential frameworks, but their true value emerges only when they are adapted to real classroom contexts.

As a high school English teacher, I have learnt that effective teaching requires flexibility, reflection, and continuous adaptation. Each class presents unique challenges, and each theoretical

principle must be interpreted through the lens of student needs, institutional constraints, and learning objectives.

Ultimately, the exchange between theory and practice is what transforms teaching from a mechanical process into a dynamic and meaningful educational experience, one that not only develops linguistic competence but also fosters curiosity, confidence, and lifelong learning.

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TEACHING WRITING SKILLS

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Research in the field of methodology considers writing to be the most difficult skill to acquire when learning a foreign language, not only because of the necessity to generate and organize new ideas related to a given topic, but also because of the need to produce a readable text in a foreign language.

The first step in teaching writing is choosing a topic to write about.

The teacher may use various activities to make use of the starting points that have been generated. Students are encouraged to write as much and as quickly as they can, disregarding any possible mistakes. What matters most is writing their ideas. This gives the feeling of actually accomplishing a writing task, not simply solving exercises connected to writing. The activity is a pleasant one, helps students relax and decreases inhibitions.

At this point, the teacher may choose to guide the students' steps into the writing process in order to soften their way towards more elaborate pieces of writing. This may be done by using fixed patterns in which the students may insert words that extend the context of the story. The teacher may provide a list of words they may choose from, at first, then gradually reduce control and have them come up with words of their own.

In order to help students produce more elaborate pieces of writing, the teacher needs to inform the students on the four stages of any writing process: **(1)**

- A. Planning
- B. Drafting
- C. Revising
- D. Editing

These stages are not sequential or in a particular order. The student needs to know that, while writing a draft, he/she may stop and do some more planning, may revise and then reformulate. The teachers who, due to the lack of time, choose to compress these stages into only one stage deprive their students of the connection between drafting and revising.

A. PLANNING

Planning does not necessarily imply drawing an outline for the entire writing material; it may simply suppose to jot down a chart. The teacher needs to train the students into taking into account who the reader is going to be (a friend, an official person, an unknown person who enjoys fiction, a family member etc), what the purpose of the piece of writing is (expressing plans, opinions, asking for or offering something, making a complaint, congratulating etc.).

Attention should be drawn on the choice of the mood as well; how is the reader going to feel while reading the piece of writing? Will the text express happiness, sadness, satisfaction, dissatisfaction? And, last but not least, the students should focus on the key idea the writing revolves around. For such writing activities, it may be helpful for the students to receive some guidelines that may keep the students on track during the writing process.

B. DRAFTING

At this stage, the students try to produce a piece of writing bearing in mind certain readers (friends, family, classmates, etc). This is why the teacher should draw their attention on the fact that a certain audience requires for the use of a certain writing style. Moreover, at this point, the writing process revolves around the main idea the writers want to communicate to the readers.

The students should be invited to focus on the fluency, and not on the accuracy. Research in the field of methodology stresses the fact that students should not take into account spelling, punctuation, and grammar during the drafting stage, to the benefit of having words flow on paper. Such concerns may hinder the stream of thoughts and may slow down the writer.

C. REVISING

Revising supposes an examination of the written material to see whether the communication of the meaning has been done effectively. It should improve the content and the way the ideas are organized in order to present the student's intent as clearly as possible and to get the message across successfully. The students need to know that revising supposes an improvement in both structure and clarity; it makes ideas clearer and helps readers understand the piece of writing better, while offering more satisfaction to the writer.

In order for the four stages to take place, the drafting stage needs to be accompanied by a response to the piece of writing. The teacher's response may be oral or written, but it can also be done by the students themselves, who may read each other's compositions. As an extension to this activity, the students may work in pairs and read aloud each other's compositions. This gives a good opportunity to the writer to evaluate his/her own weak and strong points.

D. EDITING

This is the stage when the written material is polished and given the final touch before it reaches its readers/evaluators. The teacher needs to point out the importance of this stage and how such mistakes may impede the correct decoding of the message they want to get across. This can be done by providing examples.

When checking the accuracy of grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure, the students may edit their own writing or their classmate's, since it is easier to spot errors in someone else's writing than in your own. The teacher may hand in a checklist to keep the students focused on some common errors, focusing on training students to spot patterns of errors, not individual errors. This enhances their autonomy from the teacher, on the correction of which they tend to become dependent. This is why such activities should be used in classes first, under the guidance of the teacher.

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MOVIES - USEFUL TOOLS IN ENGLISH CLASSES

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Movies are one of the most effective and engaging tools for English classes because they combine authentic language, cultural context, and strong visual storytelling into a single learning experience. Movies present English as it is spoken in real life—natural speed, intonation, slang, idioms, and everyday expressions. This helps students: hear authentic speech and varied accents, understand how vocabulary is used in context and improve listening comprehension through repeated exposure. Because films combine audio and visual cues, learners can infer meaning more easily, even when the language is challenging.

Moreover, films introduce students to a wide range of vocabulary—academic, conversational, emotional, and cultural. Activities such as vocabulary matching, scene-based word lists, or context guessing help reinforce new terms effectively. Students remember words better when they see them used naturally by characters in meaningful situations.

From a cultural point of view movies are cultural products. They reflect traditions, values, humor, social issues, and ways of life. Using films in class helps students to understand cultural references to compare cultures and develop empathy and global awareness.

Studies highlight that movies foster cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural understanding in EFL classrooms. We all know how important is to motivate and engage students. Therefore, students are naturally motivated by movies—they are entertaining, emotional, and visually rich. Teachers report that movie-based lessons increase participation and enthusiasm because: students enjoy stories to create emotional connections and because films spark discussions and debates. This makes learning more dynamic and enjoyable.

Nonetheless, movies developing critical thinking. Movies encourage students to analyze characters, themes, conflicts, and messages. Through guided questions, learners can consequently interpret symbolism, evaluate character decisions, identify narrative structure and express personal opinions.

Some classroom activities using movies might be:

- **Observation tasks** – students watch a scene and answer detail-based questions
- **Ordering events** – learners rearrange story events to practice sequencing
- **Role-plays** – students reenact scenes to improve speaking fluency
- **Subtitles practice** – watching with or without subtitles to strengthen listening skills
- **Scene analysis** – discussing themes, characters, or conflicts

Last but not least, movies can be adapted for all levels from beginners to advanced learners.

To draw a final conclusion, integrating movies into English classes transforms the learning experience. They provide authentic language, cultural richness, emotional engagement, and countless opportunities for creative activities. Research confirms that films enhance linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and student motivation, making them an essential tool in modern English education.

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BRIDGING THEORY AND PRACTICE: EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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The process of teaching English as a foreign language has undergone significant transformation in recent decades, moving from rigid, teacher-centred methodologies toward more dynamic, learner-centred approaches. In this context, the concept of experience exchange has emerged as a particularly valuable dimension of professional development and pedagogical effectiveness. Experience exchange creates a bridge between educational theory and classroom reality, allowing teachers to refine their methods through collaboration and critical reflection. The relationship between theory and practice in teaching English is not linear but reciprocal: theory informs practice, while practice challenges, reshapes, and enriches theory.

From a theoretical perspective, English language teaching is grounded in several major linguistic and pedagogical frameworks. Traditional grammar-translation methods emphasized accuracy, memorization, and explicit grammar instruction, often neglecting communicative competence. In contrast, communicative approaches prioritize meaningful interaction, fluency, and the functional use of language in authentic contexts. Learning occurs through social interaction, making collaboration between both students and teachers essential for language acquisition.

The classroom is a complex environment influenced by students' motivation, cultural background, proficiency levels, institutional expectations, and available resources. This is where practical experience becomes indispensable. A teacher may fully understand the principles of communicative teaching but still encounter difficulties when managing large classes, addressing mixed-ability groups, or maintaining student engagement. Through experience exchange, educators can learn how colleagues adapt theoretical models to specific teaching realities. For example, a teacher working in a rural school with limited technological access may develop highly effective low-resource communicative activities that are absent from academic textbooks but invaluable in practice.

Professional collaboration among teachers plays a crucial role in this process. Workshops, seminars, peer observations, conferences, and professional learning communities create opportunities for educators to discuss challenges and share successful strategies. Such interactions reduce professional isolation and encourage reflective teaching. Experience exchange strengthens this reflective dimension by exposing educators to multiple perspectives and alternative solutions.

An important example of theory-practice interaction can be observed in the teaching of speaking skills. Theoretically, students acquire oral fluency through regular exposure to authentic communication and opportunities for spontaneous speech. In practice, however, many learners experience anxiety, fear of mistakes, or limited vocabulary that inhibits participation. Teachers often discover through experience that building confidence is just as important as linguistic input. Activities such as role-plays, debates, pair work, and project presentations may be adapted according to students' emotional readiness rather than strictly following textbook progression.

Technology has further expanded the possibilities for experience exchange in ELT. Online teaching platforms, webinars, international teacher forums, and social media communities allow educators from different countries to share resources and innovations instantly. The rapid transition to virtual classrooms demonstrated that theoretical preparation must be accompanied by adaptability and collaborative problem-solving. Teachers exchanged practical solutions regarding student participation, digital assessment, and online classroom management, proving that collective experience often responds faster than formal institutional guidance.

Nevertheless, experience exchange should not be understood as a replacement for theory. Practical solutions without theoretical awareness may become routine habits lacking pedagogical justification. Similarly, theory without practical testing risks remaining abstract and ineffective. The most competent English teachers are those who maintain a balance between both dimensions. They rely on theory to understand why a method works and on practice to determine how it works best in a particular context. This balance also supports lifelong learning, as teaching is not a static profession but one that requires constant adaptation to linguistic, technological, and social change.

Furthermore, novice teachers benefit significantly from mentorship provided by experienced colleagues. Teacher education programs often offer strong theoretical preparation, yet beginners frequently struggle during their first years of teaching because they face situations that university courses cannot fully simulate. Mentorship and observation provide emotional support as well as methodological guidance. In this way, professional identity is shaped not only by formal training but also by participation in a community of practice where knowledge is continuously negotiated and shared.

In conclusion, experience exchange represents a fundamental connection between theory and practice in teaching English. It transforms isolated teaching into collaborative professional development and ensures that pedagogical knowledge remains relevant to real classroom needs. Theory provides the intellectual foundation for effective instruction, while practice tests and refines these principles in authentic educational contexts. Through dialogue, reflection, and cooperation, teachers become more responsive, innovative, and effective. Ultimately, successful English teaching depends not on choosing between theory and practice, but on integrating both through continuous experience exchange, which remains one of the most powerful tools for educational excellence.

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THE ART OF FINDING THEIR VOICE: WHY PUBLIC SPEAKING IS ESSENTIAL IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

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In the contemporary educational landscape, traditional academic skills are no longer sufficient to guarantee the personal and professional success of young people. In a world saturated with information and digitally interconnected, the ability to communicate clearly, confidently, and persuasively becomes a true superpower. Although often perceived as a skill reserved for adults or leaders, **public speaking finds its optimal window for cultivation during the middle school years.**

Middle school represents a period of profound transition, marked by the search for identity, emotional vulnerabilities, and social shifts. Introducing a public speaking elective course this school year proved to be more than just an academic opportunity; it was a formative necessity, providing students with the tools to transform their stage fright into impact.

Public speaking goes far beyond simply delivering a message to an audience; it touches the very core of a middle school student's socio-emotional development through three essential dimensions:

- **Building Self-Confidence:** Glossophobia (the fear of public speaking) is one of the most widespread fears globally. When addressed early through proper techniques, this fear diminishes, making way for a solid sense of self-worth.
- **Developing Critical and Structured Thinking:** A good speech requires logic, sound argumentation, and the ability to extract the essential from informational noise. Students learn not just *how* to speak, but more importantly, *what* to say and *why* it matters.
- **Empathy and Active Listening:** To be a great speaker, one must be an excellent listener. Public speaking teaches students to decode their audience, pay attention to others' reactions, and adapt their message based on the context.

The success of this elective course lay in its deeply practical nature. In an era dominated by screens, the classroom was transformed into a living laboratory, where theory was replaced by action through innovative activities:

1. Roleplaying

By assuming diverse identities—ranging from historical leaders and scientists to characters from everyday life—students practiced cognitive flexibility and problem-solving. Roleplay allowed them to explore multiple perspectives, developing their assertiveness and negotiation skills.

2. Structured Speeches

Whether dealing with persuasive, demonstrative, or storytelling speeches, students mastered the architecture of an impactful message: a captivating introduction, a well-argued body, and a memorable conclusion. This rigor will serve them long-term, from school exams to future job interviews.

3. Pantomime Stories (Nonverbal Communication)

Over 50% of a message is transmitted through body language and micro-expressions. Pantomime and nonverbal storytelling activities decoded the importance of posture, eye contact, and gestures for the students, proving to them that stage presence often speaks louder than words.

"Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." – John Dewey

Investing in communication skills at the middle school level produces positive long-term ripple effects. The competencies acquired in this elective are not confined to the classroom; they migrate organically into all other disciplines. Students become more active in class, present their projects with greater ease, and manage their emotions better during evaluation periods.

Furthermore, in the long run, these young people will step into high school and the job market with a major competitive advantage. In a future where automation and artificial intelligence handle repetitive tasks, uniquely human skills—*soft skills*—such as charisma, persuasion, the ability to inspire, and collaboration will remain irreplaceable.

This school year's public speaking elective demonstrated that when middle school students are offered a safe space for expression and proper guidance, they have extraordinary things to say. Developing these skills is not a pedagogical luxury; it is a fundamental component of a well-rounded education. Moreover, as an educator, this mission is deeply personal to me. I have always been, and still am, fearful of speaking in public. I know firsthand the paralyzing weight of glossophobia, the racing heart, and the internal struggle to let one's voice be heard. It is precisely because I understand this vulnerability that I refuse to let my students feel the same. By giving them the tools to communicate effectively early in life, we are not just improving their grades; we are breaking the cycle of fear. We are giving them the courage to own their ideas, step into the spotlight with confidence, and truly become the fearless authors of their own future.

THE AUTHENTIC CLASSROOM: BOOSTING ENGLISH FLUENCY THROUGH EUROPEAN COLLABORATION

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Every English teacher faces a familiar classroom paradox: a student may achieve top marks on a complex grammar assessment, yet experience significant hesitation when attempting spontaneous conversation with an international peer. For decades, traditional foreign language instruction has struggled to bridge the divide between theoretical textbook exercises and natural, authentic communication. Within a conventional learning environment, pupils typically compose essays destined solely for teacher evaluation and practice scripted dialogues with peers sharing their native tongue. This structural limitation often reduces language acquisition to an abstract academic chore rather than a functional life skill.

Genuine linguistic development requires a meaningful purpose alongside an authentic audience. Educational collaboration platforms like eTwinning redefine this dynamic by connecting classrooms across international borders. Through this digital framework, English transitions from an isolated school subject into an indispensable *lingua franca* that facilitates genuine human connection. By engaging in transnational initiatives, young learners no longer practice vocabulary merely to satisfy academic requirements; instead, they employ language as an active instrument to exchange ideas, establish friendships, and solve complex problems collaboratively.

To demonstrate how these collaborative frameworks operate in practice, the eTwinning initiative titled "Book Circle" offers a compelling case study. Implemented throughout the 2025–2026 academic period across partner institutions—including “Ecaterina Teodorescu” Secondary School alongside “Sfântul Andrei” Secondary School—the project engaged 6th and 7th grade learners through structured international cooperation with peer institutions based in Turkey, Italy, and Georgia.



Central to this pedagogical model was the implementation of reading circles, wherein participants assumed distinct analytical roles to examine literary works from multiple critical viewpoints and produce creative deliverables. Rather than approaching literature through passive reading, participants critically examined two seminal Jules Verne novels: *Around the World in 80 Days* and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Furthermore, students engaged in direct exchanges that transformed standard comprehension exercises into a dynamic intercultural experience. Beyond cultivating literary engagement, this collaborative framework strengthened participants' foreign language fluency, personal self-efficacy, and cross-cultural communication abilities which transformed standard classroom reading assignments into a dynamic, interactive exchange.

Student collaboration formed the operational core of the project, taking place during

scheduled class periods, after school hours, and through online forums. Working within international reading groups, pupils adopted specialized analytical roles—such as the *Researcher*, the *Interrogator*, and the *Artist*—to evaluate literary passages from multiple critical perspectives. Beyond textual interpretation, international student teams co-created original artistic artifacts, including customized team logos, handmade and digital bookmarks, and alternate book cover designs. Towards the conclusion of the initiative, participants engaged in joint brainstorming sessions to compose original song lyrics summarizing their collaborative journey.

The final deliverables achieved by the pupils were published on the central TwinSpace platform following democratic selection procedures. For instance, students across all partner nations participated in digital polling to select the official project emblem. Furthermore, participants convened through videoconferencing sessions on Zoom to present their completed assignments, exchange personal impressions, and deliver constructive peer feedback. This real-time interaction allowed educators to adapt ongoing activities continuously to match the evolving learning requirements of their students. All completed student works—encompassing literary analyses, visual artwork, and musical compositions—were ultimately compiled into a comprehensive, published digital volume.



A central strength of the "Book Circle" project was its integration into the formal English language curriculum, directly connecting foreign language acquisition with Literature and Visual Arts learning objectives. Reading circle discussions mapped directly onto official curriculum standards for reading comprehension and oral production, while graphic design tasks fulfilled visual arts competencies. Furthermore, the collaborative songwriting activity supported broader creative writing and musical expression goals. Teachers aligned weekly lesson plans and assessment rubrics with national curriculum descriptors, scheduling project milestones within regular class time to maintain pedagogical continuity.

Technology functioned not as an isolated subject, but as an essential medium enabling project outcomes. Students utilized digital design platforms like Canva to produce visual graphics, formatted layouts, and digital artwork. Video conferencing applications provided a platform for live international dialogue, while TwinSpace served as an asynchronous forum, document repository, and publishing clearinghouse. Additionally, digital survey tools enabled efficient data collection, baseline testing, and post-project evaluation.

The activities embedded in the project offer substantial linguistic benefits, as they expose learners to authentic communication tasks that demand clarity, adaptability, and purposeful language use. When students collaborate with international peers, they engage in meaningful exchanges that strengthen vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, and pragmatic awareness. Writing messages for real audiences encourages more deliberate structuring of ideas, while interactive tasks foster confidence in spontaneous communication. Through these experiences, learners refine receptive skills by navigating diverse accents and expressions, and they enhance productive skills by articulating ideas with greater precision. This sustained engagement with genuine communicative situations supports the development of fluency, fosters intercultural sensitivity, and reinforces English as a practical tool for collaboration rather than a purely academic

requirement.

The success of the "Book Circle" project demonstrates that integrating eTwinning does not require redesigning the whole national curriculum. Instead, it requires recontextualizing existing curriculum goals through an international lens.

When language serves a clear, collaborative purpose—like analyzing a book with a friend in Turkey, Italy, or Georgia—learning happens naturally. English ceases to be a set of rules to memorize for a mark; it becomes an indispensable tool for exploring the world and building global citizenship.

TEACHING LANGUAGE IN CHUNKS THROUGH NEWS TEXTS

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As an ESL teacher working with upper-intermediate and advanced learners, I have increasingly found that teaching vocabulary as isolated items is not enough. My students—whether preparing for exams or aiming for more natural communication—often produce grammatically correct sentences that still sound unnatural. This led me to explore teaching through chunks of language, an approach grounded in Applied Linguistics and strongly advocated by Michael Lewis.

In my own classroom practice, I have noticed that when students learn expressions such as take responsibility, raise awareness, or carry out research as whole units, they become more confident speakers and writers. They hesitate less, make fewer errors, and sound more natural. This confirms a key idea of the Lexical Approach: fluency depends not only on grammar knowledge, but on the ability to retrieve ready-made language. Why I Use News Texts? To make this approach practical and engaging, I rely heavily on authentic materials—especially news articles from sources like The Guardian. In my experience, news texts work extremely well because they:

- expose students to real, current language
- contain recyclable chunks useful for speaking and writing
- naturally introduce formal and semi-formal registers
- spark discussion and critical thinking

My students are often more motivated when they feel they are working with “real English,” not just textbook examples. In one of my recent lessons, I introduced the following headline: ‘City Council Greenlights River Revitalisation Project’

Classroom extract:

The City Council yesterday greenlit a major river revitalisation project aimed at restoring wetland habitats and easing chronic flooding in low-lying neighbourhoods. Officials said the scheme will roll out in phases, starting with bank reinforcement and community tree-planting this autumn. Residents who have long clamoured for action welcomed the announcement but cautioned that funding must be secured to see the plans through. “We’re hopeful the measures will pay off,” said the council chair, adding that contractors will be asked to draw up detailed timelines within six weeks.

Instead of explaining vocabulary first, I guide students to notice language themselves. First, I ask them to underline expressions they find useful or unfamiliar. Then, we group these into categories :

Collocations: greenlight a project, secure funding, draw up timelines

Phrasal verbs: roll out, see through, draw up .

Expressions: pay off, clamour for action.

I encourage students to guess meaning from context before I clarify. This step is essential—it trains them to become more independent readers.

Next, we move to practice. I might give them:

- gap-fill exercises
- matching tasks

- sentence transformation activities

Finally, students complete a production task, such as writing a short news report about a local issue or discussing a topic using at least five chunks from the lesson. This is where I see the biggest improvement: students start actively using the language.

To reinforce learning, I often bring additional headlines inspired by The Guardian: ‘Government set to roll out nationwide energy plan amid growing pressure’, ‘Tech firms under fire as data privacy concerns mount’, ‘Local communities call for action as housing crisis deepens’. ‘New education reforms aim to level the playing field’. ‘Scientists say breakthrough could pave the way for cancer treatment’. I ask students to predict the story, expand the headline, or rewrite it in simpler English. These quick activities are highly effective and require minimal preparation.

From my experience, teaching in chunks has significantly changed the way my students use English. They are no longer building sentences word by word; instead, they are drawing on a repertoire of ready-to-use expressions. This not only improves fluency but also boosts their confidence.

Using authentic materials like The Guardian allows me to bring real language into the classroom and create lessons that are both practical and engaging. Ultimately, this approach helps students move closer to natural, idiomatic communication, which is the goal of language learning.

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LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH PROJECTS

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English has become one of the most important languages for communication, education, and professional development. Many students learn English in school, but traditional lessons are not always enough to help them speak fluently and confidently. One of the most effective ways to improve English skills is through participation in international projects. These projects bring together students from different countries and cultures, giving them the opportunity to communicate in real-life situations. International projects play an essential role in learning English because they improve communication skills, increase motivation, develop cultural awareness, and prepare students for future careers.

First of all, international projects help students improve their communication skills. During these activities, participants must use English to exchange ideas, solve problems, and work together on different tasks. Unlike classroom exercises, where students often repeat grammar rules or memorize vocabulary, international projects require real communication. Students learn how to:

- express their opinions,
- ask questions
- understand people from different backgrounds.

Because English becomes a practical tool rather than only a school subject, learners become more confident in speaking and listening. In many cases, students who are shy in the classroom feel more relaxed when they communicate with peers from other countries in an informal environment.

Another important advantage of international projects is that they increase students' motivation to learn English. Many young people lose interest in language learning because they do not see how English can be useful in real life.



However, when students participate in exchanges, online collaborations, or Erasmus-type programs, they quickly realize that English is the key to communication and friendship. They become more enthusiastic about learning new words, improving pronunciation, and understanding different accents. Motivation is one of the most important factors in education, and international projects create a strong reason for students to continue studying English with pleasure and determination.

In addition, international projects help students develop cultural awareness and tolerance. Language and culture are closely connected, and learning English through interaction with international partners allows students to discover traditions, customs, and lifestyles from around the world. By working together with people from different countries, students learn to respect diversity and understand different perspectives. This experience reduces stereotypes and encourages open-mindedness. For example, a Romanian student participating in an international project may discover similarities and differences between Romanian culture and the cultures of students from Spain, Germany, or Italy. Such experiences help young people become more adaptable and respectful

citizens in a multicultural society.

Furthermore, international projects contribute to personal development. Students learn important life skills such as teamwork, responsibility, problem-solving, and leadership. They often need to organize presentations, participate in discussions, or collaborate on creative activities. These experiences improve not only language abilities but also social and emotional skills. Students become more independent and self-confident because they learn how to manage challenges in an international environment. In many cases, participants create friendships that last for years, which makes the learning experience even more valuable and memorable.



International projects are also very important for future career opportunities. Today, many companies look for employees who can communicate effectively in English and work with international teams. Students who participate in global projects gain practical experience that can help them in their academic and professional lives. They become familiar with international communication styles and learn how to cooperate with people from different cultures. These abilities are highly appreciated in fields such as business, tourism, technology, medicine, and education. Therefore, international projects not only improve English skills but also prepare students for success in the modern job market.

Moreover, technology has made international collaboration easier than ever before. Through video conferences, online workshops, and social media platforms, students can participate in international projects even without traveling abroad. Virtual exchanges allow learners to practice English regularly and interact with native or non-native speakers from different countries. This modern form of communication helps students become more comfortable using English in digital environments, which is extremely important in the 21st century.

In conclusion, international projects have a major impact on learning English. They improve communication skills, increase motivation, promote cultural understanding, and prepare students for future careers. At the same time, they help young people develop confidence, independence, and teamwork abilities. English is no longer only a school subject; it is a bridge that connects people

from different cultures and opens doors to new opportunities. For these reasons, schools and educational institutions should encourage students to participate in international projects as often as possible. Through such experiences, learning English becomes more practical, enjoyable, and meaningful.

STRETCH THE SENTENCE: BUILDING MAGNIFICENCE INTO SIMPLE CLAUSES

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"Words are things, and a small drop of ink, falling like dew, upon a thought, produces that which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think." — Lord Byron

When we ask students to "stretch a statement," we aren't just telling them to ramble or use more words; we are teaching them in-depth thinking. We hence stir their cognitive awareness from basic recall to vivid description and critical analysis.

Consider how a sentence virtually expands when a teacher asks students to do this. It moves from a static point to a multi-D-like picture:

"I bought a house." ---- (, Add Descriptive Adjectives and Epithets:)

"I bought a deceptively compact, rustic cottage." ---- (, Add Spatial Context, Adverbs and Subordination:)

"I recently bought a marvelously built rustic cottage nestled quietly in a rolling suburban valley."

By encouraging this sentence elasticity, we don't just teach grammar; we teach visual storytelling. Students are provided with the structural scaffolding required to paint vivid pictures with their vocabulary. A mere statement is taking shape as a rose in bloom, up to a garden of roses in blossom, mesmeric in their heavenly vista and long-lasting fragrance – this is how a word is so spectacularly knitted to the ones around into genuine sentences and paragraphs – A garden of roses is a spectacular place. , A garden of roses is something you want to take with you home., A garden of roses likens a novel you so dearly want to purchase to avidly read. A garden of roses so uniquely likens a human being in its beauty, fragrance and refinery. – and ultimately how a good read is shaped.

Stretch the sentence is a superb practice for various levels, enabling students to enjoy at most their power of crafting a tiny text to genuinely expanding it into wondrous pieces of writing, from mere paragraphs to short stories.

This is a sound and entertaining fun practice that enables words, apparently so lifeless like scattered planets in the Universe, to gradually acquire importance as constellations of words and so become meaningful brief contexts up to real masterpieces, just as the Earth appears colourful and rivetingly painted.

An easy stretch-the-sentence drill may look like this: This is a house. It may stay like this and be followed by easy sentences. The house is not big. It has a garden. It has one storey. Inside there live a family. Or it may be turned into a developed statement: This is a quaint, double-glazed suburban bungalow.

A series of micro-activities are meant to enhance this approach. One may be the accordion one. Draw a simple accordion, a spring, or a rubber band on the whiteboard to represent sentence expansion. Write a micro-sentence on the first fold (e.g., *"The dog barked"*). Pass the marker to the next student, who must expand it by adding an adverb (*"The dog barked fiercely"*). The next must

add a clause (*"The dog barked fiercely because a stranger approached the gate"*).

This physical, visual metaphor helps students realize that sentences are not rigid blocks of cement; they are elastic bands that can expand indefinitely.

Another is banning words like *good*, *bad*, *nice*, *big*, and *sad* for an entire lesson. When a student says, *"The book was nice,"* introduce them to a next-level alternatives or evocative metaphors. Was it *riveting*? *Thought-provoking*? *An emotional rollercoaster*? By stretching their lexical boundaries, you simultaneously stretch their ability to assess and analyze the world around them.

Whenever a student provides a minimalist answer, don't just say "Good." Use a designated, dramatic prompt: "Paint the scene." or "Depict it thoroughly.":

Student: *"I went to the market."*

Teacher: *"Paint the scene, Elena!"*

Student: *"I hurriedly elbowed my way through the chaotic, sun-drenched market in the heart of the city center."// "I eagerly went to the nearby market to get the sweetest strawberries for the whole family."*

When we teach our students to stretch their statements, we are empowering them to voice their true identities in a foreign language. We move them away from the plain environment of textbook reiteration and guide them toward the sprawling, vibrant landscape of genuine human connection.

What's more, this approach does not solely hint at written language, this is also valid with speaking drills. Almost unknowingly, when asked to stretch the phrase, students gradually ward off that fear of speech and diligently look for words to expand their statement. Just as a pebble dropped into a still pond sends waves across the water, a single spoken phrase can engulf the entire class of students across a classroom. The teacher tosses a soft ball or a paper globe to a student, offering a bare, lifeless clause: *"The train arrived."* The student must catch it, instantly add a phrasal verb or dynamic adverb, and pass it onward: *"The morning train chugged in sluggishly."* The next student catches the momentum, stretching the context further: *"The morning train chugged in sluggishly, coughing thick smoke into the crisp mountain air."* This swift game of verbal drills proves to learners that a spoken sentence is easily shaped by imagination.

By teaching our students to make use of their language, we hand them the keys to their own identity in a foreign tongue. We invite them to step away from the monochromatic world of simple textbook repetition and step boldly into a sprawling, vivid landscape of genuine context, where every word is a rose in bloom, and every voice can bring down the house.

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CHAMPIONS BEYOND THE GAME: USING STEAM TO ELEVATE PERFORMANCE AND LEARNING IN A MULTI- SPORT HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

In a sports high school where disciplines such as handball, athletics, volleyball, swimming, and boxing define students' daily routines, education must go beyond physical training. STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) offers a powerful framework to connect academic learning with athletic practice. This article presents a tailored perspective on how STEAM projects can enhance performance, deepen understanding, and prepare students for both sports and future careers.

1. Introduction

Our sports high school brings together students engaged in diverse disciplines—handball, athletics, volleyball, swimming, and boxing—each requiring specific physical, technical, and mental skills. While training builds strength and discipline, integrating STEAM into the educational process transforms students into informed athletes who understand the science behind their performance.

2. Why STEAM Matters in Our Sports Environment

Science explains endurance and recovery, Technology supports performance tracking, Engineering improves equipment, Arts enhance coordination and creativity, and Mathematics supports statistics and strategy. STEAM links theory with practice.

3. Sport-Specific STEAM Applications

Handball: physics of throwing and tactics analysis.

Athletics: biomechanics and speed analysis.

Volleyball: trajectory and coordination.

Swimming: hydrodynamics and efficiency.

Boxing: reaction time and force measurement.

4. Practical STEAM Projects

Performance Analysis Lab, Heart Rate Study, Sports Statistics, Equipment Design, Nutrition Planning, Creative Identity Projects.

5. Benefits for Students

Improved performance, increased motivation, critical thinking development, and expanded career opportunities.

6. Implementation

Collaboration between teachers and coaches, use of accessible tools, and integration into daily training.

7. Conclusion

STEAM education transforms students into both better athletes and well-prepared individuals for future careers.

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TRAINING LEARNERS IN EFFECTIVE DICTIONARY USE

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Dictionaries can be used as a last resort when “guessing from context” strategies fail. But they can also be used productively, both for generating text as resources for vocabulary acquisition. Their usefulness depends on learners being able to access the information they contain both speedily and accurately. **Training learners** in effective dictionary use is particularly important since many learners may not be familiar with dictionary conventions, even in their own language. Such training also provides them with the means to continue vocabulary acquisition long after the course of formal study has been completed.

In training our students in dictionary use we will want to achieve three things: in the first place we will want to remove the fear that they may have when faced with the mass of information a dictionary contains. Secondly, we will want to train students to understand that information, and thirdly we will want to make the dictionary a normal and comfortable part of language study and practice.

Some **key skills** involved in **effective dictionary use** are the following:

- Recognising features of dictionary layout, such as use of alphabetical order, headwords, grammar and pronunciation information, definitions, etc.
- Understanding the way dictionary entries are coded – particularly the use of abbreviations such as adj (adjective), sth (something), ScotE (Scottish English), etc.
- Discriminating between the different meanings of a word, especially a word with many polisemes such as course or fair, or words that are homonyms such as bill, bat and shed or homographs such as windy, live and lead.
- Cross – checking (when using a bilingual dictionary) that the translation equivalent for the meaning that is required. Only by checking “backwards” (by looking up the entry for) will they discover that some of the English words may have a more restricted meaning and may not be appropriate for their purpose.
- Using synonyms, antonyms and other information to narrow the choice of best word for the meaning intended. For example, a learner wanting to convey the meaning *carefree* but knowing only *careless* could use this as the starting point in a dictionary search. Similarly, the learner who wants to correct the sentence “They told everyone their engaged” will find both the noun engagement and the correct verb announced under the entries alongside engaged in any learners’ dictionary. Or a learner wondering if *steed* substitutes for *horse* will find that it has poetic connotations and is generally only used in a literary context.
- Inferring the spelling of an unfamiliar word from only having heard it, in order to check its meaning in the dictionary.

In order to develop **ways of training learners** in the above skills it would be advisable to do the following:

* **Direct attention** to the dictionary’s layout information, as displayed in a typical entry. Such example entries can usually be found in the introductory matter at the front of the dictionary. We could prepare a wallchart or overhead transparency that displays this information. Then we prepare a quiz that learners can answer in groups, using their dictionaries. The words should be obscure because if the learners already know the words, there would be no incentive to use the dictionaries.

* **Encourage dictionary use** when learners are self – correcting their written work. Indicate, for example, where a mistake is due to the wrong spelling (*wich* for *which*), the wrong choice of

word (*nervous* for *angry*), or the wrong form of the word chosen (*argues* for *arguments*). As preparation, we could distribute examples of vocabulary errors collected from homework, and ask learners to work in pairs or small groups, using dictionaries, to correct them.

***Encourage learners to guess** the spelling of unknown words that occur when they are listening to a recorded cassette, for example. Pause the cassette after words known to be unfamiliar, and allow learners time to work in pairs to work out the spelling. They may then check the spelling in the dictionary, looking up the meaning at the same time.

It was pointed out that the first line of attack on meeting unfamiliar words in a text is to use “guessing from context” strategies and that dictionaries should only be consulted as a last resort.

The point has been made that the learning of a new word is not instantaneous, but that it requires repeated visits and conscious study. Much of this revisiting and studying of words will have to take place outside class time, since there simply isn’t time enough in class for review and recycling. This means that learners will have to depend to a large extent on their own vocabulary records. However, few students are so organized that they automatically record the content of vocabulary lessons in a way that will provide a useful reference for later study. Like other vocabulary learning skills, the keeping of vocabulary notebooks is a skill that usually requires some classroom training.

It has previously been highlighted that we must arouse interest in words and a certain excitement in personal development in this area. How is this worthy aim achieved? One way is simply to timetable plenty of time for vocabulary – focused activities. Teachers can take heart from recent developments in research that seem to suggest that a heavy concentration on vocabulary acquisition, especially in the early stages of learning, is a prerequisite for later proficiency in the language. It may be the case that mastery of the grammar system depends on there being a critical mass of vocabulary to work with. Teachers need not fear, therefore, that they are “wasting time” teaching vocabulary.

It is also important not to short – change learners by depriving them of vocabulary learning activities that arise during the course of the lesson, even if these might seem to be peripheral to the main focus of the lesson. There has been a tendency in recent classroom practice, in dealing with texts, to focus on superficial reading skills such as skimming and scanning. Students are cautioned “not to try and understand every word”. It seems a wasted opportunity, though, not to exploit such texts to the full, especially since many students feel that they would like to “understand every word” in a text. To deny them this satisfaction may be counterproductive.

As a teacher, possibly a learner, and definitely a user of words ourselves, we should share our sense of the excitement and fascination of words with our students. Vocabulary learning never stops, even long after the grammar system is firmly in place. New words are being coined daily, and old words are assuming new meanings. Talking about words like these, and even coining new ones, can sensitise learners not only to the rules governing word formation, but also offer an insight into aspects of the cultures that produce such coinages.

English language pedagogical lexicography has been quick to utilize computer assistance, both in the establishment and systematic use of large text corpora as the primary basis of different dictionary projects and in the presentation of lexicographical material in electronic form. The major learners' dictionaries are available online, and it is now possible to consult simultaneously all or some of the different works in a publisher's program in an integrated search and to work interactively with them for (second/foreign) vocabulary teaching and learning.

CONNECTING ELT THEORY WITH CLASSROOM REALITY

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English Language Teaching (ELT) is a dynamic field that combines educational theories with practical classroom experiences. Over the years, various theories of language learning have shaped teaching methods and influenced how English is taught around the world. However, successful language teaching does not depend solely on theoretical knowledge. It requires a meaningful dialogue between theory and classroom practice, where teachers adapt ideas to meet the needs of their learners.

Theories of language learning provide a foundation for understanding how students acquire a new language. Behaviorist theory, for example, emphasizes repetition, imitation, and reinforcement. This theory inspired methods such as the Audio-Lingual Method, where students practice language patterns through drills. In contrast, cognitive theories focus on the mental processes involved in learning, highlighting the importance of understanding, memory, and problem-solving. Constructivist theories suggest that learners actively build knowledge through interaction and experience. These perspectives have contributed significantly to modern ELT approaches.

One of the most influential developments in ELT is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Based on the idea that language is best learned through communication, CLT encourages students to use English in real-life situations rather than simply memorizing grammatical rules. The theory behind CLT emphasizes communicative competence, which includes not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts. This approach has transformed classrooms by making learning more interactive and learner-centered.

While theories offer valuable guidance, classroom practice often presents challenges that theories alone cannot solve. Every classroom is unique, with learners having different backgrounds, abilities, motivations, and learning styles. Teachers frequently encounter situations that require flexibility and creativity. For example, a communicative activity may work well in one class but not in another due to differences in student confidence or language proficiency. In such cases, teachers must modify activities and teaching strategies to achieve learning goals effectively.

The relationship between theory and practice can be viewed as a two-way process. Theory informs practice by providing principles and frameworks for teaching. At the same time, classroom experiences help teachers evaluate and refine theoretical ideas. Through observation and reflection, educators discover which methods are most effective for their specific learners. This process of reflection allows teachers to become more skilled professionals who can make informed decisions in the classroom.

Technology has further strengthened the connection between theory and practice in ELT. Digital tools, online platforms, and interactive applications offer new opportunities for language learning. Theoretical concepts such as learner autonomy and collaborative learning can now be implemented more effectively through technology. For example, students can practice speaking through video conferencing, collaborate on projects online, and access authentic language materials from around the world. Teachers must understand both the theoretical benefits and practical

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limitations of these tools to use them successfully.

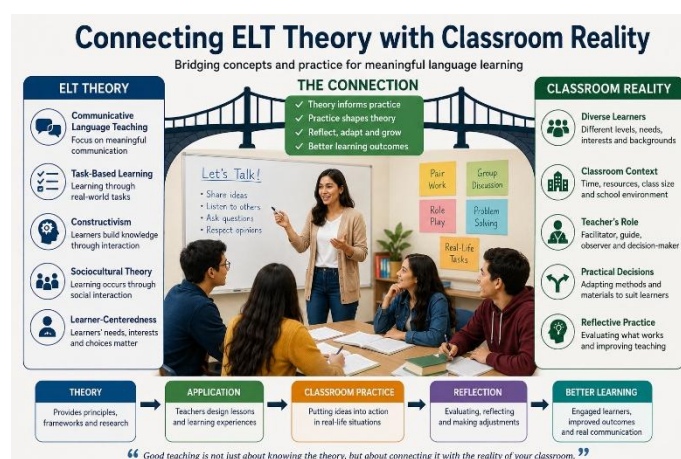
Professional development also plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Teachers who engage in workshops, research, and reflective practice continuously update their knowledge and improve their teaching skills. By staying informed about current theories and educational trends, they can make better decisions and create more effective learning environments.

Overall, ELT is most effective when theory and classroom practice work together. Theories provide valuable insights into how languages are learnt, while practical experience helps teachers adapt these ideas to real teaching situations. The dialogue between theory and practice enables educators to respond to learners' needs, overcome challenges, and promote meaningful language learning. As ELT continues to evolve, maintaining this balance will remain essential for successful teaching and learning.

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TASK-BASED LEARNING: AN EFFECTIVE METHOD FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

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Introduction

Teaching English has evolved significantly over the past decades. Traditional methods that focused mainly on grammar rules, memorization, and translation have gradually been replaced by more interactive and learner-centered approaches. One of the most effective and widely recognized methods in modern English language teaching is Task-Based Learning (TBL). This approach encourages students to use English as a tool for communication while completing meaningful tasks that resemble real-life situations. Rather than learning language for its own sake, learners acquire language through purposeful interaction.

Theoretical Background

Task-Based Learning is based on the idea that language is best learned when students actively use it to achieve a specific goal. Instead of spending an entire lesson studying grammar structures or vocabulary lists, students engage in activities such as solving problems, planning trips, conducting interviews, giving presentations, or working together on projects. These tasks require learners to communicate naturally, making language learning more authentic and motivating.

One of the greatest strengths of Task-Based Learning is its focus on communication. In many traditional classrooms, students know grammar rules but struggle to use English in real conversations. TBL addresses this issue by creating opportunities for meaningful communication from the beginning. Students are encouraged to express ideas, negotiate meaning, ask questions, and collaborate with classmates. As a result, they develop not only linguistic competence but also confidence in speaking English.

A typical Task-Based Learning lesson consists of three main stages: the pre-task stage, the task cycle, and the language focus stage. During the pre-task stage, the teacher introduces the topic and prepares students by activating prior knowledge and presenting key vocabulary if necessary. The teacher may show pictures, ask questions, or provide a short video related to the lesson theme. This preparation helps students understand the context and reduces anxiety before they begin the task.

The second stage, known as the task cycle, is the core of the lesson. Students work individually, in pairs, or in groups to complete a meaningful task. The teacher acts primarily as a facilitator rather than a lecturer, monitoring students' work, providing support when needed, and encouraging communication in English. Learners are free to use the language resources they already possess, experimenting with vocabulary and grammar to express their ideas. Mistakes are viewed as a natural part of the learning process rather than something to be avoided.

After completing the task, students often present their work to the class. This presentation stage gives learners an authentic reason to communicate and allows them to practice public speaking skills. It also creates opportunities for peer learning, as students listen to different ideas and approaches from their classmates.

The final stage is the language focus. At this point, the teacher draws attention to useful vocabulary, grammatical structures, or pronunciation features that emerged during the task. Instead of teaching grammar before communication, the teacher helps students notice language patterns after they have already used them. This sequence reflects the natural process of language

acquisition, where communication comes first and formal analysis follows.

Conclusions

Task-Based Learning offers numerous advantages for both students and teachers. First, it increases student motivation. Learners are generally more interested in completing meaningful tasks than in filling out grammar exercises. Activities such as designing posters, planning events, creating advertisements, or solving mysteries make lessons enjoyable and engaging. Motivation plays a crucial role in language acquisition because students who enjoy learning are more likely to participate actively and retain new information.

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