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DE PROFESSORES DE INGLÊS

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Editorial

Dear APPI readers,

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter edition of *The APPI eJournal*, in which a panoply of articles is displayed so as to invite us to keep digging into the realm of education, helped by dedicated educators and researchers.

We begin with Leonor Mouralinho's *Norwich – A city of stories*, where she shares her experience attending a course she was awarded as the first-prize winner of the Alberto Gaspar scholarship. She presents us with powerful hands-on tools, leaving space for personal stories.

In *From Bans to Balance: Co-Creating AI Policies with Students in the EFL Classroom* Carlos Lindade, our writer in residence, shares an experience and a challenge embraced by him and C2.1 English students – future EFL teachers to respond to the lack of regulation concerning the use of AI and the way “shared power” fostered reasoning and critical thinking.

Tiago Carvalho's article *Mentoring in Educational Contexts: Growing Through Reflection and Dialogue* underscores his participation in the *Mentoring in Educational Contexts* course at APPIforma and the benefits that subsequent teamwork and reflection brought to his teaching/supervision practice.

Andy Sampson highlights *Vygotsky's Contribution to Inclusive Education* showing us how to integrate students with disabilities in the classroom and beyond as well as the benefits this brings for everyone.

Patrícia Cruz brings us *Empowering EFL Learners through Self-Assessment: A Practical Summary* in which she showcases an action research study involving 16 secondary English students, focusing on writing tasks, self-assessment, teacher feedback, and rewriting.

Evi Karidi's article *Once upon a Classroom: Practical Storytelling Ideas for EFL Teachers* turns our attention to the power of storytelling in engaging the student, creating memorable moments while combining varied skills.

Beyond What We Can See: Fostering Visual Literacy and Critical Thinking in the EFL

Classroom by Joana Louro reflects on the massive impact that images have in today's world and therefore the importance of observing attentively, reading between the lines and thinking critically.

Nádia Raminhos offers us *Using Canva to Enhance (Creative) Writing* for 8th and 9th graders connecting it to two festivities, Halloween and Christmas. Following the allocated tasks, the students gave wings to their imagination while energising their creativity, aspects visible in their shared work.

Cristina Oliveira's article *A Bag of Goodies* offers a myriad of enticing materials, from a moving TED talk with Emmanuel Jal, activism concerning environmental issues to Ed Vere's must-read book, to name just a few, all of them do justice to the title of Cristina's piece of writing.

Nic Hurst in his article *Manuel Gomes da Torre Award* pays tribute to a leading figure who not only stimulated the development of the English language but also sponsored the growth of English language teaching and teacher training at FLUP. Nic Hurst's words also convey his personal gratitude to Professor Gomes da Torre, along with that of other professionals. His name and commitment will surely be perpetuated for days to come.

On the Bookshelf, Wendy Jones writes the review of the book by Louis Rogers *Academic Vocabulary and Grammar: Essential Language for Academic Writing*, a great source of knowledge for both teachers and learners in what concerns deepening language learning through vocabulary and grammar explanations, examples in context followed by practice.

We hope you enjoy this issue of the APPI *eJournal* and make the most of it by applying some of the ideas that resonate most with you and your students in your classrooms.

The Editorial Team

Judite Fiúza
Maria Isabel Silva
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If you are interested in helping produce the APPI eJournal, we would love to hear from you. We would particularly appreciate someone who is interested in, or has abilities in graphic design.

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Leonor Mouralinho
Alberto Gaspar Scholarship
Norwich – A City of Stories

It all began with “I blame the books! I have always loved books!”. These were the first sentences I wrote on my application for the Alberto Gaspar Scholarship. Little did I know that I would actually have the chance to visit a place where stories are just around the corner: Norwich.

After submitting my application, I thought nothing more about it and went about my life as usual. One day, while in class, students were working in groups and sending me essays to review, I opened my email and there was the application result, and with it the privilege of being able, as a non-native English speaker, to practise the language I teach.

After learning I had been selected, I began the process of choosing which course I should take. Among the various options suggested by APPI, which would be held at NILE—Norwich Institute for Language Education, one stood out and seemed suited to my love of stories, but in a more contemporary format that could be used in the classroom. I chose “Video, Image, and Story in Language Education” by Jamie Keddie, a well-known APPI speaker and friend. I had attended his talks at APPI conferences, so I thought it would be a good way to deepen my knowledge of how to use materials available to us online, such as on YouTube or photos. The challenge I faced was how I could transform what I encountered daily, in the form of videos or images, into something valuable and inspiring for my students. What narratives could be created to provide richer language learning that was also effective and fostered critical thinking? I was about to find out. With my choice made, all that was left was to take care of the formalities and book the trip. Between APPI and NILE, everything was very easy and on July 20, 2025 off I went for two weeks of learning, but also a lot of fun.

After a three-hour flight (there was a delay) and another three by bus, I arrived in Norwich on a Sunday. There was hardly anyone on the streets, and all the establishments were closed. For a Portuguese, it's always a surprise to learn that not all countries follow our schedules. After much searching (because there was no one to ask), I finally found the bus stop that would take me to my accommodation, the University of East Anglia. I arrived at 6:30, right in time for dinner. And that's where it all began!

Now, as to the first morning, filled with nervous butterflies, I arrived at NILE for the first session of “Video and Storytelling in Language Education”. There I was, the only Portuguese element amongst a group of five Spaniards and eight Uzbeks. Actually, I was the only Portuguese person at NILE for those two weeks, which was amazing, since it kept the temptation of using my mother tongue away, and therefore I had to immerse myself completely in the English language. As a non native teacher of English it was challenging but the most valuable practice I could ask for.

For the first session, and after getting to know each other through various ice breaking activities, we dived into different techniques to foster communication through a series of interactive activities for teachers in the classroom. We started by discussing the role of the teacher as a storyteller and what that means. Many times, we, as teachers, are afraid of talking about ourselves and sharing our stories, however, every day we ask the students to share their thoughts, dreams and anxieties in the classroom. We need to take the stories of our life and model them into shareable and teachable moments, writing them down and using them to keep students engaged and curious and motivate them to speak. Leading by example fosters a more personal learning experience for the students and promotes awareness and empathy.

On one of the first tasks, related to the use of video, we watched a video where a baby panda scares its mum and after watching it, in pairs, we narrated what we saw and then compared the texts with other pairs. Each group had different versions, and we were able to compare the use of different verb tenses and their choice, the description of the setup, the use of vocabulary, the register and also world knowledge. All great things to explore in the classroom and adaptable to different language levels.

Another very useful activity was “Videotelling”. In this type of activity, instead of showing the video, we were given different videos and had to film ourselves “telling the story”, after scripting it. This means, we created a video-based story and told what we saw, giving it our personal interpretation, and only afterwards did we show the video. This type of activity is good for encouraging students to practise language and critical thinking, as each person will imagine what is happening in their own way. I must say that, most times, the stories were way more interesting than the videos. Maybe that is why I always think the books are better than the films, as we can imagine a multitude of scenarios.

The use of photos, especially personal ones, can be a valuable means of language input. The imagining of scenarios and set ups, the development of characters and background stories and even the mimicking of what you see can all be used in language learning, no matter how young the students are. Of course, whatever we decide to do, it is important to prepare ourselves for how students might respond and how they might interpret what we present to them.

A way to prepare is to script the story and work it out with the students, even by giving them the scripts. We can use the script for language practice or use it as a dictogloss activity. The possibilities are endless.

The practical value of the sessions was clear and we were equipped with a new set of strategies for immediate classroom use. Ultimately, what made the course so impactful was its emphasis on meaning and connection. Jamie Keddie’s approach reminds us that language is a human tool and integrating video, image, and storytelling is not about entertaining the students but about creating a classroom where students can be inspired to use English in meaningful ways. Check out and subscribe to his page <https://www.lessonstream.com/> for valuable input and material you can use.

We cannot forget the social programme. We had a guided tour through Norwich, visited the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell and the Norwich Cathedral (among other monuments), we had a quiz night, ate at the local market and had a pint or two at local pubs. After all, it is said that Norwich has 52 churches but 365 pubs! So many stories shared with so many people of diverse walks of life have left me wanting more. I feel that my story with Norwich has just begun.

Thank you, APPI, for the opportunity! To everyone considering applying for the Alberto Gaspar scholarship next year, I can only say, “Go for it!” Who knows, it might just be the turning point you were looking for, and it will certainly be an experience rich in both academic and personal value.

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“Baby Panda” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8d6voO-na6w>
<https://www.lessonstream.com/>

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Carlos Lindade APPI B-7249

From Bans to Balance: Co-Creating AI Policies with Students in the EFL Classroom

The most important thing about AI may be
that it shows us what it can't do, and so reveals
who we are and what we have to offer.

— David Brooks (New York Times)

Summary:

The rapid generalisation and widespread access to generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools has outpaced institutions' ability to develop adequate policies. Students across all levels of education are already experimenting with AI-powered tools for tasks ranging from essay writing to brainstorming project ideas. Educators face an urgent dilemma: how should classrooms respond when regulation lags behind technological adoption? This article presents a bottom-up approach to AI policy-making, with pre-service EFL teachers in a C2.1 English class at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Porto. Through collaborative discussion and co-construction of rules, students developed a nuanced AI policy that balanced opportunities with responsibilities. The experience highlights both the risks of avoidance and bans, and the potential of participatory policy-making to foster AI literacy, accountability, and meaningful digital practices.

The expansion of generative AI tools in education is not a future challenge but a present reality. Students are already making use of these tools in ways that stretch across academic, professional, and personal domains. Yet while usage has grown rapidly, institutional policies often lag behind, leaving classrooms in a vacuum where uncertainty prevails. For teachers, the question is not whether students are using AI — many are — but how to guide them responsibly.

Responding with prohibition in the classroom is inadequate because it will likely drive usage at home, while ignoring it leaves students vulnerable to misuse and misinformation. Instead, educators need approaches that are transparent, critical, and accountable. One promising strategy is to involve students directly in shaping classroom guidelines. Such a bottom-up approach does more than regulate behaviour: it cultivates digital literacy, prepares learners for professional environments where AI will be omnipresent, and empowers them to take responsibility for their own choices.

This article shares a classroom-based initiative conducted with C2.1 English students at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Porto. Importantly, this is a class of pre-service EFL teachers, taking their first steps in teacher education. By involving students in the creation of context-specific guidelines, I sought to promote AI awareness, encourage accountability, and avoid the pitfalls of either blanket bans or laissez-faire acceptance. The process illustrates how teachers can become pioneers in shaping AI literacy and classroom culture, rather than waiting for institutional or governmental directives to trickle down.

The EU AI Act and Education

The European Union has been at the forefront of regulating AI through the proposed Artificial Intelligence Act (European Commission, 2021). The Act categorises AI applications into levels of risk and introduces obligations for developers, deployers, and users. While not written specifically for education, the Act acknowledges the role of AI in shaping democratic societies, fairness, and fundamental rights. In the educational sector, this translates into ensuring transparency, avoiding

bias, and preventing harm to learners (European Parliament, 2024). For teachers, however, the AI Act is both too abstract and too slow. It provides an important legal backdrop but does not answer practical classroom questions teachers ask: Can students use AI to draft essays? Should AI be part of assessment? What are the ethical and pedagogical boundaries?

This gap between high-level regulation and daily classroom reality means educators must take initiative. A bottom-up approach does not replace EU or institutional policies but complements them, ensuring that AI use in classrooms is contextually relevant, ethically sound, and pedagogically meaningful.

My Classroom Example: Building Policy from the Bottom Up

At the start of the academic year, after introductory activities in my English C2.1 group, I invited students to reflect on AI use in our classroom through four guiding questions:

- When is AI allowed without restrictions?
- When is AI allowed with restrictions?
- When is AI forbidden?
- When is AI compulsory?

Students worked in small groups and engaged in animated discussions. Interestingly, they reached consensus most quickly when identifying forbidden uses, such as drafting full assignments, disguising plagiarism, uploading personal data, or relying on AI for mental health support. They also provided suggestions for restricted use, particularly around translation, summarisation, and feedback — acknowledging that AI could help. However, when asked to consider contexts in which AI could be used without restrictions, students struggled. Even more striking was their initial inability to conceive of contexts in which AI should be compulsory. This silence revealed both uncertainty and a lack of critical engagement with AI beyond the question of what is forbidden.

From these discussions, we collectively drafted our classroom AI policy that was posted on Moodle. It's a simple document that presents the following information:

When is AI allowed without restrictions?

- Brainstorming
- Proofreading texts
- Acting as a language assistant
- Organising class notes (e.g., creating study guides, visuals)
- Formatting aspects of documents

When is AI allowed with restrictions?

- Feedback (AI may suggest improvements, but the original draft must be submitted)
- Translation support
- Summarising texts
- Creating presentations (the content must be original)
- Designing materials for microteaching

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- Designing materials for microteaching

When is AI forbidden?

- Replacing human work in drafting, writing, or critical analysis (e.g., writing full assignments)
- Uploading any material without written permission
- Using AI for mental health support
- Citing AI-generated sources as if they were academic sources
- Disguising plagiarism (e.g., through paraphrasing)
- During exams or other assessment conditions
- Uploading personal data

When is AI compulsory?

- To promote AI literacy

Crucially, these simple guidelines were not imposed but co-constructed, ensuring student buy-in and accountability. As an educator, I can now hold students responsible if AI is misused because the rules are collectively owned.

Why a Bottom-Up Approach Works

The bottom-up approach aligns with principles of learner agency and participatory pedagogy. Scholars have emphasized that co-created classroom norms enhance engagement, ownership, and responsibility (Cook-Sather, 2020; Larsen–Freeman, 2019). When students help to define boundaries, they internalize them more deeply and are more likely to follow them. This approach also resonates with the concept of digital literacies, which extend beyond functional skills to include critical and ethical awareness (Dudeney, Hockly, & Pegrum, 2013). AI literacy, therefore, is not only about knowing how to prompt effectively but also about understanding when, why, and under what conditions AI should be used.

In the case of my C2.1 students, the process of negotiating guidelines revealed their existing assumptions about AI and created space for them to articulate concerns. They expressed anecdotes about peers using AI irresponsibly and voiced fears about unfair competition. Some students also shared episodes where they were unjustly accused of using AI and had been

awarded a zero or in a case of a specific person who failed the entire course. In these stories there were no guardrails in place. Ultimately, these insights provided me, as their lecturer, with valuable information — data I could never have accessed if I had simply imposed a ready-made set of guidelines or if I simply banned AI from my classroom. By making the invisible visible, the activity fostered a culture of dialogue and reflection.

Further considerations about the Risks of Avoidance and Bans

If AI is already part of students' daily lives, the absence of clear classroom guidelines poses significant risks. Without rules, students may experiment recklessly, leading to plagiarism, inequity, or breaches of privacy. Misuse can generate anxiety and distrust between teachers and students, eroding the learning environment (Selwyn, 2022). Moreover, opportunities to cultivate AI literacy are wasted if educators choose avoidance over engagement. Simply ignoring AI leaves students vulnerable to misinformation and ill-prepared for professional contexts in which AI is increasingly embedded.

Equally problematic are bans. While some institutions prohibit AI use outright, such policies are both impractical and counterproductive. Students will continue to use AI covertly, leading to opacity rather than transparency. Bans do not teach students to use AI responsibly; they merely push the practice underground. Research on digital policy suggests that prohibition often amplifies the very risks it seeks to mitigate by preventing open dialogue and critical reflection (Livingstone & Third, 2017). For higher education in particular, where fostering autonomy and critical thinking are central aims, bans represent a failure to prepare students for real-world digital environments. By contrast, bottom-up guidelines provide a middle path: neither laissez-faire acceptance nor rigid prohibition, but contextually relevant rules that promote accountability and awareness.

Wider Applicability Across Contexts

Although this initiative was implemented in higher education, the activity can be adapted to different contexts. In undergraduate classes, students can reflect on how AI supports — or undermines — their learning. In upper secondary, teachers can use similar categories and focus on concrete examples such as translation, grammar correction, or idea generation. Even in lower secondary, where students may lack critical awareness, teachers could begin preparing them for future cycles by discussing issues of plagiarism, originality, and responsible use.

I hesitate to recommend this for upper primary at present due to the current smartphone ban, but there is potential in transitional activities that frame AI not as a forbidden mystery but as a tool requiring thoughtful use. As Buckingham (2023) argues, digital literacy education must begin earlier than we often assume if young people are to navigate technology responsibly.

The core idea is simple yet adaptable: invite students to articulate when AI is useful, when it is dangerous, and when it should be mandatory. Through this process, teachers not only set guidelines but also gain insights into students' digital lives, enabling more targeted and relevant teaching practices.

Closing thoughts:

AI is not waiting for institutional policy to catch up, and neither should we. As educators, we stand at a crossroads: we can either treat AI as a threat to be avoided or as a reality to be engaged with critically and responsibly. My current experience with C2.1 English students — future EFL teachers — shows that even a simple classroom discussion can yield powerful results: students move from uncertainty to clarity, from passive users to active co-authors of classroom norms. By adopting a bottom-up approach, teachers can pioneer AI awareness and accountability in ways that are immediately practical and pedagogically sound.

The EU AI Act provides the legal framework, but classrooms require contextualised, lived policies. A bottom-up approach ensures that guidelines are not abstract regulations but meaningful practices grounded in the realities of teaching and learning. For teachers in Portugal — and beyond — this is an opportunity to lead rather than follow, to empower rather than restrict, and to prepare students for the challenges and possibilities of a world where AI is everywhere.

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Mentoring in Educational Contexts:

Growing Through Reflection and Dialogue

Learning through the APPIforma course - a review

Abstract

This article reflects on my learning experience in the Mentoring in Educational Contexts course through APPIforma. It explores how mentoring, grounded in reflection, emotional intelligence, and collaboration, transformed my approach to academic supervision and inspired new mentoring practices with pre-service language teachers.

Introduction

I completed my PhD in Multimedia in Education in 2020 while working at the University of Helsinki. This meant taking on new roles, such as co-supervising students and guiding pre-service teachers.

I found the work both exciting and challenging. These responsibilities are important in higher education, but they often feel transactional, focused on reading, commenting, and assessing.

When I joined the *Mentoring in Educational Contexts* course at APPIforma, I wanted to try a more collaborative, supportive approach to guiding students. My aim was to see mentoring as an opportunity for shared professional growth and to learn how mentor–mentee relationships can enhance both teaching and research supervision.

Definitions | mindsets

At first, I found it hard to pin down one clear definition of mentoring. I quickly saw that mentoring does not fit into strict categories. As I put it, (...) a relationship that may arise formally or informally and supports the continuous learning of both mentor and mentee. “it is a symbiotic educational activity. This matches the Erasmus+ Project MENTOR (2015), which describes mentoring as a process based on collaboration, reflection, reciprocity, trust, and ethical awareness.

In our group discussions, the trainer encouraged us to interpret definitions in ways that fit our own situations. As I wrote in our Moodle forum: “perhaps mentoring is not about reaching an

absolute truth but about choosing the stance that legitimises one’s practice.” This helped me see mentoring as a mindset based on empathy, reflection, and dialogue, instead of hierarchy.

Models | practice

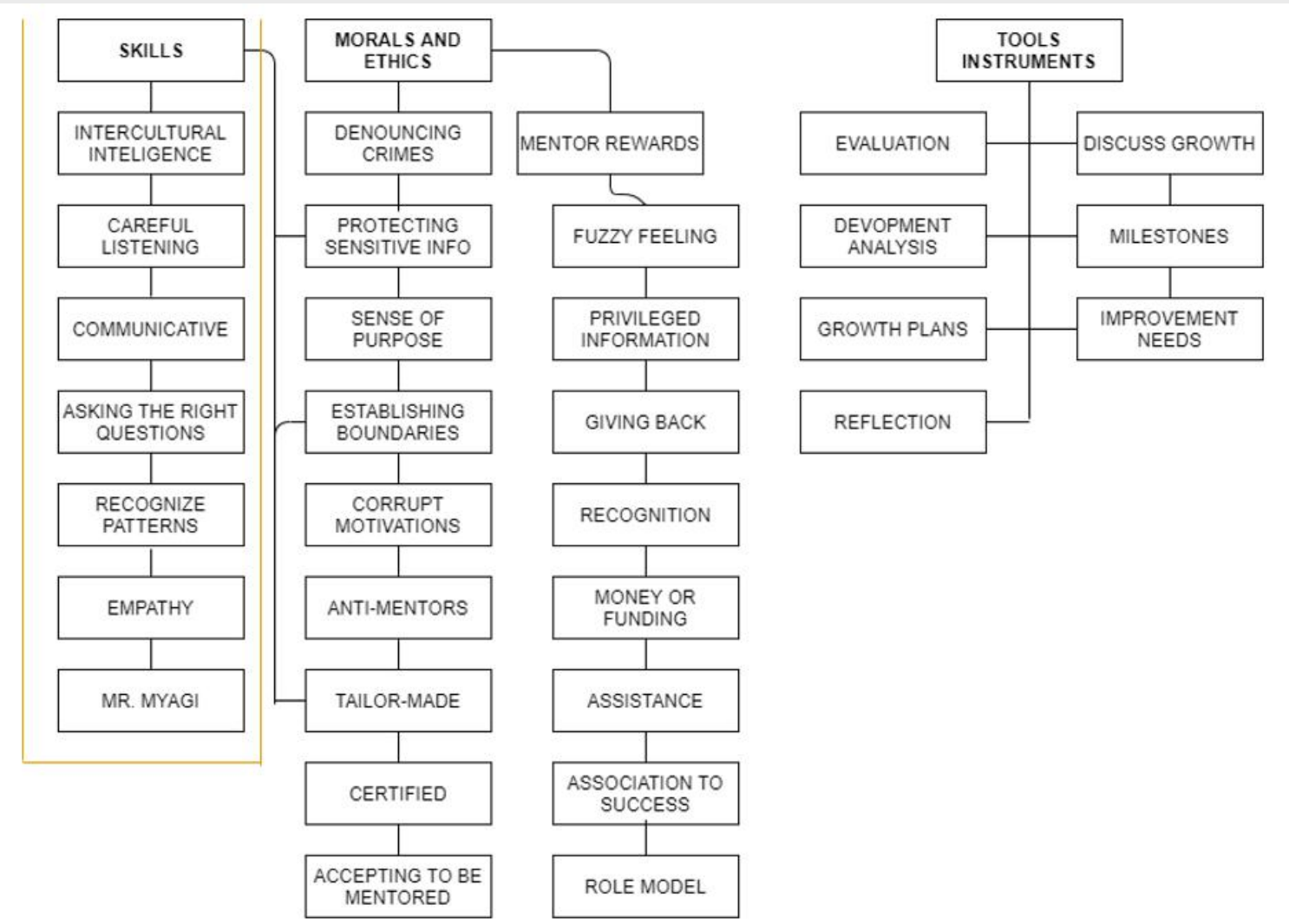
We used case studies and readings like Jim Knight’s *Instructional Coaching* (2007) to look at how mentoring works in education. Knight criticizes “one-shot” professional development and suggests a partnership approach, where mentors work with teachers instead of directing them. This idea also fits with the Erasmus+ Project MENTOR’s focus on different forms of mentoring.

Using these ideas, I developed a project called *Mentoring Training for Junior and Senior Researchers*. The goal is to move from a traditional supervision approach to a mentoring model. The project includes collaborative sessions where participants mentor each other through simulations, then practice real mentoring with peer observation. Ongoing assessments and feedback help build a sense of community. If mentoring can change how teachers are introduced to their roles, it can also improve supervision at universities.

Reflection | emotional intelligence

A key lesson from the course was the connection between mentoring and emotional intelligence. Opengart and Bierema (2015) explain that **emotionally intelligent mentoring depends** on awareness, empathy, and self-control. This framework helped me better understand my own learning process.

During the course, I created a **Mentoring Tree** — a visual map of ideas and skills from our sessions. Over time, the tree became more complex, with branches overlapping and new links forming. It showed how both mentoring and my own growth are always changing and developing.



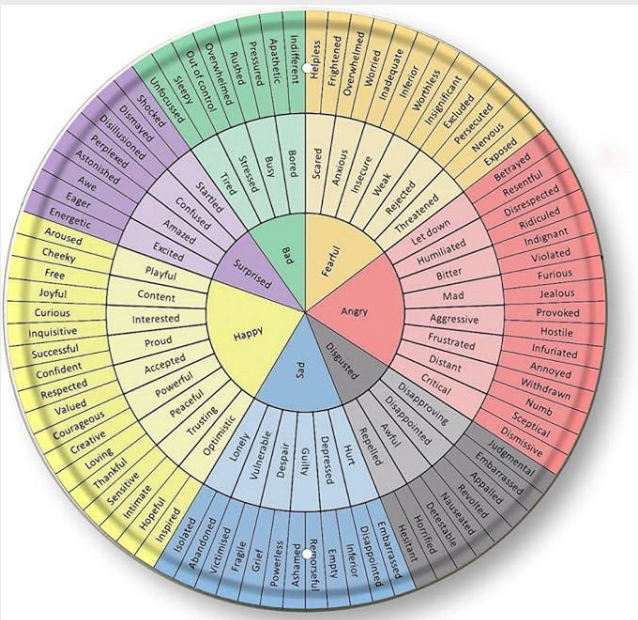
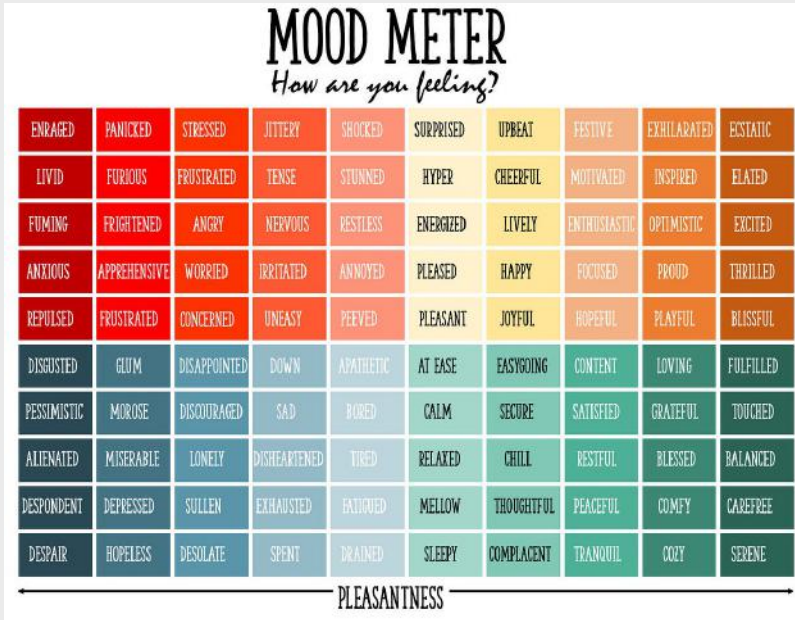
(Figure 1 – Mentoring learning tree)

We used exercises from the Yale RULER Programme (Brackett, 2019) to practice naming emotions and using the **Mood Meter**. These tools helped me notice the emotional atmosphere in learning settings and showed that good mentoring needs both clear thinking and emotional support. This even changed how I viewed the movie *Inside Out*.

This awareness also aligns with Raven’s (1958) ideas about power: real influence comes from trust and respect, while the use of force damages relationships. In mentoring, authority is not a substitute for empathy. **A mentor’s true influence comes from showing openness and self-awareness.**

(Figure 2 – Mood Meter)

(Figure 3 – emotions wheel)



Applying

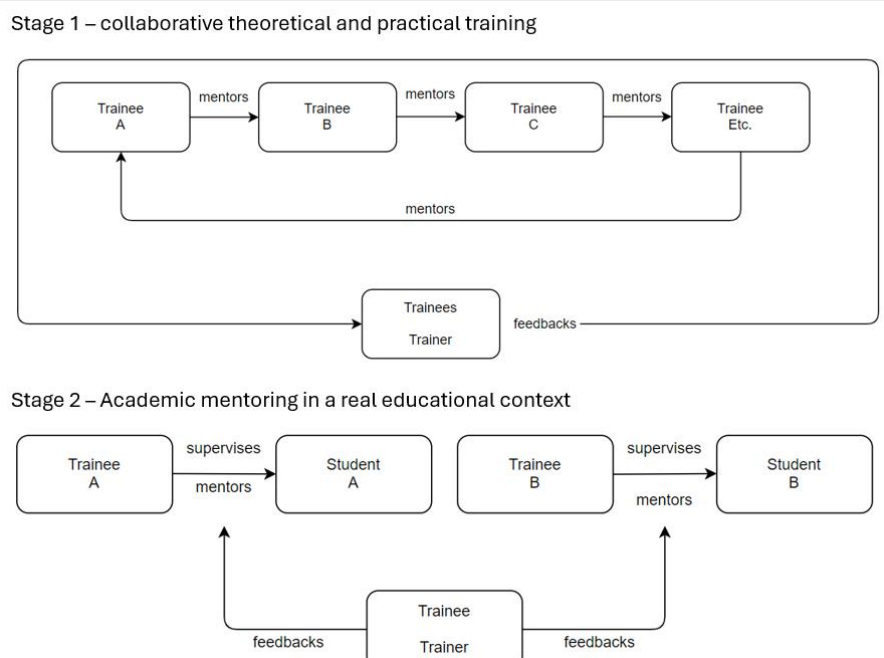
During the training, I examined how supervision could incorporate mentoring principles and tested my main ideas in practice. Now, instead of just editing texts, I add structured reflection and emotional check-ins. Each mentee writes a short log after each session, noting what went well, what was hard,

and what support they need. We use these logs to guide our next meeting, turning supervision into a feedback loop.

I also want to set up **peer-mentoring circles** for lecturers and postgraduate students, where they can watch each other teach or supervise and share their thoughts. This idea follows Knight’s partnership approach and Garvey & Stokes’s (2017) view that mentoring works best when power is shared.

There are some limits within the institution. As mentioned, teachers already have heavy workloads, many administrative tasks, and strong resistance to change. Still, I think mentoring can encourage support among colleagues and build emotional strength. Ideally, staff would focus on teaching, training, and mentoring together, making professional learning a shared experience for everyone.

The trick: **begin with small steps and trust the team**. Starting with just one mentoring pair or group can lead to broader cultural change. Over time, these local efforts can shape larger programs.



(Figure 4 – peer-mentoring cycles)

Put to work

In the fall semester after the course, I used this mentoring approach while co-orienting a pre-service language teacher. Instead of just giving written feedback on lesson plans and reports, I set up our meetings as conversations focused on mentoring. We started each session with a

quick “temperature check,” where the trainee shared her emotional state using the RULER model’s colour-energy framework, and ended with reflection questions:

What did you discover about your teaching?

What would you like to try next?

This change turned our relationship from supervision into collaboration. The trainee felt more confident and independent, and I learned how empathy, structured reflection, and active listening help us to grow professionally.

Invitation

This course changed how I think about guiding others. I started out looking for a list of skills, but I learned that mentoring, when done with emotional awareness, ethical use of power, and real dialogue, can turn supervision into shared growth. This supports my main point: **a mentoring approach truly improves teaching, supervision, and learning**.

I found that mentoring is not a checklist but a continuous practice. It is based on emotional awareness, ethical use of power, and honest dialogue. I invite APPI members to join this journey.

The course offers a strong foundation and a supportive place to ask questions, learn, and connect. As Spielberg said: “The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.”

Note: The structure of this text was outlined by ChatGPT 5 and the language was reviewed by Grammarly’s basic version.

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Links:

Project MENTOR: http://edu-mentoring.eu/memorandum/MENTOR_Memorandum_EN.pdf



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Vygotsky's Contribution to Inclusive Education

Introduction

As language teachers, many of us are aware of the work of Lev Vygotsky (1896 – 1934), the Russian psychologist whose Sociocultural Theory (SCT) has had a profound impact on our understanding of language learning. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (1978), the difference between what learners can do with the support of a teacher or knowledgeable peer and what they can achieve unassisted, and the related concept of scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976), the temporary support provided by teachers, peers or assistive tools in order to help learners reach higher levels of understanding, are important principles in our day-to-day teaching. What is perhaps less well-known about Vygotsky, however, is his ideas about inclusive education, based on his experiences with visually-, hearing- and cognitively impaired children in the war-torn Eastern Europe of the early 20th century, and which have gone on to influence our present understanding of how to accommodate diverse learners in our classrooms. This article examines the key aspects of Vygotsky's theoretical contribution to inclusive education, his conceptualisation of different learner abilities and assets, and the implications of his work for current educational practices.

Primary and secondary "disabilities"

One of Vygotsky's most important contributions lies in his rethinking of the concept of "disability" that prevailed in medical models of the time, which viewed diverse characteristics as fixed biological "deficits" (Smagorinsky 2024), grouping all people with such characteristics together and excluding them from mainstream society. Vygotsky (1993) instead advanced a "social model of disability", in which he distinguished between a "primary disability" (for example, visual impairment or autism) and a "secondary disability" (the social and psychological consequences of exclusion caused by the negative attitudes of others). According to

Vygotsky, the environment and the educational system play a crucial role in either amplifying these "secondary disabilities", through rejection and the associated feelings of inferiority, or mitigating them. Vygotsky argued that it is not the responsibility of those with diverse characteristics to adapt and become more "normal", but of those around them to become re-educated in order to adapt; in the case of teachers, this means offering alternative pathways through which students can learn and participate. This approach, Vygotsky reasoned, not only benefits the learners in question, but also contributes to the psychological development of those around them, through the gaining of new perspectives and understandings.

Vygotsky's position was remarkably different from the prevailing ideas in Europe at the time – a time at which Nazi Germany was, as we know, attempting to homogenise its population and eradicate the presence of anyone considered divergent from the "desired" physical or intellectual norm. The progressive nature of Vygotsky's ideas of social inclusion is therefore radical, considering their historical context. His vision set the precedent for the principles of inclusive education outlined in international frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), which calls for schools to accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, or linguistic differences, and also Portuguese Decree-Law 54/2018, which requires that *each student, regardless of their personal and social situation, finds answers that enable them to acquire a level of education and training that facilitates their full social inclusion*—"cada um dos alunos, independentemente da sua situação pessoal e social, encontram respostas que lhes possibilitam a aquisição de um nível de educação e formação facilitadoras da sua plena inclusão social".

Mediation and the role of cultural tools

For Vygotsky, learning occurs through mediated activity. Cultural tools such as language, symbols and technologies mediate a child's interaction with the world and enable cognitive growth. The concept of mediation has significant implications for inclusive education, as it suggests that difficulties in learning can often be addressed by providing appropriate mediational means, rather than merely simply simplifying content. Assistive technologies, such as the use of AI to describe to a visually-impaired learner what is in front of him or her, or to transcribe teacher talk in real-time for a hearing-impaired learner, all serve as mediating tools to support access to learning. The teacher's role becomes one of designing a rich environment where multiple forms of mediation are available, allowing learners to engage with material in ways that build upon their strengths, rather than emphasising their limitations. In this sense, Vygotsky's work anticipates the contemporary emphasis on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which aims to make curricula accessible to all learners through flexible methods, materials, and assessment (Luna 2025).

Inclusion and collaboration

Vygotsky's view of learning as something that is socially constructed has informed inclusive education's commitment to collaboration and community. Inclusion is not only about physical presence in mainstream classrooms, but about participation – the opportunity for all learners to engage meaningfully in shared learning experiences. From a Vygotskian perspective, peers play a vital role in each other's development, with mixed-ability groupings and peer tutoring providing contexts for social mediation and mutual scaffolding. By highlighting the interdependence

of learners and the social roots of development, Vygotsky's theory offers a conceptual foundation for understanding inclusion not as a charitable act, but as a natural and necessary feature of human learning.

Limitations

Applying Vygotsky's ideas to inclusive education is not without its challenges. One limitation lies in the lack of direct empirical work by Vygotsky with children with complex disabilities; much of the contemporary application is interpretative. Moreover, the notion of the ZPD, while conceptually powerful, can be difficult to operationalise in large heterogeneous classrooms where the teacher must attend to multiple learners' needs simultaneously. The willingness of peers to participate in social mediation in classrooms may also depend on the personalities and maturity levels of learners. These limitations point to the need for adaptive, context-sensitive interpretations of Vygotskian theory that consider both social and individual dimensions of learning, and further empirical research.

Conclusion

Modern inclusive education continues to draw heavily on Vygotskian principles. Approaches such as collaborative learning, scaffolding and differentiation are all grounded in his understanding of the social genesis of cognition. His insistence on the transformative power of culture and education resonates with current moves towards inclusive curricula that view difference through a developmental rather than a deficit lens, and diversity as an asset and a resource for learning, rather than as a problem to be managed.

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Patrícia Cruz

Empowering EFL Learners through Self-Assessment: A Practical Example

Summary

This article reports on an action research study conducted with secondary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Portugal, investigating the impact of self-assessment on goal setting and writing proficiency. Over one semester, 16 students engaged in three structured writing tasks, using rubrics, self-assessment, teacher feedback, and rewriting.

Why Self-Assessment Matters

Self-assessment is not simply about ticking boxes, it's about helping students see their own learning. When learners pause to assess their writing, notice what works, and set goals for what comes next, they begin to take ownership of their progress. This process builds confidence and awareness, qualities that are sometimes forgotten in exam-driven classrooms.

Within the framework of Assessment for Learning (AfL), self-assessment transforms assessment into a learning opportunity rather than a judgement (Black & Wiliam, 2010). It encourages students to think like teachers, to ask: *Why did this work? What could be clearer? How can I improve next time?* In doing so, they turn into active participants in their own growth rather than passive recipients (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009).

In Portuguese secondary education, where national exams have a strong washback effect, formative practices such as self-assessment are often overlooked. Yet, they can help students focus on improvement rather than comparison.

This study explores how structured self-assessment processes in writing can empower secondary EFL learners to define and achieve personalised learning goals. The central research question guiding the work was: *How does self-assessment of writing tasks influence secondary EFL students' ability to set and achieve personalised learning goals?* In fact, effective feedback answers three key questions: *Where am I going? How am I going? Where to next?* (Hattie & Timperley, 2007) and self-assessment helps students ask, and answer these questions for themselves (Andrade, 2010).

Structured self-assessment has been shown to increase motivation, metacognitive awareness, and revision quality (Bhatti & Nimehchisalem, 2020; Rezai et al., 2022). Rubrics enhance the process by clarifying expectations (Brookhart, 2013), while teacher feedback supports improvement. However, students often over- or underestimate their abilities (Brown & Harris, 2014), highlighting the need for explicit guidance and repeated practice.

In short, self-assessment matters because it shifts the classroom dynamic. It turns writing from a task into a dialogue between the learner and their evolving sense of competence.

How the Study Was Implemented

This classroom-based action research was implemented with 16 students from a year 11 Arts class in a Lisbon-area secondary school. Across three tasks (holiday episode, complaint email, opinion text), students followed a four-step process:

1. **Self-assessment & goal setting** using rubrics and guiding questions.
2. **Submission & feedback** via correction codes and/or examples.

3. **Rewriting** in class.
4. **Re-assessment** (teacher and, in the final task, self).

Instruments included rubrics, questionnaires, focus group interviews, and summative writing tests. Both qualitative and quantitative data were analysed to find out about students' engagement, accuracy, and progress.

What happened

- **Task 1 (Holiday Episode):** Few students completed all stages; goals were vague (e.g., “study more”), and many overestimated performance. Improvements focused on grammar, with limited revision of content and organisation.
- **Task 2 (Complaint Email):** All students completed the process. Goals centred on vocabulary and grammar; strategies became more specific (e.g., “write more texts”). More students' self-assessments matched teacher assessments, suggesting growing rubric literacy.
- **Task 3 (Opinion Text):** Students assessed themselves across four parameters. Many still overestimated performance, but accuracy improved. While second drafts showed progress, summative test performance dropped, likely due to the higher cognitive demands of devising arguments for a new opinion text theme.

Student perceptions (questionnaires & interviews) revealed that most valued rubrics and feedback, but struggled to see self-assessment as an autonomous tool. Rewriting and teacher feedback were appreciated. Students suggested including both strong and weak text examples, more explicit guidance on setting goals, and simplified rubrics.

What I've Learned

- Students often overestimated their performance at first, but improved with practice.
- Many focused on grammar corrections rather than content or organisation.
- Rubrics and examples are essential scaffolds, but students valued teacher feedback most.
- Students valued feedback and strong text examples, but also requested weaker examples for comparison.
- Setting specific, actionable goals (e.g., 'write more opinion texts') worked better than vague ones (e.g., 'study more').
- Transfer of self-assessment skills to new tasks remains a challenge.

Tips for Teachers

- Integrate self-assessment regularly across tasks.
- Use clear, student-friendly rubrics and discuss them together (co-construct rubrics with students whenever possible!).
- Include both strong and weak examples of texts to guide reflection.

- Encourage students to set specific, realistic goals for each task.
- Provide space in class for rewriting, not just as homework.
- Combine self-assessment with teacher feedback.

Conclusion

Self-assessment, when structured and supported, helps learners grow into independent and reflective writers. It is not a quick fix, but with consistent practice, students can develop skills that transfer beyond the classroom and that can prepare them for lifelong learning.

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Evi Karydi

Once Upon a Classroom Practical Storytelling Ideas for EFL Teachers

Summary:

This article presents useful ways to use stories in EFL classes. It shows how storytelling helps students learn languages and recommends fun activities to do before, during, and after the story. It also talks about storytelling for different ages and shares ideas to bring in drama and digital tools to make learning better.

The Power of Story in Language Learning

Stories are as old as language itself. Long before textbooks and grammar drills, people told stories to teach, connect, and remember. In today's EFL classrooms, storytelling isn't just a warm-up activity—it's a dynamic, learner-centered tool that integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills while also nurturing imagination, empathy, and cultural awareness. This article explores practical ways in which English language teachers can use storytelling to engage students, build vocabulary, and support language acquisition in meaningful, memorable ways.

1. Why Use Storytelling in the EFL Classroom?

Storytelling creates a rich linguistic and emotional context that helps learners internalise language naturally. According to Cameron (2001), stories are particularly effective for young learners because they provide structure, repetition, and rhythm, which aid language retention. For older learners, storytelling can be a gateway to cultural understanding, critical thinking, and creative expression.

Some key benefits of storytelling in EFL:

- It enhances listening comprehension
- It builds vocabulary and grammar in context
- It encourages speaking fluency and confidence
- It provides meaningful contexts for reading and writing
- It fosters collaboration and classroom community

2. Choosing the Right Story

Not all stories are equally effective for language learners. Teachers should choose stories that match the learners' language level, age, and interests. A good story for EFL learners is:

- Simple and repetitive in structure (especially for beginners)
- Rich in high-frequency vocabulary and useful expressions
- Visually engaging (with pictures, props, or gestures)
- Culturally appropriate and relatable

Examples include traditional tales (e.g., *The Enormous Turnip*), modern picture books (e.g., *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*), or teacher-created personal stories.

3. Before the Story: Sparking Curiosity and Language

a. Predict and Prepare

Before diving into the story, get your learners excited with some prediction activities. Show them a picture or just the title and ask:

- What do you think this story is about?
- Who do you think the characters are?
- What do you think might happen next?

These questions help activate their prior knowledge and introduce key vocabulary.

b. Pre-teach Key Language

Introduce essential words or phrases using real objects, flashcards, or even actions. For younger learners, try using Total Physical Response (TPR) to connect vocabulary with movement.

c. Set a Purpose for Listening

Give your learners a reason to listen closely. For example:

- “Pay attention! At the end, I’ll ask you to share what happened to the bear.”
- “When you hear the word ‘hungry’, show me with your hands.”

4. During the Story: Keeping Learners Engaged

a. Use Voice, Body, and Expression

Bring the story to life by changing your voice for different characters, using facial expressions and gestures, and making eye contact. Incorporating drama techniques like freeze frames, mime, or even stepping into a character can really boost engagement and understanding (Wright, 1995).

b. Pause for Participation

Encourage your learners to:

- Join in with repeated phrases (“Run, run as fast as you can...”)
- Act out parts of the story
- Make sound effects or gestures

c. Use Visual and Physical Aids

Incorporate puppets, props, masks, or a story map to enhance understanding and make the story stick in their minds.

5. After the Story: Deepening Language Through Activities

a. Retell and Sequence

Encourage learners to retell the story using visuals, story cards, or sequencing strips. Prompt them to incorporate time connectors like "first," "then," "next," and "finally" to help structure their retelling.

b. Role-play and Drama

Allow students to step into the shoes of the characters and act out the story. Even those who are usually shy can find their voice when they’re in character. This can be done in pairs, small groups, or even as a full-class performance.

c. Creative Writing

Invite learners to get creative by:

- Writing a new ending to the story
- Crafting a diary entry from a character's viewpoint
- Designing a comic strip that captures the essence of the story

d. Personal Connection

Encourage students to connect the story to their own experiences by asking questions like:

- "Have you ever felt like the main character?"
- "What would you do if you were in that situation?"

6. Digital Storytelling and Tech Integration

Technology opens up exciting possibilities for storytelling. Learners can:

- Record their retellings using voice recorders or video
- Create digital storybooks with apps like Book Creator or StoryJumper
- Collaborate on Google Slides to craft class stories

Digital storytelling not only enhances multimodal literacy but also instills a sense of ownership and pride in their work.

7. Storytelling with Older Learners and Teens

Storytelling isn't just for little ones. For teens and adults, sharing personal stories, anecdotes, and folktales can be a powerful way to explore language and identity.

Activities for older learners might include:

- Story Circles: Each student contributes a line to build a collaborative story.
- Autobiographical storytelling: Share a personal experience using past tenses.
- Story transformation: Give a traditional tale a modern or humorous twist.

Stories That Stick

Bringing storytelling into your EFL classroom is more than just a fun way to teach language—it's a fantastic way to foster connection, confidence, and creativity. Whether you're sharing a simple tale with puppets for young beginners or guiding teens through their personal narratives, storytelling creates a safe, meaningful, and joyful learning environment. And as David Heathfield (2014) suggests, when teachers tell stories, they model communication, build relationships, and ignite imagination. When students tell stories, they become the heroes of their own language-learning journey.

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Joana Louro

Beyond what we can see: fostering visual literacy and critical thinking in the EFL Classroom

Abstract

Realising that images are a constant presence in our lives and that being visually literate is essential for the 21st-century citizen, this lesson plan was designed to promote visual literacy and critical thinking in the EFL classroom. This lesson plan can be adapted according to the group and the topic of discussion.

Introduction

Images surround us. They are part of our daily lives, as we see them in advertising, social media, TV, newspapers, magazines, or art exhibitions. They constantly communicate with us, even if we don't realise it. Knowing how to find, interpret, evaluate, use and effectively create these images, that is, how to be visually literate (Lundy & Stephens, 2015) is therefore central for any citizen, especially learners. They are the ones who are in continuous contact with the digital world, and who are exposed to new information and images full of new messages. As the CEFR (2001) explains, language learners are "social agents" who must be able to use languages to communicate and interpret the world around them. We are, therefore, talking about thinking critically about every situation that may occur to them or the world around them.

Keeping all of this in mind, the EFL classroom has become a valuable environment for fostering both visual literacy and critical thinking. The lesson plan that follows offers an example of how this can be achieved, working around the topic of the environment. This lesson plan was designed for a B1/B2 class, but it can be adapted according to the group and the topic of discussion.

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will be able to:

- Question the reliability of images they come across on the internet;
- Distinguish between deep (meaningful) and superficial images;
- Recognise and describe the defining features of deep and superficial images;
- Express their points of view respectfully and support their arguments when necessary;
- Reflect critically on their own beliefs and values;
- Recognise the consequences of human action in the world around us and the importance of the environment;
- Compare, reflect on, and evaluate the various images they encounter in their daily lives;
- Seek up-to-date and trustworthy information on important current issues;
- Identify and select websites, newspapers, and magazines that provide reliable and safe information.

Activity 1 (Warm-up):

The teacher starts the lesson by asking students the following questions: *How would you define images? Do you consider images important to your daily life? Why? Do you come across many different pictures throughout your day? Do you consider them all the same? What different types of images can you think of?*

Activity 2:

After listening to the students' ideas, the teacher projects or writes on the board the expressions *deep images* and *shallow images*, two concepts explored by Thompson (2019). Students then share what they think these two concepts refer to (characteristics, examples, etc) and after a few minutes the teacher explains them: *deep images* refer to pictures that require more questioning, since their goal is to inform, mislead, persuade, and/or sell; if the viewers fail to analyse it deeply, they may be misinformed, misled, or manipulated. On the other hand, *shallow images* are considered simple pictures whose main goal is to entertain.

The class should then associate some PICTURES with these two categories, justifying their opinions.



Activity 3:

Students organise themselves in groups of 3 or 4. Each group will have a photo and should analyse it according to the DIG method, answering each of the following questions with some notes:

<i>The DIG Method, by Dana Thompson</i>
Analysing:
1. Review and describe the image. Who, what, when, and where do you see represented in the image?
1. Review the text. 2. What textual information is provided (caption, date, and/or headline)?
3. React to the image. 4. How does the image make you feel ?
Interpreting:
1. Determine the source (creator, publisher and/or website) of the image. Who created the image? Who owns and/or published the image?
2. Determine the message of the image. What is the message? Who is the intended audience?
3. Search for other online sources that further contextualize the image. How does context (social, cultural, historical, and/or political) inform the image?
Evaluating:
1. Think back to your first reaction to the image. How might your reaction impact how you view the image?
2. Refer back to the other websites that have published the image. Has the image been misrepresented or manipulated ?
3. Assess the reliability and accuracy of the image. Is the image reliable and accurate? Why or why not?
Comprehending
1. What judgments can you make about the image based on your evaluations above and the available information?
2. Do any of your biases or point of view impact how you view the image? If so, how?
3. What is the purpose of this image (to inform, to instruct, to sell, to entertain, to enjoy, and/or to persuade)? Why do you think so?

Using photos from the official website of World Press Photo, the teacher gives each group one of these pictures:

Photo 1:



Photo 2:

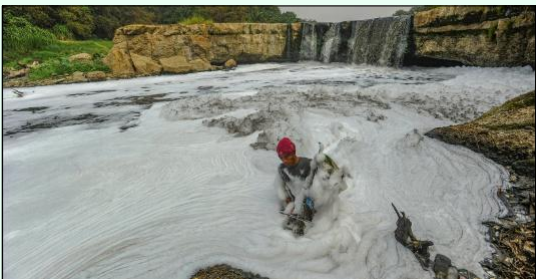


Photo 3:



Photo 4:



Photo 5:



Photo 6:



Activity 4:

After some time, the teacher randomly gives each group one card with information about the photos, taken from the World Press Photo website. Then, the groups describe their photo according to their notes and the DIG method. The other students must listen carefully to understand if the card they have describes their colleague's photo.

Card 1:

02 October 2018

A child who collects recyclable material lies on a mattress surrounded by garbage floating on the Pasig River, in Manila, Philippines. The Pasig River was declared biologically dead in the 1990s, due to a combination of industrial pollution and waste being dumped by nearby communities living without adequate sanitation infrastructure. A 2017 report by Nature Communications cites the Pasig as one of 20 most polluted rivers in the world, with up to 63,700 tons of plastic deposited into the ocean each year. Efforts are being made to clean up the Pasig, which were recognized by an international prize in 2018, but in parts of the river, the waste is still so dense that it is possible to walk on top of the garbage.

Photograph: Mário Cruz/World Press Photo 2019

Card 2:

27 August 2023

A resident catches fish at a once-scenic waterfall on the Cileungsi River. The thick foam on the water is largely a product of waste runoff from nearby industries. Curug Parigi, Indonesia.

Photograph: Arie Basuki/ World Press Photo 2024

Card 3:

06 May 2024

Waterlogged streets amid floods in Canoas, in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, 6 May 2024. Floods in the state caused environmental devastation, the displacement of more than 600,000 residents and the deaths of 183 people. The government declared it the state’s largest ever climate disaster, with 2.39 million residents affected and major human, non-human and economic losses. According to international scientists, climate change, intensified by El Niño, made the flooding twice as likely.

Photograph: Amanda Perobelli/World Press Photo 2025

Card 4:

04 February 2017

A logging truck carries eucalyptus trees cleared from a plantation beside virgin rainforest, near Porto de Moz, Brazilian Amazon. A new hybrid variety of eucalyptus that takes only seven years to grow from seed to harvest was introduced to Brazil in the mid-1990s.

After declining from major peaks in 1995 and 2004, the rate of deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon increased sharply in 2016, under pressure from logging, mining, agriculture and hydropower developments.

Photograph: Daniel Beltra / World Press Photo 2018

Card 5:

5 October 2024

A young man brings food to his mother who lives in the village of Manacapuru. The village was once accessible by boat, but because of the drought, he must walk 2 kilometers along a dry riverbed in the Amazon. The striking contrast of dry, desert-like scenes in the world’s largest rainforest makes the absence of water hauntingly visible.

Photograph: Musuk Nolte/Panos Pictures/Bertha Foundation/World Press Photo 2025

Card 6:

11 March 2017

A historic photograph of an African penguin colony, taken in the late 1890s, is a stark contrast to the declining numbers seen in 2017 in the same location, on Halifax Island, Namibia.

The colony once numbered more than 100,000 penguins. The African penguin, once southern Africa’s most abundant seabird, is now listed as endangered. Overall, the African penguin population is just 2.5 percent of its level 80 years ago; research conducted on Halifax Island by the University of Cape Town indicates the population has more than halved in the past 30 years.

Photograph: Thomas P. Peschak / World Press Photo 2018

Next, the class discusses the following questions:

- *What were the first emotions conveyed by the photographs?*
- *Does the information on the card match your initial reactions?*
- *In your daily life, do you follow all these steps when you look at an image? Do you follow some of them?*
- *Do you think this type of analysis is important? Why or why not?*

Activity 5 (autonomous work, outside of the classroom)

For the next class, the teacher asks each group to choose one of the other pictures and look for more information about it, according to these topics:

Photo 1: Droughts

Photo 2: Water pollution

Photo 3: Floods

Photo 4: Overconsumption and waste management

Photo 5: Deforestation

Photo 6: Loss of biodiversity

The following questions may help them:

1. What is behind each environmental challenge?
2. What dangers threaten animals/nature/different communities?
3. What is the current situation of the river/forest/city/species?
4. What are the consequences (environmental, social, political, etc.) of the environmental challenge?
5. What actions are being taken by international organisations (The European Union, Greenpeace, WWF, etc.)?
6. What is your opinion on the topic? Do you think we can do something to change it? Why or why not?

They should then present what they have discovered, including showing other meaningful pictures.

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Joana Louro is an ESL teacher in the 3rd cycle, Vocational Education, and Adult Learning at Escola Secundária Doutor Augusto César da Silva Pereira, in Rio Maior, Portugal. She completed her Master's degree in Teaching English and Spanish for the 3rd cycle and secondary education in 2023 at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Nova University of Lisbon. She has published in the online journal eTEALS, and her research interests include visual literacy competencies and critical thinking skills.

Using Canva to Enhance (Creative) Writing

Abstract

Creative writing is a must when we want our students to not only excel in their writing skills, but also dare to imagine, go beyond the student's book contents and topics and have fun while learning. Halloween and Christmas collective imaginarium are a good start by giving life to the characters that make up these festivities. Technology is a medium to create illustrations and ebooks!

The following creative writing activities were put into practice last school year, 2024/2025, with 8th and 9th graders. The name of my school changed about one month ago, being its name at the time "Agrupamento de Escolas nº1 de Elvas" – that's the name on the cover of every ebook.

The writing task was done in the classroom and the ebook writing and composing tasks were done at school with the teacher supervision, as well.

Halloween

Resources – Lesson 1

- Stories starters worksheet;
- Halloween characters worksheet;
- Sheet of paper, pencil, rubber;
- Projector and PC.

Resources – Lessons 2 and 3

- Draft versions of the written stories corrected by the teacher;
- Laptop and Internet connection.

Steps:

- In the first lesson the students wrote the stories by hand. The teacher took the stories home and corrected them.
- I did different work depending on the class needs. However, the main thing is to have students write and come up with creative ideas in the English classroom. They didn't use any technology at this time.
- Students were organised in pairs and in threes.
- Students were given the beginnings of several Halloween stories.
- Students had 45 minutes to write the stories using dictionaries and classmates'/ teacher's help.
- The teacher took the texts for correction and in the following lesson, students had to write the corrected versions on Canva platform.
- The second lesson took place in the school computers' room. Students corrected the stories, typed and illustrated them. Some of them finished the illustrations at home. Very important: warn students not to use Premium features or it will be

impossible to print or save as a pdf document. If any Premium features are used when we download the document we must delete all premium features, otherwise you won't be able to download it.

- The teacher created the book on the Canva platform and shared the link through the Team's platform message previously. A page of the ebook was assigned to each group. The students logged into their Canva's accounts – the shared ebook – and worked on their corresponding pages.

Some students had one more lesson to work on their Canva versions. So, in total, we used three 50-minute lessons.

Here are some examples of the stories created by the students:

8th A – Halloween – (very short) short stories and other horror tales

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This class was given various story beginnings and they were free to end them as they wished.

8th B – Cats, bats, ghosts – a Halloween night in the lives of these Halloween creatures

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The students had to choose from a list of characters: a spooky bat, a sneaky black cat, a spooky ghost, and a vampire. Then they had to give the character: a name, a problem, and the solution for the problem on Halloween night!

9th A – Once upon a time in a Halloween party

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The students of this class were supposed to organize the school Halloween party so I chose this title for their book on purpose. The students were given that beginning and freedom to invent whatever they wanted. Only two stories don't have the context of the party but nevertheless I didn't stop the students from writing with the topic they wanted.

9th B – Halloween night – a collection of horror stories

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“The Witch – The Last Dream” was the inspiration for a witch created by all the students of the class who made it in the Arts class and exhibited in the school entrance, for the Halloween School Exhibition. Every student made a part of the witch and one of the groups invented a story about it.



9th C – A Halloween night – short epic adventures of popular and not so popular characters

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGU9h59Nk8/EWELyScCbD1dhU5PA8QKAw/watch?utm_content=DAGU9h59Nk8&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=uniquelinks&utm_id=h5bf5fa40b1

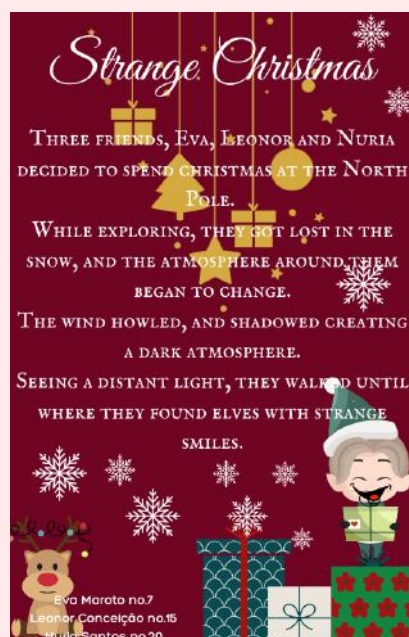
The theme for both 9th A and 9th B was “Once upon a time on a Halloween night”. Everybody managed to write creatively proving that Halloween is prolific in making students’ imagination fly.

Christmas

The same methodology was used for Christmas topics. The topics were:

- *An email / a letter to Santa*
- *Interviewing a Christmas character* – students were given a handout with a list of characters to choose from and they were also provided with some examples of questions to make. The more creative and funnier, the better! Santa, the elves, the reindeers, Rudolph, the red nosed reindeer... were the choices given.
- *A Christmas story* – students were given a handout and dice. In the handout they had various possibilities for:
 - i. The setting (Santa’s workshop, the North Pole, under the Christmas tree, by the frozen lake, at the top of the chimney, in a snowy forest)
 - ii. The characters (a talking reindeer, two cheery snowmen, three little elves, an excited girl, Santa Claus, a clumsy polar bear)
 - iii. The scenario (the night before Christmas, the characters are lost, forgot to buy any Christmas presents, stumbled across a mysterious present, knocked down a Christmas tree, wandering through a festive town)

Here are some examples of the students’ creations. All creations were transformed into an e-book. Some students had the opportunity to read their creations at the School Radio.



8th A – Christmas Tales

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8th B - Christmas Tales

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Some follow-up ideas:

Students create an e-book throughout the school year. With this activity they start the class e-book.

Students read their stories out loud for other students throughout the year. If there's a School Radio, it is a good idea to include it in a project.

It is possible to convert the document into a flipbook on Heyzine and students can record their voices as well.



Nádía Raminhos teaches English, 3rd cycle, at the “Agrupamento de Escolas Adelaide Cabette”, Elvas. Finished her degree in Modern Languages and Literatures (English and German) at the Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Lisboa and has been working as an ESL teacher in Portugal since 2002, teaching from 1st Cycle to Secondary School students and also English for Specific Purposes in adult training courses.

A bag of goodies

This article is the outcome and an updated version of a mix of two previously published ones under the section “GISIG recommends” of the e-zine FUTURITY – IATEFL Global Issues Special Interest Group e-zine – issues #05, July 2022, p.34, and #06, March 2023, p. 46. Being invited by Rose Aylett to author this section twice was a pleasurable challenge to share with my peers available resources I had come across whilst preparing classes. Some of the materials suggested in the original articles were either outdated or no longer working and were, thus, eliminated. I thank the editorial team of the APPI eJournal for taking an interest in my articles and providing the opportunity to republish them.

TED TALK

Emmanuel Jal: The music of War Child

Emmanuel Jal’s story never ceases to both inspire and shock us. In this intense [Ted Talk](#) he narrates his life as a war child in Sudan and his narrow



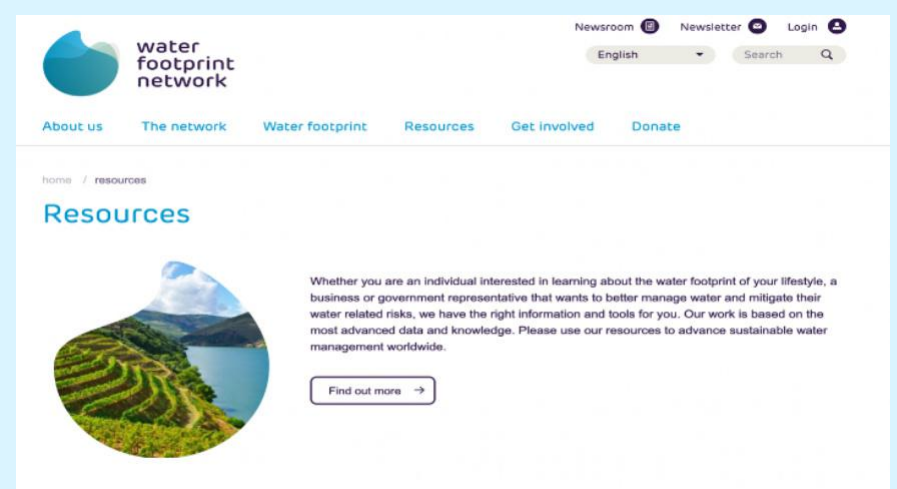
escape. He tells us about his tremendous losses, but he also tells us how he embraced music as a means to tell his story ([“Warchild”](#) is definitely a must-listen) and how it drew so many people’s attention to children’s dire situation in conflict areas. Scarred for life as he is, Jal struggles every day to expose the violation of children’s rights and the brutality endured. He believes his survival has a reason; he does not allow himself to be crippled. This Ted Talk can be used to address multiple global issues: war; discrimination; children’s rights; illiteracy, among others. In case you would like to further illustrate the topic, why not use the lyrics of the song, too? Explore this video, his story, his

music and the website. We have to listen, his voice actually takes up so many voices: there are still so many children starving not only for food, but for education.

With so many conflicts still arising in several parts of the globe, and some even closer than we would have imagined, it is of the utmost importance that we, as educators, make our students well aware of the power of education in putting an end to the disastrous consequences of war.

WEBSITE/CHARITY

The Water Footprint Network



The carbon footprint is the talk of the day, what about the water footprint? If you are exploring Environmental Issues, such as water scarcity, be sure to check this [website](#). Here you get information on what the water footprint is, as well as reliable information on water management. The website is the outcome of a collaboration network between organizations, companies and individuals aiming at the sustainable use of fresh water.

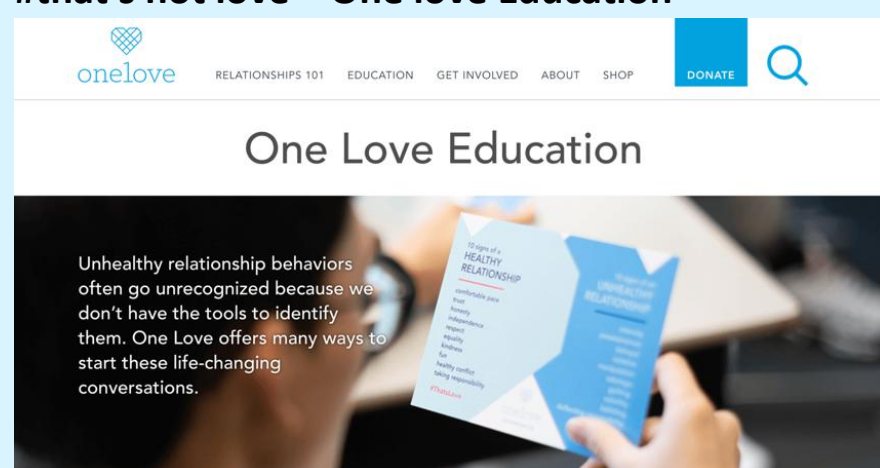
The website has activities for [schools](#) and educators, such as games and statistics. The educational games are worth checking and it must be said that even though some target younger audiences, secondary school students also learn a lot with the “How much water costs our meal?” Do try it, you will be surprised if not a bit worried...

This game is available in 3 different languages and can easily be adapted to others, should you be interested.

A [multimedia hub](#) is also available, including materials for all levels and ages.

CAMPAIGNS

#that's not love – One love Education



St. Valentine's over? True. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of violence in dating and the numbers of teen dating violence are not to be ignored.

This campaign tackles the issue with surprising [videos](#) (the link directs you to an example) and workshops. The workshops and longer videos are free upon registration on the website.

Talking about relationships is daunting, perhaps too intimate, and handling hurtful situations may make those involved hide in a cocoon; however, the videos, animations and [workshops](#) available present different thought-provoking scenarios that can easily be used in class, thus reaching all. Stereotypes like – “only girls suffer this kind of violence” or “I do this because I love you” – are broken and students (all ages) will see many wake-up calls. Unhealthy relationships (friendships included – the “frenemies”) are exposed, explored and reflected on.

With the materials provided, a whole workshop for other teachers can be held, so you can replicate the campaign at your school.

ART

Environmental Art – My Modern Met



With its early days in the late 1960s, this movement is still gathering momentum, crucial as it is in the fight for the environment. Involving both well-renowned artists and new talents, this kind of art is challenging and an eye-opener. In this [website](#) we are met with mesmerizing art productions of concerned artists working together with volunteers to create their works, many of them installations and living images. I cannot help but highlight the work of Benjamin Von Wong who has vowed to battle against plastic waste whilst creating [beauty](#).

Some others are committed to endangered species, or to exposing consumption. The vast majority reuses materials society has disposed of. Should you be curious about Von Wong in particular and his projects, allow me to suggest digging a bit deeper into this website and check his [case studies](#).

Using art in class is always an asset, usually welcomed by students. Use these productions as discussion-fuelers, simply to revise vocabulary, or to inspire a cross-curriculum project – the choice is yours.

NEWS SERVICE



[Newsround](#) is helping teachers explain the war in Ukraine to children, as well as other subjects envisaging a better feeling management through understanding.

Time passed by but I believe we are all still a bit mystified by this war outbreak, this website offers resources to facilitate our work. BBC and its educational channel are surely providing aid with this task. Suggestions, advice from expert psychologists, as well as testimonies from teachers are some of the materials to be found. Besides “Newsround”, the whole [BBC Teach website](#) – *Young reporter* offers a whole panoply of ready-made materials (or to be curated if you wish to do so) to choose from about a wide range of topics.

PODCAST

Fighting for gender equality



Looking for interesting podcasts on this topic I came across [this](#) one which is highly usable in class. It is short, considering the usual podcast length (lasting only 7.04’) and the information provided is not only interesting but also reliable. The European

Union Research Centre creates [podcasts](#) on a series of subjects, being the promotion of equality between men and women one of the issues addressed. In this recording, the speakers interact in a dynamic conversation, exposing inequalities, such as the gender pay gap and its consequences in society. Although not a resource specifically made for teachers, it is worth investing some time on, especially with more advanced levels, or trimmed to be within the attention span of younger intermediate students. If interested in having a look at some of the papers that inspired podcasts such as this one, have a look at the “Think Tank section” of the European Parliament [here](#) (gender issues/equality/diversity). The website also includes a section for teachers [here](#).

WEBSITE/CHARITY

Nobel Peace Center

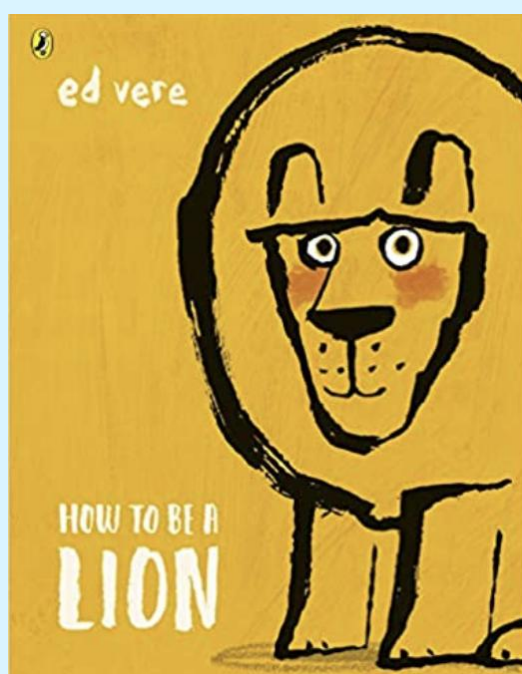


The [Nobel Peace Prize Center](#) website offers us a panoply of resources well worth exploring. In the “[What’s on](#)” [section](#), not only are you provided with a gripping menu, but you can also actually get detailed information and multimedia. The 2022 exhibition “[Nobody Plans to Give up](#)” can be visited online and some of the highlights are, for instance, “When does freedom of speech become activism?” “Civil protests in recent years”. In the [Nobel Peace prize section](#) you will be able to navigate the globe and find the laureates, peace prisoners... just name it. Not only are you given factual information, but also quotes you can use to encourage class discussion. Are your students interested in setting up a Human Rights Organization, or are they keen to further their knowledge on the topic? In this [section](#) they will also be able to do so (heading – “What does a Human Rights Organization do?”). I cannot but congratulate the Nobel Education for the

engrossing [lesson activities](#) with a novelty: in a joint-effort with Microsoft Education, the “games for a change” goal is here presented with Minecraft versions for the Nobel Education Centre: [“Peace Builders”](#) and [“Active Citizen”](#). Covering four laureates’ fields of action, this is a game-based learning experience that will, definitely, attract students (13—18). There are resources designed to accompany the gameplay in the links which you can use on their own, should you prefer that, and have (or not) students play Minecraft autonomously.

BOOK

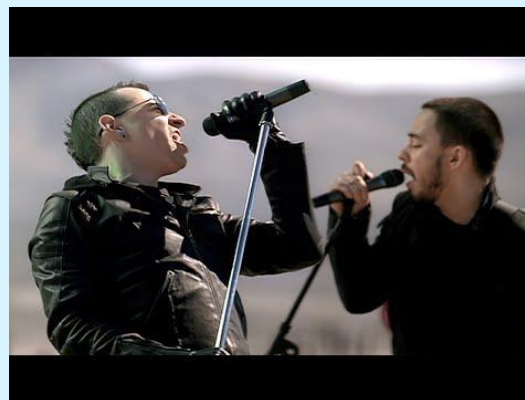
Nobel Peace Center



I only came across this stunning [Oscar’s Book Prize-Winner-2019](#) in the ICEPELL Conference (Lisbon). The message is compelling and empowering. This heart-warming picture book has so much more to it than a story of two extremely unlikely friends. I dare say it is a must-read book for all ages. Despite the apparent simplicity of the words and the beautiful illustrations which make it easy for children to understand, the message is unmistakably about stereotypes and how/why not to conform to them, this surely is an issue to be addressed with older audiences, too. The approach will make the difference and creativity will be paramount. In case you are interested in knowing more about other books like this and possible activities, I suggest checking the [ICE guide handbook as well as the ICEkits](#). The author’s reading aloud of the book is also available [here](#).

VIDEOCLIP

“What I’ve done” by Linkin Park



Definitely not recent but, undoubtedly, still so up-to-date. I still use this [videoclip](#) nearly every year and the students are invariably shocked by the images. It is highly comprehensive and a reminder that “what we’ve done” doesn’t necessarily mean that we cannot be changers. This is sort of “global issues in a nutshell”; the song title puts things into perspective: we are held responsible, let’s take action. The video can be used as a warm-up, as input for a [wordcloud](#), as a (final) reflection... just take your pick. Checking the [lyrics](#) is worthwhile as well as delving into its meaning. If you are into exploring grammar, this is a great opportunity to practise the Present Perfect in context, too.

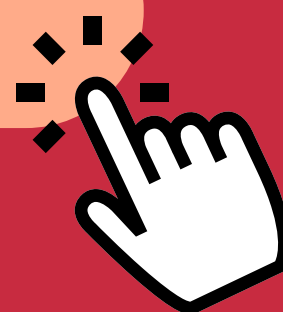
I hope you appreciate these goodies.

Cristina Oliveira has been a TOEFL for over 25 years, having worked with a wide range of students in Portugal and, whenever possible, from abroad. She has also taught Portuguese both to native speakers and foreign learners. She has been a member of APPI and IATEFL-GISIG for some years and is deeply interested in global issues and IT tools.



FORMAÇÃO CONTINUA

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Manuel Gomes da Torre Award – Homage

In October of 2022, the *Associação Luso-Britânica do Porto* (ALBdoP) signed a cooperation agreement with APPI. The agreement implies the ALBdoP providing financial support for APPI activities in Porto and the north of Portugal. This support has as its mainstay the **Manuel Gomes da Torre Award** which finances cost-free places on an annual teacher development course organised by APPI.

Prof. Doutor **Manuel Gomes da Torre** (b. 1936) was a leading figure in encouraging the growth of English language teaching at the main teaching centre of the ALBdoP, the *Instituto Britânico* at *Rua da Breiner, 155* in Porto. In addition, he sponsored the expansion of English language teaching and teacher training at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto (FLUP). Indeed, I largely owe my career in ELT in Portugal to Prof. Gomes da Torre: firstly, recruiting me from the UK to work at the *Instituto* from September 1985 and latterly to work at FLUP from January 1989 until July 2023. And there are many other ELT professionals in the north of Portugal who can tell a similar tale.

At the height of its influence in the 1970s and 80s, the *Instituto* catered to approaching 3,000 students per year. Indeed, the scale of the operation was one of the factors which led the then Board of the ALBdoP to request that the British Council assumed overall control and day-to-day running of the *Instituto*, a transition agreed to in April 1987. Prof. Gomes da Torre served the ALBdoP in various roles throughout his working life, ultimately as President until his ‘retirement’ from the association in March 2010.

Prof. Gomes da Torre started his working life as a schoolteacher of English (initially at the Liceu Nacional da Póvoa de Varzim in 1961/62 and latterly at the Liceu Normal de D. Manuel II in Porto) before joining the staff of the course in *Filologia Germânica* at FLUP in 1977 at the invitation of Dr. Armando Morais (another pivotal figure at both the ALBdoP and FLUP). If, at this time, Dr. Armando Morais was the leading figure in the field of *Germânicas*, then Prof. Gomes da Torre subsequently became the first holder of a doctorate in the field (in 1985), becoming a full professor in 1992 and the first President of the Department of Anglo-American Studies (DEAA) at FLUP.

His 25 years of service at FLUP included many positions of responsibility, such as Vice President of the Dean’s Management Committee, President of the Scientific Council and President of the Assembly of Representatives; furthermore, he was one of the founders of the Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies (CETAPS). At CETAPS, he was the founder of the “Shakespeare Project”, coordinating and enabling the publication of a new Portuguese version of William Shakespeare's dramatic plays; the first three were published in December 2001, his own focus being on “Measure for Measure”. He would go on to translate several other plays for this project: *Henry V*, *King Lear*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *All’s Well that Ends Well*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; and for another series, in collaboration with António Simões, also *The Sonnets*.

Prof. Gomes da Torre exercised his academic skills and knowledge in areas connected with methodology and its application to the teaching of English, linguistics and translation studies. For example, his influence was crucial to the creation of separate departments for both Anglo-American and German studies and the establishment of a first degree and postgraduate degree in Translation Studies at FLUP. He took part in numerous conferences and cultural events and published widely in various journals, nationally and internationally. In January 2002, he was awarded the distinction of a '*medalha de ouro*' for his services to FLUP.

Prof. Gomes da Torre died in December 2024, but his legacy remains embedded at FLUP, in CETAPS and in the ALBdoP. Having his name associated with the provision of cost-free places on a teacher development course organised by APPI is a symbolic commemoration of his importance in the world of ELT in Porto and the north of Portugal. Moreover, the DEAA at FLUP, in conjunction with CETAPS and the ALBdoP organised an event to further pay tribute to the professor's extensive contribution to ELT in Portugal in November 2025.

Nicolas Hurst

President of the ALBdoP

Email contact: infoatalbdop@gmail.com



Nicolas Hurst. (APPI-B-1415). Assistant Professor of English Studies at FLUP. Teacher of English, ELT methodology and materials design. Numerous articles published in Portugal and abroad. Regular speaker at local and international conferences. ELT coursebook consultant. PhD in Anglo-American Studies.



ON THE BOOKSHELF

A review of

Academic Vocabulary and Grammar: Essential Language for Academic Writing

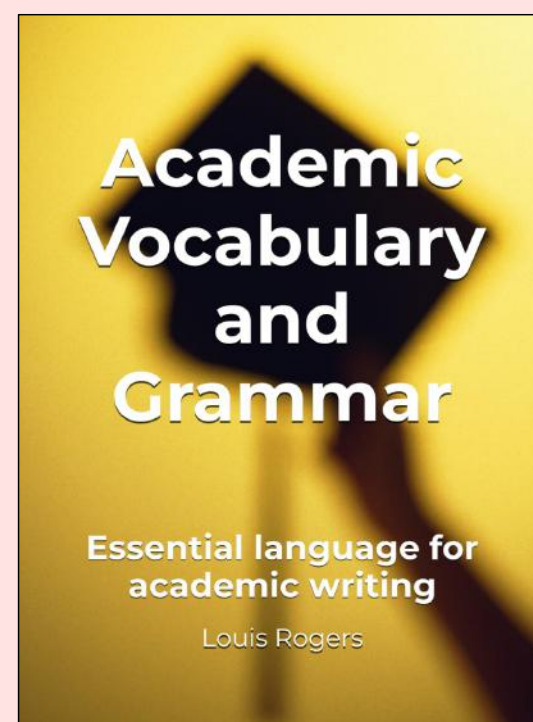
Author: Louis Rogers

Editor: Amazon Digital Services LLC - Kdp

Published 2024

148 pages

ISBN 9798346940227



Academic Vocabulary and Grammar is a practical workbook designed to help learners improve the language skills required for academic study in English. Combining vocabulary development with targeted grammar practice, the book aims to support students who need to read, write, and communicate more effectively in academic contexts. This format makes the book ideal for self-study and reference purposes.

The book is organised into two main parts. The first half focuses on vocabulary development and the second half on common academic grammatical structures. The vocabulary section introduces learners to many of the words and expressions commonly used in academic writing and discussion. Rather than presenting isolated word lists, the book focuses on how language typically appears in real academic contexts. As the units progress, the book looks at how writers construct arguments, describes process and evaluate information. This practical focus gives students a range of useful contexts to use the language in. By combining these elements, the book gradually builds a practical set of vocabulary that supports clearer and more confident academic communication.

Each unit follows a clear and consistent format. It begins with a short introduction explaining the importance of the language focus and how it is used in academic

contexts. This is followed by a key vocabulary list that defines the target words or expressions and illustrates them with example sentences. Learners are then given a series of practice exercises that reinforce understanding. These include activities such as matching words to definitions, completing sentences, or selecting the correct word in context. The units conclude with a short extension task that encourages learners to use the vocabulary in a paragraph related to an academic topic. Useful models and examples are used throughout the units.

The second half of the book focuses on grammar and reviews a range of core structures needed for academic communication. Topics include common verb tenses such as the present simple, past simple, and future forms, as well as structures frequently used in academic writing such as the passive voice, relative clauses, modal verbs, and conditional sentences. Additional units address features that help writers structure arguments and connect ideas, including comparison and contrast language, reporting ideas, and cohesive devices. Each grammar point is clearly explained with academic uses and contexts in mind.

The book is particularly well suited to upper-intermediate and advanced learners of English who want to improve their academic language skills. University students studying in English as a second language are likely to

benefit from the clear focus on academic vocabulary and grammar. It may also be useful for international students preparing for academic exams such as IELTS, as well as for learners taking English for Academic Purposes courses. Because of the clear explanations and self-contained units, the material works well for independent learners who prefer to study at their own pace. At the same time, teachers may find it useful as a supplementary resource for classroom practice or homework tasks.

One of the book's most noticeable strengths is its clear and systematic structure. The consistent format of each unit makes it easy for learners to understand what to expect and how to approach the material. This organisation also makes the book easy to navigate, allowing learners to focus on particular language areas they want to review.

The range of exercises also contributes to the book's usefulness. Activities require learners to recognise, select, and produce language in context rather than simply memorising definitions. The inclusion of short writing tasks encourages learners to actively use the vocabulary and grammar structures in meaningful ways, helping to reinforce long-term retention. The balance between vocabulary and grammar is another

positive feature, as both aspects are essential for effective academic communication.

There are, however, a few areas where the book could be improved. Although the vocabulary is clearly explained and supported with examples, there are relatively few longer reading passages or extended texts. Including short academic extracts or model paragraphs could help learners see how the vocabulary functions within authentic writing. In addition, some grammar explanations are fairly brief. Learners encountering these structures for the first time might benefit from more detailed explanations or additional examples that demonstrate the grammar in context.

Despite these minor limitations, *Academic Vocabulary and Grammar* remains a useful and accessible resource for learners aiming to strengthen their academic English. Its structured approach, focused vocabulary coverage, and practical exercises make it well suited to independent study as well as classroom support. For students who want a clear and manageable way to build the language needed for academic writing and study, the book provides a solid and reliable starting point.



Wendy Jones is a Senior Teaching Fellow in English for Academic Purposes at University of Southampton, with a demonstrated history of working in the higher education industry. Strong research professional skilled in English as a Second Language (ESL), Foreign Languages, Lecturing, Teaching English as a Second Language, and Curriculum Development.



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