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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

Welcome to the Spring/Summer edition of the APPI eJournal! In this issue you will find a display of articles which invites us to explore contents and feel motivated in our quest for new challenges with the help of enthusiastic educators and researchers.

We begin with **Carla Lopes**, In *Bridging Theory and Practice: Reflections on the Advanced Language and Methodology Course at NILE*, where she clearly states her gratitude to APPI and to the Alberto Gaspar Scholarship for being given the chance to participate in such an enriching programme in Norwich, UK. Among other aspects, she highlights the sessions devoted to creativity and motivation and draws our attention to the collaborative dimension of the course.

Helena Lopes, Judite Fiúza, and Manuela Pinto, as members of the APPI Board, report on their participation in TESOL-SPAIN, emphasising the importance of staying connected with the latest trends in teaching and learning.

Effie Kyrikakis starts by acknowledging the true bond between the 39th Annual APPI Conference theme and its development throughout the three-day event. Her article gives some readers the possibility of revisiting her workshop *From Artificial Intelligence to Humane Intelligence: Teaching with Centre, Connections and Choice* and others of becoming familiar with the *Three Doors* activity and its impact on the (he)art of teaching.

Carlos Lindade, our Writer-in Residence, contributes *AI-Aware Assessment for the EFL Classroom*, in which he reinforces the relevance of a “simple co-created agreement” that both fosters students’ ownership of responsible AI use and provides sufficient clarity for families to understand and support the process. Three frameworks that fit together: the DigComp 3.0; the AILit; and the AI Assessment Scale are displayed. Finally, he travels through “ten worked examples for lower and upper secondary English” and provides a group of “design principles”.

Opening the Classics: Dialogic Literary Gatherings in the Secondary EFL Classroom by **Pedro Lopes** constitutes a reflection on the potential offered by these activities.

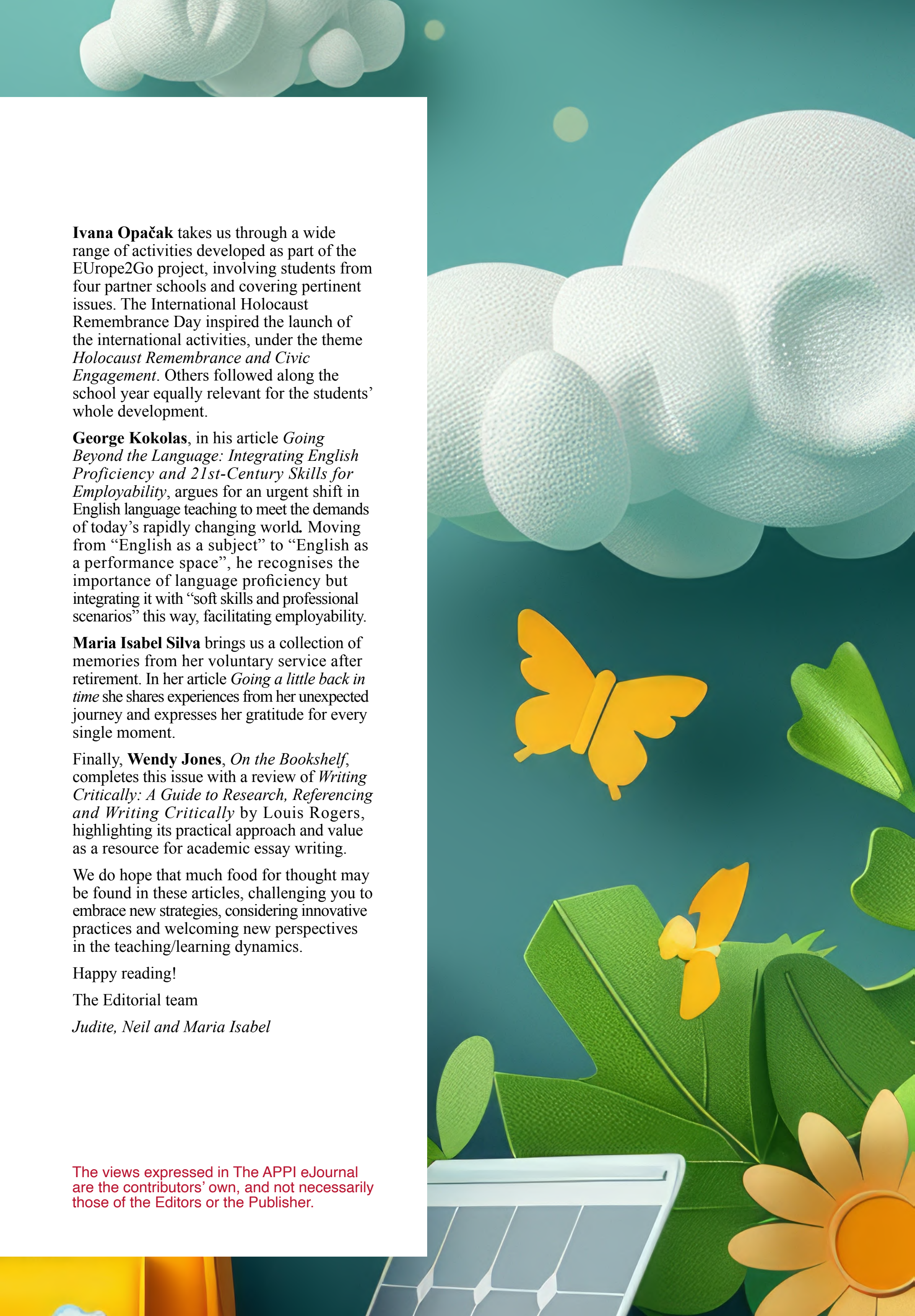
Going much beyond reading a passage from a classic text, they enable students, in a structured way, to share their interpretation, to listen to other classmates’ points of view and, ultimately, to learn how to compromise.

In **Ana Barroso**’s article *The Final Frontier: Sci-Fi films in the classroom – The Blade Runner effect*, she elaborates on the fruitful use of sci-fi films, as a tool in the EFL classroom, particularly with upper-secondary students. Despite their potential to engage learners through imaginative worlds, rich language, ethical dilemmas, and thought-provoking conflicts that foster critical thinking, science fiction films remain an underused genre in language teaching.

In *Catering for success: getting students to write collaboratively*, **Carmen Gonçalves** offers us a step-by-step activity she developed with a 10th grade class in order to foster their writing skills, by using “a hybrid and blended learning environment” and “the Rotation Model in Learning Environment”. Her reflection and concluding remarks clearly demonstrate the positive impact the project had on the students’ learning experience and overall achievement.

Paula Correia, in her article *Reimagining Halloween: A Tradition Fostering Speaking, Writing and Creativity*, turns our attention to a season celebration which along the years has become a truly global educational project involving students from primary to 12th form. Among other aspects, she emphasises the relevance of organisation, the role of creativity and engagement, the involvement of the families and the students’ genuine pride in the final product displayed.

Sara Garizo, teacher of English and school librarian, guides us through a panoply of activities included in an interdisciplinary project, involving English, where the Project-Work methodology was used, as well as Technology and Visual Arts and Music. Responding to a challenge launched by *Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian*, entitled – *DESAFI’ARTE: Museums of the Future, The Future of Museums*, the varied teachers managed to engage successfully two 7th grade classes. Their project was selected, among others, and the students invited to present it publicly.



Ivana Opačak takes us through a wide range of activities developed as part of the EUrope2Go project, involving students from four partner schools and covering pertinent issues. The International Holocaust Remembrance Day inspired the launch of the international activities, under the theme *Holocaust Remembrance and Civic Engagement*. Others followed along the school year equally relevant for the students' whole development.

George Kokolas, in his article *Going Beyond the Language: Integrating English Proficiency and 21st-Century Skills for Employability*, argues for an urgent shift in English language teaching to meet the demands of today's rapidly changing world. Moving from "English as a subject" to "English as a performance space", he recognises the importance of language proficiency but integrating it with "soft skills and professional scenarios" this way, facilitating employability.

Maria Isabel Silva brings us a collection of memories from her voluntary service after retirement. In her article *Going a little back in time* she shares experiences from her unexpected journey and expresses her gratitude for every single moment.

Finally, **Wendy Jones**, *On the Bookshelf*, completes this issue with a review of *Writing Critically: A Guide to Research, Referencing and Writing Critically* by Louis Rogers, highlighting its practical approach and value as a resource for academic essay writing.

We do hope that much food for thought may be found in these articles, challenging you to embrace new strategies, considering innovative practices and welcoming new perspectives in the teaching/learning dynamics.

Happy reading!

The Editorial team

Judite, Neil and Maria Isabel

The views expressed in The APPI eJournal are the contributors' own, and not necessarily those of the Editors or the Publisher.



CONTENTS

6	Carla Lopes	Bridging Theory and Practice: Reflections on the Advanced Language and Methodology Course at NILE
8	Helena Lopes, Judite Fiúza & Manuela Pinto	TESOL-SPAIN: Keeping Up with the Latest Trends in Teaching and Learning—Report
10	Effie Kyrikakis	From Artificial Intelligence to Humane Intelligence: Teaching with Centre, Connections and Choice
12	Carlos Lindade	AI-Aware Assessment for the EFL Classroom
18	Pedro Lopes	Opening the Classics: Dialogic Literary Gatherings in the Secondary EFL Classroom
20	Ana Barroso	The Final Frontier: Sci-Fi Films in the Classroom – The Blade Runner Effect
22	Carmen Gonçalves	Catering for Success: Getting Students to Write Collaboratively
24	Paula Correia	Reimagining Halloween: A Tradition Fostering Speaking, Writing and Creativity
28	Sara Garizo	DESAFI'ARTE: Museums of the Future, The Future of Museums
32	Ivana Opačak	EUrope2Go: Holocaust Remembrance and Civic Engagement
34	George Kokolas	Going Beyond the Language: Integrating English Proficiency and 21st-Century Skills for Employability
38	Maria Isabel Silva	Going a Little Back in Time
40	Wendy Jones	On the Bookshelf • Review of Writing Critically: A Guide to Research, Referencing and Writing Critically by Louis Rogers

Bridging Theory and Practice: A Journey Through Language, Methodology, and Becoming

Carla Lopes

Reflections on the Advanced Language and Methodology Course at **NILE**

Participating in the Advanced Language and Methodology course at NILE constituted a defining juncture in both my professional trajectory and personal evolution. Being awarded the scholarship that enabled my participation granted me far more than access to a programme of exemplary academic rigour, it afforded entry into a profoundly reflective and intellectually generative space, where practice, theory and critical inquiry converged with striking coherence. I submit this report, guided by an enduring sense of gratitude, responsibility, and commitment to transformative pedagogical development.

From the outset, the course emerged as fertile ground for interrogating the dynamic nature of language and the evolving role of the teacher in contemporary education. Engaging with themes such as language change, the intricate interplay between language and culture, and the shifting paradigms of modern pedagogy prompted a re-examination of long-held assumptions and invited a more nuanced understanding of linguistic and methodological complexity. These explorations echoed the work of scholars such as Crystal (2019) and Kramsch (2013), whose perspectives underscore the inherently fluid and culturally embedded nature of language.

Delving into recent methodological developments reinforced the understanding that language teaching today extends far beyond the transmission of grammatical structures. Rather, it involves cultivating the cognitive, communicative, and interpersonal capacities that underpin critical thinking, autonomy, and human connection. The course reaffirmed, in alignment with Richards and Rodgers (2014), that methodology is not a fixed

body of techniques but a dynamic, adaptive ecosystem shaped by context, research, and reflective practice.

Particularly resonant were the sessions devoted to creativity, motivation, and the affective dimension of learning. These discussions illuminated the psychological and emotional landscapes that support successful language acquisition, dimensions emphasised by Dörnyei (2020) and central to any pedagogy that seeks to be genuinely learner-centred. Through multimodal resources, narrative practices, and aesthetic approaches, such as storytelling, poetry, song, visual media, I was reminded that language emerges most powerfully when it is embodied, co-constructed, and experienced rather than simply studied. Creativity, as highlighted by Maley and Peachey (2015), is not an embellishment but a pedagogical necessity in fostering engagement, agency, and intellectual flexibility.

Equally enriching was the collaborative dimension of the course. The opportunity to exchange perspectives with colleagues from diverse educational contexts broadened my understanding of global pedagogical realities and underscored the value of dialogic reflection. Discussions on issues in language learning, explorations of learner autonomy, and hands-on activities focused on developing language knowledge and use aligned closely with Little's (2007) reconceptualisation of autonomy as a relational, socially mediated process rather than an individualistic goal.

The emphasis on 21st Century Skills further illuminated the extent to which language education is inseparable from broader societal demands. The course foregrounded the teacher's role in nurturing intercultural sensitivity, creativity, problem-solving abilities, collaboration, and digital literacy, competencies articulated in frameworks by the OECD (2018) and UNESCO (2016), and increasingly

central to an education that prepares learners for global citizenship.

Throughout the programme, the inextricable relationship between language and methodology grew ever more apparent. Teaching emerged as a continuous act of negotiation between knowledge, belief, and aspiration, between the structures we inherit and the pedagogical worlds we seek to create. It is precisely in this liminal space, between theory and practice, research and intuition—that teachers reinvent themselves and refine their craft.

I return from this experience with a heightened awareness, a more refined interpretative lens, and a renewed pedagogical intentionality. I bring back not only the theoretical insights and methodological frameworks encountered, but also the conviction that meaningful innovation in the classroom is inseparable from personal transformation. A truly human-centred pedagogy, I have come to understand, is grounded in empathy, intellectual curiosity, and an unwavering commitment to seeing learners as whole and complex individuals.

I remain profoundly grateful to APPI and to the Alberto Gaspar Scholarship for enabling my participation in this remarkable programme. I leave this experience more intellectually enriched, more critically attuned, and more deeply committed to advancing a socially and culturally responsible vision of language education.

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Carla Lopes is a language educator with more than twenty years' experience teaching English, Portuguese and Spanish. She graduated from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto, holds a Master's in English and Spanish Teaching and a postgraduate qualification in Early English Language Teaching, and is pursuing a PhD in Language Sciences – Language Didactics.



TESOL-SPAIN: Keeping Up with the Latest Trends in Teaching and Learning—Report

Helena Lopes
Judite Fiúza
Manuela Pinto

TESOL-SPAIN Sevilla 2026
Universidad Pablo de Olavide
Sevilla 13th—15th March 2026

Every year, members of the APPI board attend international conferences so we can be in touch with the latest trends in the education field—English Language Teaching (ELT)—and as usual we write an article for the APPI members to know what is going on in the global world of education.

Recognised as a core component of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the United Nations 2030 Agenda, sustainability has become a central focus of policy and practice in Portugal. Therefore, the APPI board has decided to head to the TESOL-SPAIN Conference held in Seville by car to minimise our environmental footprint on planet Earth. The 49th Conference took place from 13th to 15th March. We left on the 1st day and arrived there just in time to attend its opening. This year's theme, " **‘Warmth, Colour and Wonder in the World of ELT’** is both a celebration and an invitation. It reflects our belief that teaching English is more than just methods and materials. It is a human, creative, and profoundly meaningful practice."

With around nine sessions taking place simultaneously, choosing among them was no easy task.

This year's Conference programme suggests a clear shift towards a more **human-centred, creative, and technology-enhanced vision of ELT**, where innovation is balanced with learners' well-being, meaningful communication, and inclusive pedagogical practices. It reveals five dominant trends that reflect current priorities in English Language Teaching:

Creativity and Learner Engagement – fostering imagination, storytelling, drama, music, and creative methodologies to promote meaningful and motivating learning experiences.

Artificial Intelligence and Digital Literacy – exploring the pedagogical integration of generative AI, AI literacy, ethical use of AI, critical thinking, and digital competencies in ELT.

Well-being and Human-centred Education – emphasising empathy, inclusion, teacher and learner well-being, positive relationships, and a supportive classroom environment.

Multimodality and Communication – promoting the use of multimodal resources, visual literacy, digital storytelling, podcasts, and video to enhance language learning and communication.

Inclusion and Diversity – addressing equitable teaching practices, intercultural competence, multilingualism, neurodiversity, and inclusive learning environments.

Additional themes, although less prominent, included formative assessment, feedback, reflective practice, teacher professional development, and mediation.

Regarding teacher professional development, one of APPI's long-standing areas of interest, it was striking to see how its approach was directly aligned with the current priorities in ELT mentioned above. The emphasis on creativity offered a refreshing way of looking at continuous professional development (CPD) with a twist, encouraging teachers to engage with their practice resourcefully, questioning how often they truly try something new, regardless of the number of years they have been teaching. This approach considers CPD as an opportunity to rediscover long lost successful activities or strategies as well as to experiment with new ones.

A conference such as TESOL-Spain also invites teachers to step into the learners role, reflecting on practices they are familiar with but giving them the opportunity to gain new insights into them. Sharing ideas generates new ideas that might be tried out

successfully. Such exchanges lead us to reflect on how we sustain our enthusiasm and motivation at a time when new priorities are continually being set for us in schools.

During the Conference we also had the opportunity to meet other teachers from all around the world. Informal conversations during the breaks showed us that many of the problems we deal with are the same across countries. A common theme emerged from these conversations: regardless of where they teach, educators are working towards many of the same goals, the ones portrayed in the Conference dominant trends.

Participating in conferences like TESOL-SPAIN helps the APPI Board bring new ideas, new methods and global views back to Portugal, reinforcing the relevance of professional communities in helping

teachers collaborate, exchange ideas, and continue learning and growing.

We hope that by sharing these experiences with our members we help with their growth as professionals and encourage teachers to keep looking for new ways to make learning English fun, engaging and relevant.

We look forward to attending future international events and continuing to represent APPI within the global ELT community.



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Helena Lopes is an EFL teacher in the 3rd Cycle of Basic Education and Secondary Education in Portuguese state schools, as well as a teacher trainer. She holds an MA in English Studies and a PhD in Languages, Literatures and Cultures, specialising in Foreign Language Didactics.

Judite Fiúza taught English in secondary schools and Portuguese at the *Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa*, and the *Faculdade de Letras, Universidade Clássica de Lisboa*. She is passionate about literature, theatre, cinema, and travelling. Now retired from teaching, she continues to contribute to English language teaching as a member of the APPI Board.

From Artificial Intelligence to Humane Intelligence: Teaching with Centre, Connections and Choice

Effie Kyrikakis

From Artificial Intelligence to Humane Intelligence: Keeping Teaching Human in an Age of Acceleration

It was a delight to attend the 39th Annual APPI Conference in Aveiro, Portugal, as a representative of TESOL Greece – and what an energising experience it was. The buzz of discussions in the stairs and corridors as more than 800 educators came together not simply to attend sessions, but to think, connect, question, and reimagine what English Language Teaching can contribute to the common good was phenomenal.

What made the APPI Conference particularly powerful was that the conference theme, *Fostering ELT Communities for a Common Good*, was not discussed abstractly. It was embodied in the culture of the event itself: collegial, inclusive, intellectually stimulating, and deeply human.



Humane Intelligence belongs inside this wider conversation because it offers a way to make the human heart of teaching more conscious, teachable, and sustainable. At a time when

teacher exhaustion is reaching unprecedented levels, this work feels increasingly urgent. Many educators – particularly women educators, who frequently carry a second shift of caregiving, family responsibilities, and invisible emotional labour – are being asked to pour from cups that are already running low. Humane Intelligence does not ask teachers to become stronger machines; it helps them remain fully human within demanding systems. If Artificial Intelligence expands what teachers can do, Humane Intelligence helps us remember who teachers are.

Why This Conversation Matters Now

Needless to say, Artificial Intelligence is transforming education at exponential speed. Teachers now have access to tools that can generate lesson plans, activities, summaries, feedback, and administrative

support within seconds. These developments bring exciting possibilities, but they also raise a critical question: if technology increasingly supports the cognitive and procedural aspects of teaching, what remains uniquely human?

The answer, I believe, lies in the relational, emotional, and ethical conditions that make learning possible. Teaching has always been relational work and in an AI-enhanced world, that reality becomes even more significant.

Humane Intelligence: Centre, Connections, and Choice

My workshop, *From Artificial Intelligence to Humane Intelligence: Teaching with Centre, Connections and Choice*, introduced Humane Intelligence as a practical framework for protecting and strengthening the human capacities that matter most in education. At its simplest, Humane Intelligence is the ability to regulate, connect, and choose under pressure.

The phrase *under pressure* matters. It is easy to be patient, compassionate, and reflective when circumstances are ideal. The real challenge appears in ordinary school life: the difficult class, the tense email, the tired afternoon group, the overwhelming workload, or the moment when a teacher's own resources are already low.

The workshop was experiential offering reflection, and meaning-making instead of theory. Participants were invited to notice their own professional reality before any framework was introduced. Through storytelling, pair work, embodied reflection, and practical micro-activities, we explored why well-being is not a decorative extra in education but professional infrastructure.



My personal account from early in my career, when I was a young mother of two trying to serve my students, meet impossible personal expectations, and hold everything together while quietly moving towards burnout, seemed to open a door in the

room. It made the need for Humane Intelligence less abstract and more recognisable. Many participants could see themselves, or colleagues they care about, in that tension between dedication and depletion.

The Workshop in Practice

The framework is organised around three capacities: Centre, Connections, and Choice. Centre refers to self-regulation before reaction. It recognises that the teacher’s state enters the room before the lesson plan does. Through the *Doorframe Reset*, participants practised a simple pause before entering a demanding classroom: notice, breathe, and enter more available.

Connections focus on the relational dimension of well-being. Teaching can become isolating when educators carry difficulties alone. Through the *10-Minute Ask*, participants practised requesting specific, bounded support from a colleague: one challenge, one idea, one week, one follow-up. The point was not emotional overexposure, but professional oxygen.

Choice explores psychological flexibility: the ability to create one more possible response when stress narrows our thinking. Through the *Three Doors* activity, participants worked with difficult classroom moments and generated possible responses through Centre, Connection, and Choice. This allowed them to move from autopilot to agency.

What moved me most was the shift in the room. At first, some participants were hesitant, as often happens when professional spaces invite personal honesty. Gradually, however, the atmosphere softened. People began to share tiredness, emotional pressure, frustration, care, and hope with striking openness. The amphitheatre was full, and yet the session felt increasingly intimate.

When Technology Disappears and Humanity Remains

One unexpected moment became a living example of the workshop itself. Shortly after the session began, a technical problem meant that most of the slides disappeared. Only the opening and final slides remained visible. Under normal circumstances, this could have felt like a presenter’s nightmare.



Instead, it became a gift. It gave me the opportunity to demonstrate, in real time, one of the central principles of Humane Intelligence: self-regulation creates

the conditions for co-regulation, which then opens the possibility of choosing our response rather than allowing the situation to choose it for us.

The problem shifted attention away from the screen and back towards the people in the room. The

workshop became less about presentation and more about participation, less about slides and more about human connection. Participants responded with generosity, humour, and wholehearted engagement. Many stayed afterwards to talk, ask questions, and share their own experiences. I was touched, overwhelmed by the response, and humbled by the trust in the room.

What the Future Holds

The future of education will not be shaped only by better tools. It will also be shaped by the human capacities we choose to protect and practise: the capacity to pause before reacting, to connect without losing ourselves, and to choose one more humane response inside demanding systems.

What brings hope is the fact that little by little more voices join the teacher's well-being conversation. We gradually realise that sustainable students and schools cannot exist without sustainable teachers. The notion is being established day by day, that teacher well-being is not an afterthought, a side dish, or a soft concern. It is time to place attention where the pulse of education actually lives: in teachers. The heart of education is still human. And it is time we started caring for that heart – not tomorrow, not when systems become easier, but yesterday.

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AI-Aware Assessment for the EFL Classroom

Carlos Lindade

Summary:

Generative AI has not made assessment impossible. It has exposed assessment that was never measuring much. Rather than banning AI tools, the EFL classroom needs assessment that protects validity, that keeps a learner's thinking visible, while building the AI literacy this generation will need. This article starts where the work starts, with classrooms co-constructing responsible-use guidelines, and then sets out three frameworks that fit together: DigComp 3.0, the European reference for digital competence, which now integrates AI and is built to inform assessment; the AILit Framework, its primary and secondary companion; and the AI Assessment Scale, a practical tool for deciding how much AI a task should allow. It closes with ten worked examples for lower and upper secondary English, two for each level of the scale, and a set of design principles.

The real problem is not whether machines think but whether men do. (Skinner, 1969, p. 288)

1. The first step: agreeing on rules... together!

In my previous contribution to this eJournal (Lindade, 2026) I argued for moving from bans to balance, and I want to begin there, because it is also where rethinking assessment in the age of AI begins. The pressing challenge for schools today is not to write regulations that forbid AI. It is to help whole school communities: teachers, students, and families, learn what responsible AI use looks like, and to co-construct guidelines that are meaningful and easy to share.

This matters for assessment more than it first appears. A class that has agreed, together, when AI may be used, when it may not, and why, has already done the groundwork for everything that follows. The guidelines do not need to be elaborate. A simple, co-created agreement, a traffic-light scale that marks tasks green (AI encouraged), amber (AI allowed within limits), or red (no AI), gives students a shared language and gives families a clear document they can understand. Co-construction is the point. When learners help define the boundaries, they internalise them, and a teacher can hold them to account because the rules are collectively owned rather than imposed.

That agreement is the foundation. The rest of this article is about what we put on top of it: tasks that are worth setting in the first place.

2. Who are we teaching, and why does it sharpen the question?

Agreeing how we will use AI together answers one question. It immediately raises a harder one. If these tools are now part of the room, what exactly are we assessing, and can we still see the learner inside the work? To answer that, it helps to be clear about who our learners actually are.

It is tempting to reach for dramatic claims about a generation whose brains have been rewired. One should resist that, because the evidence is thin, and the history of our field is full of confident generational pronouncements that did not survive scrutiny. The “digital natives” idea is the cautionary example: Bennett, Maton, and Kervin (2008) showed that it rested largely on anecdote rather than evidence, and that young people's skills are far less uniform than the label suggests. Any claim about today's learners has to clear a higher bar.

There is, nonetheless, a defensible and specific distinction. Generation Alpha, the students born from 2010 onward (a term coined by the social researcher Mark McCrindle), differ from Generation Z and the millennials in one way that matters for us. Earlier cohorts adopted each technology after their formative years; Generation Alpha are the first to pass through primary and lower secondary schooling while generative AI is simply present, an ordinary feature of the world rather than a novelty to be learned (McCrindle & Fell, 2021). For an English teacher, that is the crucial point. These learners meet a fluent, tireless, language-producing machine before they have built the critical faculties to question it. The discontinuity is not in their neurology. It is in the sequence: exposure arrives before judgement.

And they are not waiting for us. The European Commission and OECD AILit Framework (OECD, 2025) summarises the picture: most young people are already experimenting with AI, in structured and unstructured ways, yet around half of those aged 17 to 27 struggle to identify its shortfalls, such as whether a system can invent facts. The seven-country European survey it draws on, which includes Portugal, found that 74% of 12- to 17-year-olds believe AI will play a significant role in their professional lives, while only 46% feel their school prepares them for it (Vodafone Foundation, 2024). That gap, not a story about attention spans, is the case for acting. Our students are using these tools without guidance, the English classroom is no longer their only source of the language or of

feedback on it, and the question of how we assess them can no longer be postponed.

3. The real question is validity, not cheating

Faced with all this, the instinct many of us reach for first is some version of “how do I stop them?” It is understandable, and it leads nowhere useful. AI detectors are unreliable and produce false accusations; outright bans simply push use out of sight. Both responses spend our energy policing behaviour instead of improving what we ask students to do.

There is a better question, and it predates ChatGPT. Dawson, Bearman, Dollinger and Boud (2024) put it plainly in the title of their paper: validity matters more than cheating. An assessment is valid when it actually measures the learning it claims to measure. If a task can be completed, invisibly, by a machine, the real problem is not that a student was dishonest. The problem is that the task was never measuring much. Generative AI has not broken assessment. It has revealed the assessments that were already weak, and handed us a reason, at last, to redesign them. The rest of this article treats AI not as an enemy to be excluded or a miracle to be embraced, but as something our students live with, and asks how we design English tasks that keep their thinking visible.

4. Three frameworks that fit together

A teacher designing an AI-aware assessment faces three questions, in sequence. What should my learners be able to do with and around AI? What does that look like at their age and stage? And, for this particular task, how much AI should I allow? Each question has a framework built to answer it, and, crucially, the three were designed to interlock rather than compete.

The first question is about **competence**, and the reference point is **DigComp 3.0** (Cosgrove & Cachia, 2025), the fifth edition of the European Digital Competence Framework. This is the European Union’s official description of what it means to be digitally competent, organised into five competence areas, twenty-one competences, and four proficiency levels (Basic, Intermediate, Advanced, Highly Advanced). Two features make it the natural backbone for assessment. First, it integrates AI transversally rather than treating it as a separate module, labelling each competence as AI-explicit or AI-implicit, which matches the balanced stance that AI is one digital technology among many. Second, it is built to inform assessment: it is used across Europe to develop assessments and to support both summative and formative assessment through its learning outcomes.

The second question is about **what AI literacy looks like in school**, and here the **ALLit Framework** (OECD, 2025) is the companion. Where DigComp

describes competence for any citizen across a lifetime, ALLit translates AI literacy specifically for primary and secondary learners, across four domains, Engaging, Creating, Managing, and Designing AI, with classroom scenarios for each. For English teachers, the first three domains are the relevant ones; Designing AI belongs more to the computing room. The two frameworks are not rivals but layers of the same project: the Joint Research Centre confirms that DigComp 3.0 was mapped against the ALLit competences and covers them, and both rest on the same human-centred commitment that AI should support human judgement, never replace it. ALLit, in effect, zooms DigComp in to our learners’ age, and it is candid that it stops short of telling us how to assess what it describes.

The third question, the one ALLit leaves open, is about **the task itself**, and the **AI Assessment Scale (AIAS)** (Perkins et al., 2024; adapted for EFL by Roe et al., 2025) answers it. The AIAS is a practical tool for deciding, and signalling on the task itself, how much AI a given assessment allows, across five non-hierarchical levels:

1. No AI: completed without AI, in controlled conditions.
2. AI Planning: AI for pre-task work only (brainstorming, research); the assessed work is independent.
3. AI Collaboration: AI on specific, defined sub-tasks; students critically evaluate and shape its output and keep their own voice.
4. Full AI: AI may complete elements of the task; the assessment is how well students direct and critique it.
5. AI Exploration: AI used creatively to address new problems, often co-designed with students.

No level is “better” than another, and the co-constructed traffic-light agreement from Section 1 is simply a class-friendly version of the same idea. Read together, the three frameworks form a single line of reasoning rather than a pile of acronyms. DigComp 3.0 names the competences a learner should build; ALLit makes those competences concrete and age-appropriate; and the AIAS turns them into a design decision a teacher can make, and state, on every task. The first two tell us what is worth assessing. The third tells us how much of the tool belongs in the room while we do it.

5. Putting it to work: ten AI-aware English assessments

What follows is the practical core: two worked examples for each level of the AI Assessment Scale, designed for lower and upper secondary English. Each gives the task, the learners, why it stays valid, what you actually assess, and the competence it develops. They are starting points to adapt, not a complete catalogue.

Level 1, No AI: protect the baseline

You cannot interpret AI-assisted work unless you also have evidence of what a learner can do unaided. Level 1 is not nostalgia. It is the control condition that makes every higher level readable.

1.1 Human or machine? (lower to upper secondary, A2 to B2) Give students two short English texts on a familiar topic, one written by a person (drawn from a real source) and one generated by AI. In groups, and with no devices, they argue which is which, defending their verdict with linguistic evidence: register, specificity, cliché, the kinds of small errors humans and machines each make. The task is pure reading and speaking, and it doubles as critical AI literacy.

You assess: reasoning, the language of comparison and evaluation, and the quality of the evidence cited.

Competence link: this is almost word for word a DigComp 3.0 outcome, “recognise that it can be difficult to distinguish between information and content generated by humans and AI systems” (LO1.2.04), and AILit’s “evaluate whether AI outputs should be accepted, revised, or rejected.”

1.2 The live local anchor (lower secondary, A2 to B1) Students write a short narrative in class, by hand, from a prompt revealed only that day and tied to shared experience: a place in your town that matters to you, a moment from this week. Because the prompt is specific, personal, and unpredictable, and the writing happens in front of you, it evidences genuinely independent production.

You assess: spontaneous use of target tenses, coherence, and range, under known conditions.

Competence link: the teacher models that some tasks are deliberately No AI, and explains why (DigComp 3.0, Managing AI, “decide whether to use AI based on the nature of the task”).

Level 2, AI Planning: let the machine help them start, assess what they build

Ideation and research are where AI genuinely helps. The move is to let it in at the front door while keeping the assessed product independent.

2.1 Brainstorm, then defend (upper secondary, B2) For an argumentative task on a relevant local or national issue, for example whether phones should be restricted in Portuguese schools, students first use AI to brainstorm arguments and vocabulary at home, submitting the chat log and a short note on which ideas they kept, dropped, or

distrusted. They then write or debate the argument in class, unaided.

You assess: the independent piece, plus the quality of their selection and critique of the AI’s ideas.

Competence link: AILit, Creating with AI (“use AI to explore new perspectives while staying accountable for the final content”); DigComp 3.0, Evaluating information.

2.2 Questions for a real voice (lower to upper secondary, B1) Before interviewing a family member about how English entered their life (school, work, music, migration), students prompt AI to generate guiding questions and a topic vocabulary bank. They then conduct the real interview, gather the answers, and present their findings.

You assess: the researched content and the spoken delivery, not the AI-made scaffold.

Competence link: DigComp 3.0, Managing AI (delegating structured, preparatory tasks); this also connects to the informal English our learners already absorb outside class.

Level 3, AI Collaboration: the richest level for English

Most future writing will be collaborative with AI. The validity move is to assess the student’s decisions about the output, not the output itself.

3.1 Draft, feedback, revise, with a rationale (upper secondary, B1 to B2) Students write a first draft under Level 1 conditions. They then ask AI for feedback on one defined dimension (cohesion, or a specific target structure), revise, and submit a small portfolio: original draft, the AI feedback, the final version, and a short rationale explaining which suggestions they accepted or rejected, and why.

You assess: the revision decisions and the metalinguistic reasoning, where the learning is visible, rather than the polish of the final text.

Competence link: this mirrors AILit’s own secondary scenario almost exactly, “use an AI writing assistant to revise a personal narrative, then reflect on whether its suggestions supported authentic voice.”

3.2 Rehearse with AI, perform with a human (upper secondary, speaking) Students rehearse a speaking scenario with an AI conversation partner at home, then perform the unrehearsed equivalent live with a peer, and reflect briefly on what the AI helped with and where it fell short. This is the natural place to discuss, openly, the habit of treating a tireless, agreeable machine as if it were a person.

You assess: the live human performance and the reflection, not the private rehearsal.

Competence link: DigComp 3.0, Interacting through and with digital technologies, which explicitly asks learners to describe AI’s role accurately and avoid anthropomorphism.

Level 4, Full AI: assess the orchestration, not the output

When AI may do the producing, the assessable skill becomes judgement: directing, evaluating, and correcting the machine. For language teachers this is unusually rich, because that judgement is itself deeply linguistic.

4.1 Translation post-editing (upper secondary, B2 and above) Give students an AI translation of a text (English to Portuguese, or the reverse) and have them post-edit it to publishable quality, annotating each change: false friends, register slips, idiom, mistranslation, tone. The machine produced the draft; the assessed skill is the critical linguistic evaluation that repairs it.

You assess: the accuracy and justification of their edits, a genuine and employable competence.

Competence link: AILit, “evaluate whether AI outputs should be accepted, revised, or rejected”; DigComp 3.0, Content creation.

4.2 Generate, then fact-check (upper secondary, B2) Students fully prompt AI to produce English content about Portuguese culture, history, or a local landmark, then critically annotate and fact-check it against reliable sources: where is it vague, generic, inaccurate, or quietly stereotyped? They justify a set of edits that would make it genuinely good.

You assess: the quality of their prompting and of their critique, orchestration and evaluation rather than authorship of the prose.

Competence link: DigComp 3.0, Managing AI and Evaluating information; AILit, Self and Social Awareness (bias and representation).

Level 5, AI Exploration: co-designed, creative, new

At the top of the scale, AI becomes material for genuine inquiry. These tasks are more open and project-shaped, and they return the most in motivation and in critical literacy.

5.1 Build a local language helper (upper secondary, project) Students design and prompt-engineer an AI assistant for a real audience: younger learners at their school struggling with a tricky grammar point, or visitors to their town who need English help.

They test it, document where it works and where it fails, and present it.

You assess: the design reasoning, the iterative testing, and the spoken presentation.

Competence link: AILit, Designing and Managing AI (“describe how AI can be designed to support a community problem”); this loops back to localised materials creation.

5.2 Does AI speak our English? (upper secondary, co-designed inquiry) Working from a question the class defines together, students use AI to generate English about Portuguese varieties, registers, or culture, then fact-check and critique it: what does it get right, flatten, or stereotype? The exploration treats AI’s limits as the object of study and produces a piece of critical, evidence-based English.

You assess: the critical analysis and the language used to express it.

Competence link: AILit, Creating with AI and Self and Social Awareness; DigComp 3.0, Evaluating information.

6. Design principles for AI-resilient assessment

The examples above are particular, but the moves behind them are general. Six design principles travel to almost any task an English teacher might set, and they are worth stating in their own right.

Assess the process, not only the product. This is the single most important shift, and it follows directly from the validity argument. If we grade only a finished text, we grade something a machine can now produce; if we mark the drafts, the notes, the decisions, and the reflections that led to it, we grade the learning itself, which a machine cannot do on the student’s behalf (Dawson et al., 2024). In practice this means building visible thinking into the task: a planning stage that is collected, a revision history that is annotated, a short account of the choices made along the way. The product still matters, but it becomes the end of a trail of evidence rather than the only thing we see. For writing in particular, this turns the very feature that makes AI threatening, its ability to hand back a polished paragraph, into a non-issue, because the paragraph is no longer where the marks are.

Anchor tasks in the personal and the local. When a prompt is rooted in a learner’s own experience, their street, their family, a debate the class had yesterday, an AI-generated answer loses much of its power, because the relevant material lives in the student and in the room, not on the internet. Authenticity is not decoration here; it is a validity strategy.

Be safe and open. A useful way to organise a whole unit, rather than a single task, is to think in two

lanes. One lane is safe: in-class, supervised work, often at No AI or AI Planning, that confirms what a learner can do unaided and gives every higher-level task something to be read against. The other lane is open: AI-permitted, authentic tasks that look like the real world and deliberately build responsible use. Some universities now formalise exactly this split, pairing a secured task with an open one across a programme so that integrity and authenticity are handled by different tasks rather than fought over within one (University of Sydney, 2024). The AI Assessment Scale is the natural companion to this thinking, because it lets you place each task in its lane and say so plainly.

Insist on oral and face to face interactions. A short spoken defence of a written piece, an in-class interview, a real-time discussion, these assess constructs that a chatbot simply cannot perform for a student: interaction, mediation, listening, thinking on one's feet. They need not be high-stakes. Two minutes of follow-up questions on a submitted essay will tell you, quickly and fairly, how much of it the student can stand behind.

Make reflection part of the task. Asking learners to explain, briefly, how they approached a piece of work and what they decided about any AI they used is not an add-on; it is itself a valid and assessable object, and it is one of the simplest ways to make reasoning visible.

Diversify formats, and always signal the AI-use level. A podcast, a poster, an annotated draft, a recorded presentation, a sequence of small in-class tasks: varied modes are harder for AI to mimic wholesale and they reach competences a single essay never touches. Whatever the format, state the AIAS level, or the traffic-light colour, on the task itself, so that the rule carries a purpose the class already understands and a teacher can hold students to.

7. What this approach is not

Because balance matters more than slogans, five clarifications are worth making explicit.

It is **not surveillance**. None of these tasks depend on catching anyone, and none require a detector. They depend on designing work in which genuine understanding is what gets measured, which makes the question of who used what beside the point. A classroom built on detection breeds suspicion; a classroom built on valid tasks does not need it.

It is **not anti-AI**. Only two of the ten examples exclude AI, and they do so to protect the baseline that makes the other eight readable. The whole logic of the scale is that No AI and Full AI are equally legitimate choices for different goals, and the higher levels deliberately teach students to use these tools well, because they will have to.

It is **not one size fits all**. Level and proficiency matter. A B2 class can post-edit a translation; an A2 class needs the live anchor first. The scale is a planning lever, not a ladder to climb, and a teacher will move up and down it within a single unit depending on what each task is meant to reveal.

It is **not a one-off fix**. Redesigning assessment for AI is not a box to tick once and forget. The tools change, learners' habits change, and what counts as a secure or an authentic task will keep shifting. The value of working from frameworks and a clear principle, rather than from a list of banned behaviours, is precisely that they hold steady while the particulars move.

It is **not a lowering of standards**. AI-aware assessment does not ask less of students. It asks something harder, and more worth knowing.

8. Closing

The point of an AI-aware assessment is not to discover whether a student used a machine. It is to design work in which we can still see the person think. That is the question worth assessing for, and it is the one our students, the first to grow up surrounded by AI, most need us to keep asking. The question is no longer whether they used AI, but whether we can still see them think.

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Opening the Classics: Dialogic Literary Gatherings in the Secondary EFL Classroom

Pedro Lopes

This article presents Dialogic Literary Gatherings (DLGs) as an inclusive, dialogic approach to literature in secondary EFL classrooms. It explains how classics can foster meaningful speaking, listening, empathy and intercultural learning, while offering practical guidance on organisation, language support and observation-based assessment. It argues that students learn English through shared interpretation and dialogue.

In many secondary English classrooms, literary texts are still approached as objects to be decoded: vocabulary is checked, comprehension questions are answered, and the teacher confirms the “right” interpretation. DLGs offer a different possibility. They invite students to read a classic text, choose a passage that speaks to them, and share their interpretation with classmates in a structured, egalitarian discussion. Literature becomes not only language input, but also a shared space for meaning-making, listening, argumentation, and intercultural learning.

DLGs are one of the Successful Educational Actions identified in the INCLUD-ED project, which acknowledged practices that improve learning and social cohesion (Flecha, 2015). Their distinctive feature is the combination of high expectations with equal dialogue. All students are invited to participate, regardless of English level, confidence, or classroom status. The teacher, acting as moderator, does not explain the text in advance or evaluate contributions during the discussion. Instead, the moderator manages turns, ensures respect for the rules and encourages participants to justify and respond to one another’s ideas.

In the secondary EFL classroom, this has particular value. Students are often asked to speak in English, but many oral activities remain artificial or teacher-centred. In DLGs, students speak because they have something to say about a text, a character, a conflict or a human experience. A passage from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Frankenstein*, or *Great Expectations* can open a discussion about courage, prejudice, ambition, exclusion, love, family, responsibility, or freedom. The classic text is important because it offers cultural depth and interpretative richness; however, the aim is not to turn the English lesson into a lecture on literary

history. The aim is to create a dialogic encounter between the text, the students, and the language.

A DLG is relatively simple to organise. Before the session, students read a previously agreed excerpt from a classic work of world literature, using an accessible English version of the text. Each student selects one passage and prepares a short explanation of why it was meaningful, relevant, surprising, beautiful, unfair, or confusing. In class, students sit in a circle. The moderator asks who would like to share a passage, gives the floor in order, and invites others to comment, agree, disagree, ask questions, or connect the passage to other parts of the text or to wider experiences. A session can last 40 to 50 minutes, which fits ordinary Portuguese timetables.

For DLGs to work well in EFL, preparation matters. Students may need support with vocabulary, but this should not replace the dialogic nature of the gathering. A useful strategy is to provide a short glossary, allow students to annotate the text, and encourage them to prepare sentence starters such as:

“I chose this passage because...”

“I agree with... because...”

“This reminds me of...”, or

“I see it differently because...”.

In mixed-level classes, students should be encouraged to use English as much as possible, while allowing them to use Portuguese strategically when it helps them express complex ideas or remain engaged in the discussion. Over time, the teacher can gently increase the expectation that students reformulate, clarify, and extend their ideas in English.

The benefits of DLGs are not limited to fluency. Because students listen to different interpretations of the same text, they learn that meaning is negotiated socially. This is closely related to intercultural citizenship education, particularly to the development of curiosity, openness, empathy and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 2021). When students discuss why a character acts in a certain way, whether a decision was fair, or how a social norm affected someone, they practise taking perspectives. Macagno et al. (2022) show that empathy in dialogue can be analysed through interactional moves such as inviting others to speak, acknowledging their views, reasoning, and

building on previous contributions. These moves are precisely the kind of discourse that DLGs can foster.

Assessment should therefore focus on participation and development, not on judging interpretations as correct or incorrect. During the gathering, the teacher can use a simple observation sheet to record evidence of students’ oral and dialogic participation. For example, the sheet may include columns for number of contributions, use of English, clarity of voice, turn-taking, reference to the text, justification of opinions, response to peers’ ideas, and empathy-related behaviours such as inviting, acknowledging, or respectfully disagreeing. These notes can later inform feedback, self-assessment and planning. They also help the teacher notice quieter students who may be progressing through listening or short interventions. There are challenges. Some students may initially read from notes, avoid eye contact or rely heavily on Portuguese. Others may expect the teacher to provide the “real” meaning of the text. The teacher may feel tempted to correct every language error or fill silences too quickly. These difficulties are normal. DLGs require time and trust. It is helpful to begin with short excerpts, clear routines and modest linguistic goals. In one session, the focus might be on using reasons to support opinions; in another, on responding to a classmate before adding a new idea. An example of an observation sheet follows.



DLG in EFL: Practical observation sheet									
Class	Lesson no.	Text	Chapter / Page	Obs. assessment (1, 2, 3)	P	W	Notes	Other goals	
Class 8 - B1B2								Respecting voice adequately	
And								Using appropriate vocabulary	
side								Seeking information and clarification through questions	
interior								Summarising	
1								Turn-taking	
2								Having a clear pronunciation	
3								Organising own text	
4								Building on the views of others	
5								Using reasons to support views	
6								Listening actively and responding appropriately	
7								Developing fluency and pace of speech	
8								Using rhetorical techniques, such as metaphor, humour, irony	
9								Critically examining ideas and views expressed	
10								Guiding/managing the interactions	
11								Intercultural citizenship / Empathy goals	
12								Resolving	
13								Resolving from non-participation	
14								Handling the perspective of others	
15								Imagining other affiliations, world views, beliefs, interests, emotions, values and attitudes	
16								Identifying and reflecting on own, others' interests, emotions, values and attitudes	
17								Empathy	
18								Extending and building on discussion other perspectives	
19								Relating conflict between different perspectives	
20								General Notes	
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Figure 1
Example of an observation sheet for DLG sessions

In my own work with secondary EFL learners, DLGs have shown that students can engage seriously with literature in English when classroom interaction is organised around equality, respect, and shared inquiry. The most valuable moments are often not the most linguistically perfect ones, but those in which a student listens carefully, changes perspective, connects a passage to a wider human question, or helps a classmate enter the conversation. For English teachers, this is an important reminder: language learning is not only

about producing accurate sentences; it is also about participating meaningfully in dialogue.

DLGs will not solve every problem in the EFL classroom, nor should they replace all other approaches to literature, language practice or assessment. But they can enrich our teaching by bringing together reading, speaking, listening, intercultural learning and inclusion in a coherent practice. In a time when classrooms are increasingly diverse, DLGs invite us to treat literature as a meeting place. Students do not simply learn about a classic text; they learn with it, through it, and with one another.

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Note: ChatGPT was used to support the structuring of this article. A basic Grammarly account was also used for grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The author reviewed and edited the text throughout and takes full responsibility for the final version, including its content, accuracy, and references.

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The Final Frontier: Sci-Fi films in the classroom: The Blade-Runner effect

Ana Barroso

“(...) our Everyman, must take on a science fictional way of thinking, (...)”

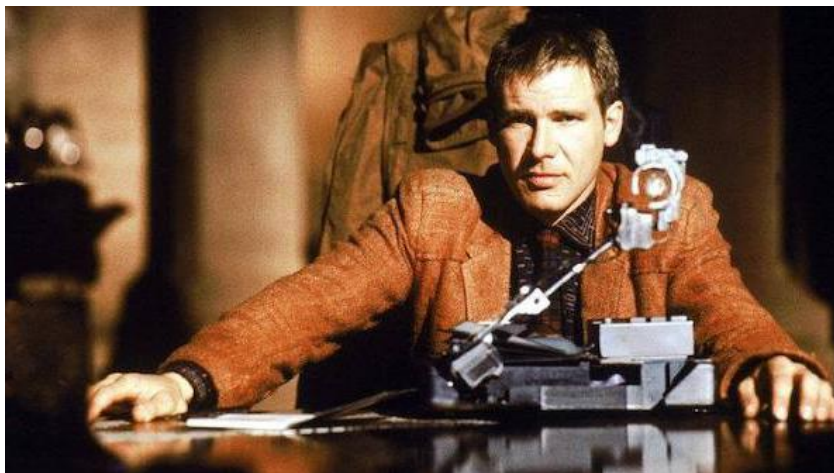
Isaac Asimov

Science fiction introduces unique and exciting words related to technology, space, and society, engaging students easily, as its plots frequently imply societal and human dilemmas and conflicts that demand personal responses from them. As Upper secondary students develop their own worldviews and love to argue about ethics, their reasoning competence and empathy allow for both intellectual and emotional engagement.

Therefore, Sci-fi films allow a pedagogical approach that values their opinions and perspectives and, as a multimodal resource, can enrich students' multiliteracies, specifically critical and visual literacies. The EFL classroom may be the ideal place for students to reinforce their identity within globalisation, not only through foreign language learning but also by enhancing critical thinking.

Interestingly, the concept of *multiliteracies* encompasses the ability to understand and use all forms of communication across a multitude of contexts and adapt these forms for personal and social development. According to the New London Group (1996, para. 4), this definition shifts from an individual focus to community engagement, mostly through various technological modalities.

Shuyuan Liu (2019) points out that several studies have examined the use of film to promote literacy, but sci-fi films, as a unique film genre, have never been systematically incorporated into the EFL classroom to help students acquire either visual or critical literacy (p.1).



Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, 1982) foregrounds science and technology ethics, Western ideologies, and globalisation, which are burning topics in our

contemporary world. They provide students opportunities to participate in discussions as global citizens, but so that they acquire and develop social and cultural competences, it's important to guide students using prompts and leading questions, not without helping them understand key concepts, both related to science-fiction as a genre, and to the ethical questions raised by the film and understand and discuss how representational, contextual and ideological modes contribute to meaning-making in the film (Liu, p. 2).

Importantly, in this age of misinformation, "deepfakes," and deliberate attempts to obscure scientific truths, bringing science, art, and science fiction together in the classroom empowers students to think critically about the world and speculate about the future.

If sci-fi “deals with the reaction of human beings to changes in science and technology” (Asimov 1975, p. 62), *Blade Runner* presents a complex and fascinating trope for discussion: how do humans relate to artificial intelligence humanoid robots? This is no longer a distant possibility in real life; thus, discussing *Blade Runner* in the EFL classroom, using appropriate pedagogical approaches, empowers students to focus on the ethics of science, technology and emerging developments in artificial intelligence without the pressure of immediate real-world positioning. Consequently, the film facilitates discussions on AI, social structures, censorship, and human identity, enabling students to assess hypothetical future scenarios, with their possibilities and consequences, while preparing them to think about and understand the fast-paced changes that are happening in the present.

At this point, it is important to consider how a scaffolding approach sparks curiosity, imagination and creativity. The first critical step to scaffolding involves practical activities to unlocking concepts/ words related to Sci-Fi and the film plot. These vocabulary activities will help students organise word banks to understand *Blade Runner's* complex narrative and boost communication, while providing the construction of a conceptual framework. This allows students to move away from literal definitions to develop and share abstract ideas.

Decoding unfamiliar words/concepts introduces students to new words; learning specific jargon will lead them, according to Bloom's taxonomy, from basic vocabulary acquisition to higher-order critical

thinking. Importantly, *Blade Runner*, with its narrative and visual tropes, provides a rich blend of specialised science-fiction terminology, different language registers, and advanced emotional vocabulary that pushes students beyond everyday conversation.

Vocabulary exercises that introduce students to specialised sci-fi language (sentient, bioethics, cybernetics, humanoid, nanotechnology, neural net, technocracy, dystopia, cyberpunk...) will help them to decode societal changes already happening in the real world. Exploring specific vocabulary used in the film is also essential (replicant, skin-jobs, Voight-Kampff test, off-world, retirement, empathy...) not just to learn plot points, but to look past the literal surface and analyse the film's deeper societal critiques. Finally, specific vocabulary related to film aesthetics (neo-noir, chiaroscuro, low-key lighting, composition, monochromatic, genre...) enables students to look at a screenshot, scene or sequence and describe it in their own words, improving their descriptive oral/writing skills.

Breaking down new and complex vocabulary into different types of activities (gap-filling, matching, sentence completion, word formation...) will move students beyond simple memorisation. Besides, creating immersive vocabulary activities inspired by the film's plot and aesthetics provides a meaningful cognitive context and gamifies the learning

experience, boosting students' engagement and creativity.

Ready? – "Is this to be an empathy test?" (Eldon Tyrell to Deckard)

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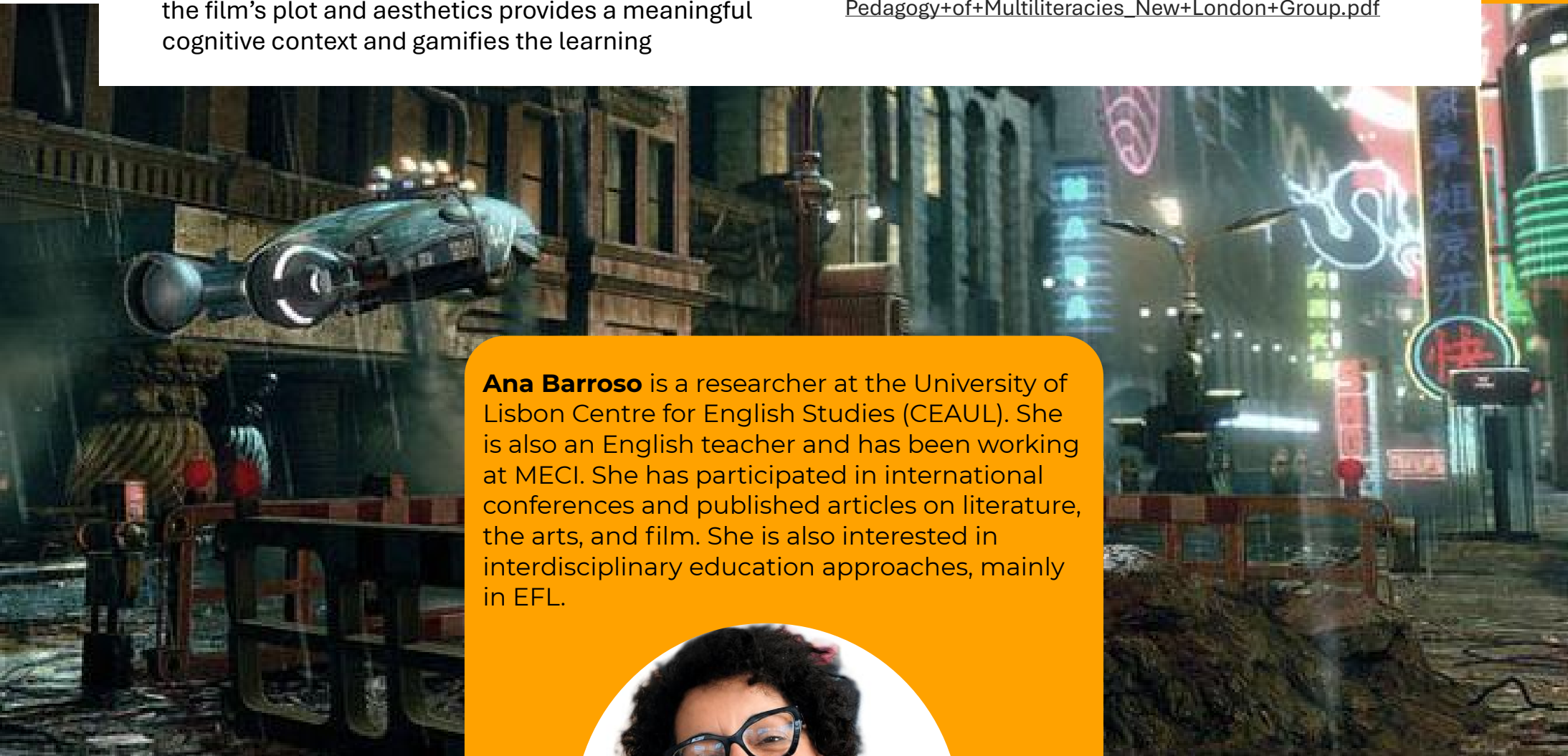
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Catering for Success: Getting Students to Write Collaboratively

Carmen Gonçalves

This article showcases the implementation of Hybrid Learning Environment and Rotation Methodology with secondary English (ELT) learners in Portugal – Marinha Grande Poente, the impact of a blended lesson, the rotation model (and rotation station) on collaborative work and proficient writing. It took three lessons of 90 minutes and two lessons of 45 minutes, 21 students and the adaptation of the student’s book six topics plus one, all of which culminated in a final assessed writing task.

Introduction:

Considering the relevance of multiple professional development courses taken and documents studied (see References), individually and in Subject Department *Grupo Disciplinar*, I have come to operationalise an activity in class with my students from the 10th grade, in order to improve their writing skills, using a hybrid and blended learning environment (Council of Europe, 2020; European Commission, 2020) and the Rotation Model in Learning Environment (Moreira & Horta, 2020; Staker & Horn, 2012), taking into account the updated versions of *Aprendizagens Essenciais* (AE), (2026, under public comment period), as well as the Companion Volume (2020, updates the CEFRL, 2001). The methodology and activities are henceforth displayed.

Step one

How to operationalise the task following the action-oriented approach (CEFR): students were given the context “Public Comment Period” citizens were to share views/thoughts and concerns about a particular public issue – “Installing CCTV cameras all over the city/town”, students picked one card, numbered from 1 to 7; then, students were grouped by number (1s, 2s, 3s, etc); the 6 topics (Fig 1.) plus 1 were projected and the assignment was explained. In each group students were supposed to “put themselves in somebody else’s shoes”, through brainstorming, online research and fact-check, hand-writing as much information as possible in view of any questions group 7 could ask. Group 7 was supposed to write 2 or 3 questions for each group. Advice given: students should embrace the cause and forget personal views on the matter they had 2x90 minutes; the teacher was available for guidance and feedback throughout every task in class.

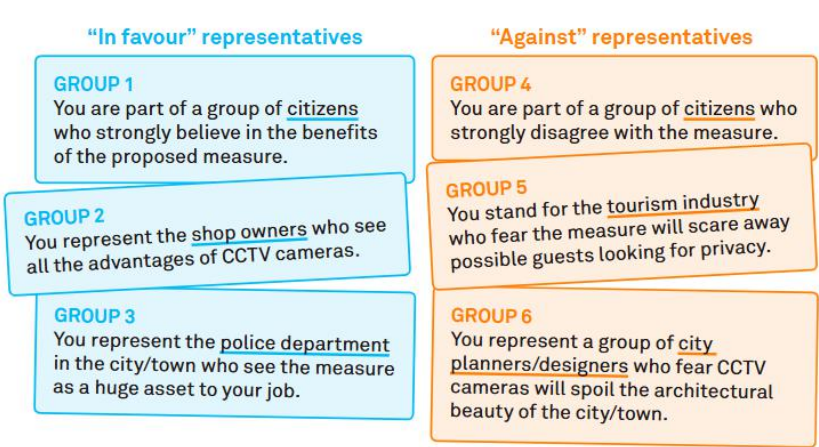


Fig.1 MySelfie-10, Leya, p.111

Step 2

It was time for Q & A. Each group should convincingly answer questions from group 7, in turns taking notes as feedback or for improvement. It was a 45-minute lesson. At this time, each group member was in possession of the same number of details.

Step 3

Through station rotation (Moreira and Horta, 2020) students were now ready to rotate individually and form 3 major groups with students numbered from 1 to 7. Each student should “Spread the word”, share views orally and gather information/conclusions (through note-taking) from fellow group-members. They had 90 minutes. At the end of the lesson students were told there would be a writing assignment focusing on the arguments presented about installing Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras all over the city.

Step 4

Each student had to write an argumentative text, expressing one’s personal point of view in the conclusion, in about 150—220 words, mentioning at least three arguments in favour and three against in two different situations. The writing component should take into consideration content (80 points), organisation (60 points) and use of language (60 points), and descriptors and levels of achievement were projected. Students had 45 minutes to complete the task.

Reflection:

The level of achievement of 20 in 21 students was surprisingly rewarding for them (85% above 150 in 200 points), as they finally realised what working in a group is all about, for a *Common Good* (UNESCO *Rethinking Education*, 2015). Implementing a hybrid blended learning context, where the rotation model (Staker and Horn, 2012) empowered students with knowledge to share and agency to collaborate in

class/groups, has proven to be enriching and challenging at various levels of performance: through mediation, students negotiated and clarified the organisation of data gathered in class (Aprendizagens Essenciais, 2026, public comment period); through critical thinking students had to ponder questions or issues raised by group 7 and answer accordingly; focusing on the outcome (Council of Europe, *Companion Volume* 2020), students felt the responsibility of co-construction of this learning experience so as to enable each and every member of the group to write about the given topic in a writing assignment.

Conclusion

Collaborative work became a meaningful learning experience, empowering students to research, share and communicate what they have gathered, developing mediation skills and critical thinking, giving consistency to writing with success.

Material and methods

- Teams' platform for assignment, mobiles charged and online access, digital literacy skills.
- Paper and pencil, note-taking activity and mind-map organisational skills, mediation and collaboration skills; speaking/listening and negotiation skills.
- Writing an argumentative text in class as a wrapping follow-up activity for assessment.
- Observation grids to assess the work developed in trios and then in groups of seven; rubric with descriptors, with levels of achievement to assess the written task.
- Hybrid and blended learning environment, rotation model, individual rotation and flipped classroom.

Follow-up activity: flipped-classroom submodel (Stacker & Horn, 2012) with a motivational video assigned on the platform Teams to generate ideas; in-class task (AE, 2026) – social media impact and personal experiences, viewing and listening activities and note-taking; discussion in small groups.

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Reimagining Halloween: A Tradition Fostering Speaking, Writing and Creativity

Paula Correia

From Festival to Learning Experience

For many English teachers, festivals provide valuable opportunities to bring culture into the classroom. However, seasonal celebrations are sometimes reduced to isolated activities that, although enjoyable, have little connection to curriculum goals or assessment practices. Over the past several years, our school has sought to approach Halloween differently, transforming it into a meaningful educational project that promotes creativity, develops language skills, encourages family involvement and contributes to a vibrant school culture.

What began as a simple classroom activity has evolved into a whole-school Halloween Project and contest including students from primary school to year 12. The initiative demonstrates how a traditional festival can become a powerful vehicle for language learning while fostering student engagement and cross-curricular connections.

A School-Wide Creative Challenge

The project is usually introduced to students in September through a motivational presentation prepared by the English teachers. This early launch gives students enough time to plan, design and create their projects before the exhibition period, which usually takes place between 30th October and 5th November.

Each year, English teachers select a specific Halloween-related theme. Over the years, teachers have chosen topics such as monsters, witches, ghosts, vampires, the world of Harry Potter, owls, haunted houses, trick or treat, witches' shoes...The annual theme provides a common thread across the school while still allowing students considerable creative freedom. Participants may work individually, in pairs, or in groups of up to four students.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the project is the originality of the final products. Students frequently surprise teachers with imaginative interpretations, innovative use of materials, and remarkable attention to detail. The exhibition transforms school spaces into inspiring learning environments.

Integrating Language Learning

The project is not simply an arts-and-crafts activity. It is carefully designed to support the development of English language skills while aligning with curriculum objectives. An important feature is its

adaptability to different age groups and proficiency levels. Students create a project and accompany it with written work appropriate to their stage of learning. For younger learners, this may involve writing a simple sentence about their project. Students in years 7 to 9 typically produce short descriptive texts using the vocabulary and grammar structures studied in class (e.g., descriptions of people and houses).

Secondary students are encouraged to create more complex written pieces, such as stories connected to their project. In this way, the activity naturally reinforces language structures, vocabulary development and creative writing skills while providing an authentic purpose for communication.

Speaking Through Show and Tell

One of the most significant educational benefits of the project is its contribution to speaking development. Once completed, students bring their projects to class and present them to their peers in a "Show and Tell" format. They introduce their character or describe their project, they may also refer to materials they used and express their own opinion about it. Older students tell the story behind their work.

Speaking assessment is integrated into the activity through rubrics that are presented beforehand, ensuring transparency and helping students understand the criteria for success.

Furthermore, the presentations provide opportunities to practise pronunciation, fluency, interaction and public speaking skills within an authentic communicative context.

Importantly, the speaking component is included in the summative assessment of oral production, giving the activity clear curricular relevance rather than positioning it as an extra or optional event.

Differentiation and Inclusion

Another strength of the project is its flexibility and inclusiveness. Students with different learning profiles can participate successfully because tasks can be adapted according to individual needs. Learners who require additional support may focus on simpler language structures, visual representations or shorter oral presentations. For example, some students may choose to create a drawing related to the annual theme and present it orally to the class.

The project also respects cultural and religious diversity. In situations where students prefer not to participate in Halloween-related activities for religious reasons, alternative tasks are offered. These students may research another cultural festival or create their own character or story.

Extending Learning Beyond the Classroom

One of the most positive outcomes has been the involvement of families. Parents may help students create their projects at home. This collaboration frequently becomes a valuable shared experience that encourages creativity, communication, and family participation in school life. Many parents report enjoying the challenge just as much as their children. The project therefore strengthens the connection between school and home while highlighting the importance of parental engagement in learning.

Students may also photograph their creations and upload them to a Padlet wall, creating a virtual gallery that complements the physical exhibition. This digital component allows students to share their work more widely and celebrate the creativity of their peers. Some classes also participate in an optional voting process to select a favourite project.

Celebrating Creativity Through Exhibition

The highlight of the initiative is undoubtedly the final exhibition. For approximately one week, student projects are displayed in school spaces, transforming corridors and communal areas. The exhibition generates enthusiasm across the school community and provides students with an authentic audience for their work.

To ensure fairness, English teachers do not participate in the final judging process. Instead, a panel of five members representing different sectors of the school community is invited to select the three best projects from each year group. The panel typically includes a member of the School Board, Art teachers, a Technology Education teacher, a non-teaching staff member (*Assistente Operacional*) and the Head of the Languages Department or another member if they are an English teacher. This multidisciplinary jury values creativity, effort, originality, and presentation.

Winners receive symbolic prizes prepared by the English teachers. Traditionally, these consist of bags containing a variety of sweets, creating a playful connection with the famous Halloween expression "Trick or Treat".

Opportunities for Interdisciplinary Learning

As the project has evolved, it has naturally opened pathways for interdisciplinary work. Its themes can easily be connected to visual arts and technological education. More recently, we have explored links with the *National Arts Plan (Plano Nacional das Artes)*, further strengthening the project's artistic and cultural dimensions. The initiative also offers significant potential as a Curricular Autonomy

Domain (*Domínio de Autonomia Curricular-DAC*) project, allowing teachers from different subject areas to collaborate around a common theme while addressing curriculum goals in meaningful ways.

Final Reflections

This project shows that festivals can be much more than occasional cultural events in the language classroom. When thoughtfully designed, they can become authentic learning experiences that integrate speaking, writing, creativity, assessment, inclusion and community engagement.

It also demonstrates how a familiar celebration can be reimagined as a powerful educational tool and that is the main reason why I decided to share this teaching experience. By connecting language learning with creativity and real-world communication, it provides students with meaningful opportunities to develop skills while enjoying the process.

Most importantly, it reminds us that some of the most memorable learning experiences occur when students are given the freedom to create, share and take pride in their work. In that sense, the project is about much more than Halloween—it is about fostering engagement, confidence, and a genuine love of learning English.

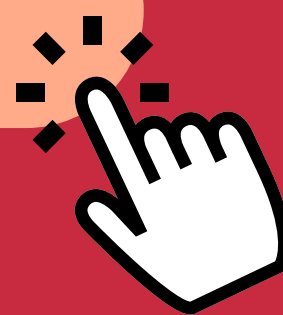
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FORMAÇÃO CONTÍNUA

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DESAFI'ARTE: Museums of the Future, The Future of Museums

Sara Garizo

DESAFI'ARTE: ART and MUSIC

Sopros de Vidro

'Sopros de Vidro' is the result of a pedagogical approach to the theme of our School's Cultural Plan – 'Daring to be... A journey through the traditional glass industry' – and to the learning of four subjects, in a collaborative interdisciplinary project for 7th graders, engaged in active learning: a project-based work about Language, Arts and Music.

For the last ten years, Project Work methodology has been one of my favourite methods to quite effective and inclusive learning of the English Language. It engages students in real-world meaningful projects, in which they try to solve a problem or answer a complex question, by investigating, selecting information, creating content and presenting a final product, as a consequence of an extended period of time work. Over the years I have improved the approach, the guidelines, the management of the topics to be studied, the observation process in classes and the final assessment.

This school year has started out with quite challenging difficulties in getting most of my pupils (in particular class B) to acquire basic knowledge in the English Language. The lack of studying methods and of motivation by 7th graders, as well as their low proficiency in the mother language, led me to try out as many strategies as possible to get them to learn. A short project work was introduced during the first semester as a brief approach to the methodology, to get pupils keen on teamwork, idea sharing, organisation and (positive) oral presentations. It only worked out for a few, though.

Being an English teacher and a school librarian, I learnt about a challenge launched by *Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian* and promoted by *Rede de Bibliotecas Escolares* (School Libraries Network), which I found interesting and worth trying with both of my classes. The challenge was entitled *Desafi'Arte: Museus do Futuro/Futuro dos Museus* (*Desafi'Arte: Museums of the Future/The Future of Museums*). The Visual Arts teacher was the one who got involved in the project, linking the contents of her subjects (Technology and Visual Arts) to the topic of *Desafi'Arte*. Together, we planned an interdisciplinary project that integrated the school's cultural programme, entitled: *Ousar Ser... Uma viagem pela indústria tradicional do vidro*, Plano Nacional das Artes (*Dare to Be... A Journey Through the Traditional Glass Industry*, National Arts Plan.)

Houses and Homes was the third unit in the English Language, so I figured out that it could be interesting to discover "family houses" that had been transformed into museums, as houses of living arts. Pupils got a first challenge: a picture of an apparently "common" house should be researched to find out where it was, whom it belonged to and what was the connection of this to *Serralves House*. They were very thrilled with this challenge and the ones who came out with the right information – *Lalique Museum* in *Doesburg* – got extra points in their daily assessment. Then, they were shown the four topics to be studied over February and March: *Serralves House*, the *biographies of Calouste Gulbenkian* and *René Lalique*, *Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian* and the *Museum of Glass*, in *Tacoma*. After the explanation of what was expected in each one, everyone in class wrote down their chosen topic on a piece of paper. As the names with the topics were read aloud, groups were gradually formed. According to a monthly calendar, pupils could always check which tasks were assigned to be done weekly. The presence of a second teacher in each class once a week helped guide the pupils' attention and work to what was essential. Having in mind the observation of the pupils' performance each lesson, the guidelines would be updated, extended or detailed. The project was fully developed at the Library, in a quite free environment with all the resources needed.

Simultaneously, in Visual Arts, students were guided to study *René Lalique's* work and some of the important exhibitions being held at *Gulbenkian Museum*. We were offered the *Guia* (Handbook) by *Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian*, which allowed us to have reliable information about the artist(s)' work.

As one of the library team teachers is a Music teacher, he integrated the project with suggestions that would relate music to glass. Therefore, workshops on sound and polyrhythms were held at the library, during English or Visual Arts lessons. Class A integrated the music academy programme but class B didn't, which was quite interesting to observe, as to what each pupil learned with this experience. The sound piece sent as part of the competition was produced with sounds of pupils' daily lives and sounds created with glass bottles and polyrhythms. These were brought together into a three layer piece in the app *Bandlab*.

Our work was selected among many other projects sent to *Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian*. We were then invited to present it publicly on the 27th April. The Music teacher kept on meeting both classes in the library, in order to prepare another sound piece to be played there.

Meanwhile, in the English classroom, the project was coming to an end with oral presentations and pupils' assessment. Most of the project stages were positive. The pupils with more difficulties were engaged in different levels, but in difficult times they got support from their team.

The trip to Lisbon and the presentation of the project were very meaningful to most pupils. They visited *Gulbenkian*, walked around in the gardens, visited a part of *Centro de Arte Moderna* (Modern Art Centre) and socialised with each other. They were happy, engaged, though nervous. But all in all, they did a very good job!

Back to school, pupils assessed the project work and *Desafi'Arte*. They were also challenged to write articles for the school newspaper, sharing their perspectives on the whole process. These were the most relevant aspects they have mentioned:

- the acquisition of more culture and knowledge about the topics;
- the socialisation with the class colleagues and others from the other classes;
- the realisation that art can be related to all sorts of situations in our daily lives, helping us to better understand the world and to manage our ideas and emotions more creatively;
- the improvement of the teams' dynamics;
- the experience of a unique opportunity filled with joy.

This project highlights the importance and effectiveness of Project Work in the language learning process, the benefits of working collaboratively, connecting contents and different teaching approaches, as well as fostering everyone's positive engagement and connection. By doing so, school and life are coming closer together, making learning more meaningful for everyone.

To access the full project, please click on the image at the bottom of the page, or scan the QR code.

Sara Garizo, English teacher for almost 30 years in many Portuguese public schools and school librarian since 2013. Her main areas of interest are reading, writing and project design. She has developed several award-winning educational prizes and has successfully secured funding for initiatives that bring together school library and different curriculum subjects.



EUrope2Go: Holocaust Remembrance and Civic Engagement

Ivana Opačak

**Young People for the Europe of the Future:
The EUrope2Go Project as a Model of
International School Cooperation**

Abstract

The **international eTwinning project EUrope2Go** is an example of the successful integration of the eTwinning programme, the European Parliament Ambassador School Programme (EPAS) and the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet initiative to foster students' European civic engagement, media and digital literacy. During the 2025/2026 school year, the project was implemented by four partner schools from Romania, Greece, Spain and Croatia through a series of collaborative activities aimed at promoting European values, active citizenship, critical media literacy, intercultural dialogue, and international cooperation. This paper presents the project's organisation, activities, participants, and educational outcomes.

Keywords: eTwinning, EPAS, Erasmus+, Jean Monnet, EUrope2Go, media literacy, active citizenship, European values

Introduction

In today's European educational landscape, there is an increasing need to empower students to participate actively and responsibly in democratic society. The development of digital technologies, the growing influence of media and numerous social challenges require educational models that combine civic education, media literacy, international cooperation and experiential learning. The **EUrope2Go** project emerged precisely from these needs. As an eTwinning project, it represents a continuation of the **Erasmus+ Jean Monnet – Learning EU Initiatives project** of the same name (2025–2028), coordinated by the **Romanian school Liceul Tehnologic “Lazăr Edeleanu” Năvodari**. Alongside the Romanian coordinating school, the eTwinning project involved three European Parliament Ambassador Schools: Secondary School of Economics in Slavonski Brod (Croatia), a co-founder of the project; IES Alonso de Avellaneda, Alcalá de Henares (Spain), and 4th Senior High School of Xanthi (Greece). The project was designed as a collaborative inquiry-based learning environment in which students/Junior EP Ambassadors, through digital tools, international teams and joint activities, learn about the European Union, promote democratic values, and develop competencies necessary for active European citizenship.

Project Launch: Memory as the Foundation of Civic Engagement

The first project activities were carried out on the occasion of the **International Holocaust Remembrance Day** on 27 January 2026. Students from the four partner schools participated in the international activity **Holocaust Remembrance and Civic Engagement**, organised in the project TwinSpace on the European School Education Platform (ESEP). The work was conducted in eight international mixed teams through structured forum discussions. Students reflected on historical facts related to the Holocaust, fundamental human rights that had been violated, lessons contemporary European society can learn from the past and concrete forms of civic action against discrimination, hate speech, and disinformation.

A particular strength of the activity was the integration of historical content with active citizenship through a CLIL approach in English language classes. Students learned how historical events have shaped the present, emphasising that democracy and human rights should never be taken for granted and that young people have a responsibility to respond to injustice, discrimination, and information manipulation in order to ensure a better future for both local and wider communities.

The result of this collaboration was a joint **European digital Zine**, a short informal publication or mini-magazine. Each team created a digital poster/AI-generated image based on a summary of its forum discussion, contributing to a shared space of remembrance. Every image was accompanied by a collaboratively written poem whose opening letters formed the acrostic “We Remember...”. The digital zine was later printed and displayed on a thematic board during Europe Day and eTwinning Day celebrations in May 2026.

Safer Internet Day and the International EU Quiz Lab

At the beginning of February, project activities focused on media and digital literacy. To mark **Safer Internet Day**, an international event / interactive quiz **EU Quiz Lab – Discovering Europe and the European Parliament** was organised and registered on the together.eu platform. Held on 2 February 2026, the event brought together more than 350 students – primarily European Parliament Ambassadors – from 40 schools in Greece, Romania, Spain and Croatia. The aim of the activity was to actively engage secondary school students

in learning about the European Union, the European Parliament, European values, safe use of media sources and responsible online behaviour.

Students from the four organising schools were asked to research online resources – specifically the European Parliament’s **Learning Resources** available on the Youth Hub platform and the **European Media Literacy Standard for Youth Workers** materials available through Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities (SALTO) – and develop quiz questions in mixed international teams within designated thematic areas: EU Member States, EU History and Facts, EU in Our Daily Lives, EU Values, Human Rights, Media Literacy, Digital Rights and EU Policies, Safer Internet Day: “Smart Tech, Safe Choices – Exploring the Safe and Responsible Use of AI”. The questions were designed collaboratively (with teachers as team coordinators) with increasing levels of difficulty, encouraging students to apply prior knowledge, acquire new knowledge and develop critical thinking skills. The **Kahoot quiz** is available [HERE](#).

In the second part of the event, students from Spain and Romania delivered short presentations on the importance of Safer Internet Day and teaching media literacy through curricular and extracurricular activities, both within schools and through project cooperation. A collaborative Mentimeter word cloud effectively summarised students’ concluding messages about the key aspects young people should pay attention to in order to stay safe online. As a follow-up activity, students jointly created an **informational poster on digital rights**, online safety and responsible internet behaviour.

International Workshop on Digital Narratives and Artificial Intelligence

On 12 March 2026, students from the four partner schools participated in the international workshop **Crafting Digital Narratives: Empowering Voices in a Connected Europe**, organised as part of the European **All Digital Weeks** campaign. The workshop was led by a representative of the Group of the European Youth for Change (GEYC) and focused on the impact of artificial intelligence on the information environment and the development of skills needed to recognise disinformation.

Students learned about methods used to create manipulated digital content, techniques for verifying the credibility of photographs and information, reverse image search procedures and the model for assessing the quality: Currency – Relevance – Authority – Accuracy – Purpose (CRAAP) of online sources. The workshop contributed to the development of media and information literacy, digital resilience and responsible AI use. At the same time, it opened space for discussions about digital well-being, ethics in online communication and the impact of technology on young people’s everyday lives.

Women’s Month: From Symbolism to Genuine Equality

Throughout March, project partners implemented a joint international activity dedicated to **International Women’s Day** and **Women’s Month** under the title **Rights, Not Only Flowers**. Teachers Ivan Devčić and Ivana Opačak (from the Secondary School of Economics) developed an open educational scenario for the interdisciplinary workshop *Rights, Not Only Flowers* (published on Croatian **Edutorij**), which was implemented in Croatia, Romania, Greece and Spain. Activities included CLIL-based English language instruction, an online international **Tricider discussion** on symbolic and structural equality, research into the history of the women’s movement and the creation of digital content.

Students critically examined whether International Women’s Day is primarily marked through symbolic gestures or serves as a reminder of the struggle for women’s political, social and labour rights. They discussed gender pay gaps, stereotypes, women’s representation in politics, and business and contemporary challenges to equality. These activities demonstrated how international projects can successfully connect civic education, foreign languages, law, media literacy and critical thinking development.

Croatian-Romanian Partner Meeting: From Virtual to Real Cooperation

The highlight of the project year was the international meeting of Croatian and Romanian partners held on 2 April 2026 at the Secondary School of Economics in Slavonski Brod. The event, **Europe2Go (in Peace) – We Can Unite Europe**, was organised in cooperation with the Romanian partner school and the Europe Direct Centre Slavonski Brod as part of Croatian **Media Literacy Days**.

The significance of the event stems from four years of international cooperation between the two schools. During this period, they implemented six eTwinning projects within the European Parliament Ambassador School Programme (EPAS) – (*Down EU Avenue, Vote4DemocracyAmbassadors, EPASsionates, Raisin(g) in the Sun, Voices Beyond Borders* and *Europe2Go*) and organised two meetings in Romania during the Europe Day and eTwinning Day celebrations (*MarEUForum 2024* and *MarEUForum 2025*).

The programme in Croatia included school presentations, international activity showcases, a European quiz, structured discussions, the workshop **We Can Unite Europe** and social and cultural exchange activities. During the workshop, students engaged in simulated international negotiations, addressing challenges related to resource allocation, cooperation and decision-making. The activity demonstrated the complexity of European integration processes and highlighted the importance of dialogue, compromise and mutual trust. Participants concluded that peace,

cooperation and democracy are not permanently guaranteed values but processes that must be built every day – even in the classroom.

Europe Day and eTwinning Day: Presenting the Project Results

Project activities culminated in May through celebrations of **Europe Day**, **eTwinning Day** and the **10th anniversary of the EPAS programme**. On 8 May 2026, students at the Secondary School of Economics in Slavonski Brod presented the final products of the *EUrope2Go* project:

- the **e-magazine *EUrope Through Our Eyes***, produced through the collaboration of seven mixed teams of students and teachers from Romania, Greece, Spain and Croatia and printed in two physical copies;
- the **manifesto *10 Years of EPAS***, featuring student testimonies about the benefits of participation in the EPAS programme.

The project was also presented at the **international hybrid event *Europe Day – United in Diversity, We Create Our Common Future***, held on 11 May 2026 in Xanthi, Greece. The event brought together more than 250 students from seven European countries. During the event, another project's final product – the learning and assessment **e-guide *ETwas about Europe***, based on the collaborative e-magazine – was presented to an international audience, making the project's outcomes permanently accessible to the wider educational community.

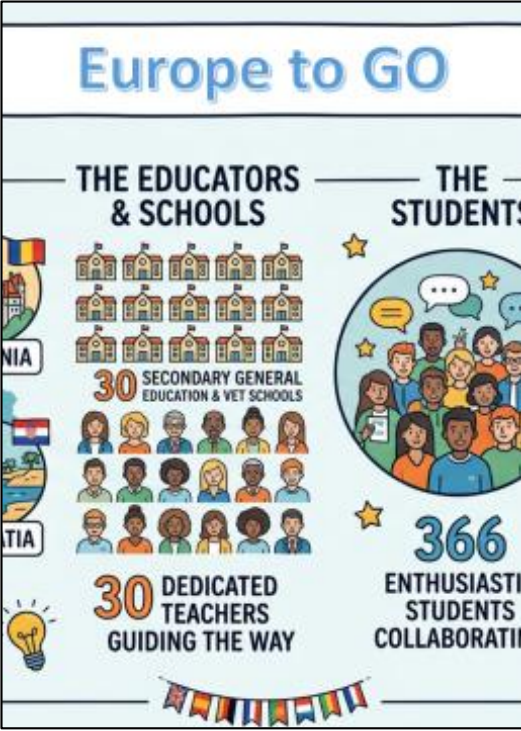
During May, the e-guide evolved into an **interactive self-learning module on the European Union** entitled ***10 Years of EPAS – The Interactive Experience***. Its purpose is to enable students, teachers, and the wider public to independently explore European topics through structured learning materials and self-assessment activities. The module contains a **final quiz**, which is intended for anyone wishing to discover what young eTwinners from Romania, Greece, Spain, and Croatia have learned and created, as well as for those wishing to test their knowledge of the European Union and active citizenship. The quiz consists of seven sections, each based on one article from the e-magazine *Europe Through Our Eyes*. Participants who achieve at least 50% correct answers receive a personalised certificate by email within a few minutes, symbolically joining the celebration of the EPAS programme's tenth anniversary.

Conclusion

The *EUrope2Go* project has demonstrated how contemporary international projects can transcend traditional classroom frameworks and become authentic spaces for experiential learning, dialogue, and civic engagement. Through activities dedicated to collective memory, media literacy, digital safety, gender equality, European values and international cooperation, students developed competencies essential for living and acting in a democratic European society.

The project's particular strength lies in the synergy of three powerful European educational frameworks: eTwinning, the European Parliament Ambassador School Programme (EPAS) and the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet initiative. While eTwinning enables everyday international cooperation and collaborative content creation, EPAS empowers students to understand European institutions and engage actively as citizens, and Jean Monnet provides a strong academic framework for learning about the European Union and its fundamental values. The project's lasting value is further confirmed by its final interactive educational module *EUrope Through Our Eyes: 10 Years of EPAS – The Interactive Experience*, which transforms the outcomes of international cooperation into an open European educational resource accessible to future generations of learners.

At a time marked by disinformation, social divisions and rapid technological change, projects such as *EUrope2Go* demonstrate that education plays a crucial role in building responsible, informed and compassionate citizens. Students do not learn about Europe solely from textbooks – they create, reflect upon and experience Europe through cooperation, dialogue and joint action with peers from different countries, thereby laying the foundations for a shared European future.



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Going Beyond the Language: Integrating English Proficiency and 21st-Century Skills for Employability

George Kokolas

Why business/ESP English teaching must move from “exam ready” to “work ready” in a skills-based world

This article argues that business/ESP English teaching must move beyond grammar and certificates to explicitly integrate 21st-century skills and soft skills. Grounded in current research and employer trends, it proposes a “Language Can-Do Professional Framework” that links real-world business tasks with language, autonomy, and holistic skill development for employability.

For years, many business English courses have promised “professional English” while quietly revolving around exam formats and tidy grammatical progressions. Learners often arrive in the workplace with solid B2 or C1 certificates yet struggle to handle a tricky client call, negotiate a deadline, or contribute meaningfully to a hybrid meeting. Teachers hear the same refrain from employers again and again: “Their English is good, but they can’t really use it when it matters.”

At the same time, the workplace itself is changing faster than most syllabuses. Global teams, remote collaboration, and AI-mediated communication are now the norm rather than the exception. Reports from organisations such as the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) stress that employers are actively searching for the “most competent, most creative, most innovative” people in a fiercely competitive, globalised market (National Center on Education and the Economy, n.d.). In this landscape, language cannot be taught as an isolated system. It has to become the vehicle for something larger: employability.

From “English as a subject” to “English as a performance space”

A useful starting point is redefining communication in our own minds. In today’s workplace, communication is not just talking and writing; it is navigating platforms, genres, and interfaces, often simultaneously. A project update might mean a short WhatsApp/Viber message, a two-minute mini-presentation on Zoom, and a follow-up email summarising next steps, all delivered with awareness of hierarchy, culture, and tone.

This is where a **Language Can-Do Professional Framework** becomes helpful. The following

‘Language Can-Do Professional Framework’ adapts the idea of can-do descriptors from broader language frameworks such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and workplace-oriented initiatives (e.g., CEFR; Language for Success Can-Do Statements). Instead of listing grammar points or vague “skills” like “speaking”, the framework names concrete, day-to-day professional performances such as:

- Participating in in-person and remote meetings (chairing, intervening politely, summarising).
- Writing emails that solve problems rather than merely exchange information.
- Pitching an idea or product to a mixed-culture audience.
- Networking at conferences, including opening and closing small talk.
- Negotiating deadlines, fees, and terms in a respectful but assertive way.
- Handling customer complaints with empathy and clarity.
- Taking part in job interviews and performance reviews.
- Collaborating with global teams on long-term projects.
- Producing reports, proposals, and slide decks that are concise and reader-friendly.

Once these can-do scenarios are clear, language stops being an abstract goal and becomes the medium through which learners rehearse the tasks that will actually get them hired, promoted, or retained. Obviously, many more language goals and language objectives could be defined with clear focus on everyday communication and tasks.

Proficiency as the foundation, not the finish line

Current research on employability repeatedly highlights the importance of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving across sectors as varied as business, IT, and research. Studies like those by Chandhok, Costantino and Rodzinka, Lebouteiller, and the (NIH) review on soft skills in IT converge on the idea that technical knowledge alone no longer guarantees career success.

Yet none of these skills can be fully deployed without sufficient language proficiency. The world’s

best engineer will underperform in a global team if they cannot ask clarifying questions, negotiate priorities, or explain risks clearly and diplomatically in English. Business sources summarised in the bibliography underline that communication skills sit at the heart of effective leadership, customer satisfaction, and internal collaboration.

In this sense, language proficiency is not “one more skill” on the list. It is the **foundation** that allows other 21st-century skills—communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking—to be visible, measurable, and impactful in professional contexts.

Skills-based hiring: a wake-up call for ELT

Alongside the shift in workplace demands, hiring practices are also evolving. High-profile organisations and recent analyses from consulting firms and business media increasingly describe a move from degree-based screening towards **skills-based hiring**, where demonstrable competencies matter more than formal credentials. Some large companies have publicly de-emphasised traditional degree requirements in favour of evidence of what candidates can actually do. (Fuller et al., 2022; Goger, 2025; Lobel, 2023).

For business English, this trend is both a challenge and an opportunity. If employers are looking less at diplomas and more at performance, language educators need to prepare learners to show concrete, observable capabilities:

- “Can this person lead a short project meeting in English?”
- “Can they handle a dissatisfied client on the phone?”
- “Can they contribute ideas and respond flexibly to feedback in English?”

Certificates may still open doors, but they will not be enough. A curriculum built around can-do professional scenarios positions learners to perform convincingly in interviews, assessment centres, and on-the-job probation periods.

English as a Lingua Franca and the human factor

The reality that most English-mediated communication happens between non-native speakers is now widely accepted, along with the strong presence of English online. This reinforces the centrality of **English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)** in professional life. In practical terms, it means our learners will be collaborating with other non-native speakers, often across multiple time zones, accents, and cultural norms.

In such environments, intelligibility, empathy, turn-taking, discourse management, and repair strategies become more important than perfect grammar. Fluency is not only about speed but about the ability to check understanding, clarify politely, and keep a conversation collaborative rather than competitive. At the same time, no AI translation

device will build curiosity, resilience, or interpersonal trust on behalf of our learners, let alone the prospective customers of a company that our learners will work for. Technology can support comprehension, but it cannot replace human judgment, emotional intelligence, or ethical decision-making.

Towards the 21st-century holistic educator

In her plenary at the IATEFL BESIG conference in Athens (November 2025), Rachel Marie Paling invited us to rethink language teaching through what she called a “New Holistic, 21st-Century Education,” where coaching, neuroscience, heart science, educational neuroscience, neuroeducation, mind, brain, and education science (MBE Science), emotional intelligence, psychology, language and communication, the science of empathy and compassion, and trauma-informed coaching all inform what happens in the classroom (R. M. Paling, plenary talk, IATEFL BESIG Conference, Athens, November 2025). Building on this perspective, the role of the teacher shifts: we are no longer just language instructors, but facilitators of brain-friendly, emotionally intelligent learning experiences that respect the whole person and the whole professional.

This “21st-century holistic educator” does not abandon language accuracy or assessment.

Instead, they:

- Design tasks that combine language with realistic professional challenges (e.g., co-creating a project proposal in a simulated multinational team).
- Scaffold learners’ emotional skills—such as managing anxiety in presentations or responding constructively to critical feedback—alongside linguistic support.
- Encourage reflection on strengths, values, and growth mindset, helping learners see themselves as evolving professionals, not just exam candidates.
- Treat autonomy as a long-term goal, guiding learners towards teacher-independent strategies for upskilling and reskilling throughout their careers.

Crucially, autonomy is not simply “doing homework without reminders”. In an age of instant answers and generative AI, genuine autonomy means knowing when to rely on tools, when to question them, and how to continue learning beyond the classroom in a self-directed, ethical way.

Classroom implications: small shifts, big impact

Integrating language proficiency with 21st-century skills does not always require dramatic syllabus overhauls. In many cases, subtle yet intentional shifts can already move a course closer to real-world relevance:

- Rewriting a standard email task so that learners must resolve a conflict, not just give information.
- Turning a listening exercise into a mini-simulation where learners decide on next steps and justify their choices.
- Building short, regular “meeting moments” into lessons, where students rotate roles (chair, timekeeper, summariser) to develop both language and interactional skills. Using reflection prompts after tasks (“How did you show flexibility? Where did you need more language support?”) to connect performance with soft skills. (Express Publishing, *Career Paths: Business English*, 2010.)
- These adjustments encourage learners to see each activity as a rehearsal for work, not just an exercise. They also make it easier for teachers to articulate the added value of their courses to employers, parents, and institutions.

Personal reflection

Working with business English materials and training teachers in this area has made one point increasingly clear: language is the **launchpad**, but it is the integration with soft skills and professional scenarios that truly propels learners into employability. The “Language Can-Do Professional Framework” has helped reshape lesson planning, materials writing, and even podcast topics, placing real-world performance at the centre.

For many of our students, success will not be measured only by exam scores but by the moment they confidently handle their first international negotiation, deliver their first English-medium presentation, or navigate their first global project. When that happens, they rarely say, “My grammar saved me.” They say, “I felt prepared.” That sense of preparedness for the real market is what modern business English teaching should aim to cultivate.

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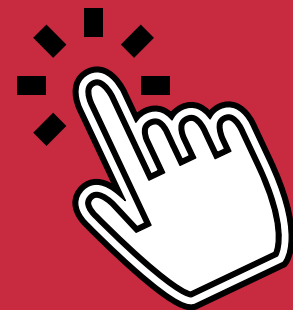


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Going a Little Back in Time

Maria Isabel Silva

Introductory note

This article reads more like a collection of memories from my voluntary service after retirement. It may sound too personal. However, it is my way of sharing my gratitude for this unexpected journey which, undoubtedly, has enriched me as a person and clearly illustrates someone else's quote: "Where God puts a comma, do not put a full stop." Thank you.

Going a little back in time

At the beginning of the 2022/2023 school year, the board of my school decided that I should not be given any classes once my retirement was expected to come any time and so I would be in the school library working the scheduled hours.

When I was told the fresh news, I felt OK with it. I would be helping with the library routine, taking part in projects and I thought that I could be of some use for the students who were experiencing difficulties with English... This could be felt as a transition.

However, life surprises us with sudden "tokens". The day before the official opening of the library, a special festive occasion particularly for the new students in our school, I was declared "retired". I knew it would come but I was secretly wishing that it wouldn't be that soon. My heart was racing when I told the librarian teacher about my new condition. But the show had to go on, my colleague was counting on me for the "tour" around the place and the "delivery" of the library instructions.

But more was to come once news travels fast. Almost at the same time, the coordinator of the Special Needs Unit asked me, totally out of the blue, if I would like to do something with the group of students attending that facility regarding the English language. I was (again) taken by surprise and, not fully aware of my answer, not even of what exactly I was supposed to be doing, I said that it would be fine.

The English Corner Experience

During my career, particularly in recent years, having students in my classes that needed minor adjustments in their evaluation process, tests or other kinds of activities, was common practice. However, my *Wednesday group* was of a different nature, some of them could not even read, despite being teenagers. "Maybe this is going to be an obstacle", I thought by then. Nevertheless, I tried to focus on the bright side of the situation – some of them were able to, and, most importantly, I was not alone in Room 37. One of the teachers of the Unit, who also had a passion for English, made me company there, and so I said to myself: "Together we will surely manage."

I became fully aware that my former objectives concerning teaching English, including seeing good results, had to change entirely. In other words, the "good results" would become visible through a diverse lens. The welcoming smiles shared every Wednesday morning, seeing their reactions while some activities were going on, the way they were helping each other, all the laughs, including my own, were among some of the "good results" they offered to themselves, to Maria João, and to me.

Halloween came and with it a vocabulary worksheet accompanied by plastic spiders, bats and pumpkins. There was time to decorate the room accordingly and revise the new words. Christmas followed and it was time to share with them my extensive Christmas cards collection, including some "treasures" that mean a lot to me as they were made by former students, more than 30 years ago. There was a list of messages and they copied the ones they liked best and created their own Christmas cards ... scissors and Christmas paper scraps were provided. Of course, a Christmas tree had to be there. I could find a felt one with a set of Velcro decorations giving them the chance of choosing where to place each item and having a new "version" every single season. Valentine's Day was the next event. Slips of paper with friendly and love messages were handed out and together we explored their meaning. There were also some envelopes to give it a more private touch and, in fact, we could feel that love was in the air ...

One of the activities that they enjoyed a lot was the one with pieces of cardboard with words on it. We used them for diverse purposes: checking words already learnt, organising them in categories (members of the family, parts of the house, seasons of the year and the words associated, verbs, adjectives, etc.), creating a story and, one of their favourites, miming.

During our meetings I used English and Portuguese. Occasionally, we listened to songs and explored the lyrics, being the main focus finding familiar words, apart from the message conveyed. Repetition was crucial and acknowledging clearly their efforts and accomplishments also played a relevant role in their progression. A happy and enthusiastic atmosphere paved our journey, producing fruitful results.

It is important to say that the growth of our relationship went beyond *The English Corner*. There was a precious backup team—all the teachers and assistants of the Unit that guaranteed and fostered this unique emotion—gratitude. They organised outings of varied kinds, giving some of the students the opportunity to experience things they had never lived before. I was lucky to be always "invited" and, of course, I gladly accepted. To strengthen the relationship there was

also a place for other types of commemorations—students’ birthdays, for example. And so birthday cakes came straight from the Unit oven and their enticing smell echoed in the pavilion. It was party time, singing Happy Birthday in English, which, as a matter of fact, is much easier than the Portuguese version.

The “birth” of a vegetable garden was also a landmark in our journey, creating routines and involving the students in the varied chores. In class, we learnt the names of the products that had been planted and created labels, in English and in Portuguese, to identify them. Some students were more enthusiastic than others, but the truth is, we could see “things” growing and even eat lettuce and tomato coming from our vegetable garden and use parsley or coriander to season a simple dish. This year a new “edition” took place and its success was even bigger.

I was responsible for the Portuguese League Against Cancer (*Liga Portuguesa Contra o Cancro*–LPCC) fundraising in my school for around 8 years and, as a community volunteer, I used to visit the different classes speaking about LPCC objectives and sharing the figures

of the previous year and how the money, theirs included, had been used. In the 2022/2023 school year I asked the “members” of *the English Corner* if they would like to join me.

Those were great moments! Sitting in the library, studying the different timetables, organising our schedule, trying to reach as many classes as possible. They were extraordinary collaborators, going the extra mile for the LPCC fundraising success in our school and truly responsible for their individual role during our visits. We kept doing it together, sometimes with new volunteers.

I had already decided that 2025/2026 would be the last school year in my school. This four-year experience has taught me so much. It has been deep-rooted in a fertile soil which is nurtured by love, inclusion, commitment, empathy, compassion and respect. What better values could I wish for before leaving?

Maria Isabel Marques da Silva took her degree in English and German languages at the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade Clássica de Lisboa. She taught English for 42 years. With her retirement a new life chapter was opened. She kept going to her last school but this time engaged in a new project – The English Corner which became her voluntary service for four years.



ON THE BOOKSHELF

Wendy Jones

A review of
Writing Critically: A Guide to Research, Referencing and Writing Critically
Author: Louis Rogers
Publisher: Rulen Press
Pages: 141
Publication date: 26 February 2025
Printed in: Dunstable, UK
ISBN: 979-8312177992

Writing Critically: A Guide to Research, Referencing and Writing Critically is a practical handbook designed to help students develop the core skills needed for effective academic writing. The book focuses particularly on essay writing and extended assignments where critical thinking and engagement with sources are essential. Rather than treating academic writing as a purely mechanical task, the guide emphasises the process behind producing strong work, including research, analysis of essay questions, structuring arguments, and referencing sources correctly. This format makes the book ideal for self-study and reference purposes.

The book is structured as a step-by-step introduction to the stages involved in producing an academic essay. Early chapters focus on research skills and the importance of evaluating sources critically. Readers are introduced to practical strategies for assessing the reliability and relevance of academic materials, encouraging them to consider factors such as authority, accuracy, and purpose when selecting sources. This early focus highlights a common problem in student writing: relying on weak or inappropriate references. By providing structured guidance on evaluating sources, the book helps learners build a stronger foundation for their research before they begin writing.

Another key theme of the guide is the importance of understanding essay questions. Many students struggle not because they lack ideas but because they misinterpret what an assignment is asking them to do. The book addresses this issue by encouraging readers to analyse prompts carefully, identify instruction words such as analyse, evaluate, or compare, and break questions down into manageable parts. Through exercises and examples, students learn how to interpret the task more precisely and ensure their essays remain focused on answering the question directly.

From this point, the book moves into the structure of academic essays themselves. Readers are guided through the components of a strong introduction, including how to provide context, capture the reader’s attention, and present a clear thesis statement. The role of the thesis as the central argument of an essay is emphasised throughout the book, reinforcing the idea that effective academic writing should be driven by a clear and defensible position.

The discussion then expands to paragraph structure and the development of arguments within the body of an essay. The book explains how topic sentences introduce the main idea of a paragraph and how evidence and commentary should work together to support the overall thesis. By demonstrating how these elements interact, the guide encourages students to see essays not simply as collections of information but as structured arguments that develop logically across multiple paragraphs.

One particularly valuable feature of the book is its attention to working with sources. Instead of focusing only on citation rules, it explains how sources should be introduced, integrated, and discussed within an essay. Students are encouraged to comment on the sources they cite, explaining their significance and linking them to their own arguments. This emphasis on critical engagement helps students avoid one of the most common weaknesses in academic writing: the tendency to insert quotations without explaining their relevance.

The book also highlights the importance of engaging with counterarguments. By acknowledging alternative perspectives and responding to them thoughtfully, writers can strengthen the credibility of their arguments and demonstrate deeper critical thinking. This approach reflects the broader aim of the guide, which is to help students move beyond descriptive writing toward more analytical and argumentative work.

Later sections focus on refining academic style and improving clarity. Readers are encouraged to avoid vague expressions, unnecessary repetition, and overly informal language. The guide demonstrates how clearer phrasing and a more formal tone can strengthen the effectiveness of academic writing. There is also a section on using feedback and marking criteria, encouraging students to reflect on teacher comments and use them to improve future work.

In addition to writing strategies, the book provides a useful overview of several major referencing systems, including American Psychological Association (APA), Modern Language Association (MLA), Chicago Manual of Style (Chicago), and Harvard Referencing

System (Harvard). These sections explain how citations and reference lists function in academic writing and offer examples for common source types. By covering multiple systems, the book recognises that different universities and disciplines use different conventions and gives readers a practical reference point regardless of the style required in their course.

Throughout the book, explanations are supported by examples, short practice tasks, and model sentences. These exercises encourage readers to apply the concepts immediately, helping reinforce the skills discussed in each section. The inclusion of a phrase bank and an answer key further supports independent study, making the book accessible to learners who are working outside a formal classroom setting.

One of the main strengths of the book is its clear focus on the process of academic writing rather than just the final product. By addressing research, planning, drafting, and revision, it gives students a more realistic understanding of how strong essays are developed. The explanations are generally clear and practical, and the use of examples and exercises helps readers actively engage with the material.

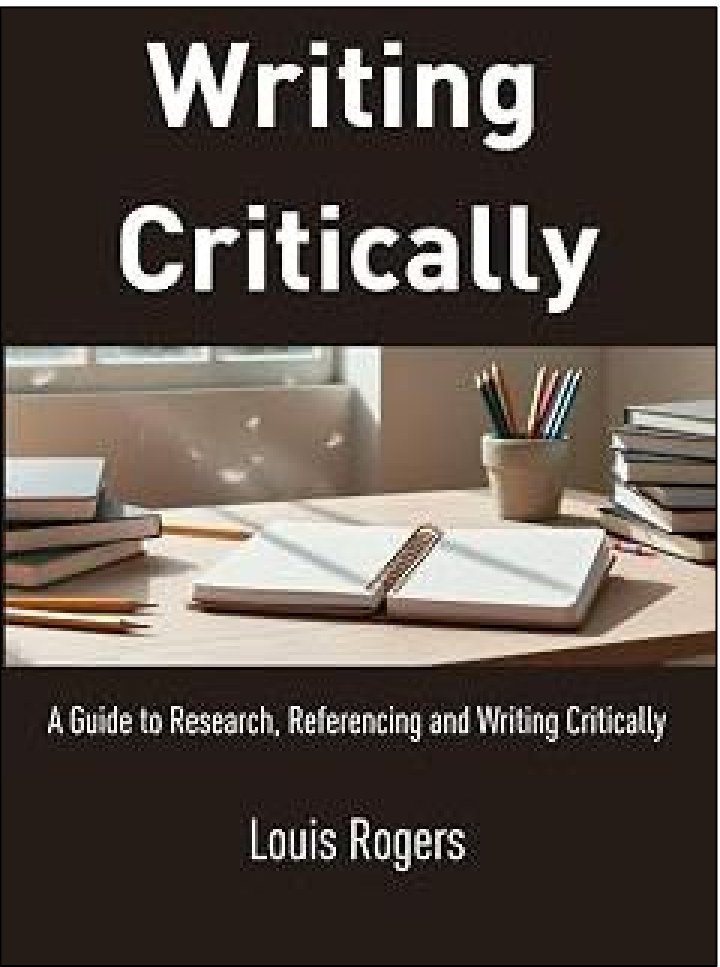
Another positive aspect is the emphasis on critical thinking. The book consistently encourages students to analyse information, evaluate sources, and develop arguments rather than simply summarising existing research. This focus is particularly useful for students transitioning from secondary education to university-level writing, where analytical skills are more heavily emphasised.

The inclusion of multiple referencing styles is also a helpful feature, especially for students studying in different academic disciplines. Rather than limiting the discussion to a single style, the book offers guidance across several widely used systems, making it a flexible reference for a broad range of learners.

There are, however, a few areas where the book could be improved. Some sections are quite structured and instructional in tone, which may feel somewhat formulaic for more advanced students who are already familiar with academic writing conventions. The book also focuses primarily on essays, so readers looking for guidance on other academic genres—such as research papers, literature reviews, or dissertations—may find the coverage somewhat limited.

In addition, while the exercises are useful for practice, some readers might benefit from more extended model essays that demonstrate how the various elements discussed in the book come together in a full piece of academic writing.

Overall, ***Writing Critically: A Guide to Research, Referencing and Writing Critically*** provides a clear and accessible introduction to the skills required for effective academic writing. Its focus on critical reading, essay structure, and source integration makes it particularly suitable for students who are beginning university study or developing their academic writing skills. While it may feel somewhat introductory for more experienced writers, it offers a solid foundation for anyone looking to improve their ability to produce clear, well-structured, and well-supported academic essays.



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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