Developing the macro skills in a competence based curriculum
Developing listening and speaking skills in a competence based curriculum

When we learn a language, there are four skills that we need for complete communication. When we learn our native language, we usually learn to listen first, then to speak, then to read, and finally to write. These are called the four "language skills":

- Listening: This is a communication technique that requires the listener to understand, interpret and evaluate what he or she hears. Listening effectively improves personal relationships through the reduction of conflict and strengthens cooperation through a collective understanding while speaking is vocalization of human communication. Being able to express an idea, concept or opinion through speech is essential in the communicative process and languages are about communication. A good language teachers plan lessons, and sequences of lessons, which include a mixture of all the macro-skills, rather than focusing on developing only one macro-skill at a time.

- Listening is the most important skill in communication. It is a mental operation involving processing sound waves, interpreting their meaning, and storing them in memory. It is a communication technique that requires the listeners to understand, interpret, and evaluate what they hear. It paves the way for other skills to tower over the others because of its significance in terms of speech, discussion and freedom of expression. They serve as an approach to make everybody comprehend which is being said. It is closely related to
speaking and it enables the persons to soak in any information that is given to them; consequently, the information can be passed on to another party later on after the conversation. On the other hand, learners will develop prediction and anticipation skills in listening. Without listening, communication will be crippled. It is vital and should be a main part in communication.

Second language (L2) listening comprehension is a complex process, crucial in the development of second language competence. Listeners use both bottom-up processes (linguistic knowledge) and top-down processes (prior knowledge) to comprehend. Knowing the context of a listening text and the purpose for listening greatly reduces the burden of comprehension. This will help students learn how to listen and develop the metacognitive knowledge and strategies crucial to success in listening comprehension.

**Listening strategies** are techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input. Listening strategies can be classified by how the listener processes the input.

**Top-down strategies** are listener based; the listener taps into background knowledge of the topic, the situation or context, the type of text, and the language. This background knowledge activates a set of expectations that help the listener to interpret what is heard and anticipate what will come next. Top-down strategies include

- listening for the main idea
- predicting
- drawing inferences
- summarizing

**Bottom-up strategies** are text based; the listener relies on the language in the message, that is, the combination of sounds, words, and grammar that creates meaning. Bottom-up strategies include

- listening for specific details
- recognizing cognates
- recognizing word-order patterns

Research has demonstrated that adults spend 40-50% of communication time listening (Gilman & Moody 1984), but the importance of listening in language learning has only been recognized relatively recently (Oxford 1993). Since the role of listening comprehension in language learning was taken for granted, it merited little research and pedagogical attention. Although listening played an important role in audio-lingual methods, students only listened to repeat and develop a better pronunciation (for speaking).
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Beginning in the early 70's, work by Asher, Postovsky, Winitz and, later, Krashen, brought attention to the role of listening as a tool for understanding and a key factor in facilitating language learning. Listening has emerged as an important component in the process of second language acquisition (Feyten, 1991). This research base provides support for the pre-eminence of listening comprehension in instructional methods, especially in the early stages of language learning.

You should know that there are different types of listening:
Listening for gist: you listen in order to understand the main idea of the text. Listening for specific information: you want to find out specific details, for example key words. Listening for detailed understanding: you want to understand all the information the text provides.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING YOUR LISTENING SKILLS

Before you listen

Think about the topic of the text you are going to listen to. What do you already know about it? What could possibly be the content of the text? Which words come to mind that you already know? Which words would you want to look up? If you have to do a task on the listening text, check whether you have understood the task correctly. Think about what type of text you are going to listen to. What do you know about this type of text? Relax and make yourself ready to pay attention to the listening text.

While you are listening

It is not necessary to understand every single word. Try to ignore those words that you think are less important anyway. If there are words or issues that you don't understand, use your general knowledge as well as the context to find out the meaning. If you still don't understand something, use a dictionary to look up the words or ask someone else for help. Focus on key words and facts. Take notes to support your memory. Intonation and stress of the speakers can help you to understand what you hear. Try to think ahead. What might happen next? What might the speakers say, which words might they use?

After listening

Think about the text again. Have you understood the main points? Remember the speculations you made before you listened. Did they come true? Review your notes.
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Check whether you have completed your task correctly. Have you had any problems while listening? Do you have any problems now to complete your task? Identify your problems and ask someone for help. Listen again to difficult passages.

Thanks to https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/active-listening-activities

Here are some activities you can introduce in class for active listening with integration with other skills

Dual dictation
Ask students to get into pairs to write a dialogue. When student A is speaking, student B should write down what they are saying and vice versa. When they have finished the conversation, they should check what each other has written and put the two sides of the conversation together. You could then ask students to perform their dialogues again to the rest of the class, or to swap with other pairs. This activity works best if you give students a theme or role-play, e.g.
A conversation between friends about holidays
An argument between siblings
An interview with a famous person
A scene from a film
Class memory quiz
Ask one student at a time to go to the front of the class. Ask the rest of the class to ask them any questions they like (as long as they are not too personal!), e.g.
What is your favourite colour/food/ band?
What did you have for lunch?
Which country would you most like to visit?

Try to make a note of some of the answers. When all of the students (or half of the students, if you have a large group) have been interviewed, explain that you are going to hold a quiz about the class. Get the students into small teams and ask them to put their hand up if they know the answer to a question, e.g.
Which student likes Oasis?
What is Marie’s favourite food?
Which two students would like to be famous actors?

Award a point to the first team to answer correctly. This game can be a lot of fun, and encourages students to listen to each other.

Listen for lies
Divide the class into two teams A and B. Ask one student at a time to come to the front of the class and read aloud a passage which you have chosen, e.g. a story or newspaper article. Then ask them to read it aloud again, but to make some changes. Each time a lie
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(or change) is read out, the students must stand up. The first team to stand up gets a point. This game requires students to listen carefully and encourages them to remember important information and details.

Now let's see if you can come with your own.

**What is Speaking?**

Speaking is the delivery of language through the mouth. To speak, we create sounds using many parts of our body, including the lungs, vocal tract, vocal chords, tongue, teeth and lips.

Speaking is the second of the four language skills, which are:
- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

In our own language, speaking is usually the second language skill that we learn. This vocalized form of language usually requires at least one listener. When two or more people speak or talk to each other, the conversation is called a "dialogue". Speech can flow naturally from one person to another in the form of dialogue. It can also be planned and rehearsed, as in the delivery of a speech or presentation.

**Speaking can be formal or informal:**

Informal speaking is typically used with family and friends, or people you know well. Formal speaking occurs in business or academic situations, or when meeting people for the first time.

Speaking is probably the language skill that most language learners wish to perfect as soon as possible. It used to be the only language skill that was difficult to practise online. This is no longer the case. English learners can practise speaking online using voice or video chat and services like Skype. They can also record and upload their voice for other people to listen to.

What is meant by "teaching speaking" is to teach ESL learners to:
- Produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns
- Use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language.
- Select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter.
- Organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence.

Use language as a means of expressing values and judgments. Use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called as fluency. (Nunan, 2003)
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Now many linguistics and ESL teachers agree on that students learn to speak in the second language by "interacting". Communicative language teaching and collaborative learning serve best for this aim. Communicative language teaching is based on real-life situations that require communication. By using this method in ESL classes, students will have the opportunity of communicating with each other in the target language. In brief, ESL teachers should create a classroom environment where students have real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language. This can occur when students collaborate in groups to achieve a goal or to complete a task.

But like all things in life, there are some barriers that may hinder the progress of attaining a good communication using English as a medium such as:

**Communication Barrier #1**

_Lack of Enthusiasm_

Do you really believe your product is better than the competition’s? Do you look as confident as you say you are? The benefits of your product will not be believable if you don’t communicate your passion, enthusiasm, and commitment through your facial expressions.

**How to Avoid This Barrier:**

Show Some Enthusiasm

Begin paying attention to the type of facial expressions you use and when you use them. You may not be aware of when you frown, roll your eyes, or scowl. Make sure your facial expressions are appropriate based on your topic, listeners and objective. When you’re smiling while communicating a serious or negative message, you create a discrepancy between your facial expression and your message. The same
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discrepancy applies when you’re communicating a positive message without facial expressions.
Once you have increased your awareness of facial expressions, practice the skill of incorporating them into your message, matching the appropriate expression to each situation. You wouldn’t want to have a stone-cold look on your face when you are expressing your passion for your company’s products.

Communication Barrier #2

Distracting Gestures
The majority of individuals I work with fidget with their fingers, rings, pen — the list goes on. If they don’t fidget, then they unconsciously talk with their hands. Their elbows get locked at their sides and every gesture looks the same. Or they’ve been told they talk with their hands so they hold their hands and do nothing.

Throughout the day, notice how you and others use gestures.
Do you talk with your hands or gesture too often? If you’re constantly using gestures, you’re not able to think on your feet and you’re creating static.
Do your gestures have purpose?
Ask for constructive feedback from friends, family and co-workers: “When I gesture do I look like I’m talking with my hands?” “Do I use gestures too often or not enough?”

How to Avoid This Barrier:

Use Gestures for Emphasis
Confident speakers use gestures to add emphasis to their words. To gesture with purpose, avoid locking your elbows at your sides or creating the same repetitious gestures. Instead, expand your gestures from your sides and let your hands emphasize and describe your message.
Add variety to your gestures by relaxing your arms back to your sides after you complete a gesture.
“Static is created when what you say is inconsistent with how you say it.”
When your gestures create a visual for your listeners, they’ll remember more information and will remember your message longer.
Gestures will grab your listener’s attention.
Gestures add energy and inflection to your voice and channel your adrenaline and nervous energy.

Communication Barrier #3

Lack of Focus
The more you add information that isn’t necessary, the greater the risk your listeners will misinterpret your point.
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How to Avoid This Barrier:

Stay Focused
When you begin to say too much and feel like a train about to derail, put the brakes on and get yourself back on track … PAUSE!
Keep your objective in mind. Think in terms of what your listener needs to know about what you want them to do, not what you want to tell them.
Put thought into your words.

Communication Barrier #4

Using PowerPoint as a Crutch
“The more you add information that isn’t necessary, the greater the risk your listeners will misinterpret your point.”
PowerPoint isn’t designed to serve as your notes. The purpose of visual aids is to enhance and support your message through pictures and illustrations.

How to Avoid This Barrier:

Design Visual Aids, not Wordy Slides
How you design your visual aids will determine your ability to stay connected with your listener.
Create PowerPoint slides with more pictures and fewer words.
Ask yourself, “Why am I using this PowerPoint slide?”
Identify how your PowerPoint slide best supports your message based on the following criteria:
Listener expectations and needs.
Listener experience and knowledge level.
Objectives.
Time frame.
Number of participants.
Save details for handouts. Your listeners will appreciate a conversational approach with interaction accompanied by take-aways they may use as a resource.
Stay away from software overkill. If you’re clicking the mouse every few seconds, your visual aids are the message and you are the backup.
If you’ve been using the same PowerPoint design for more than six months, it’s time to make a change!
Stop disconnecting with your listener by talking to your visual aids. Only speak when you see eyes! Pause when you refer to your visual aids and stay connected with your listener.

Communication Barrier #5

Verbal Static
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Um… what perception… like… do you create… you know… when you hear… um… a speaker using… uh… words that clutter… you know… their language? Knowledgeable, credible and confident are labels which probably don’t come to mind.

The number one challenge individuals need to overcome to increase their influence is the ability to replace non-words with a pause. We use non-words to buy ourselves time to think about what we want to say. These words are distracting and your listener misses your message.

How to Avoid This Barrier:
Eliminate Filler Words
Think on your feet.
Get to the point and avoid rambling.
Take a relaxing breath.
Hold your listener’s attention.
Gain control over your message.
Hear, understand and respond.
Act on what you say.

Communication Barrier #6

Lack of Eye Connection

The only way to build a relationship is through trust. When you forget what to say, you will look at the ceiling, floor, PowerPoint slides or anywhere away from your listener. When you disconnect you’ll say: “uh” “um” “so” “and”, etc.

How to Avoid This Barrier:
Keep Your Eyes On Your Audience
When speaking to more than two individuals, connect with one individual for a complete sentence or thought. Take a moment to pause as you transition your eyes from one individual to another.
When rehearsing, ask your listener to immediately give you feedback when you look away from them while you’re speaking.

http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/6-communication-barriers/

Ideas for Supporting Speaking and Listening Activities

Improving your English speaking skills will help you communicate more easily and effectively. But how do you become a more confident English speaker?
Practise where you can, when you can. Any practice is good – whether you speak to someone who is a native English speaker or not.
It's important to build your confidence. If possible, use simple English sentence structure that you know is correct, so that you can concentrate on getting your message across.
Try to experiment with the English you know. Use words and phrases you know in new situations. Native English speakers are more likely to correct you if you use the wrong word than if you use the wrong grammar. Experimenting with vocabulary is a really good way of getting feedback.

Try to respond to what people say to you. You can often get clues to what people think by looking at their body language. Respond to them in a natural way.

Try NOT to translate into and from your own language. This takes too much time and will make you more hesitant.

If you forget a word, do what native English speakers do all the time, and say things that 'fill' the conversation. This is better than keeping completely silent. Try using um, or er, if you forget the word.

Don't speak too fast! It's important to use a natural rhythm when speaking English, but if you speak too fast it will be difficult for people to understand you.

Try to relax when you speak – you'll find your mouth does most of the pronunciation work for you. When you speak English at normal speed, you'll discover that many of the pronunciation skills, such as linking between words, will happen automatically.

Remember, when speaking English...

Try to become less hesitant and more confident.

Don't be shy to speak – the more you do it, the more confident you'll become.

Remember to be polite – use "please" and "thank you" if you ask someone to do something for you.

http://www.english-at-home.com/speaking/better-english-speaking-skills
Developing reading skill in a competence based curriculum

‘An estimated 122 million youth globally are illiterate, of which young women represent 60.7% .. 67.4 million children are out of school ... deficient or non-existent basic education is the root cause of illiteracy’. (UNESCO)

Imagine what your life would be like if you didn’t know how to read. Approximately only 80% of the world’s population is reported to be able to read (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

Reading is a fundamental skill for learners, not just for learning but for life (Traves 1994) with reading being defined as “…the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately” (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 9).

Why we need to develop reading skills

L1 literacy leads to L2 literacy development awareness. Reading itself builds on oral language levels and key factors that influence (L2) reading skill development include the ability to comprehend and use both listening and speaking skills because you need to:

- **Hear** a word before you can **say** it
- **Say** a word before you can **read** it
- **Read** a word before you can **write** it (Linse 2005)

What this tells us is that young learners need a firm foundation in auditory and oracy skills before they can become proficient readers and writers of ANY language. Learning to read and then to write means the young learner has to link what they have heard or spoken to what they can see (read) and produce (write).

Beginning reading: learning letters

Especially if the children’s own language has a different alphabet it is important that they become familiar with the shapes of letters and can begin manipulating them. The following holistic (they require using the body and space rather than pencil and paper) activities help to give children a strong imprint of the shape of letters in their mind’s eye.

**Body letters**

Ask children to make themselves into the shape of given letters ‘make yourself an ‘s’ etc’. Children contort their bodies into what they think the letter looks like.
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You can model this easily by showing them an ‘x’ by standing with your feet apart and your arms in the air and wide apart. Or you can show a ‘T’ by standing with your feet together and your arms stretched out to the sides. Or ask children to make a letter and the whole class has to try to recognize what the letter is.

**Tracing letters**

Ask students to shut their eyes and with your finger trace a letter on their hand or back. They must tell you what this is. They can play the game in pairs. There may be giggles from the ticklish in the class, but the activity requires them to ‘see’ the letter in their mind’s eye and it’s great fun, too.

**Air writing**

Before writing letters on paper, get all the students to stand up and you stand at the front of the class with your back to them. Using your writing hand draw a big letter in the air saying its sound at the same time. Get the students to copy you, moving their arms to form the letter in the air.

**Letter sculptures**

Give out plasticine (soft modelling clay) to all the children (half-cooked spaghetti works too, but is messier). Ask the children to make certain letters (or words). They have to concentrate on the shape of the letter and its proportions.

The children can choose their own letter and make a big one out of plasticine or card, then stick it on a large piece of card. Give out magazines and newspapers and let the children look and find either words or pictures of things that begin with the same letter. They cut these out and create a collage with their big letter. Decorate the classroom with these posters.

**Beginning reading: introducing letters**

Before introducing letters, consider how children learn their mother tongue.

**Foundations - The sound system of English**

Begin by teaching children to recognise, understand and produce the spoken word through games, songs and stories. Allow them to hear plenty of English from you, so try to maximise your English and minimise Mother Tongue in the classroom (you can also use videos, tapes, songs etc) so they become accustomed to the sounds of English. Encourage them to speak English by repeating you, joining in chants and songs and responding to simple questions. This foundation is vital to make meaningful links to the sound system of English. Learning sounds and letters without understanding any words is a purely mechanical and potentially off-putting experience for them. Young children will quickly learn English words if you introduce them with a picture that clearly shows the meaning or you can point to the object in the classroom e.g. chair, door, window.
Introducing letters

It is possible to introduce letters after only a few hours of English classes as long as the children have already been introduced to English vocabulary – they understand the meaning of words and are able to recognise the word when it is spoken. Doing a little regularly and incorporating reading and writing into every lesson is a good idea. It gives the lesson variety and students are not overloaded.

Some suggestions for introducing letters

A TPR (Total Physical Response) action game. Call out action words like swim, jump and hop while doing the actions and get the children to copy the actions moving around the classroom as they are listening to the words. This type of activity ensures that children are learning/practising the words meaningfully and by being physically involved they are enjoying the game which makes the words more memorable. Getting children to move around in the lesson helps them to use up the energy they have or energise and focus them if they are sluggish or distracted.

Revise new language from previous lesson e.g. children have to point at appropriate objects in the room as you call out the names. Children do pick up new words quickly, but they also forget quickly, so it’s a good idea to keep revising and recycling vocabulary. When they are able to remember the words, they will feel a sense of success and be motivated to learn more.

Introduce 7 letters phonically (explained below).

Practise the new letters along with others they have already learnt.

Introduce a new song or chant and practise. Or introduce new vocabulary and practise. It is possible to have a lot of input in every lesson. Don’t underestimate what children can learn and give them plenty of opportunities to pick up new language.

Story: This is a great way to practise and/or introduce language meaningfully. See previous webpage on using stories with juniors for more ideas.

A quiet game/task based on the story - drawing and colouring in. Allow for quiet activities to allow children to process the language, have a rest, and for you to monitor them and have one-to-one dialogues with them about what they are doing. For example if they are drawing a picture which includes target vocabulary of animals, you can say ‘that’s a lovely blue tiger or ‘what a funny dog’ etc: allowing them to hear the target language in a personalised context.

Phonic approach

A phonic approach is far more useful initially than learning the names of the letters. ‘Knowing’ the alphabet, as in reciting the names of the letters in the correct order, is not useful if the children aren’t able to match the sound with the written letter.
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1. Prepare 26 flash cards, each one with a letter of the alphabet in lower case (it is also possible to buy ready-made letter flashcards, as well as cards that show common letter combinations such as ‘ow’, ‘ee’, ‘ea’ etc).

2. Show the letters one at a time (not all at once, introduce around 7 each time) and say the sound the letter makes. For the letter ‘c’ use the ‘k’ sound as this will be more useful initially. Let the children hear the sound and encourage them to repeat it.

Practise:

3. Hold up a letter and ask ‘Is this a /b/?’ or ‘What is this?’.

4. Pin the letters on the board and ask children to run up one at a time and ‘slap’ the letter you call out (phonically).

5. Ask the children if they know any words that begin with this sound. This is great for using what they already know and making the strong connection between words, letters and sounds.

Beginning reading: recognition games

Games are motivating and help make language memorable, so try to think of lots of fun ways to practise the new letters and sounds that you are introducing to the children.

Run and point

Pin up the letters that you have introduced to the class so far on the walls around the classroom at a height the children can reach. Nominate one student and say ‘Juan, run and point to /s/’. The child must look around and find the correct letter and run up to it and touch it or point to it. (Model the activity so that the children are clear about what they have to do).

You could then turn this into a race. Divide the class into two groups. They stand in two lines at the front of the class or down the centre of the room (it’s great if you can move furniture to the sides of the room). The children at the front of each line are the runners. You say the sound of the letter and the one to reach and touch it first is the winner. They then go to the back of the line and the next two children are the runners for the next letter. It is fine if other children in the team help the runner – it’s not a test but a means of helping children learn the sound-letter link.

What begins with /b/?

Ask the question with all the letters the children have been introduced to. They can tell you any words they know that begin with that sound. This is great for them to make their own connections between the letter and the sound. You may be surprised at how many words they know – even ones you haven’t introduced in class.
Hold up the letter

Get the children to make cards with the letters they know. Call out a sound and the children have to hold up the corresponding letter. This game allows all the children to join in and to focus on processing the sound-letter link without having to produce any language.

Recognising the letters

Produce handouts like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n</th>
<th>h n m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>a o d g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children have to recognise which is the same letter and simply circle it or maybe colour over it. The letters are actually very similar in shape, so it’s important that children can differentiate between them.

Beginning reading: learning words

It is a short journey from letters to words. In order to introduce words, show pictures and words together and sound out the phonics.

E.G. /c/ /a/ /t/ = cat

Move you finger under each letter as you sound it. Remember not all languages are written in the same direction. Encourage the children to read with you.

Word building

Word tiles – get the children to make 26 letter tiles out of cardboard (old cereal boxes will do) by simply cutting out small squares and writing each letter on them.

Each child has their letters spread out in front of them. Call out a word they have learnt e.g. cat and the first one to find the right tiles and put them in order must put their hand up. This encourages quick eye movement over the letters, recognition and letter combining.

Races – for fun you could challenge the children working in pairs or threes (to encourage cooperation and peer teaching) to make as many words as possible in a specified time.

As each child has their own letters, they can play with them at home or if they finish an activity early and see how many words they can make. Later they can move into building short sentences.
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Worksheets

You can produce easy worksheets like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What animal?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c_t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d_g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a_t</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children fill in the gaps. If you can add a picture of the word too: it will make it all the more meaningful.

atc =
gdo =
npe =

Children unjumble the letters to make the word. You could also do this on the board with children coming up and doing the activity one at a time.

Word searches

These are good for children to recognise words within a jumble of other words. It makes them concentrate and ‘see’ words on the page. Children have to circle or colour the ten key words in the grid.

Animals
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Children have to find the ten animal words in the box. You can either give them the ten words at the bottom to help them look. Or attach the pictures of the animals to the wordsearch.

**Bird, Cat, Cow, Dog, Elephant, Fish, Lion, Mouse, Snake, Tiger**

**Crosswords**

Children look at the picture, have to remember the English word and then have to write the word – spelling correctly – to fit it into the crossword. This worksheet is also a good record of vocabulary for them to keep and refer to.
How to explore reading with young learners

Early literacy strategies

Phonemic awareness (grapho-phonics)

Young learners of English need explicit instruction on the link between the symbols (letters) in English and the sounds they make. They need to be taught that there is a direct link between the phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters) in order to be able to start ‘blending’ or sounding out simple words, e.g. vowel consonant (VC), followed by consonant vowel consonant (VC). The UK National Literacy strategy ‘Letters and Sounds’ is a good place to start for ideas on not only the order of letters and sounds to be taught but also the methodology to be used. Once a young learner has mastered blending sounds together, they can be taught how to ‘segment’ the sounds in words they can say. These skills of putting together and separating sounds will help them with both ‘decoding’ and spelling.

The whole point of human beings inventing symbols is to pass on information to each other. They have done this in many different ways, consider the Ancient Egyptians with their hieroglyphics, Chinese pictographs, Arabic text and Roman text to name a few. There are not just differences in symbols but also in directionality. These all have to be taught explicitly because they are man-made and not intuitive.

Semantics

Being able to ‘decode’ or read aloud is not useful on it’s own. The symbols carry meaning and so young learners need to be taught how to ‘encode’ the symbols and visuals in order to find out the message being shared.

Syntactics

In the same way that every language has differences in symbols, so they have in the ‘nuts and bolts’ or arrangement of their symbols. The grammar or syntax of language is best ‘acquired’ in the Krashen sense, rather than ‘learnt’ explicitly. Acquisition will occur through multiple exposures to language usage in different contexts. Dissecting language is not very useful to a young learner, however, some simple metalanguage from the age of 10 years old upwards can be helpful, e.g. identifying nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, articles, pronouns and word order. The reason being that there may be differences between the L1 and English and being helped to ‘notice’ these differences can help. A helpful publication to find out differences between 22 languages and English is edited by Swan and Smith (2001).

Developing literacy
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You do not need access to a vast library or online literature to explore reading in your classroom.

Techniques we have used, and ones learners have enjoyed are shared for you below. It is important to remember that activating background knowledge when needed may be key to a comprehensible reading activity as;

“Our background knowledge is like a lens through which we understand what we read” and it “allows teachers to unlock vocabulary before reading” (Anderson, 1999, p. 11).

Cameron (2001) gives a very useful list of ideas for creating a ‘literate environment in the classroom’ as this may be the only place young learners see print in the foreign language. This list includes:

- Labels – labelling children’s trays, desks, coat hooks, as well as furniture and objects around the classroom and school.
- Posters – colourful posters are especially eye-catching which could include a rhyme that is being learnt, advertising something, e.g. reading, cleaning teeth
- Messages – for homework or ‘Don’t forget to bring …’
- Reading aloud – by teacher or older child

Some other activities that will help to make reading ‘pleasurable’ (Arnold 2009) which is crucial for success in literacy, include:

- Focusing on reading fluency may include timed repeated reading (Nation, 2009).
- Running dictation (in pairs, so all learners are involved in reading).
- Learners making their own story books (or comics) to share with each other (Wright, 1997, p.114-130).
- Creating backstories for character in a puppet family and creating a class binder to refer back to when reading peers stories about the family. This can be developed over a semester with learners
- taking in turns in small groups to create dramas to share with the class in written form, so peers read, and can be followed through with role plays.
- Motivation – ask your learners to bring in materials they enjoy reading – whether it is football results, recipes or song lyrics, use these as a springboard for discussion and reading.
- Make it purposeful – if learning food lexis, bring in packets / tins of food, read where different kinds of food originate from, and classify them by country or by noun basis (countable/ uncountable). (Ellis & Brewster, 1991, p.57).
- Extensive reading is where learners read a lot of easy material in the new language. They choose their own material and read it independently from the teacher. (Krashen, 1988). This develops confidence in their abilities and promotes an enjoyment of reading for pleasure.
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6 Strategies for Reading with Young Learners

Young learners love stories, and reading with young learners typically involves including a wide range of activities along with the reading itself. We read the images, read the text aloud, retell the story with our own words, and carry out a series of playful activities based on the text. However, a beautiful picture book isn’t enough, language teachers need extra materials to support their reading programmes and make them successful.

Extra materials may include:

- illustrations,
- a picture dictionary,
- activities and games,
- extra arts and crafts projects,
- Big Books for shared reading,
- And audio recordings of stories

Follow these six strategies and we guarantee that you will have a fun and successful young reading programme:

1 SHARED GROUP READING

Use Young Readers BIG BOOKS: they are specially devised for shared reading. Make sure that your students have copies of the small editions too. This way they can reread the text alone or with their family or friends.

Why do it?

- introduces reading as a fun, group activity
- models fluency, intonation and
- improves listening comprehension
- connects listening, reading and visual literacy skills
- presents and practises vocabulary in context
- breaks down barriers for children struggling to read

How to do it?

- Choose a reader.
- Activate background knowledge and vocabulary.
- Make predictions.
- Read the text to your group.
- Reread the text, inviting your students to join in the reading if they feel like it.

2 READ ALOUD AND BUILD A DIALOGUE
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- Whether you are reading with one student or a group, take this simple and easy advice: slow down. Give enough time to your students to choose a book (offer 2 or 3 titles you have selected), give them enough time to study the book before you start reading, and give them enough time to observe the images.

Why do it?

- Around the age of 5 or 6 young children are already familiar with picture books, and they have developed strategies to understand stories that are read to them. Storytelling gains more importance than ever before.
- When you are reading aloud to children, your can give your full attention to them.
- It revises vocabulary and introduces new words, phrases your students might not even know in their first language.
- You can introduce simple reading techniques to very young children: book layout, page layout, speech bubbles, and they can identify letters and words.
- When you are reading aloud, children learn to interpret images.

How to do it?

- During the second or third reading of the story, let your students finish sentences.
- Look back: from time to time, stop to ask questions about the story. ‘What happened to the kite before?’ , or ‘Do you remember this girl?’.
- Anticipation: children love anticipating the plot. It makes them feel comfortable and reassures them that their knowledge of the world is correct.
- Prediction: Ask them what they think will happen to the characters.
- Tap into their experiences: ask them if they have seen or heard about the things you are reading about.

3 MOVE AND ACT

- Reading is often a solitary and stationary act. When you decide to use stories with young learners, remember that they might not feel comfortable sitting in one spot for 30 minutes.

Why do it?

- Young learners enjoy learning through movement: they love pointing at and touching things, acting and dancing.
- Reading in the classroom should not become a monotonous action that makes your students sleepy. We have bedtime stories for that.

How to do it?

- Point out objects and people while you are reading and ask your students to do the same.
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- When there’s action, imitate the characters in the book.
- Use some scenes or the whole reader for role plays.

4 HAVE FUN WITH FLASHCARDS

Why do it?
Flashcards are every language learner’s indispensable vocabulary assistants. Most of the young learners in your groups can’t read or write yet. Use the picture or use the illustrations, but most importantly, use the flashcards

How to do it?
- Use flashcards for fun games:
  - Snap
  - Memory
  - Bingo
  - Guessing game/Charades

5 DO CREATIVE PROJECTS AND PLAY GAMES

- If you do creative projects and games after reading a story, you can make sure that your students have immediate, contextualised vocabulary practise. They can also play a game and make the book more memorable.

Why do it?
- Creative projects activate manual and visual skills, and let your students rely on their own creativity.

6 CHANT

We have talked about the power of images and acting. Songs, chants and raps are equally valuable for your reading class.

Why do it?
- Children love rhymes, and they become familiar with them at a very early age (2-3). They repeat and imitate your words without really questioning what you’re saying. This quality helps them develop unharmed pronunciation at an early age.
- If you top word repetition activities with chants, you can practise intonation and sentence structure with your young learners in a natural way.
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How to do it?

- Listen to the chants
- Listen several times, and start chanting along.
- Stop the record and chant slowly.
- Start the record again, and chant together.

Conclusion

Reading is a rewarding process and can be enjoyed by learners and the teacher alike. Our last note is simply this, approach reading with the intention of having fun in the learning process and your intention will be mirrored by your learners. Happy reading!

Teaching Reading Comprehension in CBC:

Comprehension is the only reason for reading. Without comprehension, reading is a frustrating, pointless exercise in word calling. It is no exaggeration to say that how well students develop the ability to comprehend what they read has a profound effect on their entire lives. A major goal of teaching reading comprehension, therefore, is to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and experiences they must have if they are to become competent and enthusiastic readers.

For many years, teaching reading comprehension was based on a concept of reading as the application of a set of isolated skills such as identifying words, finding main ideas, identifying cause and effect relationships, comparing and contrasting, and sequencing. Teaching reading comprehension was viewed as a mastery of these skills. Comprehension instruction followed what the study called mentioning, practicing, and assessing procedure where teachers mentioned a specific skill that students were to apply, had students practice the skill by completing workbook pages, then assessed them to find out if they could use the skill correctly. Instruction did little to help students learn how or when to use the skills, nor was ever established that this particular set of skills enabled comprehension.
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Research indicates that we build comprehension through the teaching of comprehension strategies and environments that support an understanding of text. It is important for educators and parents to teach children active strategies and skills to help them become active, purposeful readers. Teaching reading comprehension is an active process of constructing meaning, not skill application. The act of constructing meaning is:

- **Interactive** – It involves not just the reader, but the text and the context in which reading takes place.
- **Strategic** – Readers have purposes for their reading and use a variety of strategies as they construct meaning.
- **Adaptable** – Readers change the strategies they use as they read different kinds of text or as they read for different purposes.

**What Do Good Readers Do?**

- Before reading, good readers tend to set goals for their reading.
- During reading, good readers read words accurately and quickly, while dealing with meanings of words.
- Good readers are selective as they read.
- Good readers use their background knowledge (schema) to create mental images, ask questions, and make inferences.
- Good readers monitor their comprehension as they read.

**How Do Poor Readers Differ From Good Readers?**

- Poor readers do not have sufficient awareness to develop, select, and apply strategies that can enhance their comprehension.
- Poor readers rarely prepare before reading.
- During reading, poor readers may have difficulty decoding, reading too slowly, and lack fluency.
- Poor readers often lack sufficient background knowledge and have trouble making connections with text.
- Some poor readers are unaware of text organization.
- After reading, poor readers do not reflect on what they have just read.

**METACOGNITION & SCHEMA (BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE)**

Although "metacognition" and "schema" aren't comprehension strategies, they are very important for teaching reading comprehension strategies. Simply put, metacognition...
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means to think about your thinking: Text + Thinking = Real Reading. When you read text and think at the same time you are “real reading”…or being metacognitive! When you read, sometimes you activate your schema or you build upon it.

READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

1. Make connections

Connecting what your pupil already knows while he reads sharpens his focus and deepens understanding. Show the pupil how to make connections by sharing your own connections as you read aloud. Maybe the book mentions places you’ve been on vacation. Talk about your memories of those places. Invite your pupil to have a turn. Remind your pupil that good readers make all kinds of connections as they read.

Simply encourage your pupil to make personal connections to the content of the book he/she is reading. You could even jot the connections on sticky notes in colorful magic markers and stick them in the book, or make a cute chart of the connections.

Children make personal connections with the text by using their schema. There are three main types of connections we can make during reading:

- Text-to-Self: Refers to connections made between the text and the reader's personal experience.
- Text-to-Text: Refers to connections made between a text being read to a text that was previously read.
- Text-to-World: Refers to connections made between a text being read and something that occurs in the world.

2. Infer

Making inferences is similar to the text-to-world connection strategy. In order for children to adequately understand, they must be able to make inferences, yet this is a difficult concept even for some adults to grasp! Gradually work with children on drawing conclusions based on what information they know. Likewise, show them how to make educated guesses, and to look for hints to back up their reasoning. You could make lists and pictures together to help this strategy along. As always, model inferring for your pupil in an explicit way, so that he/she can see how you derive conclusions.

We “infer” by combining what we already know with clues from a story. For example, when we read, “Her eyes were red and her nose was runny,” we can infer that she has a cold or allergies. You can help your child with this reading skill by predicting what might happen in the story as you read aloud. Then invite your pupil to do the same.
Authors do not always provide complete descriptions of, or explicit information about a topic, setting, character, or event. However, they often provide clues that readers can use to “read between the lines”—by making inferences that combine information in the text with their schema.

3. Predictions

An uncomplicated strategy to foster comprehension is to simply ask your pupil to make frequent predictions. Most parents and teachers make the mistake of only asking children to make predictions at the beginning of a book. Instead, ask pupils to make predictions at the onset of a book, as well as at strategic points throughout the book. This stimulates their thinking in a number of ways. At the end of the book, discuss with pupils whether or not they liked the ending. Would they have ended it differently? If so, how?

4. Visualize

This strategy involves the ability of readers to make mental images of a text as a way to understand processes or events they encounter during reading. This ability can be an indication that a reader understands the text. Some research suggests that readers who visualize as they read are better able to recall what they have read than those who do not visualize.

Creating visual images brings the text alive. These “mind movies” make the story more memorable. You can help your pupil do this by reading aloud and describing the pictures you’re seeing in your own imagination. Use all five senses and emotions. Invite your pupil to share his “mind movies.” Notice how they’re different from yours. You might even ask your pupil to draw what’s in his imagination.

One of the best parts of reading is to picture the story or the content in one’s head. Ask pupils to describe how they picture the characters and the setting in the story. If it’s non-fiction, ask them to draw their own pictures of the content. Another fun activity is to compare and contrast visualizations between book and movie versions of various stories.

5. Questions

This strategy involves readers asking themselves questions throughout the reading of text. The ability of readers to ask themselves relevant questions as they read is especially valuable in helping them to integrate information, identify main ideas, and summarize information. Asking the right questions allows good readers to focus on the most important information in a text.

Asking children questions is the simplest and most old-fashioned way to ensure they have understood material. Don’t just ask questions at the end of a given passage. I
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would suggest stopping at strategic points to see how they are doing throughout a passage. Furthermore, the quality of the questions themselves can also determine the quality of understanding. Most people only ask explicit, concrete questions that only pertain to memory. For example, “what color shirt was he wearing?” Instead, I encourage people to ask implicit questions, which are open-ended, and to which there is not necessarily a right or wrong answer, but by which you can still determine how well the child understood. For example, rather than asking what color shirt the character wore, in its place ask “Why was it important that the character wore a blue shirt?” This causes the child to think in a deeper manner, without having to memorize the color of the shirt, yet you still yield rich insights pertaining to how well the child is comprehending.

Asking questions will make your pupil want to look for clues in the text. Pose questions that will spark your pupil's curiosity as he reads. Frequently ask him, “What are you wondering?” Jot down those “wonderings” and then see how they turn out. Remind your pupil that good readers challenge what they're reading by asking questions.

6. Determine importance

Determining what’s important is central to reading. Determining importance has to do with knowing why you’re reading and then making decisions about what information or ideas are most critical to understanding the overall meaning of the piece.

Practice determining importance with your pupils. Explicitly model how you determine what is important. Show your pupils how you might look in topic sentences, or at bullet points, titles, or headings to make more sense of a passage. Practice highlighting a passage together. Once pupils know how to extract important information, they can study better, focus better, and provide adequate retellings and/or summaries.

7. Synthesize

Synthesizing is the process of ordering, recalling, retelling, and recreating into a coherent whole the information with which our minds are bombarded every day. Synthesizing is closely linked to evaluating. Basically, as we identify what’s important, we interweave our thoughts to form a comprehensive perspective to make the whole greater than just the sum of the parts.

Once pupils can determine importance, they can begin to synthesize. The easiest way I can think of to explain synthesis to my students is to use a weaving metaphor. When we synthesize, we have to take information from different sources, and weave it all together for ourselves. This is no easy task! Imagine a weaver who has to select the best spools of thread, based on her knowledge of thread. Then, she must weave the threads together into one coherent, beautiful piece. That is precisely what successful readers do when they comprehend. They weave the information, or synthesize it. I would suggest putting important facts from a book onto long strips of paper, which could represent threads.
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Then, think through how you would weave those important facts together, and you could even physically manipulate the papers until you have your own quilt. This activity helps a lot when pupils have to write research papers, or other written responses to text.

8. Fix-Up Strategies

Last but not least, simply equip your pupil to have fix-up strategies at his/her fingertips upon which he/she can rely when information breaks down. When you are reading, won’t you stop and re-read something when you know it’s no longer making sense? Well, lots of children won’t do that. They won’t stop! They just keep going! Together with your pupils, brainstorm and make a list of fix-up strategies. The list could be as simple as “stop, go back, re-read, use a highlighter, predict, ask questions, etc.” It doesn’t have to be anything fancy. The two keys are that your pupil first recognizes when his/her comprehension breaks down, and second, knows a few things he/she can do to help mend that comprehension.

Readers who monitor their own reading use strategies to help them when they don’t understand something. Teach your pupils how to “click and clunk.” Read together and ask them to hold up one finger when the reading is making sense (click) and two fingers when meaning breaks down (clunk). To repair the “clunks,” use these “fix-up” strategies:

- Re-read.
- Read on—now does it make sense?
- Read out loud.
- Read more slowly.
- Look at illustrations.
- Identify confusing words.
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**Creative Thinking**

Creativity is such a natural and motivating skill to develop in our young learners. Creative activities are fun and engaging for our students. They take learning far beyond the simple tasks of understanding and memorizing. In fact, it is the highest order thinking skill, as Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy.

Creativity is an essential skill (along with critical thinking, collaboration, and communication) that students need in order to be successful in the 21st Century. Creative students are better at making changes, solving new problems, expressing themselves through the arts, and more.

**How important is creativity?**

Creativity is a natural ability that is found in every young learner. Unfortunately, traditional classrooms don’t always value creativity, and sometimes even hold it back. Our role as teachers is to nurture creativity at every opportunity.

Consider the following:

- Creativity develops when students are able to analyze the information they’ve learned, make new connections with that information, come up with new ideas, and evaluate their choices.
- To nurture creativity, students need the freedom to offer ideas and express themselves without judgment. In a creative classroom, all contributions from students are welcomed.
- Creativity requires the courage to make mistakes.
- Creativity and innovation go hand-in-hand.

**What are the qualities of a creative classroom?**

1. Teachers and students ask open-ended questions that encourage curiosity and creativity.
2. Students brainstorm as many ideas as possible without fear of being judged or being wrong. Students then go on to choose the best ideas and improve upon them.
3. Students demonstrate creativity not only individually, but with partners and in small groups. Ideas are generated and assessed collaboratively.
4. Students lead the learning and work together to complete projects. These projects help students take the information they have learned and present it in new and creative ways.

**How can you nurture creativity in your classroom?**
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Let’s look at some specific ways to nurture creativity in your classroom, starting with one of the building blocks of language learning:

**Phonics**

Learning about letter shapes and names can be creative! When your young learners are introduced to letters, try this activity to build their creativity. Write the letters one by one on the board and ask the following questions:

*Can you make the letter \_(b)\_ with your fingers? With your hands? With your whole body? With a partner?*

When you first do this task, you might model how students could do this. Think out loud. *Let’s see. Letter b is round and straight. How about like this? Or like this?* Then your students are ready to try their own ideas.

**Words**

Vocabulary words can be taught in many creative ways. For example, verbs such as *walk*, *tiptoe*, and *skate* can be learned more deeply by inviting students to move in creative ways. Questions might include:

- *Show me what it’s like to walk in deep snow. Show me how you might walk on hot sand.*
- *Imagine that you’re tiptoeing past a sleeping polar bear.*
- *We’re on a frozen lake in Antarctica. Let’s skate with the penguins!*

As you can see, creativity and imagination are closely related.

Other words such as nouns and adjectives can be presented creatively through facial expressions and body language, through movement, and even through dramatic skits.

**Grammar**

Grammar is often considered to be a logical and unimaginative part of English. However, grammar can be very creative as it is expressed in songs, poetry, and storytelling. Look for opportunities to build creative skills along with grammar skills.

A creative classroom is a joyful and motivating place where children feel empowered to learn, where all ideas are welcomed, and where learning is deep and meaningful. Children who are allowed to be creative are better learners, and they are more aware of their own learning styles. Creativity is a lifelong skill that our students will take with them into their adult lives to solve problems and help build a better world.

**Creativity in Teaching:**
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We often remark on the marvelous creativity of young children's drawings, dramatic play, and invented language. Children show imaginative use of color, themes, and flights of fancy in their language. As teachers, we play an important role in supporting children's ability in art, dramatic expression, and creative responses to problems.

Often, our primary goals are directed at keeping children healthy and safe, teaching cognitive skills such as shape and color recognition, encouraging prosocial behavior, and introducing basic literacy and numeration skills. With all the time that needs to be devoted to these areas, there is less opportunity to think about the importance of nurturing children's creative abilities. And yet, creative power increases a young child's desire to learn and supports intellectual development.

Ask five different teachers to define "creativity" and you'll probably get five different answers. One definition of creativity focuses on the process of "divergent thinking," which involves:

- the breaking up of old ideas
- making new connections
- enlarging the limits of knowledge
- the onset of wonderful ideas

When we encourage divergent thinking, we help to maintain children's motivation and passion for in-depth learning. Encouraging children to keep on generating new ideas fosters their creative-thinking abilities.

When children learn how to become comfortable with ambiguities, they are developing complex thinking skills. For example, Joey, an older toddler; was glad to be invited to his friend's birthday party, but he also felt grumpy because he did not get the toy train that his friend received as a birthday gift. Children need help to understand that it is not only possible, but acceptable, to hold contradictory or opposite ideas and feelings in their minds at the same time. Give children experiences in playing with ideas that may be ambiguous or uncertain.

You can help children understand that:

- Some feelings and wishes are the same as those of other people, and some are different.
- A friend may want to play the same game as you some of the time but not all of the time.
- You can do some things now, and some things later.
- One idea could be a good idea or not a good idea. (Singing songs is fun, but not at naptime when others are resting.)
- There are consequences, and alternatives, to actions. This kind of thinking sharpens reasoning skills and sparks a child's own creative solutions to conflicts.
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Creative Teaching

To enhance children's creativity, keep the following in mind:

- One important way a child learns of his self-worth is through his interactions with you.
- Be generous in positive descriptions of children's work and ideas.
- Remain focused on the uniqueness of each child and the challenge to nurture her trust and creativity.
- Hold group meetings where children can freely express ideas, particularly in the area of problem solving.

Questions Without Answers

Socratic or open-ended questions are a great way to get children's creative juices flowing. These questions help a child distance himself from the here and now. Choices, comparisons, entertaining new ideas, and formulating personal responses to these questions are all-important ingredients in creative thinking.

Here are some open-ended questions to ask children to inspire their creativity:

- What could happen if it always rained on Saturdays?
- What if cars never wore out?
- If you saw a mouse in your backyard chewing your mother's favorite flowers, what would you do?
- Why don't we wake up with our hair neat and combed?
- What would happen if a cow, a bee, and a clover got together?
- What could happen if cats could bark?
- What could happen if all the shoes in the world were the same size?

Remember that some questions may be too difficult for a child who has had little related experience in the real world (some city children have never seen a cow or clover). Be sure to tailor your questions to the current experiential knowledge of the children. When possible, take children on a field trip, show them a video, or invite "experts" in different areas to come and talk to the class in order to expand children's background of experience.

It's interesting to explore ways of jump-starting children's creativity in different curriculum areas. Whether children are involved in art, dramatic-play, or music and movement activities, careful thought and planning can help them delve further into their creative-thinking abilities.
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Dipping Deeper Through Art

Easel and finger painting while listening to classical music; drawing; clay work; making prints; slithering cornstarch goop between fingers-these are just a few of the art activities that promote creativity and are already staples of many early childhood classrooms. Sensitive observation will reveal creative discoveries. For example, a teacher may hand a large paintbrush and a cup of blue paint to each of a small group of preschoolers. She may notice as one dabs blue on her paper. In dreamy pleasure, the child watches the patch of blue on her paper. She then dips her brush and watches wide-eyed as the blue of her initial swath deepens in color, and great drips of blue paint slowly creep down the easel paper.-She marvels at creating a deeper tint of blue.

In her observation, the teacher was able to appreciate the child's discovery that layering more and more color changes the intensity of the color and the amount of the drip. Your sensitivity to the power of a child's discovery is what unlocks the child's passionate commitment and delight that are bedrock requirements for creativity.

Magical Movement

Some little folks need to be in intense active movement a lot of the time. For them, it might be wise to encourage dance and movement as often as possible. Divide children into two groups. Have one group "make music" by clapping their hands, playing rhythm instruments, or tapping their feet on the floor. Ask the second group to listen carefully to the rhythms provided by their peers and dance to the music in their own inventive ways.

Children learn to represent things by using their bodies in space. Toddlers love to try to hop like a bunny. Older children might enjoy moving like a turtle, a dragonfly, or an elephant. Ask the children whether they can use their bodies to represent emotions, such as joy, anger, or surprise.

Creative thinking is implicit in many cooperative games, such as "Big Snake." In this game, children stretch out on their stomachs and hold the ankles of the person in front of them to make a two-person snake. The "snake" slithers over on its belly to connect up to make a four--person snake and so on. The children have to figure out how the snake could slither up on a mountain or figure out a way to flip over the whole snake on its back without losing its parts.

"Just-Imagine" Games

"Imagine this" games permit children to take off on flights of fancy that require them to retrieve information from memory, compare and contrast ideas, and make connections between disparate bits of information.
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At rest time, you might let children conjure up different imaginary scenarios, such as being a fly busily walking across the ceiling. What are they looking for? How do the children on their cots look to the fly from its upside-down vantage point on the ceiling?

You can also ask children to pretend: "You can be any animal you wish. Which animal would you choose? What would you do all day long as that animal?"

Some creativity games, such as the "One Goes Back" game, help children learn more about themselves, including their preferences and reactions. In this game, you might ask:

"Suppose you were given these three objects (teacher names objects): Which one of the three would you give up if you had to give one back? Why? What could you do with the other two things? Could you use them together? How?"

The "Uses" game draws on children's ability to conjure up lots of unusual and unconventional uses for objects, such as a tin can, paper clip, or cardboard tube from a paper towel roll. When a teacher gave some men's ties to a group of 6--year-olds, they pretended to use them as seatbelts while taking a plane trip. They also pretended the ties were slithery snakes crawling along the floor. Give children the chance to play out their imaginative scripts with such props and then enjoy your peek into the window of their creative conjuring!

Indoor Picnic

Plan with children to create imaginative indoor scenarios to lift everyone's mood during dark winter days. For instance, try creating a summer picnic in the classroom. Spread a large sheet on the floor Put seashells and maybe a few handfuls of sand in shallow plastic tubs of water Work with children to prepare a variety of sandwiches and slices of fresh fruit. Ask parents to send in some summer clothing so that preschoolers can change into swimsuits and carry towels. Have a small plastic swimming pool on the floor. After children "go for a swim," they can make sand pies or sort seashells on the edge of the "sand" sheet.

Arranging for Creativity

How you set up your classroom paves the way for creative adventures. Provide enough space for a safe block corner and enough cars and blocks for creating highways and traffic jams. Have easels out and smocks with plastic flexible neck--bands ready for children to put on when inspiration strikes. Try to have fewer time constraints for activities so that children's creative juices can flow unfettered by a classroom clock.

Although story-reading times and group times are wonderful ways to increase social cohesiveness, be aware of the implications of requiring all children to participate together for other planned activities. Children may be discovering on their own something that is not part of your specific plan for them. For example, if all the children are playing a
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game outdoors and one child wants to create a sandcastle, a flexible teacher will not be threatened by this personal choice. Perceptive teachers handle such individual needs in ways that nurture a child's growth rather than squash budding initiatives.

Dramatic-Play Patterns

An indispensable classroom ingredient is the dramatic-play area. Teachers often ask themselves, "Can rigid dramatic-play scenarios be considered creative in any way?"

As they chase peers, some children play "monster" as other children screech and run away. The repetitive "monster" play requires no surprise scripts. Yet, the teacher who wants to promote creativity can help connect the stereotyped behavior of a given child with the larger world of imaginative play. We, as teachers, are constant observers and learn about each child's unique style, fears, strengths, and use of fantasy. Notice children's repetitive themes and how these serve to buffer them against anxiety. Question children to get a better understanding of their dramatic-play themes and wishes.

The relationships between teachers and children, how classroom time and space is organized, and materials available are important factors in the development of creativity. Classrooms where children are supported in their eagerness to explore relationships and materials without fear or disapproval from teachers or peers, where teachers are prepared to unearth resources to satisfy children's creative thirst to know, are classrooms where creativity is likely to blossom and grow.
Developing writing skills
in a competence-based curriculum

Introduction

Like most current-day curricula in the world, The KNC is based on the competences children and learners are expected to acquire after completing of education. In a competence-based curriculum, the aims of education are achieved by gradually developing a coherent system of key, general and specific competences. A curriculum that explains and plans the learning process in terms of developing learners' competences is called "Competence-based Curriculum".

Competences are defined as Integrated systems of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs. Theses competences are developed through:

- Formal education
- Informal education

The importance of competences:

They allow us to become:

- responsible
- autonomous
- able to solve a diversity of problems
- perform satisfactorily in everyday life-settings at the quality level expressed by the standards

Targets of CBC:

The Competence-Based Curriculum requests from teachers to address individual learning style, to use their freedom of adding or adapting the curriculum to local needs or specific
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realities. The teacher may choose the teaching methods and techniques and may adapt the pedagogical practices depending on learner's cognitive and effective backgrounds and learning styles.

**The emphasis in the CBC is on:**

1. **The learner**: as an autonomous thinker and explorer who expresses his/her own points of view, builds arguments and asks questions for understanding, exchanges ideas, and co-operates with others in problem solving rather than a passive recipient of information.

2. **The teacher**: as a facilitator of learning, a coach as well as a partner that helps the learner to understand and explain rather than a "knowledge authority".

3. **Classroom learning**: the learning which is based on collaboration and aiming developing competences instead of being based on competition in order to establish hierarchies among learners, and aiming at developing factual knowledge focused only on validated examples.

4. **The content**: The aim of the curriculum is to produce a major shift from a theoretical teaching of the subject to a variety of contexts that generate learning with understanding.

5. **Teacher's role**: from an information provider to an organizer of a wide variety of learning activities for all children.

6. **Assessment**: From subjectivism and rigidity of marks meant to classify learners, to self-assessment and progress assessment.

**Assessing & Developing macro skills in a CBC**

To achieve this aim, we need to understand the uniqueness of writing as a skill with its own features and conventions. We also fully understand the difficulty of learning to write "well" in any language, even in our own native language. Every educated child in developed countries learns the rudiments of writing in his/her native language, but very few learn to express themselves clearly with logical, well-developed organization that accomplishes an intended purpose.

The development and assessment of writing are not simple tasks. As you consider assessing students' writing ability, as usual you need to be clear about your criterion in lights of the curriculum standards just to have a clear vision about what to be developed in specified time. What is it you want to promote:
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Handwriting ability?
Correct spelling?
Writing sentences that are grammatically correct?
Paragraph construction?
Logical development of main idea?

All of these and others are possible sub-skills and can be developed through a variety of tasks.

- Before looking at specific tasks, we must scrutinize genres of written languages (so that context and purpose are clear), types of writing (so that stages of the development of writing ability are accounted for), and micro and macro skills of writing (so that objectives can be pinpointed precisely).

**GENRES OF WRITTEN LANGUAGE:**

The most common genres of the language that students might produce, within and beyond the requirements of a CBC. Even though this list is slightly shorter, we should be aware of the multiplicity of options of written genres that learners need to acquire. They are as follows:

1. **Academic writing**
   - Papers and general subject reports
   - Essays, compositions
   - Academically focused journals
   - Short-answer test responses
   - Technical reports (e.g., lab reports)
   - Theses, dissertations

2. **Job-related writing**
   - Messages (e.g., phone messages)
   - Letters/emails
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Memos (e.g., interoffice)
Reports (e.g., job evaluations, project reports)
Schedules, labels, signs
Advertisements, announcements
Manuals

3. Personal writing
Letters, emails, greeting cards, invitations, messages, notes
Calendar entries, shopping lists, reminders
Financial documents (e.g., checks, tax forms, loan applications)
Forms, questionnaires, medical reports, immigration documents, diaries, personal journals
Fiction (e.g. short stories, poetry)

Types of writing performance:
Four categories of written performance that capture the range of written production are considered here. Each category resembles the categories defined for the other three skills, but these categories, as always, reflect the uniqueness of the skill area.

1. IMITATIVE:
To produce written language, the learner must attain skills in the fundamental, basic tasks of writing letters, words, punctuation, and very brief sentences. This category includes the ability to spell correctly and to perceive phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the English spelling system. It is a level at which learners are trying to master the mechanics of writing. At this stage, form is the primary if not exclusive focus, while context and meaning are of secondary concern.

2. INTENSIVE (Controlled):
Beyond the fundamentals of imitative writing are skills in producing appropriate vocabulary within a context, collocations and idioms and correct grammatical features up to the length of a sentence. Meaning and context are of some importance in determining correctness and appropriateness, but most assessment tasks are more concerned with a focus on form, and are rather strictly controlled by the test design.
3. RESPONSIVE

Here, assessment tasks require learners to perform at a limited discourse level, connecting sentences into a paragraph and creating a logically connected sentence of two or three paragraphs. Tasks respond to pedagogical directives, lists of criteria, outlines and other guidelines. Genres of writing include brief narratives and descriptions, short reports, lab reports, summaries, brief responses to reading, and interpretations of charts or graphs. Under specified conditions, the writer begins to exercise some freedom of choice among alternative forms of expression of ideas. The writer has mastered the fundamentals of sentence–level grammar and is more focused on the discourse conventions that will achieve the objectives in a written text.

4. Extensive

Writing implies successful management of all the processes and strategies of writing for all purposes, up to the length of an essay. Learners focus on achieving a purpose, organizing and developing ideas logically, using details to support or illustrate ideas, demonstrating syntactic and lexical variety, and in many cases, engaging in the process of multiple drafts to achieve a final product.

MICRO AND MACROSKILLS OF WRITING

A- Micro skills

1. Produce graphemes and orthographic patterns of English.

2. Produce writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose.

3. Produce an acceptable grammatical systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization, patterns, and rules.

4. Use an acceptable core of words and use appropriate word order patterns.

5. Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms.

6. Use cohesive devices in written discourse.

B- Macro Shills

7. Use the rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse.

8. Appropriately accomplish the communicative functions of written tasks according to form and purpose.
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9. Convey links and connections between events, and communicate such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification.

10. Distinguish between literal and implied meanings when writing.
11. Correctly convey culturally specific references in the context of written text.
12. Develop and use a battery of writing strategies, such as accurately assessing the audience's interpretation, using prewriting devices, writing with fluency in the first drafts, using paraphrases and synonyms, soliciting peer and instructor feedback, and using feedback for revising and editing.

PRACTICAL PART IN DEVELOPING MICRO & MACRO SKILLS

IN A COMPETENCE_BASED CURRICULUM.

- Designing assessment tasks : (IMITATIVE WRITING)

English learners, from young children to older adults, need basic training in and assessment of imitative writing, the rudiments of forming letters, words and simple sentences. We examine this level of writing first.

Tasks in (Hand) Writing letters, Words, and punctuation.

Handwriting has the potential of becoming a lost art as even every young child is more and more likely to use keyboard to produce writing. Making the shapes of letters and other symbols is now more a question of learning typing skills than of training the muscles of the hands to use a pen or a pencil. Nevertheless, for all practical purposes, handwriting remains a skill of paramount importance within the larger domain of language assessment.

A limited variety of types of tasks are commonly used to assess a person's ability to produce written letters and symbols. A few of the more common types are described here:

1. copying: There is nothing innovative or modern about directing a test-taker to copy letters or words. The test-taker will see something like the following:

Handwriting letters, words, and punctuation marks.

The test-taker reads: Copy the following words in the spaces given:

Ex: bit bet bat but Oh! Bin din gin Hello, John.

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
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2. Listening cloze selection tasks

These tasks combine dictation with a written script that has a relatively frequent deletion ratio. The test sheet provides a list of missing words from which the test-taker must select. The purpose at this stage is not to test spelling but to give practice in writing to increase the difficulty.

The test-takers hear: Write the missing word in each blank. Below the story is a list of words to choose from.

Have you ever visited San Francisco? It is a very nice city. It is cool in the summer and warm in the winter. I like the cable cars and bridges.

Test –Takers see:

Have __________ever visited San Francisco? It ________ a very nice ________. It is __________in __________summer and __________in winter. I __________the cable cars __________bridges.

Is you cool city
Like and the warm

3. Picture-cued tasks

Familiar pictures are displayed with the objectives of focusing on familiar words whose spelling may be unpredictable. Items are chosen according to the objectives of the assessment, but this format is an opportunity to present some challenging words and word pairs: boot/book, read/reed, bit/bite, etc.

4. Form completion task

Filling in a simple form (e.g., registration, application, etc.) that asks for name, address, phone number, and other data. Assuming, of course, that prior classroom instruction has focused on filling of such forms.

5. Converting numbers and abbreviations to words.

Some tests have a section on which numbers are written— for example, hours of the day, dates, or schedules and test-takers are directed to write out the numbers. This task can serve as a reasonably reliable method to stimulate handwritten English. It lacks
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Authenticity, however, in that people rarely write out such numbers (except in writing checks). If you plan to use such a method, be sure to specify exactly what the criterion is. Converting abbreviation to words is more authentic. We actually have occasions to write out days of the week. Months, telephone

Test-takers hear: Fill in the blanks with words

Test-taker see: (9:00 ________ 5:45 ________ 5/3 ________ Tues____)

6. Multiple-choice reading-writing spelling tasks

Presenting words and phrases in the form of a multiple-choice task, there will be the risks of crossing over into the domain of assessing reading but they can serve as formative reinforcement of spelling conventions. They might be more challenging with the addition of homonyms. Here are some examples:

Test-takers read:

Choose the word with the correct spelling to fit the sentence. Then write the word in the space provided.

1. He washes his hands with ____________.
   A. soap       B. sope       C. sop                D. soup

2. I tried to stop the car, but the ___________ didn't work.
   A. braicks    B. brecks       C. brakes          D. bracks

3. The doorbell rang, but when I went to the door, no one was ________.
   A. their        B. there        C. they're         D. thair

Designing Assessment Tasks:

Intensive (Controlled) Writing

A good deal of writing at this level is display writing as opposed to real writing: students produce language to display their competence in grammar, vocabulary, or sentence formation, and not necessarily to convey meaning for an authentic purpose. The traditional grammar/vocabulary test has plenty of display writing in it, since the response mode demonstrates only the test-taker's ability to combine or use words correctly. No new information is passed on from one person to another.
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**Dicto-Comp**

A form of controlled writing related to dictation is a dicto-comp. Here, a paragraph is read at normal speed, usually two or three times, then the teacher asks pupils to rewrite the paragraph from the best of their recollection. In one of several variations of the Dicto-comop technique, the teacher, after reading the passage, distributes a handout with key words from the paragraph as ques for the pupils.

**Grammatical Transformation Tasks**

This technique is used as an assessment task, ostensibly to measure grammatical competence. Numerous versions of the task are possible:

- Change the tenses in a paragraph.
- Change full forms of verbs to reduced forms (contractions).
- Change statements to (Yes/No) questions.
- Change questions into statements.
- Combine two sentences into one using a relative pronoun.
- Change direct speech into indirect speech.
- Change from active into passive voice.

**Picture-cued Tasks:**

1. **Short Sentences**

A drawing of some simple actions is shown. The test-taker writes a brief sentence.

2. **Picture description**

A somewhat more complex picture may be presented showing, say, a person reading on a couch, a cat under a table, books and pencils on the table, chairs around the table, a lamp next to the couch, an a picture on the wall over couch. Test-takers are asked to describe the picture using four of the following prepositions; on, over, under, next to, around. As long as the prepositions are used appropriately, the criterion is considered to be met.
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3. Picture sequencing description.

A sequence of three to six pictures depicting a story line can provide a suitable stimulus for written production. The pictures must be simple and unambiguous. Writing the correct form of the verb is the criterion. Pictures should help Test-takers.

Vocabulary Assessment Tasks:

READ (2000) suggested several types of items for assessment of basic knowledge of the meaning of a word, collocational possibilities, and derived morphological forms. His example centered on the word interpret, as follows:

Test-takers read:

1. Write two sentences, A and B. In each sentence, use the two words given.
   A. interpret, experiment ____________________________________
   B. interpret, language ______________________________________

2. Write three words that can fit in the blank.
   i. __________________
   ii. __________________
   iii. __________________

3. Write the correct ending for the word in each of the following sentences:
   - Someone who interprets is an interpret________.
   - Something that can interpreted is interpret______.
   - Someone who interprets gives an interpret______.

Vocabulary assessment is clearly form-focused in the above tasks, but the procedures are creatively linked by means of the target word, its collocations, and its morphological variants. At the responsive and extensive levels, where learners are called upon to create coherent paragraphs, performance obviously becomes more authentic, and lexical choice is one of several possible components of evaluation of extensive writing.

Ordering Tasks

Re-ordering scrambled words to form meaningful sentence

DESIGNING ASSESSMENT TASKS: (RESPONSIVE&EXTENSIVE)
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-Paraphrasing.

One of the difficult concepts for learners to grasp. The purpose here is to ensure that learners understands the content and be able to interpret it in their own words.

- Guided Questions and answers:

The teacher here poses a series of questions that essentially serve as an outline of the emergent written text. The following kind of questions might be posed to stimulate a sequence of sentences.

**Guided writing stimuli:**

1. Where did this story take place? [Setting]
2. Who were the people in the story? [characters]
3. What happened first? then? [sequence of events]
4. Why did ___________ do __________? [reasons]
5. What did ___________ think about __________? [opinion]
6. What happened at the end? [climax]
7. What is the moral of this story? [evaluation]