

# FELT Newsletter

*The Forum for English Language Teachers in Ireland*

## ***In this Issue...***

- **Bare Bones of Language** *by Catherine McDonnell*
- **Teacher Training: Body and Soul** *by Alan Maley*
- **The Word is Mightier than the Sword** *by Fiona Farr*
- **Utilising the Web for Second Language Teaching & Learning** *by Chau Meng Huat*



*An Associate of*



***Also in this issue...***

- **European Year of Languages 2001**
- **How the World Wide Web Began...**
- **Conference Reviews**
- **News from ACELS**
- **FELT Editorial**

# The Word is Mightier than the Sword

by Fiona Farr,  
EFL/TEFL Lecturer,  
University of Limerick

## Introduction

Have you ever been in a situation where you're talking to someone and yet you feel that you are not communicating, that there is no real "connection", or worse still where you are becoming more and more irate as the conversation unfolds? I certainly have, and the irony is that I usually can't figure out what it is that is bugging me. Largely, it isn't the content or the argument coming forth but some elusive and unknown "thing". Fortunately most of us can live with this as a fact of life and get on with things by tactful avoidance of future encounters with individuals that provoke such a reaction. However it becomes an issue, and sometimes quite a serious one, when such a situation arises for us as teachers in the EFL classroom (or classrooms in general).

**A**s part of some research into the area of communication, motivation and rapport I am engaged in at present I have recently discovered why communication gaps (in the affective sense) may occur and also what can be done to bridge those gaps. Why bother? You may well ask. Well simply put, it is my firm belief that we can only be effective and credible teachers if we can genuinely communicate with (not "to") our students, regardless of age, background or any other influencing factors. If we don't connect with them as human beings on some level we will fail to impress with methodology, materials or even technology.

Communication is conducted primarily along oral channels, therefore I would like to advocate a tangible, language-based

approach to improving general teacher-student/student-teacher interactions (in the past its application in the training context has been examined (Farr and Barker 1999)). I have therefore identified metaprograms as the preferred implementation framework. O'Connor and Seymour (1994:146) succinctly define metaprograms as 'a technical term in NLP (neuro linguistic programming) to describe unconscious and habitual filters we have learned to put on our experience. They determine what information goes through and how. There is so much information we could attend to and our conscious minds are limited, so some selection is necessary'. This equates roughly with the idea of dealing with various learning styles in the EFL classroom (O'Connor and Seymour 1994 even call them learning styles). I have singled out five metaprograms which I have found most powerful for the classroom context (chosen from a possible twelve outlined in Rose Charvet (1997)).

---



---

*...we can only be effective and credible teachers if we can genuinely communicate with (not "to") our students regardless of age, background or any other influencing factors.*

---



---

While many of you may be sceptical of NLP as a discipline, in this case you may be convinced on two counts. Firstly metaprograms originated outside of and independently of NLP and have only recently found their way into the field, and secondly, you will begin to realise that many of the suggestions outlined below are simply "common sense". In addition many good teachers are already using these and similar skills effectively. They are 'nothing new' in some respects but NLP, for my purposes, simply offers an organisational framework for patterns of behaviour and expression so that they can be used in a conscious way. For those of you who may be unfamiliar with the whole field of NLP I will provide a brief summary before advancing further in my recommendations for implementation.

## Neuro-Linguistic Programming Redefined

The co-founders of neuro-linguistic programming in the early 1970s are two Americans, John Grinder, a linguist, and Richard Bandler, then a student of computer science and mathematics. They began to observe common patterns of behaviour and attitudes of people who excelled in the field of psychotherapy. The discipline is defined as an attitude to life, the aim of which is to help achieve intra-personal and inter-personal brilliance. The 'neuro' part is concerned with how we experience the world through our five senses and represent it in our consciousness. The 'linguistic' part is concerned with the way the language we use shapes and reflects our experience of the world. The programming part is concerned with training ourselves to think, speak and act in new and positive ways, in order to realise our full potential as human beings. As a discipline it has begun to find its way into the teaching of EFL and also teacher training over the last number of years (Revell and Norman 1997, 1999).

## Metaprograms

The notion of metaprograms is based on work originally conducted by Bailey in the 1960s and re-presented later (Revell and Norman 1997, 1999, Rose Charvet 1996 and O'Connor and Seymour 1994). Following this framework we all have preferred and individual ways of expressing ourselves (output) and also of receiving information (input). The emotions I referred to in my opening paragraph arise when we do not receive information in our preferred mode.

**A**s teachers we might like to consider that there are at least five communication/rapport filters which we should consider. I will briefly outline each one below and suggest the type of language which might prove more effective for students who belong to each category. It should be noted that each distinction presented below represents a continuum, it is not a case of always being either/or. We, and our students, could be somewhere in between. Also worth noting is the fact that these traits are domain specific and while we may be one type of teacher or student,

we may be a very different type of parent or child. Therefore flexibility of approach is demanded when attempting to conduct more effective communication in the classroom. The following framework has been adopted and adapted from Rose Charvet (1997).

### 1. INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL

Internal characteristics - people with this preference use their own standards to make decisions and evaluate, are self-motivated, may resist others telling them what to do, may balk at authority, decide about the quality of their own work. When they receive negative feedback they may question or judge the person giving it. They take orders merely as information, don't need external praise, gather information externally, process it against their own standards and judge it for themselves. They need time to assimilate information before they put it into practice so that they can judge its value.

External characteristics - people with this preference rely on other people's judgement and require direction. They know how they have done through feedback from others. They take information as orders, have difficulty in deciding on quality in an independent way, and have trouble starting or finishing an activity without outside feedback. They gather standards externally, and in the absence of feedback may experience a type of sensory deprivation.

---



---

*...you will begin to realise that many of the suggestions outlined below are simply "common sense".*

---



---

### 2. PROACTIVE OR REACTIVE

Proactive characteristics - a person with this preference takes the initiative, jumps into things, bulldozes ahead at times, and goes out and gets things done.

Reactive characteristics - a person with this preference waits for others to act, considers and analyses indefinitely, needs to fully understand and assess before acting. S/he believes in chance and luck, likes time and waiting, and responds with caution.

### 3. TOWARDS OR AWAY FROM

**Towards characteristics** - people with this preference move towards their objective or goal and are excited by it. They focus on what they want and like, are motivated by achievements, and are good at managing priorities. They have problems recognising difficulties and negative consequences, and therefore may be considered naïve at times because they don't take obstacles into account.

**Away From characteristics** - people with this preference move away from problems to be prevented, are attracted to problems that need solving and are motivated to do so. They act in order to avoid negative consequences, are energised by threats, have difficulty defining goals and often lose sight of them. Deadlines get these people to act, they will drop everything to fix or solve a difficulty, and at the extreme may be considered cynical.

### 4. OPTIONS OR PROCEDURES

**Options characteristics** - people with this preference are motivated by opportunities and possibilities to do something in a different way. They love to create procedures but have difficulty following them. Unlimited ideas thrill them, breaking and bending rules is irresistible. They like starting new projects but are not motivated to finish them, have difficulties committing themselves in case it reduces options, and in extreme cases may avoid making decisions.

**Procedures characteristics** - people with this preference like to follow set ways, and believe there is a right way to do things. They are interested in how to do things, and once they have started something the most important thing is to finish it. They feel personally violated when it is suggested that they don't follow the rules.

### 5. SIMILARITIES OR DIFFERENCES

This category refers to whether people prefer things to stay the same or to change, either progressively or dynamically, over time. This is what I like to term the evolution or revolution distinction. If already you are feeling a bit uncomfortable with the changed presentation format of this section you know where you fall on the scale!

## Appropriate Language for the Classroom

It has been suggested (Rose Charvet 1997) that motivational preferences strongly influence the type of language individuals employ and also the type of language that appeals to us on a very sub-conscious level. For example, if I displayed a towards preference in my professional life I would be very likely to use words such as "goals, aims, ambitions, get up and go" etc. As teachers, knowing that our students may have different preferences allows us to make more informed choices when trying to communicate better, increase motivation and build rapport.

We have recourse to either of two paths to follow in the classroom. We could profile each student (in either an overt or covert way) and match their preferences in terms of the language we subsequently use when speaking to them. On the other hand we could adapt a more balanced approach whereby the language used would take account of and cater for all possible preferences and variations that exist among students.

I would advocate the latter in case of error in the reading and subsequent interpretation of an individual's profile. A series of utterances/phraseology suitable for the teaching context is suggested below. These are examples only and ones that are suitable for the context in which I teach. Obviously they can be tailored for your own specific needs and teaching situation.

#### 1. INTERNAL/EXTERNAL

- I would strongly recommend X. What do you think? (external + internal)
- As your language proficiency improves you'll make up your own mind about X but many teachers think that.... (internal + external)
- (Give references) and you can consult them if you feel it will help. It's up to you if you use them. (external + internal)
- You'll use your own judgement in the end but the books tell us that....(internal + external)
- It is a well-researched theory/approach and now I've given you the information you need to think about it. (external + internal)

- I suggest you think about it and should you decide to try it I feel sure you'll get a positive reaction. (internal + external)
- Others will notice if you consider putting X into practice. (external + internal)

## 2. PROACTIVE/REACTIVE

- Get going on that and analyse the results to see where it takes you. (proactive + reactive)
- If you feel lucky, why wait? (reactive and proactive)
- Go for it. You'll have time to think about it before our next lesson. (proactive + reactive)
- Jump in at the deep end with this and you'll really get to understand. (proactive + reactive)
- Decide how you would like to respond to that next time and get on with it in that way. (reactive and proactive)
- Now is the time to consider this. (proactive + reactive)
- Get it done and it could clarify things for you. (proactive + reactive)
- You might consider being more proactive. (reactive and proactive)

## 3. TOWARDS/AWAY FROM

- It's not perfect but you are accomplishing a lot. (away from + towards)
- With more experience in the L2 environment you will be able to reach your goals more effectively and avoid many of the problems you're having at the moment. (towards + away from)
- There shouldn't be any difficulty with X if you put more Y into your speech/writing. (away from + towards)
- By including this in your English you'll reduce difficulties at a later stage. (towards + away from)
- There are many advantages, one of which is not having to Y. (towards + away from)
- Let's find out what's wrong so that you might achieve your aim more effectively. (away from + towards)
- If you do X (and list the positive effects) whereas if you do Y (and list the negative effects). (towards + away from)
- We've got some issues to resolve/get rid of so that you can achieve what you set out to do. (away from + towards)

## 4. OPTIONS/PROCEDURES

- There are always many opportunities and you are in a position to choose the right one. (options + procedures)
- Describe the procedures you followed and the choices you made along the way in your writing etc. (procedures + options)
- There is always a way to get back on track. (options + procedures)
- After the first two steps in your writing/reading/listening procedure can you think of an alternative direction you might have taken? (procedures + options)
- There are the options A, B or C. Which fits in best with the steps you would like to follow? (options + procedures)
- The way you did X follows proven strategy and an alternative is Y or Z. (procedures + options)
- Follow these stages carefully but occasionally be prepared to bend the rules. (procedures + options)
- The possibilities are endless for finding the right thing to say. (options + procedures)

## 5. SAMENESS/DIFFERENCE

- Compare your progress this week with last week's. Talk about the similarities and differences.
- You might address X immediately and deal with Y and Z over the next few weeks.
- How is your performance similar but better than before?
- I feel you are progressing in the following ways..... and now it's time for a shift/switch in approach to X.
- Keep doing what you're doing well and try to approach X in a totally different way next time.
- Your linguistic growth is happening in a gradual but steady way and I expect to see a different student by the end of the semester/year.
- You took a similar approach to one suggested earlier but you changed it in some ways. Can you say how?
- How have you improved since our last lesson?

## Discussion and Conclusion

Perhaps in trying to put into practice some of the suggestions outlined, there is a tendency for teachers to start 'labelling and

sorting' the students according to the traits and language patterns they display in class and for that reason it is absolutely essential to remember that firstly, there are no good or bad patterns, secondly, patterns are context dependent not person dependent and thirdly, there are in-betweens - these traits are scalar rather than polar. It is probably most advisable to identify your own preferences in terms of favoured styles initially so that you are aware from the outset the type of teacher language you are likely to use more naturally and more frequently at an unconscious level. When this has been done it requires special care and attention to cater for other and all styles that exist among our students. The implementation of the above mentioned strategies, though simple and basic, may provide the key to unlocking that part of the affective filter wall caused by poor communication and rapport between teacher and students.

My own experience of attempting to cater for all in the language I use with my students has taught me that the word is indeed mightier than the sword and while I would urge you to try it out and give it a go in your classrooms, this is, of course, something that you will decide on for yourself.

## Bibliography: \_\_\_\_\_

**Arnold, J., (1999)** Whole or Hole: Humanising Language Teaching, available online at <http://www.pilgrims.co.uk/hlt/may99/sart1.htm>

**Bandler, R. and J. Grinder, (1982)** *Reframing: Neuro-linguistic Programming and the Transformation of Meaning*. Utah: Real People Press.

**Bandler, R., (1990).** *Frogs into Princes: an introduction to Neuro-linguistic Programming*. Enfield: Eden Grove Editions.

**Bowker, D., (1998)** Helping teachers to reflect - an application of NLP. *The Teacher Trainer.*, 12(1), pp.19-22.

**Farr, F. and Barker, G.,** November 1999. "NLP in Language Teacher Education". Paper presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> IALS Symposium for Language Teacher Educators, University of Edinburgh.

**Freeman, D. and J. C. Richards, (1993)** Conceptions of Teaching and the Education of Second Language Teachers. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27(2), pp.193-216.

**Freeman, D., (1991)** To Make the Tacit Explicit: Teacher Education, Emerging Discourse, and Conceptions of Teaching. *Teaching and Teacher*

*Education.*, 7 (5/6), pp.439-454.

**Grinder, M., (1991)** *Righting the Educational Conveyor Belt*. Portland: Metamorphous Press.

**Harris, C., (1998)** *The Elements of NLP*. Boston: Element Books Inc.

**Hoover, N.L., L.J. O'Shea and R.G. Carroll, (1988)** The Supervisor-Intern Relationship and Effective Communication Skills. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 39 (2), pp.22-27.

**Kurtoglu Eken, D., (1999)** The Power of Trainer Language in Training and Development. *IATEFL Teacher Trainers SIG Newsletter, No.23*, pp.32-38.

**McLoughlin, C., (1991)** Achieving Excellence in Performance and Practice with the Use of Neuro-linguistic Programming. *The American Harp Journal.*, 13 (2), pp.27-29.

**O'Connor, J. and J. Seymour, (1994)** *Training with NLP: skills for managers trainers and communicators*. California: Thornsons.

**Revell, J. and S. Norman, (1997)** Powerful Language II. *English Teaching Professional*, 6, pp.28-30.

**Revell, J. and S. Norman, (1997)** Powerful Language III. *English Teaching Professional*, 7, pp.28-30.

**Revell, J. and S. Norman, (1997)** Powerful Language. *English Teaching Professional*, 5, pp.28-30.

**Revell, J. and S. Norman, (1997)** *In Your Hands: NLP in ELT*. London: Saffire Press.

**Revell, J. and S. Norman, (1999)** *Handing Over*. London: Saffire Press.

**Rose Charvet, S., (1997)** *Words That Change Minds*. Iowa: Kendall/Hunt.

**Tsai, B., (1999)** NLP - It's Not What You Think. *Humanising Language Teaching.*, available online at <http://www.pilgrims.co.uk/hlt/apr99/sart1.htm>

**Wisniewska, I, (1998)** What's your mentoring style? *The Teacher Trainer*, 12(1), pp.10-11.

\*Thanks and acknowledgment to Jane Revell who first trained me in NLP techniques.

## © 2000 Fiona Farr

Fiona Farr is a lecturer in EFL/TEFL at the University of Limerick where she trains teachers at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. She holds an MA in TEFL and is currently researching for a Ph.D. She is part of a research group at UL building a corpus of contemporary Irish English. Her professional interests include teacher training, spoken language corpora as well as language teaching, NLP and Irish English.



# Teacher Training: Body and Soul

by Alan Maley

Director of Post-graduate Programmes  
Assumption University, Bangkok

What makes a good teacher? There is clearly no simple answer to the question. But I want to suggest that, if we look to the content of teacher training programmes for an answer, it will be a lop-sided one. For such programmes have tended to concentrate their attention on the categories of Knowledge (What) and Skills (How), largely excluding questions of Attitude (In what manner?)

**T**here is of course no question that teachers need knowledge in order to be able to teach. They need knowledge about the language, about learning (especially as it relates to language learning), about the educational system and the society in which they are to operate. They also need knowledge about the students and knowledge of themselves, though these types of knowledge are rarely, if ever, taken care of in Teacher Training programmes.

Similarly, teachers indubitably need skills. They need language proficiency skills, pedagogical skills, management skills - both in and out of the classroom, and technical skills, particularly with the advent of information technology. They also need interpersonal skills to a very high degree, though these all too rarely occupy a significant place in Teacher Training programmes.

Notwithstanding the importance of Knowledge and Skills however, I would argue that the development of attitudinal competence is even more important. Indeed, in the absence of such capability, no amount of knowledge or skills will be effective. These attitudinal factors are, of course, not so easy to pinpoint. I would suggest however, that they cover among other things:

- a) what teachers reveal to their students about their feelings towards their work and towards the students themselves;
- b) what teachers reveal about their feelings towards themselves;
- c) what teachers do, in physical terms, to create an atmosphere in which learning is likely to take place.

How might Teacher Training programmes incorporate activities which would help trainees develop self-knowledge and expertise in this area? I would suggest focusing on Physical factors (the Body of my title) and on Psychological factors (the Soul).

## The Body

Our bodies and what we do with them constitute our most important teaching resource, even in the age of the Information Highway. A major part of the effect teachers have on their students derives from how these teachers "come across". And this depends to a large degree on their physical presence, and in particular their voices. It seems incredible that training in physical awareness and performance is still not a routine part of language teachers' training.

---



---

*Teaching is, among other things, a performance, and there are well-established ways of training for this...*

---



---

Robert O'Neill and I first attempted to draw attention to this blind-spot at the Dublin IATEFL conference in 1989, yet there is still depressingly little evidence that the message has got through.

**T**eaching is, among other things, a performance, and there are well-established ways of training for this, particularly in relation to the voice. Even if we were able only to help teachers take better care of their voices, it would be a major step forward; teachers are especially prone to pathological voice damage.

There are at least two avenues to approach this area:

## A) AWARENESS RAISING:

- Group discussion on questions relating to posture, breathing and voice;
- Self- /peer observation in class, based on the physical features of performance;
- Reflection based on videoed class sequences.

## B) TRAINING IN TECHNIQUES:

There are many "systems" and techniques which can help trainees develop their physical control. I will mention some of them only: yoga or Taoist exercises to improve posture and breathing (Chen 1990), Alexander technique exercises to reduce bodily misuse (Park 1989), the activities designed by Feldenkrais to develop bodily awareness and control (Feldenkrais 1980), basic theatre training techniques for the voice (Linklater 1986, McCallion 1988, Martin and Darnley 1992, Rodenburg 1989).

**The Soul**

These factors are less easily observable and therefore more difficult to come at. We should perhaps view training in this area as having a dual function - to provide preventative protection against such negative factors as excessive stress and to provide a positive basis for sustaining a high level of energy both in professional and personal life.

**H**ow can we help trainees to perform with "effortless effort?" Once again, both awareness raising and training in techniques are potentially helpful.

## A) AWARENESS RAISING:

- Group recollection and reflection on members' own past learning experiences and the ways in which their current beliefs and practices have been influenced by such experiences;
- Group discussion of key passages from seminal books on personal growth (Hoff 1983, Gallwey 1974, Watts 1979 etc.);
- The exploration of paradoxical stories, fables and proverbs, (for example, from the Zen, Sufi and Taoist traditions) for the light they can throw on teaching / learning situations;
- Group brainstorming on the causes of stress and anxiety in teaching to help trainees deal with the ones which can be dealt with, and to live with the ones which cannot.

## B) TRAINING IN TECHNIQUES:

- Setting aside a half hour daily for calm reflection;
- Encouraging the keeping of a journal as a reflective companion;
- Introduction to the techniques of mediation (Le Shan 1989);
- Basic training in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques (O'Connor and Seymour 1990);
- Using chanting / music as a mode of relaxation and a gateway to personal insight (Campbell 1989);
- Offering training in Tai Qi Chuan, Qi Gong, etc., which require the development of detached, relaxed concentration.

---



---

*How can we help trainees to perform with "effortless effort"? Once again, both awareness raising and training in techniques are potentially helpful.*

---



---

The suggestions I have made above are not, of course, comprehensive but I hope they give some sense of the directions which merit further exploration. It is clear that many objections can be raised to the inclusion of such apparently alien matter in Language Teacher Training. I cannot deal with these objection in the space available, but I will willingly respond publicly in these columns to readers' letters.

**References:**

- Campbell, D.G. (1989)** *The Roar of Silence: Healing Breath, Tone & Music*. Illinois:Quest Books.
- Chun Tao Cheng, S. (1990)** *The Tao of Voice*. Destiny Books.
- Feldenkrais, M. (1980)** *Awareness Through Movement: Health Exercises for Personal Growth*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Gallwey, W.T. (1974)** *The Inner Game of Tennis*. New York : Random House.
- Hoff, B. (1983)** *The Tao of Pooh*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Le Shan, L. (1989)** *How to Meditate*. Turnstone Press.
- Linklater, K. (1986)** *Freeing the Natural Voice*. New York: Drama Book Publications.
- McCallion, M. (1988)** *The Voice Book: for actors, public speakers and everyone else who wants to*

make the most of their voice. London: Faber & Faber.  
**Martin, S. and L. Darnley (1992)** *The Voice Source Book*. Winslow Press .

**O'Connor, J. and J. Seymour (1990)** *Introducing Neuro-Linguistic Programming: Psychological Skills for Understanding and Influencing People*. London : Aquarian/Thorsons.

**Park, G. (1989)** *The Art of Changing: A New Approach to the Alexander Technique*. London: Ashgrove Press.

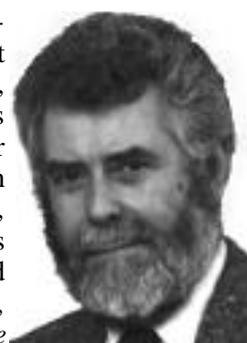
**Rodenburg, P. (1992)** *The Right to Speak*. Methuen.

**Watts, A. (1979)** *Tao: The Watercourse Way*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

© 1995 & 2000 Alan Maley

This article first appeared in *IATEFL Issues*, November 1995.

Alan Maley is director of Post-graduate programmes at Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand. He has lived and worked overseas for most of his 37 year career, in places like China, India, Singapore and Ghana. He has published over 30 books and many articles. His latest book, *The Language Teacher's Voice* was published this year. He is also series editor for the *Oxford Resource Books for Teachers*. He has a fondness for good wine, which he indulges every year in his country house in southwest France. He writes a lot of rather bad poetry as a hobby.



## Cambridge EFL Examinations in Ireland

by Adrian Kearney, UCLES

Earlier this year, the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) held the first meeting of a consultative group, which brings together representatives of FELT, ACELS and other organisations in Ireland, to consider how the Cambridge EFL examinations can be supported and developed throughout the country. There is already a strong network of Cambridge centres in Ireland, with a steadily growing number of candidates, coming principally from Spain, France, Italy and Japan.

The students are attracted to courses which lead up to a Cambridge examination for a variety of reasons, including further study of English and other subjects, and enhancing their employment prospects either at home or internationally. The examinations are ideal for all of these purposes because they enjoy a very high level of recognition by employers and educational institutions throughout Europe, Latin America and the Far East, as well as many English speaking countries.

The Cambridge EFL examinations are designed to meet the needs of students of every nationality and level of ability. They

range from the Cambridge Young Learners English Tests, designed for children aged from 7-12, up to the very demanding Certificate of Proficiency in English, for learners who are approaching the linguistic competence of an educated native speaker. There are also specialised assessments for Business English and English for Academic Purposes. All of the examinations are based on the assessment of the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – and emphasise the candidates' ability to use English in a range of realistic, appropriate contexts, and are backed up by UCLES' uncompromising commitment to quality and fairness at every stage of the assessment process.

UCLES provides a range of seminars for teachers, including introductions to each of the exams plus seminars focussing on the particular skills and the performance of candidates taking the exam, with opportunities to discuss the implications for the classroom. A very popular seminar was organised by University College Dublin (UCD) in November on FCE Writing performance- around 60 teachers attended and the feedback on the session was very positive. UCD is planning a similar event early in 2001 - further details will be provided in forthcoming editions of the FELT Newsletter.



UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE  
Local Examinations Syndicate



**FELT, The Forum for  
English Language Teachers in Ireland  
and  
ACELS, The Advisory Council for  
English Language Schools**  
  
**are proud to announce the**



# ELT Authors' Conference

June 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>, 2001  
University Industry Centre, UCD

Special Rate for FELT Members. Further details in forthcoming FELT Newsletters.

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Congratulations on getting another FELT Newsletter out. I totally agree with your editorial call for participation in the FELT Newsletter and I think the notion of a professional forum is vital to our identity, giving us a sense of being part of a professional cohort.

I have started to write an article based on the debate that has got underway in the newsletter as a result of Gronia deVerdon-Cooney's article "Legal, Decent, Honest and Qualified? A Look at TEFL Qualifications", (FELT Newsletter 2(1), p.8) and subsequently

the article by Martin Eayrs, based in Argentina, "ELT: A Profession or just a Rag-Bag Name?" (FELT Newsletter 2(2), pp.10-14).

Within the context of the ACELS ELT Qualifications Recognition Project, I think there is need for debate on what it means to say one is a professional in TEFL in Ireland.

So, I hope that FELT continues to provide a place for such a process and I hope that other professionals out there join me in the discussion.

Yours sincerely,

**Anne O'Keefe**  
TEFL Section  
Mary Immaculate College,  
University of Limerick.  
anne.okeefe@mic.ul.ie



# FELT Editorial

FELT has just reached its second birthday, so now is a good time to review matters before moving on.

2000 has been, perhaps, the most interesting year in Irish ELT for a long time - we have seen IATEFL come to Dublin, ACELS introduced the new model of its Inspection-Recognition scheme for EL schools, the long awaited TEFL Qualifications Accreditation Scheme is underway and roundtable discussions for teachers are to happen in January. The response from teachers to the questionnaire that accompanied the last Newsletter has been excellent and the number of EL teachers working has reached an all-time high...

## FELT Activities in 2001

2001, the European Year of Languages, (see page 20) should be an even better year for FELT members if we can keep the momentum going. Photocopiable application forms should accompany this Newsletter - if they are missing please email or write to us and we will be delighted to send you some more. Please, please, please pass the application forms around your colleagues - the greater the number of members, the stronger our organisation becomes, and the sooner we reach the critical mass required to run some serious activities of our own.

In 2001, FELT is not just planning to provide the Newsletter, but to also facilitate a number of training and professional development sessions in conjunction with other organisations. UCLES will be providing free orientation sessions for teachers of FCE, CAE and Proficiency exams, as Adrian Kearney of UCLES tells us on page 9. However, the highlight of the coming year will, no doubt, be the **FELT & ACELS ELT Authors' Conference** next June in UCD. FELT members will naturally enjoy a special members' rate for the conference!

## The Living Forum

In Anne O'Keeffe's letter (page 10), she speaks of a "professional forum" which gives us "a sense of being part of a professional cohort". Your views do count and they are heard - so please continue to give us your feedback, aspirations and opinions. And this recognition is official - the Minister of Education & Science recognises FELT as the body which represents the views of ELT teachers to the Department, through ACELS.

Your views have had a positive effect on the shape of the new model Inspection-Recognition scheme for schools; your influence and professional opinions will be vital to the success of the TEFL Qualifications Recognition project, so if you haven't returned your questionnaire, please do so soon.

## Call for Papers and Materials

In 2000, there have been 84 pages of FELT Newsletter - and this is no small achievement considering getting articles and materials from you people is like getting blood out of a stone! We have relied heavily on our friends from abroad for items to help fill our Newsletter. At last, it seems we may be turning the corner - particular thanks go to Mary Shepherd, Gronia deVerdon Cooney, Ciarán McCarthy, Sam Holman, Sue Hackett and Catherine McDonnell in Dublin and Fiona Farr and Anne O'Keeffe in Limerick who have kept this Newsletter alive over the last year. What about Cork? Galway? Belfast? The rest of the country? I want to see *your* names on this list next year!

## So, where to now?

As I said in the last editorial, make a positive step - start talking to your colleagues, generating ideas and let's start talking as a profession- somebody take up the gauntlet that Anne O'Keeffe has thrown down in her Letter to the Editor. *She is talking to you.*

## And finally!!!

Remember to send in your FELT Application forms for 2001 - FELT is your representative voice. The benefits include 4 copies of the FELT Newsletter, reduced rates for IATEFL membership through FELT, reduced rates for English Teaching *Professional* magazine and a number of sessions and, oh, a conference.

# Utilising the Web for Second Language Teaching and Learning

by Chau Meng Huat  
University of Technology, Malaysia

## Introduction

The use of online communication in the language classroom is relatively new<sup>1</sup>. However, it seems a very promising field and has caught the attention of language teachers all over the world. My purpose in this paper is to explore, albeit briefly, the use of the World Wide Web in second language teaching and learning.

**A**s this short paper requires no prior knowledge of the World Wide Web, the obvious starting point is a brief account of the World Wide Web ('the Web'). I will then offer a way of examining how the Web can play a facilitative role in second language teaching and learning. Finally, I will provide an example of how we, as language teachers, can utilise the Web in or outside the classroom.

## The World Wide Web

The Web offers a rich world-wide network of information. Most Web documents (whether they contain text, audio or video) are stored in the standard format of HyperText Mark-up Language (HTML), which can be interpreted by a Web-user's browser software, of which the two most widely-used are Netscape and Internet Explorer. HTML offers Web users an easy means of moving from document to document. The location of any document is given by its Uniform Resource Locator (URL).

Of special concern to the language teacher is that the Web offers a combination of various learning elements. A learning topic can

come as interactive maps, animated diagrams, photographs, voice and film clips. Thus, an everyday teaching task can be made lively and interesting to learners. Teachers can draw on the Web's world-wide resources, integrating these elements into the teaching process. Learners, by visiting the millions of pages available, can self-learn. Therefore, learning can be done beyond the four walls and the time constraints of the language classroom.

Since the Web has such potential in facilitating language teaching and learning, is it the absolute answer to all language teachers' questions? Probably not: it is clear that there is no one best method that works for all (Prabhu 1990). I would, however, suggest that language teachers, especially those teaching English as a second or foreign language, can gain invaluable insights into the Web's possibilities for fostering the learning process. These possibilities will be discussed in the following section in the light of the contribution of sociocultural learning theory to our understanding of second language acquisition<sup>2</sup>.

---



---

*Since the Web has such potential in facilitating language teaching and learning, is it the absolute answer to all language teachers' questions?*

---



---

## The Web and Second Language Learning

Since the nineties, the sociocultural learning theory, deriving mainly from the ideas of Vygotsky (1962; 1981, cited in Ellis 1999), has assumed increasing importance in second language acquisition research and language pedagogy. This is because, as Ellis (1999, p.7) puts it, the theory "addresses very directly how social interaction constructs and shapes learning". The theory examines interaction within a broad social and cultural context. In this view of language learning, language is seen as both the goal and the tool of learning: the sociocultural perspective highlights the role of social interaction in creating an environment to acquire language.

At first sight, this perspective appears nothing more than a restatement of the familiar Interaction Hypothesis (Long 1983) which states that interaction serves as a source of input to trigger the language acquisition device<sup>3</sup>. In fact, as Ellis points out, it offers a very different position on the role of interaction. As language acquisition is a social phenomenon, the sociocultural learning theory views it as occurring, initially, outside the learner. Only subsequently does it involve internal, cognitive activity. As we will see below, the Web has the potential to help foster learning at both the external and the internal levels (see Dunn & Lantolf 1998; Ellis 1998, 1999; Hall 1997 and Lantolf 2000 for more details of the theory in relation to language learning).

**B**esides, the sociocultural perspective posits that behaviour or nature of competence is shaped by the regularities that arise from recurring exposure to significant communicative practices. Through extended participation, learners develop frameworks of expectations for what counts as knowledge. Thus, in the sociocultural approach, it is said that “*what learners ultimately learn in the target language and how they learn to do it are tied to the quality and quantity of opportunities they are given to develop competence in using the resources of the practices that are made available to them*” (Hall 1997: 303).

The Web, while having the potential to help foster learning at both the external and the internal levels, could provide such opportunities. This is particularly true if the teacher is to utilise the Web as a rich resource for engendering collaborative learning. The teacher could, for instance, assign the students to publish a collaborative work of their interest on the Web by using HTML.

An excellent example of this is provided by Felix (1998, p.6) who reported a similar project which “*managed to transform a traditional and not very well received university reading course into a collaborative WWW generated ‘real world’ learning experience*”. The groups of students reported, after visiting a website, published multimedia assignments

in the area of their interest on the Web that were in turn read and critiqued by the other groups.

**I**t is easy to see the effects this approach could have on enhancing second language learning. In order to complete a particular project successfully, all groups of students have to work collaboratively, interact and negotiate with one another to plan the content and layout of their interest, peer-edit the writing and publish their work. Also, they have to read and comment on other groups’ work on the Web, which in turn will help enlighten themselves on the strengths and weaknesses in their own work. Such collaborative learning aligns with the sociocultural learning theory, which views language acquisition as the result of the learners’ “*socially constituted communicative practices*” (Hall 1997: 303). Also, it has been much valued and proposed in the literature of good language teaching practice. Thus, utilising the Web in this way not only helps reinforce the four language skills but also provides opportunities for the learners to develop in terms of motivation and empowerment, which will certainly benefit them in the long term.

---



---

*...groups of students have to work collaboratively, interact and negotiate with one another to plan the content and layout of their interest, peer-edit the writing and publish their work.*

---



---

Hence from this sociocultural perspective, we can see that the Web offers enormous potential for enhancing second language teaching and learning. The Web can serve as an acquisition-rich environment, providing learners with a wealth of up-to-date, authentic target language materials. It can also offer a great variety of interactive environments, hence providing a rich array of potential language learning opportunities. Further, it helps engender collaborative learning. Thus, it enables learners to play more active and constructive roles in their learning which, in turn, helps facilitate language acquisition (*cf.* Ellis 1998).

In the limited space remaining, I will provide an example of how we can make use of the Web, in or outside the second language classroom, to enhance language teaching and learning.

### Practical Use of the Web for Second Language Teaching and Learning

To illustrate this example, the site "Aesop's Fables" at:

<http://www.pacificnet.net/~johnr/aesop/aesopsel.html> will be used. This user-friendly site contains hundreds of interesting fables with moral values, and an online dictionary is available for learners' easy reference. Perhaps of more interest and benefit to second language learners is that they are provided with opportunities to listen to native speakers reading the texts aloud. This site is particularly useful for learners of low intermediate/intermediate level of proficiency.

I would like to suggest, however, that the teacher's early lessons, which are based on the site mentioned, be planned in such a way that they encourage the learners to read avidly. This implies that the lessons should be planned within a pre-, during and post-reading framework; that cooperative learning should be used regularly to promote discussions after each online reading, and that longer concentrated periods of silent reading should be given to help "build vocabulary and structural awareness, develop automaticity, enhance background knowledge, improve comprehension skills, and promote confidence and motivation" (Grabe 1991: 396). In short, the learners need to be encouraged to read extensively by fully utilising the online reading materials, either in or outside the language classroom.

If we accept the tenets of sociocultural learning theory, then there is every reason to assume that the learners, after having been exposed to, and interacting with, the site frequently for a considerable period of time, will be able to get a good grasp of the target language. And when the learners are ready to write, the website can serve as a model for them to develop a similar website collaboratively with their own short stories being published on it. This further

enhances the language learning process as through such a collaborative task, it is expected that the learners' motivation, independence, social integration and learning can increase (see Jacobs 1998).

---



---

*...it is expected that the learners' motivation, independence, social integration and learning can increase.*

---



---

### Conclusion

I have suggested in this paper that the Web, as a means of online communication, is worth the attention of language teachers, as it provides invaluable insights into the possibilities of fostering second language learners' learning process. Adopting the sociocultural perspective, I have offered a way to examine how the Web can play such a facilitative role.

If the central premise of this paper is accepted, namely that the Web has much to offer to second language teaching and learning, the key issue is: how can teachers ensure that the learners learn and benefit as much as possible from technological change? This is a key question we need to address immediately.

### References:

- Dunn, W.E. and J.P. Lantolf (1998)** Vygotsky's zone of proximal development and Krashen's  $i + 1$ : incommensurable constructs; incommensurable theories. *Language Learning*, 48/3: 411-442.
- Ellis, R. (1998)** Discourse control and the acquisition-rich classroom. In Renandya, W.A. and G.M. Jacobs (eds) *Learners and Language Learning. Anthology Series 39*, Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.
- Ellis, R. (1999)** *From communicative language teaching to developmental language pedagogy*. Paper presented at the ACTA-ATESOL National Conference, Sydney, Australia.
- Felix, U. (1998)** Towards meaningful interaction in multimedia programs for language teaching. *On-CALL*, 12/1. Available online at <http://www.cltr.uq.edu.au/oncall>
- Grabe, W. (1991)** Current developments in second language reading research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25/3: 375-406.
- Hall, J.K. (1997)** A consideration of SLA as a theory of practice: A response to Firth and Wagner. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81/3: 301-306.

**Jacobs, G.M. (1998)** Cooperative learning or just grouping students: The difference makes a difference. In Renandya, W.A. and G.M. Jacobs (eds), *Learners and Language Learning. Anthology Series 39*, Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

**Lantolf, J.P. (Ed.) (2000)** *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Long, M.H. (1983)** Native speaker/non-native speaker conversation in the second language classroom. In Clarke, M. and J. Handscombe (eds), *On TESOL '82*. Washington D.C.: TESOL.

**Long, M.H. (1996)** The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In Ritchie, W.C. and T.K. Bhatia (eds), *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*. San Diego: Academic Press, Inc.

**Prabhu, N.S. (1990)** There is no best method – Why? *TESOL Quarterly*, 24/2: 161-176.

**Warschauer, M. and P.F. Whittaker (1997)** The internet for English teaching: Guidelines for teachers. *The Internet TESL Journal*. Available online at: <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/Articles/Warschauer-Internet.html>

#### Acknowledgements:

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to David Ericsson who has provided insightful comments on several earlier versions of this paper, and who has, together with Khairi Izwan Abdullah, taught me how to 'fish'. I am also grateful to Koh Sin Ching for sharing with me some information about the Web. All shortcomings, of course, are strictly mine.

#### Foot Notes:

1. According to Warschauer and Whittaker (1997), it is more than ten years now.
2. No distinction is made between 'acquisition' and 'learning' in this paper, the two terms being used interchangeably.
3. Long's (1996) later version of the Interaction Hypothesis recognises that interaction can contribute to language acquisition by providing negative feedback and opportunities for learners to modify their output.

#### © 2000 Chau Meng Huat



Chau Meng Huat is a TESL student in the final year of his studies at the University of Technology, Malaysia (*Universiti Teknologi Malaysia*). His academic interests include Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Studies of Second Language Reading and Writing, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). As a private instructor to groups of ESL learners aged 13 to 18 for the past three years, he has experience in training adult learners of Business English (sincere thanks to Dr. Mohd. Hassan Zakaria for the opportunity). Chau Meng Huat can be contacted at: [chaumenghuat@hotmail.com](mailto:chaumenghuat@hotmail.com)

## How the World Wide Web Really Began...

An old, bearded shepherd, with a crooked staff, walks up to a stone pulpit and says... "And lo it came to pass that the trader by the name of Abraham Com did take unto himself a young wife by the name of Dot. And Dot Com was a comely woman, broad of shoulder and long of leg. Indeed, she had been called Amazon Dot Com. And she said unto Abraham, her husband, "Why doth thou travel far, from town to town, with thy goods when thou can trade without ever leaving thy tent?"

And Abraham did look at her as though she were several saddle bags short of a camel load, but simply said, "How, Dear?" And Dot replied, "I will place drums in all the towns and drums in between to send messages saying what

you have for sale and they will reply telling you which hath the best price. And the sale can be made on the drums and delivery by Uriah's Pony Stable (UPS).

Abraham thought long and decided he would let Dot have her way with the drums, as long as he could have his way with her. And Dot said, "There will be a lot of banging in the land". And Abraham replied, "It is my most fervent wish that this be so".

And the drums rang out and were an immediate success. Abraham sold all the goods he had, at the top price, without ever moving from his tent. But his success did arouse envy. A man named Maccabia did secrete himself inside Abraham's drum and was accused of insider trading. And the young did take to Dot Com's trading just as doth the greedy horsefly to camel dung. They were called Nomadic Ecclesiastical Rich Dominican

Siderites, or NERDS for short.

And lo the land was so feverish with joy at the new riches and the deafening sound of drums, that no one noticed that the real riches were going to the drum maker, one Brother William of Gates, who bought up every drum company in the land. And indeed did insist on making drums that would only work if you bought Brother Gates' drumsticks.

And Dot did say, "Oh, Abraham, what we have started is being taken over by others". And as Abraham looked out over the Bay of Ezekiel, or as it came to be known, eBay, he said, "We need a name of a service that reflects what we are", and Dot replied, Young Ambitious Hebrew Owner Operators.

"Whoopee!" said Abraham.

"No, YAHOO!", said Dot Com.

# News from ACELS

Many thanks to everyone who sent in their questionnaires for the ELT Qualifications Project. We had a very good response and really appreciate all the time people took to send us their comments and feedback. Due to popular demand, the deadline has now been extended over the Christmas break so if you would still like to send us your questionnaire we would be very happy to receive it!

**T**IE has also been generating a lot of interest! The Junior TIE Booklet for 2001 is currently being printed- if you would like to receive a copy (or copies), please e-mail us and let us know...

Consultation has been taking place with regard to schools' curriculum frameworks. *Jim Ferguson*, ACELS Chief Executive, has met up with many people from various recognised schools across the country and will have more meetings in the New Year. If you have been unable to see him in December, but would like to meet up in the New Year, please contact us and meetings can be arranged.

In November, *Sue Hackett*, our Project Director, was able to attend two conferences. The following is some information and thoughts which came out of attending these - hope you find them interesting...

The first one was arranged by the IATEFL TT SIG and was titled 'Developing Trainers in ELT: Strategies, Issues and Perspectives'. It was well-attended with plenary sessions being given by *Donald Freeman*, *Tessa Woodward* and *Angi Malderez*.

In *Donald Freeman's* session, the focus was on how teacher training practices influence teachers' work and ultimately their students' learning. This was framed using the concept of 'tools of the trade' and how they

facilitate learning and change. These 'tools' were outlined as follows:

- a) Tools are defined as ideas, behaviours and materials that organise activity;
- b) Tools as part of the actions that make up activity;
- c) Groups do activity; individuals do actions;
- d) Activities come from somewhere; they have a past;
- e) The work of the trainer is to establish and to organise practice with tools.

With regard to teacher training, his proposals were that -

- Teacher training needs to be based in activity, not action. This means it needs to be embedded in, and relate closely to, the classroom and school;
- Teacher training needs to draw on the past to forecast the present. This is a primary function of work on reflection and reflective practice;
- Teacher training introduces tools, not solutions. This means focusing on how tools are built up and extended into the activity of teaching;
- Teacher training influences; it doesn't change.

**I**n her talk, *Tessa Woodward* discussed ways of working ethically with issues brought to class by people training to be teacher trainers. From the base of three useful areas to work on with trainers, (e.g. being a better language learner/user, being a better language teacher and being a better teacher trainer), examples were given of issues which participants could bring to training courses, and a framework which had been evolved to encourage discussion and reflection on these key issues. A main part of this framework was that it was developed by the participants to address their needs and concerns, and was firmly rooted in participants' experiences as a starting point.

The third plenary, by *Angi Malderez*, looked at mentoring and mentor training within ELT. *Angi* presented mentoring as basically requiring 5 roles -

1. Model - to inspire, to demonstrate;
2. 'Acculturator' - to show mentee around / what to do to help mentee get used to the particular professional culture;
3. Sponsor - to 'open doors'; to introduce the mentee to the 'right people';
4. Support - to be there; to listen so that the mentee has a safe place to release emotions;

5. Educator – to listen so that the mentee can put things into words; to coach and consciously create appropriate opportunities for the mentee; to achieve professional learning objectives.

(adapted from Malderez and Bodoczky, 1999).

Mentoring was a topic that recurred throughout the conference and is obviously an area that many people and schools are interested in developing. Apart from these presentations, other topics which were explored were effective tasks for trainer development; characteristics and competencies of an effective trainer; models for the development of trainer training courses.

The second conference was the *IALS Symposium for Language Teacher Educators* held by the University of Edinburgh. The topic for this year was '*Politics, Policy and Culture in Language Teacher Education*'. Again, there was a wide range of topics with plenaries presented by *Dick Allwright, Peter Medgyes and Chris Kennedy*. *Fiona Farr and Anne O'Keefe* from the University of Limerick also gave a joint paper on using language corpora in language teacher education that was very well received.

The first plenary by *Chris Kennedy* focused on the question of whether educational policy and legislation has an impact on language education and ultimately in the classroom with learners. Research was presented to suggest that the connection is not necessarily as close as we might assume, and the process of innovation and change was explored in the language education context.

**E**xploratory practice was the focus of *Dick Allwright's* presentation. In particular the focus was on investigating the benefits of exploratory practice in teaching, viewed as a set of practices from which a set of principles could be derived (or what was preferably designated as promises to oneself and others, rather than principles as such). In the talk, exploratory practice was defined as involving practitioners (e.g. preferably teachers and learner together) working to understand:

a) what they want to understand following their own agendas

b) not necessarily in order to bring about change;  
c) not primarily by changing;  
d) but by using normal pedagogic practices as investigative tools, so that working for understanding is part of the teaching and learning, not extra to it;  
e) in a way that does not lead to 'burn-out', but that is indefinitely sustainable.

- in order to contribute to:

- i) teaching and learning by themselves;
- ii) professional development, both individual and collective.

The Department of Linguistics at Lancaster University has now set up the Exploratory Practice Centre. If you would like to know more about this, you can write to the centre c/o Dept. of Linguistics, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YT, UK.

Finally *Peter Medgyes* from *Etvos Lorand University* in Budapest closed the symposium with a paper called '*The Ventriloquist*'. In this paper he explored the inner dialogues which we all as teachers engage in and contrasted this with what we actually say – we considered how this can increase stress and loss of job satisfaction and what we as teachers can do to avoid this situation. It was a highly entertaining and thought-provoking presentation which ended on a positive note – very much the right note on which to close such an interesting symposium.

ACELS has put together a book list of references which came up from these 2 conferences. If you would like to receive this, please contact us and we will be happy to send it out to you.

Nothing remains for now except to wish you all a very happy Christmas from everyone at ACELS – 2001 looks like it is going to be exciting and we are looking forward to a productive and interesting year!

**ACELS – The Advisory Council for English Language Schools**  
44, Leeson Place, Dublin 2.

Tel.: (01) 676 7374 Fax: (01) 676 3321

E-mail: [acels@iol.ie](mailto:acels@iol.ie)

# Bare Bones of Language

by Catherine McDonnell

www.nua.ie

Edward deBono, a leading authority in creative thinking who coined the phrases 'thinking hats' and 'lateral thinking', has just published his latest book, 'The DeBono Code Book.' In it, deBono has devised a numerical system which he says can be used in place of any language—by using specific combinations of a few letters and the digits '0' to '9', endless linguistic possibilities are available.

**T**he aim is to avoid the breakdown of human communication by doing away with the linguistic ambiguity and misinterpretation that is so much a part of everyday speech. Apparently all levels of communication, from business to personal, can be attained using this code, and confusion will be a thing of the past.

## Language—help or hindrance

A reviewer writing in *The Sunday Business Post* pointed out that deBono devised this language-defeating code because he felt that while language had been the greatest help toward effective human communication, it had also provided the most significant barrier. DeBono's theory is that old perceptions are frozen into language, which in turn limits our ability to develop new ideas and concepts.

In another article in the *British Independent*, deBono is quoted as saying that "many excellent minds are bad thinkers because they stick to one idea without seeking alternatives." He also says that "the human race hasn't really started to think."

The question is: Would linguistic stagnation be the end result of our speaking in these strict codes instead of in full, vibrant, malleable languages? If every single thing we say is correct and foolproof, and no alternative is available, how will language have

room to develop? DeBono wants us to develop by seeking alternatives, but how can we do that if the everyday language behind his code presumably must remain stagnant for the code to work?

## Make sure hat matches handbag

It could be very easy to get these deBono messages mixed up. What if Ivana Trump's current tycoon/husband said "K684" to her one bleary morning, thinking he was saying "your hat doesn't match your handbag"? Unknown to him, he's just one digit out, and he ends up saying the opposite to what he wants to say. Ivana Trump could end up wandering the streets of New York for weeks wearing a hat that clashes with her handbag.

The concept of using simple codes rather than speech to get a message across is not a new one. Morse code, developed in the early nineteenth century, is the obvious example, but its use was not meant to replace language, rather it was a code that represented language. The language could change as it normally would, and the code would adapt accordingly.

## Cast your *bdi* over this

These days, because we like to communicate with minimum effort, the way we write e-mail messages on mobile phones has become more like writing in code. But as in Morse, we use the mixture of letters and numbers to represent the long version of what we want to say, rather than allowing the codes to become languages themselves.

**T**yping "CU L8R" takes a lot less time than typing "See you later." The point is that this simplification represents what you're trying to say. It is not a non-representative code that has to be translated back into your everyday language.

## 'Gotcha'

Some of the ways in which we use the Internet show that—rather than trying to adapt search engines to our flourishing languages and forms of communications—we are adapting our language to suit the technology. Dangerous territory.

Look at the way online news headlines must be written today. They've had to change quite dramatically. No longer are clever, witty headlines appropriate, unless they contain a keyword that describes your company or product.

Think of the famous newspaper headlines such as that recent singsong one in Britain which described the football match between Caladonian and Celtic in Scotland. As a take on the well known but nonsensical 'Super-cala-fraja-listic-espi-alla-docious', 'Super Callie go ballistic, Celtic are atrocious' was used to great effect. And remember the infamous but brutal 'Gotcha' to describe the sinking of the Belgrano by British warships during Britain's war with Argentina over the Falkland Islands/Las Malvinas in 1982.

### No fun, no pun

These headlines couldn't be used effectively on the Internet because their impact would be lost, as search engines would have trouble finding and listing them. We're adapting linguistically to the technical capabilities of the search engines rather than the other way around.

Ambiguity, wit, and the possibility of misunderstanding greatly enrich our language.

They turn it from something purely functional to something pleasurable, creative, and fun, and in a way, they are a vital part of human interaction. No sooner do we make a direct, straightforward statement to a colleague or friend than that person wants confirmation of what has just been said. It's all part of being human, and the present paring down of wit and ambiguity is to be regretted.

©2000 Catherine McDonnell

First published online at <http://www.nua.ie>



Catherine McDonnell writes for Nua, the Dublin-based web publishing company. She also writes freelance for the Irish Times, and has had articles published at [www.ireland.com](http://www.ireland.com). Before this, Catherine worked

as a photographer.

Nua's acclaimed range of newsletters explore digital and business culture: *New Thinking* - a philosophical exploration of our technological society. *Nua Internet Surveys* - discusses Internet commerce in light of new research and emerging trends. *Nua Knowledge News* - analyses current and emerging online knowledge management issues. *Making it Work* - examines the impact changes in technology bring to business.

## Submission Guidelines & How to Contact FELT

Submissions for the Newsletter are always welcome and badly needed. Please send anything at all...

\* By E-mail to: [feltireland@hotmail.com](mailto:feltireland@hotmail.com)

\* By Post to: FELT Ireland,  
c/o 102 Meadow Park, Churchtown,  
Dublin 14, Ireland.

We accept the following, among numerous other things, for our newsletter: theoretical articles, practical reports, jokes, brain-teasers, news, opinions, letters to the Editor, class-plans, cartoons, advertisements, questions, answers, book-reviews, reports on life teaching abroad, amusing stories about your students or trainees and so on... pretty much anything, really.

Please do not send e-mail submissions as Microsoft Word Documents (.doc) as they may carry macro-virus-

es; the Text-Only (.txt) format is the safest. If you are using Word, press F12 and select 'Text-Only' as the file type. Macintosh formats are fine too! Nonetheless, please use your virus checker anyway.

The letters, advertisements, articles and views that are expressed in the FELT Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Executive Committee of FELT - nor do they constitute any endorsement or recommendation. We make every effort to ensure all information presented is accurate and correct and we welcome any corrections - however, we are human so we'd like to apologise in advance for any errors or inaccuracies that might creep in. Contents are generally copyright of the Authors, except where expressly stated.

No part of the FELT Newsletter may be reproduced in any way without the permission of both the relevant Author(s) and the Editor of the FELT Newsletter.

[www.eurolang2001.org](http://www.eurolang2001.org)



European Year of Languages 2001  
Bliain Eorpach na dTeangacha 2001



# Introducing the European Year of Languages 2001

We are delighted that the Council of Europe and the European Union have joined forces to organise the European Year of Languages 2001.

Both our institutions are absolutely committed to two key principles:

First, that the Europe of the future, like that of the past and of the present, will be a Europe of linguistic diversity. That diversity is one of Europe's great strengths.

Second, that everyone in Europe should have the opportunity, throughout their lifetime, to learn languages. Everybody deserves the chance to benefit from the cultural and economic advantages language skills can bring. Learning languages also helps to develop tolerance and understanding between people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Both the European Union and the Council of Europe are already very active in promoting linguistic diversity and language learning. Both of us will be striving to increase the already significant impact of what we do. The European Year will take place in 2001, but its effects will not end there. By making more and more people aware of the importance of languages, the Year will create a platform on which we can build in years to come.

Everyone has a role to play in the European Year of Languages 2001. We will do everything we can to make it a success. But by taking part in the Year and telling other people about it, you can make the most important contribution of all.

**WALTER SCHWIMMER**  
*Secretary General  
of the Council of Europe*

**VIVIANE REDING**  
*European Commissioner  
for Education and Culture*