PROFESSIONAL ELT MAGAZINE ONLINE
#13

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 13th issue of our Professional ELT Magazine Online, proudly presented by TESOL Türkiye! We are thrilled to bring you another diverse and inspiring collection of articles, reflecting the dynamism and passion of our community.

In this issue, there is a remarkable group of contributors whose insights and expertise will undoubtedly enrich your professional journey. Our presenters in this issue include Deniz Özbeyli, Emrah Geniş, Ferhat Karanfil, Amanda Yeşilbursa, Georgi Dimitrov, Gökçe Gök, Merita İsmaili, Shpresa Hasani, Lumturie Bajrami, William Travers, Peter Westerhuis, Sena Elibal İçuz, Dimitris Kouniakis, Tyna Constanopoulou, Ceren Kuşdemir Özbilek, Mehmet Derviş Saltık, Irmak Tüysüz and Mehmet Emre Esen. We would like to thank all our contributors for their invaluable effort.

Finally, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to our readers for their support and enthusiasm. We also encourage you, our valued readers, to actively participate in shaping the future of our magazine! Thank you for joining us on this journey of professional growth and discovery. Enjoy the 13th issue of our Professional ELT Magazine Online!

TESOL Türkiye Promotion Council

CONTENTS

1. REFLECTIONS

POWER OF NARRATIVES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING:
USING AUTHENTIC EXAMPLES IN FICTION AND NON-FICTION

Deniz Özbeyli

A narrative is defined as a spoken or written account of connected events. People always, somehow, tell stories when they convey a set of connected events, gossip, tell jokes, or reminisce about the past. Examples of narratives include short stories, novels, biographies, travelogues, non-fiction, plays, history, even sculptures. Since they have a broad scope including all of the four skills, narratives are crucial in language learning and teaching.

A narrative approach concerns itself with creating and reading stories that include challenges and solutions linked to the learners' situations. Authentic examples of narratives open an interdisciplinary platform and eventually have the potential to grasp the learners' attention, thus leading to more engagement and learning. The interdisciplinary characteristic of using narratives makes it more entertaining and interesting. Besides, considering the duality and intertwined nature of fiction and real-life, using authentic examples of narratives in fiction and non-fiction leads to more fruitful classes. Therefore, the benefits of using fictitious and real-life examples of authentic narratives have always seemed very challenging and charming to me. I will particularly focus on the narratives about the concept of belonging as it relates to the race and social groups in fiction and real life.

One example pertaining to race and society in fiction is about a young black girl's obsessive admiration of blue eyes in the novel The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison. The real-life projection of that obsession risking social belongingness can be observed in the black singer Michael Jackson's obsession with changing his eye and skin color. In advance, I prepared some questions regarding each text we studied. I asked my students to read the short texts I handed them and show their reflections by answering the questions in a short writing activity and a speaking session.

Another example of a narrative is about pandemics. People retreated themselves from the others to avoid the risk. The Queen and her husband hid in Windsor Castle. Similarly, the fictitious case told in The Mask of the Red Death by Edgar Allan Poe, Prince Prospero and all his selected companions enclosed themselves in a castle to avoid the risk of the plague. There were wealth and luxury in both cases, and in both stories, the characters were protected in a similar way. Considering these two examples, I asked my students to tell what they did to protect their elderly family members during the times of pandemics. Reading and listening to my examples and considering the cases in their own families triggered a good vibe and enthusiasm, which eventually led to more inclusion and enhanced learning.

Another example of an intriguing topic is about people's preference for color for dyeing their hair. Some people tend to change their coal-black hair

color to Nordic blonde. I asked students to show their reflections on this preference, and write and speak about what they think about the issue.

At the beginning of the spring semester, I observed my students' participation in and reflection on some coursebook/workbook texts. I gathered some basic data for that period. After that, towards the end of the semester, during a period of 8-10 days, I gave my students the above-mentioned authentic reading texts and carried out some face-to-face and online writing and speaking activities. I observed them and took some notes, which eventually formed the findings and the data for that period. As a result, the number of students showing reflection to the authentic materials I handed was considerably higher when compared to the number of students showing reflection to the selected regular coursebook texts at the beginning. My mini survey revealed the following statistics:

- ✓ 45% of the students showed reflection immediately.
- ✓ 35% of the students showed their reflection in a couple of days.
- ✓ 10% of them said they just wanted to speak and answer orally.
- ✓ 10% of the students showed no reaction at all.

The number of students (90%) who showed more attention and were actively involved in the writing and speaking activities of the authentic material was remarkably higher than the number of students (approximately 60%) who showed reflection to regular texts.

Consequently, authenticity and variety in narratives get students' attention more, and they are more included in writing and speaking activities. What's more, as an instructor, you will be able to do a wide variety of things including all four skills to engage your students. Thus, by benefiting from authentic materials including popular and literary stories, teaching and learning go more smoothly and are gripping and fun!

Deniz Özbeyli teaches English at Yaşar University. He worked as an English Instructor in the army before. He earned his B.A. in English Linguistics at Hacettepe University; M.A. in ELT and PhD in History at Dokuz Eylül University; M.A. in Human Resources Management and Development at Marmara University. Özbeyli finished the Advanced Language Proficiency Skills Course at Defense Language Institute in Texas and took Managerial Communications classes at Wayland University in the U.S.A. He is interested in many topics ranging from ELT workshops to juggling. He has a YouTube channel and has more than 100 short stories, essays, and travel notes published in literary and art magazines. Deniz Özbeyli is also the author of the short story book, Savaş, Cinayet ve İnsanlık Halleri, published in 2022 after receiving the incentive award and grant from Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

FOSTERING LEARNER AUTONOMY IN AN EFL CLASSROOM

Emrah Geniş

Introduction

A few weeks ago, I came across an article by Darren Elliott called "Gifts and Spaces: Metaphorical Conceptions of Learner and Teacher Autonomy." One metaphor listed there attracted my attention. It defines a language learner as "a traveller in a journey experiencing ups and downs, pleasure and pain, and a goal that might be quite distant." For a few minutes after seeing this metaphor, I just thought whether they (learners) should explore the journey and their own path, or if they should follow us (teachers) without observing around and enjoying their own choices. That prompts the following question: Is it time for teachers of English to realize the dream of having autonomous learners? Are we prepared for this shift? More importantly, are the students ready?

Learner autonomy has been around for the last few decades; however, it remains a complex concept to comprehend and define. From one perspective, it may incorporate learners' metacognitive inclusion into the learning process, while others highlight learners' freedom to make choices and take responsibility for their own learning. Although autonomy may occur in different ways and forms, the common and main target is to make learners more responsible for their own learning process and decrease teacher dependency – of course, not complete independence. No matter how we define the term, learner autonomy depends on our

(teachers') roles in the classroom; that means, by making slight changes to our lesson plans we can turn our classes into autonomous ones; in fact, that change is getting increasingly imperative. However, it must be kept in mind that an autonomous classroom is a continuous process. This paper will not aim to define learner autonomy; rather, it will present some practical autonomy-promoting scenarios in language classes.

Enhancing Social Dimensions in Language Learning

One of the key elements in lesson planning is the inclusion of the social dimensions of language learning. Without ignoring the lesson objectives, it is crucial to encourage learners to engage in authentic-like communication with their peers; this can include activities such as talking to their peers about their answers to the questions; teaching some words to their peers; exchanging ideas with their classmates etc. Peer interaction before teacher involvement can help decrease the affective filter as well, thereby fostering student participation. In my classes, students have "buddies" with whom they must share and discuss their answers. Once they have completed the task, they must start a conversation with their buddy, and they need to persuade each other to reach a consensus on their answers. They may struggle, but their willingness to embrace "their own correct answers" needs to be witnessed. That easy change in the classroom may trigger

students' responsibility in their own learning. Also, it creates an authentic conversation in the classroom that may enhance the social purpose of using the language. Additionally, language teachers should talk to students about their reflection on the learning process – even a simple exit-ticket may help learners be heard and that can pave the way for the development of learner autonomy. The continuous bond between a teacher and a student stimulates learners' active participation and prevents complete separation from the teachers.

## Fostering Creativity and Collaboration in a Supportive Environment

Another crucial aspect of lesson planning is fostering creativity. Remember that an autonomous learner can thrive in environments where they feel heard and respected. Such environments encourage learners to share their ideas freely and comfortably; this also promotes participation and creativity. A suggested classroom activity for fostering creativity and autonomy is conducting "an interview with the author." Unfortunately, learners are not highly motivated to read long texts – even in their native language. What about asking them to share their reflection on the text and making them prepare some questions for the author of the text? They may be a bit harsh in criticism; but they will feel heard at the end of the activity. Sometimes, they can be assigned a paragraph to master and they can be asked to "teach" that paragraph to the other group members – giving them a responsibility / duty to teach their peer. Educationally speaking, those simple activities that language teachers have been frequently using can create a concrete purpose for why

students should close read the text as well as developing autonomous learners.

Recently, I have been trying to teach "prompt engineering" to my students – sometimes they teach me how to create better prompts as some of them are a lot more into technology and AI. To recycle target vocabulary, students can be given a list of words and phrases so that they can choose with their partner(s); then they can create gap-fill exercises by using an online tool. This can be a five-minute class activity; however, the principal purpose is guiding students how to self-study out of the classroom – a kind of enlightenment for a few of them seeing themselves preparing high-quality quizzes for themselves.

Conclusion

A few slight changes must be made to foster autonomy in a language classroom; and the focus should be put on the process of developing autonomy. As stated before, developing autonomy is a continuous process, not a single destination. In "Knowing Your Learners to Scaffolding Their Autonomy: The Perspective of Learner Capability and Perception**"** the following figure is used to show learner autonomy levels according to learners' competence and value perception. It highlights the significance of learners' attitude towards the activity to empower self-directed autonomous learners.
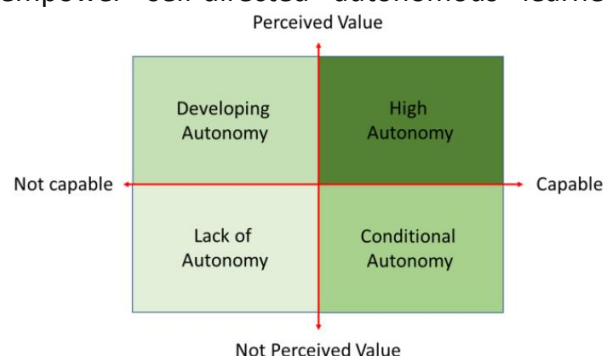
Before concluding the text, I would like to list some activities that I have used in my classes to promote autonomy. In addition to the activities, you can also find how it fosters autonomy.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE LEARNER AUTONOMY IN THE CLASSROOM	Giving learners a choice / control	Reflection on learning	Collaboration	Tracking their own process	Respect / Rapport	Self-assessment
1- Students prepare and role-play an interview with the author of the text.	✓		✓			
2-Students write a summary of their own group talk.	✓					
3-Students visualize themselves as a part of the scene and share their ideas.	✓		✓			
4-In writing lessons, students keep record of their common mistakes and refer to that list after a production activity.	✓	✓		✓		✓
5-Students create lyrics by using the target language.	✓		✓			
6-Teacher lets students choose their own tool to create tasks to practise target language (Quizlet, Kahoot, Quiziz etc).	✓		✓	✓		✓
7-Students' continuous writing on Padlet to watch progress.	✓	✓		✓		✓
8-Students share their learning goals at the end of the lesson.	✓	✓				
9-Providing learners with alternative homework or alternative ways of production (mini talk, role play etc).	✓				✓	
10-Students do the task, listen back and self-assess.		✓		✓		✓

Emrah Geniş is an Instructor of English at Izmir University of Economics. He received his BA and MA in American Culture and Literature. He also holds a TESOL Certificate from Arizona State University. He has been teaching English since 2010 and showcases versatility in his career by teaching both K12 and tertiary level learners.

THE WELL-BEING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS: TIPS AND INSIGHTS

Ferhat Karanfil & Amanda Yeşilbursa

Introduction

We all have busy schedules doing thousands of things at the same time and sometimes consuming ourselves in the process. We may feel that we can't keep on top of our duties, and over time we may lose interest in our job and feel as if we're not making any progress. In extreme cases, we may even suffer from emotional exhaustion. This is what is known as 'burnout' (Maslach, 2003).

Stress occurs when there is a mismatch between the "*perceived*" pressures of the work situation and the work situation and the individual's ability to cope with it. (Eyre, 2017 p.12). In Turkey, teacher stress is often inevitable. Global Teacher Status Index (2018) reports that some of the countries where PISA scores are low (e.g., Egypt, Brazil, Peru, and Turkey) also have low or substandard public perceptions of how good their education system is. Turkey and Indonesia, for example, are countries in which teacher status is relatively high, but student outcomes are extremely poor.

"The need to deal with the stress of the teaching profession in the 21st century has been recognized by the inclusion of emotional self-regulation and wellbeing as global skills" (PISA, 2015). The improved version of teaching 21st-century skills is the idea of "**Global Skills".** It includes:

- ✓ Communication and Collaboration,
- ✓ Creativity and Critical Thinking,
- ✓ Intercultural Competence and Citizenship
- ✓ Emotional Self-regulation and Wellbeing,
- ✓ Digital Literacies

Global skills scrutinize a wider scope of skills and give importance to the wellbeing of the learners. 21st-century skills included 4Cs (Creativity, Critical thinking, Communication and Collaboration).

We care about our students all the time, but who will look after us? Again, we need to help ourselves to manage our stress levels and burnout. Teacher attrition is a global problem as cited in (Kelchtermans, 2017) but in Turkey, for state school teachers it is not. Once we have a permanent job, we work there whatever the conditions are.

Internationally, the level of stress among school teachers is on the increase every year. According to the Teacher well-being index (2019), 73 percent of teachers reported being stressed in 2019, compared to 64 percent in 2018 and 67 percent in 2017. The numbers remind me of the fable of the boiling frogs. It is said that frogs cannot sense a slow change in the temperature of the water around them.

Figure 1: Boiling Frog (Photo credit: DonkeyHotey)

If you plunge them into boiling water, they will immediately jump out. But if you place them into room temperature water and slowly heat it to boiling, the frog will not notice and will slowly cook to death. I believe work-related stress i.e. burnout slowly heats us, and we may not notice. I will have another frog metaphor soon.

2. What can we do for our well -being?

a. Being organised

When I read about teachers' efficiency and ways of dealing with burnout, I always come across articles about being tidy and organized. To be honest, I love living in a mess and clutter, and it is fine if you are organised mentally on your workday. As a tip, I sometimes write where I put the things in my notebook and put the keys, phone, and wallet on the same spot. Sometimes, I tell myself aloud where I put the things. They both work. A messy desk often correlates with a creative mind, as the saying goes, "a messy desk is the sign of genius!" Being organized these days may actually mean writing the times of online meeting times on your phone, and being organized in online life. Some useful apps for that are Google Keep, Wanderlust, Evernote. These days, people talk about decluttering and minimalism a lot. They claim that having less to

organize have many benefits, but as someone with 50 pairs of sneakers, I enjoy planning my outfit in advance (Becker, 2019).

b. Prioritise

What happens when we are bombarded with work to do? We need to prioritize our tasks and then set about achieving them. When I write things on my to-do list, I gave numbers 1-2-3 and 3 is the most important to do. Deciding on which duty should be given priority will make you at ease. Some of you may say "I am good at multi-tasking" and I think I am as well. However, when I examine my work at the end of the day. I often feel the time could be used more efficiently. This brings me to the next suggestion – *time management*

c. Staying Focused with the Pomodoro* Technique

Figure 2: Kitchen timer Pomodoro

The Pomodoro technique is a time management method based on 25-minute stretches of focused work broken by 3-to-5 minute breaks and 15-to-30 minute breaks following the completion of four work periods. Developer and entrepreneur Francesco Cirillo created the Pomodoro technique in the late 1980s when he began to use his tomato-shaped kitchen timer to organize his work schedule. Each working interval is called a

Pomodoro, the Italian word for tomato (plural: pomodori).

It is easy to apply. First, choose a task you would like to get done. Make a small promise to yourself: I will spend 25 minutes on this task, and I will not interrupt myself. You can do it! After all, it is just 25 minutes. There will not be any distracters such as social media or messages. I sometimes switch on flight mode on my mobile. Surfing on the internet is another rabbit hole down which we can easily get lost. Visiting a website may trigger a visit to many websites and you may become distracted. After 25 minutes, take a short break. Breathe, meditate, move, grab a cup of coffee, go for a short walk, or do something else relaxing (i.e., not work-related). Your brain will thank you later. After every 4 pomodoros (i.e. 25 minutes' study + 5 minute-breaks) take a longer break. Once you have completed four pomodoros, you can take a longer break. 20 minutes is good or 30. Your brain will use this time to assimilate new information and rest before the next round of Pomodoros.

I use this technique when I need to prepare online lesson plans, writing articles or thesis (as a public school teacher, we get credit for them and they are prestigious for the teachers working in private institutions), writing Erasmus+ projects and it works for me. Besides, if there are many things you need to do and particularly one that scares you most, start with the scariest. This brings me to the next suggestion.

The Pomodoro technique® - proudly developed by Francesco Cirillo | Cirillo consulting GmbH. (n.d.). Cirillo Consulting GmbH | Services, products, software to enhance your productivity.
https://francescocirillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique

d. Eat the frog first.

Figure 3: A frog to be eaten

Another frog for you colleagues! Mark Twain reportedly once said that if you eat a live frog first thing in the morning, you know that the rest of your day will be better because the worst is behind you. After all, you have already eaten a live frog, what is the worst that could happen? Author Brian Tracy applies this same theory to productivity and business. But of course, instead of "eating the frog," he suggests that "completing your worst task.

When I was writing my thesis, it was the statistical analysis that scared me most. I took a baby step every day to deal with the elephant in the room. I started on statistical analysis first. In distance teaching, it is the feeling of "I should have enough activities for these classes" because before the pandemic, once you close your classroom door, you are the decision-maker. However, in pandemic times, parents and students watch you and the lessons are recorded. Sometimes, you might have unexpected visitors such as the principal of your school or in rare cases the Minister of Education might appear in your class so more sources of stress are there for you. In a nutshell, start the most difficult when your energy is highest. For me, it is 10 a.m. in the morning after the second lesson and the second coffee. What about you?

e. No hurry, no worry

Let us say you need to be at school at 9.30. Leaving the house at least an hour earlier, or maybe if you teach in İstanbul - would be a great idea. If you arrive late to class, hot and flustered, only to be met by a warning from your coordinator, your day is not going to go well. Your negative start may affect learners as well.

Unfortunately, I persistently underestimate the time of the journey to school, and I may often be late. I find having a teacher bag can be a great aid. If you keep all your teaching materials in it, you do not have to keep coming back to the teachers' room for stuff, leaving the students unattended. In terms of distance teaching, as the host of your online lesson, joining the lesson 10 minutes before the students, and rehearsing your materials will make you calm and at ease.
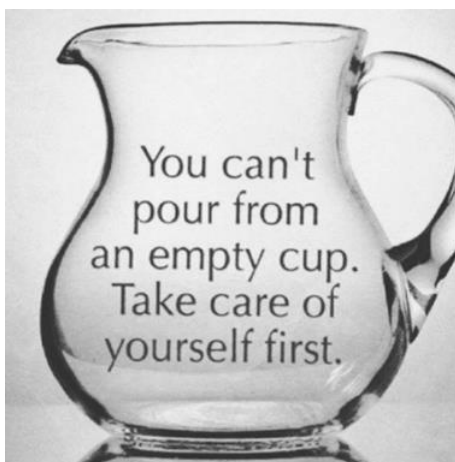
f. Be mindful, not mind full

Figure 4: Empty cup

Last but not least, it may be of most importance to be mindful. 'Mindfulness means paying attention to your thoughts, feelings, or something outside yourself, in a relaxed but much-focused way. Why is it important to be mindful of teachers? We cannot pour from an empty cup or emit light like a candle if we do not have the willingness or energy to do it.

By being in the moment and taking a step back from the hustle and bustle of our lives and profession, it can help us to feel calmer and more positive. And it can be as simple as closing your eyes, concentrating on your regular breathing, and focusing on how your body feels from head to toe (body scan). If your mind starts to wander, bring it back to concentrating on yourself in the present moment.

To deal with stress, we may use mindfulness techniques and nourish our soul. *Movement meditation* includes any body movement as meditation such as walking, or jogging can also be considered movement meditation. Teachers can do simple stretching exercises or whatever body movements relaxes body and mind before they enter a class, or they can take a walk or jog during their lunch hour and experience meditation through movement. Another type of meditation is *Insight meditation* which allows us to focus on what happens in each moment as it happens. We can accomplish this just by focusing on our breathing: when we breathe in and out, we concentrate on this act and nothing else. Then, as we focus on our breathing, we can gain insight into the 'self' as we watch various thoughts and emotions come and go because we do not react to any of them. We can thus become clearer about who is the real self that teaches (Farrell et al, 2020). What do I do in my life to stay calm? First, I use my neutral gear. I believe like a car is told to be slower or faster by gear, we can signal when we finish a task to our body and brain.

When I finished an activity before I start, I take 5 deep breaths and imagine my activity being released 5 times which signals an achievement to the brain. I encourage you to do the same, even when people cannot realise it when you do it. When the bad monkey is my head talk too much in my ELT class, I often focus on positives and think my starting point.

Why did I choose this job?
- To make a difference in people's lives
-To ignite a passion for kids to learn languages, cultures, communication.

Mindfulness is not a new idea. It was proposed by Jon Kabat-Zinn in 1974. It is a relaxed meditation of mind in which you do not need to sit in a yoga position and hum necessarily.

g. Stress Management
In her book *Success Over Stress, Jane Revell (2000)* offers seven strategies for radiant living. They are as follows:

Table 1: The Elements of Radiant Living

Stretch
Unwind and unbend
Cut the criticism;
Counter conflicts;
Eat for extra energy;
Stimulate your system;
Smile and laugh and accentuate the positive.

Her book is a must-read for stress management for all teachers. Besides, unwinding and unbending via yoga poses will help you to achieve it. I feel more energetic when I do exercises and sleep rather than hitting the pillow right away. Sticking the Circadian rhythms is advisable since if you sleep after midnight plus eating snacks, possibly you will not feel rested the next morning. It may sound like a piece of dietician advice but stopping eating at 8.00 p.m. and going to bed around 22.30 will help us to stay in full energy and young as we can get melatonin (See. Figure 5).

Another favourite thing to follow is a **stress log**. Keeping a stress log or a diary will make you more aware of the stress you experience. It is conducted in 3 simple ways.

Figure 5: Sample Stress Log

| a) Describe the event, what happened, where, who was involved?	b) Describe your feelings, actions to this event. Describe the steps you took to avoid the stress.	Rate how you handled the stress? 1- Not well 2- OK 3- very well
The parents of Can asked me to meet them at school at 17.00 but they arrived at 19.30 your manager did not let you go to your home or cancel the meeting.	I did body-scan meditation, did my paperwork tomorrow, welcomed them with s smiling face	2
The principal visited my class online there were 2 students out of 20.	I had a blank face and offered her to research together by calling parents	3
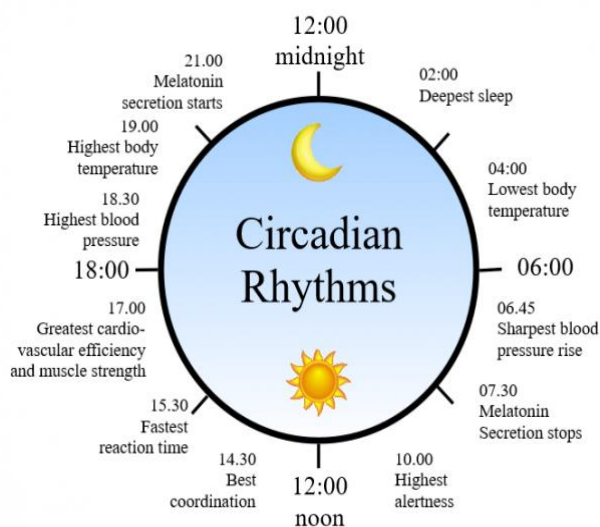
Figure 6: Circadian Rhythms of people

As teachers, if we know the rhythm of our learners and ourselves, we can better suit our instruction better suited to students' needs) (https://exploringyourmind.com/respect-rhythm-respect-rhythm-others/) .

During the day, we should also need to look for ways of killings the NATs (Negative Automatic Thoughts) and we can teach how to do it to our learners. Student well-being is a concern for us nowadays and the earlier, the better. We will not raise the cognitive therapist in our class; we will get a feeling of positiveness in our learners

(https://.positivepsychology.com/challenging-automatic-thoughts-positive-thoughts-worksheets/(n.d.), https://positivepsychology.com/challenging-automatic-thoughts-positive-thoughts-worksheets/). There are worksheets on this, and we can adapt them to our class. At the end of the day, we want to raise individuals in mental health for the future of the world.

To conclude, I cannot help citing the work of veteran trainers Sarah Mercer and Tammy Gregersen. One potentially useful perspective from which to study teacher well-being is through the lens of positive psychology (MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2019). Positive psychology is providing a long list of novel topics (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014) and theoretical frameworks (Oxford, 2016) for second language studies. A core concept within positive psychology is subjective wellbeing (SWB), which is traditionally measured by three core components: life satisfaction, a lack of negative emotions, and the presence of positive emotions (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003). Although this definition has been widely used in research, it covers only one perspective on what wellbeing encompasses. A leading proponent of positive psychology, Martin

Seligman (2011), explains the evolution of his thinking about positive psychology as follows:

> "I used to think that the topic of positive psychology was happiness, that the gold standard for measuring happiness was life satisfaction, and that the goal of positive psychology was to increase life satisfaction. I now think that the topic of positive psychology is well-being, that the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing." (p. 13)

In order to have a contribution to the field, I wrote an article named The Well-Being of Novice State School Teachers in the Mentoring Programme in Turkey: A Narrative Inquiry which is open to the public on researchgate.net. We found that in order to sustain the well-being of teachers, the mentoring programmes should be designed by taking into consideration such as timing and content of the seminars, physical conditions of schools, usefulness and teacher involvement which guides the well-being of the novice state school teachers.

I wanted to share a few practical tips I find useful. You are welcome to visit my new school Beşiktaş 100. Year Mustafa Kemal Primary School to share how you are using the tips in your context.

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https://exploringyourmind.com/respect-rhythm-respect-rhythm-others/

Dr. Ferhat Karanfil obtained his undergraduate degree in English Language Teaching from Anadolu University in 2008. He then pursued a master's degree in English Language Teaching at Uludağ University, which he completed in 2019, followed by a doctorate in English Language Education from Bahçeşehir University in 2023. Dr. Karanfil also completed his CELTA certification in 2012. Dr. Karanfil has accumulated extensive experience across multiple sectors, including roles as an Erasmus project coordinator, team leader for Cambridge Assessment and freelance teacher trainer. Prior to his current position at a foundation University in İstanbul, he held various roles within the Ministry of National Education, Oxford University Press, and several higher education institutions.

Originally from the UK, Dr Amanda Yeşilbursa has been involved in ELT and teacher education for over 30 years. She has taught students of all ages and levels, from kindergarten to postgraduate in contexts as varied as Taiwan, the UK, and Turkey. She gained her postgraduate degrees in ELT from Gazi University, and currently holds the position of full professor at Bursa Uludağ University. She teaches Teaching English Language Skills at undergraduate level, and Classroom Interaction, Language Teacher Psychology and Theories and Applications of Qualitative Research at postgraduate level. Her research interests include reflective practice, English Language teacher education, and Hogwarts School of Magic and Wizardry as a context for teaching practice.

REFLECTIONS ON THE AFFILIATE SUMMIT IN IZMIR, 2-3 MAY, 2024

Georgi Dimitrov

The beautiful city of Izmir proudly hosted an Affiliate Summit at the University of Economics organised by TESOL Türkiye. The two-day event witnessed the participation of representatives of organizations whose mission is to promote, encourage and improve English language teaching. The summit started with a welcome speech by TESOL Türkiye President, Assoc. Prof. Evrim Üstünlüoğlu, and a getting-to-know activity which engaged the participants in informal discussions and set the stage for the more serious Round Table Discussions which took place on day two. The getting-to-know activity was followed by mini presentations by the Affiliates and a mini presentation on Trauma Informed Teaching.

Trauma was the overarching theme around which the Summit was organized. On day two, the participants were grouped into four teams, that is four Round Tables, which focused on certain aspects of trauma in the context of language teaching. I was part of Round Table 4 team whose task was to discuss the following aspect: 'How can Trauma-Informed Schools be created? How can managers/directors/language teachers incorporate principles of trauma-informed teaching into schools/lesson planning/ classroom activities? (Please consider cross cultural/national practical tips for managers/EFL teachers).

My contribution to the discussion revolved around the idea that teachers should be able to identify and address their own traumatic experiences, face their own inner demons so to speak before they consider helping students. Usually trauma is associated with younger learners but I am of the opinion that this is not necessarily the case. As university teacher, I also have the opportunity to encourage students to open up and share their traumatic experiences with me. I have to admit that this happens rarely, which is understandable, but it has happened a few times. For example, during my office hours, students can come and ask questions related to the material I teach but they can also share some of their problems with me if they are willing do to so and if I manage to create the conditions for it. I am saying 'if I manage to create the conditions' because it is difficult to do so every time. Some students are more willing than others to share, to open up, to discuss and to listen to my advice. If they do not want to reveal what triggers them and what makes them feel hurt, I do not insist because these are sensitive topics for students, and for anyone as a matter of fact, and I have to be careful. I exercise patience, hoping that next time they may be more willing, or in the mood, to share and help themselves, and by extension me, feel happier due to the healing process that we have started and whose results we can feel.

At the end of the Round Table part, each team was engaged in drafting a report containing the experience, good practices as well as ideas and recommendations for dealing successfully with future cases of trauma that were exchanged during the fruitful discussions.

We have to admit that virtually any event, whatsoever it may be, influences us. The Affiliate Summit is no exception in the sense of it having a positive impact on my professional and personal development. I am sure that I will feel the impact in the academic years to come. I will be able to seek more depth, not barely scratching the surface, when having conversations with students. While sharing experience and good practices during the Round Table discussions, we – the participants – opened up and looked into the depth of some of the issues that were brought up. By being able to open ourselves up, we will also be able to more successfully help others open up, go beyond the surface, face their inner demons, and feel the relief. And who knows, some traumatic experience could be the final barrier that serves as a deterrent to success. Some traumatic experience could be the best that the subconscious has at its disposal to prevent us from striving towards and reaching our full potential. I hope that by building mutual trust, opening each other up and helping each other out, we can trump the best card of the subconscious and start chasing excellence.

The Affiliate Summit in Izmir can also be viewed as a follow-up event with respect to the online Affiliate Conference on the 6th of April. A less formal discussion of the Summit and the Conference can be found in the E-Newsletter of the Bulgarian English Teachers' Association, Issue 47: https://www.beta-iatefl.org/e-newsletter/.

He is a senior lecturer at the University of National and World Economy where he teaches ESP mainly to students of International Relations and Economics and Politics as well as general English. His main research interests are in the field of phonetics, prosody, intonation, and historical linguistics.

ANALYSING GRAMMAR TEACHING APPROACHES AS METAPHORS: A COMPARATIVE-GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR ANALYSIS OF GENERATIVE AND COGNITIVE GRAMMAR

Gökçe Gök

This paper aims to reflect on metaphors in teaching grammar in an EFL context as part of an online course titled "Teaching Grammar Communicatively", in the OPEN (Online Professional English Network) Global Course, Winter 2024 Section. It should be noted that academic ethics and integrity approval has been obtained from the OPEN Team for this publication. As stated in the module, this course is provided by World Learning as part of the Online Professional English Network (OPEN). This program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. government and administered by FHI 360. All rights to content and materials belong to the OPEN Team and FHI 360, and this course is offered under a CC Attribution license.

English language teaching has been one of the most well-known fields in education for centuries. Much research has been conducted in this field, encompassing subfields such as teaching core skills (grammar, speaking, listening, writing), curriculum and material development, professional development, World English, methodology and approaches, language acquisition, linguistics, applied linguistics, teaching English to young learners, integrated language teaching, etc. As highlighted in an article titled "Grammar Translation Method (GTM) Versus Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): A Review of Literature", teaching English as

a Second Language or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) differs significantly from teaching a first language (L1). As mentioned in the article, teachers must be well-versed in various elements to ensure effective and efficient teaching and learning, leading us to the definition of method. According to Anthony (1963), a method can be defined as "our purpose". Richards & Rodgers (2001) define it as "an approach or method [that] refers to a theoretically consistent set of teaching procedures that define best practices in language teaching". Another description defines a method for language teaching as "a set of procedures or overall plan for systemic presentation to teach a second or foreign language" (Celce-Murcia, 2001: 5, Brown, 2007: 14). As emphasized in the article, with the right and effective method, teachers can create a comfortable and engaging classroom environment. To achieve this goal, various approaches, methods, and techniques have been developed, discussed, and applied in English Language Teaching. Grammar teaching, as part of English Language Teaching, has been a longstanding topic of discussion among teachers, students, and experts. Much research has been conducted in this area of English Language Teaching. In this context, researchers and experts have developed numerous approaches, theories, and hypotheses regarding grammar teaching, as it has become a highly debated topic in the ELT field.

The reason for this lies in the challenges and obstacles students face, which hinder their English learning process. This is why teaching and learning grammar, and how to integrate grammar into English language teaching, has been a subject of research in the ELT field for many years. It has become a critical aspect of English Language Teaching and Linguistics. As stated in an article titled "Difficulties in Teaching and Learning Grammar in an EFL Context" by Muhammad Natsir and Dedi Sanjava (2011), many teachers, trainers, and educators have endeavored to make grammar teaching non-threatening, imaginative, and practical within the English curriculum to foster positive and comfortable learning environments. While students prefer formal and explicit grammar instruction and error correction, teachers tend to favor communicative activities that focus less on grammar (e.g., Brindley 1984; Kumaravadivelu 1991; Leki 1995; Schultz 1996, 2001; Spratt 1999). The article also notes that ongoing literature reviews indicate practicing teachers face a range of options for grammar instruction in their classrooms. As Natsir and Sanjava (2011) point out, students and teachers encounter various difficulties with grammar instruction in an ESL/EFL context. Identifying these difficulties and being aware of them can help teachers find ways to overcome them and provide effective grammar instruction. In this context, many approaches have been developed to offer a more effective and appropriate way of teaching grammar, with the most significant ones known as "structural grammar" and "communicative grammar". While structural grammar is traditional, communicative grammar represents one of the newest approaches in the ELT field. In summarizing their main differences, it can be said

that while structural grammar focuses on "analyzing language forms as adjectives, nouns, phrases, verbs, adverbs, or at the sentence level of grammar as grammar patterns and learning and forming language as grammatical forms", communicative grammar emphasizes functional, conceptual, and social patterns and how they are used in communicative and interactive situations. While both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages, it cannot be denied that both hold undeniable importance in grammar teaching and learning (Natsir, Sanjaya, 2014). Additionally, it can be added that while structural grammar asserts that learners need grammatical knowledge to use language appropriately and effectively, communicative grammar views language as "a social act", with the main purpose of language being "communication", and language is learned in social settings as concepts and functions. Developed based on cognitive linguistics and cognitive grammar, communicative grammar focuses on how language is used in communication and social contexts, stating that learners require more practice for effective learning. Since both language approaches analyze grammar teaching and learning from different perspectives, it can be said that both analyze language forms in social contexts using different methods. With this aim, this paper analyzes the most well-known grammar teaching and learning approaches through grammatical metaphor analysis. As language is seen as a medium of communication that reflects social concepts, using metaphors as signs of social concepts can be a very effective way of analyzing grammar teaching and different grammar teaching and learning approaches.

Figure 1: Nifli, P. Joanna. (2021, December 9). *The role of grammar practice in Foreign Language Learning*. The Art of TEFL. https://ioannanifli.wordpress.com/2021/12/09/the-role-of-grammar-practice-in-foreign-language-learning-2/
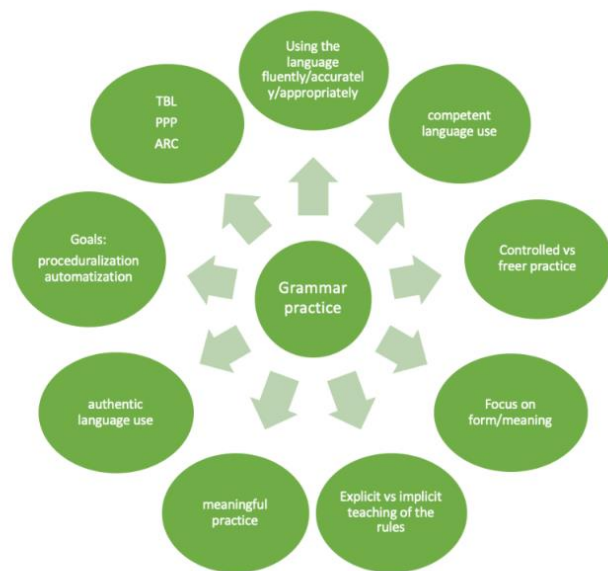
Metaphors can be seen as indicative of "how people think, understand, and analyze" various situations at the cognitive level within sociological contexts. In this regard, metaphors serve to illustrate how learners' brains function, comprehend, learn, and analyze language and grammar at a cognitive level within social contexts and concepts (World Learning, 2018). Since metaphors symbolize specific situations, contexts, ideas, beliefs, and meanings, they serve as effective tools to visually and conceptually enhance learning in learners' cognitive development. As stated in an online course module provided by World Learning (2018) and OPEN (Online Professional English Network), U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of State English Language Programs, and RELO (Regional English Language Office), "Teaching Grammar Communicatively" Winter 2024 Section, metaphors play a crucial role in teacher education and professional development as tools for reflection and awareness-raising (De Guerro, M., O. Villamil 2002). Metaphors, integral to cognitive linguistics, are valuable reflective tools for understanding how individuals conceptualize language learning and social situations, emphasizing the conceptual and functional aspects of grammar learning (World Learning, 2018). It is believed that metaphors assist both teachers and learners in simplifying complex learning situations and connecting real-world experiences with cognitive learning features. In this context, this paper aims to analyze two distinct approaches in grammar teaching and learning "traditional/structural grammar teaching and communicative/cognitive grammar teaching and learning" using the metaphors of "Brick Wall" and "Organic Garden".

To summarize these metaphors, the "Brick Wall" metaphor represents the "pattern-based, form-oriented structure of grammar teaching", which aligns with structural grammar. In contrast, the "Organic Garden" metaphor symbolizes a "natural, interactive, communicative, and functional approach" to grammar teaching and learning, epitomizing communicative grammar.

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The author, Gökçe Gök is a graduate English Language Teacher graduated from Isparta Süleyman Demirel University, English Language Teaching Department, Türkiye. She attended many local and international training, projects, webinars, seminars, workshops, and conferences in the ELT field. She made virtual and face-to-face ELT conference presentations. She is interested in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) Approach, Educational Technology (EduTech), Global Education, Social Justice in Education, Socio-E motional learning (SEL), Communicative Language Teaching, Artificial Intelligence in ELT and Education, Online Learning, Instructional Design, Digital and Media Literacy and Psychology in Education.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH

Merita Ismaili, Shpresa Hasani & Lumturie Bajrami

In recent years, the world of English education has seen remarkable shifts, primarily driven by the emergence of cutting-edge technologies and the pressing demand for adaptable and dynamic learning environments. Today's educators can effortlessly embrace advanced educational tools ranging from computers and tablets to smartphones. In addition, the introduction of digital resources like online quizzes and instructional videos has provided educators with the tools to accurately evaluate the progress of students.

These resources have significantly transformed how students interact with course content. Tools are interactive and engaging, tailored to individual needs, making the learning experience richer and more dynamic. Beyond traditional textbooks, technology has opened doors to a wealth of data that students can explore and learn at their own pace. Moreover, educators can now efficiently track students' progress and provide personalized feedback, elevating the overall quality of learning.

The goal of this study is to investigate the influence of technology on the teaching and learning of English. It attempts to recognize the changes brought about by technology in developing more flexible and dynamic learning environments. It also explores the usefulness of specialized language learning materials such as podcasts and webinars in engaging students and improving their English language skills. The

integration of technology has opened doors to personalized learning, allowing students to progress at their own pace and learning styles. In general, these technological tools have revolutionized the educational system, empowering both educators and students to prosper in an ever-evolving digital age.

During the last few years, researchers have been particularly interested in using digital technology in higher education. Aldhafeeri and Male (2016) examined the challenges that students from Kuwait University's College of Education face when utilizing digital technology. They found that technologies, besides offering advantages like easy access to a pool of information, could present significant challenges. These include barriers relating to technological accessibility, particularly for students from low-income households, as well as technical problems like slow internet connectivity and insufficient support.

Aresta, Pedro, and Santos (2015) carried out an extensive investigation of the theoretical framework of mobile learning and its potential influence on higher education. Their investigation revealed numerous advantages of mobile learning, most notably increased convenience and flexibility. The researchers, however, carefully drew attention to certain possible difficulties, such as limitations on processor speed and screen size. They emphasized the need for a comprehensive strategy to address the

challenges of mobile learning in higher education, considering technical, pedagogical, logistical, and socio-economic factors.

Balakrishnan and Woods (2013) conducted a comparative study on real and simulation labs in communication engineering, examining students' perspectives. They discovered that both types of labs were effective in promoting learning outcomes. However, simulation labs proved particularly helpful in boosting students' confidence in applying their knowledge to real-world situations. They recommended that educators incorporate simulation labs into their teaching practices to enhance students' learning experiences.

The research paper explores the use of contemporary technologies in teaching English for specific purposes. It aims to understand the necessities of integrating technology into English language instruction to improve the student learning process. The paper identifies the most effective digital tools and platforms for teaching English for specific purposes and examines the advantages and challenges of leveraging digital environments for English instruction.

The study involved a sample of undergraduate students enrolled in Computer Science studies at SEEU, ranging in age from 18 to 22 years. These students were selected due to their mandatory enrolment in the English Language course as an elective. The sample covered a total of 69 participants (three groups with 23 students in each), encompassing both male and female students within a multicultural classroom setting. The participants exhibited a range of English language proficiency levels, primarily falling within the upper intermediate to the proficient range. The research team consisted of three English professors who designed the study, collected data, and analysed the results.

The research involved administering questionnaires to collect data on students' perceptions of the impact of technology-enhanced learning in ESP classes. The questionnaire included items assessing students' perceptions of online platforms, communication tools, research materials, and application usage. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the reliability and internal coherence of the questionnaire, ensuring consistent outcomes.

The findings of this study will contribute to the existing literature on digital learning environments and provide insights for English language educators. The study reveals that students generally have a positive attitude towards technology-assisted learning, with a mean rating of 4.28, indicating its beneficial impact on English vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, a high mean rating of 4.96 indicates students' enjoyment in using online platforms for communication with instructors and peers.

In conclusion, incorporating technology in English language teaching can elevate students' learning experiences, trigger their enthusiasm for digital learning, and prepare them with essential skills for navigating the digital learning environment. However, educators need to balance the advantages and limitations of technology adoption, ensuring equitable access to digital resources and providing adequate training to navigate the digital learning environment.

Merita Ismaili was born on July 30 1976, in Shkupi. She finished her primary and secondary school in Gostivar. Then she successfully completed her studies at Tetova State University in 2002 with a degree in English Language and Literature. During her studies she worked as an interpreter for different NGO's, in 2002 she worked for the Embassy of Switzerland, Cooperation office SDC as an administrative assistant and in 2003 she started working at SEEU Language Centre. She attended various professional development workshops and has a certificate in CELTA. She successfully finished her postgraduate studies at South East European University, in the English Language Teaching program. At the moment, Merita is engaged in her doctoral studies at the South-West University "Neofit Rilski" Faculty of Philology, Bulgaria.

With over 18 years of experience and engagement in a university setting, she has helped countless students develop their language skills and achieve their academic and professional goals. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in English Language and Literature and a Master's in English Language Teaching from South East European University. Her extensive teaching career spans all proficiency levels, from beginners to advanced learners. As a dedicated and compassionate educator, she prioritizes creating a supportive learning environment and fostering language skill enhancement. Through continuous professional development, she has earned international certificates, reflecting her commitment to providing diverse learning opportunities that motivate and prepare students for future challenges.

Lumturie Bajrami is a high lector at South East European University. She teaches English for Specific Purposes to the students of the Faculty of Languages Cultures and Communication and the students of the Faculty of Contemporary Social Sciences for many years now. Her research work mainly is in the field of ELT and ESP. She has participated and presented in many scientific conferences related to English Language teaching as a second language.

HOW A SEATING CHART STIMULATED STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN LARGER EFL COMMUNICATION CLASSES

William Travers

One issue I encountered when I started teaching Business English communication classes at a Japanese university in April 2023 was managing large groups of 25-30 students in a classroom with over 50 seats. This setup often led to students congregating at the back and sitting in odd formations. Some of these students would hide, contributing little to class and interacting only with those around them unless forcibly grouped by the teacher, which always took a lot of time due to their scattered positions. Additionally, I pride myself on building strong rapport with my students, but it was difficult to get to know so many students by name when I only taught them once a week.

I successfully countered this problem by introducing a seating chart from the website Flippity and displaying it on the projector at the start of every lesson *(see figure 1)*. The chart created uniformity and made students sit closer to the front of the classroom. An unintended consequence was that it became much easier to set up tasks and put students into pairs and small groups because they were sitting closer together. Furthermore, I could better learn the students' names as I could see exactly who was sitting in each seat.

As a British Council teacher, we are subject to annual external performance reviews of the teaching center as a whole. The main feedback from the 2023 review was the need to increase the quantity and quality of interaction between students. As a consequence, I decided to manipulate the seating chart even further by having students regularly swap seats during the lesson to promote interaction between more and more students. By swapping places a few times during a 90-minute lesson, it kept students engaged in what was going on so they did not fade away as the lesson progressed. The changes do not need to be drastic; simply moving students back or across one row will suffice so that they are talking with different partners each time they do a speaking task. By the end of the lesson, a student will have interacted with over a third of their classmates.

Flippity has other uses which can assist with improving classroom management. It creates groups very quickly for projects or other tasks. Seating charts and groupings are automatic and randomized, saving time and preventing students from feeling punished or mistreated. That said, charts can be manually updated to accommodate absent students or to separate students who do not work well together, and the teacher only needs to input the students' names once and bookmark the page so it can be reused again and again every lesson.

Conversely, the seating plan does have its limitations. It definitely takes students, and teachers for that matter, a while to get used to the system. I had to dedicate a few extra minutes at the start of the lesson to ensure that students were sitting in the right place and interacting with

the correct pair/group. In my opinion, this is merely a teething problem that is resolved in a few weeks, and this learner training is necessary for its successful implementation. My classes are now at the stage where the students immediately look at the seating chart the moment they enter the classroom. Furthermore, teachers who prefer, or only have, a low-tech setup may not wish to use such a system, so they would have to find an alternative solution. A hybrid approach of using the web-based system until students got used to it could work, so that they would know where the teacher expected them to sit (at the front in rows) before the teacher stopped using the chart.

At first, it can be a challenge to manually update the seating chart as the students change seats during the class, but once you become more familiar with the students, I find it is not necessary to update it. Besides, it would only be for your reference as the seating chart is only displayed on the projector screen at the start of the lesson.

Overall, I have been very impressed with the outcome of this implementation. The key is to be consistent and apply the seating chart every lesson, even with my least motivated groups. They actively participate much more than before, and only 3% of 80 students surveyed said they did not like changing seats during the lesson. On the other hand, almost all respondents enjoy their English classes and agree that they have plenty of opportunities to speak to different people in English each lesson.

FRONT

	A	B	C	D
1	Momoka	Mikitaka	Rei	Hikari
2	Toa	Ewa	Ayaka	Kanta
3	Momoe	Chen	Yukino	Sakura
4	Shizuku	Haruka	Hikaru	Tomoka
5	Akari	Mizuki	Mahono	Takuto
6	Ru	Kanon	Ruka	Tomohiro

*Figure 1. An example seating chart displayed on the projector screen.*

William Travers has operated as an EFL teacher in 6 countries on 3 continents since 2011. Currently based in Japan, he teaches undergraduate Business English courses at Meiji Gakuin University for the British Council. He holds a BSc in Management Sciences & French, Trinity CertTESOL, and Cambridge DELTA.

2. TROUBLESHOOTING/ CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

LEVERAGING AI TO ENHANCE ACADEMIC WRITING:
A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

Peter Westerhuis & Sena Elibal İçuz
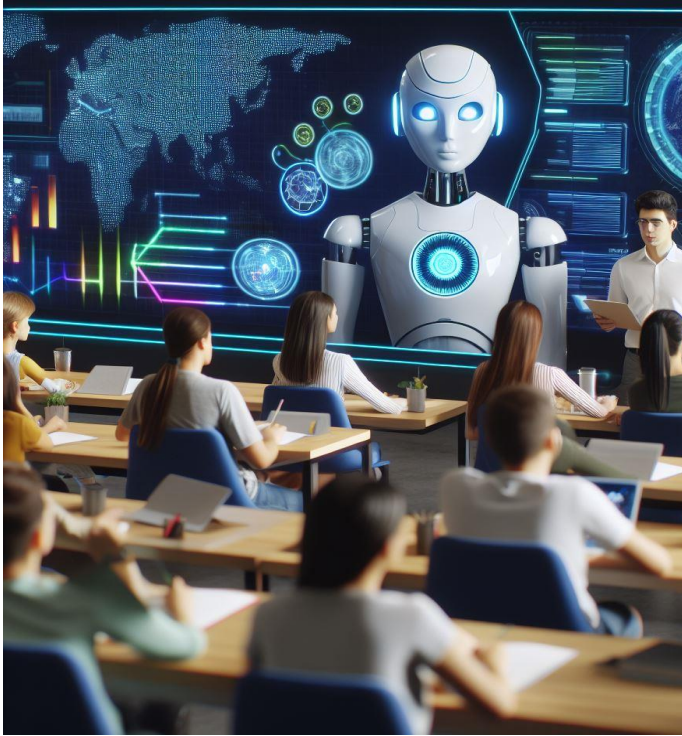
*Made with Bing Image Creator using the prompt: "AI & young adult students"

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the world in many ways, and education is one of the areas where we are most likely to see its revolutionary power. With its many capabilities, it affects the way we learn, teach, and engage with information. Even while writing this article, the built-in AI in Microsoft Word is suggesting ways of improving our writing, some of which we more than happily accept and apply. As teachers, however, its mesmerizing capacity can also be concerning. Will it get in our way of teaching our students? Or worse, will it get in *their* way of learning? Is academic integrity at stake? Is there

a way to "make friends" with AI before it outwits us?

Although there may not yet be any definite answers to these questions, it is within our capability to use AI to our advantage. We can leverage its power to enhance teaching and learning rather than seeing it as a threat to effective learning and academic integrity.

Informed AI use can potentially benefit many aspects of teaching and learning, but one area we specifically want to investigate is academic writing. Let's look at how AI can address challenges and enhance the process and the quality of academic writing instruction.

How can AI help English teachers?
AI tools can help create academic writing curricula by designing semester-long programs with weekly themes, learning objectives, and recommended activities. They can also produce specialized vocabulary lists, case studies, role-plays, or even example reports to help students understand what is expected of them. The AI tool can then create evaluations and other tasks to gauge student progress and comprehension of the material.

With reference to evaluations, AI can assist in establishing feedback systems to collect student writing responses, which can be used to fine-tune

the curriculum. AI can be used to streamline the grading of written assignments and identify writing patterns and trends. It can be used for administrative tasks by giving feedback on student work, generating rubrics, managing data for class reports, writing reports and summarizing documents.

To make the most of generative AI tools like ChatGPT, it's important to improve the effectiveness of the prompts. Here are some tips from **ETS AI Labs** to guide educators in this process:

Be laser-focused: Create specific and clear prompts to ensure that ChatGPT understands the intended output. Instead of asking it to "write an essay on climate change", ask it to "write a 500-word argumentative essay on why we should reduce our carbon footprint, with three main points and a conclusion". Now you have an essay that you can review as an example with your students.

Optimize with context: Provide background information and context to help AI tools generate accurate and more useful responses. Include information about the essay's purpose, audience, and scope, as well as any relevant research or sources that have already been consulted (ETS, 2023).

To further explore AI in education, check out resources available to teachers. One example is "**AI 101 for Teachers**", which offers a valuable learning series. This online resource includes sessions with experts, practical guides, and companion resources. The series also covers topics ranging from demystifying AI to ensuring a responsible approach to its use in education. It also provides insights into teaching with AI tools and leveraging AI for assessment. (*AI 101 for teachers,* 2023).

How can AI help students with academic writing?
Concerns regarding students' AI use usually center around it being used for plagiarism and causing disruption with learning due to an overreliance on such tools. Banning AI use entirely might not be the solution, however, since developing AI competencies will most likely be an important skill in the future (Fengchun & Holmes, 2023).

To ensure AI use does not disrupt learning or undermine human agency, AI-assisted activities can be combined with critical thinking. Here are some ideas you can model with your students:

Brainstorming: Have your students brainstorm writing ideas and jot them down and then compare their ideas with some generated by AI. Encourage students to think critically about the generated output and discuss what improvements could be made.

Summary: Students can use AI for reading into writing activities, such as summary writing or summary & response writing. Students can compare their own summaries with the AI generated ones, checking for redundancy, missing information, or possible ameliorations.

Test preparation: AI can also help with test preparation by providing sample task prompts based on example prompts it is fed with. It can also provide scoring and feedback on written responses based on provided scoring guides. The

TOEFL iBT® test, a major English proficiency test that assesses academic writing skills and other language skills, is a good example to show how students can use AI for test preparation. Its [Integrated Writing Task](#) requires reading a short passage, listening to a short lecture on the same topic, and then summarizing the points mentioned in the two sources, explaining how they relate to one another. As a suitable AI tool that can provide feedback on written input, students can feed ChatGPT with the reading passage and the lecture script along with its [publicly-available scoring guide](#). Have ChatGPT assess the written response and give feedback on task completion, coherence, organization and language use.

Linguistic improvements: Why not ask your students to write something, and then ask AI to polish its linguistic features? They can then compare the improvements to their original work. Students can ask AI to give feedback on various aspects of writing, such as grammar, syntax, lexis, organization, coherence, cohesion, redundancy, mechanics, etc.

Overall, the way we incorporate AI in our practices should be based on improvement, developing learner autonomy, and using human agency to make the final decision.

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Peter Westerhuis is a Senior ELT Coordinator at ETS Global responsible for supporting teachers in EMEA. With over 12 years of experience in teaching in multiple countries, Peter has taught students of all ages, from beginner to proficiency.

Sena Elibal İçuz is a Senior ELT Coordinator at ETS Global and is based in Istanbul. She has degrees in ELL and credentials in ELT, with over 7 years of teaching experience at the university level, including various academic and administrative duties.

THE UNDERESTIMATED STAKEHOLDERS OF STUDENT LEARNING

Dimitris Kouniakis & Tyna Constantopoulou

Are you struggling with students demonstrating inappropriate classroom behavior? Do you feel they are indifferent towards education and their learning? Have you implemented direct classroom management and motivation strategies, yet expected outcomes seem utopic? There's a card up your sleeve you might have neglected playing, and that is parental involvement. If you intentionally engage parents in students' education, you set up a considerable force skyrocketing student incentive and success. Parental involvement is without a doubt a remedy for learner apathy, low aspirations, and mediocre performance.

Empirical findings validate the idea that parental involvement is an integral component of a successful education system. When parents value their children's education and work collaboratively with teachers, students have greater chances of becoming high achievers exhibiting improved behavior, increased motivation, confidence in their academic abilities, satisfaction in the process of learning, and a stronger connection to school environment. Despite the plethora of research highlighting the importance of parental involvement, the vast majority of ELT programs and studies do not prepare educators with hands-on practices to leverage parent-teacher partnerships to the benefit of students.

Here are 15 mindful suggestions to resource supportive parents:

1. Take a moment to reflect on interest and how powerful an impact it has when it comes to building relationships. Being genuinely interested in your students' families will inevitably create a welcoming atmosphere and sprout their respect.

2. Prioritize confidentiality and honesty, making it safe for them to share meaningful information regarding their backgrounds, current conditions, and expectations. Remember much of what we experience within the borders of our classrooms relates to attitudes and behaviors fostered outside our walls.

3. Initiate and seek contact consistently, even in cases where it seems unavailing. Parents may be unfamiliar with parental involvement and therefore feel reluctant. Persistence is a results-driven choice.

4. Refrain from using too many buzzwords which may lead to confusion. Parents are not trained educators and should not be required to act as ones.

5. Help parents perceive their roles in students' lives by offering concrete examples of how they can be impactful. For instance, at the beginning the school year, distribute a flyer with general

ideas on cultivating a love for learning and inspiring student autonomy from home.

6. Point out the greatness of teamwork and inspire accountability by setting a framework of action including shared goals, responsibilities, and problem-solving techniques.

7. Provide parents with newsletters letting them know what the class will be working on and how they can be involved. Allot some time for further queries and guidance.

8. Apart from offering frequent input on learners' progress, showcasing and celebrating student accomplishments, keep parents aware of the effectiveness of their involvement and praise their efforts.

9. When students need additional support, invite parents to brainstorm and discuss their ideas on new actions. Think about it, we cannot approach learners holistically if we separate them from other environments, especially immediate ones such as family.

10. Personalize content without undervaluing classroom dynamics. It is normal for parents to care mainly for their children and expect customized care. However, intended individualization should lead to collective development.

11. Be patient and address issues constructively when parents question your intentions and methodologies or when conflicts appear. No matter how challenging it sounds, do not become defensive. Choose to listen to their arguments carefully before unraveling your counterpoints.

12. Proactively ensure appropriate communication channels are available by asking parents what their preferred means are. Remove disruptions to entice a fruitful, two-way connection.

13. Take into consideration parents' perspectives, worries, and availability. Involvement should be an enjoyable process, not a burden to the family.

14. Be ready to revamp your strategies when imperative. Having a fixed mind on how things should be done will only bring the partnership into pieces.

15. Treat parents with sensitivity when barriers emerge and encourage them to be assertive and empowered. We are not evaluating their worth or mandating their parenting style. We are simply facilitating their right to contribute to their children's growth.

Dimitris Kouniakis has been an ELT educator and LTO owner for over 20 years with an MA in TESOL. He has introduced and promoted many innovative approaches and interventions in the Greek ELT market such as the "No Homework Framework". Dimitris has delivered teacher training workshops across the country and abroad.

Tyna Constantopoulou is a lecturer at Staffordshire University and a teacher trainer. She presents at conferences around the world raising awareness of special educational needs and inclusive education. Tyna has received the Gold Award in Educational Innovation and Research, and the Bronze Award in Supporting Learners with SEN in ELT.

3. CHANGING BELIEFS AND VALUES

WHAT DO EFL TEACHERS LOOK FOR IN (A) PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (UNIT)

Ceren Kuşdemir Özbilek

Professional development is a crucial part of an EFL teacher's career whether they are in the early stages of their professional lives or seniors. I've recently started working in the CPD Unit of my institution and this marked a turning point in my own professional life where I found an opportunity to dig more into the career I love pursuing. Below are some of the points that I've found to be pivotal while working with colleagues in our unit. These points cover some of the most important aspects of conducting and sustaining continuous professional development that would actually be beneficial for teachers. As these are my humble observations, I've added no quotations from external sources because sometimes a minor observation could move more mountains than a lengthy quotation from a well-known expert.

Rapport: This is an obvious but an indispensable element when it comes to professional development. When we are conducting the Annual PD process in our school, teachers work closely with CPD Unit members whose responsibility is to guide and support teachers in their PD journey. When there is rapport between teachers and unit members and/or teacher trainers, there is no doubt that things will run more smoothly. Rapport fosters motivation and willingness to grow which will eventually be useful both for teachers individually and for the school as a whole. One of the recent pieces of feedback we've received as a unit was: "I really like X on a personal level, so I am happy that there is finally someone in that office I enjoy talking to, not just because I need to" (this was anonymous feedback in our questionnaire). This teacher probably feels more motivated to conduct a professional development activity with unit members due to the rapport established rather than feeling being forced to do so.

Choices: When it comes to professional development, variety is the key and the very spice of our lives. The same topics generally run abound for a period of time in ELT, such as the AI craze right now, and sometimes this tires teachers out. Some topics are overused in training sessions without adaptation or change of perspective. That is why teachers need to be presented with a canvas of choices out of which they will pick what is of interest to them. Employing outdated topics in professional development events (or the overuse and overemphasis of the same "new" topics, for that matter) includes the danger of hindering teacher motivation and willingness for professional development. A good way to ensure that everyone is on the same page about topics and activities is conducting a needs analysis to find out about teachers' wishes so that alternative choices can be presented.

Clarity: We have a lot on our plates as teachers, so one of the things we generally crave is clarity. We want things clearly stated so that we know

what to expect and can prepare ourselves accordingly. When things are not conveyed clearly, issues related to misunderstandings can occur and this will complicate matters as it can sometimes be difficult to reverse some of those misunderstandings. A clearly drafted speech/policy/presentation should be presented to teachers about professional development paths so that the whole process is fair and standardized.

Reflection: Reflecting on professional development activities/processes is not always easy. To some of us, it comes naturally and very easily and some of us need more guidance and support to be directed towards introspection. Reflection is a skill that can be learned with some practice as it is an inherent part of being a teacher. Every teacher needs reflection to move forward because it is not possible to go into the next stage of one's career without analyzing what happened in the earlier stages that would need improvement and/or positive reinforcement. Teachers should be carefully guided into reflection that would actually be useful for their self-development.

What now?: The final stage of any reflection should include the question "What now?" Reflection cannot be useful if the insights learned cannot be translated into future use. Teachers should be carefully guided into thinking about what to do with the results of the reflection. These future goals can include incorporating the insights derived into classroom practice, repeating the same kind of professional development activity in different ways, and moving forward with a different professional development activity. If the "what now?" part is left unanswered, professional development cannot be sustainable.

Although institutional needs can vary, I think the points above should be taken into consideration in every CPD formation/unit/office, not just for the sake of teachers but also to ensure a smooth running of the unit and even the whole school. Quality and beneficial professional development activities can transform teachers, classroom practices, and in the end, students whose learning depends partly on us.

Ceren Kuşdemir Özbilek is an SIT-TESOL certified EFL instructor, CPD Unit member, and a Cambridge certified teacher trainer at Yaşar University, School of Foreign Languages. She has been teaching English in higher education since 2013. She completed her BA in 2013 in English Language and Literature Department at Ege University, where she is currently a PhD candidate. She has previously worked as a member of Curriculum and Materials Development Unit in her institution for six years. Her research interests include continuous professional development, curriculum and materials development, educational psychology, social justice in ELT, and the use of popular culture in the EFL classroom.

UNLOCKING THE FUTURE OF ELT WITH METAQUEST 3

Mehmet Derviş Saltık

As an English language teacher, I have always looked for new ways to enhance my students' learning experiences. Over the years, technology has been reshaping our classrooms. But nothing has struck me as transformative as Virtual Reality (VR) devices. Recently, I had the opportunity to buy and explore MetaQuest 3, a leading VR device, and I am convinced that its potential to revolutionize ELT is extraordinary.

The Conventional Struggles of English Language Teaching

In my early teaching days, considering that I have been teaching for about 12 years, I relied heavily on textbooks, audio recordings, and human interactions to teach English. While these methods form the basis, I often found myself facing the limitations they exposed. My students had difficulty grasping real-world applications of the language. Many found it hard to stay engaged, and some simply could not practice enough due to limited exposure to authentic language environments.

Discovering MetaQuest 3: A New Era in Language Learning

My introduction to MetaQuest 3 was eye-opening. It provided a window into a world in which education has no bounds. I could immerse my students in virtual English-speaking surroundings with a VR headset, giving their education a richer context. This was a game-changer. For those who are unfamiliar with this definition, maybe I should point out the following:

There are many brands on the market with VR technology, but MetaQuest 1 and 2, which previously only used virtual reality technology, started using augmented reality (AR) technology in the 3rd series. In this way, while you find yourself swimming in the deep waters of technology, you are still aware of what is happening around you in real life at the same time. Namely, while you are chatting with your students and showing them Tower Bridge, you can also take your pen and write notes on the paper in front of you.

Creating Immersive Learning Experiences

With MetaQuest 3, I have been able to create immersive learning environments that were previously unimaginable. My students can now virtually explore the streets of London, engage in conversations with other students at the same time. Chatting with your students while virtually fishing is also another pleasant and unusual experience. These experiences go beyond the theoretical, allowing students to apply their language skills in practical, engaging scenarios.

Boosting Engagement and Motivation

Keeping students engaged has always been a challenge, one that every teacher knows too well. MetaQuest 3's interactive and gamified approach has breathed new life into my lessons. The platform offers a range of educational games and simulations that turn learning into an adventure. This shift has significantly boosted my students' motivation and enthusiasm.

Bridging Geographical and Logistical Gaps

One of the most profound benefits of VR in education is its ability to overcome geographical and logistical barriers. With MetaQuest 3, my students who previously had limited access to native English speakers or cultural experiences can now immerse themselves in diverse virtual environments. For example, I recently had a chance to do a lesson through an application called 'Wooorld' with a few students of mine from Izmir who had never traveled outside Izmir. In the application, I created a private room and went to any point in the world with my students and had conversations there. They explored different cities and experienced cultural nuances firsthand. This exposure has broadened their horizons and given them a richer understanding of the language and its cultural contexts.

Navigating the Challenges

Although there are many advantages to using virtual reality in classrooms, there are drawbacks as well. For some schools and educators, the initial cost of VR technology and the technical support required can be overwhelming. In addition, it will take time for educators and learners to become accustomed to this new technology and successfully incorporate it into the curriculum.

There is also the concern that VR could never replace the invaluable human interaction that is essential to language learning. While VR provides immersive experiences, it is crucial to balance it with face-to-face communication to develop the full spectrum of language skills.

Looking Forward

As I reflect on my journey with MetaQuest 3, I am excited about the future of ELT. VR offers an incredible opportunity to create engaging, immersive, and accessible learning experiences. Teachers may improve the quality of English instruction and equip students for a world where digital literacy and intercultural communication are critical by adopting this technology.

MetaQuest 3 has not only improved student learning in my classroom but also reignited my love of teaching. It is a powerful reminder that education is about creating experiences that inspire and connect us. As we continue to explore the potential of VR technology, I am confident that it will play a significant role in shaping the future of ELT.

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Mehmet Derviş Saltık has been an EFL teacher since 2010 holding a BA in ELT from Anadolu University, an MA in ELT from Yeditepe University and a CELTA diploma from Cambridge English. Currently, he has been teaching Academic Skills courses (ENG 101 and 102) at Izmir University of Economics since 2016. Additionally, he is a PPC member responsible for organizing and designing visibility materials and MPC liaison in TESOL Türkiye.

4. LEARNER VOICES

A Learner's Journey

Irmak Tüysüz

In my opinion, learning a foreign language has a great impact on both people's academic lives and broadening their perspectives. First of all, the world is moving towards globalization and with the help of technology and communication networks, developments in science, art, literature and many other fields are no longer national but are spreading all over the world. When there is a development in today's academic and social life, for example, when an invention is made, a work is composed, an event is organized, it spreads around the world at the speed of light. It may not be possible for a person who does not know a foreign language to follow these developments closely. Moreover, one of the most important things that expand one's vision is getting to know new cultures. At this point, someone who aims to get to know a new country or nation needs a foreign language because language carries the traces of the entire history and traditional elements of a nation. For all these reasons, the horizons of a person who knows many foreign languages are likely to be wider than those who do not. I strongly believe that the first step in opening up to the world through a foreign language is knowing English. That is exactly why I am currently making an effort to learn English at a high level.

When I first started the School of Languages at Sabancı University, I was making simple mistakes while speaking, even though I was an eager

sentence patterns. The resource books we used in the course were divided into units, and each unit contained a list of words and phrases related to the theme of the unit, called Teaching & Learning Program. I improved my vocabulary knowledge by studying this list before coming to class and using what I learned in class. In addition, I prevented simple grammatical and vocabulary mistakes by studying grammar rules and focusing on the mistakes I made while speaking, and reflecting on my daily speaking practices, with the methods that enable teachers to actively participate in the classroom. One of the things that most improved my English was receiving feedback. Teacher feedback helped me make significant progress, especially in speaking and writing. At this point, our graded writing and speaking tasks, in our Learning Portfolios, helped me a lot. There was a constant feedback system in these tasks, our teachers evaluated our writings, provided detailed feedback and offered tutorials to help us correct our mistakes.

In addition to these resources, I benefited from one of the extra-curricular projects offered in our program: The Cross Cultural Communication Project. This project was carried out in the spring semester (March 27- May 10) in cooperation with Sabancı University, The University of Wisconsin and Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto. I found it greatly beneficial in improving my English. In this project, we met with students from different cultural and geographical regions, introduced

ourselves through written introductions we shared in a blog, had online meetings in groups and talked about how climate change is experienced in their countries, how this situation affects their culture. We also shared our experiences. Moreover, we had the opportunity to get to know each other's' cultures during these video chats. While doing all this, I improved my English academically, socialized and gained self-confidence in speaking with foreign people. At this point, I observed how much of a difference the way I used language while expressing myself made, both positively and negatively. Since I was planning to study a department intertwined with society and communication, such as political sciences and international relations, the experience I gained while communicating with people from different nationalities also contributed to shaping my career.

To sum up, the thing that improved my English the most was forcing myself to speak. There were times when I found myself in situations where I didn't know how to express myself, but by pushing my limits as much as possible, I somehow found a way to communicate in English. Being persistent in the learning process helped me improve. Another suggestion I have is to focus on mistakes. Language learners should make use of any forms of feedback they receive in the learning process and focus on how they can learn from them.

Her name is Irmak Tüysüz. She is currently a student at the School of English Language at the university. She plans to study at Sabancı University Political Science and International Relations department. Academically, she is interested in diplomacy, politics and international journalism. She is actively involved in theater, creative writing and debate.

How Learning English Influenced My Future Ambitions

Mehmet Emre Esen

Let us imagine that we see the world through a single, stained window. Only through that window can we know what is happening around the world. That window is our only connection to the world and the possibilities it brings. We are bonded to the perspective that window provides us with. The color, shape, quantity, and clarity completely depend on that single window. That is what knowing merely one language feels like to me now. But then, suddenly, a different window opens, with completely different shape, colour, perspective than the other one. This is what I felt like when I first started to learn English. Once, I could only imagine a world through my mother tongue and the possibilities it brought. As Ludwig Wittgenstein once said, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world." Learning English, thus, opened a second window, revealing new possibilities. The way English influenced my future aspirations was profound; it expanded my view and granted me the tools for acquiring knowledge that was out of my reach for all this time. Learning English enabled me to acquire skills useful for personal growth.

To begin with, I learned how to code. Programming alone, does not necessarily require you to know English, but here is the thing; most programming languages throw error messages in English, the functions are written in English, and even libraries -a fundamental part of programming- are in English. Knowing English enabled me to manage the process of learning better than my peers and learning how to write computer programs through English allowed me to read the codes people wrote and translate them into Turkish to help the programming community. I still translate computer programs into Turkish or at least make Turkish comments so that people can understand what they are working on better. Now, as I am a newly graduate from my department at university, I can finally focus on programming languages that I wished to learn back then but did not have time to.

The personal impact it had on me is that it enabled me to see through my parents' perspective, both of whom are bilingual. I look up to them when they are communicating with their relatives living abroad. Considering that fact, learning more than one language is just a beginning for me, as learning English encouraged me to learn more than just two languages. As a Czech saying goes "You live a new life for every new language you speak. If you know only one language, you live only once." Following that perspective, I aim to improve my beginner level of German and also start learning French and Russian, which are the languages of the new world as most of the colonized world used these languages. English, in this perspective, showed me the importance of understanding people and their lives, no matter where they live.

When the more professional side of the impact of knowing English is considered, I noticed that I liked to teach. Therefore, when I approached the end of high school, I decided to become a teacher. To be a good teacher, I needed to be qualified in the field I was going to teach. I began to study English further. I attended a language course, read classics, all to build upon the knowledge I already had and finally attended to an English Language Teaching department. There, I strived to become a qualified language teacher. Nevertheless, after many hours of studying about language acquisition process and learning about theories during my years at university, I realized that knowing a language is just a beginning. After this realization, I aspired to be an academician to teach other students who have their career goals set towards teaching English to a younger generation.

In retrospect, I see the profound effect of English on my life and my future goals. English helped me to delve into the programming world and enabled me to pursue my dream of becoming a teacher. There is still a long way to go to achieve my dreams, but from where I stand, I have done a good job thus far. Hopefully, in the future, I will raise students to become their best versions as teachers.

Mehmet Emre ESEN was born in Konya in 2002. After graduating from Vali Necati Çetinkaya Middle School and Meram Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School, he studied English Language Teaching at Necmettin Erbakan University between 2020-2024.

TESOL
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TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES