How do you teach Macbeth?
Bloemert, Jasmijn

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Editorial

In this Shakespeare quatercentenary year, it was inevitable that the LMCS PCE at the Birmingham conference – and this edition of the Newsletter – would focus on the Bard. Following the success of last year’s “101 ways to teach a poem”, the day comprised no fewer than ten 30-minute mini-sessions, ranging from Jeremy Harmer’s musical opening to David Crystal’s talk on the trend for productions in Original Pronunciation. This issue includes articles based on four of these sessions, together with a detailed report by Richard E Wilson that captures the experience of the entire day. As well as her account of engaging language learners with Shakespeare, Lisa Peter of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust also writes about the work of the Birthplace Trust with learners of all ages, and Luke Prodromou contributes a thought-provoking and insightful view of Shakespeare’s ‘unruly women’, the subject of his talk which brought this year’s SIG Day to such a strong conclusion.

Providing a foretaste of next year’s PCE in Glasgow, Kieran Donaghy (the ‘online begetter’ of Film-English.com) writes informatively – and passionately – about the benefits of using film in the language classroom. This issue concludes with an interestingly fresh perspective on the use of comprehension questions by Lena Vaneyran and a review by Philip Prowse of a collection of stories and memories by the inimitable Andrew Wright. This edition of the Newsletter is long overdue, but it depends on contributions from SIG members and other readers. So, enjoy reading – but please get writing: everything is welcome, articles, long or short; reviews and recommendations; creative writing. The Newsletter belongs to – and relies on – its readers.

Alan Pulverness

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From the Coordinator’s Desk

This issue of the newsletter comes at a time particularly important for our SIG. We are overjoyed by the tremendous success of our 2016 PCE in Birmingham and delighted to be able to bring articles by some of our presenters there so soon after the event. This is our way of sharing with our members who were unable to attend the event the experiences we had there. For the 19 delegates who were in the Stratford-upon-Avon tour with us and the 67 attendants at the PCE in Birmingham, we hope this brings you cherished memories.

This issue is also coming out at a crucial moment in the history of the UK, Europe and the world. Most of us are probably aware of the results on the UK referendum on its position in the European Union and while it is far too soon to draw any conclusions of the possible concrete implications of such decision, I would like to reassure our members that our SIG is profoundly committed to mutual understanding and equality among our members. We do believe that Literature, the Arts, and all forms of human knowledge should have no boundaries and that the multicultural nature of our SIG membership is one of our most valuable assets. More than ever, we will continue working to build bridges across countries, cultures, and people.

Chris Lima

We gathered in Birmingham, a mere 39 miles (63km) from the historic home of William Shakespeare to mark the 400th anniversary of his death and to celebrate the contribution of his writing to English language and culture, and consequently to ELT, too.

The day began at 10.00 with a session focused on the music of Shakespeare, led by Jeremy Harmer, who also performed with his guitar. Jeremy reminded us how there is music everywhere in Shakespeare, especially in Twelfth Night. He also pointed out that most of the songs are sung by Fools, and women only tend to sing if they are mad and/or about to die. He then gave us a group workshop activity, taking advantage of TEFL teachers’ love of playing the role of their students, where each group looked at one of 9 different songs and we shared ideas about how we could use them in the classroom. One of the key ideas to emerge in the feedback was to look at how different productions play the same songs or scenes and thereby give students visual cues to assist them in decoding what can be difficult language to comprehend.

At 10.30 we had a talk from Keith Johnson, who focused on that language and its development, especially in terms of the lexical and grammatical change at the time of Shakespeare. Keith emphasised how much English was in a state of flux and development in the late 16th century, with new words being invented and others borrowed at an unprecedented rate from Latinate languages. One of the outcomes of this form of development of language was its inaccessibility for the largely uneducated working class. He gave the example of Love’s Labour’s Lost, and the word ‘posteriors’, used in the phrase the ‘posteriors of this day’. He also drew our attention to the creation of new English words by the addition of Germanic affixation to Latinate words, e.g. the prefix un- was added to a variety of words by Shakespeare. For example, Lady Macbeth’s famous ‘unsex me’; ‘undeaf’ in Richard II, ‘unfool’ in The Merry Wives of Windsor and, also from Macbeth, the Porter’s use of ‘unprovoked’.

Keith also mentioned one of the other, more comical, ways in which Shakespeare played with language, his use of malapropism. He gave the example of Bardolph in The Merry Wives of Windsor who accuses Falstaff of being ‘drunk out his five sentences’, and has to be corrected.
(‘five senses’). This form of wordplay would have much more comprehensible to the groundlings at the Globe. Keith then talked about the grammatical structures, which are closer to modern English than the vocabulary Shakespeare used. However, one of the aspects to note for us as readers and maybe as teachers of Shakespearean English is the inconsistency in both spelling and grammatical change, as different options and preferences operated alongside each other and it often depended on the printer as to which form actually appeared in a text. One example Keith gave is of the frequent omission of the relative pronoun in Shakespeare – ‘I have a brother _ is condemn’d to die’ (from Measure for Measure). There is also a lot of variation in the use of ‘has’ or ‘hath’ in Shakespeare, sometimes for reasons of metre, and there is the ‘thou’ or ‘you’ issue as English moved to a one pronoun language. But Shakespeare utilises a formal option at times, with ‘thou’ common at times when characters are angry or in love, while ‘you’ is much more peaceful. He also pointed out the fun you can have with students identifying the 8 different meanings of ‘will’ in Sonnet 135, an idea summed in his conclusion, which was that Shakespeare should be taught as a foreign language!
Then at 11.00 we had a presentation by Lisa Peter from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT), on keeping learners engaged with Shakespeare. Her theme was ‘get the poet off the plinth’, emphasising how Shakespeare wrote for everyone and his work was never intended to be scrutinised on the page. She also encouraged teachers to stop saying to students that ‘Shakespeare is good for you’ but to find ways to engage our learners. To this end the SBT and the British Council have designed a MOOC at B1 level, which ran in April and will happen again in August. Lisa also talked about using more accessible forms of Shakespeare, such as Baz Luhrmann’s Romeo & Juliet film, where you can perhaps focus on how Benvolio is the only young person to survive the play; the greed and lust for power in Macbeth; the topic of jealousy or ‘honour’ killing in Othello; a young adult trying to understand the world in Hamlet; the idea of tribal loyalty in The Merchant of Venice; or the Star Wars graphic novels written in Shakespearean style. Another suggestion for working with younger learners is to focus more on the characters and less on the language. You could even link the balcony scene in Romeo & Juliet with Beyoncé’s Put a ring on it. Noting how there is so much of Shakespeare in modern language, with phrases like ‘good riddance’, ‘budge an inch’ and ‘the game is up’ is another way to show younger students that Shakespeare is relevant to the English they are learning. Her appeal to us as teachers was to let the language leap off the page and to come alive. This can be achieved through creative writing activities with younger learners, asking students to speculate what happened to Shakespeare during the ‘lost years’ or at the end of his life. She even gave the example of asking students which of the Muppets could be cast as characters in Romeo & Juliet. Lisa advises you not to let students loose on the language until they have a clear background to the scene and some awareness of the language differences. Overall, the advice is to make Shakespeare for L2 learners an engaging and multimodal experience, and then it will be both successful and enjoyable.

After the coffee break, we were celebrating Shakespeare with Claudia Ferradas, who told us about a project she had devised in her home country of Argentina. She started with the concept that Shakespeare is ‘exotic’ and therefore it is necessary to explore the ‘when’, ‘where’ and ‘what’ of Shakespeare. Is it all about the merchandising now, or is there a darker, imperialistic aspect to studying the plays? Claudia told us about the reality of misogynistic violence in Argentina, where 2 women a day are killed, and how education about this and other topics can be achieved through teaching Shakespeare. Claudia also pointed out that she often first has to engage her trainee teachers, and explain to them how the texts are available for us to read in our own pluralities. For example, the themes in Othello and the Guns N’
Roses song *I used to love her* are ways to raise topics in an engaging way with learners. Talking about ‘faction’ (fact + fiction) is also a good way to elicit discussion, for example by using the *Shakespeare in Love* movie or other adaptations or transpositions such as *10 Things I Hate about You* (set in a US high school – Padua High – and based on *The Taming of the Shrew*). The current fixation on appearance and plastic surgery can be addressed through Sonnet 130, too. There are now some good graded readers which can help familiarise learners with the concepts and plots of plays before tackling the ‘real thing’, for example the Oxford Dominoes Starter of *The Tempest* in 250 words, where graphic imagery is used to convey a lot of the meaning. Similarly, look at different Tempest productions to see how character and gender are represented, not least in the version where Helen Mirren plays Prospera. Other suggestions included encouraging students to imagine they were wedding planners for the event in many of the plays and to think about who would be on the ‘top table’ and who might not be invited or to discuss how *Romeo & Juliet* might be different if the teens had had smartphones.

![Image](image_url)

*Left to right: Claudia Ferradas, Chris Lima and Lisa Peter at IATEFL*
Claudia then talked about a couple of initiatives from South America. She described the success of the Romeo Project she has been involved with in Argentina, working with children of the shanty town where the suicide rate is high because of the violence in society. She described a production linked to *The Merchant of Venice*, chosen because of Argentina’s financial difficulties and a debt owed to a Jewish businessman. She also recommended a blog by Victoria Plou about her *Macbeth* production put on as a whole-school activity using all areas of the curriculum. Claudia evidenced the benefits of the students’ involvement, including their enhanced use of language, the complexity of language used, the use of intonation to show meaning, developments in listening and turn-taking (which is an issue in Latin American culture), increased confidence, better collaborative working and greater commitment from students, too. I’m sure we’d all like to see such results from a Shakespeare-based project.

At 12.30 there was another lively and very practical talk from Rob Hill about ways of integrating and exploiting film posters. He gave us some examples of classroom activities using promotional posters, in this case, Shakespeare films and productions, as a means of accessing the text or the plot. One suggestion was to compare posters from different versions of the same play or film and decide which one is ‘best’ and why, a task which develops language of comparison and cognitive skills. Here the focus is on the idea of the ‘high concept’, or the key idea associated with the play in question. In some versions of posters for *Othello*, we analysed why Iago may be the character in the foreground in one and the background in another. Who was Othello’s gaze directed at in another? Another idea is to imagine taglines for productions, in 2-15 words. This can be done by removing actual taglines, e.g. ‘the greatest love story ever told’ or inventing ones from images that didn’t have them originally. Another version of this is for students to select which is the appropriate quotation from the play to use on the poster. Then there was analysis of parataxis in a Ralph Fiennes poster for *The Tempest* and the use of symbolism in images of a dagger and a rose in a *Romeo & Juliet* poster. Prediction activities are also possible, such as ‘what images would you expect to find in a poster for a *Hamlet* production?’ This can then lead on to a ‘guess the film/play’ activity where you can crop the images to conceal the name and ask students to guess from the content.

Leading up to lunch was a session on using improvisation with Shakespeare, from Alan Pulverness. This was in the form of a drama or improvisation workshop, with gender-blind casting (not least because there were far more women than men in the room). One of the
techniques is to plan strategies for the encounter with other characters and by doing so we as teachers can prepare students to use the idea of the ‘emotional contours’ of a scene and the emotions of the character(s) to find the emotional truth of the lines or scene. By preparing students in this way, which we spent a lot of the session trying out, Alan argued that we can make the text and meaning more accessible for students by doing some effective preparatory work.

After lunch there was no opportunity for a quiet siesta at the back of the room as Michael Martin took everyone outside the main room onto the landing for some work on the Sonnets. He used Sonnet 129 as a main example, initially asking delegates to walk around the space, avoiding others, and reading the sonnet. The next instruction was to switch direction at every piece of punctuation, which resulted in a strange sight but very few collisions. The third phase was to stamp your dominant foot to emphasise meaning, and finally the lines were read while looking at a partner, taking note of all the pauses and important content points just practised.

This was then followed by a handout of Sonnet 60, about Time. The first challenge was to read it aloud making only the vowel sounds, to highlight the assonance in the text. This was followed by some pair work in which each partner read a line in turn and then the roles were switched so each person read the other 7 lines. This is designed to emphasise the music and
The rhythm of the poem. The final activity was more pair work, based around Sonnet 130 (My mistress’ eyes ...). This time one reader had to read the build-up phase of the poem and the other the let-down, and then switch roles. This was a dynamic and engaging session which certainly woke everyone up again after lunch as well giving some interesting ideas for integrating a form of physical response and a kinaesthetic dimension into activities using Shakespeare’s words.

At 3.00pm we had a session from Amos Paran & Jasmijn Bloemert, who focused on Shakespeare in the EFL classroom, an area they say which is very much under-researched. They described a research programme which is the basis of Jasmijn’s PhD in which they wanted to gather real research evidence and not rely on what authors claimed was best practice. Amos described research into curriculum content, which revealed that Shakespeare is the most widely-taught author in France, or the dominance of Macbeth as the high school
(or exam boards’) play of choice. Another key element that emerged from their research is the belief that Shakespeare is a ‘must-read’ without much being done to generate enthusiasm for Shakespeare.

Jasmijn then gave some detail about her research regarding the teaching of *Macbeth* in a Dutch high school, where EFL literature is compulsory but the schools can choose the texts. Despite all the delegation of choice, which is not the case in a lot of countries, *Macbeth* is the most-taught play by Shakespeare, the most-taught author. The outcome of her research of most practical use to us as teachers is that Dutch students at least much preferred a language analysis approach to the play, rather than the more traditional text-based approach, which linked back very neatly to the conclusion of Keith Johnson earlier, that Shakespeare should be taught as a foreign language, with all the techniques and approaches that involves.

The penultimate talk was from Martin Peacock and was about how Shakespeare lives in 2016 through his language. He described a major project carried out by the British Council, designed to be relevant, international, and modern focusing on 4 user-groups: teens, young learners, young adults and adults, and teachers. The findings are now available on the Learn English website, where you can find interviews with actors, wrap-around tasks and activities with downloadable transcripts, all with a multi-cultural dimension. He also mentioned a Learn English print series which is very popular in China, where it reaches 3 million people and the MOOC mentioned earlier by Lisa Peter. This course is based on the concepts of social learning and by the time of the conference had already received over 140,000 comments by 11,000 different users in 120 countries. There is a big focus on cultural contexts, some language development activities and lots of video content to appeal to teens, including use of animation to support the actors’ voices reading the texts. There are also about 40 lesson plans for teachers which will be released throughout 2016 on the Teaching English website.

Finally, we were entertained by the Patron of IATEFL, David Crystal, who spoke about the latest research on OP, or Original Pronunciation – the uncovering of evidence to identify what Shakespeare’s English actually sounded like, or as close to it as possible. One of the ideas emerging is that since there was not really anything that could be called Received Pronunciation (RP) until the 18th century, OP had a variety of accents, in the same way as modern English does. David described in his usual eloquent and engaging style how the Americans tend to love OP because they have for so long been brought up on a diet of Olivier
and Gielgud, and then discover that OP has far more in common with modern American accents than RP does. He also suggested that RP was in part a reaction against the dominance of Scottish English in the Court in the period after the death of Elizabeth I, where the post-vocalic ‘r’ would have been quite prominent, which is precisely why RP or Standard English omits it.

David then told us about the production of Dr Faustus, or /fɔːstəs/ as it would have been said, at the Globe Theatre in May this year, the first non-Shakespeare play to be performed in OP. He explained how there are 4 main ways to have confidence in the OP decisions that have been made. First is by rhyme scheme; the second by pun, e.g. ‘loins’ and ‘lines’ or ‘tongs’ and ‘tongues’ would be homophones; the third by spelling; and the fourth by reference to other texts, such as the very helpful English Grammar written by Ben Jonson. Although spelling was still evolving in Shakespeare’s time, it can be a useful guide to pronunciation, e.g. the word ‘philome’ in the 1st Folio is the 2-syllable pronunciation of ‘film’ (much like can be heard in a modern Irish accent). David concedes that OP can only ever be ‘plausible’, rather than authentic, but feedback is that OP reaches out to audiences more than traditional RP (which is anyway only spoken by about 2% of the British population) and opens new opportunities and choices for presentations of plays, music and other texts such as the King James Bible. For further information, see www.originalpronunciation.com.

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How to engage language learners with Shakespeare

Lisa Peter

Shakespeare’s Birthplace Trust

“O this learning, what a thing it is!” (The Taming of the Shrew, I.2) – especially when you’re trying to get your head around modern-day English and your teacher confronts you with 400 year-old verse. I vividly remember my own first experience with two sonnets in my final school year in Germany, and what a disaster that particular session was, even for the properly literary-minded amongst us. How is it possible then to use Shakespeare’s works in the English language classroom in a productive way that manages to engage your students and does not let them down?

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust has been running special educational sessions for English language learners for a while now, both online in the forms of Skype lectures and Q&A sessions, and at the Shakespeare Centre in Stratford-upon-Avon, where we offer interactive sessions and talks to language learners on all levels. Of course this means that our teaching takes place in a very special environment, as we are a heritage organisation that looks after the houses of the Shakespeare family, including Shakespeare’s Birthplace. Consequently, most learners are only with us for short one-off sessions. In spite of these differences in the learning environment, we encounter exactly the same challenges as language teachers around the world in their classrooms: we have to make Shakespeare interesting to 21st century teenagers, and deal with the language barrier of Early Modern English.

The starting point for every teaching project about Shakespeare in the language classroom in our experience is a confession: it is not possible to do everything, particularly not if there isn’t plenty of time available in your curriculum to introduce Shakespeare to your students. So, the first step is to be honest with yourself: what exactly is it you want to achieve with Shakespeare in the language learning classroom? Are you teaching Shakespeare because one of his works is on the curriculum? If so, what are the things you have to do? Is it necessary to do a play in its entirety, or can you focus on key scenes or speeches? Do you have to read the play in the original, or can you use graded readers for the plot and story to ensure understanding of what is going on? You can still choose to use the original for some of the key scenes if you want to give your students an insight into the poetry and the special flavour of Shakespeare’s language, but in every play there are a number of more functional scenes,
where ploughing through Shakespearean word order might diminish your audience’s attention span.

Or perhaps you would like to focus on other things relating to Shakespeare, for example, on Shakespeare as a cultural icon, or on Shakespeare’s reception around the world in different art forms? This initial decision will help you to focus on what you will need in terms of material and will make it easier to discard ideas that might be nice to do but that ultimately do not help you to get the points across you would like to make.

So, once you’ve decided what to concentrate on, how can you engage language learners with Shakespeare in the first place, and how can you keep them going? First of all, ‘Shakespeare is good for you’ is not a great argument to use with your students if they don’t understand why you put this 400-year old stuff in front of them. Teach understanding and enjoyment, not blind admiration – Shakespeare is terrific, in spite of so many people telling you that he is.

Issues like lust for power, ‘honour killings’, or young people being born into conflicts that will decide their fate no matter what they do are all topics that your students will probably be able to relate to, and they are all already there in Shakespeare: *Macbeth, Othello, Romeo and Juliet* deal with themes that are not a million miles away from today’s news headlines, as numerous adaptations and transpositions of these plays into modern settings have shown. So, point out what is going on emotionally in the plays and try to present it in a language your students can understand. An interesting experiment, for example, is to try to give plays a subtitle that explains a bit of what is going on in terms of the plot. This can be a pop song title (but doesn’t have to be), like for example the Backstreet Boys’ “Quit Playing Games With My Heart” for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, or Beyoncé’s “Put a Ring on It” for *Romeo and Juliet*.

In any case, Shakespeare’s plays were written to be performed and to be experienced as part of the audience, not read alone and scrutinised in every little detail. That many of Shakespeare’s passages reveal a poetic complexity when studied does not mean that that is the be-all and the end-all of teaching Shakespeare; some people prefer close reading, others want to feel the words on their tongue – both approaches are valid.

Most people now say: let’s perform Shakespeare, turn your classroom into a drama workshop! If you want to do that and if you can, go for it – but it’s only one possible way of getting creative with Shakespeare. Not every student is an actor, not every teacher is a
workshop facilitator – and that is fine. There are lots of other ways to make Shakespeare your own.

One of them is creative writing in response to the plays. For example, point-of-view rewritings of key scenes from the perspective of a minor character are a good way of analysing both characters and conflicts in a play. What-if stories are great to highlight dramatic moments or to draw attention to the art of storytelling itself: what if Macbeth had decided not to follow his wife’s advice to kill Duncan and simply to wait and see what was going to happen instead? We’d be without a play. This is also a nice way to practise those pesky conditional sentences once again.

Another example would be a re-casting of one of the plays as a Muppet show: which role is best for Gonzo in Romeo and Juliet? Should Kermit the Frog be the hero of the story, or would he be better cast as the funny sidekick? Could Miss Piggy be Juliet or might she be better used as the Nurse? You’ll be surprised how deep character analysis becomes all of a sudden. Whichever activity you choose to let your students get creative, the best results in our experience are those where students get the chance to make Shakespeare their own and to playfully explore the story and characters.

But what about the language? In fact, Shakespeare’s English is not entirely outlandish to modern English ears. Yes, it is different, and yes, it is difficult in places – it would be wrong to deny this – but with a short introduction to the differences between Modern English and Early Modern English, quite a few hurdles can be lowered quite considerably. If you introduce your students to the fact that there was still a second person singular around in Shakespeare’s time – “thou”, with its dative “thee” and possessive “thine” – in addition to the second person plural we now use in its stead, “you”, they won’t have to look them up every time they pop up in a line. The same goes for the variant versions of the third person singular, “doth” for “does”, or “forgiveth” for “forgives” etc. Once they have these grammatical Lego bricks, they will find it a good deal easier to make their way through a sonnet, identifying the really obsolete words Shakespeare uses on the way.

So, to sum up, when you decide you want to do Shakespeare in the language classroom, here are a couple of suggestions: it’s OK not to do everything; it’s fine to use simplified versions, translations, graphic novels, Manga Shakespeare – whatever helps your students to enjoy the stories. Whatever you want to focus on, whatever you want to use Shakespeare for, go for it. He’s not the easiest writer to teach, and your lesson planning will need some research and
shaping of pre-existing material, but the sense of achievement your students will feel when they’ve mastered their bit of Shakespeare – in whatever form – will be immense. ‘I can do Shakespeare; this is for me, and it is fun’ is a great legacy to leave with your students.

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Join our national celebration of Shakespeare in primary schools between March 20 and 26, 2017, Shakespeare Week: www.shakespeareweek.com

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Bringing the Sonnets to life

Michael Martin

I was lucky enough to be introduced to Shakespeare's language at an early age by attending performances by the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford and London. I have also attended a number of weekend master classes and day workshops with voice coaches and have been introduced to the way that actors get to grips with the iambic pentameter.

A great insight into the language of the Bard can be gained by examining the sonnets, as each is complete in itself and each one is a jewel. Different methods can be used to unpack the rhythm and music of these beautiful poems. Once, with a group of Chinese students, we sat around a wooden table drumming our fingers as if on a keyboard while intoning sonnet 128: "How oft when thou my music play'st." We did not need to discuss the caesura or enjambement, we just enjoyed the music of the piece. As soon as participants start to speak the words, the meaning becomes clear; so when I teach the sonnets, I spend very little time explaining the vocabulary.

Movement of some kind is a very useful way of interpreting the sonnets. I was at a workshop in Stratford where small groups were given a sonnet and told to produce a scene. We produced an angry and over-the-top dismissal of a woman as our interpretation of sonnet 139: "O call me not to justify the wrong," while another group memorably showed misery and dejection turn to uplifting happiness while showing us their take on sonnet 29: "When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes".

In Birmingham at the Shakespeare day, so brilliantly organised by Chris, it was great to try out a few different approaches to the poetry. I always learn something new. David Crystal in his fascinating talk on original pronunciation showed us how the line from sonnet 60, "And delves the parallels in beauty's brow," should be pronounced for the last line in the quatrain to rhyme.

One book that has been a constant source of enjoyment for me has been Don Paterson's "Reading Shakespeare's Sonnets," (Faber & Faber 2010). But I always go back to the sonnets and have found over the years that, like the plays, it is by reading them, performing them, experiencing them that we gain the greatest pleasure.
How do you teach Macbeth in an EFL classroom?

Jasmijn Bloemert

EFL is a compulsory subject for Dutch secondary school students (age 12-18) and for the highest level (i.e. pre-university) literature is a compulsory part of the EFL curriculum. However, the only rules and regulations EFL teachers have to comply with are three core curriculum standards that do not prescribe how often literary works should be taught, how these works should be taught, which works should be taught, or how learners should be tested.

Despite this huge amount of curricular freedom, Shakespeare appears to be the most taught author and Macbeth his most taught play in Dutch EFL secondary education. Because of this freedom, the question of how a play like Macbeth is in fact taught becomes all the more interesting. In 2015, we (Jasmijn Bloemert & Klaas van Veen) conducted a case study in which we followed one Dutch EFL teacher and her 23 pre-university level Year 5 students (age 16-17) throughout a Macbeth unit.

When analyzing an EFL literature curriculum, there is more to it than meets the eye. In order to make sure our research was thorough and extensive we used two frameworks: (1) the Curricular Levels framework (Goodlad 1997 & van den Akker, 2006) and (2) the Comprehensive Approach to Foreign Language Literature framework (Bloemert, Jansen and Van der Grift, 2016; Bloemert, Jansen, van de Grift, Paran, in preparation). Table 1 presents the first framework including examples from the Macbeth unit and the various data sets we collected.

Table 1: The Curricular Levels Framework including examples from the case study

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Teacher interview and short survey

Teacher interview and short survey

Student survey
The Curricular Levels Framework enabled us to study all levels of the curriculum, from the Ideal curriculum, which described the core curriculum standards for EFL literature, to the Experiential and Learned curriculum, which described the students’ experiences and learning outcomes at the end of the 15 lessons. An important issue that arises from discerning the above-mentioned (sub-)levels of a curriculum is the level of alignment between the (sub-) levels. In our data analysis we followed the assumption that an aligned EFL literature curriculum is likely to be more effective than an unaligned curriculum. Therefore, ideally, when using these two frameworks, what you would like to see in a constructively aligned curriculum is that there is a high level of alignment throughout the (sub-)levels when focusing on how the literary texts are approached.

The second framework, the Comprehensive Approach to Foreign Language Literature framework (see Figure 1), promotes an EFL literature curriculum in which literary texts are taught and studied in an integrated way through a text, context, reader and language approach. This second framework enabled us to analyse the data focusing on how Macbeth was approached at the various curricular (sub-)levels.

So how was Macbeth taught in our case study school and to what extent was the Macbeth unit aligned? The answer to this first question depends entirely on the curricular (sub-)level. Figure 2, which presents a summary of the collected data which we organized according to
the two frameworks, shows that the answer changes quite drastically when moving from the Formal sub-level to the Operational sub-level, for example.

Figure 2: Summary of the collected data organized according to the two frameworks

In order to show the extent of curricular alignment we have added three circles (A, B & C) that indicate high levels of alignment and two circles (D & E) that indicate low levels of alignment. For example, even though four of the six intended learning objectives (ILOs) focus on the language approach, none of the three core curriculum standards do this. And despite this heavy emphasis on the language approach, at the formal and operational sub-levels hardly any time was spent on this approach.

Analysing an EFL literature curriculum like the *Macbeth* unit in our case study in such a way that it includes all levels of the curriculum presents a comprehensive picture that will provide EFL teachers with the necessary tools to improve and/or enrich their current EFL literature curricula.
References


This article is based on a presentation at the LMC Sig IATEFL 2016 in which I presented a chapter which will soon appear in *Shakespeare in the L2 Classroom*, edited by Amos Paran.

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Information about the IATEFL Conference Glasgow 2017

Our 51st Annual Conference will be held at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC), Glasgow.

Dates for your diary

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Original pronunciation: the state of the art in 2016

David Crystal

In 2004, Shakespeare's Globe in London began a daring experiment. They decided to mount a production of a Shakespeare play in 'original pronunciation' (OP) – a reconstruction of the accents that would have been used on the London stage around the year 1600, part of a period known as Early Modern English. They chose *Romeo and Juliet* as their first production, but – uncertain about how the unfamiliar accent would be received by the audience – performances in OP took place for only one weekend. For the remainder of the run, the play was presented in Modern English. The poor actors had to learn the play twice! I've told the story in the book *Pronouncing Shakespeare* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

The experiment was a resounding success. It turned out that all sorts of people were interested in OP – what it sounds like, how it affects actors' performance, how historical phonologists reconstruct it (the 'how do we know?' question). At the talkback sessions following the performances, alongside British Shakespeareans there were early music enthusiasts, people involved in heritage sites, and visiting theatre buffs from abroad. They all had one thing in common: they wanted to get closer to the speech or song patterns that would have been around in the Jacobethan period. The *Romeo* performances had convinced them that this was possible, and they wanted a slice of the action. As did the Globe itself, of course. The following year the experiment was repeated. But instead of a tentative toe in the linguistic water, a new production of *Troilus and Cressida* was entirely devoted to OP.

Ten years on, it's interesting to reflect on the way events subsequently 'galloped apace'. In the Shakespeare world, the Globe went in other directions and the initiative moved to the USA. In 2006, OP extracts from Shakespeare were presented during the 400th anniversary of Jamestown celebrations. In 2007 OP readings took place in an off-Broadway venue in New York. In 2010, a full-scale OP production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was put on at Kansas University, and this was followed up by a recording for radio and a DVD (now available commercially). In 2011, another university production, this time at the University of Nevada (Reno) mounted an OP production of *Hamlet*. My actor/director son Ben, who was becoming an expert in OP performance, was invited to be an artist in residence and to play the Dane.
The number of works I know of that have been produced with appropriate attention paid to the OP has grown dramatically over the past three years, and include the Sonnets, Twelfth Night, As You Like It, Julius Caesar, The Merchant of Venice, Macbeth, and Pericles. At the same time, the number of resources has increased, so that more people are able to hear what OP sounds like, notably via the British Library CD, Shakespeare's Original Pronunciation – an anthology of extracts curated by Ben in 2012. Ben's reading of Sonnet 141 in OP for the best-selling app The Sonnets (2013) made the accent reach a wider audience than ever before. But the recording he and I made on OP at the Globe for the Open University in 2011 has had the widest reach. It went viral, with over three million hits to date.

In addition to the website created to accompany Pronouncing Shakespeare, there’s now a website dedicated to the whole subject of OP – going well beyond Shakespeare to include anyone exploring accents from any period of the history of English. That’s where you’ll find out about those who are using OP to produce fresh versions of Dowland, Byrd, and Purcell, or projects involving other authors. The links are below.

Two of these other authors have had special attention – one earlier, and one later. I made a CD for the British Library of William Tyndale's Matthew Gospel, in the OP of the early 16th century – a notable difference is that silent letters in words like know are pronounced, so we get gnashing of teeth with a mouth-watering onset. And Ben adopted the persona of John Donne for a recording of his 5 November 1623 sermon. It was selected by the curators of the Virtual St Paul's project – an online recreation of how St Paul's would have looked and sounded at the time, with the aim of answering the question how it was possible for 2000 or more people to hear Donne speak in the Cathedral grounds.

With all this going on, the Globe eventually took another bite of the apple, the opportunity being provided by the completion of the new indoor theatre at Shakespeare's Globe, called the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse (named after the American actor whose vision it was to reconstruct the Globe). In 2014 the OP story was told in a three-part series of events, using play extracts, sonnets, and songs, and ending with a full reading of Macbeth by the Shakespeare ensemble of Ben’s company, Passion in Practice, the foremost developers of OP practice over the past few years. A year later, they performed Henry V in the Playhouse, for the anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt. In 2015, there was an OP Pericles in Stockholm, accompanied by violinist Daniel Hope and a chamber orchestra, and this was reprised in Savannah, Georgia, in 2016. Other writers are waiting in the wings for an OP production:
Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* and *Master Henslowe's Diary* were produced at the Globe in May 2016. The demand for resources is urgent – which is why I compiled my *Dictionary of Original Shakespearean Pronunciation* for OUP, out this year. It will be useful for his contemporaries, too.

It's an exciting time. People often say that there's nothing new to be learned about Shakespeare, given that he has been the subject of study for hundreds of years. Not so, when it comes to OP. Every time I explore a play in this way I discover something new – some previously unnoticed piece of wordplay, for example – or experience a fresh auditory impact from individual lines and interactions. With a play that has lots of rhymes that don't work in Modern English (such as *Dream*), suddenly all the rhymes work! Audiences immediately notice the effect. When the Three Witches open *Macbeth*, they speak in rhyming couplets (as witches – and fairies – always do), but 'Upon the heath' doesn't rhyme with 'There to meet with Macbeth' in Modern English. It does in OP. *Heath* was pronounced with a more open vowel.

And an exciting time lies ahead. As of 2016, only a dozen plays have been explored in OP, and few places have yet had the chance to hear it in action. Over the next few years I'm expecting there to be many more occasions for audiences to experience an OP production, so that they can judge for themselves the dramatic and aesthetic impact of presenting a play or a poem in a way that is as close as possible to how it would have been performed 400 years ago.

**Resources**

http://www.pronouncingshakespeare.com

http://www.originalpronunciation.com

Virtual St Paul's: http://vpcp.chass.ncsu.edu

Open University: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPlpphT7n9s

*Dream* DVD: http://ffh.films.com/ItemDetails.aspx?TitleId=30535


Shakespeare Lives is a major programme of events and activities celebrating Shakespeare’s work on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of his death in 2016.

The British Council is working with partners including the GREAT Britain campaign and a host of leading theatres, educators and artists, to present a vibrant programme that will engage audiences globally and showcase the best of contemporary Britain.

Shakespeare Lives will include new theatre productions, screened plays, film adaptations, art exhibitions and more. Visit the website www.shakespearelives.org for information.

HIGHLIGHTS

ELT Resources
We’ve developed a broad range of Shakespeare-based ELT resources, for both teachers and learners, that will be available online and in-print, throughout 2016 and beyond.

Shakespeare clips as an invitation to the world to upload their own.

Shakespeare Reworked
Nine research and development funds have been awarded to UK-based artists and companies working in theatre and dance to enable them to develop Shakespeare inspired projects with international counterparts and bring the best to new audiences in 2016.

Play Your Part
The world’s biggest online tribute to Shakespeare! Leading lights from the UK’s creative sector will produce stunning new
Shakespeare’s Unruly Women

Luke Prodromou

The ELT profession is dominated, at least in quantitative terms, by women. Their voices are often not as influential as their numbers would suggest. This article, about Shakespeare’s struggle to give women a voice in a patriarchal society, is dedicated to the women in ELT.

In this article, I will illustrate the fluid, diverse and often contradictory way in which Shakespeare approaches the role of women in Elizabethan and Jacobean society. We will encounter women in conflict with the conventions of the time and we will see how those conventions attempt to constrain and restrict the unruly tendencies of females in search of their own identity – or identities.

Shakespeare’s unconventional dialogue

Throughout his career as a poet and playwright, Shakespeare was engaged in dialogue with writers who held conventional views of women. Until Shakespeare came along, for example, the sonnet was largely a poem dedicated to idealizing women as inaccessible goddesses: their beauty was incomparable, they were ethereal beings of almost divine perfection. Poets under the influence of the great Italian, Petrarch (1304-1374) would write about women using romantic metaphors and similes, through which the object of the poet’s love was compared to the sun, the stars and the moon etc. In this context, we can imagine the impact of Sonnet 130 describing Shakespeare’s imperfect, but passionately real, Dark Lady:

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress when she walks, treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

This is the poet Shakespeare speaking, bringing women literally ‘down to earth’, as creatures of the real ‘breathing world’.

**The boy actor: types of ambiguity**

An equally good place to begin in order to understand the fluid and contradictory nature of women in Shakespeare’s world is the theatre itself – and, in particular, the convention of the boy actor on the Elizabethan stage. It is crucial to remember when exploring the diversity of women in Shakespeare’s plays that they were all played by boys: Rosalind, Viola, Juliet, Cordelia, Imogen, Desdemona, Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth, with the vast range of human emotions they expressed, were played by incredibly versatile boy actors, whose voices had not yet broken.

This means that automatically a certain degree of ambiguity is introduced in the presentation of masculine and feminine gender in Shakespeare’s comedies, histories and tragedies. The fixed, binary nature of gender – either masculine or feminine – is disrupted by the convention of the boy actor and Shakespeare’s dramatic use of disguise through cross-dressing. There is a built-in complexity to his women, not necessarily present in the male characters simply because they embody both male and female qualities.

An even more complex picture is created in cases where the boy who played a girl then pretended to be a young man, as is the case of Julia in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Viola (Cesario) in *Twelfth Night* and Rosalind (Ganymede) in *As You Like It*, Portia in the *Merchant of Venice* and Imogen in *Cymbeline*.

This multiple ‘role-play’, based on disguise, allows Shakespeare to experiment with gender, and, in particular, to extend the boundaries of male and female.

It is this bold ‘gender bending’ on the stage that made the municipal authorities of London persecute the actors; for the local authorities and the puritans of Elizabethan London, the theatre’s presentation of boys as girls and girls as boys disturbed the established order. A boy dressed as a girl disturbed the established order; a boy dressed as a girl who then pretends to
be a boy who pretends to be a girl disrupts the social order even more profoundly. This is what happens in *As You Like It* with the role of Rosalind.

But it is not only the *form* of the plays that is subversive: it is also *what women say* that shakes the established patriarchal order.

**Comedy: the equality debate**

In the *Comedy of Errors*, possibly Shakespeare’s earliest comedy, the unruly Adriana – referring to men – asks her conservative sister: ‘Why should their liberty than ours be more?’ Adriana is reacting to her husband’s freewheeling life about town while she is stuck virtuously at home. Her more conventional sister defends the role of men in controlling women’s passions (‘will’, here, refers to desire but also to sexual passion):

> LUCIANA  
> O, know he is the bridle of your will.

> ADRIANA  
> There's none but asses will be bridled so.  
> (*The Comedy of Errors* Act 2 Sc 1)

The plays that follow the *Comedy of Errors* explore and negotiate the question ‘why should their liberty than ours be more’? And they explore the conflicting claims made by these two sisters.

The issues of equality and submission are debated in the *Taming of the Shrew*: an irate father wishes to marry his daughter off by force. The bridegroom-to-be is a dowry hunter; the girl is an extension of the father’s property. The daughter, Katerina, resists and in her battle with the male chauvinist, Petruchio, who tries to tame her, she gives as much as she takes, in terms of blows and insults.

In the end she submits, and marries her tamer. She says, addressing herself to women:

> KATERINA  
> Such duty as the subject owes the prince  
> Even such a woman oweth to her husband  
> (*The Taming of the Shrew* Act 5 Sc 2)

Does Shakespeare present this submission sincerely or ironically?
The controversial ending of the Shrew goes against the progressive currents of thought of that time – both in the theatre and in humanist or even puritan philosophy. It also goes against the spirit and letter of Shakespeare’s work, as we shall see.

The early modern – or ‘Renaissance’ – view of gender referred to a greater balance and reciprocity between male and female – albeit within the religiously- and culturally-loaded framework of marriage.

That the ending of the Shrew is ironic and not to be taken at face value (as regards the submission of the female) is suggested by the words of Adriana in the Comedy of Errors – ‘why should their liberty than ours be more?’ and ‘only asses will be bridled so’ – as well as all the plays that followed. These plays present a more complex view of the role of women in society than that suggested by Katerina’s apparent submission,

The fact is that for Katerina there is no escape: she’s trapped. There is no dream forest or disguise to hide in or to transform her oppression to empowerment, as there is, as we shall discover later, in A Midsummer Night’s Dream and As You Like It

Thus, in comedy, the conflicts of gender end in a harmony, based on marriage, which is frequently unconvincing: a harmony which is forced onto difficult theatrical material.

**What happens in tragedy? Tragedy and the woman as property**

Romeo and Juliet includes the familiar motif of a father – Capulet – attempting to impose patriarchal authority by force as he attempts to marry off his daughter, 14-year old Juliet. Her father threatens her with violence and treats her like an extension of his real estate; he refers to her as ‘baggage’. Overpowered by the discovery of her own adolescent sexuality, Juliet resists her father and social convention and takes the brave decision to fulfil her love for Romeo:

**JULIET**

Come, civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
Hood my unmann’d blood, bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle, till strange love grow bold,
Think true love acted simple modesty.
Come, night, come, Romeo, come, thou day in night;
Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow’d night,
Give me my Romeo...

*(Romeo and Juliet Act 3 sc. 2)*
But this is not comedy; there is no wood and no disguise in which lovers can lose themselves or reinvent themselves. Juliet does not manage to impose her personal choice but she does make the adults and political authorities recognise the error of their ways and to blame masculine violence for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

_A Midsummer Night’s Dream_ begins with an explosion of anger from a father who wishes to impose his will on his daughter, with the help of the Athenian state and its draconian laws. Hermia (a reincarnation of Juliet) is threatened with the loss of freedom, an imposed chastity and even death if she doesn’t accept the husband chosen for her by her father.

DUKE THESEUS

Either to die the death or to abjure
For ever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires;

_(A Midsummer Night’s Dream Act 1 sc. 1)_

As with Adriana, Katerina and Juliet, the female, Hermia, is expected to tame her passions, to channel them where patriarchy dictates. Hermia refuses this cruel choice. An escape is provided in the wood near Athens, the wood where dreams are free. There, eroticism as allowed free play and (pre-)‘Freudian’ fantasies are allowed to roam freely through the forest. In the end, the couples return to court or conventional society and they all marry and all’s right with the world. The girls, Hermia and Helena, do get their way and their man: the fantastic wood has facilitated the successful expression of their personal wishes. But the conventions of the real world remain in place.

In the case of Portia in the _Merchant of Venice_, her father tries to shape her choice of partner even after his death, through the device of the caskets: gold, silver and lead. The correct choice intended by Portia’s father is that the right man for her should choose on the basis of love and respect for the girl’s personality and not for money and power; thus, lead is the correct choice. This marks some progress in the view of woman as property and an attempt to rein in the dowry-hunting instinct of the men, best shown in Petruchio in the Shrew who admits – or boasts – that he comes to Padua to ‘wive it wealthily’.

Notice that when Portia is disguised as a man she acquires power over herself and the world of men, a world dominated by money, racial conflict and debt. It is Portia’s hybrid masculine/feminine judgement that saves the hapless and useless men, Bassanio and Antonio,
from death – and resolves the conflict between the debtor and the moneylender on the basis of the law, but of humane justice, too.

Compared to the dull, one-dimensional Bassanio, Portia, both as a woman and when disguised as a man, shows a richness of personality that the men cannot compete with. One wonders how happy this intelligent and complex woman will be with her new husband. How happy is the happy ending of this so-called comedy?

**As you like it: several types of ambiguity**

In *As You Like It*, these patterns of gender and power are developed even more fully than in previous plays. Celia and Rosalind are cousins. Celia’s father banishes Rosalind as part of his feud with her father over property and power. Celia expressing female solidarity with Rosalind and escapes with her to the forest of Arden. Rosalind is disguised as a young man.

This disguise allows her to experiment with her identity. Rosalind shuttles back and forth from feminine to masculine and she acquires, as do the audience, greater understanding of what it means to be both male and female. Thus, we have a good example of the way the custom of the boy actor gave Shakespeare an opportunity to explore the nature of gender.

The theatrical device of the boy actor was a social necessity, but Shakespeare turned it to good advantage. It gave Shakespeare an opportunity to endow women with masculine attitudes and skills, in combination with feminine qualities. Thus, when Rosalind speaks to Phoebe and to Orlando as Ganymede she goes back and forth from one gender to the other, taking in – literally ‘embodying’ – an ever greater range of human emotions and behavioural potential.

Her game of love and marriage with Orlando, disguised as she is as Ganymede (the beautiful boy-servant of the gods of Olympus) highlights the fluidity of gender roles in the play. This gender-bending recalls sonnet 20, the famous ‘master-mistress’ sonnet:

A woman's face with nature's own hand painted,  
Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion…

Rosalind doesn’t only change her appearance; she changes her identity and she redefines the choices open to her. Like Portia, Rosalind shows initiative, she solves problems, she is in control. All this is made possible while the interlude in the forest of Arden lasts and before the return to the patriarchal conventions of the city. With the return to normality, the fantasy of transformation ends. The fluid nature of gender is re-stabilized. The free woman in love in
the forest is contained and constrained as she returns to the urban world of marriage conventions and the re-assertion of the patriarchal system. Rosalind’s last speeches are a ‘voluntary’ re-entry into patriarchy; to both father and husband she says:

ROSALIND

To you I give myself for I am yours

(As You Like It, Act 5 Sc 4)

But before Rosalind’s return to social convention, she and the play have performed for us a kind of desire which is rich and ambiguous. But the performance of a liberated sexuality is confined to the forest, far removed from the reality of power and rigid social hierarchies. But the world of alternative possibilities remains as a half-explored potential. It cannot be erased from the art form, the poetic theatre of the mysterious William Shakespeare.

**The music of love in Twelfth Night**

The story of gender ambiguity is taken up in Shakespeare’s next great comedy: *Twelfth Night*. The date in the title refers to epiphany: this date was originally a Catholic holiday and it had become a day of revelry and social disorder. Servants often dressed up as their masters and men as women. It was a day of carnivalesque festivity, when the world was turned upside down.

The place, Illyria, is a place where strange things can happen, where the normal order is subverted. It is a place of passion, like the wood in a *Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *As You Like It*, where the madness of love reigns.

The character who embodies the master-mistress in this play is Viola: in her disguise as a young man – Cesario – she falls in love with Orsino, who begins by being in love with Olivia and ends up with Cesario-Viola. Olivia marries Viola’s twin, Sebastian and Sir Toby marries Maria. The place, Illyria, is like the magic flower of Cupid in a *Midsummer Night’s Dream*: it literally makes people mad with love.

Shakespeare once again uses the device of disguise as a pretext to explore the nature of women and to subvert gender stereotypes. Viola, pretending to be a man, demonstrates she can do what men do quite successfully: to take initiatives, solve problems and in the end, to be a more complete woman/human being than if she had not played the part of Cesario. As in all of the comedies, at the end, we return to reality, but it is not a return to things as they were
before the play. Viola, like Rosalind, identifies with her role and she is so closely integrated with it that Shakespeare finds it difficult to return her to everyday routine.

The ending is awkward, as is often the case in Shakespeare’s comedies and problem plays: the harmony of comedy is forced, far-fetched – it does not accommodate the Viola who has grown before our eyes. The girl’s conventional clothes no longer fit Viola or Rosalind – they are both more developed characters, more three-dimensional, when they pretend to be young men than when they return to everyday reality and their ‘maid’s garments’. From the moment Viola begins to return to her conventional female identity she says less; when Orsino decides to make her his ‘mistress’ she, this most eloquent and voluble of master-mistresses, falls completely silent; as does Isabella, in Measure for Measure, when she, too, is married off.

The men who are assigned to them in marriage – Orlando and Orsino – seem too small for them, one-dimensional: is Olivia really going to be happy with a monosyllabic and dull Sebastian? Is Orsino really going to settle down happily with a wife who was more exciting and more intelligent when disguised as a man?

The men too, it seems, are in need of transformation.

**Desdemona**

Desdemona in Othello asserts her right to choose her man, lover and husband, Othello, the moor of Venice, against her father’s wishes. She is one of the boldest of Shakespeare’s women – she has the courage to break the boundaries of family, society and race, in choosing a black outsider. She insists on going with him to the war zone of Cyprus, where she hopes to live freely with her chosen partner in life. She is, as Othello calls her, a ‘warrior’, not ‘a moth of peace’. But Cyprus is not the forest of Arden. It is a place of strife. In Cyprus, masculine and indeed military authority rule: the ‘moth of peace’, Desdemona, is crushed by masculine violence. What happens to the combative Desdemona of the opening of the play?

The tragedy begins in Venice. It stems from Desdemona’s transfer of her conventional female submissiveness from her father to her husband. She rejects her father’s authority but accepts Othello’s, for the sake of love. The seeds of Desdemona’s tragedy are sown from the beginning, when she transfers her loyalty from one male ‘lord’ – her father – to another: her husband. She submits her will to the male so when the time comes to resist she is powerless, speechless. She has handed in her weapons: when Othello treats her unjustly she is silent, consistent with the traditional role of women. Desdemona is the victim of woman’s silent submission to patriarchy.
Notice the key words in Desdemona’s speech to her father:

**DESDEMONA**

My noble father,
I do perceive here a divided *duty*:
To you I am *bound* for life and education;
My life and education both do learn me
How to respect you; you are the *lord of duty*;
I am hitherto your daughter: but here's my husband,
And so much *duty* as my mother show'd
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor *my lord*.
*(Othello Act 1 Sc 3)*

If Desdemona has agreed to be dutiful and silent, even when she is wronged by gender violence, her servant, Emilia is not; she is articulate in her defence of women in words which recall those of Adriana in *The Comedy of Errors*.

**EMILIA**

I will not charm my tongue;
I am bound to speak

Emilia questions and rejects the silence of women when she sees the unjust consequences of this silence:

**EMILIA**

Let husbands know
Their wives have sense like them: they see and smell
And have their palates both for sweet and sour,
As husbands have. What is it that they do
When they change us for others? Is it sport?
I think it is: and doth affection breed it?
I think it doth: is't frailty that thus errs?
It is so too: and have not we affections,
Desires for sport, and frailty, as men have?
Then let them use us well: else let them know,
The ills we do, their ills instruct us so.
*(Othello Act 5 Sc 2)*

But unfortunately, *Othello* is a tragedy and the wood that gives silence meaning and voice – and gives women the chance to activate their potential – is absent.
**Conclusion**

Feminism in Shakespeare is expressed by the constant expansion of the limits of masculine and feminine, but particularly the feminine. The device of disguise or cross-dressing redefines the way the audience sees the potential of women and enriches their repertoire of roles. Society in the real world does not change but it is undermined and subverted in the poetic world of the play, in the exploratory, experimental nature of Shakespeare’s theatre. When the play is over, things can never be quite the same again.

In other words, the radical dimension of Shakespeare’s work does not lie in specific proposals for a new social order. It is to be found, rather, in the characteristic polyphony of his theatre – the multiplicity of perspectives and voices with which women are presented; the drama is a site full of conflict and contradictions that need to be resolved; but we are often left with a fluidity and an open-endedness, in spite of attempts to fix and tie up the loose ends tidily, according to prevailing conventions of marriage and property. There is no political social or feminist manifesto in Shakespeare, though Lear on the wild heath, in the storm, which is both real and spiritual, exposes and denounces the system of power and property that makes injustice possible. Shakespeare is of his time and ahead of his time. His plays and the tensions and the contradictions we find in them (the case of Shylock, the view of the ‘foreigner’ and of women are the most vivid examples of these tensions) reflect the thought categories of the time but as great poetry and great humanist poetry and in the dramatic structures that good theatre requires, they raise questions about conventional attitudes and challenge lazy stereotypes. Readers of all political persuasions can find in Shakespeare evidence for their point of view (reactionary/radical, bourgeois/popular, monarchist/Republican, conservative/progressive and so on). But, as Juliet Stevenson, the great Shakespearean actor/actress put it: ‘It’s irrelevant what Shakespeare was. The fact is the plays, like *As You Like It* and the *Dream*, ask the most anarchic questions. They don’t attempt to resolve them’.

Today in the 21st century, what do these plays have to tell us about the role of women in society? Let us not forget that there are, at this moment, millions of women trapped in the tyranny of conventions of dress and behaviour imposed by men on women; women trapped in the suffocating roles men allow them, women trapped in invisibility and silence:
New forced marriage law comes into effect in Scotland

"The introduction of this legislation will help us ensure that forced marriage has no place in the 21st Century…

"This law will mean that victims of forced marriage will no longer be alone and have to suffer in silence. By passing this law the Scottish government has given a voice to a silent minority…”

(BBC.co.uk/News/UK-Scotland, Nov.28, 2011)

NOTE: I would like to thank Richard E. Wilson for the lively discussion we had following the presentation of my talk at IATEFL, Birmingham. His comments have informed the final paragraph of the article.

Further reading


Shakespeare, Feminism and Gender – ed. Kate Chedgzoy (2001, Macmillan)


As She Likes It – Penny Gay (Routledge, 1994)


Shakespeare and the Nature of Women – Juliet Dusinberre (1975, Macmillan)

Dr Luke Prodromou is the co-author of Dealing with Difficulties. Luke graduated from Bristol University and has an MA in Shakespeare Studies (Birmingham University), a Diploma in TEFIL (Leeds University) and a PhD (Nottingham University). He wrote English as a Lingua Franca, (2010). He is: a member of a Greek theatre group (composed mostly of unruly women), one half of the Dave’n’Luke English Language Theatre group and a member of the Disabled Access-Friendly campaign. His latest coursebook is Flash on (for Italy).

lukep@otenet.gr
Shakespeare for all Ages at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

Lisa Peter

*The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust*

If you visit William Shakespeare's birthplace on Henley Street in Stratford-upon-Avon, you will pass a big red brick building that houses the ticket desks and the exhibition that gets you in the right mood before you enter the timber-framed house that once belonged to John Shakespeare, William’s glove-making father. What many visitors don’t know is that this building also houses the headquarters of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, the organisation that looks after the nation’s first literary heritage site and curates one of the most outstanding collections of Shakespeare-related documents and museum objects. In addition, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust is also an educational charity and with its mission to lead the world’s enjoyment and understanding of Shakespeare, the Learning and Participation team work hard to share their enthusiasm with learners of all ages – from 5 to 95.

My colleagues who work predominantly with young learners focus on heritage education, introducing British primary school children to the every-day lives of the Tudors, following little William's footsteps through Stratford and out at Mary Arden's Farm where his mother grew up.

The hands-on, experiential learning approach we are known for is also something that characterises our biggest learning project to-date, Shakespeare Week. Launched for the anniversary of Shakespeare’s 450th birthday in 2014, our national campaign to celebrate Shakespeare in primary schools has by now reached more than 1.9 million children in almost 13,000 primary schools. Originally conceived for children in the UK, by now many, many schools from abroad have decided to join in, as it is easy to do, for free and gives you access to lots of ideas and teaching materials around the Bard that can be used beyond the English classroom: we have plenty of materials for maths lessons, history, cooking, sports, music and so on, so that the entire school can join in with your Shakespeare celebrations. So if you would like to join in with your school during our Shakespeare Week 2017 take a look at the
website and register – and be part of a growing international community of schools that celebrate Shakespeare for young learners! The next dates are March 20-26 2017.

Of course primary school offers are by no means the only sessions we have for school-age learners. Indeed, the majority of classes at the Shakespeare Centre are for secondary school students, closely tailored to the UK curriculum for GCSE and A-level exams. In the last couple of years, we have started to expand into developing sessions and workshops for language learners, as so many schools from abroad stop at the Birthplace during their school trips to England for a day of Shakespeare-focused learning.

Whether they are just setting out on their journey of learning English, or whether they are already gearing up to continue their studies at university level, our programmes offer something for all levels: from short, warm welcomes to Shakespeare’s Stratford to introductory talks that explore what we know about England's most famous writer as fact and what we need to assume about his life, to an overview of how much modern English owes to his way with words, or an exploration of the darker side of Shakespeare's tragedies, students from all over the world enjoy our sessions and, what is more, they leave with that bit more information about Britain’s most famous writer.

We even organise longer courses for schools that would like to stay a bit and explore Shakespeare’s plays in more depth. Bespoke residential courses combine visits to the Royal Shakespeare Company with workshops, interactive talks and sessions to immerse your students both in English and in Elizabethan theatre. These residential courses are also available to universities and we've been able to build excellent relationships with many universities abroad, from the US to Finland to France, many of which have been bringing their students for decades.

For those students and teachers who cannot come to Stratford in person, digital solutions are available: whether you would like us to skype into your classroom, are looking for teaching resources or would like to participate in one of our free Massive Open Online Courses, these are all accessible from around the world, and just a click away.

Should you wish to explore Shakespeare yourself in Stratford, why not take a look at our Living Shakespeare courses or our Winter School for adult enthusiasts, which run several times a year and are a perfect meeting point for Shakespeare fans from all over the world. If you are looking for professional development, feel free to drop us a line, as we are currently in the process of designing teacher training courses for ELT.
As you can see, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust is more than just a museum or a heritage site. In fact, we are one of the few literary heritage organisations that cover such a range of activities for all ages, and for all levels of expertise both in terms of language proficiency and previous knowledge about Shakespeare. If you want to know more about what we do or would like to get in touch, please do not hesitate to send me an email.

lisa.peter@shakespeare.org.uk

Useful Links
http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/
http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/visit/mary-ardens-farm/
http://shakespeareweek.org.uk/
https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/education/efl/
https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/education/high-schools-universities/
https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/education/resources/skype-shakespeare/
http://shakespeareresources.com/
https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/moocs/
https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/leisure-courses/

Who is who in the LMCS SIG Committee

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What are the benefits of using film in the language classroom?

Kieran Donaghy

As delivery technologies have advanced from film reels to the versatility of videos, DVDs and laserdiscs, this has meant that teachers, essentially for the first time, could easily bring film and video into the classroom. Additionally, with the advent of digital video, streaming and the emergence of video sharing sites such as YouTube and Vimeo, whereby teachers and students can watch film and video anytime and anywhere they have internet access, the use of film in the classroom has risen steadily over the last 30 years. Video streaming means that teachers can now show a film without having to locate the film in a library or buy it, reserve the equipment needed to play it on or fight for the only copy of it in the staffroom. Teachers can now search for the content they need on any computer with an internet connection, find the content they need from a myriad of resources, and play it at their convenience. In this article I am going to explore the benefits of using film in language learning:

Motivation

One of the main benefits of using film in language teaching is that it is highly motivating and relates to the students’ lives. Students engage with moving images constantly outside the classroom, are knowledgeable about them, and enjoy watching them. As watching videos, films and TV series is an integral part of our students’ lives – indeed, one of the main motivations for many students is to have access to English language videos, films and television series – it makes sense to bring them into the language classroom. Film, as a motivator, also makes the language learning process more entertaining and enjoyable. Films are designed to appeal directly to people’s emotions. The motivational qualities of video in language learning can be even more enhanced if students are encouraged to create their own films. In our multimedia and multimodal world, producing moving image texts is intrinsically motivating to students. For many young people, one of their motivations for learning English may well be to create remix videos and other media in English in order to become part of the global participatory culture, which uses English as its lingua franca. Students are usually highly enthusiastic, and prepared to put in a huge amount of time and effort when working on a moving image project because it is their own and it has a tangible result. Even students who are normally disaffected and disengaged are happy to work on moving image projects in their
own time, and often achieve excellent results. Expensive equipment is no longer need to make a video – students can create very good short videos and films with a mobile phone or tablet. They can also edit them, using a mobile device or computer. Film creation can be done in class – as the main activity – or at home – as a follow-up activity.

**Creativity**

Creativity is becoming an increasingly valued skill in the modern-day workplace, and young people who can create texts in a variety of media will be in demand and much more likely to succeed. Film-making is a highly creative process. As Nikos Theodosakis states: ‘Filmmaking is about creativity. It is about looking at a question and approaching it, exploring it, investigating it from different perspectives and different points of view.’

Communication technologies now provide students with many more genuine opportunities for authentic expressions and creativity, using moving images in which they become media producers in their own right. As Carey Jewitt points out: ‘digital technologies, and visual communication more generally, offer young people new forms of power and agency within the communicational landscape.’

Digital technologies have fundamentally changed moving image media production and dissemination. The digitisation of moving image media, greater computer capability and broadband internet connection mean that students can work collaboratively with moving images. Giving students the opportunity to create their own moving image texts in the classroom is important, as it supports their learning by forcing them to express their thinking and clarify what they need to learn. This capacity of new technologies to provide young people with creative ways to engage with cultural resources needs to be exploited fully in language education, by ensuring that students have the opportunity to make moving image texts not just watch them. There has to be a shift in language education towards an emphasis on creative production which takes advantage of the emergence of these new digital tools, and the increased access to affordable filming and editing equipment.

**Authentic language**

Another vital benefit of using film is that it provides a source of authentic and varied language. Films are authentic material and provide students with genuine input which helps them see the foreign language used in ‘real’ situations outside the classroom. Film can be a useful way to help students acquire a language rather than learn it consciously. Film also provides students with authentically interactive language, the language of real-life
conversation. ‘Interaction’ is recognised in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as one of the major areas of language competence, along with Production, Reception and Mediation. However, interactive language is not normally covered thoroughly in coursebooks, which usually focus on more formal language. As a result, students are often unable to produce natural spoken English, and have a limited repertoire of functional language and colloquial expressions. Film exposes students to these natural expressions and the natural flow of speech. If they are not living in an English-speaking environment, perhaps only film, video and television can provide them with this real-life language input. As Jane Sherman states, students ‘need such exposure because to learn to speak to people they must see and hear people speaking to each other’.

**Visuality**

The visuality of film makes it an invaluable language teaching tool. This visuality means that students often understand much more because language is interpreted in a full visual context, which helps them by supporting the verbal message and provides a focus of attention while they listen. Because of the wealth of visual information and stimuli it provides, film contributes to the development of learning strategies such as predicting or guessing from the context, inferring ideas, and a chance to activate background schemata. Film assists the students’ comprehension by enabling them to listen to language exchanges and see such visual supports as facial expressions and gestures simultaneously – supporting the verbal message and providing a focus of attention. Weaker students may also understand more, as they are offered another channel of comprehension. People learn abstract and new concepts better when presented in both verbal and visual form. Film can make it easier to teach such concepts in the language classroom because of this visuality. Film is also a good way of teaching vocabulary related to a certain theme by contextualising the vocabulary.

**Intercultural communication**

Films are excellent at communicating cultural values, customs, attitudes, behaviour and religious beliefs, and increasing language students’ intercultural understanding. In the words of Alan Maley: ‘Film also offers an enlargement of our knowledge of the world and the cultures it contains. It is in the broadest sense ‘educational.’’ Video and film have a unique capacity for the development of cultural understanding. By watching films made and set in their own country, students can better understand their own culture. Watching films made and set in other cultures can help them to develop an awareness of sameness and difference which is essential to cultural understanding. Film has an incredible capacity to bring a wide range of
diverse cultural ideas into play in the classroom. Teachers can help to give students a broader understanding of other cultures by introducing a broad range of film. ‘Intercultural communicative competence’ refers to the ability to understand cultures, including one’s own, and use this understanding to communicate successfully with people from other cultures. It is increasingly recognised that learning a foreign language involves not only fostering linguistic competence but also intercultural communicative competence, in order to be able to deal effectively and appropriately with cultural diversity. One of the primary aims of second language acquisition is to facilitate students’ communication with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The importance of intercultural communicative competence in our globalised world is also reflected in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which argues that teachers should develop not just their students’ communicative language competences, but also their intercultural competence. Using films from the target-language culture in the language classroom is a very effective way to help language students understand different cultures. As Deborah Chan and Carmen Herrero state: ‘Films are perfect vehicles for introducing students to different types of popular culture and engaging them with critical questions about the relationship between information and power, through the critical analysis of sociopolitical issues and intercultural relationships.’

**Variety and flexibility**

Film can bring variety and flexibility to the language classroom by extending the range of resources and teaching techniques, helping students to develop all four communicative skills. This, in turn, provides a framework for classroom communication and discussion, and can ultimately involve them in creative film-making projects.

The different roles of film in the language learning classroom can supply the teacher with a variety of techniques. Ben Goldstein and Paul Driver identify four main roles of moving images in language teaching:

- Firstly, there can be a language focus— when new or recently introduced words are encountered in context in a film sequence.
- Secondly, film can be used for skills practice – a whole film or a sequence is used to practise listening and (to a lesser extent) reading, and as a model for speaking and (to a lesser extent) writing.
- A third role is as a stimulus – where film acts as a springboard for follow-up tasks such as discussions, debates on social issues, roleplays, reconstructing a dialogue or summarising.
- The fourth role is as a resource – in which the film provides the students with the content for subsequent tasks which will increasingly involve them in making their own films.
It is possible to bring further variety to the language learning classroom by screening different types of film – feature-length films, short sequences of films, short films, adverts and a whole array of digital video content, as we shall be discussing.

As I have suggested, film and video are excellent resources for teachers to use in the language classroom. They can motivate, expose students to a wide range of authentic language, aid comprehension, improve intercultural understanding, and add variety and flexibility. As the moving image becomes ever more dominant in our society, film and video and learner-created film and video will become a central focus in the language classroom.

Bibliography


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Do comprehension questions and language tasks kill the pleasure of reading?

Lena Vaneyran

When looking at the thorny issue of how to teach literary texts effectively, educators differentiate between extensive and intensive (close) reading (Carter, 2007). Comprehension questions and language tasks are traditionally associated with the latter; on the other hand, extensive reading is generally supposed go without them because they are said to impede the natural response to a book. Nevertheless, it can be argued that not only may appropriate comprehension questions and language tasks contribute to both extensive and close reading outcomes, but they also reinforce the learner’s pleasure from reading literature. To examine the merits of this statement let us first of all look at what is meant by ‘the pleasure of reading’.

For the reader ‘the pleasure of reading’ involves various things, from a sense of achievement to intellectual appreciation and emotional understanding. The sense of achievement would be more typical of lower-level students who start practising extensive reading, for example, using graded readers, when they feel they can follow the story (Day, 2002; Prowse, 2002; Pulverness, 2007). In other words, there is a perception that extensive reading, to become pleasurable, is supposed to be reasonably easy and fluent, whereas comprehension questions and language tasks might slow it down. The principles of extensive reading may also be applicable to learners reading authentic texts which are presumably easier to ‘appropriate’, in the sense that the reader is free to define the meaning, the tone etc. without losing something important. Moreover, the celebration of a victory over the text will be accompanied by intellectual and emotional response to it; however, ‘comprehension questions are neither of these’ (Prowse, 2002); they turn reading into ‘an activity that has no relevance to real knowledge and experience and therefore no real meaning’ (Widdowson, 1979, cited in Prowse, 2002).

Be that as it may, there might some problems here. Despite the declared easiness and fluency principle, materials used for extensive reading, notably adaptations, are not always easy in terms of their content, although their language is graded. Let us take the case of a Russian teenager approaching *Gulliver’s Travels* (Penguin Readers). Given that she really wanted to get through not only Lilliput, which girls generally approve of, but also the country of the
Houyhnhnms, she needed some explanations, preferably in the form of ‘Socratic’ questions eliciting the meaning of Swift’s satire, rather than standard tasks provided in the book. As it turned out, nobody was there for her to ask for help, so she became disappointed and put the book aside. Thus in some cases comprehension questions plus an interlocutor are desirable even with extensive reading.

The same happens when less experienced readers, even though of higher levels of language proficiency, face more complex authentic texts. Often a text contains a message which I as a reader cannot relate to my own experience and expectations, to my cultural ‘schemata’. Strictly speaking, I have the human right to play this down because literature is 'a free country', but it is no good for me. For example, consider E.M. Forster’s ‘Howards End’ (1910): for a Russian reader brought up on Russian literature of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries with its special attention and sympathy to the ‘little man’, it is really difficult to understand both the author’s attitude to Leonard Bast and Leonard’s role in the novel. However, a more competent reader might, so to speak, relish cognitive dissonance and acknowledge that this point needs further clarification, whereas a less competent one might just feel unhappy and reject the book. Although such a reaction would be valid as an emotional response, it would hardly enhance the reader’s experience. Obviously, if literature is the way to broaden horizons, it cannot always be easy, especially when it comes to cultural and historical interference.

Nevertheless, some educators (Rinvolucr, 2008) stress the uselessness of comprehension questions even far beyond the realm of extensive reading, arguing that 'the normal act of listening or reading is always one of deletion, elaboration and transformation', so why not either omit comprehension questions completely or let students create their own. That might work in a perfect world; however, in reality learners are not always able to formulate effective questions. Without relevant skills, they tend to check each other’s comprehension asking 'And what did she say next?' – ‘And what did he answer?’ Speaking from personal experience, teachers sometimes do the same. In this way we might come to the necessity of raising, first, our own, and second, our students’ critical thinking skills and reading competence, which would substantially reinforce the pleasure of discussing literature as part of the reading experience. At the same time, this would eliminate traces of a patronising attitude towards learners associated with questions ‘from Capitan Obvious’.
There appears to be a category of less competent readers who have in a foreign language situation the same problems as they would have in L1. If only they read poems, stories, novels and so on; however, they don’t. More specifically, for some adult Russian learners reading literature in English becomes their first experience of close, as well as extensive, reading, and surprisingly, some of them come to appreciate this opportunity. Presumably, this means that in a foreign language situation strategies for deepening close reading skills, which are developed for the L1 situation (for example, Beers and Probst, 2013), might be as helpful as extensive reading, where similar strategies are introduced gradually on the material of both books written specially for language learners and adaptations (Pulverness, 2007). This brings us back to the desirability of effective comprehension questions.

Educators and researchers in the field (Hall, 2015), show us that when it comes to complex authentic texts, the higher the critical thinking and reading skills that the learner has, the more likely they will appreciate comprehension questions helping them to read the text interactively in order to 'create or construct meaning' (Day, 2002). I mean comprehension questions in the broad sense, as defined and classified by Day: 1) literal comprehension, 2) reorganisation, 3) inference, 4) prediction, 5) evaluation and 6) personal response (Day, 2005). Any of these stages can be omitted if appropriate. Interestingly, in my experience, competent readers love to be stretched between levels, and have fun switching from extensive reading to difficult authentic texts, from being playful to ‘no pain – no gain’.

Considering language tasks it has been noticed that trained, skilful, competent or 'point-driven' readers (as opposed to story- and information-driven), 'also tend to have more accurate memory for linguistic surface' (Hall, 2015, loc. 3811). I assume, in addition, such readers are more likely to either think about the meaning of linguistic features they have spotted, or appreciate language tasks aimed at considering them. This means that either language tasks aimed at using language ‘in creative and meaningful ways’ (Lima, 2015, p. 4) may be integrated into the study of the text by the teacher, or students might ask their own questions. More advanced foreign language readers seem to find both these approaches intellectually and emotionally satisfying and rewarding. Going back to lower levels of language ability, the same principles could be applicable, with the difference that the density of new words in extensive reading is in principle lower than in authentic texts and linguistic features are necessarily less elaborate.
Sometimes it is difficult to draw a line between comprehension questions and language tasks. For example, considering the 'theatrical' opening of Pride and Prejudice, 'It is a truth universally acknowledged…', the reader may feel that the linguistic side and meaning of the novel are inseparable and question the text, maybe in their own words though, “Whose voice and views are we listening to here, what status or value should we grant them, and what does Jane Austen think?” (Keymer, 2013, loc.395). Moreover, at one particular point comprehension and an acquired bit of linguistic competence coincide, namely, when we read out / act / perform a poem or a prose or dramatic passage – because when we 'say it', we celebrate co-creation of meaning. However, in most cases it would be strange to start from this; it is much more valuable when learners put into their interpretation what they have learned from a discussion (for example, Burghout, 2015, p. 6), because it is 'according to the capabilities of the reader' that 'books have their destiny'.

To sum up, well-crafted comprehension questions and language tasks are essential ingredients to help students of various levels of linguistic and reading competence read with delight. They make it possible to bridge gaps between extensive reading and complex authentic texts, between the learner’s foreign language and L1 experiences, between different cultural and historical contexts. With the help of a skilful interlocutor who can talk literature learners have an opportunity to overcome the boredom of ignorance and insensitivity to lives of others, developing a holistic view of the diverse world.

References


Lena Vanyeran was one of the teachers who attended the LMCS Online Teacher Development Course on Teaching Literature and Language in October 2015. The present article was developed from a blog post she produced for the course.

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**Review: Beggar in Bogotá. And other stories and moments**

Author: **Andrew Wright**  
Obtainable from andrew@ili.hu  
Reviewed by Philip Prowse

This collection of 45 pieces is described on the cover and title page as being made up of ‘stories and moments’. The Foreword makes the distinction clear: ‘I revel in those relatively short glimpses of the manifestation of individuality when a short interaction seems to contain a sample of the intensity of a lifetime. Sometimes these short interactions contain an element of development and change, and sometimes there is no development but a moment: hence my reference to “stories” and “moments”.’ So the length of each piece in the book under review varies from ten or more pages to a paragraph or two.

The Foreword continues with a plea: ‘I would be grateful if you did not arrive at my collection of stories with a specific notion of what a story should be.’ This reviewer admits to coming to the collection with two presuppositions: the first that it be read for pleasure and enlightenment, as literature, and the second, in the context of the journal in which this review appears, that it be read as stimulus/input material for English language learning.

For the general reader there is much on offer to enjoy. The author explains that the stories have two sources: ‘Some of the stories happened to me and others have been told to me, and have become my stories because I have felt so involved in them.’ While the point of view is sometimes an ‘I-narrator’ and sometimes third-person, we can guess with varying degrees of certainty which fall into which category (and there are occasional footnotes to help us.) At the simplest level, the collection enables us to indulge in vicarious globe-trotting as we follow the author to exotic parts of the world, sharing his insights and experience events as he saw them. At a more complex level, it offers glimpses of humanity and mortality enhanced by the author’s interpretation of them as an itinerant. It is no coincidence that many of the brief interactions take place on trains, in the street, in bars or hotels. A chance encounter with a blind mother on a Hungarian train in *Girl on a train* (pp.27-29), childhood racial abuse of an old woman in *Nigger* (p.49) and an invitation to under-age sex at a brothel in *You Like Chicken?* (pp. 85-88) all raise questions in the reader’s mind. Questions about the issues...
themselves, about the people involved, and about the story – what happened next? The author leaves the answers up to us, and his occasional attempts to get chance acquaintances to stay in touch with him by letter all fail.

So, at face value, this is a collection of stories which will intrigue, delight and provide insights into an array of cultures and situations. But it is much more than that, in providing the stimulus to thought and reaction referred to above. This is fertile language teaching territory and the tales are mediated in language the author has used in their oral telling and retelling. This unconsciously restricted code, despite a wide and rich lexicon, makes them eminently accessible to the upper intermediate and advanced learner of English.

There has been a healthy awareness in some circles over the last half-century of the value of brief literary extracts as a stimulus to language learning, but this has often been drowned in the hubbub of wider methodological debate. Materials developed in the 1960s and intended for use in UK secondary schools were soon re-purposed for the ESL and EFL classrooms. Clements, S. J. Dixon and L. Stratta (1963) and Clements, S. J. Dixon L. Stratta and R. Mayne (1967) are collections of fiction and non-fiction, poetry and prose extracts from an amazing range of sources, from Lawrence to Larkin, from Churchill to Sassoon, from Steinbeck to Baldwin, accompanied by photographs and ideas for discussion and written activities. The texts provided springboards into active language use and acquisition, as did two subsequent publications directly intended for the EFL world. The first was Tomlinson (1986) with an even more eclectic choice of authors and extracts (from Wole Soyinka to Tom Stoppard), organized, as were the two previous titles, thematically, with a strong pedagogical support structure of activities. These are also features of Maley (1995), which in addition to an excellently chosen medley of extracts also includes some self-written texts, and (pp.3-7) a most useful set of ‘Twelve Generalisable Procedures’. The texts, as the title implies, go from one-liners, through limericks, letters, dreams and revue sketches to short stories.

Sadly, to the best of this reviewer’s knowledge, none of the above are still in print. So what an opportunity we have with Beggar in Bogota, with its range of short appealing texts. In a review of 45 stories, only a few can be singled out for mention and each reader will have their own personal favourites. The title story (pp.3-15) raises issues of family and trust, including how far we can believe the narrator, and a strong desire to know what happens next. Nude Bathing Off the Hong Kong Coast (p.51) makes us reflect on culturally appropriate behaviour, and this can be extended beyond the particular context. Van Driver in
Beirut (pp.83-84) is a story told to the author, as relevant to the horror of Iraq and Syria today as the Lebanon then. We Get On Now, Don’t We? featuring sibling rivalry recollected in old age in dialogue, is made for acting out, recreation and continuation. The final story, A Moment in 1956, is devastating reportage of an incident during an uprising. None of these issues is straightforward and easily dealt with, but nor are any of them duckable, and all provide contexts for authentic text response, interaction and language acquisition.

A self-portrait with coloured storyteller’s hat opens the Foreward and other delightful drawings appear through the book, the author disarming having informed us that they do not illustrate, but merely complement.

A suggestion: a companion website which hosts ideas from the author on text exploitation activities (à la Tomlinson/Maley), supported by contributions from teachers and students of their own experiences in using the book. Students could be encouraged to post their own reactions to / recreating of / continuation of the texts. A second: buying a class set of the book (rather than photocopying pages) would provide a resource for learners who wish to read more widely without teacherly direction, as well as being practical in class, in that if one text offered potential problems (the issue might be one which has recently affected a student directly) it would be easy to switch to another.

It is customary for a favourable review’s penultimate paragraph to offer minor criticisms. Any criticism here is bound to be personal and related to how texts affect a particular reader. The UK-centred texts worked less well for this reviewer, but the opposite may be the case for an overseas learner, eager to deepen cross-cultural knowledge and awareness.

I commend this title both to teachers of upper-intermediate and advanced learners of English as a valuable resource of stimulus material, and to everyone who wants to be taken on a whirlwind, thought-provoking, spin through places, people and situations.

References

Maley, A. 1995 Short and Sweet. Harmondsworth: Penguin English
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