Ecole Internationale de Genève
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Research Journal

Journal de recherches

Language as a Vehicle for Learning
La langue comme véhicule d'apprentissage

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Introduction

The Ecolint Institute of Learning and Teaching was suggested over 50 years ago by Marie-Thérèse Maurette, an extraordinary, visionary woman who believed that the International School of Geneva needed to develop expertise within its diverse faculty through a structured, central platform. We hope that Madame Maurette would be proud to know that we have arrived at that point now with the support of our Director General, Mrs Vicky Tuck. The Institute, headed by Alison Ball and Frédéric Mercier is only one year old but already we are running PGCE and Master's degree programmes through Durham University, planning an MA (Ed) in French with the University of Geneva; teachers have come together to give seminars and workshops on areas such as differentiation, the teaching of grammar and the use of technology in the classroom.

The Institute will be publishing a research journal every year, echoing the educational focus of the previous academic year. As such, this first edition is on the theme of *language as a vehicle for learning.* This resonates with our 2012 Education Conference on the same theme in which we heard from David Crystal, Colin Baker and Julia Kristeva and it is strongly connected to the bold expression of bilingualism that we are using at Ecolint: Content and Language Integrated Learning, a method that places the role of language at the nerve centre of conceptual understanding.

As Lev Vygotsky showed in his seminal *Thought and Language* in 1934, language is the generalisability of thought through symbol, the crucial bridge from one mind to another that forms the crux of human intellectual activity. Greater sensitivity to the value and potential of language as a portal into human thought allows us to teach and learn with greater precision and reflectivity. So much of the struggle for clarity, the frustration of misconception and the inability to progress comes from the quality of communication that scaffolds the learning. Vygotsky says it beautifully, nodding to Edward Sapir: "real understanding and communication will be achieved only through generalisation and conceptual designation of my experience" (Vygotsky, 1986: p. 8).

C'est bien parce que le langage écrit ne reproduit pas l'histoire du langage oral qu'il nécessite un chemin différent, un apprentissage adapté. Pourtant, le vocabulaire et la syntaxe du langage oral sont les mêmes que ceux du langage écrit ce qui pourrait nous faire croire qu'il s'agit du même processus à effectuer. On peut penser que la maîtrise du langage écrit émergera bien un jour, par un mécanisme de maturation ou une vision innéiste. Mais nous le savons, maîtriser le langage oral n'implique pas automatiquement sa maîtrise à l'écrit. Il est vrai que le plus souvent, les enfants qui commencent à "faire" de la grammaire en classe utilisent correctement la langue sur le plan lexical et syntaxique. Alors que vont-ils apprendre de plus en pratiquant quotidiennement la grammaire à l'écrit?

On pourrait se poser la même question pour la philosophie, nous savons penser, alors à quoi bon philosopher ? La distinction que fait Vygotsky, (1934) entre le langage écrit et le langage oral peut nous éclairer. Il considère que les deux langages se distinguent de la même façon que se distinguent la pensée concrète de la pensée abstraite. Ainsi, la grammaire a un but précis : " Faire prendre conscience de ce que nous faisons et à utiliser volontairement ses

propres savoir-faire............ces prises de consciences sont indispensables pour la maîtrise de l'écrit et permettent d'accéder à un niveau supérieur dans le développement du langage". (Vigostsky, 1986: p 343)

La philosophie nous permet de penser mieux en développant nos habiletés de pensée. La grammaire nous permet d'accéder aux contenus abstraits de la langue écrite, à son algèbre. Il est vrai cependant, que certaines pratiques pédagogiques, sont contreproductives en grammaire comme dans d'autres champs disciplinaires d'ailleurs et mettent les apprenants dans une situation qui ne leur permet pas de faire les prises de conscience nécessaires pour pouvoir "penser" la langue. C'est un des problèmes de l'enseignement, trouver les moyens, les pratiques qui permettent de faire ce que l'on a pensé.

PAROS, (Pour un Apprentissage Raisonné de l'Orthographe Syntaxique ; Béatrice Pothier ; 2008) est un projet qui se développe à l'école primaire et secondaire de la Châtaigneraie. Il a justement pour but d'améliorer nos pratiques dans le but d'en faire un enseignement réféchi de la langue écrite. Nous remercions Béatrice Pothier d'avoir accepté de contribuer à notre premier journal.

In this first edition Henri Moser offers us a brief preamble on the value of bilingualism, you will read Professor Lynn Newton of Durham University discussing the importance of carefully structured questioning, hence drawing on the idea that language is a scaffold for learning, while Christelle Gaillard discusses the way that young children approach language. We also investigate the socio-political weight of language through Gary Stahl's reflections on the Israeli novelist David Grossman and Sandra Steiger's article on the importance of learning English in Kenya, examines how knowledge of a particular language can be closely allied to power and opportunity.

This first edition also mentions some of the research undertaken by Ecolint staff who are involved in the Durham University MA in Education (International) and other higher degree studies.

We hope you will find these articles interesting and stimulating and look forward to hearing your comments and views.

Conrad Hughes, Frédéric Mercier, Alison Ball
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Works Cited

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Quelques réflexions sur l'enseignement bilingue et plurilingue

La promotion des enseignements bilingues ou plurilingues n'est plus à faire. Les résultats obtenus par ceux qui ont suivi ces formations sont suffisamment convaincants et le prouvent avec pertinence.

L'on se souvient de jeunes étudiants qui déclaraient : « Je ne parle ni l'allemand, ni l'anglais, je n'ai que les connaissances scolaires. » Sept ans d'allemand scolaire et quatre ans d'anglais ne permettaient pas de rédiger convenablement un texte ou participer à une conversation. Cette évidence n'a cependant pas suffi aux autorités scolaires de la plupart des pays occidentaux qui ont attendu jusqu'aux années 80-90 pour réagir. Il est intéressant de savoir que plusieurs pays de l'Est : la Bulgarie, dès 1949, la Pologne dès 1950 puis la Hongrie, ont agi beaucoup plus tôt. Se familiariser avec une langue et une culture étrangère permettaient une évasion plus aisée que la traversée du « rideau de fer ».

La Russie, quant à elle, comptait dès 1994 deux écoles bilingues francophones où la langue française constituait un tiers de l'horaire hebdomadaire.

J'ajouterai aussi un exemple historique. Nous savons que, dès le IIème siècle avant J.C., les familles romaines aisées disposaient d'un esclave grec pour l'éducation linguistique de leurs enfants. Des écrits d'Erasme datant de 1529 nous apprennent qu'il militait déjà pour une éducation bilingue précoce !

Le choix des langues à enseigner répond à une certaine logique. La plupart des écoles optent pour une langue de proximité et l'anglais.

Il paraît normal de maîtriser la langue du voisin ou du compatriote pour favoriser les contacts, partager des intérêts et entrer dans l'univers mental de l'autre.

L'apprentissage de l'anglais n'est plus remis en cause. C'est la langue internationale des conférences, des marchés et de la mondialisation. C'est aussi une langue prisée par les médias, de nombreux festivals et par la publicité. On en vient même à écrire « SALE » aux devantures des commerces pendant la période des soldes !

Beaucoup de locuteurs, à travers le monde, se contentent d'un anglais approximatif, généralement suffisant pour se faire comprendre. Churchill a dit, un jour, l'anglais est la langue la plus facile… à maltraiter !

C'est pourquoi l'enseignement de l'anglais dans une école bilingue ou plurilingue mérite la plus grande rigueur.

N'est-il pas impressionnant de savoir que le vocabulaire de Shakespeare, dans l'ensemble de ses œuvres était deux fois plus étendu que celui de Corneille ou de Racine qui de limitait à 10'000 mots !

Ce qui reste à améliorer

Il n'est pas trop difficile de trouver de bons professeurs de langues. Encore faut-il qu'ils soient suffisamment habiles pour ne pas se contenter de reproduire un enseignement « scolaire » traditionnel.

Ce sont les enseignants de matières non linguistiques qui méritent toute notre attention.

Il est généralement convenu de dire que la tâche est plus facile pour les maîtres de sports, d'activités créatrices, pour les professeurs de géographie qui disposent de cartes ou de mathématiques, grâce aux nombres et aux chiffres et de sciences, où l'on dispose de laboratoires. Leur tâche est certes moins abstraite mais plus exigeante qu'il n'y paraît.

Il n'est pas toujours facile de trouver un enseignant de l'une des ces matières qui maîtrise bien la langue. D'autre part, il faut bien constater qu'il existe peu d'offres de formations spécifiques et de matériel didactique approprié.

Ce sont aujourd'hui les principales préoccupations de promoteurs et d'utilisateurs de l'enseignement bilingue et plurilingue.

Trop souvent, encore, peut-être par une interprétation malheureuse du terme « immersion », on par de l'idée qu'il s'agit d'un apprentissage automatique, inconscient et facile.

L'enseignement de DNL (Disciplines non linguistiques) doit pouvoir s'écarter de son enseignement traditionnel, avoir des attentes réalistes par rapport aux compétences linguistiques des élèves, savoir qu'elles sont susceptibles d'évolution dans le temps. Il doit être capable de rendre son propre discours plus clair, plus simple, plus essentiel et plus intelligible.

La création de ces formations pédagogiques et le développement d'un matériel didactique spécifique sont indispensables.

Une mise en commun des expériences positives contribuerait certainement à rendre cet enseignement toujours plus efficace dans l'intérêt des écoles et surtout des élèves.

Henri Moser
Fondation Henri Moser

Teachers' Questions: Can they support understanding and higher-level thinking?

Introduction

The potential of questioning to support learning is widely recognised. When teachers ask questions the assumption is that they (the questions) do something useful and, what is more, the more questions asked, the more good they do. Perhaps this is why research tells us that teachers ask a lot of questions during their lessons (e.g. Cotton, 1989; Newton, L., 1996; van Lier, 1998). Sometimes lessons can appear to be nothing but questions. Mohr (1998) noted teachers asking about 100 questions per hour and Brualdi (1998) recorded 300-400 questions per teacher per day. Yet Walberg (1984) placed questioning only 17th in a list of 35 instructional strategies for effectiveness. Similarly, Hattie (2009), in his meta-analyses of research relating to achievement, found questioning to be one of the mid-range strategies for effectiveness, with a *d* value of 0.46[1]. Why is this the case? Perhaps the answer lies not with the quantity of questions but with their nature and purpose.

Gadamer (1993: 375) suggests *'Questioning opens up possibilities of meaning'.* Are teachers asking questions that do this? Research indicates that they use questions for a variety of purposes, from assessment and monitoring of the learning to organising and managing the learners. However in terms of supporting rich learning experiences, teachers' questions generally lack variety (Newton, L., 1996; Brualdi, 1998). The changing needs of learning situations can be ignored. Hattie (2009: 182) sums up the problem as relating to:

> *'... the conceptions of teaching and learning held by many teachers – that is, their role is to impart knowledge and information about a subject, and student learning is the acquisition of this information through processes of repetition, memorization, and recall.'*

He advocates higher-order questions to enhance understanding. Questioning is a strategy that has the potential to support students of all ages as they relate facts, construct meanings, satisfy their curiosity, make decisions, solve problems and build and change their mental models of the world in which they live. However, it is not so much the number of questions asked by the teacher that matters but what they do for the learner. Half a dozen, well-posed questions that focus on particular thinking needs at crucial times are likely to be of more benefit than a hundred questions, scattered like confetti and demanding only the quick recall of facts. Such questions cannot, however, always be conjured up from thin air but are likely to benefit from forethought and planning.

Following a brief review of the nature and role of teachers' questions in the classroom I will present some ideas to do with questioning for the particular purpose of encouraging understanding and higher-level thinking. Looking at questions through taxonomies risks an either/or view of how to question when, it is argued here, questions should be *focused* to

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[1] Hattie (2009:7), in his meta-analyses, says that '... an effect size provides a common expression of the magnitude of study outcomes for many types of outcome variables, such as school achievement. An effect size of *d* = 1.0 indicates an increase of one standard deviation on the outcome ... [1 s.d.] increase is typically associated with advancing children's achievement by two to three years ... [or] improving the rate of learning by 50%.'.

reflect the immediate needs of the situation and support mental processes on the way to better thinking.

A Brief History of Questioning

The use of questioning as a strategy has a long history, spanning not just centuries but millennia (McNamara, 1981). Interrogation in one form of another probably existed long before Socrates in Ancient Greece but Socratic questioning is one of the oft-cited early illustrations of the strategy in use in educational contexts (Dillon, 1990). Socrates was intent on having people think, understand and justify their assertions. This was not something that everyone liked or found comfortable but, presumably, Socrates thought it did some good. In his own words, *'A question is a midwife which brings forth ideas from the mind.'* (Socrates, quoted by Austin, 1949: 194). He is said to have believed participants in a dialogue are equal partners, either of whom can assume the roles of interrogator and respondent. When his students expressed an opinion, Socrates used closed questioning to invite them to exhibit their ideas, thus exposing the extent of their knowledge and understanding. Then he would challenge their views by introducing new data or ideas or pointing out their logical inconsistencies. Thus Socrates' own use of questions was much more as a tactic to manage answers than as a means to stimulate student-centred enquiry.

In England, Aelfric of Eynsham in the Middle Ages wrote study aids in which pupils were asked questions about a range of characters like the ploughman, the hunter and the fisherman (Evans, 1978). In the sixteenth century Francis Bacon stressed the educational value of questions, stating:

> *'He that questioneth much shall learn much, and content much, but especially if he apply his questions to the skill of the person whom he asketh, for he shall give them occasion to please themselves in speaking and himself shall continually gather knowledge...'*
>
> (quoted by Morgan & Saxton, 1991: ii)

Moving forward to the eighteenth century, an extract from the diary of a country schoolmaster in 1784 tells us that:

> *'[Dec]16 Thursday Snow this afternoon. Evening was reading the Roman History by question and answer. Have read about half of it, and recommend on it, to be read by school boys...'* (Coates, 1784:37)

This reflects the use of the catechism approach which was dominant in schools in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This approach (named for the rote learning of the Catechism in churches) involves a pattern of teacher-question and pupil-recitation of factual information acquired by rote learning. Gosden (1960: 118) quotes from C. Irving's book, *A Catechism of Botany* (1821), which exemplifies this approach. The teacher (T) is discussing plants and the pupil (P) is responding with what he has learned by rote.

> *T. What plants are of the second class?*

> *P. To the class Diandria belong all the plants which have two stamens in each flower.*
> *T. What native plants are there of this class?*
> *P. The privet, butterwort, meadow-sage, brook-lime speedwell, and others are common in Britain; and the last of these may be chosen to illustrate the class.*

By the end of the 19th and early 20th century questioning for rote learning of facts and ideas can still be seen in the object lessons of those times.

> *There were 'object' lessons now and then - without any objects but with white chalk drawings on the blackboard - an oil-lamp, or a vulture, or a diamond might be the subject. Once there was a lesson on a strange animal called a quad - ru - ped -- cloven footed, a chewer of the cud; her house was called a byre (but in Tysoe it was not); her skin was made into shoes and from her udder came milk. It burst upon Joseph that this was one of the creatures he would milk after school, part of Henry Beasley's herd. He would milk three or four cows...*
> (Ashby, 1961: 18)

The problem with this approach is that, as can be seen above, it can be very easy to slip into the habit of drumming in the facts and neglecting understanding. Facts are important, without them there is nothing to understand, but understanding is a powerful way of knowing and so is important. For understanding to occur, however, the learners have to think.

Nor is this emphasis on questioning only confined to students in schools. It was apparent at all levels of education. For example, Brewer (1894) described the focus on questioning in the early examination procedures at the University of Cambridge:

> *'... it was customary, at the beginning of the January term, to hold `Acts', and the candidates for the Bachelor's degree were called `Questionists'. They were examined by a moderator, and afterwards the fathers of other colleges "questioned" them for three hours... It was held altogether in Latin, and the words of dismissal uttered by the Regius Professor indicated what class you would be placed in...'* (Brewer's Dictionary, 1894: 1027-8)

The Socratic approach also proved to be long-lasting, surviving through to more recent times where it can still be seen in many university oral examination systems for higher degrees as the familiar *Viva Voce,* the means by which the breadth and depth of knowledge of the candidate's thesis is tested.

In the twentieth century, questioning has been increasingly the subject of more formal research. It is not, and has never been, the sole prerogative of the discipline of education. Dillon (1982) surveyed the literature on questioning in twelve different fields of thought. The fields had different emphases and used different approaches. He found a diverse range of theories and practices, each standing in relative isolation and yet he suggested that they had much to contribute to one another's concerns. Despite his meta-analysis, Dillon was unable to construct a reliable working definition of questioning, as he found no single set of characteristics common to all types and functions question. He states:

> *'Of all the literatures on questioning, that in education is the oldest and largest, and is probably the most encompassing of the many facets of questioning.'*
> (Dillon, 1982: 152)

This wealth of literature on questioning in education has been regularly reviewed (for example, Sanders, 1966; Gall, 1970; Dillon, 1982; Dillon, 1988; Morgan & Saxton, 1991; Newton, 1996; Newton & Newton, 2000; Chin, 2006). All sources agree that questioning as a strategy is extensively used in all aspects of teaching and learning - in textbooks and work cards, in assessment tasks and, most commonly, in various aspects of classroom discourse. Such studies have also generated a variety of systems or taxonomies for sorting and classifying questions into categories. Much of this work has been North American in origin and, in the educational context, has tended to focus on older school pupils and college students.

Question Asking for a Purpose

Much of the early research into questioning was not of great practical help to teachers. It did, however show that, as teachers, we all differ enormously in how we use questions but the variety of questions tends to be small so that most of the time is spent managing the class or asking for the recall of facts and rehearsing answers. For instance, Brown & Wragg (1993) found that the questions of primary teachers in the south west of England comprised some 10% of a day's interaction. They analysed over 1,000 questions asked by these teachers. Most (92%) of the questions were of a management and control nature. Of those to do with the lesson content, most were of the closed or recall of factual information type. There were far fewer (8%) open or more demanding questions that went beyond the recall of facts. They suggested that:

> *... teachers do not necessarily prepare such questions, but somehow expect them to arise spontaneously. It may be that if we want to ask questions to get children to think, then we've got to think ourselves about the questions we are going to ask them.* (p. 14)

Fifty primary teachers in north east England, when asked about the questions they use, all claimed to use a full range of questions in their lessons, including those that encourage higher level thinking (Newton, 1996). When 26 of them were then observed teaching a science lesson they did indeed use a lot of questions. However, the majority (nearly half) were descriptive (*What ...? Where ...?When ...?*) or procedural (*How...? Who...? Which...?).* The teachers rarely went beyond description and recall, seldom pushing the children to explain (*Why...?*), predict (*What if ...?*) or apply their existing ideas in new contexts (*Could you ...? Does ...?*). Surrogates (workcard schemes and books designed for student use) were also examined for the types of questions asked, with very similar results.

The point is that teachers, and the authors of books and teaching schemes, may ask a lot of questions but not always about the lesson in hand or necessarily to the best effect. They do not ask questions which promote understanding and higher level thinking such as analysis and synthesis or creative and critical thinking. Teachers are not, of course, equally confident across all subjects they may be asked to teach, especially in the primary or elementary

stages. Where broad, underlying subject knowledge is not strong, the teacher may find it easier to stick to facts. They may even think that it is facts that count as understanding in that subject. Yet Newton & Newton (2000) found that in primary schools there are teachers without an A-level or higher qualification in science who <u>do</u> ask for more than facts and there are also those with science degrees who seem to ignore everything other than facts. At the same time, teachers may see their main task as the transmission of ready-made information, not the promotion of active participation and learning with understanding (Rodriquez and Kies, 1998), what Elder and Paul (1998) described as burying thinking under tons of information. But, by asking closed questions (those that lead to a right answer), the teacher diverts the pupils' thinking from wider problem solving into a search for that 'right' answers'. In effect, the cognitive hard work is being done by the teacher, not by the pupils. Related to the cognitive demand of tasks and questions is the work of Neumann and Mahler (1989). They investigated the cognitive congruence in questioning (the degree of cognitive match between the questions asked by the teacher and the pupils' answers). They found a mismatch in that the questions were not stretching the pupils' thinking abilities. The teachers' questions functioned at the task level (that is, management, procedural, factual recall) not at the cognitive level (requiring higher order thinking skills).

There is no doubt that the questions teachers ask control communication and hence influence the learning (Gall, 1970; Dillon, 1982; Newton, 1996; Rodriquez and Kies, 1998; Shaunessy, 2000). Closed or factual questions enable teachers to retain control. They ensure progression on the teacher's terms, the role of the learners being that of a respondent in the communication slots allowed by the teacher. Such control restricts the cognitive freedom of the learner. More demanding questions may reduce the teacher's control of the content and direction of the lesson.

Research has shown that children's thinking and problem solving abilities improve when teachers use higher level questions (e.g. Blosser, 1973; Andre, 1979; Redfield & Rousseau, 1981; Koufetta & Scarfe, 2000). These questions are usually considered to be those that ask for higher levels of cognition as defined in various taxonomies, such as that of Bloom (1956) or Anderson and Krathwohl (2001). The questions require mental actions such as evaluation or synthesis of information and knowledge. More recent work found that *What if...?* and *Why...?* questions stimulated creative and critical thinking which, if followed by more questions, encouraged the development of ideas and the construction of understanding (Fredericks, 1991; Kazemi, 1998). These findings were also confirmed by Newton (1996) in a study of teachers' questioning in primary science lessons. Willig (1990) also suggests that skilful questioning lies at the heart of a cognitive conflict strategy, making children reflect upon their ideas and their reasons for holding those ideas. Whatever the potential of higher level questioning, however, it is academic if they are often absent in the classroom.

A problem with this is the under-pinning assumption that higher-level questions elicit higher cognitive level answers. Even when questions relating to the higher levels of taxonomies are asked, Dillon (1982) found that higher order responses do not automatically follow. Any question narrows the options open to the respondent, limiting the field of thought to that intended and expected by the questioner. The degree of restriction depends on the type of question asked, the degree to which the questioner and learner share common knowledge

and experiences and the extent to which the questioner is in a real position to evaluate the answer. This emphasises the importance of contexts and shared meanings for question asking and answering. Researchers have tried to assess the cognitive level of the questions or have focussed on the interactional, as well as cognitive, effects of open, half-open and closed questions (Call, 2000). There have been numerous attempts to produce classification systems or taxonomies which teachers might use yet they seem to be unaware of such taxonomies or do not use them (Dillon, 1990). Many of these systems suggest a hierarchy from lower level/order questions to a higher level/order. Generally, the former are concerned with simple factual recall or basal comprehension, while the latter involve understanding, meaning making, reasoning and thinking.

Focused questions

Tying questioning tightly to particular levels in taxonomies is not always of great practical benefit. Asking questions at any particular taxonomic level without regard for what is going on in the learner's mind is not likely to be productive. It is not a matter of *one* kind of question being better than another but of recognising *which* kind is needed and knowing how to use it to good effect. What is the right kind of question for the right purpose? This is focused questioning.

Martens (1999) talked about productive questions, those that help teachers to bridge between task and learner. The focus of these productive questions, according to Martens, is on attention-fixing; measuring and counting; comparing; action-generating; problem-posing; and, reasoning. I prefer to call them focused questions because this indicates better that they are tailored to the particular needs of the learning situation, and these vary from learner to learner and lesson to lesson. These evolving learning situations might include episodes of, for instance:

- tuning children's attention to the task in hand;
- eliciting prior knowledge;
- developing or supplementing that knowledge;
- developing a grasp of the new situation;
- highlighting significant relationships;
- consolidating learning;
- articulating ideas;
- developing and using learning;
- applying ideas in new contexts; and,
- deepening and widening learning.

What is productive in one of these episodes may be different to what is productive in another but the type of question is not always a useful guide. For example, *How...?* as a process (as in, *How did you measure the distance?*) cannot be distinguished from *How...?* as a fact or quantity (as in, *How far is it?*). However, when the focus of the question is considered, the outcome changes. *What was the name of …?* and *How did we …?* questions function to elicit prior knowledge and understanding, the former of factual information learned and the latter of procedures. *What happens if …?* and *How might we…?* questions extend and apply knowledge and understandings gained from prior and current experiences. All are useful productive questions but are stronger in their use if focused on particular stages in a lesson.

Recall of prior experiences would work well at the beginning of the lesson to set the scene for new experiences. Extension and application questions focus attention on the new experiences and force learners to connect ideas and construct new understandings.

The process of constructing understanding and laying the foundations for productive thinking can be supported by the teacher's strategic use of focused questions. The same kinds of questions can be used for different purposes in the different steps.

[1] **Scene setting / relevance:** ask questions to engage interest and make relevance explicit: *Who knows ...? Have you ever ...? Remember when we ...? What did we do when ...? What happened if ...?*

[2] **Specific prior knowledge ready for inferencing:** ask questions which elicit or ensure the learners have the necessary prior knowledge to work with; *Who can tell me why ...? What is a ...? Why does a ...? What do you mean by ...? How does ...? What happened when ...? How did we ...? When/where else might ...?*

[3] **Setting expectations / guiding and focusing:** let the learners know what they are expected to do mentally as well as physically and use guiding questions to help the learners to focus on what is relevant to the task/topic in hand; *Is it ...? Why has / why hasn't ...? What happens when ...? Why is that ...? How can you ...? Does it matter if ...?*

[4] **Use the learning in new situations:** encourage the learners to explain and predict, and apply their ideas in new contexts through problem solving; *What will happen if we ...? What if we use ...? Why is ...? Which will ...? Can you explain ...? What would ...? Why is it important to ...?*

Such a focusing of questions is intended to stimulate more precisely the active thinking that is needed at that point. Supporting learning through questioning, therefore, involves a sequence of questions, each helping the child over a particular mental obstacle. Of course, not every topic will present every obstacle so the pattern of focused questioning cannot be a rigid one. The focus on the use of questions by teachers to develop students' thinking was also explored by Chin (2006). From her analysis of the dynamics of the interactive relationship with 11-12 year olds in science classroom, she identified a number of enabling strategies relating to teacher questioning and feedback:

- avoidance of explicit evaluation or put-downs;
- acknowledgement of the students' contributions;
- re-statement of student responses; and,
- ability to pose follow-up questions that build on the earlier responses and stimulate cognitive processing.

She also noted that all strategies appeared to promote productive talk rather than mere rote recall responses. She advocates the need for teachers to *'position themselves as enablers of talk for thinking'* through the deliberate use of *'... meaningfully related questions that stimulate students to tap into higher-order thinking process"* (Chin, 2006: 1343-4).

The beginning of this productive, higher-order thinking is understanding. A traditional view of understanding is one of *"How much?"* - an additive view. New learning (facts, ideas, information, ...) is added on to what is already known. More contemporary views now see

understanding as the construction of mental models of situations or experiences, with new ideas being related to each other and integrated into the existing mental structures to build something new (Newton, D., 2012). While a good memory can provide the answer to many questions, this doesn't necessarily reflect understanding. For example, the question, *"Which substance has the chemical symbol H_2O?"* will probably generate the immediate answer, *"Water."* But the answer does not tell us what the respondent understands about that substance. Does s/he understand elements and compounds or the properties of water? Facts are important. Knowing facts can be very useful and enable economical responses. Think of names and dates, symbols and signs, mnemonics - these are all useful for thinking. But it is the relationship between facts and understanding that is important. In the classroom, facts and understanding work in combination.

Lustick (2010) suggests that using quality focused questions enables learners to engage in authentic inquiry about relevant phenomena, benefitting both teachers and students by fostering curiosity and enriching understanding of content. This is inherently inquiry-based learning, problem solving and creative thinking (Newton, L., 2012). So how do we encourage teachers to do this?

Developing Teachers as Skilful Questioners
Most children know the question and answer game from a very early age. Taylor and Taylor (1990) noted that very young children can distinguish questions from non-questions, and *yes-no* questions from *Wh*-questions, relying on intonation, the presence of key words and sentence structure. Even 2-year-olds are able to do so, although not always responding appropriately. Berninger and Garvey (1981) found that yes-no questions evoked relevant responses from all the 3-year olds tested, but certain *wh*-questions evoked irrelevant responses from them. Some *what* and *where* questions were easily answered by them using pointing words, such as *that* and *there*, and often questions were answered with offers of demonstration, such as, *'I'll show you.'* However, *why* questions require answers that involve formulating cause and effect. Berninger and Garvey found younger children unable to handle these. By the age of 4 years, Wells (1986) found most children studied were enthusiastic question askers, although many parents found difficulty answering appropriately. Children themselves are no obstacle to the strategy. The problem is in defining skilful questioning and helping teachers to question skilfully.

Willig (1990) wrote that what counts is not so much the kind of questions asked but rather the strategy of *skilful* questioning being used by the teacher. But what exactly is skilful questioning? I see it as that which addresses the needs of the immediate learning situation help learners progress to the kind of productive thought that is desired - understanding, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, ethical thinking - these reflect the realities of high quality teaching and learning. However, skilful questioning is not a mechanistic process but one that requires the mental engagement of the teacher with the children's thinking as well as that of the children with the topic. This means that decisions have to be made in action but this does not mean that questioning is a totally on-the-spot matter. Forethought and planning can prepare the teacher for the interaction and ensure that there is a clear progression that focused questioning will support. A collection of prepared questions can be a useful resource. For those who lack confidence in the subject, a good book or

scheme may help but these may be few and far between as far as focused questioning is concerned.

A final point is to do with the training of teachers to ask questions. Research shows that the effect of training teachers was significant, improving their questioning skills and outcomes in terms of gains in student achievement (Redfield & Rousseau, 1981; Gliessman *et al,* 1988). Interestingly, Redfield and Rousseau also showed that a mixture of lower and higher level questions was more effective in generating deeper understanding. Working in the USA, Lustick (2010) found that the questions used by teachers to foster reasoning are likely to be taken from a textbook, laboratory manual or a worksheet. As such, they are generic, not even class, let alone learner-specific. He recommends the use of more focused questions and emphasises the need for those delivering pre-service programmes for teachers to be *"... exposed to a more robust discussion about the quality of focus questions beyond that of higher or lower thinking and open or closed construction"* (2010: 508). He proposes a *focus question framework* for teachers to use in science with pupils across the K-12 age range but emphasises the need for teachers to know more about the topic of questioning and develop the skills needed to exhibit focus questioning behaviours consistently. The consequence of such exposure would, according to Lustick:

> *"... translate into more engaging, interesting, and memorable learning experiences in future classrooms. By developing and incorporating science questions that promote sustained reasoning through inquiry, classroom teachers can help learners foster deeper understanding of science content and an appreciation for the scientific enterprise."*

Questioning can provide effective support for understanding and higher-level thinking. However, confining attention to one category of a taxonomy is not a helpful guide to the kinds of questions that make a difference to thinking. What matters more is that the question produces the kind of thinking that furthers the kind of learning that is wanted. What is needed is focused questioning that facilitates the development of children's knowledge and understanding as the basis for productive thought.

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Les premiers pas dans l'apprentissage de la lecture et de l'écriture

Les premiers pas dans l'apprentissage de la lecture et de l'écriture sont déterminants, pour ancrer les élèves dans une attitude positive et efficace vis à vis de l'écrit, tout au long de leur vie. A l'école primaire des Marronniers, nous menons depuis trois ans un programme d'enseignement/apprentissage lié à la pratique de l'entrée dans l'écrit.

Les questions qui sont à l'origine de ce travail se sont posées en ces termes :
Comment améliorer les performances des élèves dans le domaine de la lecture et de l'écriture, dès le plus jeune âge, en nous appuyant sur les fondements tirés des recherches psycholinguistiques ? Comment transposer les acquis scientifiques en situations didactiques et permettre aux enseignants d'être guidés dans ce passage de la théorie à la pratique ?

Nos réflexions nous ont menés à un programme de recherche : « L'entrée dans l'écrit » proposé par la Faculté de Psychologie et des Sciences de l'Education de l'Université de Genève. Pour nous aider dans la mise en œuvre du programme nous avons fait appel à Mme Veuthey, membre de ce programme, chargée d'enseignement et chercheure à l'Université de Genève.

Après avoir formé toute l'équipe enseignante sur les concepts directement liés à la démarche de l'entrée dans l'écrit, Mme Veuthey est directement intervenue dans les classes, pour faciliter la mise en œuvre du programme. Cet accompagnement de proximité a permis aux enseignants de s'imprégner de la démarche et de pouvoir être guidés dans leur pratique « en toute sécurité ». Ils ont progressivement pris le relai et travailler en équipe, mettant en commun leurs réflexions et interrogations. Le dispositif de suivi a été modulé en fonction des besoins de chacun pour donner ou redonner "des forces" sur un point particulier.

Ce travail de collaboration entre chercheurs et enseignants a été extrêmement positif. Il a permis de faciliter le passage de la théorie à la pratique en ancrant la formation dans la réalité de la classe.

Les fondements qui constituent l'ossature de la démarche de l'entrée dans l'écrit telle que nous l'avons mise en œuvre sont les suivants :
Les fondements qui constituent l'ossature de la démarche de l'entrée dans l'écrit telle que nous l'avons mise en œuvre sont les suivants :

• La langue est un système à plusieurs composantes structurée selon trois axes : les représentations de l'écrit et à l'opposé le principe alphabétique ; un deuxième axe qui comprend la compréhension et la production de textes ; un troisième, constitué de la lecture et de l'écriture de mots. (Fayol, 2000)

  La lecture et l'écriture prennent leur source chez le jeune enfant bien avant l'apprentissage formel du système alphabétique, lors d'une étape pré alphabétique. (Ferreiro, 2008)

• C'est l'écriture qui permet de découvrir et de construire le système alphabétique (Ferreiro, 2002)

- L'écriture et la lecture progresse en appui l'une sur l'autre. La lecture va tirer partie de la découverte du système alphabétique en écriture, et l'écriture d'abord pré-alphabétique, tire profit de l'économie assurée par le système orthographique importé de la lecture.
  (Ehri, 1998)

- La progression de la lecture et l'écriture n'est pas linéaire, elle suppose plusieurs stratégies possibles au même moment, dont certaines sont dominantes. On peut donc en tirer que l'acquisition de la langue écrite ne devrait pas faire l'objet d'apprentissages disjoints et successifs, selon les stratégies pré-alphabétiques puis alphabétiques puis orthographiques, mais devrait correspondre plutôt à un enseignement simultané dans des dispositifs appropriés.
  (Rieben & Fayol, 1997)

Cette démarche d'entrée dans la culture de l'écrit, prend appui sur un dispositif d'enseignement /apprentissage commun à quatre situations problèmes, qui sont pratiquées de la classe de réception (élèves de 4 ans) à la classe de 4ème.

Le dispositif se fonde sur plusieurs éléments clés : la lecture et l'écriture sont travaillées conjointement, le texte constitue l'élément de départ du travail, avec ses caractéristiques communicatives, discursives et textuelles. Le dispositif d'enseignement /apprentissage consiste en situations problèmes ouvertes dans lesquelles l'ensemble des enfants, de culture, de représentations, et de compétences diverses, peuvent progresser de façon optimale selon un cheminement qui leur est propre. Ces situations problèmes sont le lieu de découvertes et de la construction des composantes de la langue écrite. Elles sont pratiquées en alternance avec des activités spécifiques centrées sur une seule composante du savoir, activités qui sont le lieu de sa consolidation et de son automatisation. Le dispositif repose sur la médiation de l'enseignant et de ses pairs, notamment à travers un guidage interactif ancré sur les connaissances, et les représentations des élèves. Il repose également sur un recours constant aux outils de référence collectifs ou individuels mis en place dans la classe.

Ces quatre situations problèmes s'emboîtent selon une progression en « spirale ». Toutes les composantes de l'écrit sont déjà présentes dès le départ de la progression et se complexifient non pas dans le nombre de composantes travaillées, mais dans leur degré d'appropriation. Elles visent d'abord une prise de conscience des composantes, de leur fonction dans la langue, puis ont progressivement pour objectif une réflexion plus poussée sur les unités langagières, leur fonctionnement et leur articulation.

La première situation problème, proposée aux élèves dès l'âge de quatre ans est celle de la **Lecture/Ecriture Emergentes**. Elle permet à l'élève dès son entrée à l'école de s'investir du rôle de scripteur et de lecteur, de différencier le texte de l'image dans l'élaboration du sens, de comprendre la fonction communicative de l'écrit, de prendre conscience de la nature représentative du signe graphique, ceci bien avant qu'il ne devienne lecteur et scripteur de manière conventionnée.

Parallèlement, la deuxième situation problème de **Dictée à l'adulte** amène l'enfant à prendre conscience des différences entre l'oral et l'écrit, à énoncer un oral « écrivable », à repérer la segmentation de l'écrit, et à reconnaître des mots écrits, en interaction avec l'adulte.

Dans la troisième situation du ***Texte de référence***, l'entrée dans l'écrit progresse par le fait que l'enfant prend lui-même en charge l'écriture normée des mots, mots qu'il « copie » à partir d'un texte. Il cherche d'abord ces mots dans le texte élaboré collectivement en dictée à l'adulte, et construit ainsi à la fois ses compétences en lecture et en écriture.

Enfin la situation de **Production textuelle orthographique** complète l'entrée dans l'écrit à la fin de l'école primaire par la prise en charge intégrale de la production dans ses aspects à la fois de textuels et orthographiques.

Les évaluations mises en place pour valider les pratiques ont été positives d'un double point de vue, celui de l'élève mais également celui de l'enseignant.

Les grilles d'évaluations des progrès des élèves dans le domaine de l'écrit, de la Pré-primaire 2 à la classe de troisième nous ont permis de constater et d'analyser les progrès significatifs des élèves. Ces progrès sont également directement liés à une augmentation des compétences des enseignants dans le domaine. Ayant une meilleure connaissance des étapes qui structurent l'entrée dans le langage écrit, ils sont plus à même d'analyser le travail de leurs élèves et d'apporter l'étayage nécessaire à leur progrès.

Pour conclure je dirais que le partenariat entre chercheurs et enseignants est essentiel. C'est à ce prix qu'une compréhension profonde des situations complexes d'enseignement / apprentissage peut percer avec le double avantage d'un gain sur le plan de la recherche et sur celui des pratiques enseignantes.

Ce travail de collaboration permet de faciliter le passage de la théorie à la pratique en ancrant la formation dans la réalité de la classe. Il oriente durablement les choix et les pratiques de l'enseignant.

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Imaginaire de l'enfant et acquisition de la langue

Pour cette intervention, nous utiliserons l'expression *« imaginaire linguistique »* dans le sens de « *utilisation des potentialités de la langue* » et non dans le sens que lui donne, par exemple Anne-Marie Houdebine dans ses écrits et qui s'apparente alors davantage au terme de « représentations linguistiques».

Cette précision donnée, notre propos s'attachera à montrer combien les petits apprenants de la langue française s'évertuent à trouver une logique à cette langue qui en est bien souvent dépourvue et surtout comment ses provignements, ces essais, ces tentatives sont appréciés par l'Institution scolaire.

Il y a encore peu, le monde scientifique des sciences de l'éducation, tout dévoué à Piaget, pensait que l'univers du petit d'homme était un véritable chaos, peuplé d'éléments disparates, bizarres, sans lien les uns avec les autres, que l'adulte se faisait fort de ranger selon son ordre établi, sa vision du monde et, il faut bien le dire, son bon sens. On imaginait alors l'enfant, un peu perdu dans un univers qui l'envahissait peu à peu, rempli de couleurs (qu'il était incapable de distinguer), de mouvements qu'il ne pouvait décrypter, d'humains qu'il ne savait distinguer et de sons divers auquel il devait s'habituer parce que c'est ce qui deviendrait sa langue, son moyen de penser, de communiquer, de structurer le monde.

Depuis les années 80/90, les chercheurs ont réitéré les expériences piagétiennes et ont réussi à démontrer que si tout n'est pas parfaitement en ordre dans la tête du tout petit (mais est-ce que cela l'est dans la tête de l'adulte ?) il est toutefois capable d'organiser son environnement. Il sait que les animaux se déplacent, mais que le ballon ne bouge pas si personne n'y touche. Il est capable d'étonner dans ses classements et de ranger les dinosaures par catégories alors que l'adulte en est incapable. De même, contrairement à ce qu'on pu croire nos prédécesseurs, l'enfant acquiert très tôt la notion du nombre. Il est capable de différencier le nombre et la longueur. Proposons-lui de choisir entre quatre bonbons en ordre serré et trois bonbons en ordre plus dispersé, cela ne fait aucun doute, il choisira le tas où les bonbons sont les plus nombreux. Bref, les enfants se montrent plus rapidement intelligents qu'on ne l'a cru, un temps, et l'adulte se trouve bien étonné parfois des performances qu'il ne soupçonnait pas. Cependant, c'est sans compter avec la langue et en particulier la langue française qui va demander à l'enfant de franchir des obstacles qu'il n'aurait pas à surmonter si cette dernière suivait sa logique enfantine.

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C'est maintenant un fait établi, ce ne sont pas les adultes qui enseignent la langue à l'enfant, ils n'en sont que les utilisateurs que le petit écoute et dans les paroles desquels il se sert autant qu'il le peut, aussi abondamment que possible pour réutiliser les mots et les structures morphosyntaxiques à son propre profit. C'est même assez incroyable qu'il puisse, dans la masse d'informations qu'il reçoit, être capable de repérer de telles unités qu'il réutilise à bon escient L'adulte, noyé dans une langue étrangère, met beaucoup plus de temps et présente nettement moins de facilités pour s'approprier l'idiome en question. Mais, l'enfant est avide de connaitre, il est curieux de nature, c'est un chercheur-né. Il développe des capacités d'apprentissage exceptionnelles et sa curiosité multidirectionnelle, si elle inquiète quelque peu les adultes qui pensent qu'il se disperse, lui permet d'acquérir très vite les rudiments, les fonctionnements et les subtilités de la langue. Il se plaît à exploiter les possibles.

Mais, là ! La langue française n'a rien d'une mécanique qui, une fois bien huilée, coule de source, sans exceptions ni anicroches. C'est une langue riche, qui a connu une histoire complexe ce qui lui fait prendre des chemins de traverses qui n'ont rien d'un long fleuve tranquille. Elle est réputée pleine d'exceptions, mais c'est cet aspect de ses fonctionnements qui la rend si attachante, du moins pour l'adulte qui la maîtrise.

Ceci est sans doute un peu moins vrai en ce qui concerne les apprenants étrangers et surtout les petits francophones. En effet, les étrangers en apprentissage d'une langue ne s'essaient pas – ou moins – aux provignements à travers lesquels l'apprenti francophone tente de s'approprier sa langue et qui le mettent en butte avec les adultes qui l'entourent, parents ou enseignants qui recherchent la reproduction de la norme. Il arrive que le petit apprenant fasse montre de ce que Guilford appelle « la pensée divergente » qui va différer de la capacité à trouver la bonne réponse en la capacité à imaginer une palette variée de solutions.

L'imaginaire créatif de l'enfant en matière de langue devrait être souligné, remarqué, encouragé alors qu'il n'est - bien trop souvent - que bafoué, corrigé voire sanctionné. Il est le reflet d'une personnalité extra-ordinaire, marque souvent caractéristique des personnalités d'exception. L'imagination est une caractéristique fondamentale de la cognition humaine. Cependant, il est à noter que la « création » orthographique est le plus souvent commandée par et à l'intérieur d'une règle précise, à savoir, dans le cas qui nous intéresse à rapprocher de ce qui existe effectivement d'ores et déjà dans la langue écrite. Loin de limiter

l'imagination scripturale on s'aperçoit que cette « règle » aiguillonne l'imaginaire. Si l'on en croit Max Turner, la créativité reposerait sur l'analogie qui consiste à trouver des ressemblances cachées entre des éléments apparemment disparates. La pensée analogique serait donc un des piliers de la créativité. En revanche, les objurgations reçues ne rendent pas justice aux compétences logiques des enfants lorsqu'ils s'essaient aux conjugaisons et que de :

- « il est » / « il était », ils déduisent, « ils sont »/ « *ils sontaient* »
- ou encore lorsqu'ils concluent que si l'on peut dire que : « un pantalon est vert » et que : « une jupe est verte », on puisse appliquer la même règle avec un adjectif, lui aussi de couleur et lui aussi terminé par le phonème [r] et donc dire que : « un pantalon est noir » alors que « la jupe est *noirte*. »
- Comment ne pas entendre cet élève qui écrit « le chien aboies » avec un 's'au verbe parce qu'il aboie plusieurs fois !
- Comment imaginer qu'en enfant ne fasse pas un parallèle entre ;
  un navire / des navires et un avion / des navions.

Seul l'adulte, qui sait comment ces termes s'écrivent, est capable de comprendre que la liaison de l'un correspond phoniquement à la présence d'un graphème chez l'autre. L'enfant n'est pas un adulte en miniature. Le dernier répète ce qu'il a entendu sans trop s'essayer à créer, de peur de se ridiculiser, le petit va de l'avant car s'il se restreignait à n'utiliser que ce qu'il a entendu, il ne serait jamais un locuteur de sa langue, juste un perroquet capable de psittacisme, pas de création, pas de parole au sens saussurien du terme.

Comment ces créations originales sont-elles accueillies dans ou par le système scolaire ?
Nous ne reviendrons pas sur le concept à l'acception tellement judéo-chrétienne et moralisatrice de *la faute,* dans une civilisation qui se réclame athée. Le latin « culpa » a engendré les termes de « culpabilité » et de « coupable »… Comment imaginer un seul instant que l'enfant soit « coupable » de se tromper, de s'essayer à comprendre les fonctionnements de la langue ? Ses essais sont le plus souvent ignorés, quelques fois raillés, jamais soulignés comme des tentatives intelligentes d'utiliser sa langue.

A cet élève qui écrivait « une foto » (que n'est-il hispanophone !) l'enseignante explique que la raison d'être de cette graphie qui paraît complexe est une étymologie grecque. L'enfant, retourne à sa place et se refuse à corriger son erreur parce qu'il sait, lui, et il le dit à qui veut l'entendre que du temps des Grecs, la photo n'existait pas ! Comment satisfaire la curiosité

des élèves quand la logique ne fonctionne pas ? Quand **leur** logique se voit bafouée par des explications, certes exactes, mais qui ne correspondent pas à ce qu'ils savent déjà, à ce qu'ils ont intégré ?

Comment convaincre un élève de 9 ans qui a écrit l'adverbe « loin » avec un 't' terminal qu'il n'est pas dans la norme ? Lorsqu'on lui demande la raison de cette lettre superfétatoire, il répond qu'il a réfléchi et qu'il s'est souvenu que l'enseignant met toujours en garde contre « les lettres muettes » qu'il faut parfois ajouter à certains termes. Après réflexion, il a mis en œuvre ce que l'adulte lui a inculqué et à chercher « un mot de la même famille ». Il a trouvé l'adjectif « lointain » ce qui est tout à fait recevable, mais le raisonnement, le « truc » de l'adulte ne fonctionne pas dans cet exemple. En fait, il ne fonctionne que lorsque l'on **sait** orthographier le terme. Sinon, pourquoi mettre un 'c'à tabac ? Les mots de la même famille sont « tabatière » ou « tabagie » … Pourquoi transcrire « plomb » en faisant référence à *plombier* alors que l'enfant fait référence à la ceinture de « plongée » dotée de plomb, précisément et transcrit le terme avec un 'g' graphique terminal ! Cette capacité de rapprocher les éléments de la langue fait montre d'une motivation à trouver des solutions possibles, et d'une persévérance dans la recherche de la « bonne » graphie qui devraient pouvoir trouver échos dans un milieu favorisant l'épanouissement de ces « innovations ».

Il ne s'agit pas de préconiser aux enseignants de devenir des thuriféraires béats, mais, tout comme nos collègues africains de se montrer plus progressistes en affectionnant le proverbe qui dit que « : « *L'erreur n'annule pas la valeur de l'effort accompli.* »

Les neurosciences nous ont appris, en le démontrant, que le cerveau des bébés et des enfants présente une plus grande plasticité que celui des adultes. Les petits apprenants font fonctionner ces possibilités mais si leurs propositions ne sont pas reconnues, si l'adulte ne comprend pas qu'il ne faut surtout pas pénaliser ces essais, s'il ne les encourage pas, en les relevant, en interrogeant l'enfant sur les raisons qui l'ont poussé à proposer telle ou telle graphie, le jeune chercheur ne se posera plus de questions !

Il deviendra ce « bon petit » qu'apprécie nettement plus l'Institution (pour ne pas dire certains enseignants), celui qui obéit sans réfléchir. Notre société aura perdu ces jeunes empêcheurs de tourner en rond, ces futurs *poils à gratter* du système qui le font avancer dans une pratique d'essais/erreurs qui a fonctionné de tous temps, qui a fait avancer le monde et qui fait que, grâce à Einstein, Mozart ou autre Picasso, nous n'en sommes plus au temps des australopithèques.

English in Diverse World Contexts English and Education in Kenya:
Post-colonial legacies and influences of globalisation

Abstract

English is Kenya's official language and the main medium of instruction (MOI) in school, despite the fact that a majority of Kenyans do not use it in their day-to-day lives. Language use differs extraordinarily between rural and urban contexts, yet language policy in education remains centralised and English-language based. This, combined with teachers unprepared for these linguistically complex educational environments, directly influences the quality of learning and tends to benefit those who already hold privileged positions in society, reproducing existing inequalities rather than providing an opportunity for social mobility, as English is perceived to do. This belief can be rooted in both Kenya's colonial past, and seen as a lingering form of linguistic imperialism. It can also be explored from a more liberal functional perspective, whereby having an existing system of English MOI is seen as a practical advantage for a country wishing to play a greater role in the global community. This article argues that both these forces contribute to generally unquestioned positive attitudes towards English MOI, making it difficult to introduce a greater role for Kiswahili and mother-tongue languages in education, despite their proven advantages for education quality. Furthermore, while the promotion of a Kenyan Standard English has been suggested as a way of "writing back" to the legacy of British colonialism, this would not necessarily benefit rural Kenyans due to their lack of exposure to it, nor urban Kenyans unless text-books and examinations were adapted to this Standard. If genuine progress in education access and quality is to be made, as well as closing the gap of social inequality, it is crucial that education policy-.makers pay closer attention to adapting policy to, and preparing teachers for the wide variety of linguistic contexts that exist in Kenya, rather than maintaining a centralised system.

1. Introduction

Throughout the process of researching and reading for this paper, I have been pulled back and forth in a tug-of-war in an attempt to situate English in Kenya today within the ever-present societal consequences of its colonial past, and its aspirations to develop a global presence. Kenya, like many other post-colonial developing contexts, offers a magnitude of issues to discuss with relation to the role of English in the country. English is the language in which Kenya communicates with its people and with the world; liaises with development organisations; makes economic and policy decisions; and seeks to educate its children. English is also the language brought by the British when they colonised Kenya in the late 19th century: a language denied at the time to the vast majority of Kenyans, the marginalising effects of which are still evident today. In today's global world, where English is widely accepted to be the international language of communication, it may seem advantageous that English already plays such a large role in Kenya's media, and political and educational institutions. However, below the surface, attitudes towards English and the practical implications of a mostly monolingual (English) approach to policy reveal a complex

negotiation of identity in a rapidly changing society, the roots of which are founded firmly in its colonial history.

The current Kenyan population stands at approximately 41 million, made up of over 40 ethnic groups, each with their own language, the five largest being: Kikuyu 22%, Luhya 14%, Luo 13%, Kalenjin 12%, and Kamba 11% (CIA 2011).

Each of these ethnic groups have a base within the country where the local language is used almost exclusively, although the different languages are not restricted to these areas, especially due to growing rural-urban migration in search of employment (Michieka 2005).
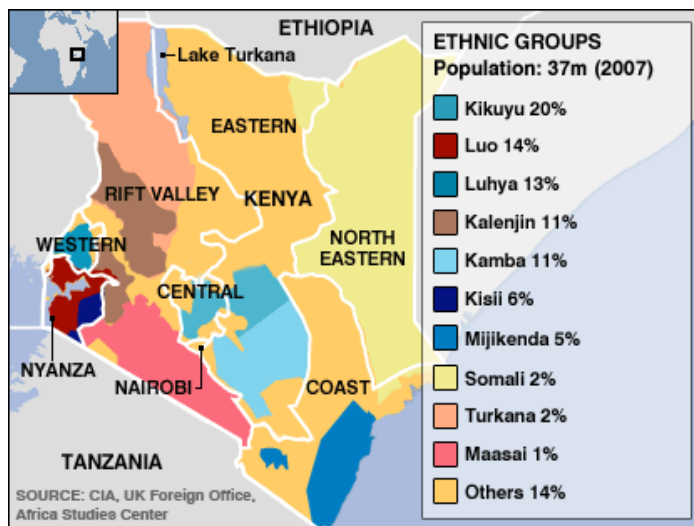
Some Kenyans remain monolingual, while others, particularly in urban areas or along ethnic borders, are bi- or multilingual (Michieka 2005). Kiswahili has historically been, and continues to be, the lingua franca for trade and communication within Kenya and the East Africa region.

Much of the discussion about English in Kenya revolves around its role in education, since it has remained the medium of instruction (MOI) in many British ex-colonies. In the context of current global "Education for All" initiatives, where education is deemed central to development and poverty reduction (UNESCO 2000), English as MOI is problematic, in that a vast majority of Kenyans, especially in rural areas, have little opportunity to practise or use it in their daily lives (Michieka 2009; Sure 2003). They are also rarely provided with the resources or appropriately trained teachers to learn it as a completely "foreign language", rather than as the lingua franca that it is often perceived to be (Michieka 2009). As a result, English does not seem to be offering a way forward for those who believe in its power to do so.

In this paper I investigate the relationship that English in Kenya has with its colonial past, within a context of globalisation and development. Two questions frame my analysis, specifically: How has Kenya's colonial past influenced the role and perception of the English language in Kenya today? What impact does current language in education policy have on

Kenya's development as a country and its position in a global context? In answering these two questions I also take into consideration the differences between rural and urban communities as regards their exposure to and relationship with the English language.

To address these questions, I begin with an analysis of postcolonial theory and theories around globalisation in order to provide the context of these past and future 'forces' within which the role of English in Kenya is situated. This is followed by a brief history of education in Kenya, outlining important elements and decisions regarding English in education during the colonial period, post-independence in 1963 as well as current realities. The discussion section revolves around several issues: the legacy of colonialism on the status of English and implications for rural and urban populations' ability to access English and, as is perceived, social mobility; the implications of English's status on local languages; the influence of the role of English as an international language on language decisions; and finally, the possibility of a Kenyan Standard English.

2. The many perspectives of the role of English in Africa

The debate around the extent to which English is a construct of economic power through history or rather, has been used as a means to domination, offers a variety of perspectives. This section focuses on the following concepts: that discourse surrounding the English language confers on it the power to continue the intentional social divisiveness of the colonial period even today; the link between linguistic imperialism and the world economy; a *laissez faire* liberalism that lauds the functional and pragmatic purposes of English; and a hybridity of language that allows for the appropriation of English in new ways and thus, the recreation of identities.

Pennycook (1998; 2002) explores the relationship between the English language and the colonialist ideologies that ensured a certain social stratification and balance of power such that the English language became a product of colonialism, saturated with these ideologies and carrying them into future policy decisions and individual perceptions regarding education and language. He proposes that it is essential not only to investigate the discourse around English, discourse being that which organises and gives meaning to texts, but to note how, when discourse about English takes place *in* English, it confers extra weight to the power of this discourse. Colonialist discourses exist in the many texts, novels and recorded history produced during colonialism, the influence of which still "echoes into the present"

(Pennycook 1998:17). An example of this can be drawn from the British Council *English 2000* report in 1995, quoted in Holborrow (1999: 55) about the importance of English for 'personal development' and 'economic and social advancement'.

Holborrow (1999) investigates the role English plays within economic, political and social spheres and criticises the lack of attention paid by academics to these relationships. She praises Phillipson (1992) in his work *Linguistic Imperialism* for taking such an anti-imperialist stance and criticising laissez-faire attitudes to English in the world by making evident the underlying imperialist tendencies linked with the English language. However, Holborrow also critiques Phillipson's reliance on the 'centre' and 'periphery' model of a world system to frame the economic differences between developed and developing nations, ignoring the economic inequalities *within* them.

Holborrow also sees limitations to Pennycook's argument on discourse, arguing that English (and discourses around English) alone are not the source of inequalities, which should be instead attributed to growing global competition within a capitalist system. English has thus played a role due to the dominance of Britain, and now the USA, within the global marketplace. However, she also warns against too quickly buying into claims that English is becoming a true world language because of this, when those who are less active in, or have not seen the benefits of the global market place, are also those to whom the spread of English has not reached. She highlights in particular that although English has official status in African nations, a very small percentage of the population can actually communicate in it.

Other authors, however, believe it is problematic and unhelpful to continue to dwell too much on the historical burden of colonialism in the face of the growing effects of globalisation on the linguistic priorities of countries (Sonaiya 2003; Lin & Martin 2005). Globalisation has on the one hand led to a growing awareness and appreciation of the world's enormous amount of minority languages and cultures and the development of a rights framework to protect them. On the other hand, it has also put pressure on many countries to develop their citizens' skills in English - the language of global communication - very much for the practical purposes of participating in the global economy and at the expense of cultural heritage and minority languages (Rubagumya 2004). A functional approach to English learning is often advocated in answer to this, where English is to be taught and used in specific contexts and for specific purposes, but not at the expense of one's 'identity language' (Sonaiya 2003).

However, this view fails to take two things into account. Firstly, it tends to focus purely on nations within a global context, overlooking the complex social, political, economic and linguistic differences that occur within different regions of a country. That is to say, it ignores that a growing number of Africans in urban areas are in fact being brought up with English as a mother tongue (Rubagumya 2004). Mazrui (2004) refers to these citizens as "Afro-Saxons", whose use of English is more than simply functional. Secondly, it doesn't sufficiently address many rural areas in which there is very little opportunity or need to use English outside the school environment (Sure 2003; Michieka 2009), rendering a functional approach more or less obsolete. These issues also draw into contention the traditional conception of Kachru's concentric circles, whereby post-colonial contexts, formerly considered to be belonging to the outer circle, now show elements of the inner circle (through native-speakers) and expanding circles (where English is a foreign language).
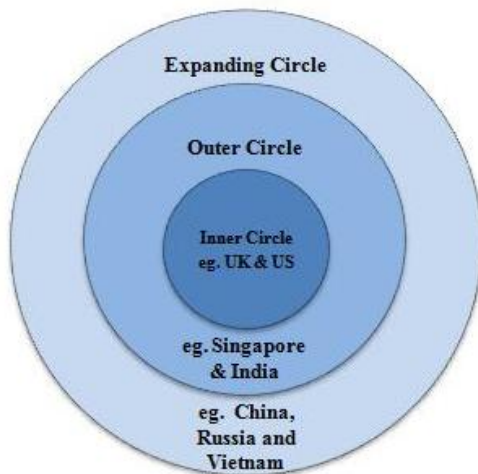
Questions of which Standard of English to use in education follow quickly in these discussions. Quirk, cited in Sure (2003: 198) writes that:

> It is neither liberal nor liberating to permit learners to settle for lower standards than the best; and it is a travesty of liberalism to tolerate low standards which will lock the least fortunate into the least rewarding careers.

This begs the question what really constitutes the "best" standard which, in many African contexts, is still considered to be the British Standard. But is it possible for a new standard to be developed: one that has status and is effective on a national and global stage? Kembo Sure (2003: 201) argues that such a standard, which is "internationally intelligible, locally acceptable and culturally relevant", would be beneficial for learners and teachers.

And so, taking all these perspectives into account, each one offering valuable insight into different elements of the situation, that this paper analyses the linguistic and educational challenges Kenya faces.

3. Colonialism and Independence

English and education during British colonialism

Decisions made by missionaries and the colonial government, with regard to the use of local languages or English for education, formed the foundation for the societal stratification in Kenya today. After declaring Kenya a British colony in 1895, it was decided that it would be less expensive to train and educate some Kenyans to facilitate the efficient running of the colonial government, rather than import British labour (Michieka 2009). This was a controversial move, provoking fears that it would socially uplift too many Kenyans, and measures were taken to ensure that English education in 'literary schools' remained limited to those who would serve the colonial administration, and 'village' schools, where local languages were used for instruction, directed students towards the professions of teaching, farming and craftsmanship (Michieka 2009).

However, it is interesting to note the tension of views regarding English in education and social mobility in 1927, when the Advisory Committee of the colonial office acknowledged that "one of the main incentives of African parents in sending their sons to school is for them to acquire knowledge of English" which leads to "economic advance later in life", and denying them this "would be regarded as the attempt of government to hold back the African from legitimate advance in civilization" (Gorman, 1974: 413 in Michieka 2005: 177).

The desire for better education for Kenyans was spurred by the return of Kenyans from the battlefields of World War 2 who, realising the economic value of English, were determined that their children acquire literacy in this language (Michieka 2009). This higher demand, however, never fully materialised into an increase of English literacy in village schools.

English in Kenya since Independence in 1963

At independence in 1963, after what Holborrow (1999: 84) refers to as "one of the bloodiest struggles in history", the new Kenyan government's adoption of English as the MOI from Standard 1 nationwide was welcomed by Kenyans who, having previously been restricted from learning English, now felt they had access to this instrument for upward social mobility

(Mbaabu 1996). The decision was also informed by a 'functionalist' view of English (Mazrui 2004). It was believed to offer more "scientifically conceived" foundations to learning and offered greater "linguistic equipment", therefore promoting a higher quality learning and faster progress (Republic of Kenya 1964). Meanwhile local languages were used only for story-telling in early primary, and Kiswahili's value as a lingua franca was only weakly promoted by becoming a compulsory subject, but not examinable (Mbaabu 1996). National unity was intended to be encouraged through a centralised education system (Glewwe, Kremer & Moulin 2007).

In 1976, the 'Gachathi Report' (RoK, 1976) recommended that the language of the 'catchment area' be used as the MOI from Standards 1-3 with English as a taught subject in preparation for the switch to the MOI in Standard 4; and in 1985 Kiswahili became an examinable subject after the observation during government inspections that it was not being taught seriously (Mbaabu 1996).

The language of the 'catchment area' means the local language in rural areas, and in urban areas either Kiswahili or English. In urban settings, the language of instruction is generally English from the beginning on. Children have more exposure to it in this more linguistically-mixed school environment and outside community (Glewwe et al 2007). In some cases, mother-tongue is banned and punishment dealt out for using it (Muthwii 2004a; Nabea 2009). In rural areas, where communities are more linguistically homogenous, the language of the catchment area is often used even until Standard 5 before transitioning to English MOI (Michieka 2006). Often students have very little opportunity to practice English outside the classroom (Ackers Hardman 2001). Some schools, however, begin teaching in English as early as possible in an attempt to be in competition with private and urban schools since all exams are undertaken in English, even in the first few years of school (Muthwii 2004b; Bunyi 2005).

Pressure to perform is high as, despite the huge linguistic differences in urban and rural contexts, all schools undergo the same standard national Kenya Primary Certificate of Education (KCPE) at the end of Standard 8 and primary schools are ranked on the average performance of the students. A further problem with this exam is that teachers do not always possess a command of the standard British variety of English, instead using a variety of different English norms, and as a result cannot model language use as required by the KCPE (Muthwii 2004a; Kioko & Muthwii 2003).

Discussion

The prestige of English: colonialism's legacy

While it could be argued that English was chosen and accepted by Kenyans at independence as the official language, this was not a choice that was void of certain aspirations that were linked to the prestige of English developed during colonialism. As a result, English in education is an enduring legacy of colonialism (Bunyi 2005). In studies conducted in Kenya, English is perceived to demonstrate intelligence, ambition, expertise, and confidence (Kioko & Muthwii 2003). Users of English must have gone to school to claim any competence, so asking people if they know English is almost synonymous with asking them if they have been to school and if they are literate (Michieka 2005).

Today, the descendants of those who benefited from being 'chosen' during colonialism to learn English and administer the colony, continue to benefit from the economic benefits and societal status gained through language, which is reproduced through what Myers-Scotton in Rubagumya (2004:135) calls "elite closure". This can be through such advantages as easier access to higher quality English MOI education, regular exposure to English in day-to-day life, and employment opportunities in government and high-end business where English is the working language. Often this group are now mother-tongue English speakers who Mazrui calls "Afro-Saxons". Having no or very little exposure to African languages other than Kiswahili, which is still a taught subject at school, there seems to be a significant disconnect between the starkly different linguistic realities of those making social, cultural, and economic policy decisions, and the majority of Kenyans.

Pennycook (2002) warns against dichotomizing between the haves and have-nots; the elites and the dominated, for fear of oversimplifying social realities. However, I do so in an effort to draw attention away from the 'core' vs. 'periphery' and 'inner-circle' vs. 'outer-circle' framework and highlight the very real relationship the English language has with social stratification *within* Kenya.

Rural and urban realities

Social stratification is particularly distinct when comparing rural and urban areas. In urban areas, people exercise larger repertoires of English varieties than in rural (Kioko & Muthwii 2003). They have more exposure to written and spoken English through media and interpersonal interactions. Even in poor urban slums, from my own observations, once some

knowledge of English is attained there is strong incentive to use it, and more opportunities to do so.

In rural areas, English usage is generally restricted to schools (Michieka 2005) and it follows that children do not benefit from outside exposure to English, or the ability to practise and contextualise the language in real life. In these contexts, the rules prohibiting local language use from Standard 4 are even considered "humanly impossible" by Bunyi 2005: 133) causing children to be passive in the classroom in the face of these norms (Kioko & Muthwii 2003). Furthermore, in rural areas teacher-quality tends to be lower for a variety of factors (Ochieng Ong'ondo & Borg 2011). With relation to language acquisition, ineffective methods such as linguistic routines, rote learning and choral responses restrict learning of English (Bunyi 2005; Kioko & Muthwii 2003).

The centralised nature of the education system, adopted at independence for the purposes of national unity (Glewwe, Kremer & Moulin 2007), is not flexible enough to address the different language-related learning needs of rural students. That they leave school without a mastery of English, nor sometimes Kiswahili – the languages in which debate and public affairs take place, and in which legal and administrative documents are written - makes it difficult for them to take part in transformative decision-making processes (Orao 2009), and contributes to the reproduction of existing inequalities.

The fight for minority languages

In recent years, the call has been growing for mother-tongue education as a right (UNESCO 2010; Negash 2005; Pennycook 2002) and because of its necessity for the emotional well-being of the child, as it is the "mental home" of an individual (Sonaiya 2003).

> It is in language that people find their mental home, their definitional relationship to the external world. What this also means is that people can hardly be themselves in an idiom in which they have difficulty understanding or expressing themselves. They can barely be creative and innovative in a language they have to struggle with in order to command expression.
>
> (Prah, cited in Sonaiya 2003: 149)

Sonaiya (2003) argues for at least one identity language to be attained and additional languages to perform a more functional purpose. Rubagumya (2004) also sees the practical use of English, but not at the expense of local languages. However, what seems to take place in rural Kenya is a sort of subtractive bi-/multilingualism, in that English is introduced at such an early age, without realistic provision for the development and maintenance of the

mother-tongue, such that the lines around English language as identity or function become quite hazy. It seems children are raised with the impression that their mother-tongue has little value, yet are denied the opportunity to master a functional language that would enable them to progress through the education system and into what is considered to be valuable employment.

Phillipson (2008: 37) warns that too much focus on English will in the future be detrimental:

> If postcolonial elites in Asia or Africa confirm a trend towards monolingualism in English, this is likely to intensify the gaps between haves and have-nots locally and globally and consolidate states that are untenable socially, culturally, and ecologically.

Rubagumya (2004) supports the idea of *additive* multilingualism. However, this possibility is hampered by the legacy of the nation-building ideology of monolingualism and the perceived dangers of multilingualism to stability (Pennycook 2002), as well as what Rubagumya (2004: 141) calls "globalisation euphoria".

> He suggests, however, that English will not lead Africa to play a greater role in the world economy, but rather that producing goods and service which are competitive will enable greater participation. This implies a need for creativity and innovation which, as we have seen argued by Prah (1998 in Sonaiya 2003) necessitates use of the mother-tongue. Meanwhile, those who are already strong will continue to be so. If language is power, and the language of schooling is an impediment to knowledge because the majority do not have real access to mastering it, then this power is lost (Rubagumya 2004).

The question of a standard

Inherent to decisions with regards to English language instruction in Kenyan schools, is the question of what form it will take. It has implications for teacher training, what is acceptable in examinations, and authentic and practical use of English within Kenya and internationally.

It seems that Kenyans from all walks of life prefer a non-ethnically marked Kenyan English as opposed to native (*British)* English (Kioko & Muthwii 2003: italics mine), yet exams and textbooks are still written based on the British Standard, which is rarely used in rural communities, nor is it mastered by teachers in many rural or urban contexts (Muthwii 2004a; Kioko & Muthwii 2003). In this way, by insisting on the British Standard variety, English

language teaching (ELT) in Kenya seems to be, like Pennycook (1998) suggests, a lingering product of colonialism.

Calls for a new standard have been numerous, especially in the wake of the rise of 'Sheng', an urban street language that fuses English, Kiswahili and various local languages to allow communication between the growing varieties of ethnicities in Kenya's cities. Academics and authorities blame Sheng for decreasing standards in English (Mazrui 1995; Nabea 2009) and as such, it could be considered a threat to education and development plans for the country. Sheng could be seen from a "resistance perspective" (Canagarajah, cited in Pennycook 2002: 65) in that the urban poor, having enough knowledge of English to not wholly rely on Kiswahili as a lingua franca, yet lacking sufficient skills in English to communicate entirely in it, formulate a language of their own that enables them to threaten the existing norms of language use in politics and society (Mazrui 1995).

However, this movement is unique to urban areas and the rural poor, in their limited need for English in their daily lives, have little incentive or opportunity to reconstitute it in an attempt to renegotiate existing power imbalances. They seem more subject to the reproduction of inequality with regards to the value of their languages, their role and identity in society, and their educational opportunities. For this reason, I generally agree with Pennycook (2002: 48) that:

the vision that access to standard forms will somehow be automatically empowering is inadequate; on the other hand, it is important not to fall into the trap of suggesting that power also lies outside language and that it is only with social change that different language forms may come to take on different roles.

To benefit the rural communities in Kenya, however, I think social and political change will need to play an important role, and discussions around language alone will not suffice.

Summary and conclusions

In this paper I have discussed how the continuation of colonial language-in-education policy practices post-independence seem to have contributed to a reproduction of social inequalities in Kenya, with exposure and access to English being a major factor to succeeding into higher education and upward social mobility. I have also outlined the incentives for English to continue to play an important role in education, as it is the language

of global communication and thus facilitate access to the global market place, and, importantly for Kenya, allow ease of communication with agencies involved in development initiatives. The role of English in Kenya is problematic, sparking debate about the depth to which its imperialist (and neo-imperialist) tendencies contribute to a reproduction of inequality in contrast to beliefs that the development and appropriation of a Kenyan Standard, and rejection of the British Standard, will enable Kenyans to 'write back' to this power imbalance and establish a place in our globalised world of its own making.

While I agree that a Kenyan Standard - incorporating grammatical and lexical elements of local languages while remaining intelligible to speakers of other forms of English - seems more natural than British Standard English, I foresee several problems. First is that, until the school curriculum, including text books and examinations, accepts this standard, it will be of little use to a child who knows it, but must only use the British Standard at school. Second, while communities in rural areas have little exposure to, nor use for English, it seems that debate on the very issue of a Standard is futile without investigation into a system of education that is less centralised and more flexible with regards to the linguistic needs of these communities. Greater investment in teachers who are able to teach English effectively through a variety of methods as appropriate to the linguistic context is also essential. Attempts to unify the country through a common language without taking these factors into consideration, contribute to inequality, and this would be more likely to be reduced if efforts were made to increase the value of local languages, while taking care to teach English as an additional language, in full knowledge that 'natural' exposure to it is limited in rural areas.

It is likely that attempts to reduce social inequalities purely through economic and social initiatives will bear little fruit until decision-makers acknowledge the relationship between their proficiency in English and their access to power, and seek to address issues of language policy, particularly in education. Without the political will to allocate research and funding into such an initiative, I foresee rural populations continuing to lag behind urban ones in the evolution of the English language debate in Kenya and hope that more research and thought will be dedicated to this discussion in the future.

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Of Echoes, Exiles, and Remnants: David Grossman and the Mystery of Modern Hebrew

As Israeli writer David Grossman spoke to us* about his love of Hebrew, of writing, and of Eretz Yisrael, I had an uncanny 'moment of recognition' that several tropes of humanity have come full circle since the founding of Israel in 1948: tropes of echoes, exiles and remnants. David opened the one-hour session by reciting a short poem of his, and the echoes of his modern colloquial Hebrew reverberating off the walls of the Aula caught me off guard. The sounds and words were often pleasing, of course, as is the case with *any* language, but there was also something odd, anomalous and haunting in the fact that it was H-e-b-r-e-w. Had he been writing a century ago, David Grossman would have written *not* in Hebrew but in Polish and/or Yiddish, the languages of his ancestors. So what is the story behind this?

In some ways, modern Hebrew should not *be* (echoes of Leibniz). Archaeological evidence tells us that for over twelve centuries (10th c. B.C.-3rd c. A.D.), the Canaanite Semitic language known as Classical (or Biblical) Hebrew was used on a quotidian basis in ancient Israel, and then it largely left the streets, the markets and the homes of the Jews (echoes of the Gezer calendar, Moabite Stone, Dan Stele, and Lachish seals and ostraca). Toward the end of the Roman Period (c. 200 A.C.), Jews were systematically dispersed from the Roman province of Judea, and Hebrew retreated to the synagogues and temples, where it was used for religious purposes only (i.e. liturgical and rabbinical) (echoes of the Siloam inscription, Dead Sea Scrolls, Copper Scroll, and Bar Kochba letters).

Fast-forward eighteen centuries to modern Israel, and we find the following example of a rather typical 'identity crisis':
"On a bus in Tel Aviv, a mother was talking animatedly, in Yiddish, to her son – who kept answering her in Hebrew. And each time the mother said, 'No, no, talk Yiddish!'
An impatient Israeli, overhearing this, exclaimed, 'Lady, why do you insist the boy talk Yiddish instead of Hebrew?'
Replied the mother, 'I don't want him to forget he's a Jew!'" (Rosten xxi).

At one point in our interview, David Grossman praised the astonishing work of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922), the lexicographer that was the driving force behind the revival of Hebrew. In 1879, Ben-Yehuda published an article entitled 'A Burning Question' in a Russian Jewish journal where, inspired by the efforts of Bulgarians to gain their independence, he "advocated the revival of a Jewish national entity in Palestine, with Hebrew as its language, and serving as a cultural centre for the scattered Jewish people. The idea that Hebrew could be brought to life again as a modern colloquial language seemed totally unrealistic at the time" (Comay 57).

Ben-Yehuda's goal was "To spread the Hebrew language and speech among people in all walks of life … and to prepare (it) as a spoken language in the home, school, public life, business, industry, fine arts, and in the sciences" (Gilbert 8). To that end, Eliezer and his fellow members of the 'Committee of the Hebrew Language' systematized terminology, spelling, and pronunciation, and coined thousands of new words based on Hebrew and Arabic roots, as well as borrowed words from Yiddish, Latin, Greek, Polish, German,

Russian, English, Ladino, and other languages. Eliezer and his wife Hemda (1873-1951) developed a set of 'action-plans,' the most important of which was "Hebrew in the School." They raised their son Ben-Zion Ben-Yehuda entirely in modern Hebrew, making him the first person to speak it as a mother tongue since the second century.

To be sure, Ben-Yehuda and his colleagues faced an uphill struggle for years, one punctuated by tremendous conflicts along predictable lines: locals-immigrants, Ashkenazi-Sephardi Jews, religious-secular, Jewish-Turkish. Amazingly, the man also had to deal with bans, arrests, lawsuits, imprisonment, and several years of exile during the First World War. One example of such tensions occurs in Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel, *Meshugah*, when the New York-based writer/protagonist-cum-author, Aaron, is miffed to hear that "Several (fellow Polish *landsleit* who had made *aliya* to Israel after World War II) had already forgotten their Yiddish and spoke Hebrew among themselves" (191). Or what about Amos Oz, who says he heard Yiddish being spoken by so many elderly people in Jerusalem when he was a boy that he was convinced he would suddenly start speaking it at the canonical age of forty-five?

Nevertheless, significant momentum was gained from two quarters, political and educational. In the early twenties, British authorities selected Hebrew as an official language (along with Arabic and English) in the Mandate, and in the mid-twenties, the prestigious Haifa Technion adopted Hebrew as its language of instruction. By the time of his death in 1922, Eliezer and Hemda had managed to publish six of the seventeen volumes of the *Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew*, and today the language is spoken by more than seven million people worldwide, half of whom are native speakers. With Modern Standard Arabic, Hebrew is one of the official languages of Israel. "It is the only case of an ancient language that has been successfully revived in modern times" (Comay 58). (Echoes of Lazarus).

In 1908, Ben-Yehuda paid tribute to the power of the resolute individual: "For everything there is needed only one wise, clever and active man, with the initiative to devote all his energies to it, and the matter will progress, all obstacles in the way notwithstanding ... In every new event, every step,…it is necessary that there be one pioneer who will lead the way without leaving any possibility of turning back" (Jewish Virtual Library) (echoes of the Genesis story of Abraham and Sarah, where the development is logical and felicitous: one man, a couple, a family, a 'tribe,' a nation, and 'the rest of the world').

Three final tidbits: (1) What was the first word Eliezer taught his wife Hemda? *Mafteah*, or "key" (echoes of Helen Keller). (2) Like the Ben-Yehudas, Ludwig Lazarus Zamenhof (1859-1917) brought a *Yiddishkeit* background to *his* linguistic enterprise, but with far less success – Esperanto today has no more than a thousand native speakers. (3) At one point, Eliezer's gravestone on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem was sprayed with graffiti – in which language? Hebrew, of course.

David Grossman thus joined A.B. Yehoshua, Amos Oz, and oodles of other writers of the "Israeli" generation – those *born* into Hebrew – in saluting Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, a "muse of fire" who, in his own way, "ascended the brightest heaven of invention." It's a miracle.
Gary Stahl (The International School of Geneva)

*David Grossman spoke for one hour to a large gathering of students, teachers and parents at the La Chataigneraie campus of the International School of Geneva on Tuesday, 13 November 2012.

Gary Stahl
International School of Geneva

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Research at Ecolint

Many of our colleagues are involved in studying for higher degrees. This first edition of the Ecolint research Journal looks at some of the research areas and also mentions books that others may be interested to read. Many of the books mentioned can be found in the Institute professional development section of the secondary library at Campus des Nations and are available to borrow.   Please contact the authors if you would like to discuss any of the titles below.

Does the teaching of empathy have a role in developing children's productive thinking in the early years classroom? Catherine Gdula

Abstract:

Gordon suggests that, "The illiterate of the next generation will not be those who don't know how to read, they will be those who don't know how to relate." (2009:100) In order for young children to feel open to developing their critical and creative thinking skills they need to feel secure and supported in the classroom. This support needs to come in many forms and as is stated by Gordon should not only focus on the academic aspect the curriculum prescribes but also the development of the child's emotional literacy and empathetic skills.

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Which theoretical frameworks were most effective for fostering productive thought within the context of the 2012 International Baccalaureate (I.B.) Primary Years Programme (PYP) Exhibition ? Isla Gordon

Abstract

The La Châtaigneraie PYP Exhibition requires students to inquire into an issue of economic, social or environmental significance and devise proposals for a suitable action to be taken. To be able to do this students need to acquire a solid understanding of the subject matter and to then apply this understanding, thinking creatively and critically about their proposed actions. Such tasks, when categorised in educational theoretical frameworks, feature at the levels of higher order thinking and productive thought.
This paper evaluated, through a simple action research project, the perceived effectiveness of some selected frameworks for planning, organisational and assessment purposes of the Exhibition. These were used by curriculum coordinators, teachers and students and included the use of the SOLO taxonomy (Biggs and Collis 1982), Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), as well as the Anderson & Krathwohl's revised version of Bloom's taxonomy (2001) and Kath Murdoch's Inquiry Cycle (2007).
In conclusion, each framework was most useful at different stages of the Exhibition process, often complementing each other in their purpose. Each would also be recommended for enhancing curriculum design and assessment purposes across subject areas and age-ranges.

Moseley , D., Baumfield, V., Elliott, J., Gregson, M., Higgins, S., Miller, J., & Newton, D. P. (2005).*Frameworks for thinking: A handbook for teaching and learning*. (1 ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Murdoch, K., & Wilson, J. (2008). *Creating a learner-centred primary classroom*. (1 ed.). Victoria, Australia: Routledge.

Lisa Craddock – La Côte International School, member of the Durham University MA Education (International) group, taught at Ecolint.

Abstract:

The objective of this investigation was to examine how SOLO taxonomy can be applied across subject areas as both a student and teacher tool for metacognition and self regulation which ultimately leads to a greater awareness of learning and productive thought. It stresses an importance on the process of how students learn above the subject content.   The investigation began with an introduction to SOLO taxonomy as implemented in the

International Baccalaureate English Literature classroom and then continued to student reflection and application in other subject areas. The investigation was informed by research into metacognition and SOLO taxonomy. The premise of the investigation was that the Structured Observed Learning Outcomes model devised by Biggs and Collis in 1982 can be used to enhance the metacognition and productive thought of Year 8 students. The investigation used qualitative surveys and mediated interviews with students. It concluded that students did indeed find an awareness of SOLO taxonomy allowed them to think metacognitively and that they could see the possibility of transferring their learning and complexity of thinking from one subject to another. It also concluded that SOLO taxonomy can encourage teachers to engage metacognitively as a teacher of learning as well as subject knowledge; the paper also discusses the relevance of this to the philosophy of the International Baccalaureate. Thus, SOLO taxonomy is a powerful tool for pedagogy and metacognition, combining thinking skills and self-regulation to create productive thought.

The Compatibility of Feminist and Catholic Literary Theories in the Novels of Donna Freitas Kathryn Concannon:

Abstract:

This dissertation was submitted to complete the requirements for a Master's in Children's Literature from the University of Roehampton.

This paper first defines feminist literary theory and catholic literary theory through close text analysis of the Young Adult novel texts of Donna Freitas, then examines the theories' compatibility or contradiction. Using the works and research of Roberta Seelinger Trites as a foundation, the novel texts are evaluated as exemplars of both schools of theory. Using current literary theory as it applies to children's' literature helps contextualize these novels within the genre of realistic fiction.

The importance of 'Questioning' in the classroom as a means to encourage higher order thinking skills in students, (pupils), with particular reference to the development of trainee teachers. Alison Ball

Abstract:

As teachers we may view our job in different ways: to impart knowledge, to mentor our students as they learn, but perhaps most especially to help them develop and engage in higher order thinking skills which will not only facilitate their learning in school but also provide a means to evaluate the way they see the world in later life.
The 'quality' and type of questioning we use in our classroom from day to day can be vital in the development of higher order thinking, and the aim of this assignment is to look at this area in relation to trainee teachers.

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Costa, A. L. (2001). *Developing minds: A resource book for teaching thinking*. Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

An analysis of critical thinking descriptors in Theory of Knowledge aims, objectives and assessment criteria. Conrad Hughes

Peterson, A. (1987). Schools Across Frontiers. La Salle, Illinois: Open Court. on the history of the IB and UWC movement

Ennis, R.H. (1996). Critical Thinking. New York: Prentice Hall. on critical thinking.

How will explicit genre teaching promote better understanding of reflective writing in EAL students? Karen Procter

How will explicit genre teaching promote better understanding of reflective writing in English as an Additional Language (EAL) students?
The purpose of this investigation was to critically evaluate what 'understanding' means in terms of developing EAL (English as an additional Language) learners' writing skills. Writing is a complex task particularly for EAL learners as they need to contend with specific sentence and text structures, and culture- and content-specific concepts and vocabulary. A genre approach with strategies to support understanding is key to 'academic understanding' and this study looked at how learners can construct this understanding for themselves. The reflective genre was specifically selected because the EAL classroom should incorporate reflective thinking. Lessons to foster and support understanding were designed to enable students to independently produce reflective writing compositions. Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected through observation, mediated interviews, analysis of pre, post and delayed genre-based instruction samples of reflective writing and student reflection journals. Native samples, from a year 7 Reflection class provided a benchmark for comparison. The results from the quantitative data, supported by qualitative findings, suggest that there was statistically significant improvement in both schematic and linguistic features at the end of the research period for EAL students. This indicates that the active scaffolding process, raising awareness of reflective text characteristics appears to have benefited students. Not only did the EAL students improve but overtook the native benchmark.

It may be reasonable to hypothesize that the explicit teaching of genre has helped EAL students to construct their own understanding of the reflective genre, improving their academic writing and hence their academic understanding. Genre reflects both the current teaching theories for understanding and language teaching pedagogy, so it sits well with the MYP programme, which promotes active, learner-centred, scaffolded learning, embedded within an authentic context.At the end of the process students can see results, take ownership of their writing improving motivation and self-regulation. Hopefully, students will now see themselves as writers 'in process' rather than 'bad writers' (Fernsten, 2008, p.51).

Newton, D. P. (2012). *Teaching for understanding: What it is and how to do it*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Wellington, J, Osborne, J.(2001) *Language and Literacy in Science Education*. Open University Press

Does the PYP promote productive thought? Sandra Simpson

Abstract:

In this paper, I analysed summative assessment tasks in the PYP using the taxonomy table of Bloom's revised taxonomy. My results showed that these assessment tasks promoted conceptually-based productive thinking.

Ferguson, C. (2002). Using the revised taxonomy to plan and deliver team-taught integrated, thematic units. *Theory into Practice*, *41*(4).

Krathwohl, D. W. (2002). Theory into Practice.*A revision of Bloom's taxonomy taxonomy: An overview*, *41*(4), 412-418.