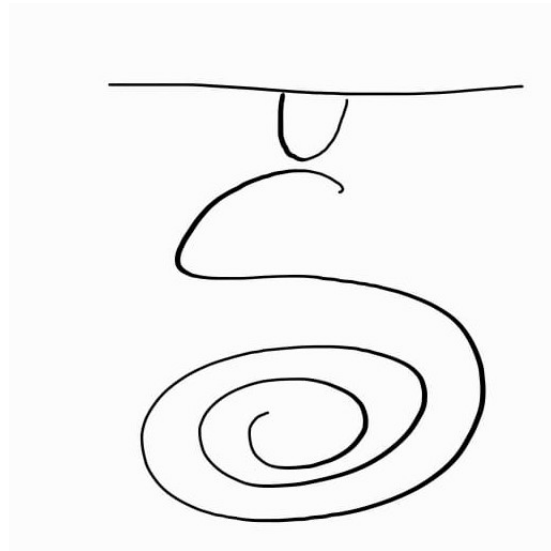




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(And since a picture is worth a thousand words ...

please have a look at the back cover!)

Cătălina Cocan – *The Shapes of Joy*



Cătălina teaches English. She has been doing so for almost twenty years, sometimes with gusto, sometimes with the feeling that she will eventually retire from another job...

As a child, she discovered her penchant for humming sounds and creating music in her head. However, pursuing a career in music (writing down and interpreting that very music in her head) had never been an option, due to rightful life constraints... until very recently.

Someone's forties may just be the right time for a change. Given that the teaching strike (May-June 2023) offered her a long-needed mental rest, Cătălina took the time to offer herself a gift, the gratification of a lifelong desire. She composed a playful piece that was played and sung (by something like twenty people) at a common friend's retirement party.

When she steps away from her piano keys, Cătălina is editor of *Teaching Stories. Old and New*, a no-frills magazine for teachers who have a story to tell.

The Shapes of Joy

Life joy comes in various shapes: rectangular books, oval earrings, triangular pizza slices to share with friends.

Life attachment also has a tendency of coming in various shapes. Heart-shaped walks, diamond-shaped wedding rings or ever-growing circular bellies of to-be-mums. Also, the multi-shaped litter in the living-room just before guests' arrival, brought about by the toothless prankster who used to inhabit the said ever-growing belly.

Cheesy? Bear with me.

There are those life moments when things seem to circle in on us and we need the peace and quiet brought about by happy memories of old. Recollections we may not have deemed "cheerful" at the time, but which have become more and more so as time went by...

In times of unrest (from September to June, every single year), teachers need the inner comfort brought about by the things they love (which may have little, if anything, to do with teaching, but which make them feel alive).

Yes, this kind of bliss comes in shapes.

Circular - Ice-cream scoops or bunny noses. Fluffy, stuffed toys, nurturing the roundish warmth of holiday sleepover memories.

Rectangular - Black keys, white keys. Little rectangular drops of sound whose burgeoning conclusion on the listening ear is still untold...

Oval - Chocolate thins, potato chips or, better still, flower petals. Elegantly winding their fragrant silkiness, gazing upon one another from various angles. Life in its intricate, elegant spirals, enjoying the journey more than the destination.

I have taken the liberty of imagining that teaching joy could also come in shapes. Hence, let us have a closer look at what the warmth of circular shapes, the clarity of rectangular shapes and the growth of spiralling shapes could mean for our teaching magazine.

Circular storytellers (Daniela Andrieș, Daniela Botiza) are the ones sometimes called “Mami! Uhhh...Teacher!” by prep grade students. Hugged during the break on school corridors, they have ears bustling with lively singsongs (“Uite-o pe Teacher!”, “Ciao!” or even the obsolete, mainstream, though still acceptable “Hello, Teacher!”). Such teachers hold the key to attachment-based learning.

Rectangular storytellers (Luisa Filip, Andrada Jichici, Andreea Grigoraș), just like refined pianists, turn raw sound into mellow song. Such storytellers are rumoured to have the ability of turning classroom boredom to fond memories, by allowing artificial intelligence, antispeciesism or international projects to step into their classroom.

Oval storytellers (Palmina La Rosa, Alina Jiman) instil their teaching with life skills. Since no memorable teaching happens in a void, social skills such as openness to the needs of the community, volunteering or fund raising are all part of the teaching job description of the teachers who infuse memorability into everything they do.

Which brings us to square one.

What do *you* do to feel good in the classroom?

What is the shape of *your* joy?

If you would like to share your story with us, please have a look at the *Call for Papers 2024* requirements on the very last page of this issue.

Happy reading!

Cătălina

Palmina La Rosa – *Life Skills, Project Management and Academic Success*



I've been involved in teacher training and education for almost 30 years.

I founded Giga International House in 1997 and, in January 2021, we launched CTD – Coaching Training and Development, a division of Giga IH.

I became a qualified Coach, approved by International Coaching Federation (ICF) in 2018 and Team Coaching Specialist in 2022.

In 2020, I attended the High Impact Leadership Course, held at the University of Cambridge Institute of Sustainability Leadership.

I am currently the AISLi Accreditation and Inspection Coordinator (the Italian Association of Italian Language Schools). I look after the accreditation processes and inspection procedures and manage the AISLi inspectors' team.

I am also a Career Guidance Specialist accredited by ASNOR (the Italian Association of Career Guidance Specialists).

I am dedicated to pursuing excellence conveying passion and enthusiasm for my work.

www.ctd.coach – palmina@ctd.coach

Life Skills, Project Management and Academic Success

Integrating life skills such as interpersonal and entrepreneurship skills into school programs and implementing various learning opportunities that enable learners to develop the skills needed to upgrade their potential should become our mission as educators.

In today's fast-moving world, students find it very difficult to plan their future. They must learn more about their personalities and the world of work and align their values and career decision with their life goals.

As educators, when we develop our curriculum, we should focus on the importance and the benefits of integrating life skills in the school curriculum to help students develop the social, emotional and thinking skills. They are important building blocks for our students' growth.

We need to focus on developing such skills to strengthen our students' ability to meet the needs of the present society and to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. It is the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that bridges the gap between school and society.

Life skills seek to enhance our students' capabilities to make decisions and take actions that will enable them to positively impact their lives and the lives of those around them.

If we believe that integrating life skills will help our students go the extra mile, we should allow our students to think outside of the box, to creatively generate ideas and evaluate the pros and cons of each idea.

We should present them with opportunities to practice problems solving, listening and communication skills.

Our students should be more active and participative. They should increase empathy for the others and their point of view when working in teams. Team work will maximize their input and will allow interactions.

We should make educational games, role plays and case studies part of our daily routine. In fact, promoting fun and active learning in a positive environment will enhance not only their knowledge, but also their attitudes and skills. Students will have a chance to analyse, explore and challenge different solutions. Sharing ideas and learning a new mindset will help them see things in a different way.

Integrating life skills into our curriculum will have lengthy-term benefits for our students. The most important benefit is that the students became aware of their strengths. They started to believe in their abilities to be a valuable contributing member in their society.

Researchers have pointed out that young students are unable to utilize their potential in an appropriate way due to the lack of guidance.

With this in mind, our department of Coaching, Training and Development (CTD) is developing a model that will help our students improve their collaboration skills, develop their values and views and increase their self-confidence.

The model is a methodological approach to leading teams through coaching techniques while working on project-based activities and on developing soft skills.

It is based on an equation which describes the process, time, energy and commitment needed for the creation of an effective team, the achievement of its project goals and the development of its members.

While working on the project, the students will enhance their soft skills and the teachers will develop their coaching skills.

When putting into practice these skills, the teacher provides added value because they will empower students to master life skills and ensure they reach their full potential thanks to their learning journey.

If you are interested in knowing more about the model, stay tuned on the CTD website. We will share updates on the model soon.

Alina Monica Jiman – *3D Comes from Dor De Dar*



Alina has been teaching English in different public schools for almost three years and now she is teaching English at a private kindergarten in Cluj-Napoca.

The first year of teaching English in a public school, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod Secondary School, Cluj-Napoca, was Alina's first encounter with her mentor, Catalina, who brought confidence, making Alina give her best shot.

Alina and Catalina co-edit Povestiri Transparente, a student magazine raising funds for humanitarian causes.

3D Comes from Dor de Dar

Some stories are connection stories. Here is ours.

Throwing back to 2020, the pandemic year, me and my coworker at that time, friend of all time, used that context of not being onsite as teachers and having only online classes, as a way of spreading implications even if they were online implications.

We started a magazine with the stories of our students for raising funds for different humanitarian causes.

Because the first magazine appeared in December 2020, we thought that our students would like to write about some Christmas stories. Then, with each new issue of our magazine, we gave students new topics to write on. We even played games in choosing the topics, being inspired by the Dada movement. We created stories on the spot, by including random words from a bag. A word document became a perfect place for their unleashed creativity.

We entitled the magazine Povestiri Transparente (Transparent Stories). The stories are transparent because of the light that composes them. It is the inner light of each child that is there in his own story written with a special purpose: helping the others. And here is the place where something coming from the inside meets the outside world, it is the light that goes through people's hands. The transparency makes the

movement possible. It is, in fact, an energy of being involved in the story of *We Need One Another*.



Povestiri

Transparente started in a word document. Then we created a Facebook page with a heart as a profile picture. We never thought that 3 years later we will have a Logo (*Dor de Dar*) and a QR Code and catchy stories, dressed up in new clothes.

They were presented on the local radio, in different workshops at American Corner and they decided their new path, a would-be audiobook.

Meet us here: <https://povestiritransparente.weebly.com/>



Luisa Filip – *Artificial Intelligence. A Curse or a Blessing?*



Luisa is an experienced ELT professional who has been working with students and teachers of all ages for many years; she holds a BA in English Language and Literature and a MA in Education.

She is a teacher trainer, mentor trainer and a TESOL graduate from Oregon University.

She was an English language county inspector for many years contributing to training, assessing and developing teachers. These aspects of teaching have remained her main strengths and interests.

Since 2019 she has resumed full-time teaching and is happily working with upper-secondary students in a Romanian and English bilingual-teaching college in her hometown Cluj-Napoca, in northern Transylvania, Romania.

Artificial Intelligence –A Curse or a Blessing?

This short article is the product of my reflections as a participant in a training course on *Leading Change-Digital Transformation of Education in the Era of Artificial Intelligence* offered by ASEF (Asia-Europe Foundation in Education), in the summer of 2023.

1.Technology and Artificial Intelligence

Digital learning has become a must not just an approach in order to ensure the progress in achievement and also the well-being of our learners.

It all goes back to our experience during the pandemic when teachers and students had to move online to continue the process of learning. The next step was setting up digital platforms which moved the classroom online and made it more secure. Later digital platforms went flipped or hybrid as teachers tried to humanize learning and create more motivation. Some of these experiences stayed with us as they turned out to be more empowering for students allowing them to choose what to learn and when to learn thus giving them more autonomy. The new normal which emerged since 2021 is a blending of the learner-centred approach with digitalization and inter-disciplinary content (not only in ESL) so as to equip students with skills for the new world in order to achieve their full potential.

We are in fact moving away from the traditional formative and summative assessment towards an integrated learning and assessment model where digital tools are more frequently and independently used by learners and here comes in the use of AI to provide valuable feedback to students allowing them to make use of their skills, intelligence and creative thinking in completing evaluation tasks. A switch in assessment tools has also taken place with the increased autonomy in learning: more independent tasks rather than standardized tests, project and portfolio work, creative assignments where students may also use AI components. In fact technology and AI are moving on fast forward at an incredible and unprecedented speed so that more specialists are now looking for solutions to fix the future.

2.Perspectives of Using AI in Education

The potential of AI is endless and without clear ethical regulations that would limit its use (not only in education) it could turn into a threat that could jeopardize world order and democracies in the world. The first aspects to be approached refer to digital services and the European Commission plans on adopting an official Act to regulate

them at the beginning of September 2023. In this way even major social media platforms will have to comply with obligations regarding content used and employ protective measures to eliminate risks.

On the other hand, a global conduct act with regard to using AI would be a safer solution for stronger models like CHAT GPT which may generate content that can later be manipulated for negative purposes.

In fact, everything we know about student accountability in writing, plagiarism, testing and grading are being questioned. AI relies on human-created content to generate answers, therefore it depends on the creativity of humans to improve. As AI is going to become ubiquitous, human creativity will be essential for work to stand out in the future.

Major companies and famous stakeholders around the world seem to favour the benefits of AI, but future developments will reveal how this new reality is going to work. Changes are irreversible and countries will have to stick together so as to win the battle for progress to improve every-day life while committing to freedom, liberty and other human values.

In education raising awareness with regard to the potentials of AI will set the ground for reshaping the teaching profession.

Resources:

1. Artificial Intelligence And Education: A critical view through the lens of human rights, democracy and the rule of law: <https://rm.coe.int/artificial-intelligence-and-education-acritical-view-through-the-lens/1680a886bd>
2. UNESCO AI and Education: Guidance for Policymakers: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000376709>
3. What is AI?: <http://jmc.stanford.edu/artificial-intelligence/what-is-ai/index.html>
4. Different Branches of AI: <http://jmc.stanford.edu/artificial-intelligence/what-is-ai/branches-of-ai.html>
5. Artificial Intelligence in Education: Bringing it all together: <https://learninganalytics.upenn.edu/ryanbaker/oecd-baker.pdf>
6. Six reasons Artificial Intelligence technology will never take over from human teachers: <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=2948>

Andrada Jichici – *Antispeciesism in the English Classroom*



Andrada Jichici is an English teacher at Ion Agârbiceanu Secondary School in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

She studied English and Italian at university and has a Master's Degree in Creative Writing.

She lived in London for while, immersed in the English language with its many accents.

She believes in the unique flavour of every soul and wants to enable her students to enjoy and explore their uniqueness. She's interested in performance art and dance therapy and she's an animal rights advocate.

She returned to teaching after having a variety of other jobs and experiences that revealed to her the power of finding and sticking to your soul in a world that asks for obedience and conformity.

Antispeciesism in the English classroom

There is currently, in the UK, a new petition asking the government to introduce mandatory lessons on animal slaughter for primary school children.¹ The petition is linked to a campaign called 'Peppa is bacon'² that features a video with Peppa Pig's cousin, Paul, who goes looking for Peppa at a slaughterhouse where he is killed and turned into sausage. The campaign shows that children there are mostly unaware of the process a pig goes through from farm to plate. Each month, in the UK, 1 million pigs are killed for food from the total of about 1.2 billion land animals that land on British people's plates.³

I could not find these figures for Romania, but I have noticed a difference in the perception Romanian children have on the animals that they eat. In the school year 2022-2023 I worked with around 350 primary school children. Many of them have witnessed the slaughter of a pig usually at their grandparents' house at least once. When we talk about it, they say that tradition tells us to slaughter the pig, or that this is what pigs are for and also that pork tastes really good. However, neither Romanian nor British children seem to be aware of the living conditions of animals in intensive farming. They imagine that the animals they consume all come from an idyllic place called the 'animal farm' where the cow, the pig, the horse, the chicken, the donkey, etc. all smile and live in harmony with a nice farmer in a kind of continuous present. The animals 'give' things to the farmer: eggs, milk, even their own flesh. How 'normal' or 'natural' is this situation? Have you stopped and wonder? And even if this were the

¹ <https://plantbasednews.org/culture/law-and-politics/petition-mandatory-slaughterhouse-lessons-schools/>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57VlsJehr84>

³ <https://plantbasednews.org/culture/law-and-politics/petition-mandatory-slaughterhouse-lessons-schools/>

case, if the idyllic farm were not a lie, what makes us humans feel it is justifiable for us to use other sentient beings for our benefit? What is the underlying idea or belief that makes this acceptable? The answer is, in one word, speciesism.

Speciesism is the belief that some species are superior to others. It usually applies to humans believing that they are superior to non-human animals. This belief makes it acceptable for us to exploit members of other species for food, clothing, entertainment and experiments. It is also the reason we eat pigs but value and love dogs, thus discriminating between the two species of animals.⁴

Children are not born speciesist, much in the same way as children are not born racist, homophobic, anti-semitic, transphobic, etc. They learn speciesism. And how do they learn it? Among other means, and unfortunately, language learning plays a big part in promoting speciesism through the ways animals are taught in class. From kindergarten to 4th grade, most children books present animals either smiling at the farm or behind bars at the zoo. My current preparatory grade textbook also shows animals as something humans possess: 'My brother has got a mouse', 'My sister has got a cat', etc.⁵ My first grade textbook shows wild animals in Africa during a safari trip. Here they are a source of entertainment.⁶ Images with children or adults riding horses are common, too. Before Easter one second grade textbook⁷ offers us 'Easter bingo!' On the second row we see a lamb, cute, with a tiny bell around his neck. He will be, as we all know, separated from his mother and killed just before Easter. This is not mentioned. The examples can go on and on. If you are beginner teacher, I invite

⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speciesism>

⁵ English for Kids, Booklet

⁶ English Academy 1, Macmillan Education

⁷ Fairyland II, Uniscan

you to pay attention to how animals are depicted in our English textbooks. If you are an experienced teacher, how do you feel about this?

It is scientifically proven that non-human animals feel pain and have a preference to live rather than to die. These two factors alone give animals the intrinsic right to live and not be harmed. Do we want our children to relate to animals in an ethical way? If yes, what can we do to foster the understanding that animals are here *with* us not *for* us? Fortunately, there are plenty of anti-speciesist resources out there. Below are some ideas and resources that I recommend as a starting point:

- Replace the animal farm with an animal sanctuary; watch short films from two sanctuaries here in Romania : Nima Sanctuary⁸ and Spirit Animals Sanctuary⁹; use Nima Sanctuary colouring book. All these will expose children to people protecting and looking after ‘farm’ animals, not exploiting them, people hugging not milking cows, cows together with their babies, cats and sheep in one place and getting the same love and affection, pigs sleeping next to humans in total trust and so on.¹⁰
- Explore anti-speciesist poems and songs by writer and animal rights activist Benjamin Zephaniah (‘Talking Turkeys’ is great just before Christmas)¹¹
- Use the poem ‘Hurt no living thing’ by Christina Rossetti and invite children to write their own versions using the same structure and inserting the animals they want to protect.
- For further ideas and activities, check out these websites:

<https://www.petakids.com/>

<https://www.twinkl.ro/search?q=vegan>

⁸ <https://sanctuarnima.ro/>

⁹ <https://spiritanimals.ro/>

¹⁰ <https://shop.sanctuarnima.ro/shop/>

¹¹ <https://benjaminzephaniah.com/>

<https://vegnews.com/vegan-news/vegan-childrens-books-kids-animals>

There are of course many other resources and I really hope that you will do your own research and challenge the speciesism in our English language textbooks. Our effort as teachers will pay off. When one person stops consuming animal products, they save in one month alone around 30 animal lives, not to mention the 124,920 liters of water, 540 kg of grain, 90 Sq.m of forested land, and 270 kg CO₂¹² Imagine.

A compassionate sustainable world is possible and it starts in school with building an ethical relationship with animals based on consent and compassion and respecting the animals' intrinsic rights.

¹² <https://feelgoodpal.com/app/calculator/>

Andreea Grigoraş – *Finding the Magic in our Town*



I studied English and German at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş- Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. I graduated in 2008.

During this time, I had a taste of teaching, by working as a kindergarten German teacher. After graduating I gave the corporate world a shot, however I decided to follow my dream of becoming a teacher, instead.

I have been teaching English for 15 years now, a childhood passion, that has turned into a career.

So here I am, enjoying every step of the way.

Finding the Magic in our Town

This article is based on my experience as a participant in the *My Magic Town* eTwinning project, that took place from January to June 2023.

It involved two teachers, one of which was the co- founder of the project , myself and sixteen students from our school.

The main aim of our project *My Magic Town* was to get to know and promote every aspect of our town. For that we partnered with eight schools (six from Türkiye and two from Georgia).

Our project aimed at bringing students and schools from different parts of the world together and focusing on building relationships. By looking closely at our town with a fresh perspective and with a desire to promote it internationally, our students developed a taste of being curious about their town and consequently, curious about the other towns presented by the other partners. We innovated by encouraging students to research information about their town and they further designed that information into logos, posters, calendars and dictionaries, by using ITC and Web.2 tools. Project-based learning was also used at length in this project and it proved to be a great motivator for the students.

My students are 7th and 8th graders with ages ranging from thirteen to fifteen. They are all classmates and are passionate about English and travelling the world. Even though the 8th grade in our educational systems is a challenging time, as they have to

sit national exams at the end of the school year, the students found the time, energy and enthusiasm to participate in a project that allowed them to connect to students from countries so foreign to them.

Our activities were designed to be as diverse as possible, thus we included:

- creating an avatar to introduce themselves, in order to preserve their confidentiality as minors and also to introduce them to different apps from which they can choose to work with
- logo voting- we included not only the students in our project, but the whole school, all the teachers and all the pupils were able to choose their favourite logo, not knowing which belonged to our school
- the project poster was another activity where pupils worked together in groups to decide on the design
- the poster poll was another activity which brought together all the students from our school and by this time more and more students became interested and started asking questions about eTwinning projects
- parental consent meant that parents acknowledged their children's activity online and approved it
- e-Security was very important to us, as our students are minors who access the Internet daily, so it was essential to make them understand the risks of online exposure and also give them tools to protect themselves against potential aggressors
- the local recipes e-book was a fascinating project for our pupils, because they had to choose their favourite and most representative dishes from our region. After its completion, we all tried one international recipe and that made the students appreciate food from other cultures, to observe the differences, but most importantly the similarities

- the city promotion meant that students had to find resources online, synthesize and analyse them, in order to make our city attractive
- traditional clothes are essential in identifying a culture, therefore we paid particular attention to our students wearing their traditional clothes
- the project calendar is one of our common products and it shows different glimpses of our town during one specific time of the year. Students worked in groups and also together with the pupils from the other countries to create this product in Canva
- the proverb dictionary allowed us to sample the wisdom and view on life from other cultures. Students worked together in the app Writereader to create this common product
- the project brochure outlined the highlights of our towns

All in all, I am happy and grateful to have participated in an international project, which provided my students with the experience of getting to know other cultures and getting in touch with new friends from around the world.

Daniela Botiza – *Reflection, Experience and Change*



Daniela Botiza is an ELT professional who has been working in public schools for 17 years, teaching students of all ages.

She is passionate about teaching English through songs and games, developing the students` creativity and role playing in the English lesson.

She has delivered workshops in conferences in Cluj-Napoca, Iași and Timișoara.

She has been involved in POSDRU projects with her students: “Skills for Jobs” POSDRU/160/2.1/S/141384. Her research interests include: project-based learning and collaborative learning.

Reflection, Experience and Change

Reflection: How and why did you become a teacher?

I think it is important to start by understanding how and why we became teachers. Having a clear understanding of these aspects can help you a lot, especially in your most difficult moments.

My story starts when I was four years old. I had a lot of toys and I wanted to make them speak and sing. Of course, I soon realized that toys couldn't speak or sing, but people are the ones who could speak and sing. So, I turned my attention towards people.

When I was seven years old, I composed a short song for my family and I invited them to listen to me singing and then sing along. What I discovered was that people could sing together and they could also learn from one other. That was the moment when I decided that I would somehow get involved in teaching and learning.

At school I realized that I could help my colleagues do their homework, when they frequently asked me to do that. This fact made me think that I could teach people how to do things.

When I became a high school student, I started to like English. So, if until high school I only knew that I wanted to teach, but I wasn't quite clear what subject I would teach,

in my ninth grade I decided that I would teach English. That was the moment when I started to focus on English and pedagogy.

A few years later, after graduating Babeş-Bolyai University, I became a teacher.

Having this short reflection on how and why I became a teacher has helped me in my most difficult moments. That is why I wanted to share this.

Reflection should be a part of our lives. After we have made it clear how and why we became teachers, we should always reflect on our lessons, what went on well and what needs to be improved.

Although I have many years of teaching experience now, what I understood is the fact that we should never stop learning. It doesn't matter if we are in our first, second, fifth or tenth year of teaching. Learning should be a continual process during our life.

Experience and Change: What did you learn from experience?

One of my most vivid memories is from my first year of teaching when I started teaching in primary school. I knew I had to use toys in the process of teaching young learners. But, at first, I was wondering how I would use them. It is not enough to have them in the classroom. One day, inspiration struck me. I had the following dialogue with a preparatory grade girl:

Girl: "Oare se supără puiul dacă îl pun în colț?"

D: "Nu știu. Întreabă-l!"

Girl: "Te superi?"

"A zis că nu se supără"

What I understood from this dialogue was the importance of role playing. The fact that the girl asked the toy chicken whether it minded if she put it in the corner and she really expected an answer, gave me a very clear image of the children`s world.

I also understood that it is not only the students who can learn from us. We could also learn from them and there is no shame in doing that.

I realized that I could use role playing in the English lessons. From that day on, my students had dialogues with toy animals. Of course, I gave voice to toy animals, so that they could really participate in the dialogue and answer all the children`s questions.

I noticed that children love these learning activities and they are always curious who will be our next “teaching assistant”. From that day on, I always used toy animals when teaching in primary school. Sometimes the toys were really present, while, at other times, we could see them in photos and videos.

Another experience that influenced the way I teach and my view on teaching was the fact that I discovered the importance of affection in teaching, how students feel that you care.

One day, I was very curious why some high school students didn't attend my classes and school in general. I thought I could try to bring them to school by sending them individual messages. I searched their Facebook profiles and sent them some private messages in which I showed that I was concerned about their lack of attendance to my classes and to school in general. Then I expressed my strong belief that they will soon come to school. I was very surprised when the students answered by mentioning their reasons for not attending and promising that they will come to school the next day. And they really came to school from that day on. I had never imagined that a message could have such a great impact, that those students just needed to see that their teachers cared about them.

From that day on, I have been using “affectionate teaching” by always showing that I cared about my students. It is not that I hadn't cared before, but I think I didn't show it enough. I started to show my students that I cared and I also told my colleagues to do that.

All in all, I think we should never be rigid about teaching. We should prepare our lessons, but also be ready for change and improvement (which can come from various sources).

This article wanted to show how reflection, experience and change can improve our teaching. Of course, there are also other ways for improvement and teacher development which will be the subject of future articles.

Daniela Andrieș – *The Story behind Every Successful Story*



I am a teacher of English since 2002 when I graduated the Faculty of Letters, "Stephen the Great", Suceava. I also graduated from a Master's program at the same University, „Cultură și civilizație britanică în contextul globalizării” in 2014, writing the paper “Consuming the Other. Gender Role Subversion in “The Edible Woman” by Margaret Atwood and “The Bloody Chamber” by Angela Carter”.

In 2015, I wrote “Employing Poetry in Teaching English Efficiently” as a part of my “maturity exam” as I like to call the first degree in teaching English.

I have been teaching English since 2002 in two different villages where I have found dedicated, sincere pupils who have gained my respect and unconditional love.

I am currently an English teacher in Calafindesti School, which is approximately 30 kilometers away from my home town, Suceava.

The Story behind Every Successful Story

Stories are important: people hear them, people tell them, people use them to achieve their goals. Human beings are part of their own narratives which they construct as they feel like it to position themselves favourably in society. That is why stories may be employed successfully to stir interest and to promote communication as pupils are eager to communicate and to share their own experiences. When they feel they are listened to and teachers pay attention to their needs, they open up like a book to be “read” and understood.

It has been repeatedly demonstrated that the process of learning is in close connection with the emotions experienced by the learner in question. Experts have shown that emotions affect the child’s learning, memory and performance in school. It has been emphasized the importance of positive or negative feelings experienced by children in the attempt of learning. Anything that may play an inhibiting role automatically leads to poor learning and, on the other hand, anything that may stir their curiosity, interest and motivation may have the role of a booster, helping them easily internalize what they are supposed to learn. There is a close connection between memory and emotions - the emotional items are remembered vividly. Moreover, events endowed with emotional meaning are more likely to be remembered than the ones deprived of emotional information.¹³

Turning lessons into events endowed with emotional meaning seems to be the right way for long-term learning. The moment a teacher enters in a classroom, s/he turns into a director whose creative vision of her/his lesson is put into practice. The pupils in a classroom are the actors and the teacher asks them to act as he needs to fulfil his/her vision and goal and to make them feel important and valuable. Pupils need to

¹³ Lewis, M., Haviland-Jones, J. M., & Barrett, L. F. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of Emotions* (3rd ed.). The Guilford Press.

be given opportunities to be heard without being criticized, they need to be understood and gently corrected to enhance progress.

There are students who feel the urge to use English to tell their own experiences. There are passionate pupils in every grade. They are eager to share their experiences using English proudly even if they make some minor mistakes.

For instance, there is a pupil who finished the 6th grade who has not succeeded in integrating himself very well in his group of peers. However, he feels the need to talk to me in English as he has noticed that he is appreciated for his “gift” (they started studying English in the 5th grade so to speak English fluently is not a general characteristic in their case). He usually asks me to bring him something to read and I give him extra work which he does happily. English class has been a way to make himself noticed and appreciated. I usually listen to him after class telling me things about his recent experiences and I spend time with him to his heart’s content. I encourage the other pupils to express themselves freely in English and share their experiences too. Telling our own stories may help gaining confidence and self-esteem. Feeling confident and learning from one another are the keys to a successful and durable learning.

Younger students are eager to attend their English classes, learning songs and nursery rhymes answering promptly whatever I ask them. They feel confident using English whenever they can, boosting their self-esteem, too. There is one pupil who finished the first grade who uses English more often than his classmates to their surprise. Even if he does not speak correctly, he is very proud I have understood what he has just said.

Watching their favourite cartoons in English or playing games and interacting with their peers in English may be of great help in the process of English acquisition.

There is a story and a goal behind any successful story.

Good lessons are like good stories which will be remembered forever.



Call for Papers 2024



Would you like to publish your teaching story?

It can be about a student you keep close to your heart (although (s)he may have graduated school 15 years ago), a teaching technique you have discovered, a piece of advice you have decided to follow/disregard in your teaching journey.



In other words, anything that can fit the storytelling definition, as seen from a teacher's perspective.

Please include all the following into *just one document* (.doc or .docx)

1. Name and Surname - Title of the Article.

Calibri (Body) 16 – left, bold, italics

2. A recent photo (head and shoulders, in sharp focus)

Aligned left, one space below the name and surname

3. A 100-word presentation of the author

Aligned left, one space below the photo

Calibri (Body) 14, line spacing 1.5, no indentation, justified

4. The article (2-5 pages)

Calibri (Body) 14, line spacing 1.5, no indentation, justified

5. Deadline: 1st August 2024.

Many thanks!
Cătălina Cocan, editor
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