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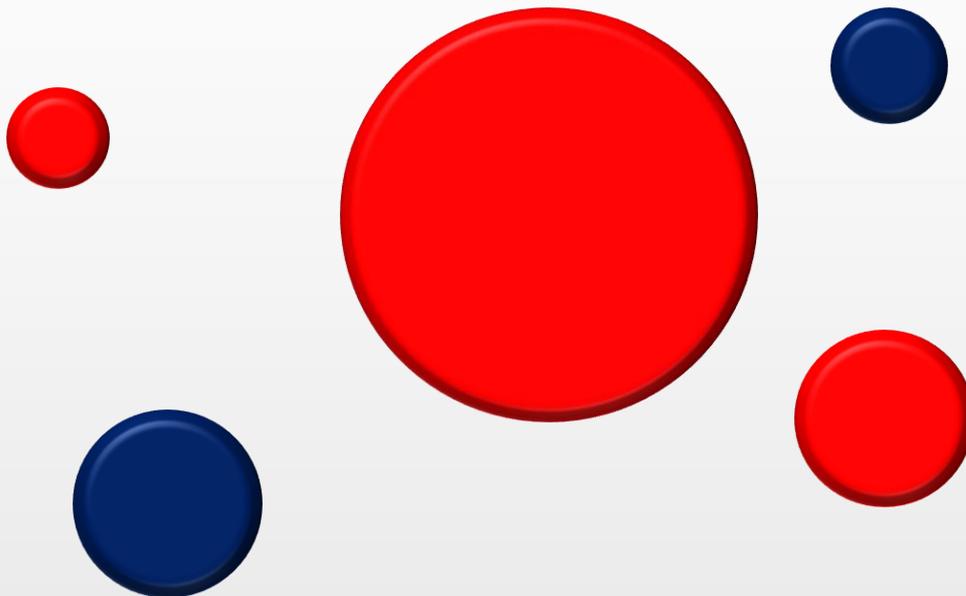
Ex Alumnos del Profesorado en Lenguas Vivas

*“Juan R. Fernández”*

**National Exams, International Standards**

Teachers' Centre

**AEXALEVI *Forum***



**Issue XXXIV / December 2020**

[www.aexalevi.org.ar](http://www.aexalevi.org.ar)

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April 2009

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# Editorial

This has been a particularly difficult year for most of us. We have faced unexpected challenges and learnt with every step ahead. With our 34<sup>th</sup> issue of *AEXALEVI Forum*, we would like to round off 2020 on a positive note.

On the following pages, you will be able to enjoy reading articles written by student teachers at Teacher Training College, *I.E.S en Lenguas Vivas “Juan Ramón Fernández”*. We would like to thank Daiana Ferraz, Agustina La Porta, Enrique Meoniz, Romina Valor, Rocío Villanueva, Daniela Vincelli, Natalia Sanchez, María Belén Pérez, Matías Moronha, Zulma Calvo, Verónica Engelhardt and Paula Bardi for having contributed articles based on their research on the four macroskills. It is always interesting to read about listening, speaking, reading and writing as we need to continue developing our understanding of what it takes to develop them in English language learning and teaching.

We will move on to the use of tentative language by our editor, Gustavo Sevilla,

and we will discover a new conception of poetry as Paola Verando introduces us into the world of Instagram. Next, we will read about feedback, in an article where I have attempted to expand on it by suggesting ways in which it can be done in the present circumstances.

We will close this issue with an interview with Eugenia Carrión Cantón as we hear a voice from the south of our country, reflecting on several meaningful topics for us all.

We hope you will enjoy *AEXALEVI Forum* and that you will close the year in harmony and with renewed hopes. Thank you for sharing and reading.

**Myrian Casamassima**

***AEXALEVI Forum* Coordinator**

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# Face your Fears and Go into the Listening Jungle with your Students

**Daiana Ferraz, Agustina La Porta & Enrique Meoniz**



*“Listening is hard work, and deserves more analysis and support.”*

Vandergrift, 1999

**A**lthough we now know we need to devote more attention and time to developing our students' listening skills, there is an extremely pernicious belief that prevents English teachers from *teaching* listening skills to their students: *students will improve their listening skills just by listening alone*. Sadly, this is not true.

To make things worse, despite the fact that listening to learn and learning to listen are not the same (Vandergrift, 2004), bottom-up activities seem to be taboo for most teachers (Caldwell, 2018). When we practise listening to learn, we follow a top-down approach (centred around comprehension) and we focus on the end product rather than

on the process. Still, learning to listen - paying attention to the process through which we improve this skill - is extremely important because comprehension cannot happen without perception. Bottom-up activities concentrate on perception or decoding skills, which include analysing sounds in order to discriminate them, recognizing reduced

forms and stress patterns, and distinguishing word boundaries, among many other microskills.

Before we begin, we would like to invite you to picture a listening activity. These stages may come to your mind: contextualizing, while-listening, post-listening, follow-up activities. How much time do you really devote to the listening skill in your lessons? Do you see listening as a goal in itself or just as an activity for other purposes? Let's be honest: we tend to deal with it for discussion, writing, practising grammar, or reviewing vocabulary. But do we actually *teach* listening?

In fact, we may think we are focusing on listening when that is not entirely true. First, because we have been equating the sight substance (visual, graphic shape) to the sound substance (auditory, acoustic shape) of spoken speech for too long (Cauldwell, 2016), even if they are not the same. We rely too much on written tasks and on transcripts, but the actual listening task does not reside there. Second, because we usually focus our attention on comprehension, which is important, but we forget that **perception is necessary for understanding**.

However, our students need to learn how to **decode** auditory input in order to be competent listeners. Therefore, we must let go of the fear of making our

students feel frustrated and confront them with real-life oral input, even with “the strangest and most difficult bits of speech” (Cauldwell, 2002). This is what we mean by “going into the jungle”.

The jungle, along with the garden and the greenhouse, is part of Cauldwell's (2018) botanic metaphor. The greenhouse refers to a place where words are pronounced in their **citation forms**, separately; whereas the garden makes reference to where words merge together following **connected speech** rules. The jungle is where there are no rules, words crush, overlap, and even get lost in natural **fast spontaneous speech**. Teachers sometimes are too uncomfortable going in there with their students, and they tend to stay in the greenhouse or go out just a bit into the garden. How may you start going into the jungle, then? You may want to try out:

## The Botanic Walk

You will need photos of a greenhouse, a garden, and a jungle. If you are in the classroom, you put the pictures on different walls and move to exemplify the difference in pronunciation. This will make students aware of the different types of oral input they will find and of the importance of the work they will embark on when they venture into the jungle. You can also combine this activity with the following one.

## Earworms

Ask your students to repeat what they hear. This is not a pronunciation activity, so it is not important for them to produce the sounds perfectly. The aim is to train students' short-term memory and perception. Remember to start in the garden and build up from there! We want to challenge our students, but scaffolding is still necessary. First, students will repeat citation forms very slowly. Then, they will repeat a little bit faster applying connected speech rules. Finally, they will try to repeat the original version.

## YouGlish

This is a platform where you can find various examples of specific sound units taken from YouTube. You just type in a word or phrase and you will be presented with hundreds of samples taken from real-life speech.

Hopefully this article will have sparked your curiosity about the listening jungle and its possibilities. There are many ways to start introducing authentic material into your lessons and to apply a bottom-up approach, and we encourage you to find the ones that will better fit your students. If you wish to gain a deeper insight into these topics, feel free to check the bibliography we have used to write this article.

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**Thank you, Analía Duarte for your inspiration and all the things you have taught us about listening for comprehension.**

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# Creating a Safe Environment for Speaking

**Romina Valor, Rocío Villanueva & Daniela Vincelli**



**T**eaching speaking can be a demanding task, to such an extent that we sometimes look the other way. We pretend that reading aloud is enough practice to develop oral skills and we may fear that if we start a debate in the middle of the class, we might never get to start the next task. Nevertheless, giving the students a space to express themselves by speaking can be very rewarding. As with every other skill, it takes time to acquire the tools to successfully develop a conversation but, if you manage to create a safe environment, your students will definitely start off on the right path. However, the question that remains is: how do we create a safe environment for speaking?

## **Classroom environment**

To begin with, we have to take some factors into account in order to create a friendly, safe and cooperative classroom environment. For instance, students

need to be physically comfortable and relaxed – the more it seems like an evaluation, the more pressure the students will feel. The interaction needs to be frequent. Perhaps not all of the classes, but every other class, the

teacher should provide a chance for the students to speak. They need to have opportunities to learn and make mistakes without penalty. Not every moment needs to be evaluated, and teachers need to provide students with successful language experiences. Conversation needs to be meaningful to have the desired effect. These are just some aspects to take into consideration.

## Affective filter

One of the key points we sometimes overlook is the “affective filter”. The affective filter is an obstacle consisting of high levels of stress and anxiety that block the learning process. Even though this may affect all four skills - reading, writing, listening and speaking - students may feel the most exposed when asked to produce orally. As teachers, we need to provide them with a warm climate that will encourage them to speak, notwithstanding the number of mistakes they may stumble upon. They should be able to conceive of teacher’s feedback as an opportunity to improve their speaking skills.

## Silence

Another strategy that we may not be aware of is the use of silence on the part of the teacher. It may appear shocking,

but it could open the floor for the students to step up their game. We tend to believe that silence is equivalent to unresponsiveness, but a good amount of silence can trigger the students' minds and allow them to come up with their own ideas and present them to the rest of the class. Many times we speak over students’ thinking time, not allowing them to word their ideas.

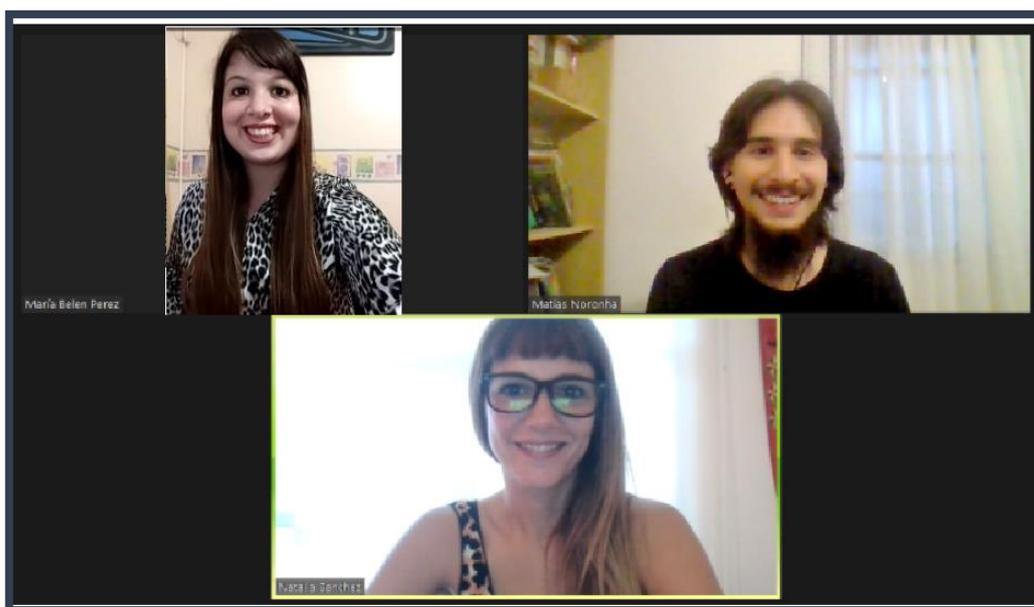
## Final remarks

In any case, there are no perfect formulas or solutions to successfully create a safe environment. Here we have presented a few tips. You may wish to try them out within your classrooms. We think it is important to debunk some myths and open up new possibilities in order to develop our students’ speaking skills.

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# How Can the “I don’t know what to write” Issue Be Solved?



## María Belén Pérez, Natalia Sanchez & Matías Moronha

**W**hen it comes to writing, some students may not feel inspired enough to carry out this task. They could also experience “writer's block” or simply find it difficult to express what it is that they want to actually say. In order to answer the question posed in the title, it is essential for the teacher to take an approach other than the traditional one.

To begin with, writing can be taught focusing either on the *product* or on the *process*. The concern of the former is mostly on the correctness of the final

product of writing, i.e. the appropriate use of vocabulary, grammar and language devices. On the other hand, in the latter students develop their writing

in different stages or phases, such as pre-writing, drafting, editing and producing a final version.

Although process writing is complex, since it entails looping backwards and forwards among these various stages, it is fruitful to experience it in order to develop writing, as opposed to only focusing on the final product. There are, of course, some disadvantages in getting students to concentrate extensively on the writing process. To mention some, it is clearly time-consuming: students need to brainstorm ideas, draft a piece of writing, review it and edit it, and teachers are well aware of the fact that classroom time can be quite limited. Another drawback could be the weariness this may cause on students, consequently leading to a performance which might not be the expected one.

Furthermore, teachers need to consider the student's possible fear of having 'nothing to say', which may turn the task of writing into a painful, demotivating experience. To start dealing with this central matter, teachers may help their students 'build the writing habit' so that they can recognize writing as a normal part of the classroom practice and feel as motivated as when doing any other activities.

One way of encouraging the writing habit is to provide students with motivating,

straightforward tasks. To name a few, the use of pictures and their description may be a positive way to get started. Another option can be instant writing activities, in which teachers give students half a sentence and students have to complete the given sentence with their own ideas and thoughts. Movies, songs or also story reconstruction activities can be other alternatives. What is more, it is a good idea to give the students the opportunity to get their piece of writing published. Depending on the type of activity, the teacher may ask them to carry out the task individually, in pairs or in small groups. Thus, teachers can persuade students and show them that writing is not only attainable, but also entertaining, and above all shareable. Who would not be proud to see their work published on the school website or blog, or in a book compiled by the class? Many apps and sites are available to create publications online.

Apart from assigning enjoyable tasks, it is advisable for teachers to provide enough tools, ideas and information so that students feel confident to fulfill the task. One of the tools that can be used to equip students is knowledge regarding genre, subject matter and writing process. It is also relevant to include subskills such as spelling and punctuation, vocabulary, organization of paragraphs, coherence and cohesion,

as well as originality. All of these will guide the students and give them patterns, which will help them organize their ideas so as to make them feel at ease with the writing process.

All in all, it goes without saying that teaching writing tends to be not as straightforward as it seems. As it was stated, there are a number of aspects that need to be taken into account, but the most important one is the fact that the aim of the tasks would be to make students write for fun and practice, rather than have them write as a skill and for the sole purpose of producing. This would indeed help as a good attempt to solve the “I don’t know what to write” issue.

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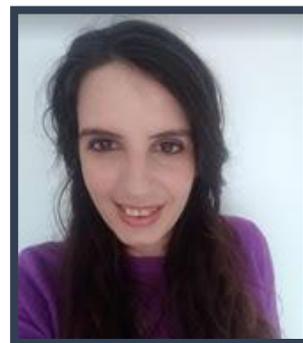
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# Resisting the Temptation of the Reading Guide

Paula Bardi, Zulma Calvo & Verónica Engelhardt



**W**e've all been there. We find a book full of interesting language and literary devices and we decide it's just *perfect* to assign to our students. We create worksheets and reading guides full of tasks and when all is done we are left wondering: why don't students enjoy extensive reading? It's because what we've been doing is *not* extensive reading.

What *is* extensive reading? Extensive reading means reading for long stretches of time without interruptions. It is about using the target language to do something enjoyable, while simultaneously being exposed to new vocabulary or structures. It's not about actively engaging in the acquisition of new language items. When we assign students comprehensive reading guides that require them to answer questions or jot down vocabulary items, we are

contradicting the key elements of extensive reading. Remember that extensive reading is supposed to be fun!

To do extensive reading in a classroom setting, it's a good idea to devote one or more classes per month to do it. Setting the mood is key. Bring options for your students: books that fit their level with a wide variety of topics and genres. Ideally, you could bring more than one copy of the books that are more in demand. Prepare the environment: bring

pillows and cushions, blankets even. Sit on the floor. Move away chairs and desks. Maybe add some background music or noise (have you heard of lo-fi and ambience music? – if not, look them up!). Allow students to choose what they want to read. Give students the space to read, and time. No interruptions. No “after reading tasks”. Just reading for pleasure. It would be nice, if possible, to allow students to take the books home to finish their reading. Experimenting reading as an enjoyable activity may encourage your students to read outside the classroom. This way, they can actually decide if they enjoy reading or not, and they will surely be asking for more “extensive reading” classes.

Sometimes we simply do not have enough time to devote to extensive reading during class hours. How do we help our students generate the habit of reading for pleasure when we are pressed for time? One possible way is to tell them about SMART goals. SMART is an acronym that stands for: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant or Realistic, and Timely. First, we have to set a specific goal: for example, reading a book in a month’s time. “Measure” can mean the number of pages or hours per day devoted to reading. Thirdly, it’s important that students set an attainable goal, such as reading a book appropriate for their level. It’s also important to express the reasons for reading – it

should be something relevant to the students such as improving their lexical knowledge, the acquisition of language, or their interest in reading about a specific topic. Finally, they need to set a time to do this activity. It should be part of their daily routine. And remember: to successfully create a new habit, they need to try this at least for a whole month!

Hopefully, these tips will help you resist the temptation of reading guides and encourage your students to try some relaxing and pleasurable extensive reading!

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# The Use of Tentative Language – Something Most Speakers Tend to Find May Be of Use under Certain Circumstances



Trad. Gustavo Sevilla

**W**e always make a point of teaching linkers or connectors to our students in intermediate and upper levels. However, there is still another topic that is, in my opinion, at least as important to make their language sound natural both in written and oral speech – the use of hedges. For example, by writing the title of this article the way I did I actually made an attempt at showing how hedges work in English – instead of saying: *The use of tentative language – something all speakers will always find of use*, a conclusive statement that would have sounded rather petulant, I preferred to use a less pretentious form: *The use of tentative language – something **most** speakers **tend to find may be** of use under **certain** circumstances*. Even in my previous sentence I fell back on expressions like “in my opinion” and “at least”, which leaves room for discrepancies.

According to Wikipedia, hedges are words or phrases that allow speakers and writers to signal caution, or probability, versus full certainty. Unlike in cultures of Latin origin, where ordinary people tend to sound categorical at all times (an exception must be made of the scientific style, where language users try

to be cautious no matter how certain they feel), in civilizations of Anglo-Saxon roots there is a widespread tendency to be more tentative both when writing and speaking, and this is something we must transmit to our students for them to be more in line with English language standards and habits.

Hedges might be used to downplay a harsh critique or a generalization in writing, or to lessen the impact of an utterance due to politeness constraints in speaking. Typically, hedges are adjectives or adverbs (“downtoners”, as per Quirk terminology), but can also consist of phrases or even clauses. Linguists consider hedges to be tools used by speakers and writers to soften their assertions – not that such assertions may not be true, but just in case. Sometimes, a hedge works as a form of euphemism.

Hedges can be classified according to their functionality or meaning (epistemic – that is, related to the extent of knowledge in question –, possibility and quality) or according to the word categories they involve (verbal, adjectival, adverbial, and lexical, if other categories or groups of words are used). The lists below are merely illustrative and can be used as a starting point for a more thorough search:

### Epistemic hedges

according to	actually	apparent(ly)
approximate(ly)	basic(ally)	broad(ly)
clear(ly)	comparative(ly)	essential(ly), in essence
hypothetical(ly)	indeed	likely
most (+adjective)	normal(ly)	potential(ly)
practically	presumably	probable, probably
rare(ly)	really	relative(ly)
roughly	somehow	somewhat
theoretically	virtually	

### Possibility hedges

by (some/any) chance	hopefully
maybe	perhaps
possible, possibly	in case (of)
can, could, may, might	if you catch / get / understand my meaning
if you know what I mean (to say)	if you know/understand (what it/that means)

### Quality hedges

(as) we all know	as far as I/we know
as is (well) known	as you/everyone/the reader know(s)
as the saying goes	(as) everyone/people/they say(s)
from what I hear/know/see/understand	in a sense
for all practical purposes	for all intents and purposes
let us say that	one might say that
don't you think	in a manner of speaking
I / we understand that	wouldn't you say

## Verb hedges

(would) like to/want to/can/may + verb (e.g., ask, comment, discuss, explain, mention, note, point out, remark, say, state, tell)
I/we/one/people/the reader/they + perhaps/mostly/sometimes/kind of/sort of + verb
I don't think / believe (so)
I believe / think / thought

## Lexical hedges

as it were	so to say	so to speak
(at) about	if you know what I mean	in a way
kind of	might as well be	more of a ...
more or less	most	something like
sort of ...	kind of ...	can be looked at
can be viewed as	strictly/broadly speaking	in one sense
in some sense	in a real sense	would like to
details aside	I wouldn't	if not...

Additionally, we can encourage our students to use sentence adverbs, most of them known as disjuncts. Just like other hedges, they can be used to emphasize, to specify, to qualify (i.e. to restrict the scope of the statement), to indicate the field of knowledge, or to show the speaker's attitude. Quirk classifies them into style disjuncts, which express the speaker's comment (like *personally*), and content disjuncts, which make an observation in terms of truth (e.g. *certainly*) or value judgment of content (e.g. *understandably*).

## Sentence Adverbs

Used to emphasize	actually - basically - certainly - clearly – evidently - frankly - honestly - indeed - invariably - naturally – truthfully
Used to be specific	especially - particularly - specifically
Used to qualify	apparently - hypothetically - ideally - presumably - theoretically
Used to indicate area of influence	biologically - economically - environmentally - emotionally - financially - locally - intellectually – internationally - mathematically - philosophically - politically - psychologically
Used for other comments	by the way - briefly - confidentially - curiously - fortunately - hopefully - incidentally - interestingly - ironically - oddly - predictably - regrettably - seriously - strangely - surprisingly - thankfully - unfortunately - wisely

A good exercise can consist of thinking of different ways in which the speaker or writer can sound assertive, doubtful, compromising, critical, concise, vague, strict, sympathetic, etc. We can also look for texts including, for example, both assertive and tentative expressions and, after stripping them off those resources, invite our students to replace them. This can be done both for composition writing and conversation practice and is of

course related to the different functions of language, so we can combine different adverbs with other linguistic devices that the student can use to act in a certain way, for example, assertively:

- You must agree that ...
- Obviously, ...
- As you are well aware, ...
- I can assure you that ...
- Nobody can deny that ...
- Beyond any doubt, ...
- Undoubtedly, ...

or tentatively:

- I'd say that ...
- Some people are of the opinion that ...
- The evidence suggests that ...
- There are some exceptions ...
- One limitation of the study is that ...
- In general, ...

Once our students have understood the importance of using not only linkers but also hedges and disjuncts, their compositions and discussions will be more fluent and they will be better prepared to make their points, persuading their interlocutors with their eloquence instead of sounding so categorical that their ideas may be discarded as obtuse or biased.

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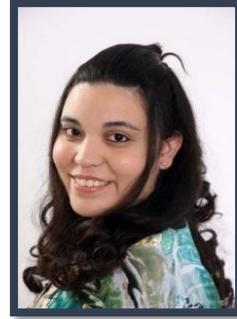
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# Visually Attractive Poetry: Instapoetry

**Prof. Paola Verando**



**H**ave you ever thought of using poetry in your classes to adolescents? Well, even if there are many authors who write simple poetry which could be used in our classes, a new special type of poetry has come into existence and is available through a medium our adolescent students handle to perfection: Instagram.

Instapoetry was born around six years ago on social media such as Tumblr, Twitter, and Instagram. The Instapoet who has taken the lead, Rupi Kaur, has already published three books since 2014. She has sold over 3 million copies and spent more than a year on The New York Times Best Seller list. After her second book, this young Indian-born Canadian poet was chosen one of the BBC's 100 Women in 2017. Her work "touches on love, loss, trauma, healing, femininity, and migration" (Kaur, R: 2020).

Although there are other prominent Instapoets, Rupi Kaur has become an emblem of Instapoetry, having chosen social media over more traditional methods of distribution. In Rupi's own words:

"[a]fter writing and performing poetry for many years, [...] I asked a creative writing professor what I needed to do in order to get published, and their response was [that] poetry basically never got published [and that] I had a better chance having individual poems published in literary journals, magazines, and anthologies. I then asked them if self-publishing was a good

route to take. Immediately I was told – no. [...] I started submitting individual poems to anthologies, magazines, and journals. The result was one rejection after another. As I was in the middle of picking and choosing which pieces to submit, I came upon a realization. I felt I was doing a disservice to my larger body of work by plucking pieces out of the collection [...] I realized that my work read differently, when read in its entirety [...] That's when I set my eyes on self-publishing, regardless of what the creative writing professor had said" (Kaur, R: 2020).

Most Instapoets are millennial women and/or people of colour with loads of followers. Their poems are easy to relate oneself to since they tackle universal emotions. They are written in simple English, with minimalist posts usually accompanied by attractive visuals or engaging illustrations.

Many Instapoets choose "political and social subjects such as immigration, domestic violence, sexual assault, love, culture, feminism, gun violence, war, racism, LGBTQ and other social justice topics" (Wikipedia: 2020). And these topics are of great value when we are dealing with CSE (Comprehensive Sex Education) and the development of critical thinking in the classroom.

Having provided enough background information about this type of poetry, let

us get into action and start exploring different Instapoets and how we can use their works in the ELT class.

## **Rupi Kaur, the Forefront of Instapoetry (@rupikaur\_)**

Even though Rupi Kaur is a published writer these days, she continues posting some individual pieces on her Instagram account in order to share them with her 4 million followers. This is of incredible value to us, teachers, since we get the chance to have access to some of her material for free.

The poem whose picture I have chosen to share with you in this issue is one of her most famous poems, "Legacy". Short but to the core, this poem could be used in class by students (not only girls) for reflection upon the women who preceded them and the obstacles they may have had to go through. It might serve as a valuable speaking point since it touches our own personal history and helps us deconstruct it. Why not also use it to explore the intertextual relations with other female stories such as Sylvia and her mother's in *The Earthquake* or Ikemi's in *Eye of the Storm*? How important are their mothers to these female protagonists?



Another possible activity is to show the students the picture first and to conceal the poem as if it was a typical picture description task. Interesting facts to point out about the picture: the human figure in the centre can be identified neither as a male nor as a female; the rucksack (“heavy load”) has been left on the ground in order to see farther; the mountain the person has climbed has **five** crevices; then, there’s the sun, which also displays **five** rays; depending on the age of your students, you could also point out that the peaks of the mountains also look like female breasts.

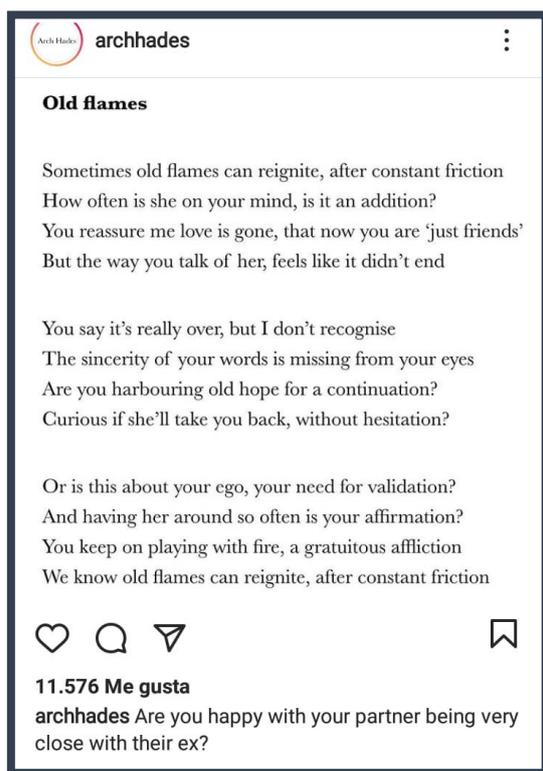
Remarkable facts about the language used in the poem: use of the lowercase pronoun “i”, no interrogation mark at the end of the question, use of italics for her thoughts, use of the comparative form “farther” as opposed to “further” (most grammar books include the irregular comparative form of “far” as “further”

these days), the personification of the mountain (by deeming it as “tall”, not “high”), and so on. The lack of capitalization and her particular use of punctuation have been explained by Rupi Kaur on her webpage and you can explore them there in detail under the FAQ section (you will find the citation below).

## Arch Hades (@archhades)

Another important exponent of Instapoetry, with 1 million followers, Arch Hades is a bestselling British poet. She writes mostly lyrical poetry and blends it with aphorisms. Hades writes mostly about modern romance and ancient philosophy.

The poem I have chosen to show you on this occasion explores the acceptance of our partner’s previous relationships and the fact they continue being in touch. What I love about this post is the way in which @archhades prompts her followers to react to her poem. When I first read it, I hadn’t realized what the poem was about and was on the point of discarding it (oh, yes, I have chosen the poems in this article with a purpose in mind). Yet, her comment made me realize how poignant the poem is and how students might relate to it. Also, the topic it touches on may be explored in a class with adult students.



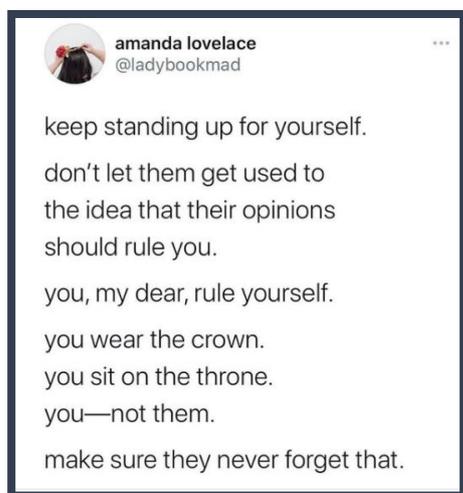
How to use it in the ELT classroom? Well, I would start by writing @archhades' question on the physical or virtual board or even the Zoom/Meet chat. Maybe I would change its grammar as in "Would you be happy if your partner was very close to their ex?", which might be a great opportunity to practise second conditionals and also to explore the use of "they" with a singular reference. Probably, a student might come up with the proverb in Spanish "Donde hubo fuego, cenizas quedan" (Old flames die hard) and you could start exploring the image of "fire" which is so pervasive in the poem, as we see in "old flames", "reignite", "constant friction" and

"play with fire". I would also make an Infographic or a slide showing different comments that were posted to reply to the Instapoet's question and compare how similar the answers are. For an FCE course, the poem could also be presented as a word formation exercise, since there are words like "addition", "reassure", "sincerity", "continuation", "hesitation", to name just a few. To explore intertextuality, I would go over the AEXALEVI graded readers' characters and their relationships: would they have liked their partners to have fluent relationships with their exes? (for example, Peter and Anne in "Diary of a Young Girl," or Martin and Natalie in "Face").

Interesting facts about the language used in the poem: the use of "can" instead of "may" to show that the reignition of the flames is possible rather than probable; the use of "addition" instead of "addiction" (the natural rhyme with "friction"): is it just a typo (my first guess) or might it be meaningful?; the use of the phrase "just friends," which is usually used by celebrities to hide their true romances; the use of both simple present and present continuous to show there is a routine repetition of the closeness (also stressed by adverbs of frequency, "how often" and terms such as "keep on", "constant" and "continuation"); the verb "harbour" which usually has a negative connotation; the

use of pronouns (“I”, “you” and “she” in most of the poem, while at the end it shifts to “we”); and the rhyming scheme, AA-BB-CC-DD-DD-AA, which is so neat, so predictable that makes *me* think that the expected ending of the poem could foreshadow the expected ending of the relationship as well.

## Amanda Lovelace (@ladybookmad)



Amanda Lovelace is a much less popular American Instapoet who has been writing since 2016, when she was named the Goodreads Poet of the Year. With a moderate amount of more than 90,000 followers, her topics are mainly self-love and self-confidence. Her poetry might not look as poignant or professional as that of the previously mentioned writers, but it is the simplicity and universality of her words that mostly captures her readers' attention. She

writes from a particular perspective: she might be considered overweight (following the patterns of heteronormativity) and she is married to Cyrus Parker (@cyrusparker), another Instapoet who has come out as non-binary. Thus, her words of self-value, self-respect and of little or no attention to other people's opinions are very meaningful to her followers.

The chosen poem for this article has not been publicly given a name but belongs to the poetry collection called “break your glass slippers”. Following Rupi Kaur, Amanda Lovelace and many other Instapoets have decided to write using lowercase only and few punctuation marks (mostly periods). Amanda Lovelace, though, has made use of commas and a dash in this poem (we will analyse this later on). This poem basically explores the idea of self-value and the affirmation of one's own opinions, of ruling one's own destiny.

Ideas for ELT class: You could work on intertextuality with songs such as “Born this Way,” by Lady Gaga, “Vogue,” by Madonna or “Beautiful,” by Christina Aguilera. You might then provide students with a version of the poem which lacks certain key words, such as the one that follows, in order for them to write a follow-up on the songs they had previously listened to:

keep                      for yourself.  
 don't let them  
 the idea that  
 should  
 you, my dear,  
 you wear the  
 you sit on the  
 you—not them.  
 make sure they

You could also explore intertextuality with some characters in AEXALEVI readers, namely: Katrina Kirby in *K's First Case*, Ikemi in *Eye of the Storm* or Martin in *Face*.

Points to highlight about the language in the poem: the contradictory use of imperative in a poem which prompts you to rule out other people's impositions; the use of the comma in order to address the reader (in this poem, the persona is not writing about themselves- note the word "themselves" is correct- or addressing the poem to a person in the lyrical world, but to the reader, who is included in the poetic realm and becomes part of it for a while); the use of the dash in order to make a contrast between the addressee of the poem and the people whose impositions must be avoided at all costs; all the lexis connected with "being your own leader", such as "stand up for yourself," "rule," "wear a crown," or "sit on a throne"; three one-line stanzas which, if read independently, also make a mini poem of their own (one is at the

beginning, one is in the middle, and one is at the end of the poem); two three-line stanzas which show that, even though the poem seems somewhat messy, it still has a neat structure; also this fact of the number three being repeated in the structure of the poem makes *me* think of the trio formed by the poet, the reader and addressee and "them," those whose opinions readers should disregard.

All in all, I invite you to explore Instapoetry in the classroom since it is truly accessible in the full sense of the word: easy to get, easy to understand, and easy to relate to.

Other famous Instapoets are:

Atticus (@atticusxo),

Tyler Knott Gregson (@tylerknott),

Najwa Zebian (@najwazebian),

Nikita Gill (@nikita\_gill),

Lauren Eden (@ofyesteryear),

Lang Leav (@langleav),

Sayam Pradhan (@lowslo\_),

Yrsa Daley Ward (@yrsadaleyward).

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Instapoem by Sayan Pradhan

Pradhan, S. Photo of unnamed aphorism. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CHk-eNeFW2g/?igshid=1rp3s3hxtqsi6> 14 Nov. 2020.

# Great Job!

## What Feedback Has to Offer



**Mgter. Myrian Casamassima**

**T**he end of the year generally brings feedback into focus as we have to write reports on our students' progress, and assess the overall learning and teaching process. However, the truth is that, as teachers, we always have to give feedback. In particular, the pandemic has imposed some variables on us that are completely novel and that may put us to the test when feedback time comes along.

Let us then seize the chance to review some central ideas so that they may come in handy now or at any other time.

Our first question is about when we should provide our students with feedback. The reason why we are starting with this question is that sometimes we are overloaded with things to do and we may not be able to give feedback along the way. Then, at the end of the process, it may come as a shock to some students and parents that perhaps things did not turn out to be exactly the way we would have liked or they would have thought. When this

occurs, the situation is very stressful for everyone involved. Feedback is a necessary component of the learning and teaching process at all times because evaluation is ongoing. We may decide to be more or less formal about feedback, but if we are consistent, it will provide our students and their families with the necessary information as the process unfolds.

It is very easy to lose track of our students as we go ahead with the tons

of contents we have to teach. Perhaps it can help to decide when we will give feedback and to write it down on a grid or a chart. Feedback needs to be as concrete as possible. If our students can have access to this information, it will surely make feedback easier to follow. The pandemic has opened up possibilities that were mostly unexplored before. Many of the tools that we have been using this year have allowed us to keep a record of assignments submitted, corrected and the like, thus turning the feedback process into a more concrete experience.

Ideally, we should be able to tell our students what to do in order to improve whatever needs to be adjusted. Feedback is goal-oriented and not only retrospective. We tend to think that providing feedback is telling our students about how something went, but actually feedback is also setting a goal to move towards next. In this sense, conferencing is a useful tool because it gives us the chance to work with our students on a more individual basis. We can explain to them what we have assessed, they can have the chance to talk about how they feel and what they need, and both sides together can come to an agreement on how things can be improved. This type of conference is an appraisal interview, where teacher and student get together on the basis of an agenda and, after conferencing, they set

a goal for the student to work towards and to be discussed in the next appraisal. Of course, with large courses and without a helper, this would be totally impractical. But whenever it is feasible, conferences and appraisals can be excellent evaluation tools. If the class is too large, we can still use these tools with the students that need more assistance during the process. Undoubtedly, the synchronous tools that are now widely spread contribute to organizing appraisal interviews.

When the difficulty lies in composition writing, for example, we may wish to record our screen while we are correcting the written piece and commenting on it. This would be overwhelming if we had to do it with all compositions, but our suggestion goes only to those that need very careful comments. Feedback may need to be differentiated and personalized. Just picture a one-minute audio file with your comments. That alone may mean a lot to your students.

Large classes are always challenging when we wish to provide feedback systematically. We may ask ourselves who else can give feedback. This will bring other options into the picture. At the end of the term, it is usual that teachers working in the same school or institute interchange exams to correct or give oral exams to their colleagues' classes. This practice is very interesting

as a way to enrich assessment. Perhaps this can be done at other times during the year: swapping the outcomes of students in two different classes for our colleague to comment on while we do the same with the production of her/his students. And we could go on wondering. What about the principal? What about the students themselves learning to comment on their own work and even perhaps reviewing their peers'? What about the parents? The answers to these questions will largely depend on what is possible and wise in the contexts where we teach. Not everyone will provide feedback about the same things. We could, for instance, have parents comment on attitude from time to time, or have peers give their view about the content produced rather than its accuracy.

Sometimes the ones giving feedback can be fictional characters. Of course, this will not relieve the task of the teacher at all! But it can be enjoyable for the little ones to be told about their work by a character in the coursebook or in the reader, or the class puppet if there is one.

As usual, feedback that can be socially shared is welcomed by everyone: badges, certificates, stickers, emojis, etc. The virtual medium does not hinder

this sort of feedback at all. On the contrary, it is where it is more easily shared. Who is not happy to see a hand-clapping gif or hear a loud "Bravo!"? All that is possible by a tap on the screen.

For older or more advanced students, we may wish to try learning journals, which can be digital and thus become e-journals. Here feedback can be easily embedded in the entries written by the student and the teacher. Journals are also excellent tools for evaluation and contribute to learner autonomy in that they provide self-assessment experience.

One way or another, feedback is essentially about learning and it goes beyond the recurrent "Great job!" and "Well done!" into the need to fill in assessment with content about how the students performed and how it can be improved. Feedback needs to become varied, systematic, integrative and purposeful. Fortunately, we have at hand many different ways in which this can be accomplished. We just have to make sure that we keep it going and growing.

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# An Interview with

## *Eugenia Carrión Cantón*



**W**e are pleased to publish this interview with Eugenia Carrión Cantón from Tierra del Fuego. Eugenia is a qualified EFL educator with a Licentiate Diploma in English Literature from *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba*, a Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Management from FLACSO and she is currently attending the MA in Education at *Universidad Nacional de Quilmes*. She has taught extensively in the field of EFL, Cultural Studies, and Critical Citizenship at different levels. She has also presented locally and internationally and published in international journals. She is a former vice-chancellor at Paulo Freire Teacher Training College and a curriculum developer for primary, secondary and teacher education in Tierra Del Fuego AelAS. Presently, she is in charge of Professional Development at TDF AelAS Ministry of Education.

### **AEXALEVI Forum**

Before the pandemic, was any remote teaching done in Tierra del Fuego? Has the pandemic changed learning and teaching there and in the areas that are relatively close to you?

### **Eugenia Carrión Cantón**

Before the pandemic remote teaching was done only at Tertiary and University levels. In all Teacher Education Institutions and at University, there are Moodle platforms with classrooms for every subject. However, not all professors are aware of their availability or familiar with their use. The rest of the

levels of education in the public sector had very little experience with ICT (information and communication technology).

#### **AEXALEVI Forum**

In the era of technology, are there any hopes for teachers who are not high-tech in your opinion?

#### **Eugenia Carrión Cantón**

I definitely believe that technology has brought new learning opportunities for teachers of all teaching levels and contexts. However, it seems to me that this pandemic has evidenced the fundamental role of educators in society. We are the social and political agents who contribute with one of the main purposes of school, which is the **socialization and humanization** of students in Perez Gomez' words (1992). This concept implies forming citizens for interaction in public life; developing a compensatory function with respect to social differences; developing an educational function framed by reproduction and change with the aim to organize development and to induce and facilitate reconstruction of knowledge; reconstructing knowledge through experiencing; and developing a radical compensatory function in terms of learning rhythms and styles considering the existence of a common and comprehensive curriculum.

I strongly believe this pandemic has forced us, educators, to take action and reflect upon the true dimension of our task, its impact on our students, our responsibility in the development of critical and committed citizenship, and our contribution to society both in a virtual and in a face-to-face context.

#### **AEXALEVI Forum**

How would you explain gamification in simple terms? What are its benefits for ELT?

#### **Eugenia Carrión Cantón**

Gamification is an approach that engages and motivates students into learning. Although adults may look at digital games without fully understanding their organization and pedagogical goals, video-games are intricate constructions that follow rules and are connected to high and low-order thinking skills.

In this context, teachers emphasize the need to update and integrate new approaches which would take into consideration the needs of children whose natural environment is the use of information-communication technologies. From this perspective, gamification is the opportunity to increase their interest as well as to motivate them, connect them and empower their communication and sharing. Besides, it is a way of organizing the content and the context of

a class in order to replicate a game that can be digital with clear learning objectives and outcomes. This means using games to foster and stimulate language learning in a critical and problem-solving environment. In order to create such an environment, some rules related to gamification need to be taken into consideration. For example, it must be fun and challenging, the students-players need to be in control, receive immediate feedback through process indicators, and be provided with scaffolding to progress in learning. Research has shown that the basic characteristics of gamification have a great connection with the Connectivist and Constructivist theories of learning. Social networks are the support for higher motivational levels. At the same time, the processes of performance-evaluation and feedback help students build on their own knowledge. Although technology is important for this learning theory, the aim is to engage students in learning through highly motivating environments.

#### **AEXALEVI Forum**

One of your interest areas is Gender. Can teachers integrate it easily with Literature in the classroom? Would it be beneficial?

#### **Eugenia Carrión Cantón**

Literature has the endless power of enabling the discussion of human issues

as well as a close relationship with ELT and I feel glad that there is more and more room in English Language Teaching classes, forums, workshops, webinars and congresses to focus the attention on the discussion of the implications of teaching rather than on the linguistic ones.

In like manner, NAP (the acronym in Spanish for *Núcleos de Aprendizaje Prioritarios*) states that teaching foreign languages is approached from an intercultural and multilingual perspective that fosters multidisciplinary approaches and combines learning languages with reflective capacity and critical disposition, as required to live in culturally diverse societies. Thus, teaching foreign languages integrates knowledge which is taught at school, highlighting its formative dimension related to linguistic education, cognitive development and the acquisition of the sociocultural identity of children, teenagers and young adults.

According to Graciela Morgade (2011) "all education is sex education". This statement becomes a springboard to contextualize any topic in foreign language classrooms with sex education both in compliance with Argentinian Comprehensive Sexual Education Act No. 26150 (in Spanish, *Ley de Educación Sexual Integral*) and in agreement with the NAP approach to teaching English as a foreign language.

In this context, reflecting upon gender stereotyping in literature, whether canonical or not, and its impact on students' visions of others and the world becomes urgent for all educators. Literary works contain themes, symbols and messages that are deeply layered in one's own perception of society, sexuality and gender roles. Both traditional and modern literature can allow students to think critically about how men and women are portrayed as well as to compare these portrayals within their own communities.

#### **AEXALEVI Forum**

Thank you, Eugenia for sharing your knowledge and experience with us!

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