TSL3111 Developing and Using Resources for the Primary ESL Classroom

Topic 6a: Developing Resources for Teaching

Ruth Wickham, Brighton Education Training Fellow, IPGKDRI

Student Notes

Contents

Topic 6a: Developing Resources for Teaching

The following articles by Harmer and Dobbs contain useful ideas for using resources. Read them and answer the questions below. *(It may be worthwhile reading this unit ahead of some of the others.)*

The Children as a Resource

(Harmer, 2007, pp. 176-7)

The Students Themselves

By far the most useful resources in the classroom are the students themselves. Through their thoughts and experiences they bring the outside world into the room, and this is a powerful resource for us to draw on. We can get them to write or talk about things they like or things they have experienced. We can ask them what they would do in certain situations or get them to act out scenes from their lives. In multilingual classes (see page 132), we can get them to share information about their different countries.

Students can also be very good resources for explaining and practising meaning. For example, in young learner classes we can get them to be 'living clocks'. They have to demonstrate the time with their arms (using a pointing finger for the minute hand and a fist for the hour hand) and the other students have to say what the time is. We can also get them to stand in line in the order of their birthdays (so they have to ask each other '*When is your birthday?*') or in the order of the distance they live from the school. They can be made to stand in the alphabetical order of their middle names (so they have to ask), or in the order of the name of another member of their family, etc.

Students can elect one of their number to be a 'class robot'. The others tell him or her what to do. Students can mime and act out words and phrases (e.g. *Hurry up! Watch out!*) for the rest of the class to guess. They can perform dialogues taking on the personality of some of the characters the other students know (e.g. for 10 - and 11-year-old beginners, Clever Carol, Horrible Harvey, etc.), and the rest of the class have to guess who they are. Most students, especially younger learners, enjoy acting out.

Questions for 'The Children as a Resource':

1. How do the children bring the outside world into the room? ....
....

2. What can we get children to talk/write about? ....
....

3. What can we ask the children to act out? ....
....

4. How can children act as 'living clocks'? ....
....

5. They can stand in line in order of their birthdays, or distance from the school. Think of another.

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....

6. What can children learn from the 'class robot' game? ....

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7. Give four examples of words or phrases they can act out for others to guess:

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8. What characters would Malay students know that they could 'act out'? ....

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....

Objects as Resources

(Harmer, 2007, pp. 177-181)

Objects, pictures and things

A range of objects, pictures, cards and other things, such as Cuisenaire rods, can be used for presenting and manipulating language, and for involving students in activities of all kinds. We will look at four of them.

Realia

We mentioned above how a simple pebble can be used as a stimulus for a creative activity. However, this is only one possible use for real objects: realia. With beginners, and particularly children, using realia is helpful for teaching the meanings of words or for stimulating student activity; teachers sometimes come to class with plastic fruit, cardboard clock faces, or two telephones to help simulate phone conversations.

Objects that are intrinsically interesting can provide a good starting-point for a variety of language work and communication activities. Jill and Charles Hadfield suggest bringing in a bag of 'evocative objects' that have a 'story to tell' (Hadfield and Hadfield 2003b; 32). These might be a hair ribbon, a coin, a button, a ring, a paperclip, an elastic band, an old photo frame, a key and a padlock. Students are put into groups. Each group picks an object from the bag (without looking in first). Each student in the group then writes one sentence about the object's history as if they were that object. Members of the group share their sentences to make the object's autobiography. They then read their autobiographies to the rest of the class.

We can find an object with an obscure use and ask students to speculate about what it is for (*it might/could/probably is*) and or design various explanations to account for it (*it is used for -ing*). The class could vote on the best idea. If we bring in more than one object, especially when they are not obviously connected, students can speculate on what they have in common or they can invent stories and scenarios using the various objects. They can choose which three from a collection of objects they will put in a time capsule, or which would be most useful on a desert island, etc.

Some teachers use a soft ball to make learning more enjoyable. When they want a student to say something, ask a question or give an answer, they throw a ball to the student, who then has to respond. The student can then throw the ball to a classmate who, in turn, produces the required response before throwing the ball to someone else. Not all students find this appealing, however, and there is a limit to how often the ball can be thrown before people get fed up with it.

The only limitations on the things which we bring to class are the size and quantity of the objects themselves and the students' tolerance, especially with adults who may think they are being treated childishly. As with so many other things, this is something we will have to assess on the basis of our students' reactions.

Pictures

Teachers have always used pictures or graphics - whether drawn, taken from books, newspapers and magazines, or photographed - to facilitate learning. Pictures can be in the form of flashcards (smallish cards which we can hold up for our students to see), large wall pictures (big enough for everyone to see details), cue cards (small cards which students use in pair- or groupwork),

photographs or illustrations (typically in a textbook). Some teachers also use projected slides, images from an overhead projector (see E2 below), or projected computer images (see E4 below). Teachers also draw pictures on the board to help with explanation and language work (see E1 below).

Pictures of all kinds can be used in a multiplicity of ways, as the following examples show:

- **Drills**: with lower-level students, an appropriate use for pictures - especially flashcards - is in cue-response drills (see Chapter 12, B2). We hold up a flashcard (the cue) before nominating a student and getting a response. Then we hold up another one, nominate a different student, and so on. Flashcards are particularly useful for drilling grammar items, for cueing different sentences and practising vocabulary.

Sometimes teachers use larger wall pictures, where pointing to a detail of a picture will elicit a response, such as '*There's some milk in the fridge'* or '*He's just been swimming'*, etc.

We can show large street maps to practise shop vocabulary or to get students giving and understanding directions.

- **(Communication) games**: pictures are extremely useful for a variety of communication activities, especially where these have a game-like feel, such as 'describe and draw' activities, where one student describes a picture (which we have given them) and a partner has to draw the same picture without looking at the original. We can also divide a class into four groups (A, B, C, D) and give each group a different picture that shows a separate stage in a story. Once the members of the group have studied their picture, we take it away. New groups are formed with four members each - one from group A, one from group B, one from group C and one from group D. By sharing the information they saw in their pictures, they have to work out what story the pictures together are telling.

Teachers sometimes use pictures for creative writing. They might tell students to invent a story using at least three of the images in front of them. They can tell them to have a conversation about a specified topic and, at various stages during the conversation, to pick a card and bring whatever that card shows into the conversation.

- **Understanding**: one of the most appropriate uses for pictures is for the presenting and checking of meaning. An easy way of explaining the meaning of the word, aeroplane, for example, is to have a picture of one. In the same way, it is easy to check students' understanding of a piece of writing or listening by asking them to select the picture (out of, say, four) which best corresponds to the reading text or the listening passage.
- **Ornamentation**: pictures of various kinds are often used to make work more appealing. In many modern coursebooks, for example, a reading text will be adorned by a photograph which is not strictly necessary, in the same way as happens in newspaper and magazine articles. The rationale for this is clearly that pictures enhance the text, giving readers (or students) an extra visual dimension to what they are reading.

Some teachers and materials designers object to this use of illustrations because they consider it gratuitous. But it should be remembered that if the pictures are interesting, they will appeal strongly to at least some members of the class. They have the power (at least for the more visually oriented) to engage students.

- **Prediction**: pictures are useful for getting students to predict what is coming next in a lesson. Thus students might look at a picture and try to guess what it shows. (Are the people in it brother and sister, husband or wife, and what are they arguing about - or are they arguing? etc.) They then listen to an audio track or read a text to see if it matches what they predicted on the basis of the picture. This use of pictures is very powerful and has the advantage of engaging students in the task to follow
- **Discussion**: pictures can stimulate questions such as: What is it showing? How does it make you feel? What was the artist's/photographer's purpose in designing it in that way? Would you like to have this picture in your house? Why? Why not? How much would you pay for the picture? Is the picture a work of art?

One idea is to get students to become judges of a photographic competition. After being given the category of photographs they are going to judge (e.g. men in action, reportage, abstract pictures), the students decide on four or five characteristics their winning photograph should have. They then apply these characteristics to the finalists that we provide for them, before explaining why they made their choice.

Pictures can also be used for creative language use, whether they are in a book or on cue cards, flashcards or wall pictures. We might ask students to write a description of a picture, to invent the conversation taking place between two people in a picture or, in one particular role-play activity ask them to answer questions as if they were the characters in a famous painting.

We can make wall pictures, flashcards and cue cards in a number of ways. We can take pictures from magazines and stick them on card. We can draw them. We can buy reproductions, photographs and posters from shops or we can photocopy them from a variety of sources (though we should check copyright law before doing this). It is possible to find pictures of almost anything on the Internet and print them off.

The choice and use of pictures is very much a matter of personal taste, but we should bear in mind three qualities that pictures need to possess if they are to engage students and be linguistically useful. In the first place, they need to be appropriate not only for the purpose in hand but also for the classes they are being used for. If they are too childish, students may not like them, and if they are culturally inappropriate, they can offend people.

Ultimately, the most important thing is that pictures should be visible. They have to be big enough so that all our students - taking into account where they will be sitting - can see the necessary detail.

Lastly, we will not want to spend hours collecting pictures only to have them destroyed the first time they are used! Thought should be given to how to make them durable. Perhaps they can be stuck to cards and protected with transparent coverings.

Cards

Apart from flashcards with pictures on them, cards of all shapes and sizes can be used in a variety of ways. Cards, in this sense, can range from carefully prepared pieces of thick paper which have been laminated to make them into a reusable resource to small strips of paper which the teacher brings in for one lesson only.

Of the many uses for cards, three are especially worth mentioning:

- Matching and ordering: cards are especially good for matching questions and answers or two halves of a sentence. Students can either match them on the desk in front of them (perhaps in pairs or groups), or they can move around the classroom looking for their pairs. This matching can be on the basis of topic, lexis or grammatical construction.

We can also use cards to order words into sentences or to put the lines of a poem in order. Using cards in this way is especially good for kinaesthetic learners, of course (see page 89). But it is good for everyone else, too, especially if we can get students walking around the classroom for at least a brief period.

- **Selecting**: cards work really well if we want students to speak on the spot or use particular words or phrases in a conversation or in sentences. We can write words on separate cards and then, after shuffling them, place them in a pile face down. When a student picks up the next card in the pack, he or she has to use the word in a sentence. Alternatively, students can choose three or four cards and then have to incorporate what is on the cards into a story.

Students can also pick up a card and try to describe what the word on it feels, tastes or smells like so that the other students can guess it.

- **Card games**: there are as many card game possibilities in language learning as there are in real life. We can turn the card selection into a game by introducing a competitive element - having students in pairs play against each other or against other pairs.

A simple vocabulary game can be played in which students have cards with pictures on one side and words on the other. If they pick the picture side, they have to produce the word. If they pick the word side, they have to draw it and then compare it with the original picture. The old game of Snap can be adapted so that two players have a set of cards, with the same objects, etc., but whereas one player has only pictures, the other has only words. The cards are shuffled and then the players put down the cards one at a time. If a picture and word card match, the player who shouts '*Snap!*' first wins all the cards on the table. The object of the game is for one player to end up with all the cards.

Cuisenaire rods

Originally invented by the Belgian educator Caleb Gattegno (see the Silent Way on page 68), these small blocks of wood or plastic of different lengths (see Figure 3) were originally designed for maths teaching. Each length is a different colour. The rods are featureless, and are only differentiated by their length and colour. Simple they may be, but they are useful for a wide range of activities. For example, we can say that a particular rod is a pen or a telephone, a dog or a key so that by holding them up or putting them together a story can be told. All it takes is a little imagination.

The rods can be used to demonstrate word stress, too: if one is bigger than the others (in a sequence representing syllables in a word or words in a sentence), it shows where the stress should be (see Chapter 2, F5 and Chapter 15, B2).

We can also assign a word or phrase to each of, say, five rods and the students then have to put them in the right order (e.g. '*I usually get up at six o'clock*'). By moving the '*usually*' rod around and showing where it can and cannot occur in the sentence, the students get a clear visual display of something they are attempting to fix in their minds.

Rods can be used to teach prepositions. Teachers can model with the rods sentences like '*The red one is on top of/beside/under/over/behind (etc.) the green one'.* They can show rods in different relative positions and ask students to describe them. Students can then position the rods for other students to describe (in ever more complex arrangements!).

Cuisenaire rods are also useful for demonstrating colours (of course), comparatives, superlatives, and a whole range of other semantic and syntactic areas, particularly with people who respond well to visual or kinaesthetic activities.
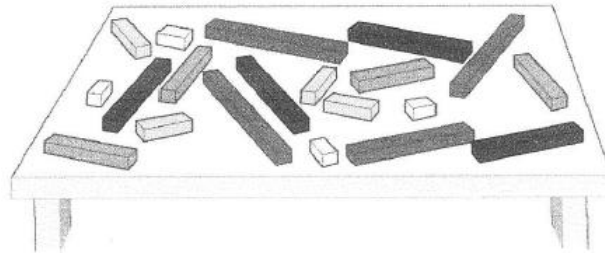
FIGURE 3: Cuisenaire Rods

Questions for 'Objects as Resources':

1. What are the two main purposes of using these objects? ....

....

Realia

2. What does the word 'realia' refer to? ....

....

3. What two things are realia useful for with young children? ....

....

4. What could you do with 'evocative objects'? ....

....

5. List five possibly evocative objects (not mentioned in the text) that you could use in the local context. ....

....

6. What could you do with one or two 'obscure' objects? ....

....

7. Can you think of a possible object to use? ....

....

8. How could you use a soft ball? ....

....

9. What could you use instead of a 'soft ball'? ....

....

Pictures

10. How can pictures be used for drills? ....

....

11. How could a large wall picture be used? ....

....

12. How could you use a large street map? ....

....

13. What happens in a 'describe and draw' activity? ....

....

14. How can you use four pictures from a story and four groups of students? ....

....

15. What is one way to use pictures for creative writing? ....

....

16. If you are using pictures to present meaning, how could you check understanding? ....

....

17. Why would a reading text be adorned with a photo that is not strictly necessary? ....

....

18. How does asking students to predict a text by looking at a picture help the students in their reading or listening? ....

....

19. How can you stimulate questions in a discussion? ....

....

20. What are the three qualities that pictures need to possess if they are to engage students and be linguistically useful?

- ....
  ....
- ....
  ....
- ....
  ....

Cards

21. How can cards be used for matching and ordering? ....

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....

....

22. How can using cards be good for kinaesthetic learners? ....

....

....

23. How can cards be used to help students select topics or words? ....

....

24. Describe a vocabulary game using cards with pictures on one side and words on the other.

....

....

....

....

25. What are Cuisenaire rods? ....

....

Have you ever seen / used Cuisenaire rods? ....

Have you ever seen these rods available in schools or shops in Malaysia? ....

26. Read the description of how rods can be used. What could you use if rods were not available?

....

....

Using the Board in the language Classroom

(Dobbs, 2001, pp. 1-11)

Introduction

As far as we know, the first teacher who wrote on classroom walls was the Reverend Samuel Reed Hall (1795 – 1877), an innovative educator and minister who is said to have first written on a piece of dark paper when teaching a mathematics lesson in Rumford, Maine, in 1816. Later Hall moved to Concord, Vermont, where, it is believed, he had the plaster in his classroom painted black. Soon, many other teachers, following Hall's example, painted plaster walls or plain boards black to create a visual teaching aid. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, enamelled walls and then slate boards dominated American classrooms. Hall, who is also credited by American historians with inventing the blackboard eraser and with introducing many other educational innovations, has been honoured by the state of Vermont with a memorial in Concord bearing the inscription including the words "pioneer in the use of the blackboard as a schoolroom appliance.

In today's classrooms, of course, it is possible to find not only black chalkboards but also green, blue, or other colours, as well as boards of different types of composition such as whiteboards that require dry ink markers instead of chalk. In some classrooms, one also finds flip charts, large tablets of paper used for many of the same purposes and activities as boards. From here on I shall refer to public writing space of these different kinds simply as *the board*.

In spite of the availability of these various kinds of public writing space, however, I have noticed recently that board use in many US schools is declining. In some schools, old boards are being allowed to decay; in many new classrooms, space devoted to boards is decreasing. The reason is not hard to find: Many classrooms now have overhead projectors, movie screens, and TV and computer monitors for student and teacher use. A few even have electronic whiteboards. Because such equipment not only is expensive to buy and maintain but requires electricity, varying degrees of technological skill, and accessories such as transparencies, film, and software programs, many classrooms – even some in affluent countries – will continue to operate with few or no high-tech tools.

Even when classrooms have access to high-tech tools, however, we should not use these tools at the expense of boards. Boards provide a public writing space that is immediately accessible to both teachers and students. Teachers can use the board to record messages they especially want their students to remember, to present new information, and to record what students say. Writing on the board is an active, public, physical activity: Students not only can see something happening, they can physically make it happen themselves. Students writing publicly can receive immediate, personal, face-to-face responses from the teacher and from their peers. Teachers can see not only what students are producing (or not producing) but also can read their body language.

Moreover, because different students rely on different learning strategies, they need a variety of learning experiences. When the teacher writes on the board, students whose learning is strengthened by visual stimuli benefit. When students write on the board, students whose learning is strengthened by hands-on, kinaesthetic experiences, benefit.

When a number of students write on the board simultaneously and the others write at their desks, elements of competition and immediacy are introduced into the classroom chemistry that heighten students' interest.

Teacher use of the board

The board can help teachers manage the classroom, can be a valuable teaching tool, and can be a way to record student input.

Using the board to help manage classrooms

Classroom experience soon teaches us that when we have an important message to convey to our students, we may need to write the message as well as say it so that our students will have a better chance of understanding and remembering it – and so that they can write it down if they need to. This is especially true of homework assignments, announcements of plans or of items to be brought to class for special purposes, schedules and timetables, and special class rules, if we have them. When students are assigned to groups, confusion may be avoided if we post the names of each group's members as well as each person's duties: Who will lead the discussion, who will record it, who will report it, and who will keep track of the time and keep people focused on the task. If students have special classroom roles or duties on a rotating basis such as attendance taker or clean-up, we can record them on the bard. Without being intrusive, we can keep students informed of how many minutes remain in times activities and tests; or we can post scores for competitive activities. It is sometimes effective to display outlines of lesson plans and agendas: If students can see that a fun activity is planned for the end of a class period, they may help us keep to a busy schedule in order to ensure that there will be sufficient time left for it. Or we may want to display information mainly as a reminder to our students and/or ourselves.

Many of these housekeeping messages need to be communicated on a daily basis to keep the class well organized and running efficiently. Writing them on the board can help ensure that our students understand, follow remember, or record important information; moreover, messages can be used to prevent confusion and to save valuable class time.

Using the board as a teaching tool

In preparation for the day's class, we can use the board for a "get-ready-to-learn" tool. We can write, before or at the beginning of class, provocative quotations or questions, riddles, tongue - twisters, scrambled vocabulary words or scrambled sentences. These types of activities give students who arrive early something to get started on, and they help get everyone focused on English, although, of course, these activities can be used not only as a warm-up but any time during class.

For beginning levels, we might head the board with the day and date. And for all levels, just for fun, we can write greetings and draw illustrations to observe special occasions such as local, national, or religious holidays, birthdays of famous people, and our students' birthdays. Or we can invent occasions like 'Happy Heat Wave!' or 'Celebrate Spring!' or 'Let's Sing Day'.

There are many ways the board can be used during class to support teaching. We can, for example, draw stick figures or abstract forms on the board and have students compose oral or written stories

about them. Or, we can write vocabulary words or questions or statements drawn from a course book reading or other sources and then ask students to respond orally or in writing in appropriate ways. You might want to browse through the index of this book at this point for additional, more specific ideas of board activities you might use to support your own teaching.

Using the board helps students focus on what we are saying when we introduce them to new language concepts, and it helps them understand and remember what they hear. Presenting new material "live" on the board obviously takes longer than giving students a handout with the material already prepared – pre-packaged as it were. But in most cases, this additional time is time well invested. As we draw or write on the board, we can explain what our drawing or writing means. When the board is used, students get the information gradually, so that they have the time to question anything they do not understand. If the information is complex, the students have time to grasp small pieces of it as it evolves, rather than looking at a sheet of paper bearing long lists of vocabulary words or complicated instructions or rules. If students then transcribe the information from the board to their notebooks they make it their own. They write down as little or as much of the information as they feel they need; they process the information as they reproduce it.

In addition to using the board to present new concepts to students, we can use it to explain, clarify, illustrate, emphasize, organize, drill, and list information. We can write key words or a brief outline of our complete presentation. We can give examples of how to use new vocabulary. We can draw stick figures to illustrate grammar points and webs to show relationships between concepts. We can use the board to amplify and highlight the most important information in our presentations. Students may then elect to copy some or all of this supplemental information into their notebooks. Supplying them with a visual record is extremely important because many students are unable to listen to information delivered in a second language, evaluate what they hear in order to extract the most important information, and then record it.

We can also use board work to determine students' readiness for new material, to review new material, and to assess students' success at mastering this material. Frequent, quick, informal checks of students' achievements, which many of the board activities in this book can provide, help to keep us abreast of students' progress, or their lack thereof, easily and without the stress to students that accompanies quizzes and tests although tests certainly have their place in the curriculum. Furthermore, students may benefit from seeing how well they do in comparison to their peers because it helps them to assess their own achievements more realistically.

Finally we can use the board to quickly summarise the day's important activities, to review a language concept that we have just introduced, or as a lead-in to the next day's class.

Using the board to record student input

Just as we use the question-and-answer method to involve our students and enliven and enhance our presentations of new concepts, we can also elicit input from students to make our use of the board more collaborative. We can ask students to brainstorm a topic while we record what they say. We can record questions and record student's answers.

Michael O'Hare, a supporter of this method of teaching, points out in his article "Talk and Chalk: The Blackboard as an Intellectual Tool" (1993) that the advantage of making a board record is that it can be referred to as long as it remains visible. "What is said out loud," he writes, "must be said to all, but any participant can interrogate the board privately at any time" (p 241). But, O'Hare warns, teachers should record "participants' contributions in their own words," because if teachers rephrase, students will feel that their comments were somehow "wrong". He also believes that when teachers paraphrase students' comments, they are exerting a type of control over their students' discourse that tends to "dump them back into 'you talk we listen' mode" (p 245). O'Hare however, is not writing specifically about ESL/EFL students, who make a larger number of erroneous contributions than native speakers do. An exception needs to be made, therefor, to allow for the elimination or correction of erroneous statements. When a student's contribution is not in error but a native speaker might use an idiomatic expression or choose a more precise word, we may want to supplement the student's phrasing with this information in the hope that the student will make it his or her own because it expresses his or her own idea. Of course, one way to avoid the possible problems of paraphrasing, as well as to increase student participation further, is to let students do their own recording.

It is the rare teacher – experienced, new, or in training – who has not used the board as a language teaching tool or been taught by a teacher writing on the board. Thinking back on five years of high school and college-level foreign classes, I find it difficult to recall ever writing on the board as a student I now see, however, that my own students look forward to activities that put them at the board and that when they become comfortable using it at my direction, they sometimes initiate using it on their own.

Student use of the board

For students, writing on the board is a hand-on, learning-by-doing activity. What they write publicly usually gets read and responded to immediately. Not only the teacher but also peers become involved in what has been written. It is advantageous, therefore, to have not only individual student scribes use the board, but also groups of students working simultaneously while the rest of the students write at their desks. In this way, all members of the class are challenged by the same questions. Students writing at the board often comment spontaneously on each other's content and each other's language. Furthermore, students writing at the board often invite their peers' comments because their work is on display and their need to know is great. As they compare their work with that of their peers, their critical faculties are heightened. They learn from their peers' successes and mistakes. Making comparisons, alterations, and corrections helps students become more aware of what revision means. They collaborate and compete. And they become teachers.

Some advantages of having groups of students write publicly at the board are as follows:

- A different atmosphere is created. A group writing at the board is a public group within the whole class, and the students interact not only with those in their group but with the whole class. In contrast, when students collaborate in small groups at their desks, usually little or no interaction takes place between groups.

- No single student can become disengaged and "disappear" without the teacher's notice, as can students in groups at their desks.
- A student cannot monopolise the discourse because written discourse cannot dominate "air time' the way oral discourse can.
- Spontaneous collaboration at the board is a voluntary process in which students can participate or leave at will, unlike the process that occurs when students are grouped at their desks for the specific purpose of editing each other's work or discussing content.
- The teacher's monitoring ability increases. A teacher can "sit in" only on one small group at a time. But, when the board is used, the teacher can observe what is taking place at the board and circulate among students working at their desks, acting as a resource to both groups.

In addition, board work allows us to easily observe students in the act of writing and see how they think in their new language. We see their false starts, their hesitations, and the errors they make but discover for themselves. These observations often lead us to a better understanding of the types of errors they make repeatedly, and of whether or not they doubt the accuracy of their usage. Furthermore, it gives us the opportunity, if we choose, to address difficulties as they arise – to assist by suggesting the word of grammar structure the students seems to be searching for, or to make corrections as problems occur. This immediacy can be very exciting for teachers and rewarding for the students who are intensely aware of their needs at that moment and appreciate having their needs met.

Public writing allows us to emphasise the process rather than the product. By its very nature, board writing is ephemeral and errors are easily erased. Students seem not to become as possessive and sensitive to criticism of their board writing as they do of "finished" writing or of writing that is committed to paper that they can hold in their hands.

Furthermore, some students have more confidence in their written than in their oral discourse and find it easier to participate in written form. Some students dislike asking for help or lack the verbal competence to express their problems and welcome the fact that the teacher or other students can see their problems and offer help when they need it.

Using the board in response to teacher prompts

At the teacher's direction, students can use the board for numerous activities such as practising and testing their grasp of new forms; paraphrasing or summarising other writers; generating their own writing; editing their own and their peers' public writing; checking answers to quizzes and tests; playing games; sharing knowledge, personal experiences, and feelings; or sharing information about their countries and their cultures.

In addition, when possible, students can be encouraged to draw illustrations on the board to accompany their writing: research increasingly shows a strong link between drawing and language learning. Mona Brookes, author of *Drawing with Children: A Creative Method for Adult Beginners, Too* (1996), writes, "[Y]ou can learn information eight times faster and retain it eight times longer if you draw what you are learning about" (p225).

Spontaneous student use, no teacher input

Students who have been made aware that the board belongs to them as well as to the teacher sometimes write on it spontaneously. They may, unasked, join a group the teacher has appointed to write publicly. Or, they may, for example, decide to write the answers to a quiz on the board, even though the teacher has not announced that this is the method of checking answers that will be used. Still others may use the board to communicate with their classmates or teacher or to show off newly acquired language skills.

My initial enthusiasm for making sure that students view the board as part of their domain was kindled by one beginning learner, and adult who was illiterate in his own language because he had never had the opportunity to go to school and who became so pleased with his growing skills that he began to write "Good Morning!" and other greetings on the board each day as he arrive, making visible his pride and love of earning. This act convinced me of the power of public writing and led me to seek ways of sharing that power with other students as well as with my fellow teachers.

A summary

Writing on the board offers many benefits. When teachers are writing and not just talking, the visual element stimulates students' interest in what they hear. More important, visual materials help students understand and remember the new information teachers are presenting. When students write at the board, their learning experience becomes self-centred and active. And when groups of students write at the board simultaneously, the students feel both challenged by their peers and protective toward them – they share with them and learn from them.

Questions for 'Using the Board in the Language Classroom'

1. How, when, where and why was the blackboard invented and by whom?

....

....

....

....

2. What kinds of 'public writing space' are available nowadays?

....

....

....

....

3. What kinds of 'housekeeping' messages can be communicated on the board?

....

....

....

....

4. How can the board be used for warm-up activities?

....

....

....

....

....

5. Give an example of a day or date that you could especially decorate the board for.

....

6. Give an example of a stick-figure story you could draw on the board.

....

7. How is presenting material "live" on the board better for learning?

....

....

....

....

....

8. Have you heard the expression "Talk and Chalk"? What does it mean? Is it generally seen as a good or a bad thing?

....

....

9. What does O'Hare say is the advantage of making a board record?

....

....

10. What do you think about rephrasing students' answers for them when they are incorrect?

....

....

....

....

11. Would you have groups of students writing on the board? Why / why not?

....

....

....

12. How does having students using the board allow you to see how a student is thinking?

....

....

....

13. How does public writing emphasise the process rather than the product? Is this a good thing – why / why not?

....

....

....

14. What do you think about children writing on the board spontaneously? Have you ever experienced this?

....

....

....

15. Which is better: high-tech or low-tech? Why?

....

....

....

Students could hold a **debate** to discuss the benefits of technology.

Ways of Showing

(Harmer, 2007, pp. 183-7)

Over the years, technology has changed the way that teachers and students are able to show each other things (one of the most important functions of classroom equipment). We will look at four major presentation aids.

The board

The most versatile piece of classroom teaching equipment is the board - whether this is of the more traditional chalk-dust variety, a whiteboard written on with marker pens, or an IWB (see page 187). Boards provide a motivating focal point during whole-class grouping.

We can use boards for a variety of different purposes, including:

- **Note-pad**: teachers frequently write things up on the board as these come up during the lesson. They might be words that they want students to remember, phrases which students have not understood or seen before, or topics and phrases which they have elicited from students when trying to build up a composition plan, for example.

When we write up a word on a board, we can show how that word is stressed so that students can see and 'hear' the word at the same time (see Figure 5). We can sketch in intonation tunes or underline features of spelling, too. We can group words according to their meaning or grammatical function. Some teachers use different colours for different aspects of language.
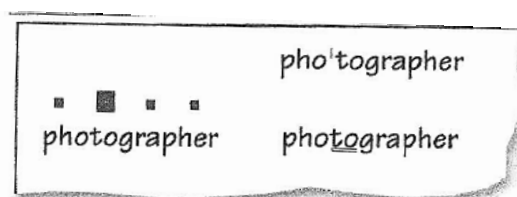

FIGURE 5: Different ways of recording word stress

- **Explanation aid**: boards can be used for explanation, too. For example, we can show the relationship between an affirmative sentence and a question by drawing connecting arrows (see Figure 6). We can show where words go in a sentence by indicating the best positions diagrammatically, or we can write up phonemic symbols (or draw diagrams of the mouth) to show how a word or sound is pronounced. The board is ideal for such uses.
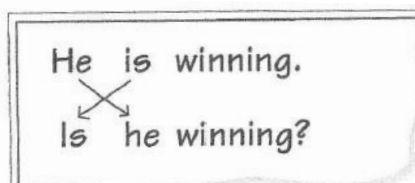

FIGURE 6: Using the board to show sentence/question relationships (elementary)

- **Picture frame**: boards can be used for drawing pictures, of course, the only limitation being our artistic ability. But even those who are not artistically gifted can usually draw a sad face and a happy face. They can produce stick men sitting down and running, or make an attempt

at a bus or a car. What's more, this can be done whenever it is required because the board is always there, helping students to understand concepts and words.

- **Public workbook**: a typical procedure is to write up fill-in sentences or sentence transformation items, for example, and have individual students come up to the board and write a fill-in item, or a transformed sentence. That way the whole class becomes involved in seeing what the correct version is.

Teachers sometimes write mistakes they have observed in a creative language activity on the board. They can ask class members who think they know how to correct them to come up and have a go.

Such activities are very usefu1 because they focus everyone's attention in one place'

- **Game board:** there are a number of games that can be played using the board. With noughts and crosses (also called Tic-tac-toe), for example, teachers can draw nine box frames and write different words or categories in each box (see Figure 7). Teams have to make sentences or questions with the words and if they get them right, they can put their symbol (O or X) on the square to draw their winning straight line. A popular spelling game involves two teams who start off with the same word. Each team has half the board. They have to fill up their side with as many words as possible but each new word has to start with the last letter of the word before. At the end of a given period of time, the team with the largest number of correct words is the winner.

can't	won't	like
must	enjoy	want
dislike	hate	has to

FIGURE 7: Noughts and Crosses (tic-tac-toe)

- **Noticeboard:** teachers and students can display things on boards - pictures, posters, announcements, charts, etc. It is especially useful if the boards are metallic so that magnets can be used.

Handwriting on the board should be clear and easy to decipher; we should organise our material in some way, too, so that the board does not just get covered in scrawls in a random and distracting fashion. We could, for example, draw a column on one side of the board and reserve that for new words. We could then put the day's or the lesson's programme in a left hand column and use the middle of the board for grammar explanations or games.

It is probably not a good idea to turn our back to the class while we write on the board, especially if this goes on for some time. This tends to be demotivating and may cause the class to become restless. Indeed, it is better to involve the students with boardwork as much as possible, either getting them to tell us what to write, or asking them to do the writing themselves.

Questions for 'Ways of Showing':

1. What is 'one of the most important functions of classroom equipment'? ....
....

2. What is the most versatile piece of classroom equipment? ....

3. What do boards provide? ....
....

4. Give an example of using a board as each of these:

Notepad: ....
....

Explanation Aid: ....…......

....

Picture Frame: ....…..

....

Public Workbook: ....….

....

Game board: ....…...................

....

Noticeboard: ....…...............

....

5. What should the handwriting on the board be like? ....

6. Give an example of board organisation.
....

....

....

7. Why is it not a good idea to turn your back to the class while writing on the board?

....

....

Flip Chart and Computer

(Harmer, 2007, pp. 186-7)

The Flip Chart

Flip charts are very useful for making notes, recording the main points in a group discussion, amending and changing points, and for the fact that individual sheets of paper can be torn off and kept for future reference. Many of these qualities (and more) are, of course, shared by computer-based technology, but flip charts are portable, relatively cheap and demand no technical expertise.

Flip charts work best in two particular situations. In the first, a teacher, group leader or group scribe stands at the flip chart and records the points that are being made. The participants - because they can see what is being written up - can then ask for changes to be made.
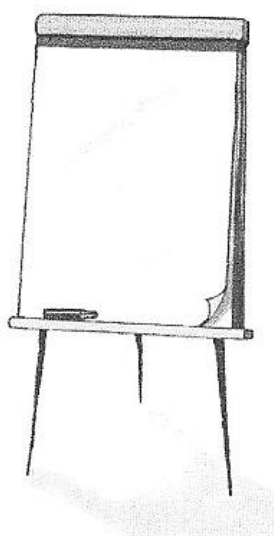
FIGURE 9: Flip chart

When possible, it is ideal if groups can each have flip charts of their own. When an activity is finished, students can walk round the room seeing what the different groups have written (or what points they have noted down). Flip charts can also be posted at different points in the room, each flip chart standing for a topic or a point of view. Students can walk around, adding to what is on each of the flip charts, writing up their opinions, disagreeing or merely getting an idea of what the other students are thinking, based on what is already written there.

Computer-based presentation technology

Computers have changed the world of classroom presentation forever - that is for those fortunate enough to have the money and resources for both hardware and software.

The two crucial pieces of hardware are a computer and a data projector. Anything that is on our computer screen can be shown to the whole class using a data projector to put up an enlarged version of it on a screen or a white wall. This means that all the class can see a word processed task at the same time, or we can project a picture, diagram or map, for example.

Presentation software, such as PowerPoint, increases our capacity to present visual material (words, graphics and pictures) in a dynamic and interesting way. However, the most commonly used PowerPoint template (a heading with bullet points) has suffered from overuse and may not be the

most effective use of the medium. In fact, the software offers a more interesting option where we can mix text and visuals with audio/video tracks so that pictures can dissolve or fly onto and off the screen, and music, speech and film can be integrated into the presentation. Some people, of course, may find this kind of animated presentation irksome in its own way, but there is no doubt that it allows teachers to mix different kinds of display much more effectively than before such software came along.

One of the major technological developments in the last few years has been the interactive whiteboard, the IWB. This has the same properties as a computer hooked up to a data projector (i.e. you can present visual material, Internet pages, etc. in a magnified way for everyone to see), but it has three major extra advantages, too. In the first place, teachers and students can write on the board which the images are being projected onto, and they can manipulate images on the board with the use of special pelts or even with nothing but their fingers. The pen or finger thus acts as a kind of computer mouse. Secondly, what appears on the board (just like the screen of a computer) can be saved or printed so that anything written up or being shown there can be looked at again.

Enthusiasts for IWBs point to this extraordinary versatility and to other tricks (such as the ability to mask parts of the board and gradually reveal information). They say that the ability to move text and graphics around the board with pen or finger is extremely attractive, especially for younger learners. They emphasise the fact that text, graphics, Internet capability, video and audio material can all be controlled from the board.

Critics of IWBs worry about the amount of money they cost. There is some concern, too, about the fact that currently most IWBs are at the front of the classroom and thus tend to promote teacher (and learner)-fronted behaviours, and are less favourable for groupwork.

There are also worries about projector beams (especially in ceiling-mounted projectors) affecting the eyes of teachers who frequently find themselves looking directly at them.

Questions for 'Flip Chart and Computer':

1. What are flip charts useful for? ....

....

2. What advantage does a flip chart have over computer-based technology? ....

....

3. What has suffered from over-use? ....

....

4. What are the (3) extra advantages of an Interactive White Board (IWB)?

- ....
....
- ....
....

- ....
  ....

5. What are the disadvantages of the IWB?

- ....
- ....
  ....

BRIGHTON

10 Things I hate about PowerPoint
by Jeremy Harmer

Jeremy Harmer writes books (*The Practice of English Language Teaching, How to Teach English, How to Teach Writing* - for Pearson Education - and *Just Right* and the *Just* series for Marshall Cavendish). He is the editor of the Longman methodology series. He uses PowerPoint in presentations around the world.

Introduction

Ok, this is how it goes. I was at an international conference recently (I go to a lot of conferences) and I found myself in conversation with a colleague at the end of a long conference day. And we started rolling our eyes and groaning and generally being a bit melodramatic about the presentations we'd been to. Which is not very kind. But we weren't complaining about the content of the talks and we certainly weren't having a go at the presenters (people in glass houses....). No, what we were moaning about was death-by-PowerPoint, the sheer ubiquity of that Microsoft platform that can induce catatonia in the liveliest mind - quite apart from the damage it can do to the sleepy middle-aged one that I am forced to carry around.

And the more I experience PowerPoint, and the more I think about it, the more overheated I become. Why, I can feel myself getting all steamed up even as I type. And the reason I'm getting worked up is because there are ten things about PowerPoint that I absolutely hate. I mean hate, OK?

1: PowerPoint as lecture notes

Sitting in the front row at a big conference recently I remember feeling trapped and tortured with that desperate urge for escape which you know is impossible. And then you feel like screaming or carving up textbooks or even teachers. What brought about this madness? The little figure on the PowerPoint screen which said 4/52. That meant there were another 48 slides to go (think about it! *Forty-eight!*). And the sad thing is that the fabulous educator was using the slides as her lecture notes. But I don't want to see a presenter's notes. I want to see how they come out the other end as discourse when the presenter is in full flow.

And the other terrible thing is that if a presenter chucks up what they are going to say on a slide, before they say it (and they often do) you can read it in 45 seconds - and then what's the point of listening at all?

PowerPoint offers so much more than this: a chance to show pictures, play music clips, show video clips of teaching. But it's a lousy reading machine unless the words are used as signs or staging posts to structure a talk.

2: Visual assault

Pictures, flashes, whizzy entrances, funny faces. It can all get far, far too much. Sometimes you want to hear what's in the presenter's brain, not be dazzled by a kind of pyrotechnic ejaculation. Ooops! Myself I use pictures and animation a lot. That's what PowerPoint is so good for - a whole visual vocabulary that overhead transparencies could and can never match. The images from a data

projector can be so much clearer, so much sharper and cleaner. If you've ever seen a presentation given first with OHTs and then again with the pictures on a PowerPoint slide you'll know what I mean.

But I'll need to re-evaluate what I do with pictures and animation. Someone told me I was overdoing it the other day so I'll have to get feedback to see if other people think I'm also guilty of visual overload. Hmmm

3: Aural assault

Thwack! Zing! Bzzzz! Kerpow! Wow. There's one presenter I know who is totally brilliant and loved almost everywhere he goes. His PowerPoint presentations literally erupt into the room and if there's a new gizmo to be had, he'll have it. And then he'll chuck in all the latest VERY LOUD sound effects. I can only take about 30 minutes of this before my head starts exploding. But you can't walk out. It's rude! It's just that aural overload is horrible.

Ooops! Myself I use music clips in almost every presentation I do (if I can find some daft excuse to include them). It's not just for the 'Auditory' people in the audience, it's for my own enjoyment too - a total self-indulgence. But maybe it's too much for everyone else. I'll have to get some feedback. But one of the great things about PowerPoint is that you can bring in little audio and video clips at the click of a mouse. All you need is to download some audio editing freeware, the simplest kind, and you can cut little excerpts from audio tracks and give them fade-ins and fade-outs so that they sound good. Even I can do that so it can't be very technically challenging.

4: Bullet points

If I never see another bullet point again I will be

- Happy
- Relieved
- Surprised

They're everywhere in Microsoft's PowerPoint template and they screw up the hierarchy of information. And they're boring. And there are other means of showing the much more subtle ways that different bits of information relate to each other. PowerPoint - with its animation and varied letter shapes - gives the users a myriad of means in which to show main and subsidiary points. I mean one of its greatest tricks is to allow material to arrive and fade away and then reappear. That's using the medium properly. Bullet points aren't. They're for paper, not for an animate screen.

5: PowerPoint backgrounds

Oh please spare me from another wishy-washy Microsoft background with a translucent globe or the intimations of water or any of the other lacklustre visual 'washes' that the designers have chucked in there. The moment you see one of those your heart sinks and you know the user has just taken something off the shelf, and lecture notes (see above) are probably on the way. I'd much rather see a blank or monochrome background. There's a reason why the walls in many art gallery

are plain white. You can do some much more with visual presentation if you don't have to worry about clashing with some Gatesian* view of subtle harmony.

6: Early closing

This really gets me mad. I mean mad. Oh dear I'm overheating again. But I get all steamed up when a presenter finishes their talk and the moment - I mean the second - any applause stops they start clicking away and closing up their PowerPoint so we can all see the programme and their desktop. I reckon that's just plain rude - especially if the presenter has put their email or website address up there and some poor teachers are scrabbling away to try and write them down. You wouldn't expect an orchestra to start folding up their music stands before the audience had even got out of their seats at the end of a concert. They wait till the hall is pretty much empty. So why do presenters look like they care so little? Leave the last screen up there until people have left the room. It's good manners.

7: Lecturers who stand in front of the projector

I reckon it should be easy to spot the difference between a human-being and a machine. One walks and breathes and talks, the other just beams. They don't mix. They are different media. But presenters often stand right in that beam so we can all see the coursebook excerpt being projected slithering all over their tie or their dress or whatever. And it's kind of irritating. And we all (I mean us presenters) do it.

8: Lecturers who are stuck to the computer

Look what PowerPoint can do to a person! When you speak to them in the breaks, or they are talking about their presentation they are all animated, they move around, they seem to function perfectly well as breathing humans. And then they give their sessions and they turn into statues with only one moving part, an index finger which goes click, click, jabbing downwards - the only sign of life in the paralysed creature in front of us.

But it doesn't have to be like this. Cordless clickers and controllers are easily available. They can have a range of thirty metres, big enough for a presenter to stride around in just about any room or hall. The moment you get one you morph from paralysis back into teacherdom. It's a great feeling. Ooops! Except a colleague said to me the other day - when I had presented in a room which was very cramped (and thus didn't allow for any wandering about) - well it was nice to see you stay in one place just for once instead of galloping around. I don't like statues, but maybe striding the aisles can be just as irritating. I'll have to get some feedback on that.

9: Technology experts

I've been to a couple of sessions recently where people got really, really excited (almost indecently) about all the wonderful new chunks of hardware and software that are on offer. Interactive Whiteboards - swoon - Google maps - ooooh - computer-mediated communication - aaaaah! And what did we see on the screen? Lecture notes. Bullet points. Ugly little pictures coming up - *splat* - on a vacuous background. Why do technology fetishists make such a mess of it I wonder? Perhaps it's because when they talk about the technology they sometimes forget to remember that it's

teaching they should be talking about - fitting the technology to the child, not the child to the technology as the British academic Susan Greenfield said in the House of Lords (Britain's second legislative chamber) the other day.

Of course not all IT experts are like this. Far from it. We all know people who are brilliant at using the resources they have to hand. They know what I also believe which is that if technology is your thing then you are sort of obliged to show it in its best pedagogic light. The medium, in this case, really is the message.

10: Technology failure

It happens. It's always happened. The tape recorder doesn't work. The OHP goes *phutt!* as the bulb explodes. The video/DVD player has a monster sulk.

Computer's do it too. They freeze when you try and engage Media Player or they go all funny when you bring in a music clip. And if - as happened to me in Abbottabad last Autumn - the electricity goes, you're back where you started: just a presenter and two hundred teachers, and the fans have stopped working in the fetid heat and there's still sixty-three minutes to go and they're looking at you expectantly....

And then, once the panic disappears, you suddenly remember what it is to be a teacher.

Conclusion?

Phew. I've got all that off my chest then. I feel much better now, thank you for asking. As you've probably guessed, I'm actually a huge fan of PowerPoint. I use it all the time. It allows me to add extra dimensions to teaching and presenting that were never previously available. But I'm still a novice, really, and probably irritate people with the way I used the medium just as much as people (as you have seen) irritate me. So I need your feedback (see above). Which is why, if you see me presenting at a conference and I make a mess of it, do come and tell me. I'm sure I'll be pleased to hear from you.

Won't I?

(Harmer, 10 things I hate about PowerPoint, 2006)

[* Gatesian – Gates + ian, referring to Bill Gates, Microsoft]

Questions for ' 10 Things I hate about PowerPoint':

1. Who is Jeremy Harmer? ....

2. What is it that people complain about? ....

3. Have you ever seen a PowerPoint presentation where the slides are the lecture notes? ....

4. Have you ever given a PowerPoint presentation where the slides are the notes for your talk?

....

5. Is this bad/wrong? .... Why? ....

....

....

6. What is involved in a 'visual assault'? ....

....

7. What is the problem here? ....

....

8. What kind of 'aural assault' do we get with PowerPoint? ....

....

9. Does this mean that it's bad to use sound effects? ....

10. Do you use bullet points? ....

11. What does Jeremy Harmer NOT like about bullet points in PowerPoint? ....

....

12. Do you like and/or use Microsoft backgrounds? .... Why / why not? ....

....

13. What is the problem with 'early closing', or turning the presentation off quickly at the end of the talk? ....

14. Where should the lecturer / presenter stand? ....

15. How can the presenter move away from the computer? ....

....

16. What should you do when your technology fails? ....

17. What is Jeremy Harmer really saying about people using PowerPoint? ....

....

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