



# CHALLENGING READING: ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION WITH CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

## STRAND 1: THE CHALLENGE OF LANGUAGE PLAY AND LANGUAGE CREATIVITY

### Strand Chairs

**Dr Saskia Kersten, University of Hertfordshire**

**Dr Amos Paran, UCL Institute of Education**

### Presenters

**Aurora V. Archer**

#### **Extensive reading: Reading for pleasure in an EFL context?**

International policies have included the teaching of English in most countries because of globalization issues (Graddol, 2006). As part of this globalization trend, most countries like Mexico, among other developing countries, have included English in their basic education curriculums (Chepetla et al., 2008). Nevertheless, teaching a foreign language is a challenging task in contexts where students face lack of exposure to meaningful L2 input after they leave their L2 classes (Davies and Pearse, 2000). Thus, curriculum designers need to consider the following: language methodologies that provide a great amount of L2 input exposure, and attention to the children learning needs.

Studies have shown the relevance of encouraging free reading with children because of its positive effects on writing, grammar and vocabulary in L2 learning (Krashen, 2013). The use of stories and picture books play a significant role in the development of L2 reading (Kolb, 2013). Thus, my paper will present the report of an action research project implemented with a group of 10 young learners, from 9 to 12 years-old, who were exposed to extensive reading at a beginner language level. The children's performance in some L2 reading activities will be examined through their portfolios, interviews and journals. Findings will show both the challenge that involves developing extensive reading in this particular context, and also the rewarding L2 learning effects that can be obtained. Furthermore, the analysis of some affective factors that were involved will be discussed to see their effect in the development of this investigation.

**Aurora V. Archer** is a PhD Candidate in ELT and Applied Linguistics at the University of Southampton. She has been an English teacher for more than 20 years and has a BA in Education, an MA in ELT and an MSc in Human Development. She works at the School of Languages, University of Veracruz. She has been an active supporter of extensive reading since 2005.

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**Carmen Becker, TU Braunschweig & Jana Roos, Paderborn University, Germany**

**‘How lovely my dear!’ – Improvisation activities in the young-learners classroom**

Children begin naturally imagining and pretending they are grown-ups in concrete everyday situations at the age of three. They engage in role-play, experiment with their first language in specific situations and interact and communicate verbally even with very limited language. Therefore, early foreign language learners already have a general communicative competence in their first language, and are also able to use non-verbal cues and responses such as body movements, gestures and facial expressions. These skills can be transferred when engaging in improvisation activities in the foreign language, turning drama activities and creative tasks into powerful tools to give children the opportunity for communication and interaction in the early foreign language classroom. The experience of children with make-believe, and the desire to play and act, can therefore provide a springboard for formulaic language use as well as linguistic creativity in the foreign language classroom. Research has shown that engaging in dramatic activities can have a considerable positive impact on language acquisition. However, opportunities for improvisation and language play are often rare.

This presentation will present an approach to creative speaking that promotes autonomous language use in activities that stimulate learners’ imaginations. We present examples of learner language that are based on both poster activities and communicative tasks and discuss their value for the overall acquisition process.

**Carmen Becker** is Professor of English Language Pedagogy at the TU Braunschweig. Her research focuses on portfolio assessment and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

**Jana Roos** is Deputy Professor for English Teaching (primary), University of Potsdam, and Professor of Applied Linguistics and English Language Education at Paderborn University, Germany. Her research focuses on Second Language Acquisition and (Early) Foreign Language Teaching and Learning in Institutional Contexts.

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**Dominic Cheetham, Sophia University, Tokyo.**

**Extensive reading of children’s literature and language learning; first, second and foreign**

Over the course of their school lives, children learning their first language can acquire, at a conservative estimate, over 40,000 words. This is far too great a volume of learning to be accounted for by direct instruction, and has consequently stimulated research examining the role of extended reading in incidental vocabulary acquisition. Children’s literature is a very rich source of vocabulary, and extensive reading of children’s literature has come to be seen as one of the most powerful means of acquiring a large working vocabulary for both first and second language learners. However, for foreign language learners, children’s literature has a less positive image. and the most commonly recommended reading is of graded readers. Corpus research has shown that work for children has a wide range of rare words, comparable

to adult literature (Thompson and Sealey 2007). In direct contrast to the view for first or second language learners that this represents a valuable source of input, it leads instead to the argument that children's literature puts too great a comprehension and memory strain on foreign language learners, and is an inefficient learning tool compared to graded readers (Pellicer-Sánchez and Schmitt 2010 p. 40).

This presentation examines the arguments for children's literature in language learning in terms of some features of naturalistic child reading behaviour, and the stylistic choices of writers for children. Replication of child reading behaviours in conjunction with the aid to comprehension and memory inherent in stylistic choices, combined with motivational and practical considerations, are argued to make children's literature an equal, if not superior choice as extended reading material for foreign language learners, and an excellent tool in any kind of language acquisition.

**Dominic Cheetham** (PhD) is a lecturer in Children's Literature at Sophia University in Tokyo. He has a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Birmingham University and has published on a variety of topics in children's literature, including the history of dragons, translation and translation theory, language learning and, most recently, on the created vocabulary of Roald Dahl.

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**Sam Duncan & Amos Paran, UCL Institute of Education, University College London, UK**

### **Negotiating challenging reading: Literature in second and foreign language teaching**

Most work on literature in second or foreign language teaching has fallen into two main types. One is theoretical discussion of the value of literature in language teaching; another is description of pedagogical approaches, whether in broad terms or in terms of focusing on the work of one writer or on detailed plans on how to use one work. What has often been missing is looking at the realities of secondary school classrooms in situations where literature is being used in teaching a second or foreign language.

This presentation presents preliminary findings from three case studies looking at the way in which the use of literature actually plays out in language teaching and learning. In visits to three secondary schools teaching the IB Diploma Programme in three different European countries we interviewed teachers and learners about their views of the role and importance of using literature in foreign and second language classrooms. We focus on some of the preliminary salient findings of this study, such as the use of reading aloud in the classroom, the role of culture in the teaching of literary works, factors in choosing suitable literary texts, and the reasons for using literature in the foreign and second language classroom. We also discuss the distinction between using and teaching literature and the way it is expressed in such factors as using literary metalanguage. We also look at the concept of difficulty and challenge and the way teachers negotiate these with their students.

**Sam Duncan** (EdD) is a Senior Lecturer in Adult Education and Literacies at the UCL Institute of Education, University College London, where she teaches on the PGCE in Adult Literacy Teaching and on the MA in Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy. She has a background in literature and film, and is interested in novels, poetry and cinema in language teaching. Her book, *Reading Circles, Novels and Adult Reading Development* was published in 2012 by Continuum.

**Amos Paran** is a Reader in Second Language Education at the UCL Institute of Education, University College London, where he teaches on the MA TESOL. He started his professional career in Israel, where he taught EFL in secondary schools and trained teachers. He has run teacher training workshops in countries such as Viet Nam, Uzbekistan, Israel, Switzerland, Spain and France, and works regularly in Chile. His main research interests are reading in a foreign language and the use of literature in language learning, as well as distance education, and he has written extensively on these topics. He is co-editor (with Lies Sercu) of *Testing the Untestable in Language Education*, published in 2010 by Multilingual Matters. His most recent book is *Literature*, co-written with Pauline Robinson and published by Oxford University Press in the *Into the Classroom* series.

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## **M. Carmen Fonseca-Mora & Analí Fernández-Corbacho, University of Huelva, Spain**

### **Singing, movement and video clips for early reading skills**

A large amount of literature has been published on reading acquisition difficulties in native (L1) or in second language (L2) learning. Several factors, such as phonological and decoding skills, have often been described as variables of crucial importance in the learning-to-read process. In fact, learning to decode a language such as English, with its opaque spelling, is a major difficulty for the young Spanish reader. In the search for methods for teaching reading in a foreign language, this study shows the results of the implementation of a programme for the teaching of reading decoding skills based on melodic and rhythmic elements. Young learners' singing, moving and learning phonological elements through video clips were observed. Specifically, we tested the efficacy of a phonological training program, with and without musical support, aimed at improving early reading skills in 7–8-year-old Spanish children (n = 63) learning English as a foreign language. Of interest was also an exploration of the impact of this training program on working memory and decoding skills. Significant improvement in the development of phonemic awareness and reading fluency of young Spanish children suggests relevant pedagogical implications for learning to read in English as a foreign language.

**M. Carmen Fonseca-Mora** (PhD) is the head of ReALL (Research in Affective Language Learning) and professor in the Department of English Philology at the University of Huelva, Spain, where she was also Vice-Chancellor for Lifelong Learning Programs and Innovation until 2012. Her main research interests are applied linguistics, language teacher training, innovation in Higher Education, and scientific journals. Her work has appeared in a significant number of academic journals and edited volumes, and she has lectured in

Germany, Portugal, France, Italy, Great Britain, Sweden, Peru, United States, Austria and Spain. She is currently a member of the European Language Council (ELC) and co-editor of the English edition of *Comunicar*, a bilingual media education research journal.

**Analí Fernández-Corbacho** is lecturer in the Department of English Philology at the University of Huelva, Spain. She is member of the research group ReALL (Research in Affective Language Learning) and has participated in the project (I+D+I) “Music perception and reading skills in foreign language learning”. Her teaching activity is related to applied linguistics, foreign language teaching/learning and teacher training. Her main research interests are the development of reading skills and innovation in foreign language teaching methodology, the use of music and new technologies, experiential learning and project work.

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## **Hans-Joachim Jürgens, University of Münster**

### **Serialization and fondness of reading: Considerations from the perspective of aesthetics and reading pedagogy**

Serial fiction enjoys tremendous popularity with children. This applies to book series as well as to series in other medial forms. From the perspective of reading research there is a close connection between the reception of literature in the series format and the fondness of reading. Serial literary texts often generate extensive readers.

Against this background, this presentation will reflect on those factors that appeal to children aged 8 to 12 with regard to well-known book series like Mary Pope Osborne’s *Magic Tree House* (German: *Das magische Baumhaus*), Enid Blyton’s *St. Clare’s* (German: *Hanni und Nanni*) as well as Elfie Donnelly’s *Benjamin Blümchen*. Furthermore, the paper will discuss consequences for reading pedagogy that derive from those factors. The focus will be laid on the interplay between fondness of reading and repetition, and monotony and boredom, seen from the perspective of aesthetics and reading pedagogy.

**Hans-Joachim Jürgens** is Professor for Literary and Media Didactics with a main emphasis on linguistic and aesthetic learning in primary school in the German Department of the University of Münster (WWU). He studied German studies, History, Education and Social Psychology at Hannover University, and has taught at Hannover University, Teacher Training College Karlsruhe, Oldenburg University, and the University of Münster. His research and teaching areas are aesthetic learning, literary learning, literature for children and young adults and its teaching methodology, reading didactics and gender studies.

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## **Saskia Kersten, University of Hertfordshire**

### **Pretty little chunks of language: Teaching formulaic language to L2 learners**

Arnold, Dörnyei & Pugliese (2015) include “the formulaic language principle” in their seven criteria of success in the *The Principled Communicative Approach*. Consequently, chunks should feature extensively in EFL classrooms, as “beyond word-level notions” are often “express[ed] awkwardly” by L2 learners (Smiskova et al. 2012: 141). Although native-like selection of multi-word units is not necessarily a goal of second language development, a

good command and extensive knowledge of formulaic language is useful for the learners to have because, not only do they aid fluency and provide learners with general purpose language (Ellis 2012), but they may also make it easier to comprehend texts. Finally, formulaic language often has specific pragmatic functions and is bound to specific (cultural) contexts, registers, text types etc.

When it comes to teaching formulaic language to L2 learners, some advocate explicit teaching, including a comparison with the learners' L1 (e.g. Nesselhauf 2003), while other focus on awareness raising and semantic and structural elaboration (e.g. Boers & Lindstromberg 2009). The aim of this presentation is to provide an overview of recent studies on the acquisition of formulaic language, discuss the recommendations for teaching chunks of language and the role of reading in this context, and provide examples of how chunks can be successfully integrated in the classroom.

**Saskia Kersten** (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer in English Language & Communication at the University of Hertfordshire, UK. She obtained her PhD from Hildesheim University, Germany, in 2009. Her research interests are second language development in young learners with a focus on formulaic language, learning and teaching vocabulary and computer-mediated communication.

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## **Marie Kiefer, University of Education Karlsruhe**

### **Teaching English through narration**

Both practice and research have shown that learners at the end of primary school have excellent aural skills; however, they lack oral skills (Engel, Groot-Wilken & Thürman 2009). Helping develop the learners' oral skills requires opportunities for them to progressively move along a continuum from imitative, to controlled, to free speaking. Here, narratives may take a key role. As Georgakopoulou (1997, 1) states, the "narrative is viewed [...] as inescapably fundamental in human life" and it is precisely this fundamentality which makes narratives deserving of special attention in foreign language teaching and research, within which narratives have long been acknowledged as a powerful educational tool. By taking up this tradition and integrating new technologies, foreign language teaching can provide an opportunity for learners to create multimodal narratives enabling them to develop oral skills, especially oral narrative competence. This presentation shares a research project that aims to evaluate the development of oral narrative competence in young EFL learners. The research uses stories told by learners, questionnaires, learner and teacher interviews, and classroom videos to look into the potential of using a combination of analogue and digital narrative forms. It also develops learning scenarios for facilitating oral narrative competence in the primary EFL classroom.

**Marie Kiefer** is a research assistant at the English Department of the University of Education Karlsruhe. In her PhD project she investigates the development of oral narrative competence in the primary EFL classroom. Further research interests of her include, among others, teaching primary EFL, young children's literature, and multiliteracy education.

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## **Markus Kötter, University of Siegen, Germany**

### **Developing young language learners' English with the help of children's literature. A critical look at some popular texts in the light of current insights into the development of the mental lexicon**

Almost from day one of their primary school careers, stories and story books are one of the main sources of input for young learners of English in Germany. There are many reasons for introducing children as soon as possible to these texts, including their often considerable level of authenticity, their exploitation of various connections between print and visual support and, of course, factors such as the use of child-appropriate language and the opportunity for children to become familiar with written representations of the target language. However, a look through the books lists compiled for helping teachers to choose the right material and the books themselves suggests that a fairly sizeable amount of them ended up on these lists not because they are particularly useful aids to developing young learners' English, but simply because they contain attractive visual support and/or because the plot is "nice".

In this presentation, I will analyze selected story books with a specific focus on the contribution they can make to expanding and/or consolidating young foreign language learners' mental lexicons. As part of my analysis, I will discuss the respective authors' choice and range of vocabulary and use of formulaic language, repetition and /or variation of language and the use of language play and their use of humour. Moreover, I will look at the possible interplay between text and available visual support and at the potential to stimulate and support independent reading.

**Markus Kötter** is professor of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at the University of Siegen/Germany. His research interests include TEFL with young learners, working with words and the assessment of progress in language learning.

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## **Britta Padberg-Schmitt, University of Münster**

### **A critical look at reading and SLA theory with respect to transferable skills from native to foreign/second language reading instruction**

Several theorists are important when thinking about the link from second language acquisition to first language acquisition theories, especially when considering the classroom use of literary texts. What should we consider regarding the transferability of skills from the first language to the second or foreign language? There are certain skills that students acquire when confronted with reading in their native language. Some of these can readily be applied by foreign and second language instructors to reading in the foreign language classroom—rules that apply to good language learners (Rubin) come to mind, or looking at what cognitive psychologists subscribe to (Iser), or even what communicative language instructors have recommended in the past (Kramsch). Another important area is reading theory, where the importance of the reciprocal relationship between prior knowledge and input must be considered, as well as the importance of the role of the *world in our heads* (Smith). By outlining the reading process on the whole (Smith), the instructor can better understand what skills are required to facilitate this process for the language learner. A psycholinguistic

guessing game, reading is interactive, as thoughts and language must intertwine in order to lead to understanding (Goodman). How can we use what theorists have presented in the past to better understand and also enable the students to become better readers in the future? All these factors need to be taken into account when considering the possibility of skill transferability in SLA theory. How do we facilitate the accessibility of these skills in a foreign language learner? Which skills are realistically transferable and what kinds of activities can facilitate this transfer in the FL classroom? This presentation begins with a very brief overview of various theories used specifically in first language acquisition and reading theory, and then provides suggestions for how the cognitive skills required to successfully read in a native language can be applied to reading in a second language. Examples from classroom scenarios will be used to present and discuss the importance of these findings for the FL classroom as well.

**Britta Padberg-Schmitt** (PhD) completed her doctorate at New York University, New York, USA. She taught at the Deutsches Haus, NYU, and was also a freelance-editor at Burda Media, Inc. Additionally, she presented at the MLA, North East and ACTFL conferences. Subsequently, she studied law at the Westphalia Wilhelm's University in Muenster, Germany. There, she completed her legal coursework and obtained an additional certificate from the American Law Program (FFA), where she taught for several years. Teaching American culture and literature have become her specialty in the last 15 years; focusing on American Folklore as well as Teaching Methods in ESL/EFL Classrooms, Reading Theory, Second Language Acquisition Theory and using Literature in the Classroom.

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## **Jutta Rymarczyk, Heidelberg University of Education**

### **Formulaic language in Michael and Joe Bauer's *Eric Vale – Epic Fail*. A blessing or challenge for the foreign language classroom?**

Typically, the target audience for picturebooks seems to be primary school learners. When picturebooks are used in the secondary classroom, it is mostly the more demanding content as well as more sophisticated visuals which attract the older learners. In Michael and Joe Bauer's graphic novel "Eric Vale – Epic Fail", however, it seems to be the interplay of the images and text which asks for more advanced foreign language learners. While the text is well supported by Joe Bauer's grey scale illustrations, with a mix of comic-style cells, single illustrations and humorous embellishments, the visualization of adages and idioms might prove a challenge in the foreign language classroom—or turn out to be a blessing in disguise.

This presentation compares the English and the German editions and their respective metaphorical sequences. The challenge for EFL learners lies in the illustrations, which depict the literal meanings rather than the figurative ones. Yet, to understand and enjoy the graphic novel, the learners need to be able to comprehend the figurative meaning of the idioms being used. Thus, one suggestion of how to deal with the book in class is to work with both the English and the German editions. Students might explore the literal and figurative meanings and analyse the new illustrations that had to be drawn for the German edition in order to



match the literal meaning of the idioms translated into German. The value of this cross-linguistic and cross-pictorial analysis will be the topic of my presentation.

**Jutta Rymarczyk** is professor of English as a Foreign Language at Heidelberg University of Education. Her current research interests include visual literacy in the foreign language classroom, ranging from picture books to works of fine arts.

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## **Larysa Sanotska, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine**

### **Everyone can be a poet: Poetry for EFL learning revisited**

Research shows that using poetry as resource and method in the classroom facilitates language acquisition. This presentation aims to provide evidence to verify the validity of this assertion. It is based on a project run by two student-teachers during their one-month teaching practice in a secondary school under the supervision of the author, who advised the student-teachers, consulted with them about the materials to use, and observed the student-teachers and the learners. The project involved organizing and running a poetry club as a part of extracurricular student-teaching, with the distinct benefit of the process not restrained by academic ‘frames’. The informal environment encouraged the learners to read poems by contemporary and old poets, writers of culturally diverse backgrounds. The participants argued about the necessity of rhyme, discussing the plot and feelings of protagonists, occasionally learning their favourite pieces by heart, and eventually, trying to write their own poetry. This undoubtedly implied learning various aspects of English implicitly, at the students’ own pace, and in an amusing way. The poetry club meetings took place twice a week, totalling eight meetings within the time frame of the student teaching. It was attended by eighteen 14–16 year-old secondary school pupils, who enrolled voluntarily. With the objective of exploring the motivational and educational significance of poetry for teaching EFL in action, we employed qualitative analysis methods. These comprised a survey, consisting of two questionnaires, at the beginning and at the end of the month, and interviews with the pupils and the student-teachers about their feelings and beliefs concerning the club. An important part of reflecting on the project was a careful study of the texts produced by the learners, with at times unusual style, structure or imagery, which may display the inner world of adolescents to the observant language teacher, and could encourage her/him to use it for developing teaching materials in the future.

**Larysa Sanotska** (PhD) is an Associate Professor in the Department of English Philology, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine, a practitioner-researcher with substantial experience in teaching EFL as well as teacher training. She is a co-author of “Poetry in the English Language Class”, a course book for university students of philology. She has taught TEFL in various contexts, EAP (Academic Writing), Second Language Acquisition, and Methodology of TEFL. Her research interests comprise SLA, TEFL, teaching foreign languages through literature, motivation in TEFL, psychology in language learning, learner identity.

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**Angelika Zirker, Eberhard Karls Universität, Tübingen**

### **From ‘Pudding Lane’ to ‘Offal Court’: Explanatory annotation as a teaching and learning tool**

This presentation deals with explanatory annotation as a teaching and learning tool in L2 acquisition. The textual basis is Mark Twain’s historical narrative for children *The Prince and the Pauper*, first published in 1881. The narrative (set in Tudor England in 1547 and revolving around the future Edward VI and a pauper boy with whom he exchanges roles) presents readers with historically and linguistically remote concepts, facts and words that need to be explained in order to make the text accessible. In our project, L2 learners identify items in the text that require explanation and then begin to gather information about these in small groups. The results are presented to and discussed with their peers.

By reading the text and identifying gaps in their understanding, L2 learners are challenged with regard to their writing and reading skills. Explanatory annotation makes readers understand the annotated text better concerning both content and historical context; moreover, it is a method by which learners may become interested in books that are outside the range of school curricula. While annotations in textbooks are usually oriented towards a rather abstract reader, explanatory annotation in a classroom is based on individual, readerly needs and takes diversity as well as individuality into account; it is activity-oriented and takes learners seriously by putting them in a responsible position.

I will present examples of annotations that explain, for instance, the historical accuracy and meaning of street names and locations in London in Twain’s short novel (e.g. “Pudding Lane” and “Offal Court”) in order to show how explanatory annotation can be applied as a learning tool and also as a tool for teaching literary texts in a usage-based approach to L2 acquisition.

**Angelika Zirker** (PhD) is an Assistant Professor in the department of English at Tübingen University. Her research and teaching focuses on Early Modern literature and the 19th century but also involves various interdisciplinary projects, e.g. GRK 1808 *Ambiguity: Production and Perception* and project A2 *Interpretability in Context* of SFB 833 in Tübingen. She is the co-founder (with Prof. Dr. Matthias Bauer) of the peer-learning project *Annotating Literature* and has recently started a collaborative project with the department of educational studies to conduct research on reading competence and explanatory annotation.

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