Strand Chairs

Dr Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak, University of Wroclaw
Professor Jean Webb, University of Worcester

Presenters

Janice Bland, University of Münster

The ‘script’ of transformation in The Hunger Games

A highly popular series like Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games* trilogy has the potential to motivate language students to extensive reading, which is considered by many researchers and educators to be crucial for consolidating and enriching students’ language skills. Furthermore, speculative as well as mimetic fiction is considered by literature scholars to offer opportunities for the exercising of cognitive skills: ‘the relationship between the actual world and its fictional representation constitutes a substantial cognitive gap that demands a number of cognitive and metacognitive skills’ (Nikolajeva 2014). According to Boyd (2009), narrative ‘develops our capacity to see from different perspectives, and this capacity in turn both arises from and aids the evolution of cooperation and the growth of human mental flexibility’. In this presentation the trope of transformation in *The Hunger Games* narrative will be examined as to how far conventional, frequently patriarchal fairy tale transformation scripts, such as in many versions of *Cinderella* or in recent popular young adult texts, are revised or endorsed. Focusing on Katniss and Peeta, as well as on the transformations of the Capitol elite, I will examine to what extent the dystopian mirroring of contemporary western consumerism and consumer manipulation, reality television and celebrity culture might enable a critically aware classroom discourse. I argue that dynamic learning is possible while exploiting the popularity of speculative fiction in series format; encouraging extensive reading, while aiming for deep reading that recognises both limiting scripts and subversive scripts that push at constraining boundaries. Arguably, teachers as well as writers ‘must work simultaneously within and against dominant discourse’ (Parsons 2004) in order to support the agency of the teenaged learner.
Janice Bland is Deputy Chair of TEFL at the University of Münster. She holds a doctoral degree from Jena University, and has worked in the English Departments of the Universities of Duisburg-Essen, Hildesheim, Paderborn and Vechta, Germany. Her research interests are literature and language teaching in the L2 classroom, visual and critical literacy, intercultural learning, drama and creative writing. Recent publications are Children’s Literature and Learner Empowerment. Children and Teenagers in English Language Education and Teaching English to Young Learners: Critical Issues in Language Teaching with 3-12 Year Olds both Bloomsbury Academic. Janice is co-editor of the open-access CLELEjournal: Children’s Literature in English Language Education.

Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak, University of Wroclaw, Poland

Teaching children’s rights and critical cultural literacy with China Miéville’s Un Lun Dun

China Miéville’s Un Lun Dun (2007) is a children’s radical fantasy novel very much like a Marxist fable about economically and politically oppressed groups which unite and subvert the coalition of capitalists and politicians. It concludes with Deeba, the twelve-year old protagonist, confronting the British Secretary of State for the Environment, who conspires with the Smog, a personified contamination, to let it enter London so that Prime Minister could use it as a chemical weapon. Its open ending does not give a clue about what this meeting leads to, but the very idea of a teenage girl storming into a minister’s office to demand transparent policies is a literary representation of possible effects of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which requires that children should be informed, involved and consulted about all decisions that influence their lives. I argue that Miéville’s novel is potentially a very useful text for the EFL-literature classroom, not only because it exemplifies the creative potential inherent in the English language, but also because it (1) invites a reflection on the contentious debate about the feasibility of children’s rights; (2) encourages the exploration of British history, culture and politics; (3) models critical reading strategies; (4) addresses challenges of active youth citizenship; and (5) propagates social and environmental justice. I conclude that, owing to its thematic diversity and its radical agenda, Un Lun Dun is a welcome alternative to the cultural and educational monopoly of the Harry Potter series.

Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak (PhD) is Assistant Professor of Literature and Director of the Center for Young People’s Literature and Culture at the Institute of English Studies, the University of Wroclaw, Poland. She has published Rushdie in Wonderland: “Fairytales” in Salman Rushdie’s Fiction (2004) and co-edited Towards or Back to Human Values? Spiritual and Moral Dimensions of Contemporary Fantasy (2006), Considering Fantasy: Ethical, Didactic and Therapeutic Aspects of Fantasy in Literature and Film (2007), Relevant across Cultures: Visions of Connectedness and Earth Citizenship in Modern Fantasy for Young Readers (2009), and Exploring the Benefits of the Alternate History Genre (2011).
Soumi Dey, University of Glasgow

Emotional engagement and language acquisition through metafictive picturebooks: A cognitive exploration with bilingual primary school readers

In an increasingly multilingual world, the needs of children learning English as an additional language (EAL) have become more complex. The emergence of new text types and technologies provides scope for finding innovative EAL provisions to cater to diverse learners. Contemporary picturebooks, with their postmodern interplay of words and images, are increasingly being used in classrooms as a creative resource that enhances a range of skills from language acquisition to cultural awareness (Arizpe et al 2014; Bland 2013; McGilp 2014; Mourao 2012). One skill essential to intercultural understanding in a growing multicultural world is emotional literacy. Using a cognitive criticism perspective, this research focuses on the role metafictive picturebooks play in supporting and enhancing the empathetical and emotional experience of young readers.

Drawing on recent empirical evidence that reading fiction and appreciating characters in picturebooks leads to ‘narrative empathy’ and improves Theory of Mind (Keen 2007; Kidd and Castano 2013), this study uses Emily Gravett's critically acclaimed books as ‘training fields’ (Nikolajeva, 2014) for Primary 1 and 2 children helping them ‘read’ emotions in real life people. Data from qualitative visual enquiry methods including image annotations, drawing and dramatic enactment of readers’ affective engagement with texts is analysed using tenets of cognitive criticism incorporated into categories of reader response (Sipe 2008; Arizpe et al 2014). Findings underscore crucial links to culture and identity, helping children seek ‘multiple perspectives’ (McLaughlin & DeVoogd 2004), developing ‘critical literacy’ skills and impacting outcomes in the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence areas including citizenship and modern languages. This is especially relevant to EAL learners who are ‘acculturising’ (Wei 2008) to a new language and the culture that comes with it. It challenges and promotes, cognitive, intellectual, emotional and social development (Kummerling-Meibauer 2013) with a view to making them more accepting of ‘difference’ in the wider intersectionality of cultures.

Soumi Dey has worked as a corporate trainer and EFL teacher in India and the UK. Being multilingual herself (she speaks five Indian languages), she is interested in early years bi/multilingual immigrant learners. She presented a paper on ‘The Indian Englishes’ for the Scottish Association of Literary Studies (University of Glasgow, September 2014). Her research interests include multiliteracies, picturebooks for language learning and cognitive literary studies. She presented a poster at the Symposium on Cognitive studies at Homerton College, Cambridge (May 2014) and has won a bursary to represent IBBY UK at the 2016 IBBY Congress in Auckland, New Zealand.
Nardeen El-Atrouzy, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt

Fairy tale adaptations in Shakespearian plays

Shakespearian plays have always proved to be very rich material for the imaginative minds of many scholars. However, reading Shakespeare in the classroom with students has always been a challenge to many teachers and educators, from whom I am no different. The persistent questions remain in debate till today of whether to teach original texts or abridged ones? To read extracts or full versions? And to reveal all intended aspects, or stick to one plot presentation?

The fairy tale world has always been appealing to adults since it addresses the child within and takes the reader or audience to a spectacular world of fairies, magical enchantments and spells. This is why adapting plays which are rich in fairy tales has always been appealing to teach and is enjoyable in the classroom. Critics and writers like Linda Hutcheon have presented many arguments regarding the adaptations of adult works to suit the younger generations. This presentation describes a case study from the Kids’ Workshop Edutainment Program, Summer 2015, age group 9 to 12 years old. The presentation will study closely the adaptations of *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to make them more child friendly by highlighting the use of the fairy-tale element, creating a theme, plot and setting very much appealing and interesting for children to study in the classroom.

Nardeen El-Atrouzy (PhD) is a Teaching Assistant at Ain-Shams University, Cairo, in the English Language and Literature Department. She holds a PhD in Comparative World Literature, Drama and Theatre from Ain-Shams University, 2007, and an MA in Comparative Children’s Literature from the American University in Cairo (AUC), 2001. She is Founder and Director of Kids’ Edutainment Program in Cairo, Egypt & Dubai, UAE.

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Jan Martin Eschbach, Gymnasium Marienberg

*The Circle – a dystopian satire in a digital age*

Dave Eggers’ satirical novel *The Circle* depicts a world in which each and every one of us is not only a celebrity in the global web community but also the object of complete digital surveillance. *The Circle* addresses issues that especially young adults are confronted with in everyday life. While discussing aspects such as social media, digital surveillance, lobbyism, transparency, freedom of information and economic exploitation, it also makes entertaining reading in its use of satirical and dystopian elements.

My presentation will consider how, compared to classic dystopias such as *Brave New World*, *Fahrenheit 451* and *1984*, which depict societies radically and often somewhat remotely different from ours, *The Circle* presents students with a world they can easily relate to because it is so very similar to their own. In its critical focus on digital media, it is ideally suitable for teaching in senior classes when it comes to what North Rhine Westphalia’s current curriculum (*Kernlehrplan*) dubs “Visions of the future: utopia, dystopia and modern media.” Regarding specific competences and skills, the novel offers socio-cultural orientation in that students are invited to reflect upon contemporary means of communication and the
influence of modern media on society and the individual. This aspect is supplemented by the opportunity to acquire intercultural and communicative competences and skills in that the novel seeks to invite readers to critically reflect upon and formulate in a foreign language how much their lives are influenced (or possibly controlled) by modern digital media, and how far these enrich or inhibit their capability to interact with others on a global scale.

The teaching of the book serves, moreover, to improve students’ critical appreciation of literary texts and offers rich opportunities to voice and discuss personal views and attitudes regarding young readers’ personal perception of modern media, online and offline.

Jan Martin Eschbach has a PhD from the University of Cologne. He currently teaches English, History and Drama at Gymnasium Marienberg. He has produced several school productions of Shakespeare since 2002, and has given talks for the Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft on using Shakespeare in schools.

Frauke Matz, University of Duisburg-Essen
‘To serve and preserve humanity’ – Global issues in young adult dystopian fiction

Since the turn of the century, there has been an immense rise in the publication of (especially American) young adult dystopian novels—more than 23 million copies of Collins’ *Hunger Games* were sold from fall 2008 until summer 2012 in the U.S. alone (van Straaten 2012). This illustrates the increasing interest of young adult readers in bleak visions of the future as depicted in novels such as Collins’ *Hunger Games* (2008), Dashner’s *Maze Runner* (2009), Oliver’s *Delirium* (2011) or Shusterman’s *Unwind* (2009). Although readers might choose these novels for various reasons (such as romantic aspects, or page-turning action), they are also faced with the issues of globalisation or, more specifically what Beck (2012) calls ‘world risk’, featured within these texts, especially regarding environmental crises and apocalyptic events as well as the abuse of power and science on a global scale.

Hence, in this presentation, I would like to demonstrate the great potential in the teaching of global matters to teenagers, which these currently very sought after texts have, as they focus on different transcultural aspects of the globalised world. Furthermore, these novels show that the represented global societies suppress creativity and individuality, an issue with which young adults might feel very familiar. However, as they also offer a fictional world that is still far removed from our contemporary world, reading them can also be pleasurable for students as these ‘novels simultaneously seek to teach serious lessons about the issues faced by humanity, and to offer readers a pleasurable retreat from their quotidian experience’ (Basu, Broad and Hintz 2013).

Young adult dystopian fiction offers a motivating way for students learning about world risks, reflecting on the globalised world they live in, and perhaps even finding ways of dealing with these 'terrors' they face in the 21st century. I will look closely at a selection of these texts, which consists of Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* (2008), James Dashner’s *Maze Runner* (2009) and Veronica Roth's *Divergent* (2011) and give an insight into their critique of
the realities of globalisation and their origins as well as their possible impact on young adult readers.

**Frauke Matz** (PhD) is a Lecturer of Applied Linguistics and ELF Teaching Methodology at the University of Duisburg-Essen. After completing her studies in English and History at the University of Essen, she completed both her M.A. in English studies and her TESOL certificate at the University of Wolverhampton. She also completed her CILT GTP at the University of Birmingham as well as her PhD in English Literature, and worked as a Language Teacher in England and Germany. Her research interest is the Teaching Methodology of Literature (esp. YA Fiction), Inter-/Transcultural Studies and the role of Multiliteracies for second language acquisition.

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**Anthony Pavlik, University of Münster**

**The possibilities of the impossible: Utilising fantasy otherworld fiction for children in L2 learning**

Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) have shown how fiction may play an important role in L2 learning, and several scholars have argued for more focus to be given to fictive language in L2 learning (Crystal 1998; Cook 2000; Kramsch 2002). This paper will, therefore, follow Cook’s (1997) contention that “a good deal of authentic or natural language is playful, in the sense of being focused upon form and fiction rather than on meaning and reality” by considering how other world fantasy fiction for children, often considered as escapist and inferior as literature, can be considered as a viable resource in language learning classrooms.

Using examples from popular children’s fantasy texts, this presentation will discuss how, in addition to providing natural, authentic and relevant input in the form of language as play, such texts can also be seen as providing a developmental tool in that the cognitive processing of possible worlds presented in such fiction, requires higher order cognitive skills in order to deal with the various types of counterfactual premises available, in terms of both “what if” as well as “as if” experiencing of such texts. The presentation will also point to the extent to which fantasy other worlds often replicate the real/unreal combination that is a principle of children’s imaginary play, thus offering a noteworthy link between text, language and readers’ lived experiences.

**Anthony Pavlik** (PhD) teaches in the TEFL department at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität. His main areas of research include children’s literature (on which he has published on topics including fantasy spaces, maps and mapping, and ecocriticism), the use of drama in ELT, and the use of children’s literature in the ELT classroom.
Julian Wacker, University of Münster

Postcolonial Pasts: The Potential of Counterfactual Narratives in the EFL Classroom

In times of interdisciplinary teaching approaches, it is necessary to define potential overlaps between EFL and History teaching. Ever since Hayden White attempted to bridge the gap between literary and historical narratives, it has become obvious that both fields can benefit from each other. In recent subject-specific debates, history didactics has focused strongly on constructivist notions of historical consciousness and narrative competences. Moreover, historical narratives, such as British colonial and imperial history, are anchored in EFL curricula.

Inspired by alternative historians such as Tetlock and Parker, I argue that postcolonial counterfactual narratives bear the potential to foster both a critical awareness of history and intercultural communicative competence in the EFL classroom. Literary texts which engage with alternative pasts can thus subvert dominant epistemological discourses and subvert students’ pre-built assumptions about history. As conceptual change research has shown, students, when encountering new topics and texts, tend to activate certain knowledge systems which significantly differ from the ones used by teachers and scholars in the engagement with historical and literary narratives. My presentation will show that counterfactual narratives serve as a tool to disturb these conceptions of history and give rise to a substantial reorganization of (historical) knowledge. This re-organization, however, depends on the right implementation of counterfactual narratives at the beginning of the specific learning process. Through literary examples, I will show how counterfactual texts can serve as entry points into new thematic fields while simultaneously busting dominant master narratives and creating productive confusion about the value and very nature of history. Moreover, these narratives enhance intercultural understanding by criticizing predominant Western imaginaries regarding former colonies. Reading re-imagined postcolonial pasts means more than simply engaging with pure fantasies: It lays bare the very foundation of historical knowledge formation and offers new perspectives in a global society, which desperately longs for alternatives.

Julian Wacker is a Masters of Education student of English and History at the University of Münster. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in British, American, and Postcolonial Studies as well as History, which he obtained at the University of Münster and St. Norbert College, WI/USA. His research interests include, among others, teaching historical narrativity, postcolonial studies, ecocriticism, alternative pasts and imagined futures as well as the colonial experience in neo-Victorian popular culture.
Jean Webb, University of Worcester, UK

Speculating futures in fiction for teenagers: Westernized perspectives

Robert Heinlein defined speculative fiction as the story of people dealing with contemporary science or technology… embodying the notion "just suppose--" or "What would happen if--." In the speculative science fiction story accepted science and established fiefs are extrapolated to produce a new situation, a new framework for human action. As a result … new human problems are created—and … how human beings cope with those new problems. The story is not about the new situation; it is about problems arising out of the new situation’ (Heinlein 1947).

Contemporary speculative fiction for teenagers reflects the concerns of the age. This presentation will discuss how the reader is placed by speculative fiction which reflects upon potential problems arising from the consequences of contemporary social and scientific attitudes and developments projected into an imagined future.

Social concerns will be discussed in texts such as Gamerunner (2011) by B.R. Collins, which interrogates the isolation of adolescents in a technologically driven world and Children of Time by Adrian Tchaikovsky (2015), which considers the nature of humanity in a world which was devised as an Eden. Environmental concerns are raised in texts such as Alastair Reynold’s Blue Remembered Earth (2012), set in an Africa 150 years in the future, where the continent is now the dominant technological and economic power, and where crime, war, disease and poverty have been banished to history, and Floodland (2000) by Marcus Sedgewick, where England is irrevocably devastated by floods.


Jürgen Wehrmann, University of Oldenburg

Experimenting with thoughts – Cognitive, moral and aesthetic challenges in reading science fiction with EFL learners

The affinity between thought experiments and science fiction has frequently been pointed out by philosophers as well as authors and critics of the popular genre. Particularly with regard to the secondary classroom, it appears effective to understand science-fiction texts primarily as invitations to experiment with thoughts: in order to read speculative fiction in a truly fruitful and satisfying way, readers have to be actively involved in the speculation; they are supposed
to accept more or less daring hypotheses, to follow how the experimental scenario is unfolded in the narrative and, finally, to judge the plausibility of the outcome, its implications and its relevance as an example. Ursula K. Le Guin’s meta-utopian short story, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (1973), makes such invitations to reader participation playfully explicit. The text enables the distinguishing of three types of thought experiments in reading science fiction, which can be elucidated by references to the concepts of utopian thinking (cf. Ernst Bloch), heuristics of fear (cf. Hans Jonas) and dilemma discussion (cf. Lawrence Kohlberg and Georg Lind). All of them, it will be argued, can be used as exercises in moral judgement, which integrate the impact assessment of possible changes on the one hand with the reflection on values, norms and conflicts between them on the other. Using Le Guin’s short story as an example, various ways will be discussed as to how thought experiments can be carried out within process-oriented task sequences that include rational-analytic as well as creative approaches and, while concentrating on the speculative dimension, do not neglect the formal, allegorical and intertextual dimensions of science fiction.

Jürgen Wehrmann (PhD) received a DFG scholarship from the University of Tübingen for writing his doctoral thesis on metahistorical Irish plays, which won the CDE Award for the best monograph study in the field of contemporary drama and theatre in English in 2010. After temporary jobs as dramaturge and lecturer, he became a teacher of English and Philosophy at a grammar school. Currently, he also works as a part-time lecturer of TEFL at the University of Oldenburg and is writing his second book, which is intended as a handbook for teaching utopias, dystopias and science fiction in the EFL classroom.