

A POWERFUL TOOL TO CONTINUE TEACHING STUDENTS AND OURSELVES

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Saying good bye to my students before summer holidays I am pretty often faced with their questions how to refine their English during this period of time. Obviously not all of them enjoy a wonderful opportunity to travel abroad. Twitter, Face book and other social sites come in very handy but unfortunately have nothing to do with the excellence of language. Perhaps, my advice sounds a bit old fashioned but I invariably insist on reading on line, searching new exciting authors on line and of course trying to leave their comments on line. Reading fiction gives any mind a great boost. Thus it is not always necessary to know what you will do with your reading. The dots will connect at sometime in the future. Keep reading. You will definitely be more creative in whatever area of life you choose to excel. So I commonly send out a “summer” reading list to their group e-mail boxes but which is more important I ask them to search for new quality stories and share.

The role of literature in teaching Business English has been little explored, with only a handful of published works on this topic. These include Vogt (1998) who suggests using literature in the Business English classroom to help students understand other cultures better. Peter (1999) has conducted a quasi-experiment using the experiential approach to literature in the classroom and claims that it helps business students to improve their English proficiency and communicative effectiveness in business writing. [5]

There are numerous examples when outstanding politicians or business people employ their knowledge of literature, vivid literary characters, metaphors and quotations to cross the boundaries of shoptalk, when necessary, to treat professional issues from a fresh perspective in many walks of life.

Business Schools are often a place for a certain sort of rigid language instruction, which can make them hostile environments for students. New emerging information technologies are changing the way we learn. Education has become too flexible. The language textbook is no longer the sole source of information. Much language acquisition via the internet often takes place in out-of-university contexts, often in online environments, and becomes a strong socialization factor for learners.[4]

The Internet is very useful for incorporating literary texts into business English teaching. Teachers can browse the Internet for useful materials gathering information for their classes. There are plenty of important resources which are now being published in digital format. “The new technologies make the materials vivid, easy to access and fun to use” - H. Gardner. Huge amount of information relating to works of literature and the back ground in which a book is written is made accessible to the users by several portals, such as,

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/subject/literature-language-arts>,
<http://www.teachingliterature.org/teachingliterature/technology.htm> and etc.

In order to orchestrate successful learning all language teachers working in a media-rich environment need not only to be able to use standard software confidently and competently but also:

- recognize the individual learning problems of student groups;
- make a careful choice concerning the use of sites;
- make wise and critical choices of information found.

The student is no longer viewed as a receptacle into which the teacher pours wisdom and knowledge, but as an agent of change, reacting and interacting with the mass of materials that s/he encounters which leads to closer interaction between teacher and students. Sometimes students can manage the search task even much better.

That is why it is appropriate to involve them into this activity.

This involvement can enable the students to feel that they have control of their own learning and that they have choices about the route which they take. It has already had a tremendous impact with the widespread establishment of computerized library catalogues such as <http://www.literaturepage.com/> which can be searched by students with relatively little IT experience on their own keywords and thus immediately broaden their awareness of library resources beyond those recommended by their teacher.

The results of the mutual search for multilevel literary texts can be used for Compiling an American and English Literature Supplement with the Business English course which appears a sense-making perspective for Business English class in order to:

- To diversify the vocational nature of the Business English class and make Business English instruction less rigid.

- To provide **live** communication with native English speakers. Galloway (1998, p.134) maintains that “a visit to an authentic literary text is much like a visit to the country itself”, whereas communication through audio-visual materials is rather limited as they devour students’ imagination; Reading is a very active state exercise for your mind as opposed to watching films or listening. Reading forces your brain cells to engage in activity as you paint a vivid image in your mind about the story that you are reading.

- To develop students' cross-cultural competence.
- To enhance learners' analytical and critical thinking abilities.
- To involve students in such activities as discussion and generalization.
- **To use** the passages or stories under analysis as **specific case studies** due to their realism, practicality and human experience. Pearce & Robinson (1994) maintain that case analysis is both a proven educational method that adds realism and excitement to the business course and an excellent opportunity to develop and refine analytical skills.

Selection of appropriate literary passages using internet resources together with students is another challenging task. This approach will enable contents to be continually updated with minimum efforts.

Short stories and literary passages can be selected from a range of sources, on the Internet. Whatever the source, the most important thing is that the story you choose is suitable for the students it is intended for. You need to check that the content is relevant, memorable and involves them emotionally.

The language level of the story also needs to be appropriate and to fit in, at least partially, with their level and subsequent unit in Market Leader.

The selection should be business-oriented as well student-centered. It must include contemporary authors such as Jeffrey Archer (Not a penny less, not a penny more), Hillary Lyon (The little Entrepreneur), William Saroyan (Short Stories), Randall Jarrell (A Sad Heart at the Supermarket), Sidney Sheldon (The Stars Shine Down, Master of the Game), Barbara Bradford (To Be the Best) and others. Internet provides unlimited opportunities to get insight into contemporary literature on the following web sites: <http://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/contemporary-literature>, http://www.mills.edu/academics/graduate/eng/events_and_news/contemporary_writers_series.php and their number is still growing.

It may include classics such as Theodore Dreiser (The Financier, Stoic, Titan) or Galsworthy (Quality). Classical literature may be viewed as “out-dated material” to explore business matters. But classical literature is known for exposing its readers to common human values, problems and joys which have no expiry date.

The selected short stories, poems or passages can be arranged thematically and explore the relevant unit in Market Leader (basic course book): Brand, Managing people, Corporate Culture, Advertising, Ethics, Communication, etc.

The functional theory of language is based on the assumption that all language use is textual and, thus is realized in real-life contexts. Fiction offers a thrilling journey to the world of business to serious explorers, not tourists.

What is the point to educate a businessman who is nothing but businessman? Nowadays, students read less than a decade or two ago. Still reading should in fact become a habit as common as bathing or eating. It has a host of benefits for students – but the main one is storing new ideas, new words, phrases, idioms in their database to add color and spice to their language and eventually to cross the bridge between the common knowledge and perfection.

Mr.Rusterholz (1987, p.433) once said "We can never prepare our students adequately for the variety of working situations in which they may eventually find themselves, but by teaching them to be skillful readers, we can give them the tools to continue to teach themselves " and we can add and ourselves too.

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UNLEASHING THE POWER OF TWITTER

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Today teachers of English tend to be quite interested in information technology as it enhances their teaching effect and improves on the traditional classroom teaching models, skills and resources.

With the evolution of Internet linguistic education is the sector which has gained a big momentum. Google - the search giant has equipped the educators with superb tools which help us be “more” effective in the classroom. In addition to Google social networking applications are of great help to improve our students’ English to a greater extent and the name of the best one is Twitter.

It was one of the social networking phenomena of 2008, and has enjoyed substantial growth in popularity recently. Being a privately funded startup it has grown into a real-time short messaging service that works over multiple networks and devices. In countries all around the world Twitter can provide teachers with a constant flow of materials from breaking international or business news to information about a lot of great websites and updates from their friends. [1]

Twitter is a free service that asks one question, “What are you doing?” Answers must be under 140 characters in length. These short messages are called “Tweets”. Tweets can be send or read via email, instant messages, text messages on a mobile phone, or on the Web.[1]

Twitter is an ideal instrument for: instant feedback, discussions outside of class, announcements, notifications about completed assignments, word, trend or hash tag trekking, following conferences, communicating with professionals, taking notes, sharing stories, mapping trends, setting up polls, starting book or any other clubs, following outstanding business or political leaders, keeping up with current events, capsule reviews, creating supplements for foreign language lessons and so on.