In Praise of Praise

by david (Deubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 8/10/2010 7:30:09 AM

I sat down this morning, coffee at the ready, ready to write some advice to new teachers about the coming school year. I thought about the usual things - classroom management, organization, icebreakers, action research, personalizing, then for some strange reason I started thinking of Mr. Worth, my high school math teacher.

Mr. Worth was a string bean of a man always smiling. He always was standing outside of his classroom greeting every student and not just his own. Smiling, grinning, with a kind of Jim Carey stance - he'd shout out to each student, "Hey, James looking good!" or "David, wow, what a game yesterday!". He would do this all the time, over and over. To me, he was my educational human growth hormone. I felt good. I believed in myself. I tried my best because of him. And he did this for everyone in the school AND outside of school. You'd meet him in the mall and as you tried to avoid contact, he'd come rushing up and pat you on the back, saying, "I heard you are thinking of coaching soccer - great idea, you'd be wonderful at it!" or something such.

Mr. Worth did a few other things that I think are important to note. He always spent time asking us about our lives and talking "shop". He'd sit at the front and blather back and forth with us about "Mork and Mindy" or the latest U2 album (I'm showing my age!). He'd laugh with us and be jovial - then, he'd roll up his sleeves and say - let's get to work!

Doug (I'll now call him Doug - I got to know him well enough after I left school) also had a unique way to do right when praising.

Praise is so, so, so underrated by teachers. In my own years teaching, I've become convinced that teachers should be taught to praise students ad infinitum. We are as much cheerleaders as teachers. Failure is learned, Smart kids and not so smart kids can "fall off the map" if they don't encounter praise from their teachers. It happens every minute of every day in our classrooms. However, there are several things that a teacher has to do right when praising.

1. Make the praise specific. Don't use generalities. Doug always praised a specific act, a specific state. He referenced the praise and in that way, we knew it was genuine and not just robotic, soulless. We knew he was aware and connected to us as individuals.

Doug knew what it takes to get a student to succeed - success! Nothing breeds success like success, so the old saying goes. Doug bred success not just through accomplishment but through the power of praise. We'd do well on the test and he'd personally say to those struggling (like myself), "wow, you did quite good, great work, keep it up!" And I did. I tried harder at math and though I didn't have the greatest mark, I learned, I really learned!

2. Praise is not encouragement. Praise is something that is sincere. If you endlessly encourage students, you'll see much the same on the test. And in ending, a big thank you to Doug. You've passed the torch and that's all that a life needs to do - to be a "success".

In Praise of Praise...
Making Picture / Story Books

by ddeubel (DDeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 8/4/2010 8:00:00 PM

Writing storybooks or making picture books is a great way to reinforce grammar and vocabulary. It also gives students confidence and pride in “producing” something visible and tangible to measure their English language learning experience.

There are several steps to making a storybook and I’ll use my own Mr. X’s Incredible Day/Yesterday as an example.

1. Tell the story with students. Play a video / use a storybook / use a ppt but pictures are essential! Go slow and exaggerate and use your voice/gestures to communicate vocabulary and content/context. You might get inspiration on the incredible Tarheel Reader where you can also download the books as printables.

2. Students re-tell the story. Note the vocabulary for the story on the board and students use this to make sentences to retell the story. Or, just show pictures and use them as a prompt to retell the story. See how I used VoiceThread to retell the Mr. X story. But you can just take the words off the ppt and use a picture only ppt.

3. Writing. Students are now more comfortable with the story and vocabulary. Get them to write 6-10 sentences to outline the story. For each sentence, provide a prompt on the board for lower level students. Higher level students can add more information for that sentence number. The teacher monitors and helps correct/edit. I use this worksheet for Mr. X.

4. Bookmaking. Give students some sheets of A4. They fold in half and staple to make the book. Or fold again and cut the folds to make a mini book (students usually like this smaller book more!). Students cut and paste their pictures into the book and also write their text from the worksheet. Color, make a title page, borders and personalize. There are many types of books you can make by folding/cutting paper. The most incredible resource for printable pdfs and videos showing bookmaking is Susan Kapsinsky’s “Making Books”. Here she describes how to make an accordion book. But look at her pdf instruction sheets for many types.

5. Present/ Publish. Students can read their books to the class or in small groups. Sharing is a must! Make a library for your student produced books!

Here are just some ideas for picture / story books:

1. Stories- Retell a traditional or just read story! 2. Making Picture / Story Books
3. routines- Trips/Holidays/Weekends 4. letters / words- alphabet books / word books
5. favorites- All about me books
6. comics- Adventure books of heroes/comedy
7. vocabulary- dictionary books describing the vocab category (ie. Sports)

Submitted at 8/2/2010 3:30:00 AM

Around the education/technology twitiverse, there has been a lot of hand-wringer and “I told you so” about THIS blog post on TES, “Byte the Dust”. Basically, it outlines how tens of millions of dollars of Educational technology are laying around gathering dust. This follows another study which reported that children with home computers had lower test scores. Some educators are (and I think without re-reading the article in full), clapping and saying “there you go, we don’t need this waste nor technology in our classrooms”!

The traditional approach worked well this year, thank you! I like these teachers who comment on ELT Tech blog.

That’s sad.

For one, they didn’t read the article in full. If they did, they’d have seen there is a lot of common sense in the many quotes/responses of the teachers in those schools. I’ve outlined them below.

For two, the only thing the article highlights is how in cahoots education is with business - how education isn’t about what works but rather, who can sell and buy from whom. It is an indictment of “Edubusiness” not the use of technology in the classroom.

Technology is an essential component of education. You can’t throw out this pencil and go back to scratching with limestone. It has its place and effect/need. However, you don’t need to spend billions on fancy doohickeys, widgets and doodads from Acme Inc. This is what you need.

1. Broadband internet access and a project/screen. All schools, all classrooms.

-- There are plenty of free, safe resources online for students. Web 2.0 as it grows, will only make this more so.

My own content rich community is the shining example - it is ELT but you can learn everything you’d want there and it is all that is freely available. Gathered and supported in one place/community/portal.

2. Teachers trained in the technology and the resources available. The overspending on useless techno gadgetry is only rivaled by the underspending on the training of teachers (and ongoing support for) in educational technology. There is a plethora of evidence that the bane of technology in education is how school administrators just throw technology into schools without any support or training.

3. Access to computers for all school children and new ways to integrate this within the curriculum. We need better curriculum developers in the school systems - ones with knowledge about technology.

The presentation of a new “paradigm” where learning can happen outside school hours and online AND be accredited. We have to find a way to value what students do on their own time/dime. The school system can’t continue to have 4 walls.

Here are some quotes from the article which support my contentions:

“ICT is essential in schools, but schools are in danger of buying white elephant technology,” he adds. “There are so many flash salesmen and all 000 before you’ve won the hearts and minds of you students. Higher level students can add more information for that sentence number. The teacher monitors and helps correct/edit. I use this worksheet for Mr. X.

4. Bookmaking. Give students some sheets of A4. They fold in half and staple to make the book. Or fold again and cut the folds to make a mini book (students usually like this smaller book more!). Students cut and paste their pictures into the book and also write their text from the worksheet. Color, make a title page, borders and personalize. There are many types of books you can make by folding/cutting paper. The most incredible resource for printable pdfs and videos showing bookmaking is Susan Kapsinsky’s “Making Books”. Here she describes how to make an accordion book. But look at her pdf instruction sheets for many types. Also, this kid makes an amazing mini book from one sheet of paper! Learn more about using books here. Find more videos like this on EFL CLASSROOM 2.0

5. Present/ Publish. Students can read their books to the class or in small groups. Sharing is a must! Make a library for your student produced books!

Here are just some ideas for picture / story books:

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5. favorites- All about me books
6. comics- Adventure books of heroes/comedy
7. vocabulary- dictionary books describing the vocab category (ie. Sports)
Wow! A sterling project between her class in student created videos and visit her inspiring website. Someone at the forefront of using video and web 2.0 community. Beauty and small - through understanding and classroom collaboration. Making the world more The internet and associated technologies offers no Submitted at 8/3/2010 6:00:00 PM by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0) The power of collaboration - a member's story. by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0) Submitted at 8/2/2010 7:30:00 AM This blog carnival is REALLY a carnival! Click on the photo and enter the carnival. You'll "spin the wheel" and get a random blog carnival entry. Download the ppt too, it might work better! If you get lucky - one blog item is a download of this random selector ppt I made - great for use in class just control with the "*" key on your keyboard). If you like this, please visit the Random ELT Blog generator for more "surprise". The next blog carnival will be hosted by Ms. Flecha's My Life Untranslated: Adventures of a New ESL Teacher in New York City. Please participate and use the same blog submission form, Lots of fine entries, see them all described below. Enjoy - the ticket is free! * Katie at Trip Base tells us about the Top 10 places to teach English * Dani at Trying Out Web 2.0 describes some vocabulary strategies for adv. students * Eva at A Journey in TEF lets us in on how to improvise to create a quick game * Larry at Websites of the Day shares one of his "Best" lists - The Best "When I Say Jump" online sites and also lets us know about "Common Core" Standards in the US * Shelly at Teacher Reboot Camp tells us more about building characters and talking avatars using Voki * Maria on her Student's Page outlines how to use nouns and adjectives to describe places and also urges teachers to participate in the "Flat Stanley" project * Mau at Niftiness describes how he uses video games to "Funify" education * David at ESL Classroom 2.0 offers some thoughts and resources for using drawing in our lessons and also asks readers about their own educational blogging * Phil at Classroom 201x fully describes a lesson for interviews and using the Bush/Flip camera * Vicky at Educational Technology in ELT speaks eloquently about her transformation from a part time to full time teacher * Karenne at Kalinago English offers up a challenge - plan a lesson around a poem to get students critically thinking * Johanna at the Spelling Blog offers up some tips and warning about lessons with homophones * Vicki at Learning to Speak Merican shows Bobby McCField teaching music and asks us if we could do the same in our English language classes * Jennifer at My Integrating Technology Journey offers many links and suggestions for using Flickr in our teaching * Brent at O Say Can You See Blog asks us to think about our museums and using history in our teaching * Andrew at Lingo Match Blog offers some tips on learning or teaching British English * Mary Ann at Learning the Language asks readers to offer some wisdom to the new director of the U.S. Dept. of Education * Technology in Class Blog direct us to a vocabulary site - Learning Chocolate * Michael at Mr. Stout's Blog urges teachers and students to follow the advice of the Dalai Lama and speak "broken English" Significant Results/Learnings: Technology skills as students became experts at manipulating their wiki postings. They also learned about geography through online mapping tools, and time and weather sites. The most significant learning was an increased awareness of similarities and differences between similarly aged children from other countries. The buying of * community by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0) Submitted at 8/10/2010 8:00:00 AM This is a reply I posted to Pearson's "new" networking site. Hired guns drumming up business and time of hard working teachers. The post speaks for itself. I'm not against Jeremy Harmer or even Pearson - but the notion that you hire people to promote yourself without them explicitly noting they are paid and bought. End of story... Read on for more ... Jeremy, Can I be TRULY honest here? Is your teacher talk time here, paid? And how much do you get paid exactly, to contribute your few paragraphs of enthusiasm? How many are others paid? Shares, dividends, what? What are the ethical boundaries to this "teacher talk time". I like your blog. I read it like the bible. I buy all your books and tell thousands of students to buy your books. See a recent (one of dozens where I recommend) here. However, this is over the top and definitely too much TTT. A waste of time and I'm only participating to tell you that it is a waste of your own and anyone else. Big publishers late in the game, buying their way into "community" is disgusting. They should have been on it and at it years ago like I was - if they had any real interest other than profit. This is "pandering" and commercialism at its worst. Get the teachers here and sell. Is that what ELT has boiled down to? I quit my job teaching grad school this week after a big conversation with the dean. She questioned me about my classes after never even having visited a class all year. There is more to it. But to get to the point - I suggested that my own views on curriculum development were supported by you. She shot that down and said Jeremy Harmer knows nothing about curriculum development. So I let into her politely (as I usually do). Then quit. I believe in that. I'll continue believing in you when you stop this soulless garble. As someone said to me, "it is like watching my Dad shouting at my girlfriend". Speak from the heart or not at all. I have spoken (but held my tongue a lot). I've been promoting, striving, instilling, inspiring teachers from my own heart for many years online. Why do you not even drop by to talk to the thousands that are in my community? Am I not paying? Where does "teacher" and "teacher online talk time" begin and end? I say all this with sincerity and the deepest respect. David PS. I've copied this and will publish on my own blog so teachers can decide for themselves. (even though "Pearson" won't even let anyone copy from their page! - fortunately, I'm a technophile and this is not beyond me. But more than this - isn't that ridiculous, even making public comments uncopyrightable / unreproducible?????
New Teachers - Essential Resources on EFL 2.0

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 8/26/2010 8:00:00 PM

I just finished a whirlwind 6 day week of workshops on technology and language teaching - given to mostly new teachers. I had a wonderful time and the energy of the teachers always renews me, no matter how tiring the 6 hour sessions a day truly are.

It got me thinking that I need to do a better job here - creating a directory of essential "go to" resources for new teachers. Would also benefit other teachers, new to this page, on my old training site does this and I highly recommend it. However, it could disappear soon so I'll list here what I think is great for new teachers/mentors on EFL Classroom 2.0. (I'll be building this so keep returning or bookmark! Most can be found through our very comprehensive site directory)

Please comment and add your own gems. What do you find "really" works?

Use our tag search! It really works and is a god send if you find "really" works?

Please comment and add your own gems. What do you find "really" works?

My Public blog: Authentic Materials/ Coteaching/ Listening/ Using the board/ Flashcards/ Drawing/ Student created content/ Storybooks/ Teaching Writing/ Speaking/ The teenaged Learner/ class design and decor/ A/V player to teach

IDEAS and Lesson plans: Lessons in a Can/ Lesson For Resources (14 pages)/ Teaching Recipes/ Lesson ideas handsbooks

Helpers: Teacher Tools/ Language Lab/ Quizlet/ Worksheets/ Media Fire (see the activity folder in particular)

Games: PPT Games

Video: Top Youtube videos+ use your video database - click the tags to get the videos you want!

Reading and Stories: estory page/ printable leveled readers for your students.

Young Learners: Elementary page / YL group/ Kids Songs

Technology: Software page (download essential programs free, for your computer)/ EFL and Technology (learn about the best technology for teaching languages)

Getting to know about where you teach....

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 8/18/2010 7:30:00 PM

English language teachers travel and like strangers in a strange land, try to learn about their new "home". It is important to learn about the culture and a historical account of the people you'll teach. Language is about and in turn, wrapped up with culture and identity.

I've lived now 5 years in Korea and will be indelibly tied to this country connected to an amazing peninsula. Along the way, I've tried to understand my students and the people among who I've lived. You'll find a lot of the so thought bending, really challenges traditional notions of "who we are" and "what we should be".

Korea - military service

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 8/31/2010 10:12:06 PM

I thought this video news report would make a great article / essays / videos / audio I've collected in our YAPPR EVENTS AUDIO TWITTER

SAVE OUR LIBRARIES!

Governor Strickland's proposed budget cuts Public Library Funding by 50 percent. This would devastating to our libraries in Ohio. (see the people you'll teach. Language is about and in turn, wrapped up with culture and identity.

Korea resources area Find HERE, all the videos we have about Korea and/or teaching in Korea.

Here are a few more items I highly recommend about Korea. Helpful especially to the flood of new teachers that will be arriving or have arrived for the new semester. Wherever you are, why not post up in our resources, some videos or readings that are pertinent to the country you are from or where you teach presently? Or maybe do so in one of our World Classrooms.

Tiger Spirit”, is a beautiful ruminaton on the torn nation of Korea. On the surface it tells the stories of families ripped apart for decades but deeper, it deals with issues of identity and what is important in life. In our fractured, mobile, modern world - identity is a topic that will be more and more important - especially regarding language acquisition and learning. A must watch.

Korea - America is a video made by a teacher as a technology professional development project during a summer training program. She did a wonderful job using Windows Movie Maker and highlighting the divide between generations in Korea and in America.

Photographer Rich Smolan tells an amazing story about an Amerasian (Korean/American) girl and it is definitely worth a watch. Really challenges traditional notions of "who we are" and "what we should be".

Profit, Waste and Education

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 8/13/2010 10:00:00 PM

This is a first in a series on how "profit" and corporations continue to erode and threaten the fabric of education - learning. There appears to be "learning" and "progress" but the results are limited except for profit statements.

Putting 2 and 2 together.

Sometimes, "learning" is about connecting the dots and putting 2 and 2 together. The ancient Greeks were not only metaphorical and I'll show you what we should promote in how tiring the 6 hour sessions a day truly are.

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What teaching gives me

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 7/28/2010 11:06:03 PM

So often in teaching, we get caught up in ourselves. What we do and what we contribute. Me, me, me, us, us, us. However, it is often the case that once we get some distance, we see how much our students have given us. How much they've made us grow and learn. It is this oft neglected theme I'd like to comment on today.

I had the pleasure to be a LINC teacher in Canada for a number of years. LINC is short for "Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada" and it is a program funded by Immigration Canada to help new immigrants to Canada get their English "up to scratch" and also with life skills training.

I can't say enough how indebted I am to my former students. I had the honor of in most cases, being the first Canadian they formed a relationship with. I was like a father figure and it changed me.

Often, my students had just come off the plane the very same day! (the sooner they were in class, the better!)

I got bags of pistachios from the Iranians, bags of dumplings from the Chinese, so many flowers from the Serb/Croatians! We'd have pot lucks every month plus a free buffet. Not a student gambled but they loved walking outside and the trip. The casino sure lost money on us! We'd sing and teach each other folk songs from our respective countries as we drove along.

My classes would have 10-12 adult students and it was such an experience to see the Tibetan guy chatting it up with the Chinese grandma. Or the Iranian student sharing tea with the Iraqi. Or the Tamil and Hindi dancing and laughing together to Abba. These things happened every day!!!!!! When I think of them, I'm ashamed of the world we live in, twisted as we are by politics, armies and "good intentions".

I remember so well one day teaching 5 floors up, Bay and Bloor downtown office building. Suddenly two women get up and start screaming. And I mean, SCREAMING! Everyone was bewildered. What were they screaming about? Well, it had begun to snow. And there they were dancing in front of the big glass windows. All I could do was say, "Welcome to Canada" and then trash my lesson plan as we talked about big, "firsts".

So this one, this blog goes out to all my former LINC students wherever you are. I hope you have found success and I thank you for all you made me be.

I'll leave you the most amazing video I know about new refugees to Canada. A must watch! You might even use this with higher level students....

How is your summer holiday going?

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 7/24/2010 8:00:00 PM

It is summer holiday for many of us teachers. I’d love to find out more about what other teachers are doing this summer holiday. Blog about it or throw up a few comments here! I was inspired to write this by Anton’s amazing post and pictures about his summer rafting trip.

I only have time for a mini getaway (but will have time this fall for my "real" holiday - visiting my beautiful parents and writing a book I’ve long been planning). I traveled east from Seoul to the beautiful city of Sokcho. It is a quick 2 hour and 20 min (or 3 hours if you take the scenic bus over the mountains) and is on the east coast, up north near the DMZ (demilitarized zone with N.Korea).

It is a jewel! Not heavily visited but lots to do! It has great beaches, lots of lakes and clean streets. Sokcho mountain is its backdrop - one of the most famous monastic Nacional parks in Korea. It is also the main place for the ferry to Russia and Vladivostok - so you’ll meet quite a few Russians. I stayed a few days in the city and took in the sites and baked on the beach. Then a few days in the mountains in a nice luxury hotel.

I highly recommend the following.

1. Seorak Nat. Park - the cable car, the views! All the hiking you’ll ever want. All levels. Best in fall but great any time of year.
2. Sokcho beach. Clean, not crowded at all (unless you go during the 2 week peak summer period)
3. Chongchoho Lake. Right in the middle of the city, it is a place of quiet respite, horseback riding, leisure sports and peace and quiet.
4. The "pull boat" and the N.Korean village. Right downtown, you take a small pullboat across the river. Made famous in some Korean soapopera, it is something all Koreans do. Then, stop in the N.Korean village for some great grilled fish or famous "sondae", a specially made sausage.
5. The city tour bus. I usually hate these things but it is a double decker with great views. You stop at all the sites and for $7 , can’t be beat.

Here are some photos from my trip. How about you? What are you doing this summer holiday to recharge your teaching batteries?

Also, you might find interesting this recent survey on EFL Classroom 2.0 about the length of teacher’s summer holiday.

Sokcho Port
Seorak San - very high up.
Seorak from below
Try some Pajeon!
The Beach
Me and the Mermaids

The #1 ... (mispelled word in English)

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 8/14/2010 10:30:00 AM

** Not your ordinary endless list - just what’s number 1. Just the BEST. Misspelled!
Yes, if you caught the mistake in the title, you are well on your way to being a great spellor! Almost everyone, native speaker or 2nd language learner, has a problem spelling certain words. It usually comes down to how we processed the word when we first "learned" the word. Not our first encounter with the word but the first time it was "acquired" and became part of our standard inventory of recallable language. Here’s the best list I know of the top most misspelled words in English. Which one(s) do you have particular trouble with? I can’t spell "accommodation" if my life depended on it! Also try this quiz and see how you do. But remember, recognizing a word’s spelling it and spelling it are actually two different things/skills!
Chopping Wood
by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)
Submitted at 9/7/2010 6:00:00 PM

I'm returning to my home and native land Canada in a few weeks and I've been thinking incessantly about "chopping wood".

Chopping wood isn't easy! Many city folk who try it, look like bumbling fools. Even if they manage to do okay, they last only a few short minutes. It's a workout!

I've chopped many a pieces of wood back of the house on our farm - so let me share a few of my insights into this very misunderstood art.

1. Force is not what it is about. It is all about striking with the axe or splitting with the hands!

2. You axe is you. You are one with the tool. Respect it and keep it sharp, constantly sharpen it.

3. Each piece is different. Some will give way like butter to a hot knife.

4. The chopping block matters. Low, flat, hard and wide. Steady and stable. It should stand the test of both time and energy/force. Old and cranky is the best.

5. Listen to the sound as the axe meets the wood. There is a lot to be learned from that.

6. If you keep at it, you can chop wood with your eyes closed. I swear you can, it is an art of the most ancient kind - the art of interacting with the physical forces around us.

7. Chopping wood is a necessary but very lonely job. I know of no machine that can chop wood. It is one of the few things man can do that is not mechanical.

8. Chopping wood is very important. Our house needs wood to last the winter, to keep the cold away. We chop wood not for sport but of necessity. Respect that, honor that. It isn't a weekend hobby.

9. The wood has to be stacked. Yes, it is fun chopping but at the end of the hour or the day - you have to measure it all. Find a way that suits you - cross pile, stack straight, lump and cover with a tarp. Whatever works for you but you'll have to do this. We need the security of knowing we are safe, there is that pile there to keep the cold away.

So there you have it. My few words of wisdom straight from the chopping block.

The Power of Getting Personal
by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)
Submitted at 8/28/2010 2:00:55 AM

I just read this amazing blog post about the best things a blogger can do to be successful. Amazing! (thanks Larry E). I love to sit down and have coffee with this guy. He hits many nails on the head and the point that most impressed me was "being personal".

I've always championed this to teachers - it is fundamental to good teaching. But it also applies to blogging. So here is a little more about me! Check out more about my life and what I'm into. This photo is me, circa 1998 - on the brochure of advertising our school's TEFL Certificate course. Apto photo given all my travels and teaching! Thank you to the people who gave me feedback on my personal page. Invaluable!

Find out more about me through my personal profile.
The #1... (person answering grammar questions)

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 8/20/2010 6:18:06 PM

** Not your ordinary endless list- just what's number 1. Just the BEST.
Richard Firsten - Grammatically Speaking

Richard has been answering grammar questions from teachers for years. They are all collected on one nice page and you'll find the answers to most anything that has puzzled you about the use of the English language.

I've been reading his stuff religiously for a number of years and I particular love his simple, clear explanations. Usually you get a lot of "fluff" from language mavens (the term Finker uses for those who pontificate over etymology and usage). Not with Richard. He also answers readers/teachers direct questions so there is a very practical vein to what he writes. Here's an example where he describes why we often say, "computer mouses".

Dear Richard,

Here's a quickie. When talking about that indispensable part of a computer in the plural, do you say mice or mouses? None of us at my school can decide which it is!

Aidan O'Rourke
Grand Rapids, MI USA

Dear Aidan,

There is a tendency in English to change an irregular plural noun back to a regular plural form when that noun takes on a secondary meaning that it never used to have. For example, the Canadian hockey team is now called the Maple Leafs, not the Maple Leaves. When talking about people of ill repute, we refer to them as low-lifes, not low-lives. This seems to be the way the word mouse is heading when it refers to the computer tool instead of the animal. Even though this has not been set in stone yet, the more accepted plural of computer mouse seems to be computer mouses. (I bet a lot of readers are saying, "Aha!" right about now.)

Read Grammatically Speaking from time to time and your knowledge of the peculiarities or just regularities of English grammar will grow and that will show in the classroom - without a doubt!

Zen and the Act of Publishing a Book (Part 1)

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 8/16/2010 12:00:01 AM

Jeremy Harmer made a comment in defense of big publishers the other day. He said, "the cost of producing a book is horrendous these days, the investment staggeringly high."

I took that as a challenge so within 8 hours I CREATED and PUBLISHED a book. Not some frothy, blablabla book but something substantial and which practicing teachers or teacher training programs can use. This book and wisdom came from my own experience using reflective writing in my teacher training courses.

Later this week in a detailed post, I will describe the steps I took to both publish AND market this book. I think it will be highly beneficial to all - writers or even those who might still be only thinking about it, "one day".

Admittedly, I have a sound tech background and so could do all this quicker than the regular Joe - however, it isn't difficult and the costs and investment AREN'T staggering - unless you want to justify your billion dollars in profits (after expenses / before taxes - Pearson's 2009 financial statement).

Get the book on Lulu to order or download (and be so kind as to write a review/comment!)

Also, everyone who is supportive enough to donate whatever amount to EFL Classroom 2.0 to cover our rising costs (from Ning, another profit hungry bemoth), will get it free. The license is Creative Commons and Sharealikes. Meaning, once you get it - do whatever you want with it and copy, spread around as much as you like! Teacher trainers, you can contact me and get the powerpoint for instructional purposes.

Google's Earth - what's next for google and us?

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 9/7/2010 6:20:58 PM

I've written numerous times about the "ubiquitous form of Google. In admiration and also about their rare "flops". So today when reading William Gibson's NYT's "Google's Earth" - I thought I'd take the opportunity to share some of my past posts on Google. The article is a great read about google's reach and how we turn to it so much. "What's next?". he asks.

As Raul Midon sings - does Google really have all the answers? A nice karaoke I made of his amazing song. Get him live on TED.

Previous "Google" related posts. - Google: how do you use it/them? Google: Logos for teaching Google Sets Google Fast Flip

The #1 .... (video for teaching about mother nature)

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 8/31/2010 3:30:00 AM

** Not your ordinary endless list- just what's number 1. Just the BEST.

HOME(with subtitles)

I've been spending some time zooming through Japan's country/city side this week. A fascinating blend of nature and man and it got me thinking about this gorgeous video. It is a perfect way to learn/ discuss our relationship and responsibility with "spaceship earth". Get students reading the subtitles and stop and have discussion or prepare questions. A truly amazing video to teach with, in HD. Here's the trailer but get it at the link above.
The #1 ... (conversational game)

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 7/23/2010 9:43:37 PM

** Not your ordinary endless list - just what's number 1. Just the BEST.

1. Pass the Paper

There are many conversational games but I have found none so popular and powerful as "Pass the Paper".

We have many pre made Pass the Paper games on EFL Classroom 2.0 but you can also do it low tech, without a powerpoint. However, I like the ppts because you can just set a slide transition interval and it takes care of itself and you are free to wander the classroom - helping, monitoring.

What is it? Basically, the students are in a group with one crumpled piece of paper among them. The music plays and they “Pass the Paper”. When the music stops, the one with the paper must do something preset by the teacher. It can be many things.

1. Answer the question on the ppt.
2. Do something the group asks.
3. Answer a question the group asks (with target language, the teacher has on the board. ie. Have you ever ...?)
4. Finish a sentence or expression on the powerpoint.

5. Truth or Dare (for higher levels).
I've used this game to good effect at workshops as an icebreaker. See below and example of the many available in our resources.
Try “Pass the Paper”, it really lowers the affective filter of students and gets them relaxed and learning English without even knowing it!
Finish It Off! - PPT game (full screen)

More on Reflective Teaching

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 8/13/2010 3:44:15 AM

I'm a big fan of reflective teaching and use it extensively in my teacher training programs. Especially reflective writing / journal writing. There is something about the act of writing in this way, that makes one intimate with oneself (as Schon, the grandfather of this subject once put it). It gets one growing as a teacher and I still look at my teaching journal from my first year teaching and learn a lot!

In ELF, you can't go wrong visiting some of Thomas Farrell's books on the subject. He's a great "teacher's teacher" and I've attached a review by David Nunan about his latest, " Reflective Teaching Practice: From Research to Practice" (see below). He's a wonderful writer/speaker on the subject. If you get the chance to hear him speak - do so. He'll be in Seoul for the International Kotesol conference this fall.

Reflective Teaching Practice review Nunan

Also, over the last year, I've compiled this ebook - The #1 .... (conversational game) by ddeubel  (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 8/4/2010 12:30:00 AM

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Reflective Teaching Practice review Nunan

Also, over the last year, I've compiled this ebook - The #1 .... (conversational game) by ddeubel  (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)
The #1 ... (way to quiet down students)

by ddeubel (Ddeubel's Posts - EFL CLASSROOM 2.0)

Submitted at 9/2/2010 6:30:00 PM

** Not your ordinary endless list- just what's number 1. Just the BEST.

Speak softer

In all my years teaching, this is one of the most powerful things I learned. It also directly had an impact on my classroom and student learning. Often, (because it is human nature), we speak louder in a noisy environment. Everyone then responds in kind and the volume just keeps getting louder and louder. It leads to a noisy environment and for a language classroom, a hard time for students to hear clearly. I don't agree with the adage that "a noisy classroom is a good classroom". Yes, students should be talking/communicating - that's a great classroom. But forget the noise.

So if you want to quiet down your students, begin speaking to the whole class or individual groups in a soft voice. Everyone will naturally follow suit. It works!

Another nice trick is to put on "soft" music, music without voice. My "go to" music for this is Edward Satie. Put it on and it really calms down everyone. Get a nice selection in our "Study Music" pop out player.

How do you "calm down" your class? Further, take our poll on the main page and view what others do to get students' attention.