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RaPAL

Research and Practice in Adult Literacy

**This edition
celebrates the
2008 RaPAL
Conference
in Galway**

**Winter
2009**

The Research and Practice in Adult Literacy Network

Who we are

RaPAL is an independent national network of learners, teachers, managers and researchers engaged in adult literacies and numeracy. Our support is generated by membership subscription only, and we are therefore completely independent in our views. RaPAL is the only national organisation focusing on the role of literacies in adult life.

What we do

- **campaign** for the rights of adults to have access to the full range of literacies in their lives
- **critique** current policy and practice where it is based on simplistic notions of literacy as skill
- **emphasise** the importance of social context in literacy
- **encourage** collaborative and reflective research
- **believe** in democratic practices in adult literacy
- **create** networks by organising events (including an annual conference) to contribute to national debate
- **publish** a journal three times a year

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We are a friendly group - open to new members and new ideas. Please contact us with any contributions (views, comments, reports and articles) and do not be put off if you are new to the field or if you have not written for a publication before. This Journal is written by and for all learners, tutors and researchers who want to ask questions about this field of work. It does not matter if the questions have been asked before. We want to reflect the many voices within adult literacy and numeracy work and to encourage debate. Why not join in?

Further information can be found at our website: www.rapal.org.uk

The RaPAL Journal expresses a variety of views which do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial group.

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Editorial

The theme of RaPAL's 2008 conference was Inclusion and Engagement in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL and it took place in June at the National University of Ireland, Galway. It was RaPAL's largest conference to date, with 150 delegates attending from the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Northern Ireland, England, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and Australia. The inclusive nature of the conference and of RaPAL itself was evident in the variety of workshops on offer. Some focused mainly on practice, some mainly on research. Some provided delegates with an opportunity for reflection, others encouraged more active involvement. One or two, we are told, even became quite rowdy! We think this variety is also reflected in the content of the contributions to this issue of the journal, as well as in the range of formats and styles the writers have chosen.

This conference represented the beginning of a new phase for RaPAL: it was our first conference outside the UK and it

marked the start of what we hope will be a long and close association with many colleagues in Ireland. It also represented an ending, because it was the occasion on which we said goodbye to one of our founder members, Roz Ivanic, who retired in the summer. Roz gave the closing keynote address, the text of which is printed here. Her 'OPQ of a Life in RaPAL' contains some moving personal reflections and reaffirms powerfully for all of us what we stand for and why we do what we do. We would like to thank Roz on behalf of all RaPAL members, past and present, for her friendship, support and inspiration over the years and to wish her a long, healthy and happy retirement.

Finally we would like to say thank you to everyone who has written in this issue of the journal; reading the contributions has reminded us again of what an enjoyable and successful conference it was.

Amy Burgess and Kieran Harrington

THE RaPAL CONFERENCE

Yasmin Barry works as a tutor in Galway and is a newcomer to RaPAL. In this article she gives an overview of the conference as a whole.

WHAT EXACTLY IS RaPAL?

RaPAL stands for Research and Practice in Adult Literacy. RaPAL is an independent network of learners, teachers, managers and researchers in adult basic education. It is UK based, but it has an international membership.

THE CONFERENCE

An excellent conference took place at Galway University on June 20th and 21st. It was the first time that a RaPAL conference has been organised outside of the UK, and apparently, attendance was far larger than normal. The Galway Adult Basic Education Service organised and coordinated the smooth running of the conference.

Approximately one hundred and fifty delegates attended from as far away as New Zealand and Canada, but with many coming from the UK and from all parts of Ireland. In a very congenial and positive atmosphere the conference was opened by Senator Fidelma Healy Eames and Brendan Ó'Callarán (C.E.O. City of Galway V.E.C.).

A series of workshops covered very many of the 'hot' issues being debated in adult literacy at the moment: issues such as: 'The Role of the Literacy Tutor', 'ESOL for Work', 'Creative approaches in family learning'. There was also a lively round-table discussion about 'The Professionalisation of the Tutor'.

The workshops that I personally attended were 'ESOL for Work': Do short, sharp courses work? The speaker Naeema Hann outlined her experiences of teaching a very mixed level and culturally diverse ESOL class in Bradford. A wide ranging discussion took place during this workshop, and it was definitely very interesting to hear the experiences of other tutors.

I also attended the 'Creative Approaches to Family Learning'. A very useful synopsis was put forward by Mary Flanagan from Clare about using a throw away comment by her students about plants to form the basis of a literacy project. This gave much food for thought about the different ways that literacy can be incorporated into life and life into literacy.

The final workshop I attended was 'Approaches and strategies in working with adults from a multiculturally diverse range'. This was quite a new approach for me, as it involved using craft work to further literacy and language skills. I could definitely see the usefulness of this approach, but I did feel on unfamiliar territory when the participants of the workshop started doing their craft-work in the middle of the talk. However, to be challenged in our preconceived ideas about how workshops operate is thought-provoking and I felt that I gained from the experience.

The best thing for me about the conference was, of course, meeting other people and chatting to them and learning about their experiences. It is also interesting to see the multi-faceted range of Adult Learning, from the academic researchers to the volunteer tutors and learners, each with their own unique story and way of doing things.

There is no doubt that the people attending the conference from outside of Ireland were very impressed with our city, I heard nothing but positive comments (despite the weather), and sometimes it's good to be reminded of what a lovely part of the world we live in.

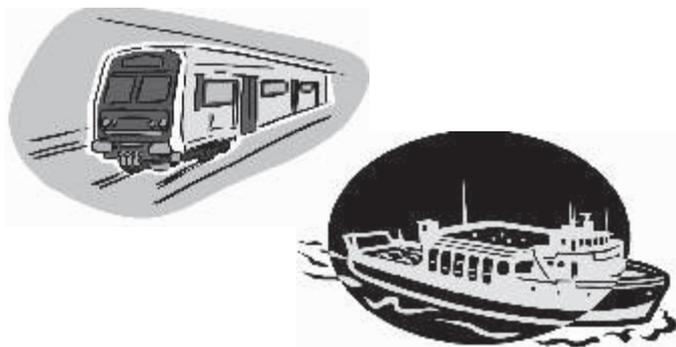
*Yasmin Barry
Tutor (Co. Galway V.E.C.)*

This section contains some reflections and reminiscences that participants sent us after the conference. It begins with a piece written by Sandie Stratford which she submitted as evidence for her Continuing Professional Development portfolio.

Reflections, critical and otherwise

Sandie Stratford

...and the advantage of train travel, and ferry travel, when the sea is calm.



'List the parts of the conference I thought most helpful/ thought-provoking?'

Non-starter: every part was informative, including hearing the Mayor welcome everyone in Gaelic, the music and dancers at the reception on Saturday night, the chats over coffee, the workshop leaders from Toronto Canada, Sunderland, Australia, Glasgow, South Africa, Galway.....so that task is nigh impossible.

'Did I learn any new information? What challenged or surprised me?'

Yes, I did; here it is in more or less chronological order:

- Sheila Rosenberg's overview of ESOL was informative, challenging many assumptions made by the government in its attempt to bring about social inclusion. The talk was entitled 'Why can't they speak English? Why don't they speak English? Why won't they speak English? And whose English is it anyway?'
- Fine Gael Senator Fidelma Healy Eames welcomed us to Galway, the loveliest town in the loveliest country in the world...she may be biased. Fidelma asked why Finland persistently leads in the PISA* and concluded that it coincided with the country's decision to invest in their teachers. Fidelma also pointed out that [Craic] is Gaelic for 'fun!' I like that.
- Workshop 1: Sarah Rennie introduced the idea of a 'community of enquiry' in a practical activity on the topic of 'Engaging with New Literacies' (i.e. technologies such as email, texting, etc). A mixed group of teachers, academics and literacy learners, we considered our present position vis a vis technologies, shared it with a

neighbour, then framed a question. The group came to a consensus about which question was the critical one to tackle, and in the process clarified our thinking. It made us think about Gunther Kress's notion of 'outsiders' v 'insiders' in the realm of digital technologies. Deceptively simple....

- Workshop 2: Shelley Tracey replaced a written assignment on the Belfast Subject Specialist TT course with an interactive group exhibition on literacies. We shared some of the fun of creating a collage with quotes and pictures, to gain some idea of how a group dynamic develops in the process of using visual imagery and participation. How about introducing a weekly 'fantastic ideas' slot to encourage tutors to share their resources?

** PISA: Are students well prepared for future challenges? Can they analyse, reason and communicate effectively? Do they have the capacity to continue learning throughout life? The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) answers these questions and more, through its surveys of 15-year-olds in the principal industrialised countries. Every three years, it assesses how far students near the end of compulsory education have acquired some of the knowledge and skills essential for full participation in society.*

- Workshop 3: Caroline Outten's excellent presentation on the theme of self-awareness and its importance to inclusive learning made a lasting impression with its practical interactions and content. Caroline is herself from a Mohawk ancestry and related her presentation to cultural constructs understood by 'First Nations' people, in a highly visual way. She succeeds in helping Immigrant Women to gain the necessary confidence before moving into learning.
- Workshop 4: Aileen Ackland and David Wallace from Scotland showed us how to create wikis and blogs, and how they could be used to liberate (subject specialist) tutors to further their own learning. I am determined to exploit Moodle at Lincoln College to this end, and to engage all participants in online discussions from the word go in September 2008, as a first requirement.
- The Round Table discussion on 'The

Professionalisation of the Tutor' with a panel of experts representing Scotland, Ireland, Northern Ireland and England shed some illumination on the debate over the recently introduced teacher training qualifications in England and Wales. The word 'professionalism' was suggested as a concept which teachers would claim for ourselves, whereas a government might impose so-called 'professionalisation'. The discussion began with a shared engagement on the question 'what expertise does a literacy teacher need?', but this gravitated rapidly into a list of qualities. A further important point was reiterated, namely that the absence of a suitably recompensed career path in the sector was at the root of any debate. Practitioner research, and the collegiality engendered, continues to underpin the base of local knowledge.

- Finally Roz Ivanic – on the brink of retirement - rounded off the conference with an OPQ (as opposed to an ABC!) of RaPAL (O is for Outrage at inequalities which still persist; P is for lots of things including persistence, patience and practitioner; Q is for Questioning)

'Have I shared or discussed these ideas with anyone?'

It is difficult not to, on a conference which gets more like a family reunion every year, but what I found most useful was sharing some aspects of our (my?) Lincoln College dilemmas with experienced and knowledgeable people from both FE, HE and policy-making settings, and to gain their wisdom. Most participants were firmly in the Literacies sector, but English teacher trainers understood the potential of new, perfectly adequate vocational teachers apparently being 'set up to fail', by colleges omitting to put in the underpinning needed for them to attempt the teacher training assignments. I have yet to discuss this with my line manager and my department, who I am confident will take a problem-solving approach to the challenge.

'What impact will this have on my practice? What changes will I make?'

In light of the above, I will suggest:

- Participants in Initial Teacher Training should have the opportunity of a dedicated L1/L2 Literacy and Numeracy class, in order to pass it before the course starts. They have to have passed it by the end, and good literacy tutors will have imbued the participants with confidence. This

should include writing practice in the essay genre.

- PTTLS should (must) be done immediately, but then new teachers should have time to work with a mentor/ experienced person in their department to get on with preparing appropriate lessons and getting used to the job. This would take the pressure off new teachers who have to balance all the demands of a new job AND a demanding course. Not all will want to take this gap, but it should be offered.
- A L3 course in both maths and English should be offered as CPD across the college, to upskill colleagues with their own literacy and numeracy.
- Moving on to Unit 2 could then happen once the (less academic) teacher is used to the job, and has some underpinning knowledge of assignment writing.
- Mentor training should be introduced/ revived, with a college certificate attached for CPD purposes; mentors should be trained to, and should as SUBJECT SPECIALISTS observe tutors-in-training. The consensus seems to be that City & Guilds are out of step here, and will soon be required to update their advice.
- Roz's idea of Learning Sets fits in well, allowing like-minded studious teachers to work together in an environment of mutual support. Lead lectures would precede group tutorials in these sets.
- Consider – as part of Learning Sets – the value of multiple authoring, which is accepted practice in many learning cultures. Wikis would facilitate this; tutors clearly need to be contributing more or less equally: this can be monitored on Moodle. Although specifically discouraged by C&G, multiple authoring is evidence of active social constructivism, and experimenting with this could be the topic of some action research for a RaPAL article.
- Introduce the concept of a 'community of enquiry' as a way of getting people to think more deeply and systematically about the issues (see Sarah Rennie handout)
- I need to foster a 'can do' approach with the Yr 2 Diploma people, by
 - Reflecting on the past then putting it behind us
 - Making the best of the present opportunity
 - Cutting off discussions which will lead nowhere and perpetuate negative feelings

- Determining to learn from bad as well as good experience.

Postscript:

Last year's theme was 'journeys'; this year the concept took on a whole new meaning, on my way home. My return journey consisted in travelling from Ireland's western-most point, due east for around 14 hours, stopping just short of the North Sea. I duly set off from Galway to Dublin by train. There is a bus service from the Dublin Heuston train station to the ferry port; however for reasons known entirely to himself, the bus driver dropped three of us off in the middle of nowhere ('this is as near as we go to the ferry port'), part way to the ferry terminal (he was supposed to have delivered us to the bus station where a shuttle would have delivered us safely to the port terminal.)

As the bus drew away, I caught up with my two young travelling companions, a Canadian brother and sister with backpacks, and we walked approximately four miles to the terminus, engaging in a most detailed and fascinating exchange of ideas about... a wide range of current issues, including adult literacies, Kyoto, Obama and idealism. The young man had a dark skin and tight curls, and the girl wore a hijab. I had never before heard the Islamic call to prayer as a ring-tone on a mobile phone.

We eventually arrived on foot at the terminal, to the considerable surprise of the car queue gate-keeper. Owing to (very) high winds, he informed us, the 1430 ferry was cancelled, but the message had been relayed at the bus station, which we didn't actually reach. What to do now?

At this point – I don't know how you would feel – I felt more than a little protective of my young travelling companions, who were viewed with some suspicion, especially as we walked together through the industrial wilderness. Culturally I sensed a challenge: the young man clearly expected to do the talking for the two of them (and for me too?) and I had no desire to embarrass him.

After freshening up, we lunched and then took a free shuttle back into Dublin, where (separately) we whiled away the best part of 7 hours. Meanwhile I pondered my options: 1. a room overnight and the first Monday ferry, but I ruled that out as I thought I probably wouldn't sleep well anyway; 2. the 9pm ferry, resuming my train journey with a 2 hour wait in Holyhead at midnight and a further 2 hour wait in Crewe in the early hours of the morning. My experience

of railway stations at night suggested this was an unattractive option. The third option came to me by accident as I waited for the Irish Ferries shuttle to appear on the bus station departure board: a bus leaving Dublin for Manchester. So for an additional 52 Euros I got to travel safely on a bus – front seat – and then a direct train from Manchester to Grimsby, arriving 0826.

Waiting in the Dublin bus station queue I engaged the next lady in conversation, and discovered that my new half a dozen hitherto unacquainted travelling companions were very friendly indeed; the afore-mentioned lady was born in Ireland, had not only heard of Louth, but had worked in a Nursing Home in the village where I was born and where my parents still live, in the heart of rural Lincolnshire. So my journey continued in as merry a manner as it was possible for me to imagine (waxing Dickensian here); I snoozed a good deal, secure in the knowledge that I would be not be permitted to oversleep a critical stop.

So...a few hours' reflection later, I feel that the learning taken from the 2008 Galway RaPAL conference consists in considerably more than the academic, and I can't wait to attend 2009 in Newport, Wales.

Another time, another space!

Mary Rhind is the Adult Literacies Coordinator for the Highland Adult Literacies Partnership. HALP has been involved in several pioneering projects in adult literacies over the past 6 years and is always looking for new ways to facilitate literacies learning over what is a very sparsely populated and wide geographical area (- the size of Belgium). HALP's work encompasses adult literacies, ESOL provision and Gaelic literacy.

The importance of the empty space for learning.

It's very Freirean to create a comfortable space where people can learn without pressures or stresses from others. The RaPAL Conference is such a space for learning. It gives one a break away from the usual day to day work and this year's conference in Galway couldn't have been much further away.

But of course the concept of space and learning is not new. Over 2000 years ago Archimedes used his comfortable space in the bath to learn about the activity of objects in water. Almost certainly more learning is done in "down time" than is ever done in times set aside for "learning".

Two of the workshops I chose were about creating such spaces for learners. One was "Creating Spaces for Inclusive Learning" facilitated by Nessa Skiffington and Shelley Tracey. The work they are doing centres around creating a space in which tutors gain a rich learning experience. And the hope is that as well as benefiting from their own experience the tutors will begin to understand the importance of creating spaces in which the people which they in turn tutor, can learn.

The second workshop was "Creative techniques used with vulnerable women learners" facilitated by Catherine Watt and Julie Fraser. This was a different kind of space and used the construction of simple books to focus the mind and create a space where the women on the project could learn. What was notable from the workshop was the opportunity the craft work offered for conversation. Space for talking is not always valued as part of learning as it is difficult to measure its value. But it has always been an essential part of learning.

Fidelma Healy Eames in her Keynote Speech highlighted that talk was more important than reading with literacy learners and we need to ensure we remember to create the space for that. Perhaps too it's about not rushing learners and not rushing ourselves. Archimedes may have got his best idea in the bath but it almost certainly wasn't his first bath. Sometimes the conception of ideas takes time.

At the end of the conference a group of us visited the old creeper covered quad of UCG. This created area symbolises totally the idea of a space apart for talking in which informal learning will be carried on while the rooms surrounding it cater for the more formal learning.

However as we admired it we received a stark reminder of the dangers too of getting isolated in a space. While we were there the heavens opened and in no time at all we were faced with the prospect of an ankle deep wade if we were to cross the river that had collected at the entrance to the quad.

Thanks to the generosity of one of our number who took off her shoes and waded out to find some boards and stones, the rest of us were able to escape comparatively dry shod.

And that little episode summed up this year's conference for me – generosity (of sharing ideas), practicality and working together. And, of course - space!

Lesley Crawford - Belfast

This year's RaPAL conference showed me again just how inclusive and supportive adult literacy people are at every level of involvement, and being part of a group of "grown ups", all down on their hands and knees painting in response to a poem, was one of my most memorable moments.

Having worked as a science/pharmacy technician all my life it was only after I decided to train as a literacy support worker that the whole field of reaching out and teaching adult literacy was revealed to me. It has been like moving out of a world of black and white corridors into a wonderful landscape of natural colour. The freshness, the inspiration and the feeling of a common purpose that I experienced during my courses at QUB, and when I meet others concerned with literacy, really is like having a whole new horizon open up for me. The RaPAL conference reminded me that I'm proud to be part of a profession that wants proper emphasis on soft outcomes and individual aspirations; this is what sets us apart from a system that is driven by targets, statistics and cold economics.

Jolene Hamill - Belfast

RAPAL is like a fresh breeze blowing through the paperwork, a wake up call to start afresh, to look at things from a different perspective and to never give up hope. The yearly conference gives me the chance to realise that I am not alone in my madness and that it is ok to have a creative opinion. Sometimes I forget that.

The next piece is from the Literacies Café blog by Tracey Mollins. Read more of her blog at <http://literaciescafe.blogspot.com/>

Tracey is the publisher of Literacies, a Canadian magazine about adult literacy research and practice. Recently she has worked as a facilitator of online courses at AlphaRoute; a podcast developer for the Festival of Literacies; and a researcher for The Learning Circles Project and Connecting the Dots.

Blog post...

The Panel Discussion at RaPAL was about the professionalisation of literacy teachers, facilitators, instructors or, as they are known here, tutors.

The first thing we were asked to was to generate a list of qualifications we felt necessary to be a literacy teacher. The list was mostly things such as compassion, empathy, flexibility, openness, collegiality, the ability to

think on one's feet, the ability to work from where people are, the ability to adapt constantly and so on. The panel seemed pretty surprised that our list was made up of almost exclusively what they called "soft skills" or personal qualities rather than the "hard skills" such as subject matter knowledge. The practitioners objected to the use of the term soft skills because they felt it demeaned what they see as vital to the work. I found it interesting that the list we came up reflects what literacy students say they value in literacy teachers -- they rarely mention subject matter knowledge. We were speaking the language of literacy and our literacy wisdom was on parade.

The rest of the conversation included some of these points:

- Professionalisation gives practitioners a career path with options and mobility
- A professionalised workforce will garner more respect from policy-makers and the public allowing the field to have a stronger, more effective advocacy voice
- The terms and approaches to achieve this voice means we are using the master's tools to dismantle the master's house and where does that leave us?
- The reason practitioners are not respected is not because we are not professionalized (certified, accredited) but because the people we work with are not respected
- Because we are a female dominated field there is a big difference between professionalisation and professionalism.

Then we went to a dinner where the Lord Mayor greeted us and a senator danced with a practitioner.

Tracey later added:

Hi there,
Seeing the post here I notice all the typos I made — obviously not a big focus on the 'hard skills' from this literacy worker! But the joy of the internet is that I can sign in and fix them and it can be our secret.

To be fair to the panel, when they asked us to create the list I think that they were thinking that our list would reflect the things that

should be taught in an accreditation program and were surprised that it was composed of mostly the unteachable — or less teachable — elements of what we think makes good literacy and ESOL teachers. We have probably all had that happen. We have phrased the question in such a way that the response is completely unexpected and we have to think on our feet to change our plan and incorporate the feedback. So kudos to them for taking the risk and asking us for our input.

That said - I agree (obviously) that the use of terms such as 'soft' and 'hard' when referring to skills was unfortunate. But it did illuminate strong points of resistance amongst our colleagues and that is always interesting and informative. People showed considerable courage in voicing their resistance to the 'experts'. We have a lot to be proud of. They were such a good role model that the Canadian contingent got it together to speak up as well. Some on the panel did agree that we needed a different way to talk about skills. Some even agreed that a teaching-as-social-practice approach might be best. Hmmm... what is good for the goose...

What was also quite fascinating to me was the parallels to Canadian conversations about professionalisation. In Canada, ESOL (we call it ESL) teachers are certified but literacy teachers are not. Some are certified teachers but there is no specific literacy teacher certification program. Sometimes we look at our ESL colleagues and speculate how we can get some of the good stuff 'professionalisation' seems to offer without the headaches it brings. Literacy workers, even those who are the poorest paid and work in the worst conditions, resist the idea of formal accreditation. What they seem to feel would be valuable is an ongoing, individualised professional development plan that would be supported by the funding of conferences, workshops, and resources and would give them some mobility in their work. Sound familiar ganders? I think I heard much the same thing from many at the RaPAL conference.

'Bringin' the boys onboard: the role of reading aloud and learner publications in engaging hard-to-reach learners.'

George Hay, Paul Carberry and Sean Hurl

George Hay - is a learner with the Positive About Literacies (PAL) project in Glasgow's East End. George has struggled with homelessness and addiction issues but has been engaged into reading by being read to by his tutor. A first time attendee at RaPAL conference, he contributed to a workshop on his experiences.

Paul Carberry - a learner with PAL Paul has struggled with reading and writing all his life. He missed a lot of compulsory schooling due to ill-health and has had to deal with various health and emotional issues. Paul is still able to recount numerous stories of the 'underground Glasgow' which allowed him to contribute to a city learner publication as he explained in his workshop.

Sean Hurl - is an adult literacies worker with the PAL project and has worked in the north and east of Glasgow since 1995. His work is focused on the development of learner reading and writing and personal transformation. The PAL project is a community based adult learning programme within a local economic regeneration agency.

The broad themes of our workshop were:

1. That there is potentially a much bigger 'problem' of literacy difficulty than at first recognised in Scotland
2. That often a small piece of work can have enormous consequences for a person's life. - *Paul's Story*
3. That often the modelling of literate behaviour is one of the most effective tools in engaging a learner - *George's Story*

The workshop had a number of connected themes but the most powerful was that of the role of story in Literacies tuition. Embracing the theme of inclusion given by the conference organisers, I was desperate to get the voice of learners at the centre of the workshop. In doing this I came to recognise that often the telling and extraction of the story requires other events to occur. In all my experience over 13 years as a literacy and numeracy tutor the best form of learning experience is more a case of accident than design. To bring the learners to Galway, there were some exceptional sets of circumstances that lead to us being able to deliver our workshop.

New Light on the Scottish situation

In March 2008 a report was published by the Scottish Government that gave probably the most explicit data about the education and lifelong learning of people in Scotland.¹ (Scottish Government 2008) Extracted from the much larger 1970 British Cohort Study (BCS70), the

key messages paint a very alarming picture. The report reconfirms many accepted ideas about literacy and numeracy learners. The report's key findings state that:

'economic disadvantage is one of the factors which work against educational progress and inhibits literacy and numeracy skills acquisition'

and those learners with low levels of literacy or numeracy:

'were the least likely to be in full-time work at age 34², and the most likely to be unemployed or sick'.

The major findings of the report are however that 39% of men and 36% of women – about 1.5 million Scottish adults – had literacy skills at levels that would cause them significant disadvantage in work. On top of this about 70% of all adults had issues with numeracy that would prevent them from reaching their full potential in the workplace.

Equally important was that there is more reluctance on the part of learners to engage with learning and that:

'not many adults with low levels of literacy and numeracy recognise their own limited capabilities'.

These figures will be subject to the same scrutiny that previous studies like the

1. 'New Light on Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland: Summary Report, The Scottish Government Edinburgh 2008
2. At the age the study set was conducted

International Adult Literacies Survey have undergone but at face value they do show a significant problem for those of us practising in Scotland. As someone who works in the East End of Glasgow which is acknowledged to contain the leading areas of social deprivation, not just in Scotland but in Britain as a whole, it sets us very difficult challenges in our work. However even here there are stories of success against the odds and I will share the stories of two of my learners in the East End of Glasgow who are striving to make advances in their learning journeys against incredible odds.

Paul's Story

Paul is a 52 year old learner, who has always had writing and reading difficulties. He missed a significant amount of formal schooling, due to illness, but has managed to get by with the help of family and friends. At one point he suffered a serious accident at work with a chain saw that severed his right arm. Although the surgeons were able to save his arm, Paul was left with limited movement in the arm and he has had to re-learn to write with his other hand.

He then ran a small cleaning business with his wife dealing with all the written and number tasks. However on the sudden death of his wife due to cancer, Paul's 'literacies' network fell apart and he slipped into poor health and depression. His business failed as a result and Paul found himself unable to sustain his home. With the help of a key support worker at Glasgow Association for Mental Health, (GAMH) he was referred to the local adult literacy and numeracy project, Positive About Literacies (PAL) and he has been attending for over 12 months.

Paul has always been a collector and teller of stories and when the local Adult Literacies Partnership advertised for learner ghost stories for a learner publication, we felt that we had to try to submit one of Paul's stories. Paul was, at this time, trying to sell his house through a local estate agency. The workers in the agency told him of some eerie situations in the office which had been built on the grounds of an old Catholic chapel in Ballieston, Glasgow.

However we had such little time for development, research and revision of this story, but acting as a scribe, I as the tutor, managed to get Paul's story ready for the editorial committee deadline. The editorial committee was made up of other Glasgow adult literacy learners and, to his surprise, Paul's story was selected for inclusion.

The book was called 'Grave Tales – Glasgow Ghost Stories'. It was launched at the annual 'Aye Write Book Festival' held at Glasgow's Mitchell Library and Paul, as a contributor, attended the launch night party. We were advised on the night that the book was to be added to the city archive and would be available through the city's public lending libraries too.

The impact of the launch of an official publication, the chance for a learner to see their name and story in print, the committing of the effort to history and the knock-on effect on the confidence and motivation of a learner cannot be understated.

Paul continues to write and attend classes; he is using his writing to record and manage his life now. As indicated in his interview, he has set himself new challenges to learn more about using video as a method of recording his thoughts and experiences.

George's Story

George Hay is in his thirties and currently not working or in training. He attributes his difficulties with reading and writing from a period in his late primary years. He never really 'stuck in' at school and left without formal qualifications. As an adult he drifted into drug addiction and has been in jail. He has a partner and two children but is at present in temporary accommodation. He stated early on that he came to the class to help him 'get thru life (sic)'.³

Maria-Elena Heather, an Adult Literacy and Numeracy Development worker with the Glasgow Adult Literacy Partnership, had approached us to become involved in the work of an Edinburgh publisher, Barrington Stoke.⁴ They are a publisher of books for the 'emergent adult reader' and have an excellent series of books under the title 'Most Wanted'. These books are written by established authors but in accessible format language which they claim are for those of a reading age of 8. Drafts of the manuscript are sent to learners, tutors etc in advance of publication for comment and revision. The suggestions for changes to the text are returned to the company who work with the author to incorporate these changes. Learner are therefore central to the production of the book, being used as editors, or 'consultants' as the company refers.

PAL learners were used as consultants on a book called 'The Chop' and as a gesture of thanks were given a copy of 'Kill Clock' by Allan Guthrie, a well known Scottish crime writer. The book is

3. From learner's own work

4. www.barringtonstoke.co.uk/search.asp?mid=693&cid=12762

set in Edinburgh but has many common themes of the council estates or 'schemes' of Glasgow with criminals and violence. In short I felt it was a theme that George would be familiar with.

However I was faced with a dilemma on how to get this over to George as the tutor. The academic research was, at best, ambivalent about reading aloud to an adult learner as it mirrored too closely the experience of school, which in turn may 'turn off' the learner. However I reflected on my own life experience where in workplaces I would often turn to colleagues and read aloud emails, newspaper articles, SMS text messages, etc. and decided that I would try it to see. At our normal learning session I told the learners that I was going to read the opening chapter of the story and ask them what they thought. It was soon clear that the storyline had gripped the learners and George in particular asked me to read a further chapter. It was, as he says, as if he 'had taken to them', the story spoke to him.

George returned the next week and said that he'd read the book and that it was the first book he'd ever read as an adult from cover-to-cover. I was amazed at the speed at which he'd read this book but it seemed to me that it suggested that a key component was that the story line had engaged with him. It was interesting and that had engaged him. The power of the story was that interest and this had proved to be a vital milestone in George's learning journey. We were able to follow this up by meeting the author at a separate event at the Aye Write Book Festival and ask a few questions about how the author felt about the book. We spoke to staff at the publishers and they were so supportive of our work and feedback. By meeting and listening to the author of the book we had used in class, we were able to take away some of the mystery of the production of books and to see them in their context as part of a wider social and collaborative effort.

Conclusion

I hope that the two learners stories and the contextual parts of our workshop, that I have outlined above, can give the reader an idea of the role of story in developing the reading and writing skills of learners.

We need to encourage as much as possible the idea of learners developing their stories into print. I have looked at developing this further in blogging⁵ and using the language experience approach with other learners.

I think we need to be careful to reject the didactic approaches to learning that we associate with formal, compulsory learning but must embrace, as demonstrated by Roz Ivanic in the plenary speech at conference, that interest is a key factor in producing writing and encouraging reading to be put alongside purpose as a spark to a learner's grappling with this thing we call Literacies.

5. <http://palintheeastend.blogspot.com/>

Family Learning as a way of engaging adult learners

Mary Flanagan

Mary Flanagan has been the co-ordinator of The Clare Family Learning Project since 2006. She had worked in Family Learning for the previous six years and prior to that worked in Adult Literacy as well as a variety of programmes such as Youthreach, Back to Education Initiative.

She completed a Masters of Education focusing on Family Learning in 2004. Her interests include reaching those least likely to engage in adult education by developing innovative programmes. Encouraging people to become more active citizens has been integrated into her family learning work.

The twelve participants in the workshop had a combined 186 years of adult education experience and this was really valued in our workshop activities. Fifty per cent of the group knew about Family Learning, so we did a little bit of work on what family learning is about. People were very willing to speak honestly about difficulties in engaging and getting schools on board. We learned from each other sharing experiences.

Using partnership with other agencies and service providers was seen to be the most successful way of reaching groups and sharing limited resources.

What words does Family Learning bring to mind?



Using photographs of everyday activities in the home to prompt learning opportunities for reading, writing, numeracy, environmental print, oral language.



Who are our target groups?



The workshop showcased the work of The Clare Family Learning Project in engaging those least likely to attend adult education provision.

We have a number of varied programmes to engage Dads and Lads, for example Fun Science Experiments, Games, Gadgets and Machines, Sport and IT.

In the workshop the group experienced how using a variety of teaching methods it is possible to meet the needs of all learners, visual, auditory and kinesthetic, and this also helps to maintain the group's interest.

Overall the group found common ground in many issues around attracting and engaging the most educationally disadvantaged. For example, reaching men, negative experiences of education, extreme poverty and/or a difficult home life, lack of confidence, and a fear of revealing a lack of literacy skills.

STUDENT EXHIBITIONS: Creating Spaces for Inclusive Learning

Shelley Tracey is the Coordinator of the Essential Skills Tutor Qualifications Programme at QUB. She first became involved in adult literacy and numeracy in South Africa in the 1980s. She is particularly interested in practitioner research, the relationship between creativity and learning, and engaging literacy learners in reading and writing poetry. She organised the RaPAL conference in Belfast in 2007 and edited the conference edition of the journal.

Nessa Skeffington is Essential Skills Coordinator in South West College, Dungannon Campus and has responsibility for coordinating the Queen's Adult Literacy Teaching Certificate. Nessa has over two decades of experience working with young adult school leavers, promoting their employability in the field of childcare. She has combined her interests in adult education, family literacy and creativity in learning by developing programmes for adults including making story sacks to promote parents' literacy.

We each coordinate the same tutor education course, the Certificate in the Teaching and Management of Essential Skills, in our workplaces. As the South West College franchises the course from Queen's, we work closely together throughout the academic year, benefiting from the differences and similarities in our student groups and contexts.

One of the assignments in the programme requires students to create an interactive group exhibition on literacies. The purpose of this assignment is to offer students a rich and complex learning experience in which they gain a deeper understanding of the nature of literacies and an awareness of the diverse needs and literacy practices of their learners.

Nessa:

The RaPAL conference is a marvellous opportunity to share practices, ideas and resources with other practitioners. There is a sense of common purpose and a great generosity that makes each conference a most rewarding experience. For the above reason I was pleased when Shelley Tracey, Coordinator of the QUB literacy qualification for tutors, asked me to share with her the presentation of a workshop at the conference. My contribution to the workshop was to give an account of how a group of trainee tutors in South West College (a QUB outreach centre) executed the exercise.

The brief the students had been given was to create an exhibition about literacy. The guidance was deliberately wide and was intended to allow the participants as much scope as they wished to create a presentation that was engaging and informative, and which would link with what their peers were doing in the task. In retrospect the wide brief, while empowering also proved a burden for the group to agree a focus for the final event. Further difficulties became apparent

as not all participants were able to attend meetings outside college hours. For this reason the process of agreeing a final product was an ongoing one which sometimes moved focus when some participants were absent. (This was not a tidy process.) In an effort to help the students prepare for the exhibition, time was set aside in class during which they could meet and plan for the exhibition. This tactic proved successful in focusing the group and in the event they produced an exhibition which was cohesive, well planned and engaging.

Group exhibition

Having taken photographs of the students' exhibition I created a 'photostory' which I presented at the RaPAL workshop. The 'photostory' gave a flavour of the exhibition which took place covering themes such as; the development of literacy through the ages; definitions of literacy such as: functional, vernacular, dominant and autonomous literacy. Students reflected on multiple literacies and displayed words associated with various aspects on a Christmas tree. (The exhibition took place just before the Christmas holidays.) Through the use of the acrostic RESPECT the exhibition concluded with all participants exploring the role of the tutor in facilitating adult learning.

- R** : Relevance to the learners' lives
- E** : Engagement with the learning experience
- S** : Social relationships developed with learners
- P** : Participation by learners in choosing goals, curriculum materials and methods
- E** : Educational opportunities across the life span and across multiple lifecycles

C : Community support for adult literacy education

T : Teachers who care about adults, literacy, and learning (Sticht, 2007: LSDA)

Lessons learned

Many of the students reported although they had been dubious about how the exhibition would work, in the end it had proven worthwhile and that they had learned much from each other's presentations. The fact that it was an exhibition forced them to think about how they would present their individual pieces and ensure that there was some coherence in the process. As the course tutor I learned that it is perhaps too ambitious to expect the group of adults to organise themselves outside class time to create the exhibition. Many of the students were in employment and travelling a distance to get to college and the additional time expected from them added stress to their already busy lives. Overall what I observed was an exhibition that the students could be justifiably proud of and I sensed their sense of achievement when the exhibition was over.

Shelley:

The Queen's students worked in four groups to plan their exhibitions. They were presented just before the Christmas break, and the Christmas theme was apparent in most of the work, with mince pies and tinsel and even a visit from Santa! Each of the exhibitions was different, as is evident in the titles:

- *A Journey Through Literacy*
- *Multiliteracies of the 21st Century*
- *Life Through Literacy*
- *The Four Seasons*
- The class as a whole decided on the order in which the exhibitions were to be presented. Tutor and peer feedback were collated. One group received the following comments:
 - Excellent posters.
 - Only one member of the group presented the exhibition but all were available for comments. Interesting online game.
 - Seemed to be very much a joint effort
 - Written exercises very well-prepared
 - A variety of opportunities for interaction.
 - We liked the opportunity to write on the graffiti wall
 - An extensive range of perspectives and definitions. Very well-researched.
 - Good quotes about literacies.
 - Looked effective.

- Your "literacy opens doors" exhibit was wonderful!

Feedback on the process of designing and engaging in the exhibitions suggests that the half hour devoted to each group was insufficient. This has now been changed to an hour, with more time for groups to set up their exhibitions.

The process of creating the assignment was a positive one for the QUB students; group cohesion developed quickly, and written reflections on the experience and other coursework demonstrated that the students enjoyed and benefited from the collaborative learning opportunities. Some excerpts from students' reflections explain far more effectively than I can about the impact of the experience:

Communication technologies in the information and knowledge driven society in which we live affect consideration of the concept of literacy such that definitions are always shifting. A consequence of this is that literacy programmes need to take account of such shifts. Freire called for education to be brought back to grassroots level. Eminent contributors like Dewey and Knowles argued for informal, interactive educational environments. More open definitions of literacy offer possibilities for a change in the tutor/learner relationship, putting it on a more democratic footing. A teacher needs to be less a 'dripfeeder of knowledge' and more a 'facilitator of learning'. Collaborative teaching methods enable learners to bring diversity to the learning environment and match their needs and experience to learner led projects where the tutor becomes the guide. I have found this assignment to be a real challenge. Taking part in the exhibition revealed that this assignment is more than a consideration of the meaning of literacy; it is also an exploration of collaboration and critical reflection in relation to good teaching practice.

Designing the exhibition required discipline and focus and much the same processes used in designing learning activities. Our group wanted the exhibition to be eye-catching and thought provoking with interesting, relevant and concise information for the audience.

As each member of the group gets the same mark as the rest, I feel this is fair to each individual. A group of peers should have good communication and preparation skills to ensure that each member of the group has an equal amount of work and research to do. With sixteen and seventeen year olds a group presentation

can be competitive and can be beneficial to get the best out of the student. Sometimes they put more into a topic that interests them and this is, I feel, a wonderful way to learn as long as the groups do not get too competitive.

Every individual is different and has different learning styles and needs. Some are creative writers, some expert readers; some have difficulty in spelling, and my greatest learning from the exhibition was how varied learners can be. The learning about definitions of literacy reinforced ways in which to engage learners and improve their everyday life and knowledge.

The title of our group's exhibition was to be 'Multiliteracies of the 21st Century' and we had each begun to think about what it should include. We had several pieces already picked out that we thought would be of value and we were each keen to make sure that we all went away happy with our topic. Some of us seemed to have an interest in a particular area and that made the choice easier. In the end we agreed on five areas that we wanted to cover in our exhibition. These were: vernacular literacies, literacy through the ages, literacies in context, multiple literacies, and learning opening doors. Our one worry was how it would all fit together into one exhibition. Would it present as five separate pieces of work?

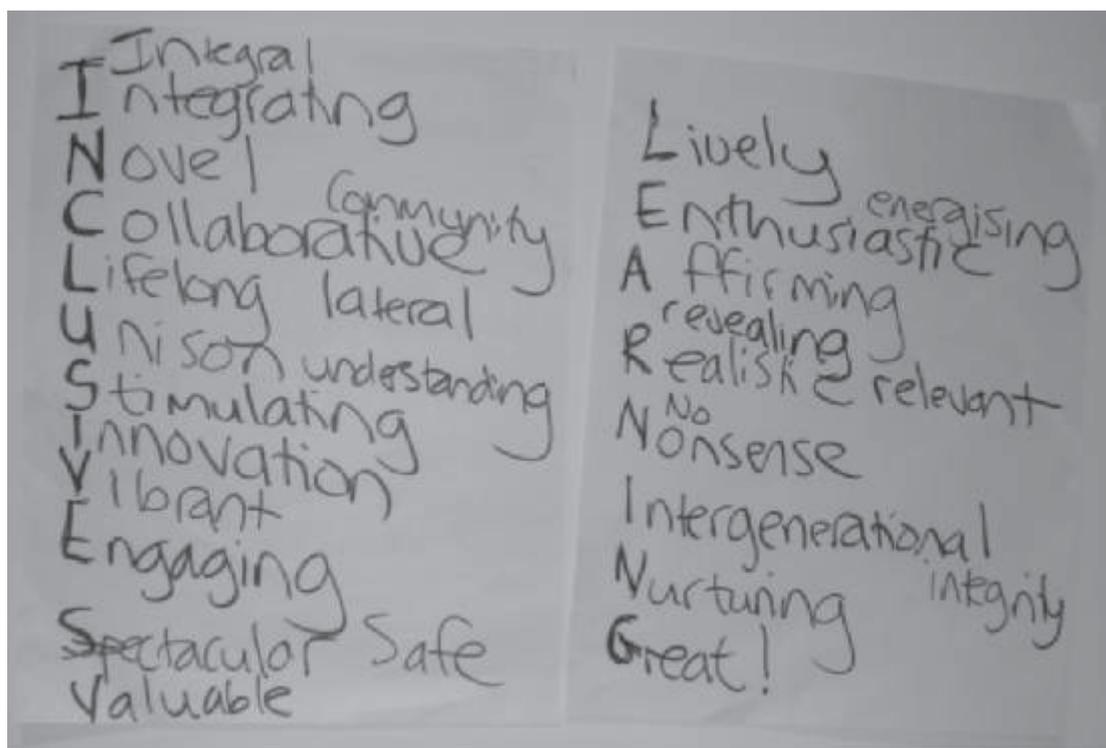
Nessa and Shelley:

In our RaPAL workshop, we wanted to give participants a sense of the inclusive learning experience which was central to the assignment, as well as the interactive methods we use to engage our students on the courses. We involved everybody in the creation of a shape poem, based on the image of the sun and the theme of summer. The sun poem idea was designed by one of the groups of students in Belfast and included in their exhibition. We also involved the RaPAL group in an acrostic poem on inclusive learning, and are glad to present it in the image which accompanies this report.

As tutors, we have learnt a great deal from the challenges involved in designing and facilitating the group exhibition assignment. We hope that participants in our workshop on Galway experienced some of the excitement, collaboration and creativity involved in this work.

References

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Email in both the actual and virtual adult literacy classroom

Ellayne Fowler

Ellayne has taught adult literacy in a wide range of contexts. Her doctoral work focused on email as a literacy practice. At present she is involved in teacher training and teaching linguistics at undergraduate level.

The idea for this workshop was generated by a number of factors. I had undertaken research on the literacy practices around the use of email in a Further Education college in order to achieve a doctorate in education. I have been attending RaPAL conferences over many years and although often interested in the research presented I was often left with the dilemma of deciding how this could inform my practice as a basic skills practitioner. The focal point of the workshop I ran at this year's RaPAL conference was therefore about forging a link between the information I had uncovered as part of my doctorate and the basic skills classroom.

In order to explore this link between research and practice I will give a brief outline of the research I carried out and describe in more detail the data I collected from Skills for Life teachers and students about email. I will then make links between the Skills for Life information and the larger study. This then provides the basis for the workshop where we generated ideas for incorporating email into the basic skills classroom, both in reality and virtual reality. What I hope to demonstrate is a clear link between asking questions of learners and colleagues, analysing that in a theoretical framework and generating ideas for use in practice.

Research project

My doctoral research was designed to answer the question: ***What are the situated literacy practices involving email in a Further Education college?*** In order to answer that question I looked at the following:

1. *How email works as a text.* This was based on a large corpus of emails (408) that I collected over four years.
2. *How email is managed.* I explored this through interviews, questionnaires and a small number of email diaries, where participants kept a record for a week of emails sent and received.
3. *People's attitudes towards and the values they attach to different emails.* This was researched through questionnaire, interview and focus group data.

4. *Was there one or more set of literacy practices around the use of email?* Did different groups within the college use email differently? Again, this was explored through email data, interviews and questionnaires. Participants were coded into four groups (students, academics, managers, support staff).

In order to research any phenomenon it is necessary to have a theoretical framework, as this guides the sort of questions you ask. The theoretical basis for this study was the New Literacy Studies and, in particular, the six propositions that Barton and Hamilton use (2000, p.8):

- 1) Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.
- 2) There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
- 3) Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others.
- 4) Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.
- 5) Literacy is historically situated.
- 6) Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.

These propositions applied to my study as follows -

1. Emails were the written texts.
2. I looked particularly at the domains of work, study and home.
3. I investigated the controls on the email system imposed by the college on both content and access to the email system.
4. I looked at emails as part of the social practices of the college. For example, I explored

when it was appropriate to do something by email and when another communication medium was more appropriate.

5. The college administrative system runs by email. It is both a communication tool and the medium for the distribution of documents that underpin meetings and administering learning. It has replaced earlier literacy practices, such as those involving typed memos and handwritten telephone messages.

6. I was investigating a relatively new phenomenon and was able to see new practices developing during the study.

Before moving on to the specific information related to Skills for Life teachers and students, I have outlined some of the key findings in relation to my research questions.

1. How email works as a text

Emails were generally short messages, usually of one sentence. Writers used standard punctuation and language that was neither markedly formal nor informal. I did not find a specific email genre. Emails are recognisable because of their layout, which is controlled by the specific software used. However, if you took the text of the message there was a wide range of styles. Within this particular college, email worked as a flexible medium meeting a wide range of communicative needs and purposes and particularly formed the backbone of college administration.

Some writers might consider email a 'lean' using information richness theory (see for example, Markus, 1994). A medium that is rich needs:

- Timely feedback
- Transmission of multiple cues
- Messages customised to personal circumstances
- Language variety (Huber and Daft, 1987, cited by Markus, p.505)

Markus therefore theorised email as being located between the telephone and non-electronic written forms in terms of richness. However, the writers of emails in my study often included elements that might be missing from typed interactions through the use of visual clues, graphic creativity and the representation of sounds. The example below illustrates this. (Please note that the emails are represented in a different format to that you would see on the screen, with the earliest at the top of the page).

Figure 1.

Participant 1 3/12/2003 9:30:51
 stop following me! u 'eard! :op ... im supposed 2 be doing work but not actually doing it.....listening 2 mooooooooooooooooooosic - lol

Participant 2 3/12/2003 9:33:18
 lalalalalalaalala dum de dum!
 lol.....yeah me good taaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa, u ? im well bored? wanna come to the toilet? lol hehehehehe

Participant 1 3/12/2003 9:35:07
 yeah im alright got a bit of a sore throat ! but never mind :) im bored as well but ive got photography next so that's groovy, wanna go to the darkroom ? hehe

Participant 2 3/12/2003 9:37:29
 awww sore throat - lol me still a bit ill - never mind tho eh.... Hehe...

 oooooooooooooooooooooo darkroomgo for it - lol meet you in there in 5 mins :op

 hehehehe

Participant 1 3/12/2003 9:40:02
 Awww have you a cold or something ? ahh get well soon

 yeah the darkrooms are v. kool makes you eyes go weird when you go in though

 how many lessons have you got today then ??

This is part of a dialogue of emails going backwards and forwards between two students. It illustrates a number of elements that were highlighted by my research project. The emails can be seen as hybrid texts, that is, they borrow from other genres. You can see the influence of texting (v.cool) and Computer Mediated Communication (lol). The writers also approximate sound (lalalalalalaalala dum de dum! ahh) and include emoticons in an attempt to capture facial expressions (:op).

This comes from a dialogue, which was another way of analysing emails in the corpus. Emails could be quite formal, borrowing from written genres, such as memos and business letters, but as soon as emails became a dialogue they quickly became informal, borrowing more from

spoken genres such as conversation. An example is included below.

Figure 2:

Participant 1	27/11/2003
Dear Jean,	
We have arranged a meeting of Programme Leaders and yourself on Wednesday 17th December at 4.30 pm. I didn't realise that it was admin week and wondered if we could rearrange the meeting earlier in the day. Please would you let me know a time that would be convenient to you unless you would prefer to keep it to 4.30pm. I also placed a number of questionnaire papers on your desk from various areas, just in case you wondered where they came from.	
Thanks very much Jean,	
WILLIAM	
Participant 2	1/12/1003
Hello William	
I could make the meeting a little earlier. I will be in xxxxx for most of the day and need to allow time to get back from there. Would 3.30 pm be okay?	
Many thanks Jean	
Participant 1	1/12/2003
No problem Jean,	
Thanks very much	
WILLIAM	

This dialogue demonstrates the influence of different genres, such as the letter format that begins the dialogue. The dialogue then becomes more formal, with the 'hello' greeting more usually found in speech. These exchanges also demonstrate the high level of politeness found in my survey (note the use of 'thanks' and 'please').

I have taken some time to outline some of my findings about emails in this particular FE college, because the key finding was that email in any setting is governed by the people that use it, the tasks that it is a part of and the purposes it is used for. This came home to me in a research seminar at the Open University, when

someone asked why I hadn't investigated the phenomenon of people copying elements of emails and then forwarding them. I hadn't come across this in my data, but it seemed to be a normal practice within the Open University. This suggests to me that before talking to students about what makes a 'good' email, we need to investigate the practices that they are already part of. Other studies have found different styles in emails depending on the context (see for example Gains, 1998, comparison of commercial and academic emails).

2. How email is managed.

I found that the amount of email that people dealt with varied enormously (between 0 and 100 a day) and depended on the person's role within the college. People who coordinated information, such as faculty PAs or had roles managing people or courses dealt with a large amount of emails. The role of the email system in college administration was shown in the growing use of attachments. Those who dealt with a large amount of emails tended to develop a process for dealing with them. For example, one manager, WP, stated that first thing in the morning:

Normally I check the email first thing and what I've tried to do is once I open an email I try to deal with it straight away if it's something that's going to involve a lot of work then I close it down and prioritise it then to urgent or needs further action and it comes up as a different colour and I check those then at the end of the day before I go home.

I found through email diaries that nearly half of emails were read and then deleted (47%), which underlines the ephemeral nature of email. However, 20% were read and then stored. This need to archive, either digitally or in print, was particularly driven by accountability, either to internal or external authorities. It could be argued that the printed email is seen to have more value, particularly as evidence.

3. People's attitudes towards email

Respondents to the questionnaire felt that email was good for disseminating information to a lot of people at one time. It was seen as quick, easy and reliable. However, it was felt to be inappropriate for sensitive or personal issues. The downside of the ease of sending emails is that people can feel they have information overload, although this is often more to do with the relevance of emails rather than the amount

(see Ruggeri Stevens and McElhill ,2000, for more on this).

Email is chosen over other forms of communication because it is easy, it provides evidence and it suits the availability of people (such as lecturers) who are often away from the base room.

4. Groups of practices

The different groups surveyed in the college use email differently. Students send and receive fewer emails than other groups, often preferring to use synchronous on-line spaces, such as Bebo which facilitate the multi-modality they had achieved in emails collected in the pilot phase of my research (see Figure 1 above). Their emails are often affective, friendly, informal and borrow from electronic genres, such as CMC and texting.

The amount of emails received by academic staff varied and was affected by job role, how long they had been in the college and where they were based. They tended to use more greetings and sign offs than students.

Support staff also dealt with varying amounts of email depending on whether their job role involved coordinating information. A large proportion dealt with college administration. A quarter of the emails surveyed in this group finish with *thanks*, emphasising the over politeness of many of these emails.

Managers had developed routine procedures for dealing with email as they received so many, although the routines were individual. Their emails tended to inform or direct and were often very straightforward in style.

It is possible to see that even within one institution there were a range of practices around the use of email

Skills for Life learners and teachers

In the course of my research I discussed the topic of email with one of my own literacy groups and also collected data from Skills for Life teachers in the college. Although this data did not find its way into the final dissertation, it reflects the wider findings, while also offering a specific focus on adult basic skills.

Learners

The discussion with my adult literacy group came out of a session where we were going to write informal letters. It soon became apparent that this was not relevant to the majority of the

group. Through discussion I found that only one student wrote informal letters or intended to write them. This led to us investigating our current and also aspirational literacy practices, which suggested that the majority of students already or wanted to use electronic channels of communication.

What came out of the discussion were the following ideas and practices around email:

- Email was used in different domains – particularly at home and at work
- Email was used for different functions
 - To talk to people
 - Secretarial work (for an organisation one student was a member of)
 - Getting hold of someone
- The language of email
 - Depends on what you are doing and who you are talking to
 - Less formal than letters

While this data did not find a place in my final dissertation it did reflect a change in my own practice as a teacher. I had always given my students choices, particularly about the group work we would cover, but I hadn't realised until that moment how important it was to find out what literacy practices (rather than skills) they currently had and what they aspired to. It meant that informal letters were dropped from the curriculum for that group and we started to use email as both a text type and a tool for the work of the class.

Skills for Life teachers

Towards the end of the research process in 2007 I began to wonder how other basic skills teachers were incorporating email into their classrooms. I therefore sent out an email asking:

- Do you use email in class?
- If so, how do you use it?

Of 16 emails sent I had 12 (75%) replies. As a short digression, I would recommend the use of email as a research tool, as I did get a good response rate, particularly if I put questions under the main body of the email, so that the recipient just had to hit return and fill in their answers. Weisband and Kiesler (1996) have also noted how 'people offer more accurate and complete information about themselves when filling out questionnaires using a computer than when completing the same form on paper or through a face-to-face interview' (cited in Baron, 1998, p.147).

7 (58%) teachers were using email in their basic skills classroom. I categorised their uses of email into four main areas:

- Document handler and storage
- Text type
- Develop IT skills
- Literacy as social practice

I was able to relate these findings to the findings from the main study, which then gave the basis for ideas for practical uses of email in the classroom. The conference workshop generated even more practical ideas based on the four categories above.

Document handler and storage.

Skills for life teachers used email for handling documents and storing information. In particular they mentioned its use:

- To back up information (stored in sent folder)
- For sending documents (to get printed in colour)
- Sending homework for corrections
- Sending work to BBC Skillswise and competitions
- Emailing work to college and back

In the *main study* questionnaires 28% of respondents felt that email was good for attaching documents. For some teachers and students this was a way round the limitations on digital storage space available, particularly to students. Many staff respondents (20% of the data) thought email was good as a record or evidence of work done or conversations that had happened. This was a major theme in looking at attitudes to email within the college and reflects issues of accountability, not least as emails were often printed in order to be classed as evidence.

Ideas for using email in a literacy classroom

- Group writing (sending work on to the next person or discussing editing a piece)
- Shared writing (writing a portion and then sending the file on to the next person)
- Photograph and send into message board
- URL pasting (website addresses)
- Photos and documents (as attachments)
- Exchanging recipes
- Sending writing prompts (select one) and send essay back
- Pass-it-on activities

Text type

Skills for life teachers refer to their use of email as a text type:

- For ESOL entry one learners
- In literacy classes as a comparison with memos and letters
- To illustrate the process of writing, with drafting, editing, saving and sending

In the *main study*, as mentioned above I did not find a specific email genre, although I found that generally emails were:

- Short (the majority were one sentence long)
- Used standard punctuation
- Not formal
- Influenced by both spoken and written genres.
- Dialogues were more informal

Key elements such as the use of name, greeting and sign off are very influenced by the context.

Ideas for using email as a text type

- Writing for different audiences
- Thank you letters
- Email conversation
- Collecting emails for analysis from a student's own contexts in order to identify specific elements, such as the use (or non-use) of greetings etc.

Developing IT skills

Skills for life teachers valued the use of IT to develop literacy skills, but also acknowledged that IT skills could be developed in the context of the adult literacy class.

In the *main study* I had explored through the questionnaire how people had learnt to use email. 66% of respondents had not had formal training. Email was something that was learnt through doing (*trial and error, practice, hands on*). This informal learning was facilitated by friends, family and colleagues. This suggests that email has to have a purpose other than simply a text type in the classroom. It needs to become part of someone's literacy practices. It also suggests that rather than formal teaching it is worth considering individual coaching.

Ideas for using email to develop IT skills

- Students should learn through doing, so that email is part of a process rather than an end in itself
- Peer coaching – let the more IT-able share their expertise
- Expand the use of IT through using platforms such as Nintendo Wii and DS
- Find five different ways to send an email – this could lead to a portfolio of evidence for ICT

- Use of the calendar facility (usually available through the software) package

Literacy as social practice

Skills for life teachers valued email as a means of:

- Communication between learners and teachers
- As a means of raising the self-esteem of learners who were sending and receiving 'real' communications

As email becomes embedded in the adult literacy classroom it becomes part of the social practices of that group. It also gives the opportunity to exchange actual texts as opposed to the writing of texts based on case studies. This use of 'real' texts in the classroom is seen as one way of applying the social practice view of literacy to the classroom (see Street, 2003).

In the *main study* I was able to observe social practice around email developing over the years of my study. The key finding is that those social practices are governed by the organisation, the nature of tasks and individuals involved.

Ideas for incorporating email as social practice

- Emails can be sent and replies received from both within and without the classroom.
- Email can be a tool for collaborative learning.
- Sending message to students re: research topics and finding
- Reflecting new learning in email - using phrases from the actual lesson to reinforce learning
- Constructive feedback and editing/revision for student writing
- Consequences - story making
- Brainstorming
- On line discussion (although this would be better on a list serv)
- Draft and editing - using the colour facility
- Competition - first to email back an answer
- Planning group visits
- Setting up projects
- Investigating and analysing the literacy practices around email in other domains for learners (such as work, organisations they belong to). This investigation then gives the analytical tools for learners to approach new contexts and work out how email is done there.

The more email is integrated into the teaching and learning in the classroom the more it becomes a social practice.

What this article has attempted to do is to forge links between research findings about the use of email to its use in the adult literacy classroom. The focus has been on practice rather than an in-depth review of my research project. It wouldn't have been possible without the contribution of those who were in the workshop.

Thanks to workshop participants:

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Engaging Young People with Literacies Learning: A Scottish perspective. Reporting on a workshop provided at the RaPAL Conference 2008

Sheila Doogan and Lewis Atha

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Introduction

A workshop on youth literacies presented at the RaPAL conference in June 2008, focused on how to engage young people with literacies learning. The workshop looked at the context for practice development in Scotland and highlighted examples of practical work carried out by Lewis Atha and Ronnie Campbell, youth literacies practitioners, from the West of Scotland. The international nature of the RaPAL conference 2008 provided an ideal opportunity to discuss literacies practice with young people, gaining perspectives from a variety of countries. This article provides a flavour of some of the areas presented by the workshop facilitators.

The Scottish Context

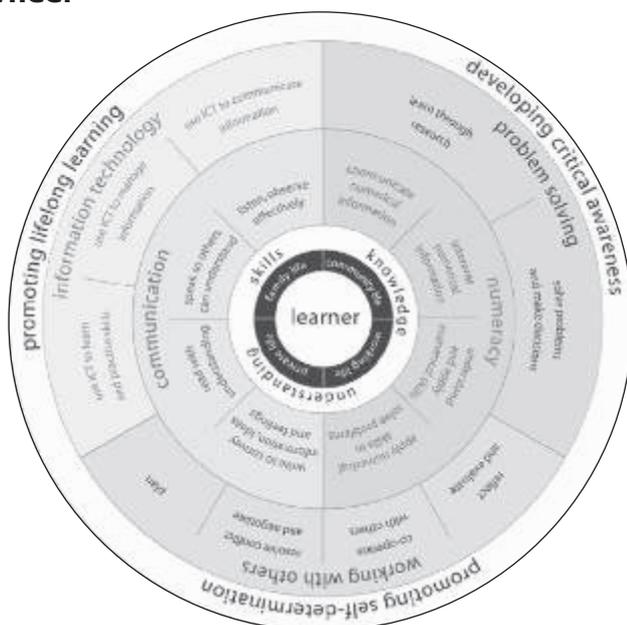
There has been a number of recent changes in policy and practice in Scotland, which has influenced literacies provision for young people. Young people are high on the agenda and literacies support fits well within these developments. *Skills for Scotland: a Lifelong Learning Strategy* (Scottish Government 2007) sets the foundation for a new and distinct approach, towards building a 'Smarter Scotland'. The strategy sets out a vision for young people to become (i) successful learners, (ii) confident individuals, (iii) responsible citizens and (iv) effective contributors. *Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Government 2008) also considers developments for young people, aiming to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland. Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) focuses on the needs of the child and young person and is designed to enable them to develop the four capacities (above). CfE aims to achieve improved quality for learning and teaching and increased attainment and achievement for all children and young people in Scotland. This will include those who need additional support in their learning, and a continuous focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

Curriculum for Excellence Cycle



Support to young people, making the transition from school into the adult world, is one of the concerns for those involved in literacies provision for young people in Scotland. Literacies support can assist young people in reaching their full potential and move on to a positive destination. Engaging young people with literacies at an early stage is important to maximise their opportunities for the future. *Curriculum for Excellence* puts young people at the centre of the learning process and recognises the importance of literacy and numeracy. At the same time, in order to support progression, literacies practitioners in Scotland have been developing innovative programmes to engage young people with literacies learning. This approach is supported by the adult literacy and numeracy curriculum framework, which has a number of commonalities with the Curriculum for Excellence. The learner sits firmly at the centre of the curriculum and the young person's experience and prior learning are valued as part of the learning process.

Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Wheel



Finding the key to engaging the interest and motivation of the learner, requires an imaginative approach, based on the interests and motivation of young people.

'Time and again respondents indicated that the ability of providers to identify needs and interest among young people was crucial in recruiting and engaging learners in literacies provision.' (Mapping Youth Literacies Practice with the 16 – 25 Age Group 2008)

Using new technologies have been successful tools in engaging young people with literacies learning.

'It was evident that technology was being used in many different ways. For some, it was about recognising that applications of ICT such as Mobile phones were a major part of young people's lives and could be used as a means for engaging young people with literacies. Others documented the use of computers and various software packages, and noted how these provided an interest for some young people.' (Mapping Youth Literacies Practice with the 16 – 25 Age Group 2008)

Mobile devices, computer programs and games can be used to engage young people with literacies learning. Some examples can be seen on the Literacies Matters DVD, filmed at the 'Write 2 Speak' conference (October 2007). This features young people, sharing their insights into the experience of being involved in literacies learning. One theme from the conference was

the use of communicative technology to encourage engagement. Podcasting, blogging, texting, and using search engines such as Google and Yahoo are all part of young people's lives in the twenty first century, and can be used to encourage engagement with literacies. Integrating literacies work with ICT based provision has been successful in encouraging young people back into learning.

The RaPAL conference in June, gave an opportunity to share some of the work that has been developed in the area of literacies learning and teaching with young people in Scotland. Lewis Atha, from East Ayrshire Essential Skills, shared some of the practice that has been developed in his area, developed under the definition of adult literacy and numeracy used in Scotland:

The ability to read, write and use numeracy, to handle information, to express ideas and opinions, to make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners.
Adult Literacy & Numeracy in Scotland (2001)

The ideology of the Essential Skills Project is rooted in two main modes of practice, keeping the learner in control of all learning and using the social practice model. The youth literacies element of the project differs from the adult literacies element in one key area; as well as supporting one-to-one classes and small groups; it uses innovative approaches to engage young people in short, sharp courses delivered locally. Young people's interests and hobbies are discussed with them at an early stage, to find out about their existing skills, including literacies. This gives an opportunity to open up a discussion about the project, giving information on self referring for further literacy support. The project operates an inclusive approach to working with groups, however there is a clear understanding that that the programme will have a literacy and numeracy element.

Literacies development may not be the original primary motivation for the young people attending the course, but their involvement in the course helps them to recognise that they could improve their literacy skills. Programmes on offer can range from one 2 hour workshop to a 12 week programme, with the aims and expected outcomes stated from the beginning. Some of these aims will be literacy based, while others will focus on soft skills. Common aims include improving team working, communication

skills, ICT skills and raising confidence and self esteem. A variety of programmes are offered to maximise the opportunities available for young people, to give them choices in the type of learning that they engage with.

Workshop activities foster a sense of fun and team work; working towards an end product for the young people. The programmes encompass a range of reading, writing and numeracy activities which allow the workers to identify participants with potential literacies needs. The opportunity to assess the young person's preferred mode of learning and literacies needs ensures that further workshops can be tailored to the individual requirements. All programmes have time for reflection built into the activities and touch on emotional literacies.¹

A variety of formats for reflection are recorded at various points in the programme. These include video diary room discussions and personal learning diaries. Electronic individual learning plans allow the opportunity for the young person to store images and video clips which reflect their learning. The young person creates evidence of their learning journey, which they can keep for themselves, or share with friends and family. Computer software emotional literacies including 'Comic Life' has been used to chart changes, recording feelings 'before and after' they attend the group. Using a picture of themselves in the centre, the young person is invited to put several thought bubbles to the left of the picture containing what they thought before they started the programme, or what they were worried about. To the right of the picture they create thought bubbles stating what they have achieved/enjoyed during the programme. Other useful tools for encouraging reflection have been 'free writing', 'journaling' and group discussion.

Example Literacies Programmes with young people²

Making Digital Comics (graphic novels)

East Ayrshire ALN Partnership has had a lot of success in engaging young people with literacies learning by using software such as 'Comic Life'. This user friendly interactive tool can, in a very short space of time, create a graphic novel on a subject of the young person's choice. It has been successful in delivering two hour comic workshops with partner agencies already working with young people. This has been more effective than a 'cold sell' approach in engaging young people with literacies learning. The aim of these workshops is to engage with young

1. "The capacity to register our emotional responses to the situations we are in and to acknowledge those responses to ourselves so that we recognise the ways in which they influence our thoughts and actions" Susie Orbach, Virago Press Ltd (2001)

2. Available at www.aloscotland.com

people, let them meet the ALN staff and inform young people how they can get further literacies support. This has also been useful for raising awareness of literacies issues and opportunities with partners, leading to effective referrals.

A brief summary of such a workshop would be:

- literacies staff introduce themselves and the project, discuss what literacy means and ask group if they want to take part
- ice breaker game
- spend 10 to 20 minutes doing creative writing, discuss what makes up a story, compare and contrast comics and books
- hand out photocopies of graphic novels that have pictures but no words and work as a group to add speech bubbles and narration boxes
- Provide dressing up clothes for participants to create a character, then as a group, create a plot using these characters, story boarding how you would tell this story through pictures
- take turns using a digital camera to capture the storyboard
- load the images onto laptops (one laptop for every 3 participants)
- demonstrate how to use comic life and support each smaller group to create their own story
- evaluation and reflection of the workshop
- print off comics and post to participants along with postcard advertising our project.

The choice of layouts, fonts, colours and special effects, allows young people to create different versions of the same story, using the same photographs. This process can be extended to create a more in depth story over a longer period of time, with the finished comic developed into a script for a short movie.

Other ideas for using this approach include:

Communication – stories, letters, birthday cards

Confidence building – scripts for acting

Team building – working together to create a comic

Explore Issues – drugs, knife crime etc

Support- eLearning Plans

Chart progress – before and after thoughts

Instructions – how to guides

School transition year - welcome guide to school

Publicity – flyers, posters

Evidence – showing trips visits, workshops, evaluations

Using Animation

Animation has also been used with young people as a tool to engage young people with literacy learning. Animated films take teams of professional animators' months to create. The animation process can be used to improve different literacies skills by exploring how animated films are created and by using some of these complex skills in the creation of their own animation. Literacy and numeracy skills are used in planning and creating a script, making use of writing skills. Reading skills are also used in the following of instructions, proof reading, planning and story boarding. Numeracy is used in the manipulation of shape and calculating the number of shots required for an animated scene. To get the group started, a task is suggested e.g. the group act as an advertising agency, given the contract for creating a new advert for The Big Plus.³ This scaffold approach helps to build bridges from the learner's current skills, knowledge and understanding to the next level, gradually transferring control to the learner. This task also allows the subjects of literacy and numeracy, to be explored and gives an opportunity to get involved in research. The final task is to create an animation, which involves learning to work together and communicate effectively.

Benefits to young people

In youth literacies practice, young people are encouraged to take control and responsibility for their learning. Existing skills are recognised and valued before being built on and used to learn new skills and achieve their goals. The sense of fun and working together is also important; it builds the confidence needed to address an issue which can come with a stigma. It is important to raise awareness about the opportunities available to improve literacy and numeracy and the positive benefits that can be gained. Literacies in the twenty first century are changing, promoting a transformation in the approach to literacy learning in this information age. In this information age, a change in the approach to literacies learning is needed. Learning is a lifelong process and it is important that young people are aware that there is still the potential to continue learning after school. There are the opportunity, support and resources available to help young people decide on and achieve their goals. An informal integrated approach to literacies, building on existing skills and knowledge has been successful in providing a safe learning environment, where young people can work together to achieve their goals.

Workers' Impact Statements

- Aug '08** One off comic life session led to two young girls referring themselves for one to one support.
- July '08** Creative writing Room 101 "This led to an open debate and group discussion, and brought up topics such as National Independence, Perceived bias in the media, role of family, pros and cons of alcohol, chocolate - healthy eating and in moderation"
- July '08** During the creative writing process, before planning digital comic, Learner K identified herself as having problems with capitals, sentences, punctuation and grammar

Conclusion

Literacies learning for young people in Scotland is often the first step back into lifelong learning. Methods of engagement are crucial to this. The transition from school into the adult world can be an exciting and challenging stage and support for literacies can set young people on the path to a positive destination. Young people should be active participants in their learning, and should be encouraged to reflect on their own learning and how it is impacting on their lives.

Further information

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<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/publications/buildingthecurriculum3/index.asp>

Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland, Scottish Executive (2001)
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2001/07/9471/File-1>

3. The Big Plus is Scotland's national campaign to promote the free literacy support available across the country www.thebigplus.com

Functional Literacy: new idea or déjà vu?

Amy Burgess, Mary Hamilton and Roz Ivanič

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Mary Hamilton is Professor of Adult Learning and Literacy in the Department of Educational Research, Lancaster University, U.K. She is interested in informal adult learning and strengthening the links between policy, research and practice. She is co-author of two recent books: Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy: Policy, Practice and Research with Lyn Tett and Yvonne Hillier (Open University Press) and The Changing Faces of Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL: A Critical History with Yvonne Hillier (Trentham Books.)

Roz Ivanič is Professor Emerita of Linguistics and Education at Lancaster University. From 1974 to 1985 she was the literacy coordinator at Kingsway-Princeton College, London. From 1986 to 2008 she was a literacy researcher and lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and English Language, Lancaster University, and at the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre, recently directing the 'Literacies for Learning in Further Education' project.

Introduction

Functional skills is about to become a very hot topic in England as the current Skills for Life and Key Skills are going to be phased out and replaced by this term. What's more, Functional Skills is intended to integrate school education and adult education, so there are all kinds of implications for our work in adult literacy. This seemed a good time to raise these issues in a workshop, to consider the historical and theoretical 'baggage' that comes with the word 'functional', and how different interpretations of the term will have different implications for policy and practice. As far as we are aware, this change to policy appears to have been introduced with little or no consultation with practitioners and learners, so we wanted the workshop to provide an opportunity for them to reflect critically on the concept and share their views. We therefore explored with workshop participants how they understand the term and how those working in England are responding to the planned introduction of Functional Skills. Colleagues from other countries were able to provide insights into whether the notion of functional literacy is part of the policy discourse in their contexts.

After explaining our motivation for offering the workshop, we invited participants to discuss in small groups what they understand by the term 'functional literacy' and to produce posters recording their responses, which were later displayed in the foyer of the conference venue (see photo at the end of this article). To guide the discussion we produced a pro-forma for the poster which included the following questions:

- What do you understand by the term 'functional literacy'?
- Is it used among your colleagues where you work?
Where do you work?
If yes, how does it / will it affect your practice?
- Is it relevant to your policy context?
If so, how?
- Do you find the term useful?
If so, in what way(s)?

These questions were also included in a questionnaire which other delegates completed outside the workshop and several more members have completed since the conference.

In the workshop groups presented their completed posters and there was some open discussion. A number of issues have been mentioned repeatedly in the posters, discussion and questionnaires, suggesting that RaPAL members broadly agree about the concept, although it is not relevant in some policy contexts.

Functional Literacy in Different Policy Contexts.

Practitioners from Scotland, Northern Ireland, The Republic of Ireland, Canada and England have given us their views. The majority of people from all these countries were concerned that 'functional' seems to represent a 'narrow', 'minimalist approach' which could prevent learners from moving on to what one person described as 'a more complex cognitive level'. However, one workshop group stated that it might be acceptable if used to describe 'a sub-

set of literacy'. Most of our respondents agreed that the term implies 'top down' rather than 'bottom up' teaching and that we need to ask who is allowed to define what counts as 'functional'. They felt that it was likely to result in decontextualised teaching that failed to address issues of empowerment and identity.

There was some scepticism about the way Functional Skills is being introduced in England as a supposedly 'new' initiative. Some people felt that more materials from the 'embedded' range would be incorporated into adult literacy education so that the focus would remain narrowly on 'mundane, practical activities'.

Colleagues from England also felt uneasy that the policy is being introduced 'by the back door', as one of them put it. Some conference delegates asked about the rationale for the choice of the word 'functional' in view of some of its unhelpful historical and ideological associations. Two colleagues who have been involved in the discussions that resulted in this choice have confirmed that because several other terms have already been used (Basic Skills, Essential Skills, Key Skills), it was actually very difficult to find a suitable alternative.

Practitioners from Scotland informed us that at present the word 'functional' is not part of the policy discourse there, although some thought it likely that the Scottish government might eventually decide to follow England. They seemed to feel a sense of resignation about this, with one person telling us that 'it's like a train a-coming'. To date, colleagues in Northern Ireland have not heard of any plans to introduce Functional Skills there. It is not part of the policy discourse in Canada or the Irish Republic and was not considered to be useful by anyone from these countries.

Historical Overview of Functional Literacy Programmes

Following our discussion of the posters in the conference workshop, Mary Hamilton presented a brief history of the term 'functional literacy' in order to show some of the historical and theoretical 'baggage' attached to it. The concept was originally promoted in the US by the army, becoming influential during and after World War Two. The first time it was discussed in a publication that was accessible internationally was in 1956, when Gray defined it as being able to:

engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in [their] culture or group (Gray 1956:24)

Gray's definition strongly influenced UNESCO policy and programmes. It attempted to express the idea that there is a continuum from "illiteracy" to "literacy" rather than an either/or state. It also tried to define a point at which people can be deemed 'functional', which might be when they have reached a certain 'reading age', for example. The key underlying assumption is that literacy links directly with economic development and individual prosperity; it is also assumed that literacy instruction needs to link with real life activities, although this idea is not fully explained. Gray's definition was accompanied by more liberal rhetoric on the part of UNESCO which portrayed literacy not as an end in itself but rather as a means to a fuller and more creative life controlled by people themselves and enabling access to their own culture. This understanding of functional literacy underpinned 11 UNESCO pilot projects in the 1960s and 1970s which provided occupationally embedded literacy instruction. However, due to a lack of infrastructure and cultural support, these projects all failed.

Functional literacy was always closely tied up with the idea of employability and the desire to measure and compare literacy levels and texts. It therefore gave rise to a number of surveys and to the production of various tests, one of the first being the US Adult Performance Level (APL) Survey in the early 1970s (Northcutt 1976). The APL was based on the idea that the concept of literacy is meaningful only in a specific cultural context; as technology changes, the requirements for literacy change, and literacy must therefore be redefined as technology changes over time. However, there was a contradiction within this model because although it recognised the relative nature of literacy, it still aimed to achieve a single or standardised measure and sought to impose its own definition of appropriate tasks.

There is also a relationship between this approach and the language of competencies and skills that took hold of education and training in the UK in the 1980s in the form of NVQs and Key/Basic Skills. It is also implicit in the "human capital" approach to literacy that is still so prevalent in policy. This version of literacy tends to slip into a narrow vocational definition. Sticht, for example, defined functional literacy in the context of working life as:

possession of those literary skills needed to successfully perform some reading task imposed by an external agent between a

reader and a goal the reader wishes to obtain (quoted in Nafziger et al 1975: 21)

In the UK in the 1970s the Right to Read campaign referred to UNESCO and borrowed a definition of functional literacy from the US National Reading Centre:

A person is functionally literate when he [sic] has command of reading skills that permit him to go about his daily activities successfully on the job or to move about society normally with comprehension of the usual printed expressions and messages he encounters (British Association of Settlements 1974:5)

At the time, this was seen as a positive move away from school-based measures of 'reading age'; literacy was seen as contextualised in the everyday, starting from real life materials and tasks identified by adult learners, rather than those designed by teachers and adapted from children's books and worksheets.

In the 1980s the Ontario Adult Functional Literacy Framework was developed. As with the UNESCO model, this framework was based on a definition that tended to slide into viewing functional literacy as synonymous with a narrow, top-down definition of vocational skills decided by employers and others, not by learners themselves. It was concerned with "everyday" tasks, but only a narrow range of such tasks was represented in tests and curricula, the focus being on texts connected with employment, bureaucracy and being a consumer. Initiatives such as the development of the Ontario framework show the continuities between the early attempts at definitions and the model eventually adopted by the OECD and the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). The latter define literacy as follows:

Literacy means more than understanding how to read, write or calculate. It involves understanding and being able to use the information required to function effectively in knowledge-based societies that will dominate in the twenty-first century.

Literacy is no longer defined merely in terms of a basic threshold of reading ability, mastered by almost all those growing up in developed countries. Rather, literacy is now seen as how adults use written information to function in society. (OECD)

Part of the baggage that "functional literacy" carries with it is the more general notion of "functionalism" found in sociology, which has been widely critiqued against alternative theories. Functionalism places the emphasis on maintaining the status quo; people are socialised to fit in to society, not to change it. This is therefore an inherently conservative idea that does not explain how people can exert agency to change beyond adjusting to society's demands. It is not concerned with people's own meanings and interpretations or the symbolic aspects of social life, but is performative, system driven.

By implication it creates the opposite side of the coin: dysfunctionality and deviance.

To sum up, we find that there are numerous contradictions within and between different approaches and policies which claim to be 'functional'. The following list shows just some of the many ways different people over time have defined the term.

- purposeful
- effective
- fitting in
- low level literacy
- task related
- practical
- performative
- measurable
- vocational
- routine, mundane, bureaucratic
- useful
- relevant to real life
- embedded in a bigger picture

However, it is important to be aware of what is ignored or left out of definitions of functional literacy. We could therefore add that functional is not:

- creative
- empowering
- critical
- developmental
- fun
- interesting

Contemporary Definitions of 'Functional'
Mary's presentation made it clear that despite some commonalities between the different models, historically there has been no single agreed definition, and different definitions have different implications for policy and practice. We have found that there are contradictions and tensions between the different ways in which the

term is used in contemporary discourse and we wanted to give participants the opportunity to reflect on some current definitions and their implications. We therefore gave groups a selection of recent quotations about functional literacy from various sources and asked them to stick them onto flipchart paper in a way that showed how they relate to one another. In addition we asked people to suggest alternative definitions which they might find useful in their own professional contexts. These are the definitions we provided:

My approach to writing is I start off with functional stuff. The majority of the students I teach, I do start on this "I can write letters, I can fill in forms, I can do this." Depending on what level they come in at, obviously..... Because it's what they need straight away in everyday living So I start using things like shopping lists and form filling and notes to the milkman, or whatever, that type of functional literacy to give me, you know, the work on plurals and everyday language that's coming through.

[Transcript of an interview with a Skills for Life teacher carried out by Amy Burgess, November 2003]

The term *functional* should be considered in the broad sense of providing learners with the skills and abilities they need to take an active and responsible role in their communities, in their workplace and in educational settings. It requires learners to be able to communicate in ways that make them effective and involved as citizens, operate confidently and to convey their ideas and opinions clearly in a wide range of contexts.

[QCA (2006) Functional skills standards: English QCA /06/2934]

'Almost one half of adults (17 million) have difficulty with numbers and one seventh (5 million) are not functionally literate' '95% of adults to achieve the basic skills of functional literacy and numeracy by 2020'

[Leitch S (2006) *Prosperity for All in the Global Economy: World Class Skills* Norwich: HMSO. Leitch defines functional literacy as what was measured by the International Adult Literacy Survey (p42 paragraph 2.10)]

[Functional] approaches to the teaching of writing involve teaching in real-life contexts, or in simulated contexts, where the emphasis is on adequate fulfillment of a specified social goal – a goal specified by someone in authority such as an employer, or imposed by bureaucracy, rather than the learner's own goal.

[Ivanič R (2004) 'Discourses of writing and Learning to Write' *Language and Education* 18 (3) 220-245]

A 'functional skills-based approach' focuses attention on the autonomy of the text and the meanings it carries. It searches for universal features of adult literacy, numeracy and language and other semiotic sign systems. It leads to narrow, reductionist definitions of reading, writing and calculating and ignores aspects of learning that cannot be dealt with at the psychological or cognitive level. In this way, we maintain that it excludes many issues that are important for understanding learner responses.

[Hamilton M, Hillier Y and Tett L (2006) 'Introduction: Social Practice of Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Language' in Tett L, Hamilton M and Hillier Y (eds) *Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Language* Maidenhead: Open University Press]

Functional versus Expressive Writing

By encouraging rigid distinctions between formal and informal writing we are in danger of reinforcing the notion that transactional [functional] writing is dull, remote and stuffy while personal writing is fun.

Wallis J (1995) 'You can't write until you can spell: attitudes to writing amongst adult basic education students.' In J Mace (ed) *Literacy, Language and Community Publishing. Essays in Adult Education* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

The responses of the different groups to this activity were interesting. None of them found a definition they felt they could work with and most thought that any version of 'functional' would exclude some of the most crucial goals and principles of literacy education. These included the need for teaching that is transformative, enabling and relevant and that

promotes critical reflection and confidence.

A colleague who has been involved in piloting the new Functional Skills in England reflected that the term has historically been used in a narrow way, as if it meant 'survival literacy'. However, she felt that this is gradually changing and that 'it is up to us to extend its application' to encompass a more holistic approach that includes a critical dimension.

Will practitioners in England find ways of working with and extending the concept of functional literacy? Will they be placed in the position of mediators between the interests of their learners and the less desirable aspects of policy? If so, how will they do these things in practice? We hope that as the policy is implemented and colleagues begin to work with it, they will share their reflections and experiences in the RaPAL journal.

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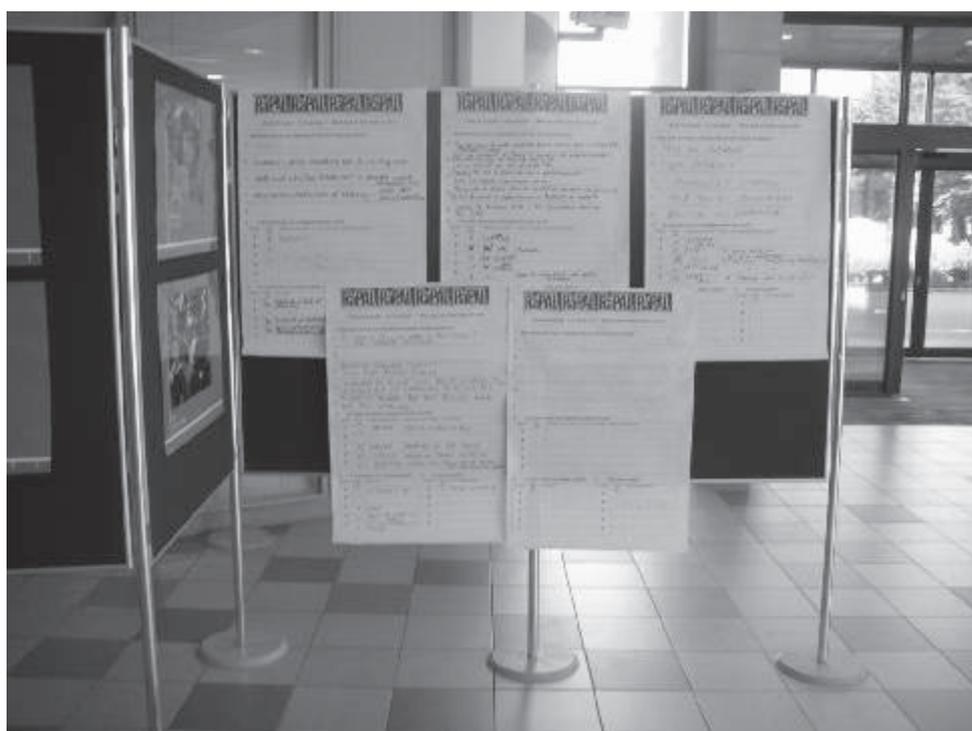
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Showing up and seeing what happens: A reflection on lesson planning and process in adult education

David Kirwan

David has been working as an ESOL tutor and materials developer with an adult basic education programme in County Donegal in the North West of Ireland for the last six years. He has recently begun to work as an organiser of literacy classes within the same programme. He is interested in using digital media in language and literacy classes and hopes to complete an MSc dissertation on this topic in 2009.

While attending a recent educational event, the Galway RaPAL conference, as a participant without specified function, I had the luxury of not having to worry over planning. Management of attendance, accommodation and participation required minimal effort on my part; all I had to do was show up and see what happened. The organisation of the conference, on the other hand, involved extensive preparation, and the approach to planning and style of delivery of the programme left much food for thought. This paper is a reflection on certain areas of personal professional practice that was prompted by my involvement in that conference. It explores, in no great detail, three features of teaching practice in adult education: planning lessons, the importance of context, and the question of identity in the classroom. It is unavoidably teacher-centred in perspective, offering only tentative suggestions regarding practice and development. The principal purpose of the paper is to highlight particular matters of personal interest in relation to teaching that I feel deserve greater investigation.

Striking a balance

A matter of personal consideration for some time now has been the tyranny of making plans. Increasingly, I find that much of my present time is spent planning future actions: trying to look forward in time and consider when, where, and how certain things will or should happen. I am sure this is true for many or most of us. John Lennon sang: *Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans*, and more than ever I feel that this is true. Existing moments expire overlooked in preparation for future ones. Painstaking effort is put into making plans for weekends, holidays, weddings, families, careers, lives, and most relevant here, lessons. Agonising over lesson plans, however, is not simply a concern over the use or misuse of present time; there are also, it seems to me, questions regarding the efficacy of a certain type of planned lesson.

In lessons, as in life, there needs to be room for contingency. During training, teachers are often evaluated on the implementation of lessons

according to a plan - a predetermined set of step-by-step instructions predicting how and when learning will happen over a given period. Such strict adherence to this type of plan, though, leaves little room for unanticipated learning opportunities and the development of the improvisational skills teachers need to handle the unexpected. Taking Vygotsky's belief that social interaction¹ is a key factor in the learning process, Van Lier (1996: 200), in relation to the language-learning classroom specifically, argues that *'social interaction ... cannot be planned but must be constructed locally'* - in the here-and-now. He is not advocating an anarchic lesson, although that might be worth exploring, as he continues by insisting that planned recurring activities are important too as they provide reassurance and echo the ritual elements essential to any culture (1996: 200).

At this point it is important to define the type of event we are talking about. Richards offers a sufficiently comprehensive and relevant definition of a lesson:

It is, of course, possible to define a lesson solely in terms of the teacher's 'pedagogical purpose' but this would exclude the many unanticipated, incidental and spontaneous interpolations - including those directly flouting the teacher's purpose - that provide educationally valuable diversions and sometimes important learning opportunities. While nobody would wish to deny that teaching is and should be a goal-directed activity, this does not mean that interactional legitimacy is determined solely by pedagogic purpose. (2006: 57)

For one thing, basing lessons purely on pedagogical or teacher's purpose tends to exclude learner input and assumes that institution and practitioner know best. Questions of control and identity arise here which I will address later but a lesson such as Richards' appears to be sufficiently flexible to allow equality of purpose and balanced interaction. Surely a balance needs to be struck between

1. Social interaction is meant here in a broad sense, defined by Van Lier as: *'being 'busy with' language in one's dealings with the world, with other people and human artefacts, and with everything, real or imagined, that links self to the world'* (1996: 147).

planned and improvised activities if learning potential is to be maximised in class in an equitable way; Richards' definition legitimises departure from all preconceived purpose as improvisation rather than digression. It seems unacceptable, almost totalitarian, to assume - let alone insist - that interaction adhere to the teacher's lesson plan.

The thought of improvising can be daunting for teachers accustomed to a more strict class structure. On the subject of improvisation in jazz music Charlie Parker is quoted advising players to: *Learn everything, and then forget it all*. This recommendation seems transferable to other, albeit less artistic, pursuits. Through life, study and practice the teacher internalises a great deal which can be called upon when the unexpected arises. This wealth of knowledge and experience can be tapped to turn unexpected events into valuable improvised learning opportunities. A certain amount of confidence is required on the teacher's part to take unplanned detours but it seems to me that such confidence only comes from practice. By allowing room for the unexpected in class and using the spontaneity such incidents demand the teacher can develop in an authentic way, from within himself and his own experience. It is often the unforeseen events that occur in class that offer the most interesting topics for discussion and practice: the learner who arrives on crutches, the torrential downpour, or the classmate who declares their imminent departure to Australia.

These are topics of interaction emanating from the learners' lives and the world around them and as such are often more valid than a pre-planned lesson on 'going to the supermarket' or 'filling out forms'. In lessons, strategic planning, in the forms of schemes of work and lesson plans, can become a background over which the teacher can make a set of here-and-now principled choices which equate to a form of online planning or improvisation.

What about context?

To strike this balance and allow authentic social interaction to occur in a classroom, the teaching approach, Kumaravadivelu states, *'must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu'* (2001). This call for a teaching that is particular to context is part of a move toward a 'postmethod pedagogy' (Ibid, 2001) that offers a convincing framework for teachers to consider when planning lessons. This

pedagogy goes beyond context, however, and calls for a disruption of the hierarchy of roles that traditionally exists in education.

Practitioners and theorists are no longer separate; teachers need to be able to construct their own theory of practice and in these conditions practice will be able to divine the breadth of experience that learners bring with them to class in a more democratic way.

Sensitivity to context is essential if a teacher is to plan and deliver the balanced lesson described. It is usual and advisable that teachers get to know the people they share the classroom with. Together they, over time, assess needs and help learners work towards their particular goals. For many reasons this is not always easy and the teacher can, at times, unintentionally cause discomfort, frustration or even offence. Such negative incidents are probably unavoidable and even though it seems advisable that they be kept to a minimum, no matter how good the teacher is there is no escaping the fact that the job will always present challenges. Taking the actor Michael Caine's advice on exploiting difficulty by turning it to one's advantage these inconveniences could be seen as an opportunity to improvise - part of the online planning process.

'I was in rehearsals, waiting behind a door to come out while a couple onstage were having a row. They started throwing furniture and a chair lodged in front of the door.

My cue came and I could only get halfway in. I stopped and said, "I can't get in. The chair's in the way."

And the producer said, "Use the difficulty."

I said, "What do you mean?"

And he said, "Well, if it's a drama [you're acting in], pick up the chair and smash it. If it's a comedy, fall over it." (Caine, M.)

This may call for some fast thinking but, whatever the outcome, mistakes, even those made by 'Teacher', are an integral part of the learning process and a significant foundation for development. Besides, it seems only right that teachers should be willing to lose face in class if learners are to be encouraged to take the risks necessary to learn.

Who is who in the classroom?

Questions of power and control are particularly pertinent in the adult learning context. The notion of learning as a journey is well established. It is also widely recognised that this journey is life-long and ultimately self-directed. Awareness would seem to be the journey's

departure point, a point from which the learner enters a cycle of action, critical reflection and reflection-based change. Becoming critically aware is the kernel of this process and, whether it is termed 'conscientisation,' or 'perspective transformation' (Tennant, 1997), it is the individual learner who is its initiator and controller. Education, I believe, should give people greater control over their lives and offer paths towards becoming self-empowered autonomous individuals more conscious of themselves, their world, and the possibilities of both.

The learner can travel this journey alone or within some institutional context. In the latter the teacher, to extend the metaphor, could be seen as a guide. To assign this position to teachers however, is an obvious contradiction; it is a misappropriation of power and a reconstruction of a hierarchy in which the learner - rightful initiator and controller of the process - becomes instantly disenfranchised. In adult education, this paradoxical situation is something that is not immediately evident to the teacher and often remains unconsidered by learners. The raising of learner consciousness and the cycle of development that follows is gradual and learners often tend to preserve the attitude of a novice in the hands of the experts - teachers. The teacher in a literacy, numeracy or ESOL classroom, undoubtedly, should possess expertise and experience in their particular field. But, if well-balanced context-sensitive teaching and learning is to flourish, whose class is it?

Terms other than *teacher* are often adopted, tutor and facilitator being the most popular, but regardless of the appellation, the individual at the top of the classroom is unavoidably faced with a certain crisis of identity and questions about role. In classroom interaction, as in any other social interaction, the question of identity is not a simple case of being one or the other, either teacher or student. When we interact with others there exists a series of identities that fluctuates in response to a complex series of factors, not least: context and perceived relationships. Three aspects of identity offered by Zimmerman relevant to the analysis of interaction are:

- 1) **Discourse identity** - this relates to the moment-by-moment organisation of the interaction: current speaker; listener; questioner etc.
- 2) **Situated identity** - this is relevant to particular situations and refers to participants' contribution: in a classroom, a

possible relevant situated identity would be teacher and student.

- 3) **Transportable identity** - this refers to identities that are assignable or claimable due to physical or culturally founded emblems: being white, middle-aged, a father, English etc. (1998: 90-91)

Richards refines Zimmerman's proposition by suggesting that each participant in any given interaction also possesses 'a 'default' identity and associated discourse identities' (2006: 60). This concept relates to the expectations associated with a particular context and further complicates the relationships between the various parties during interaction. An example offered is that in a classroom two default identities might be teacher and student, whereas in a school staff-room they would be colleague and colleague. Citing Schegloff, Richards agrees that these 'default' identities *'are not binding, but it nevertheless seems analytically relevant to recognise their pre-eminent position within a range of possible options'* (2006: 60). Richards' exploration into social interaction within the classroom highlights a need for greater awareness and reflective analysis of the complexity of the relationships between aspects of discourse as well as personal and institutional identity.

Another much-discussed and context-related feature of classroom discourse that immediately relates to power and control is IRF:

- 1) Initiation (or question, elicitation)
- 2) Response (or answer)
- 3) Feedback (or follow-up, evaluation)

In short, an all too familiar example of this exchange is: the teacher asks a question to which he knows the answer, the learner/s answer, and the teacher gives positive or negative feedback. The teacher is clearly in control here; he starts and finishes the turn while all the time holding the knowledge required to judge the response worthy or otherwise.

This exchange cycle is undoubtedly familiar and pervades educational environments. IRF is not in itself a bad thing and can be disrupted to positive and, hopefully, more democratic effect. The use of open or 'real' questions, questions posed by the teacher but to which he does not have the answer, is often recommended. This questioning approach appears sound, leaving room for learner-knowledge to be aired, and affording opportunity for further learner-initiated

interaction. Research shows however, that focusing on the question-stage of the exchange has little effect on predominance of the teacher as controller of classroom interaction (Nunan, 1987). The final part of the cycle, the feedback stage, where the flow of interaction is usually stemmed by the teacher's 'verdict' could present a better approach. Focusing on this third element of IRF can prove fruitful in the search to make the cycle more equitable. It is suggested that 'if, in the follow-up (or feedback) move, the teacher avoids evaluation and instead requests justifications, connections or counter-arguments and allows students to self-select in making contributions' extended student participant can be sustained (Nassaji and Wells, 2000). This focus on the end of the exchange lends greater flexibility and is likely to provide a more conversation-like interaction in which the teacher is merely one of many participants stepping in and out of their various 'default' and associated discourse identities.

Conclusions

Unlike present and past, future happenings cannot be said to be either-or; the future always remains uncertain, a maybe. When a teacher enters the classroom he needs to have prepared a strategic framework, a lesson plan, but he also needs to be prepared to make informed choices as the lesson progresses about how it should progress. Finding a successful balance between planning and improvising is a challenge, but a worthwhile and exciting one that is, given practice, not insurmountable. Kumaravadivelu offers a set of 10 macrostrategies (1994) that presents a starting point for forming an individual approach to framing lessons. Sensitivity to context is essential if the teacher is to develop the skills necessary to achieve this balance. Teachers need to be 'in tune' with the individuals attending class, their strengths and weaknesses, needs and aspirations. They also need to know where they are coming from with regard to socio-economic, educational and cultural background. Most importantly, perhaps, teachers need to be conscious of what is going on in class from moment-to-moment and possess what Prabhu terms a teacher's *sense of plausibility* (1990), in order to respond adequately and effectively to unanticipated eventualities.

A well-worn piece of advice that rolls off the tongue all too often and easily is: *just be yourself!* As a many-time receiver of this nugget - before job interviews mostly - I am usually left with the question: *Who else could I be, then?* The self is a complex thing it seems, a

social and linguistic construct, a nexus of meaning rather than an unchanging entity (Kerby, 1991: 34). Teaching calls for an investment of self on the teacher's as well as the learners' part. It also calls for an awareness of the complexity of the associated identities this entails. An asymmetry of knowledge prevails in teacher-fronted classroom activity; the teacher is in charge, a default dictator. Disrupting this format through group/paired work and less evaluation at the end of speech turns provides learners a greater opportunity to express themselves as equal participants rather than novices. Bringing this attitude into the classroom also opens access to 'transportable identities'. You - the teacher, the white man, the father, the Sopranos fan, the flat-picking Bluegrass enthusiast - are *being yourself* in class and, at the same time, encouraging learners to do the same.

I arrived at the conference stress-free and enthused and that, pretty much, was how I left. I had just shown up at the assigned venues at the appointed times without any great forethought or planning. I *was* prepared however, and the strategic framework provided allowed the desired authentic, interesting and informative interaction to happen.

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Writing for the Rapal journal

Yvon Appleby

Yvon is a senior lecturer at the University of Central Lancashire and is Coordinator for the RaPAL Journal

The workshop 'Writing for the Rapal journal' was designed to give people information about writing for the journal and to gain confidence in having a go themselves. Several members of the journal editorial team were on hand to explain, support, guide and take part in the workshop. These included Julie Collins, Jackie Sitters, Amy Burgess, Shelley Tracey and Reviews Editor Ellayne Fowler. We all looked at back issues in heaps on the floor seeing the different types of writing that has been published over the years. We saw how some contributions discussed research whilst others were much more practice based and yet others were a combination of the two. We explored how some people used poetry to discuss ideas and feelings, others photographs and images whilst others used mainly writing. It was agreed that images were powerful and they helped the journal to 'come alive'. We all felt that it would be good to include more images, cartoons and photographs in the future.

Some pieces were collaborative using voices from students as well as tutors. Julie Collins described her work with homeless men in producing a piece which represented their experiences as well as her own. This, she explained, took time and many steps in the process of writing. Shelley Tracey also described how she worked with tutors and learners in writing collaboratively in Belfast. We looked at how tutors shared their knowledge and understanding of what was happening within their classroom in reflective and practice based pieces. We also looked at longer articles which critically discussed research and policy. People felt that these were sometimes more challenging and might have to be read several times to fully understand. It was felt to be worth the effort of reading these longer pieces in 'several sittings'.

As we explored the back copies the way that the journal is structured became obvious. The first section has shorter more reflective pieces based in practice. The second section has pieces that are longer and often linked research to practice. The third section has peer reviewed articles which are more sustained and develop a critical perspective on research and practice. In discussion we felt that first time writers might want to start by writing about their practice in the first section or by writing a review which Ellayne explained about. Submissions are open so it is possible to have a go at any section.

Whatever type of submission, whether writing, poetry or images, or section the editorial group explained that they provide support and feedback throughout the process – from early ideas to the end piece.

One can only do so much talking about writing so we had a go. We were lucky to have Paul and George two students from a Glasgow project who were confident at writing in workshops as they had just published their work. Their enthusiasm for the task of writing a short poem using the words *Guinness, laugh, getting there, excitement conference and writing*, was infectious. Very quickly each small group had produced a poem which reflected their feelings about coming to the Galway conference.

Guinness is strong
Getting there in time for the pub
Excitement to be there
Laughing at the barmaid
We write her phone number
We meet a lot of people
At the conference in the bar
Paul

The excitement of writing
Is getting there
In the conference hall we laugh
Hearing the craic
Of Guinness soaked poets
Ellayne and Julie

Getting there in the excitement of
Guinness is not bad
For the very first
Conference in Ireland
And we are all writing
For a laugh
David and George

In Galway
At the Rapal conference
Brendan O'Callaran encouraging us
To laugh, to taste the Guinness in the city
Writing for the journal

Sex in the city it's not
Guinness and laughs while
Writing for the journal
At a conference and
Lots of excitement in getting there
Gill and Mary

The excitement of getting there
To Galway
To the conference in the
Home country of Guinness
It makes me laugh
I think of this
As writing a poem
Pure genius - I feel write at home!
Toni, Amy Ciara

manageable first step as the reviews are short and rely upon knowledge and understanding from practice. These are things people are more confident about and you get to keep whatever you review. We hope that some of these early ideas come to fruition and others may be stimulated by reading this. The writing workshop 'Writing for the RaPAL journal' has worked as everyone who came is published in this conference edition!

Several people discussed ideas they had for pieces. Others said they were interested in having a go at reviewing one of the publications sent to the journal. This was felt to be a

For more information about the journal or to discuss ideas please contact any of the editorial group or me at YAppleby@uclan.ac.uk



Participants in the Writing for RaPAL workshop.

'Why don't they speak English?', 'Why can't they speak English?', 'Why won't they speak English' and 'Whose English is it anyway?'

Sheila Rosenberg

This is the edited version of the pre-event address to RAPAL (Research and Practice in Adult Literacy) annual conference, University of Galway, June 2008

Sheila has been involved in English teaching – as a volunteer, paid teacher and organiser and as an inspector – to all ages up to 85 and at many levels. These have ranged from SEN in schools to University Extra-Mural classes in literature, and from adult literacy to ESOL for those aiming for higher education. In December 2007 she published her Critical History of ESOL in the UK 1870-2006, drawing on her own experience and researches, but also on the experience and archives of many colleagues in the field. Her presentation looked at aspects of the present situation for ESOL teaching, as well as at the new world order of many Englishes, and suggested that these have

Introduction

I must begin by acknowledging that the situation facing ESOL learners and teachers is different in different parts of the British Isles. Refugees and migrant workers in Wales are taught Welsh as well as English and they don't pay fees up to Level 2. In Scotland ESOL learners cannot join English literacy classes unless they are "illiterate" in their mother tongue. In Northern Ireland teachers also deal with Irish speakers. Wales and Ireland have recent, and often remembered, experience of being linguistically colonised. Ireland is just beginning to deal with language needs of asylum seekers. The Irish Prime Minister has recently suggested knowledge of English should be a requirement for citizenship, whereas in the UK the citizenship requirements for knowledge of life in the UK (with different subsets for the four nations) and a knowledge of English or Welsh or Scots Gaelic have been in place since 2002.

However, I want to deal with the common experience of ESOL learning and teaching which I suggest transcends local differences. I know also that we have delegates here from Australia, Canada and South Africa. Most of my material will be drawn from the UK, and mainly England, but not all.

The other thing I want to establish very clearly is that I use the term ESOL to refer to anyone who does not have English as his or her first language. This may range from absolute beginners to fluent speakers, and from those who are well-educated and literate in the Latin script, or highly literate in another script, to those with no literacy skill in any language. This presents a considerable challenge to teachers, whether they are dealing in adult literacy classes with ESOL learners who are fairly fluent but need to develop their literacy skills, or with absolute beginners in ESOL classes, some of

whom are highly literate in the Latin script and others of whom are just beginning to learn the alphabet. But I want to emphasise that there is no glass ceiling for ESOL learners. At a recent event run by the Ruth Hayman Trust – the charity set up by NATECLA (the sister organisation to RaPAL for ESOL teachers) and which now mainly supports refugees and asylum seekers in the UK – we had three very moving presentations from people to whom we had given relatively small grants for examination and tuition fees: – an Iraqi doctor, a Moldovan lawyer and an interpreter from Sudan.

But there has, I submit, been a glass ceiling in our thinking about ESOL, though this has not been of our making and has owed much to the constraints of government funding and the financial power of the global EFL market which provides for overseas students of English. For fifty years teachers of ESOL in the UK (but not it seems in other English speaking countries) have been involved in the battle of the acronyms especially between ESL (for immigrants) and EFL (for overseas learners). And because these debates have concentrated on trying to identify set curricula and stereotyping learners into groups, rather than looking at the various and varied identified needs of particular learners, many learners have been shoehorned into inappropriate provision.

This has been a problem for decades. In the 1970s one FE college in an inner London borough with a high immigrant population had a very strong EFL tradition but it also provided established and respected courses for doctors taking the PLAB test in order to qualify to practise in the UK, as well as ESOL courses for 16-19 year olds resident in the UK. In that context an Asian woman in a sari who arrived to enrol on a course could find herself directed straight to basic classes in the community,

unless she got in quickly enough with the information that she was an orthopaedic surgeon from Mombasa who wanted the PLAB course.

I now believe that those debates on the acronyms often generated more heat than light and created more fog than opened up blue skies. And that is why in the UK, by the beginning of the 21st century we finally had come to use the term ESOL as a plain, neutral statement of fact to describe someone who spoke English as a second or other language, without suggesting a level of competence or a particular curriculum. But there is now once more a heated debate in England, this time between EFL and ESOL (which has somehow transformed itself into the old ESL for immigrants), ignited this time by inadequate funding, massive demand and the Government's wish to prioritise certain groups and the provision to be made for them. And then, to fuel the debate still further – and as will be covered in the last section – the one-size-fits-all EFL model is itself being increasingly challenged globally as the world demands on English as a lingua franca mean that different countries are developing their own systems for English teaching and learning.

So to the main issues: 'Why don't they speak English?' looks mainly at matters of fact. 'Why can't they speak English?' looks at impediments to learning but also examines some of the differing and often conflicting perceptions of a speaker's competence in the language. 'Why won't they speak English?' deals with the much more sensitive and fraught issues of which language a citizen chooses to use. These are often in conflict with official perceptions and fears in the context of a multi-cultural and multi-lingual society, and concern about identity, social coherence and even national security. Finally 'Whose English is it anyway?' considers the implications for the UK and Ireland of the development of English as the international lingua franca.

Why don't they speak English?

The first and obvious reason is that they have had no opportunity and/or no exposure at all. I don't speak Lingala and I am sure any group of teachers could together tot up hundreds of languages they don't speak. But there are people in the British Isles who would seem to have some exposure but still don't speak English. Why? Well they may be living and being looked after in a monolingual community. This might apply particularly to new brides

arriving into settled communities. We have long known that this can also apply in the monolingual workplace. The Adult Language Use Survey in the 1980s did some useful work in this and found a direct correlation between the use of and competence in English and the language used in the workplace. The workers in the kitchen of a Chinese restaurant, for example, would operate in and need only Cantonese. The waiters and managers needed and spoke more English.

Through the work of Norton (2000), Block (2007) and others, we are now developing a deeper understanding that acquiring a language as an adult, even when the learner is living or working in a context where that language is spoken, depends on a complex set of motivations and experiences. However, we have long known that not using English may be a matter of personal choice. This is particularly true of which language is used in the domain of the home and family, and in this way it overlaps with 'Why won't they speak English?' which comes later.

Why can't they speak English?

Though this may sometimes be said with overtones of exasperation by harassed officials, the intention here is to take the statement at its face value to indicate that there has been no exposure to the language and that there are impediments to learning.

Women at home may have no child care to enable them to get out and there are rarely childcare facilities attached to classes. And in the UK spouses have to wait a year before they are entitled to English tuition, and it is still then means tested. Then there are would-be learners who are disabled and cannot get out of the house. It was for learners such as these, as well as the shy and unconfident, that the traditional Home Tutor schemes were set up. There is also the fact that many older immigrants never learned much English, or if they did, some have actually lost it as they have grown older. All this has implications for community-based and social service provision.

Another impediment to learning is that there is no provision and teaching expertise available in the particular area. This is especially true in rural communities to which refugees have been dispersed or where migrant workers have been recruited.

Then, there is the fact that where provision is made it can be woefully insufficient and there

are long waiting lists, and the provision does not meet the needs of the wide range of learners. These were the findings of the 2006 NIACE survey of ESOL provision in England published as *More than a Language*.

In a monolingual or multi-lingual workplaces there may be no opportunities for workers to learn English. Governments across the years have adopted a variety of strategies to encourage employers to release their employees for English tuition. In England we can go back the Industrial Training Act of 1964 which allowed for the provision of English classes in the workplace, but by 1969 only a couple of Industrial Training Boards made any provision. That is why the work of the Industrial Language Service, 1974 -1989, was so valuable. After its abolition it was not replaced. Successive UK governments then tried find other ways of involving more employers in the language learning of their workers but with only limited success. This was the focus of the NIACE conference *Learning at Work* in May 2008. Attended by teachers, Union Learning Representatives and employers, it looked at all adult basic skills learning in the workplace, but there was a very considerable emphasis on ESOL.

A more recent impediment is that of fees. One estimate is that in England, learners who do not qualify for means-tested fee remission, can be charged as much as £880 per course. Adult literacy and numeracy tuition remains free. Charging fees for ESOL has met enormous opposition, but the demand is massive and the Government in England in 2006 felt it would not, or could not continue free tuition up to Level 2. Some efforts were made by the Mayor of London and the Learning and Skills Councils to provide temporary funding to mitigate the effects of this ruling on the low-paid, and on wives at home who would otherwise have to ask their husbands for the money.

Discussions about availability and accessibility obviously raise the wider question of entitlement – when, and for how long, learn; how much you pay for tuition. These issues affect all countries providing migrant settlement or on-arrival programmes, such as in Australia. The NIACE survey of ESOL in England, *More than a Language* (2006), lists some of the different programmes in different countries. Nowhere is there an open-ended and all-level commitment.

Whose perception it is that a person cannot speak English?

Perceptions of someone's ability in English depend on who is doing the evaluating. Women in particular often feel inadequate, particularly in front of their children. A woman interviewed in the 1970s about her childhood memories of the Jewish immigrant community in the East End at the beginning of the twentieth century described how 'my mother spoke English in 26 different languages' and others said their mothers could not speak English at all (White: 82). These perceptions of the ability in English within the family can lead to mothers in particular feeling very inadequate.

Even when all objective evidence would seem to indicate mastery of the language, the learner can still feel inadequate. The experience of one woman interviewed in 2000 will chime with many ESOL teachers and learners today. When she arrived in England at the end of World War Two from a Polish refugee camp in East Africa, and aged 18, she wanted to train as a nurse. Initially she had great difficulty with English, even though she had had lessons in the camp school, 'English was just a noise.' She speaks warmly of her 'excellent English teacher' (Barton, 2000: 31) who helped her pass her examinations and qualify as a nurse. She married another Pole, and when the regime there changed, and they were unable to fulfil their dream and return to Poland, they set up home in Lincoln and then in Nottingham to bring up their family. Despite the length of her stay in England, and the fact that she had qualified as a nurse in the English system, she could still say:

I still felt self-conscious about my competency in the English language despite the years spent in Lincoln. It was difficult for me at parents' evenings or when I had to discuss problems, and it marginalized my involvement in school life. I felt that it was a barrier at times to understanding my children's educational needs, but they all succeeded in school (Barton 2000: 32).

This nurse reminds us how easy it is to underestimate the tensions, conflicts and continuing lack of confidence experienced by adult ESOL learners, even in the most apparently successful cases. One wonders how far her perception of her inadequacy came from herself, her family or the responses she experienced in the wider community because she still spoke with a Polish accent.

The official perception of someone's ability in English, and how that is arrived at

Governments and their departments are also interested in assessing the competence in English of their citizens but the tools for doing this have often been very crude. An extremely influential survey, *The Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities in England* was carried out in 1994. Its evidence for the language levels of respondents came from the judgements of the interviewers themselves. At the end of each interview, which might have been conducted entirely in the respondent's mother tongue, the interviewer was asked to say whether respondent 'speak[s] English fluently, fairly well, slightly or not at all' (Modood et al 1997: 592). However, an examination of the instructions to interviewers shows that they were not told how to carry out this assessment or given descriptors for the different levels of English; the only guidance given was that, at the end of an interview conducted in the respondent's mother tongue, the interviewer should switch language and initiate a conversation in English. This tactic alone could have led to a mis-reporting of the actual level of the respondent's English. For some ten years following their publication, these FNSEM findings on language levels were drawn on in a large number of government policy documents.

Nonetheless, the survey's findings on the language levels of women from the Indian sub-continent were similar to those which had prompted the Community Relations Council's language schemes in the 1960s and the BBC Parosi project in the middle 1970s. This was also cited in the Kennedy Report, *Learning Works: Widening Participation in Further Education* in 1997.

However, there are also problems with self-reported levels of competence, as used in the recent NIACE Language Survey (2008). Khanna et al (1998) show how these can be often be over-optimistic.

Why won't they speak English?

Such statements can come from racists in the community, or they can reflect the view of perplexed officialdom that not speaking English is evidence of bloody-minded incalcitrance or even of subversion. But, as bi-lingual speakers themselves know, not speaking English can reflect an unforced, personal choice on the part of the speaker.

From the point of view of ESOL speakers themselves

For the ESOL learner his or her own language is a means of maintaining identity and culture, and the use of English can mean the diminishing of the historic self, no matter how effectively the new language has been mastered. Evidence for this comes most eloquently from the learners themselves. In her *Lost in Translation* Eva Hoffman gives a clear account in her early humiliating experience as a thirteen year old Polish speaker just arrived in Canada, and then the excitement she felt as she began to master the language.

We have been brought to school ... to classes that are provided by the government to teach English to newcomers. This morning, in the rinky-dink wooden barracks where the classes are held, we've acquired new names. All it takes is a brief conference between Mr Rosenberg and the teacher, a kindly looking woman who tries to give us reassuring glances, but who has seen too many people come and go to get sentimental about a name. Mine -'Ewa' is easy to change into its near equivalent in English 'Eva,' My sister's name -'Alina' -poses more of a problem, but after a moment's thought, Mr Rosenberg and the teacher decide that 'Elaine' is close enough. My sister and I hang our heads wordlessly under this careless baptism. The teacher then introduces us to the class, mispronouncing our last name -'Wydra'- in a way we have never heard before. We make our way to a bench at the back of the room; nothing much has happened, except a small seismic mental shift. The twist in our names takes them a tiny distance from us - but it's a gap into which infinite hobgoblin of abstraction enters. Our Polish names didn't refer to us; they were as surely us as our eyes or hands. These new appellations, which we ourselves can't yet pronounce, are not us. They are identification tags, disembodied signs pointing to objects that happen to be my sister and myself. We walk to our seats, into a roomful of unknown faces, with names that make us strangers to ourselves.'(Hoffman, 1989 105-6)

The passage which follows, written by a sensitive, highly intelligent learner who is reflecting on how she has mastered the language, provides us as teachers with a uniquely valuable insight into some of the affective aspects of language learning.

Everyday I learn new words, new expressions. I pick them up from school exercises, from conversations, from the

books I take out of Vancouver's well-lit, cheerful public library. There are some turns of phrase to which I develop strange allergies. 'You're welcome,' for example, strikes me as a *gaucherie*, and I can hardly bring myself to say it – I suppose because it implies there is something to be thankful for, which in Polish would be impolite. The very places where language is at its most conventional, where it should be most taken for granted, are the places where I feel the prick of artifice.

Then there are words to which I take an equally irrational liking, for their sound, or just because I am pleased to have deduced their meaning. Mainly they're words I learn from books, like 'enigmatic' or 'insolent' – words that have only literary value, that exist only as signs on the page.

But mostly, the problem is that the signifier becomes detached from the signified. The words I learn now don't stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in my native tongue. 'River' in Polish was a vital sound, energized with the essence of riverhood, of my rivers, of my being immersed in rivers. 'River' in English is cold – a word without an aura. It `has no accumulated associations for me, and it does not give off the radiating haze of connotation. It does not evoke.' (ibid: 106)

Language and the colonised

Then there is the different role of English amongst those who have been colonised. In Galway it is hardly necessary to reiterate the historic role played by English as the dominant language in a colonial or imperialist setting. This is well captured in Brian Friel's play, *Translations*, set in Donegal in 1833. Friel brings together the political and economic relationships between coloniser and the colonised, and the particular role of language – and also tells a tragic Romeo and Juliet style love story. The setting is a hedge school – the ultimate in adult education, where the teacher and his son teach everything from basic literacy and numeracy to Latin and Greek. The English army are in the area to survey the land and make maps, but this also involves transliterating and/or translating the Irish names into English. The attitudes of the Irish to the English language, which is also about to be introduced as the compulsory means of instruction in the new national schools, vary considerably. Maire, a young woman, wants first to learn it so that she can emigrate to America – the sweet smell of the potato blight is already in

the air. For some the changing of the place names is a betrayal. Others wonder whether it is time to move on into a more international language. Some hold to the old language as the repository of history and art and culture. Hugh, the old school master, has been talking to the English Captain who confesses his limited command of languages.

He then explained that he does not speak Irish. Latin? I asked. None. Greek? Not a syllable. He speaks - on his own admission - only English; and to his credit he seemed suitably *verecund* – humble ... Indeed - he voiced some surprise that we did not speak his language. I explained that a few of us did, on occasion – outside the parish of course – and then usually for the purposes of commerce, a use to which his tongue seemed particularly suited ...and I went on to propose that our own culture and the classical tongues made a happier conjunction.(24-5).

The English lieutenant, who becomes the tragic lover of Maire, wants to learn Irish but understands that acquiring a language means engaging in and accepting the culture too, and being accepted

Even if I did speak Irish I'd always be an outsider here wouldn't I? I may learn the password but the language of the tribe will still elude me. The private code will always be hermetic' (40).

Owen, the interpreter, answers 'You can learn to decode us.'

(Incidentally, I have only just learned that the term 'tribe' is generally used to describe some of the social groupings under chieftains in Celtic Ireland. When I first read the Brian Friel passage I was brought up short because I had a very particular set of associations with the word. This is surely a good example of how words, in even a shared language, take on different denotations as well as connotations, according to the social and cultural context in which they are used.)

There is, of course the other fact associated with the languages of the colonisers, the fact that English, French and Portuguese, in particular, are now often used by choice, particularly for administration and education, in countries which are now independent nation states. This is often true in countries with many indigenous languages. This will be a topic for the last section 'Whose English is it anyway?

Schoolmaster Hugh's views on the inadequacies of English were echoed in a survey in 1998 (Khanna et al 1988) which demonstrated how the attitudes of the learners towards learning English were much more 'instrumental' than 'integrative', i.e. geared towards work, education and training rather than social mixing. The survey found that learners viewed the host society positively only on those attributes which had an achievement orientation: 'successful', 'educated,' 'efficient,' 'confident'. Only 41 per cent of respondents related positive traits like 'sweet' or 'scientific' to English, and only 11 per cent judged English to be 'highly civilised'. The respondents' mother tongue was used extensively in the domain of the home and among family and friends, and adults expressed a strong wish that their children maintain it.

This survey was a useful reminder to practitioners that adult ESOL learners bring into class a complex range of emotions and motivations in relation to their own language and English, and a need to maintain their own identity.

Considerable evidence is now accumulating that even those born and brought up in the UK use their historic mother tongue alongside English in in-group and family situations to establish and confirm their multicultural and multilingual identities. Butt (2008) has examined the way youngsters in Bradford use Urdu and Punjabi in systems of code-switching as part of their cultural capital. He points to sentences started in one language and completed in another and the use of tags, such as 'teekhenah,' 'OK then.'

The decision to use another language can, however, be seen very differently by native speakers of English, and particularly by governments. Outright racism aside, their responses can demonstrate a mixture of suspicion and irritation, though this is often in the name of encouraging community cohesion and good citizenship. In the UK knowledge of English (or Welsh or Scots Gaelic) as well as of life in the UK is now required not only for applicants for citizenship but also for those applying for Indefinite leave to Remain and Extended Leave to Remain.

The development of a more prescriptive language requirement goes back to the UK Home Secretary, David Blunkett, when in 2002, following the 2001 disturbances in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley, he published his 'Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain.' It was in the section entitled 'Giving Meaning to

Citizenship' that he tackled multiculturalism, citizenship and the place of the English language. First he looked at citizenship and multiculturalism:

An active concept of citizenship can articulate shared ground between diverse communities. It offers a shared identity based on membership to [sic] a political community, rather than forced assimilation into a monoculture, or an unbridled multiculturalism which privileges difference over community cohesion. It is what the White Paper Secure Borders, Safe Haven called 'integration with diversity' (Blunkett 2002: 76).

While his attack on 'unbridled multi-culturalism' aroused some considerable discussion about what he meant, it was the passage on language and citizenship which followed which led to the most heated debate.

Citizenship should be about shared participation, from the neighbourhood to national elections. That is why we must strive to connect people from different backgrounds, tackle segregation, and overcome mutual hostility and ignorance. Of course, one factor in this is the ability of new migrants to speak English – otherwise they cannot get good jobs, or share in wider social debate. But for those long settled in the UK, it is about social class issues of education, housing, jobs and regeneration and tackling racism. I have never said, or implied, that lack of fluency in English was in any way directly responsible for the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in the summer of 2001. However, speaking English enables parents to converse with their children in English, as well as in their historic mother tongue, at home and to participate in wider modern culture. It helps overcome the schizophrenia which bedevils generational relationships. In as many as 30% of British Asian households, according to the recent citizenship survey, English is not spoken at home. But let us be clear that lack of English fluency did not cause the riots (Blunkett, 2002: 76–7).

This suggestion that it was the business of governments to decide which language should be spoken in the home created the greatest furore, along with the suggestion that difficulties in intergenerational relationships are confined to the Asian community alone.

It is instructive to consider the assumptions behind David Blunkett's statement. First, researches for my history (Rosenberg, 2007) revealed very few instances of anyone ever actually denying - at least in public - the usefulness of learning the language of the country of settlement, and there has been little resistance to the requirement to have mastered some levels of English in order to apply for citizenship. Furthermore, history has shown how each succeeding group has spoken the mother tongue at home and that its use can be a stabilising force and can strengthen family bonds, and that its loss by the second and third generations is often mourned.

What was new in Blunkett's statement was the drawing of a direct relationship between social responsibility and not speaking English. This had never before been voiced in this way. It had barely been applied to the Yiddish speakers, overcrowded and impoverished in London's East End. *Pace* the suspicion that they were spies, which some German speakers faced in the First World War and in the 1930s, it had never been applied to subsequent groups of refugees and immigrants: not to the Poles in the 1950s, the Italians in the brickfields of Bedfordshire, the Vietnamese boat people, the Ugandan Asians fleeing from Idi Amin, the Greek Cypriots and many more. Though, of course, all these groups faced racism and xenophobic hostility.

David Blunkett's injunction to mothers to learn English was not new. It was raised in a 1963 Ministry of Education Pamphlet. In the 1960s the Ministry of Education was dealing with very newly established communities and was concerned that children would start school at a language disadvantage. However in 2002 there was a new focus. Could it be that women were somehow now being blamed for the disaffection of their English-speaking sons and grandsons? Was there a subtext combining gender, class and culture? In 2008, with the knowledge that the 7 July 2005 London bombings were carried out by British nationals fluent in English, there is still a focus on all family members being able to speak English. These issues are not easy to grapple with and oversimplifications are dangerous. Class and economic disadvantage can lead to alienation and disaffection, but we also now know that global politics and ethnic and religious identity play an increasingly important role too.

What is true is that in the first decade of the 21st century the teaching and learning of English has become highly politicised, closely associated with cultural identity, social

responsibility, citizenship and even national security.

Ireland has begun to move down its own paths with its Integrate Ireland Language and Training programme (a mixture of practical skills and learning about the systems and culture of Ireland) for those with refugee status but I have just learned this is no longer to be a national programme. The Irish Prime Minister too has recently said there would be a language requirement for those applying for Irish nationality.

So, to sum up, while there are difficulties and impediments, no one at either government or community level is arguing against all citizens having access to a common language. And, in 2008, this is to a common global language, which brings us to the last section: English as a lingua franca.

Whose language is it anyway?

The current role of English as the global language is, for the moment at least, incontestable and uncontested (Crystal, 2007). In 1995, using evidence drawn from the Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of the Year, it was estimated that while 325 million people spoke English as a mother tongue, another 300 million used English as the lingua franca within their own country. A good example is the use in India, where Hindi may be the national language but English is the language of administration. This has much to do with the fact that Hindi itself is a minority language in India. In Bangalore, in the famous hi tech centre, for example, the language is Kannada. These 1995 figures also excluded those who spoke English within a bilingual tradition such as in Francophone Canada. Beyond these groups there was the massive increase in the numbers of those using English as an international lingua franca - for science, for ICT, for trade, for international relations - and this has continued to rise. There are now an estimated 35 million learners in China alone. Graddol (2006) estimated that the number of learners worldwide would soon rise to 2 billion.

There is considerable discussion about the implications of all this for the UK. The British Prime Minister issued a press release in January 2008 after visiting China and India. He wanted Britain to make a gift to the world - pledging to help and support anyone, whatever their circumstances, to have access to the tools they need to teach and learn English. To do this he has, as Winston Churchill did at the height of World War II - enlisted the help of the British

Council, which has set up on-line tuition. (Teachers may be interested in examining this). Churchill wanted to support the development of English as a lingua franca and also to deal with the educational needs of the Allied service personnel stationed in the UK. Both Prime Ministers saw the English language as an agent for political and economic advantage. Churchill was thinking particularly of post-war Europe and Brown is looking to post-colonial Britain in a new world order which includes a fiercely competitive market in English language teaching.

But what form will this new English take? This is currently the matter of some considerable debate among linguists (especially Jenkins, 2000, 2007) and I can touch on it only briefly. The existence of different Englishes has now been recognised, as courses are developed within countries to meet their own needs. The content of these courses focus on and reflect the social and political systems and culture of that particular society. Even more important, as more and more countries, particularly China, introduce English in primary schools, the need will be to develop English for and within the mainstream education curriculum of the particular country. In this context, also, most teachers of English world-wide will not be native speakers in the old EFL sense and their pronunciation will reflect their backgrounds in Delhi, Tokyo and Shanghai – though how learners themselves feel about this is another moot point. (Jenkins 2007).

English language teachers will also have to decide what it is that ESOL learners need in order to communicate across national and linguistic borders with others who also do not have English as their first language – Finns talking to Japanese and Frenchmen communicating with Nigerians. There is already work on the pronunciation and grammar seen to be necessary for this. Mutual comprehension will take precedence over the less important – but in EFL terms sacrosanct – issues of managing the difficult fricative 'th' or the use of the definite and indefinite article.

There will also be the issue of defining, for this new world, what constitutes 'Standard English' – an issue already fraught with difficulties among and within Anglophone countries themselves. Will there be Standard Indian English or Anthea Gupta's Standard Singapore English – Singlish (Gupta 1999). Will this lead to fragmentation and inhibit mutual comprehension? The issues of mutual intelligibility will apply to both the written and spoken word.

Conclusion

What are the effects of all this on us as teachers here? And this is whether we are mainly adult literacy tutors or ESOL teachers.

First of all we must accept that our language itself is a significant pull-factor for overseas students, immigrants, migrant workers and refugees. Then Graddol (2007) has predicted the end of one-size-fits-all EFL, and that will affect us whether we teach abroad or we are teaching Italian teenagers in a Cork or Brighton summer school, or whether we are looking to EFL textbooks to support ESOL for refugees.

It will make us think anew about what is taught to all second language speakers who are settled among us, and how it is taught. What is the relationship between information, grammar, vocabulary and idiomatic usage in a course for multi-lingual care workers? What parameters do we establish for the written form? What level of non-Standard English do we accept, especially in our students' writing in literacy classes?

Which models for pronunciation do we use? We already have international learners choosing between American English and some notion of Received Pronunciation for British English. The use of RP itself has been modified within the UK by the BBC. Anyway is it appropriate for ESOL learners living in Ireland, Scotland and Wales? It is certainly not appropriate for Canada and Australia. In fact there seems a universal view that British RP equates with poshness, class and the last vestiges of colonialism. It is noticeable that it is the only accent which American film makers can safely use for their villains – all others would risk alienating some group or other within the USA! But on this side of the Atlantic how do we tackle the English spoken in Brixton or the Gorbals?

So what is the situation we are left with in the UK and Ireland? In one sense it is quite liberating. We can just become small islands hanging off the edge of Europe, teaching our new and established citizens the written and spoken language which is appropriate for life in Galway, Glasgow, Glamorgan and Gloucester. But if we, along with the British Prime Minister, see ourselves carrying the burden of our linguistic heritage, and also that this fortuitously brings with it economic and political advantage for the state, and career advantage for ourselves, then we must accept that our old EFL models for international English will not suffice. The jury is out. We live in interesting times.

At the time of writing the UK Government planned to require all applicants for visas to join existing residents to show evidence of some competence in English. This is arousing heated debate and opposition.

At the time of writing the UK Government was proposing to use the Common European Framework as a benchmark against which to assess the ability in English of applicants who wish to join residents.

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An OPQ of a life in RaPAL: A retrospective

Roz Ivanič

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The 2008 conference, RaPAL and me

The Galway conference *Inclusion and Engagement in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL* took place 19 – 21 June 2008: just two days, but bringing together enough exciting ideas and examples of committed practice about adult literacy to last a lifetime. The lifetime of RaPAL is much longer: this is RaPAL's 23rd birthday. RaPAL has been a central part of my professional life for those 23 years: I have shared its goals, activities and above all the beliefs which guide it. I wasn't there at the meeting in 1985 when RaPAL was started for the very good reason that my daughter was born on almost the same day. She and RaPAL are both 23 this year. Twenty three years is a LONG time, perhaps easier to imagine how long when you think of the life of a person: from baby months, through teething troubles, early years, primary schooldays, secondary schooldays, driving test, university years and into an unknown future.

Yes, RaPAL has been through a lot and has survived uninterrupted since 1985 (For details of its history see Hamilton and Hillier 2006). That is a very long time, but my own professional life in literacy research and practice is nearly twice as long as that, going back a further 18 years before RaPAL was founded: 41 years in all. My life as a teacher began in 1967 – before the majority of people at this year's conference were born. I've listed what I've done over those 41 years in the box below. The things listed on the left are the main jobs I did; the extra things indented and in square brackets are posts held within them, holiday jobs, secondments, and studies. I have included this list because I expect that most people reading it will recognise bits of it – starting working life with occasional supply teaching, studying in free time ('part time' is a misnomer!), and no simple linear progression: these are the characteristics of most lives in RaPAL.

One old RaPAList's life in a list:

- 1967 – 1968** Occasional secondary school supply teaching
- 1970 – 1974** Teacher of English, Drama, Latin, RE and gardening in a small girls' secondary school

[1973 – 1974 Open University Post Experience Certificate in Reading Development]

[1972 – 1982 Teacher at Lynn Lewis language development holiday schools]

1974 – 1985 Lecturer with special responsibility for the Language Support Service and Community Education Unit, Kingsway-Princeton College, London

[1978 – 1979 Exchange Teacher at the Developmental Education Department, San Joaquin Delta College, California]

[1982 – 1983 MA in English Language Teaching, Lancaster University]

1985 – 1986 Lecturer in Language, Learning and Literacy, Garnett College of Education for Teachers in Further and Higher Education, London

1986 – now Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and English Language, Lancaster University

[1988 – 1993 PhD on *Writing and Identity in Academic writing*]

[2002 – now Assistant Director of the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre

[2004 – 2007 Director of the *Literacies for Learning in Further Education* research project – book due out next year]

For details of the project, see www.lancs.ac.uk/lflfe

In the rest of this article I will bring out a few key themes which stand out when I look back at those 41 years as a teacher and researcher: principles and emotions which have been important to me, and still seem to me to be key to the work of RaPAL, and to the 2008 conference. I have focused on words beginning with O, P and Q partly because they seem to be rather neglected letters of the alphabet: A, B and C get much more attention in article titles and conference talks. But, frivolity aside, O, P and Q do allow me to include a lot of what I really want to say.

O is for OUTRAGE

- Outrage at the way people are treated when they make mistakes in reading or writing;
- Outrage at the way schools fail these people;
- Outrage at the elitism which surrounds most talk about reading and writing;
- Outrage at the reductionist views of literacy which underpin, and are explicitly espoused, in most policy on adult literacy education;
- Outrage at the conditions of service for the ALNE profession and lack of recognition for their work.

This outrage is a driving force for many of us in RaPAL: it is what keeps us working in the field; it is what makes us work many hours beyond the call of duty; it is what makes us militant in our professional lives; it is often what inspires people to write for the RaPAL journal or the press. In my own career, it was the first three which changed me in 1973 from being 'just' a teacher to being a teacher with a mission and a political position ('political' with a small p). No longer was my main concern with 'correctness', 'standards', and 'good literature', but rather it was with 'justice' and basic humanity. This was nothing very complex or high-flown – just a question of ensuring that the girls in my school who for whatever reason didn't do conventional spelling and punctuation were treated with respect and recognition of everything they COULD do.

'O' is also for ...

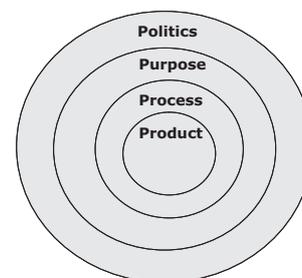
- **Opportunities**
- **Open-mindedness**
- **Open and (h)onest**
- **Outsiders – becoming insiders**

These are all themes which emerged from sessions at the conference: all 'O' words which

elaborate the conference focus on inclusion and engagement. Like 'Outrage' these words capture principles espoused by RaPAL members and presenters: some of them will be apparent in other articles in this issue. There is lots to say about each but, for now, I will leave them open for you to clothe in your own meanings.

P is for

Passion
Pleasure
Patience
Perseverance
Power(less)
Professionalism
Practitioner research
Publication
Phonics
People, and humility



The four Ps of writing

A life in RaPAL is overflowing with themes beginning with 'P'. The emotions at the top of the list: Passion and Pleasure are what have sustained me as a RaPAList over the years – my own and my colleagues' passion for the work and for the causes associated with it; my own and other people's pleasure at small steps taken, at hurdles overcome. Pride is another emotion I might have added, and which was mentioned at the conference as one of the characteristics of being an ALNE professional: pride in being associated with people's achievements, often against great odds. The attributes which come next – Patience and Perseverance - are evident in all the work reported at the conference, and in so many accounts of adult literacy teaching and learning. These are qualities which mark out RaPALists and the learning which is reported in the RaPAL journal. Power and particularly its opposite, the powerlessness experienced by so many people who come to ALNE classes, are issues at the heart of the work of RaPAL, issues which I saw as the motivation behind many of the research and development projects which were presented at the conference. Another 'P' which was represented at the conference is Pecket Well College, the college which was set up by adult literacy learners in the Halifax area. The principles guiding Pecket Well College have always challenged us in RaPAL to address issues of power: to eschew patronising provision, and to respect the knowers - who feels it knows it.

In this conference, there was a special panel devoted to the topic of 'professionalisation', and the issues discussed there included making an important distinction between 'professionalism'

and 'professionalisation'. I agree with the conclusion reached in the discussion that 'professionalisation' is worthless if it is not grounded in 'professionalism', and dare to suggest that the types of 'outrage' that I referred to above are a fundamental part of being a committed RaPAL professional.

Practitioner research and Publication were the focus of the workshop run by Yvon Appleby.¹ I want to join her in encouraging all members of RaPAL to recognise 'research' in their practice in ways I will elaborate on below when discussing Questioning. Integrating research into practice has been one of the things that has fed my excitement in being an ALNE professional for so many years. And publishing can start with something very small. My very first publication was a single A4 sheet of suggestions for the teaching of punctuation, then a set of teaching materials, then a review of someone else's book for the RaPAL Bulletin (as it was called in the 1980s), working up to an article for the Bulletin, then co-editing an issue, and so on until my latest publications which have been no longer on paper but electronic: a DVD and a website.

Publication is an important theme also because of its value for people who are developing their literacies. Outstanding work was presented by Sean Hurl, Paul Carberry and George Hay in their session: *'Bringin' the boys onboard: the role of reading aloud and learner publication in engaging hard-to-reach learners'*. The work of this group in the East End of Glasgow revives the tradition of publishing the writing of first-time writers which was nurtured in the 1970s and 1980s through the energy and commitment of the Write First Time collective, Centerprise and Gatehouse Publications.

Phonics is on the list because, like Greg Brookes at the conference, I think understanding phonics is of enormous value for anyone who wants to help others with reading and writing. Lots of other things as well as, but not instead of, phonics. When I first started working with children with spelling difficulties in 1972, I, like many of us, discovered phonics and thought this was the best thing since sliced bread (actually, I'm not sure that sliced bread had been invented in 1972 ...). I spent the last week of March – after the end of term and before my husband's Easter break – constructing a complicated chart which had a little flap for each of the 44 recognised sounds of English, and under each flap were separate cards for each of the possible ways of spelling that sound, with examples. So, for example, the sound 'ai' had about eight ways

of spelling it, including 'aigh'. I thought this chart was going to be the answer to all my teaching needs from then onwards and I would use it in all my 'special' classes. I am pleased to say, and many of you will not be surprised to hear, that I NEVER used it in a single class. What terrible teaching material it would have been! But it was not wasted: the process of making it was what had been really valuable, instilling in my mind a firm understanding of the way the English spelling system works. I have drawn on what I learnt from the process of making that chart spontaneously and flexibly for the rest of my career as a teacher, while concentrating on meaning, purpose and context.

This brings me to what I have called in the diagram above 'The four Ps of writing': Product, Process, Purpose and Politics. There is lots to say about all four, and the relationships among them, issues addressed in exciting new ways by Moira Greene in her presentation here at the conference about the new CABES (Clare Adult Basic Education Service) framework. Focusing on a fifth and more encompassing 'P', Practices, she talked about the process of socialization into literacy practices and introduced the concept of 'literacy mobility' to refer to moving with confidence from one set of literacy practices to another. She was not only taking forward the thinking encapsulated by the diagram above, but also addressing an issue at the cutting edge of literacy research, theory and practice: now that we understand literacies to be situated in their social contexts (Barton and others 2000), how can people use what they can do in one context as a resource for engaging in different literacy practices in a different context? (See also Pardoe and Ivanič 2007, Ivanič and others 2009 for more work on this issue).

Since the biggest of these topics, the Politics of writing, was the subject of a book (Clark and Ivanič 1997) – here I'll just concentrate on 'Purpose'. Purpose connects to **meaning**: the idea of reading and writing 'for meaning', rather than for accuracy and correctness of product or process, has revolutionised thinking about literacy over the 40 years I have been involved in the field. During the conference I have encountered a new way of thinking about this. Sheila Doogan, Ronnie Campbell and Lewis Atha in their excellent workshop on *Using technology as a vehicle for engaging young people with literacies* showed how engaging the **interest** of young people is the guiding principle of the exciting projects being pioneered by CLAN (Community Literacy and Numeracy) in West Dunbartonshire. This reminds me of my own

1. Unfortunately I was only able to go to one workshop per session, so am not able to make reference to all the interesting-sounding ones I wasn't able to go to.

epiphany on the importance of meaning and interest giving a purpose for reading – before the opportunities offered by new technologies, but none the less striking for that. I was working in a workshop at Kingsway-Princeton College with a group of four young men, and it was patently obvious they were not going to concentrate on the worksheets I had intended for them. On the spur of the moment I made four quick copies of a short article – only about three paragraphs and a picture – from a weekly news magazine about the current state of the Cold War. The young men wanted to know! They asked each other what parts of the article meant, they asked me (I didn't know many of the answers myself), they spent the whole hour exchanging knowledge and questions about what was referred to and what was implied by particular words and phrases, because of their **interest** in the content of the article. Thank you, Sheila, Ronnie and Lewis for bringing purpose for reading and writing, and in particular interest in the content of what is being read and written, to the forefront of our attention.

The last 'P' on my list is the one I consider most important. P is for People. Underlying a lot of what I have written so far, and central to a lot of the presentations at the conference, is what I believe holds us together as RaPALists: a recognition that our work is first and foremost about people, and humility at the wealth of experience, capabilities, knowledge, understanding, ingenuity, courage and determination of people who come to ALNE classes. I remember my feeling of humility when in my mid 20s I was teaching an evening spelling workshop at Kingsway-Princeton College. Each person was working individually, and the task for Cynthia was to write a letter of condolence – there was a scenario for it on a worksheet. When I came round to give my customary 'ten minutes per person', I found she had written:

You must be greaving for the loss of your dear father.

I was struck to the core with a sense of humility in the presence of this person, and a sense of shame at my assumption that I knew more than she did. I realised that, even though I knew how to spell 'grieving', and the rule the spelling followed, I could never have expressed the emotions of the occasion in such powerful words as she had chosen. I had a big lesson from Cynthia that night, and have often been grateful to her since for teaching me something about how to word those difficult letters.

The presentation by Sean Hurl, Paul Carberry and George Hay introduced two more important 'P' words to the list: Poverty and Positive. Poverty: setting ALNE work in a political context makes it essential to take seriously the links between difficulties with literacy and poverty. Positive: Sean, Paul and George work in the PAL project: 'Positive About Literacies'. 'PAL' and 'Positive' encapsulate important principles for RaPAL's work. When I asked for suggestions for more 'P's at the conference, someone came up with 'pens', 'pencils' and 'paper' – a good reminder of the practicalities of our work as well as the principles.

Q is for QUESTIONING

When I've asked other members of RaPAL to guess what my O, P and Q stand for, they have nearly always come up with the same 'Q' as me: questions, quest, questioning. Asking questions is at the heart of good practice, and of good research. Good teaching, I suggest, starts with asking questions – questions about where the learners are coming from, questions about how language works, questions about why people do things the way they do, about their passions and desires, and about what would help them reach their goals. Questioning is what links practice and research, what turns a quest for ever better and better teaching into a quest for new understandings about literacies, numeracies and adult learning more generally. Many of the projects presented at this conference started from questions of this sort.

An example of what I mean by questioning comes from working with Leon, a young man who had failed his GCSEs (or 'O' levels as they were called in those days). He was back at college for a second chance, taking English, Home Economics (as 'Food Technology' was called in those days), and History. Half way through the year his tutor, the Home Economics teacher, could see that he was headed for failure again, getting low marks on his assignments and being criticised for poor spelling and carelessness. She referred him to me for 'language support'. Soon after I met him he brought a history essay for me to look at, containing the following sentence:

In those days, the Russian peasants worked there land with their bare hands.

You will not be surprised to hear that this sentence, among many others, had attracted the red pen, with double underlining (the tutor was annoyed) and a comment along the lines of 'Can't you be consistent?' Poor history teacher –

s/he naturally enough thought that if someone could spell 'their' correctly in one place, it was just carelessness to spell it incorrectly elsewhere in the same sentence. My response could have been (and might have been, given my enjoyment of linguistic rules and explanations) to go through the uses of 'there', 'their' and 'they're', and perhaps to offer a worksheet. Fortunately, I didn't do that. Instead, I asked Leon WHY he had chosen these different spellings of the word in the two places.

"Well," he said, "I thought about that, and I thought yes, the hands belonged to the peasants, so the spelling must be 'their' for possession, but they didn't own the land – the landowners did – and so it wouldn't be right to use the spelling 'their' for the land."

I'm glad I asked the question; I was glad I had made the assumption that Leon wasn't careless but had actually had a reason for what he did. That belief has stood me in good stead for the 33 years since then in my work as a teacher and researcher.

When I applied for a place on an MA in 1982, my head of department agreed to do the reference. A few days later she told me that she had written: "You are always questioning everything to do in your work, she said. And that I think that is a very good basis for postgraduate study." I didn't quite see her point back then. I have thought of what she said many times in the past 25 years, and now I see the wisdom of it. I am grateful to you, Mary Bacon, for this insight into what lies at the heart of the integration of research and practice.

In the 23 years of RaPAL I have had the enormous pleasure of being associated with other RaPALists' questioning too. Just to take those who were at this year's conference: Mary Hamilton, Yvon Appleby, Amy Burgess in her PhD on discourses and identities in adult literacy classes, and Ellayne Fowler in her PhD on the use of e-mail in Further Education – these are just a few of the questioners I have had the great pleasure of working with.

.... and R is for RaPAL

This year is a landmark for RaPAL: the first time the conference has been held outside the UK. This is just one indication the RaPAL is not stagnating, but going forward, forward, as represented in the diagram that follows.....



In this diagram, '19 – 21 June' represents the short duration of the Galway conference. The thick grey arrow represents the life of RaPAL. The part above the conference is RaPAL's life so far, and the thin dark arrow shows how my professional life as a literacy practitioner and researcher has merged with the development of RaPAL. This is the moment for me and others of my generation of literacy workers to 'fall off' the arrow, knowing that the ideas which were buzzing at the Galway conference give RaPAL strength for exciting developments in the years ahead.

GOODBYE, AND GOOD RAP-PING INTO THE FUTURE, EVERYONE

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**Conference delegates enjoying a meal out in Galway.
Left to right: Mary Hamilton, Sarah Rennie, Roz Ivanic and Amy Burgess**

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We are looking for members to review materials for the journal particularly practitioners and those involved in training who can make helpful comments to guide others.

We would be pleased to hear from new or experienced writers.

For more information please contact Ellayne Fowler Reviews Editor at ellayne.fowler@btinternet.com

RaPAL Conference Evaluations

Lesley Crawford, Fiona Watters and Julie Collins.

Lesley, Fiona and Julie are members of the RaPAL Management Group. Lesley and Fiona are from Belfast and Julie lives on the Welsh borders.

Ever wondered what happened to all those workshop evaluations and feedback sheets you completed at the RaPAL conference in the summer? At the first RaPAL committee meeting after Galway Amy Burgess asked for volunteers to read the feedback sheets and present a short report at the next meeting to take place at the end of October in Belfast. Lesley Crawford and Fiona Watters from Belfast assisted by Chester-based Julie Collins rose to the challenge. The task was undertaken over the weekend before the meeting.

Fortified by copious cups of tea and a freshly opened tin of chocolate biscuits, the work began at Lesley's dining table on Saturday afternoon. Julie authoritatively snapped open her shocking pink Applemac book and set up a template for recording responses to each workshop while relative technophobes Lesley and Fiona made tally charts to record responses as well as identifying key comments from participants. Initially progress was slow but soon speeded up and by Saturday evening two thirds of the sheets had been processed. The following day after a tour of the murals and some critical retail therapy in the city centre, the task was completed.

Delegates commented that they would have appreciated a more extended synopsis of workshops to enable them to make a more informed choice. A colour coded traffic lights system was suggested to identify whether the focus of the workshop was research based, theoretical, of practitioner interest or hands on practical. Opportunities for discussion in the workshops were particularly valued indicating that consideration might be given to making the sessions longer and as a consequence having less of them. Importance of striking a balance between active and soak up activities was also stressed.

Presenters should have regard to the use of acronyms with which participants may not be familiar; the provision of a glossary might address this issue. Consideration might usefully be given to the range of levels at which delegates attending are teaching. A number of respondents enquired if presentations, where possible could be uploaded on to the website incorporating relevant web links. It was however acknowledged that it places additional demands

on the time of the presenters. It might however go some way to answering the perennial problem of choosing which workshops to attend. A delegate list would also have been appreciated.

The questions on the evaluation form could be revisited as delegates were reluctant to answer questions which elicited a negative response. Instead suggestions about improvements might be preferred. Printing the workshop evaluations a different colour from the conference feedback would have been helpful.

The importance of onsite ICT support at the workshop venues was stressed. A separate sheet to record specific ICT requirements of presenters would assist planning for this support although resource implications would need to be considered

"Positive energy and buzz", "approachable and engaging facilitators", "lovely venue" and "great food" were just some of the positive comments. The conference provided memorable opportunities for meeting delegates from other countries, sharing ideas and experiences.

Reports and Reviews

A critical history of ESOL in the UK, 1870 – 2006

Author: Sheila K. Rosenberg
2007 National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace)
ISBN 978-86201-268-4

Biography of Reviewer

Angela Smith is works for Dumfries and Galloway College managing the Independent Learning Centre, which is an award winning basic skills and ESOL centre supporting adults returning to education. She also works as an associate lecturer with the Open University. CELTA trained; with a Masters Degree in Applied Linguistic she is currently undertaking an EdD with the OU researching the inclusion of international students in a Scottish further education college.

Contact: smitha@dumgal.ac.uk

The history of ESOL in the U.K. is one of migration and assimilation. Starting with the Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe Rosenberg charts the history of not only migrations but also the history of the organisations which grew up to provide language tuition services to migrants and support for teachers. It gives an historical perspective on today's mass migration from Eastern Europe and underlines the fact that migration is nothing new and the issues grappled with today are similar to those of the past.

The history of ESOL is an amalgam of education and social change. Legislation and changing attitudes to immigration and the perceived needs of the learners all have had an impact. This book gives a well-rounded account of all these things and their interconnections. Whilst the book scholastically documents the history of the UK, those reading from a Scottish perspective may be disappointed that most of the early history is mainly concerned with England. Arguably, however this is a reflection of the greater migrations experienced by England and Rosenberg does recognise the Scottish perspective.

The publishing of English language course books is also explored both in terms of content and teaching methodology. As Teachers of English Language we accept traditional methods and procedures of English teaching purely because historically that is how they evolved and were taught. Rosenberg challenges us to question our methodology and assumptions. Reading about the history of ESOL challenges us to question

the origins and relevance of our teaching methods and encourages us to continue the work of those who have gone before while keeping our work relevant for today's learners.

This book is an invaluable read for today's ESOL practitioners as well as those who are purely interested in the history of the UK migrations and/or education.

Grave Tales from Glasgow

The publication is available by contacting Lorna Campbell on 0141 287 8961 or email lorna.campbell@csglasgow.org.uk. It is available at the following Glasgow libraries: Govanhill, Hillhead, Knightswood, Langside, Maryhill, Milton, Pollock and Mitchell library.

Reviewer: Mark Girdlestone, Wiltshire College, Warminster

Well, my name is Mark Girdlestone. I started my life in a small village up north. I didn't do too well at school, left at 16, then started work as a farm labourer. I joined the British Army at 19 and left at 27 in 2000. I have been a security guard since then. Over the last eight years I have studied computer word processing, Maths and English. I have a good job at the moment because of all my studies, but I still want a better one.

'Grave Tales from Glasgow' is a book of short stories from north of the border written by fellow students. The large print is a great help for an easy read. I feel that, these would make excellent quick reads, especially when you know that these stories are created by people like me who are studying at night school too.

Being ex-Forces myself, 'Army ghost', touched me as when you're about to go on a tour of duty, you do make your own agreements with your close mates. Mine was to marry his wife and look after his sons if the worst happened.

'The Pawn shop' I found to be different and original. I read a lot of books and sometimes I can tell what is going to happen, but not this time.

'Acting up' I liked because of a nice twist to it. It reminded me of a news paper article about an ex-SAS man who is now a vicar. Maybe this story is telling us we can use our talents in a different way.

'The grave tale' I really liked. I liked the man, who, in his new job, got a helping hand from an anonymous man, who turned out to be the person they were digging the grave for.

The stories so far are a little spooky but not scary. I would let a young child read them. My girlfriend from Czech Republic would probably use them to teach her students English.

Some of these stories remind me of a well known Czech author called Karel Capek and his famous book 'Tales from two pockets'. This book is full of short stories he made up while on his way to work.

Conference Review - Making a Success: QIA/CEL summer conference 2008

Katy Bolt

On 1 October 2008, the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) became the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), the new sector-led organisation dedicated to the development of the further education and skills sector.

The June conferences set the scene for the new organisation and at the first of the conference's regional venues in Bristol, Dame Ruth Silver, inaugural chair of LSIS, formally announced the name of the new body's first chief executive, Roger McClure. Dame Ruth said: "We have waited a long time...for the opportunity to create a sector-led organisation, so I'm delighted that we are getting it and I pledge my energies and commitment to making it the best it can possibly be."

Welcoming the future

A common theme across the events was the challenge to professionals in the sector to take up the baton and work to develop LSIS and the new National Improvement Strategy (NIS).

A series of interactive sessions at all the conferences enabled delegates to share successes, discuss their concerns and highlight areas they felt needed to be addressed. Among the calls for improvement were: embedding a culture of self-assessment within organisations; support for sharing effective practice and innovation; and the need for 'plain-talking' language to be adopted that did not alienate learners in the drive for improvement.

Hosting the conference in four locations around the country provided opportunities to hear the regional voice of the sector. Speakers represented the perspectives from the South West, the Midlands, the South East and the North East, ensuring that there was no domination by one region, and giving practitioners and partners throughout the country the chance to participate.

So what now?

Feedback and ideas from the conference are being gathered together and recorded to help inform the development of LSIS and the new NIS. The conference marks only the start of this process and a great deal more is yet to be done.

Conference presentations and some of the key speeches are available on the conference web page:

<http://www.qia.org.uk/aboutus/conf08.htm>

A discussion forum following the conference is open on Excellence Gateway. Visit 'General Forums' on the 'EG Community' tab at <http://excellence.qia.org.uk>

Apologies to Peter Goode whose celebration of John Gynn's life was unfortunately missed out of the last issue. We include it here.

This poem of mine expresses best everything John meant to me.

You reached out and touched

You reached out and touched

*I reached out and touched
and inspiration became AND.....
now loneliness of guilt*

*You reached out and touched
I reached out and touched
and inspiration
became*

inaudible and indivisible

John homed in on the image of the stone of Pecket Well College, picking up pebbles to throw at the window of education that still rattle the windows today.

The first thing I remember John saying to me at Gatehouse, we were having a debate, "Well, I'm going to play devil's advocate". As soon as I heard that, I listened and I thought "Well I'll be the devil" He learnt me so much, in joy, not in anger.

He took the image from "Opening Time" and made it into his own by celebrating it as workshops. He could see a drop of an idea growing, like ink in water.

John was relaxed in his own skin. What you saw was what you got. In spite of my difficulties with reading, he never treated me as a put down. Some people, he rubbed their noses, but because of that, it fetched a different view. It was about individuality. He treated me as an equal, someone he could play mental tennis with, word games, batting ideas back and forth. I was very, very lucky to know him. He was a very special creator. I want to say cheers to John one last time.

**RaPAL 2009 Conference
will be held at the University of Wales, Newport**

The main conference will be on Friday 26 and Saturday 27 June, with a free pre-conference event on Thursday 25 June.

The conference theme will be Sustainable Literacies and we will be sending out further details and a call for papers in January.

Newport is a former Victorian industrial town between Bristol and Cardiff which flourished as a port, docks and steel town until the 1970s. It subsequently lost these core industries but is now recovering as a lively and attractive city with developments such as new bridges, an arts centre, the establishment and expansion of the University Of Wales, Newport, city centre regeneration and other projects.

The area surrounding Newport is extremely diverse: Norman castles, Jacobean mansions, estuary mudflats and wetlands, the Welsh capital city of Cardiff, canals, ancient woodland, windswept hills, Iron-age hill forts and post industrial valleys...There are many visitor attractions within easy reach.

Visit the RaPAL Website www.rapal.org.uk for more details

Writing Guidelines

Why not write something for the RaPAL Journal?

We invite contributions from anyone involved in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL education to write and share ideas, practice and research with RaPAL readers. This can be writing from learners, ideas linking research and practice, comments about teaching, training or observations about policy. We welcome articles, reviews, reports, commentaries or cartoons that will stimulate interest and discussion.

The journal is published three times a year and represents an independent space, which allows critical reflection and comment linking research with practice in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL nationally and internationally.

The RaPAL network includes learners, managers, practitioners, researchers, tutors, teacher trainers, and librarians in adult, further and higher education in the UK. It also has an international membership that covers Canada, USA, New Zealand, Australia, South America, Europe and Africa.

Guidelines for Contributors

All contributions should be written in an accessible way for a wide and international readership.

- Writing should be readable avoiding jargon. Where acronyms are used these should be clearly explained.
- Ethical guidelines should be followed particularly when writing about individuals or groups. Permission must be gained from those being represented and they should be represented fairly.
- We are interested in linking research and practice; you may have something you wish to contribute but are not sure it will fit. If this is the case please contact the editors to discuss this.
- Writing should encourage debate and reflection, challenging dominant and taken for granted assumption about literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

Journal Structure

We want to encourage new writers as well as those with experience and to cover a range of topics, to do this the journal is divided into three main sections and a review section. Each section is slightly different in length and focus. We welcome illustrations and graphics for any of the sections. The journal has a different theme for each edition but welcomes general contributions

particularly for Section 1 and Section 2 and for reviews.

Section 1. Ideas for teaching

This section is for descriptive and reflective pieces on teaching and learning. It is a good place to have a first go at writing for publication and can be based on experiences of learners and teachers in a range of settings. Pieces can be up to 1,000 words long.

Section 2. Developing Research and Practice

This section covers a range of contributions from research and practice. In terms of research this could be experience of practitioner research, of taking part in research projects, commenting on research findings or of trying out ideas from research in practice. In terms of practice this could be about trying out new ideas and pushing back boundaries. Contributions should include reflection and critique. Pieces for this section should be between 1,000 2,000 words long including references.

Section 3. Research and Practice: Multi-disciplinary perspectives

This section is for more sustained analytical pieces about research, practice or policy. The pieces will be up to 4,000 words long including references and will have refereed journal status. Although articles in this section are more theoretically and analytically developed they should nevertheless be clearly written for a general readership. Both empirical work and theoretical perspectives should be accessible and clearly explained. Writing for this section should:

- **Relate to the practices** of learning and teaching adult literacy, numeracy or ESOL.
- **Link to research** by describing and analysing new research findings relating this and any critical discussion to existing research studies.
- **Provide critical informed analysis** of the topic including reference to theoretical underpinning.
- **Write coherently and accessibly avoiding impenetrable language and assumed meanings.** The piece should have a clear structure and layout using the Harvard referencing system and notes where applicable. All Terminology should be explained, particularly for an international readership.

Review Section

Reviews and reports of books, articles, and materials including CD should be between 50 800 words long. They should clearly state the name of the piece being reviewed, the author, year of publication, name and location of publisher and cost. You should also include your name, a short 2-3 line biography and your contact details. You can write the review based upon your experience of using the book, article of materials in your role as a practitioner, teacher trainer, and researcher or as a student.

Submitting your work

1. Check the deadline dates and themes which are available in the journal and on the website.
2. All contributions should have the name of the author/s, a title and contact details which include postal address, email address and phone number. We would also like a short 2-3-line biography to accompany your piece. Sections, subsections, graphs or diagrams should be clearly indicated or labelled.
3. Send a copy either in electronic form or in hard copy to the journal co-ordinator
Yvon Appleby at: University of Central

Lancashire, Preston, PR1 2HE or to YAppleby@uclan.ac.uk

4. Your contribution should be word processed, in Arial size 12 font, double spaced on A4 paper with numbered pages.

What happens next

1. Editors and members of the Editorial Group review contributions for Section 1 and Section 2. Contributions for Section 3 are peer reviewed by a mixture of experienced academic, research and practice referees.
2. Feedback is provided by the editor/s within eight weeks of submission. This will include constructive comment and any suggestions for developing the piece if necessary.
3. You will be informed whether you piece has been accepted, subject to alterations, and if so the editor/s will work on a final editing process. Any final copy will be sent to authors prior to publishing.
4. Where work is not accepted the editor/s may suggest more relevant or alternative places for publication.

Please contact us if you want to discuss any ideas you have for contributing to the journal.

Editors, themes and deadlines

Edition	Theme	Deadline	Editors
Spring (April)	Open Edition	End of February	Alex Kendall, Rob Smith, Cathie Lacey, Matt O'Leary, Chris Winter and Mandy French
Summer (September)	Changing landscapes of literacy and language learning	End of July	Shelley Tracy and Nora Hughes
Winter (December)	Conference Edition	End of September	Amy Burgess and Gaye Houghton

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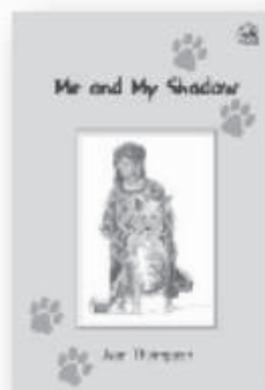
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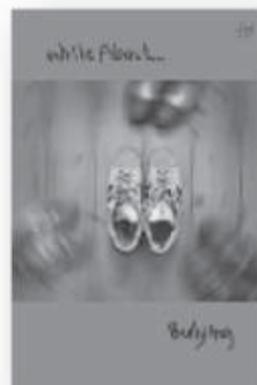
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