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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2025 edition of The APPI eJournal. This issue invites us to reconsider traditional perspectives on learning, differences, and development—both our students' and our own. It displays a lively range of voices, practices, and pedagogical innovations that mirror the evolving landscape of language education in Portugal and beyond.

This edition begins with *Sensory Challenges* by Agnieszka Dziecioł-Pędich, which highlights the often overlooked but pivotal factors in learner behaviour: the senses. With coherence and sensitivity, the article explains how sensory processing differences can shape classroom dynamics, and why developing an awareness of these needs can lead to more inclusive and effective teaching.

Keeping on with the neuro-educational theme, Aida Santos introduces us to *Neuro Language Coaching*, an approach that combines neuroscience and coaching to help teachers navigate modern classroom challenges—from short attention spans to emotional disengagement. This method offers tools to create safe, responsive environments where both teachers and students can thrive.

Marjorie Rosenberg, in *Embrace the Differences*, makes us aware that learning diversity isn't a burden—it's an opportunity. By recognising preferences and adapting our methods, we increase deeper learning and motivation while Tiago Carvalho's piece, *Letting the Passengers Stay on the Bus*, shows us a meaningful metaphor for self-awareness and acceptance—lessons as zestful for teachers as for learners.

We're also stimulated to rethink the role of feedback in *Beyond the Red Pen*, where Annie Altamirano suggests practical insights into formative practices that develop student autonomy and metacognition. Meanwhile, Carlos Lindade explores the educational potential of podcasting and new AI tools in *Talk the Talk*, showing how digital literacies can enhance both engagement and curricular alignment.

From Ana Barroso's inspired use of *Edward Scissorhands in the classroom*, to Calliope's creative work with theatre as a means of learning English, to highlights from the 38th APPI Conference and the IATEFL gathering in Edinburgh, this issue also celebrates communities of learners, educators, and global collaborators. We especially applaud the contribution to the *Mamie Martin Fund*, which reinforces the life-changing potential education plays all over the world.

Finally, in *On the Bookshelf*, Judite Fiúza offers a timely and accessible introduction to neuroplasticity and neurodiversity—concepts that, as this issue demonstrates, are becoming central to the future of language teaching.

We hope this edition inspires reflection, conversation, and new possibilities for your teaching journey. Enjoy the read! Hope you had a well-deserved summer break. Wishing you a wonderful school year ahead.

The Editorial Team

Judite, Neil, Isabel

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Sensory challenges – how to spot them in language classrooms?

– Dr Agnieszka Dzieciot-Pędich

Dr Agnieszka Dzieciot-Pędich teaches English for General and Specific Purposes as well as trains future teachers of English at the University of Białystok, Poland. She is also a member of IP SEN SIG – a group that promotes genuinely inclusive practices that lead to a sense of belonging and full participation for all within the ELT community.



This article looks at how sensory challenges can show up in language classrooms. It explains the eight senses and how being extra sensitive or not sensitive enough affects how learners behave and learn. It also shows why understanding these challenges is important for language teachers.

All people experience the world through their eight senses:

- **auditory** (hearing);
- **tactile** (taste and touch);
- **olfactory** (vision and smell);
- **vestibular** (balance and movement), which allows people to know where their whole body is in space and helps keep them stable and upright (Kelly, 2023);
- **proprioception** (body awareness), which allows people to know where parts of their bodies are and what they are doing (Kelly, 2023), similarly to the vestibular sense, it is crucial to maintaining balance (Cleveland Clinic, n.d.), and it also controls the amount of force people use during body movements (e.g., squeezing toothpaste or shampoo, closing a door, or shaking hands); and
- **interoception** (internal body signals), which allows people to understand and feel what is going on in their bodies (Kelly, 2023), helping them sense signals such as a heartbeat, breathing, hunger, or the need to use the toilet (Barker et al., 2021).

Learners with **sensory processing challenges** struggle with information that comes in through the senses. This means that their brains find it difficult to receive, interpret, or respond in an appropriate way to sensory input. We can differentiate between two main types of sensory processing challenges (Belsky, 2023).

The most common kind is being too sensitive to sensory input (or oversensitivity/hypersensitivity) which can lead to sensory overload. Sensory overload happens when learners are receiving more input from their senses than their brain can sift through and process (Watson, 2025). Consequently, they often try to stay away from things that feel too much for them to handle.

The other type of sensory challenge is **under-sensitivity (hyposensitivity)** which causes learners to be more sensory seeking. They may actively seek out extra sensory input or might need help from others to notice it (Bennie, 2023).

As noted, hypersensitivity is related to sensory-avoiding behaviours. As far as the **sense of hearing** is concerned, auditory avoiders may (Twenty-One Sense Team, 2021; GriffinOT, 2018):

- tend to cover their ears and be bothered or even in pain when they hear loud or high-pitched noises;
- feel stressed and upset when trying to work in noisy, crowded settings;
- be extremely irritated by repetitive or specific sounds;
- be easily distracted by background noises.

As for the **sense of touch**, tactile avoiders may (Kitchen, 2024):

- refuse to get their hands messy (e.g., during arts and crafts);
- avoid playing with other learners and constantly worry about being touched or bumped into. They might also avoid crowded places for the same reason;
- avoid working with materials such as glue, finger paint, slime, clay, or glitter;
- be big on cleanliness and avoid touching objects or surfaces that they find dirty.

When it comes to the **sense of smell**, olfactory avoiders might (Twenty-One Senses Team, 2021; Sensory Processing, n.d.):

- become distracted or even overwhelmed by smells that other learners find pleasant;
- complain about faint smells or smells unnoticed by other learners;
- refuse to eat lunch in the dining hall;
- be unable to use the school toilets.

With regard to **balance, movement**, as well as **body awareness**, vestibular and proprioceptive avoiders may (Twenty-One Sense Team, 2021; Middletown Centre for Autism, 2021):

- prefer sedentary activities e.g. reading instead of movement-based games;
- avoid playground equipment;
- struggle to judge physical risks accurately. For example, they might lean back too far on a chair without realizing the risk of falling;
- become dizzy, anxious, or nauseated when the classroom environment involves too much movement or visual motion (e.g., fast transitions, visual animations);
- become anxious or have trouble focusing when sitting on a high chair (or a toilet) where their feet do not touch the floor;
- avoid physical contact with others – similarly to tactile avoiders.

Regarding **internal body signals**, those learners who find it difficult to properly respond to sensory messages from their bodies (Twenty-One Sense Team, 2021):

- may have a high tolerance for pain and not realize they have been hurt;
- could fail to notice they are hungry, thirsty, or need the toilet until it becomes urgent;
- may not sense changes like a racing heart or quickened breathing and only recognize exhaustion when they are completely worn out.

Sensory seekers, on the other hand, might:

- stand too close when talking to the teacher and their peers. They may not have
- not have a good sense of personal space, either (Morin, 2024). It should be stressed that by doing that learners are not trying to annoy anyone. On the contrary, getting close is their way of trying to connect. The problem is, they miss the signals that tell them they might be making others uncomfortable (Griffin, 2023);
- constantly touch their peers and classroom objects (Morin, 2024);
- fidget with anything within their reach;
- be unable to stand or sit still even when they are older;

- seek out or make loud noises (Morin, 2024);
- hold objects with too much pressure (Bennie, 2023);
- chew on things like pens or clothing.

It is important to note that the lists above do not cover everything, and that sensory seeking behaviours can vary widely — they exist on a spectrum. It means there is a wide range in how often they occur and how intense they are as well as how much they affect learning process and / or social interactions.

Language teachers should be aware of learners' sensory challenges because thanks to this knowledge they can, among others:

- recognize when a student is overwhelmed or not responding because of sensory overload or underload;
- build empathy and patience by understanding why some behaviours happen;
- adjust classroom activities, materials, and settings to reduce discomfort or distractions.

Remember: even small adjustments can make a big difference in how learners engage, focus, and succeed.

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Neuro Language Coaching in the English Classroom

Promoting Autonomy, Motivation, and Focus

– Aida Santos

Aida Santos, APPI member B 3754, has been teaching English in Portuguese state schools since 1996, experiencing different learning and teaching contexts. She is an author of coursebooks and a certified Cambridge Examiner. She has participated in international projects and is continually striving to enhance her teaching.



If we wish our students to think, feel and talk more, we must provide them with space to reflect, feel secure, and take responsibility for their learning.

As we face the dynamic context of English teaching in Portugal, teachers need to cope with complicated classroom matters, including disruptive classrooms, unmotivated students, brief attention spans, and low learner independence. Such challenges may result in students' and teachers' frustration and stress. More seriously, they most frequently hamper quality learning.



In light of these difficulties, numerous teachers have been examining new methods of engaging students, addressing varied learning needs, and constructing emotionally secure contexts. One such promising method that has been growing in popularity recently is Neuro Language Coaching® (NLC), a practice that combines the fields of neuroscience with the practices of coaching to make more individualised, accurate, and emotionally intelligent learning processes.

What Is Neuro Language Coaching?

Neuro Language Coaching is not a teaching style so much as a learner-focused model that supports autonomy, self-awareness, and goal-setting learning. Based on findings from neuroscience—how stress influences learning, for example, or how the brain constructs language routes—it facilitates a non-critical, contemplative environment. Here, the teacher turns into a coach who leads the students to find out how they learn, how they feel, and how they can take care of themselves and their progress.

During the 2024/2025 school year, I started exploring various aspects of NLC in lower secondary classes, all of which had the same problems: low motivation, high classroom disruption, and weak self-regulation. Instead of making radical changes to my teaching style, I incorporated small, actionable strategies from NLC principles, realising both concrete and gratifying results.



Minor Modifications, Significant Transformations

Rather than making dramatic changes, I started small:

- ✓ Weekly mini-goals
- ✓ Simple reflection templates
- ✓ Coaching-style questions to prompt discussion

1. Operating with Mini Goals

I had students declare a personal mini-goal each week. They were short, realistic, and frequently quite straightforward:

- "I would like to speak English at least once today."
- "I plan on retaining five new words."

At the close of the lesson, we saved two minutes for reflection: ***Did I succeed at my intention? What worked for me? What are other strategies I can try if I need to do it again?*** This little ritual gave a sense of ownership, with students taking charge of their own learning process. Even the resistant ones soon became more engaged.

2. Promoting Self-Reflection

I designed user-friendly self-assessment templates with questions such as:

- What did I learn today?
- What posed challenges?
- What would I do differently next time?

Over time, even the most inattentive students began to work more seriously with their own learning process. They became more honest, more dependable, and more observant in their own reflections. Most importantly, they began to see *how* they were learning—not just *what* they were learning.

3. Asking Coaching-Style Questions

Open-ended questions that work are at the centre of the NLC approach. In class, I used questions like:

- "How do you feel about speaking English today?"
- "What keeps you on task in class?"
- "What do you do if you don't get something?"

Those questions prompted students to pause, look within, and articulate aloud their feelings and thoughts. For some, it was the first time they ever acknowledged feeling anxious or stuck when speaking English. The mere observation and naming of those feelings were an achievement—and it created a more compassionate learning environment.

Tools and Templates for the Classroom

To try to make this process more streamlined and effective, I designed a range of specific templates. These were:

Mini-Objective Monitors:

- Today's mini-goal of mine is:
- Why is this significant to me?
- How will I know I've succeeded?

Weekly Self-Assessment:

1. One thing I learned this week:
2. Something that I struggled with:

5 POWERFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR LEARNERS

1 What do you think?
Encourage students to share their perspective.

2 Can you tell me more?
Prompt learners to clarify ideas.

3 What will you do next?
Support their goal-setting.

4 How did you figure that out?
Explore their thought process.

5 What do you need from me?
Understand how to assist learners

- 3. Something that helped me:
- 4. Did I achieve my mini-goal? (Yes / No)
- 5. Otherwise, what can I do differently next time?

Emotional Check-In Questions:

- Express your present emotional state in a single word (English).
- Choose a colour that matches how you're feeling: Green (great), Yellow (OK), Red (stressed).
- What do you need today to learn better?

Reflective Coaching Questions:

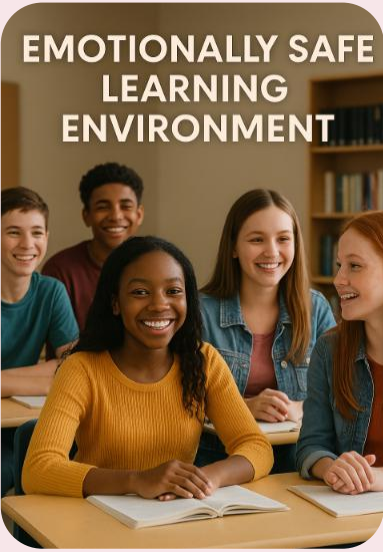
- What would you like to achieve in English this term/semester?
- What factors are hindering your educational progress?
- What is something you can do today to move closer to your goal?
- How do you assess your progress?
- Which approach might assist you in future situations?

These instruments can be used continuously or at intervals depending on set-up classroom routines. They work effectively as opening procedures, closing rituals, or pieces of weekly plans—and can be adjusted to support any level of competence.

Creating an Emotionally Safe Learning Environment

NLC's success also owes itself to the fact that it **creates a supportive and safe learning environment**, which is difficult to achieve when students are off-task, unmotivated, or distracted. Below are some easy-to-use techniques I have found helpful:

- **Be positive, upbeat.** Instead of "That's wrong," say "Good try—can you find what's missing?"
- **Celebrate effort along with results.** Even small strides should be rewarded.
- **Promote self-correction.** For example: "Would you like to rephrase that?"



- **Use humour and empathy** to develop rapport and minimise stress.
- **Incorporate brief focus breaks.** A 30-second breathing exercise or stretch can allow students to refocus their attention.
- **Offer choices.** Let students decide if they want to work individually or in groups, or how they would prefer to present an activity (poster, video, podcast...).

These seemingly insignificant behaviours can have a strong cumulative effect. Students begin to feel themselves as active participants in their learning process, not just passive receivers of information.

Adapting to Your Surroundings

One of the most beneficial aspects of the NLC is its built-in **flexibility**. There is no need to implement all elements at once. Rather, choose one or two approaches that fit your teaching style and adapt them to your classroom situation. Observe your students' responses and adjust as needed.

When dealing with large mixed-ability classes and having limited teaching sessions a week, the ideals of NLC can still have a significant influence. The goal is not to create perfect students but to make them more reflective, self-directed, and confident learners—abilities that extend beyond the confines of the English classroom.

Final Thoughts: Start Small, Think Big

Neuro Language Coaching has allowed me to reshape my role in the classroom—not "instructor" any longer, but "learning facilitator." It has also allowed my students to acquire a greater sense of agency, responsibility, and emotional intelligence. These are not merely academic skills—they are life skills.

I believe this approach holds genuine promise for English teachers all over Portugal. Through some carefully crafted adjustments, we can build classrooms that are safer, more focused, and more engaged—and that leaves teachers feeling more confident in their ability to meet students where they are.

7 MICRO-HABITS TO BUILD FOCUS AND MOTIVATION

- SET A SMALL GOAL
- MAKE A PLAN
- CREATE A ROUTINE
- START A TIMER
- REDUCE DISTRACTIONS
- TAKE A SHORT BREAK
- REWARD YOURSELF

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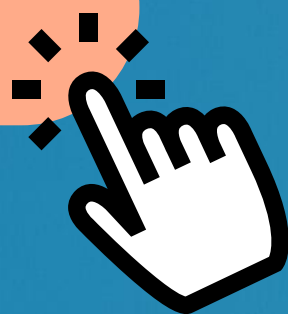
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Embrace the Differences

Promoting Autonomy, Motivation, and Focus

– Marjorie Rosenberg

Marjorie Rosenberg, MFA, has been teaching English to adults in Austria since 1981. Her interest in how people learn has encouraged her to write articles and books on the subject, train teachers, present at conferences and to carry out a research project on learner preferences at the University of Graz.



Our classrooms consist of individuals with a variety of learning preferences that we need to consider. This may seem challenging, but seeing the effect on our learners makes it worth it. Mixing methods is enriching for our learners and encourages them to both make use of their successful strategies and begin to explore new ones.

Failure followed by success

Most of us encountered a variety of methods when trying to learn a foreign language at school as methods went in and out of style. My experience, unfortunately, with the popular audio-lingual method was so negative that I had convinced myself that I was incapable of learning a second language at all. Years later I moved from the US to Austria and began to learn German. I started on my own, then took some classes but also carried a dictionary around for the first few years so that I could see the words I was hearing. I was lucky that people were patient with me and slowly but surely, I became more fluent.

More information

However, the revelation of what had gone wrong in my school days became apparent at a training I attended a few years later where I learned about the differences in receiving, processing and storing information in different sensory modalities. Once that became clear it began to make sense. I realized that I relied heavily on seeing the words. From there I could begin to pronounce them or understand them when I heard them. Adding in movement or emotion was also a major step to remembering vocabulary.

My learners

As I began observing my learners, I also started to see the different preferences among them. Some asked me to write a word on the board, some blossomed when they got to move around the classroom, others didn't need to write anything down but remembered what was said. Then there were learners who noticed every detail and sometimes preferred to work alone whereas others preferred the big picture and enjoyed working in groups or pairs.

As a life-long learner I found this fascinating and began to realize that there were certain myths about these different styles. For one thing, although learners do not learn material in the same way, it does not mean that we need to teach each learner individually. Being aware that there are different types and mixing

our methods is the key to reaching learners. Some styles are not better or worse than others, they simply give learners certain talents that another learner might not have. However, it is important to remember that styles are not an excuse, nor are they judgmental in any way. We are not expected to pigeon-hole our learners as that would limit their abilities to stretch out of their comfort zones and develop new strategies.

Two Models

This talk covered two main models. 'VAK' covers the sensory-based visual, auditory and kinesthetic processing whereby we have discovered in working with these models that people tend to be either kinesthetic motoric or kinesthetic emotional. Then there is the cognitive model which looks at how analytical or global people tend to be on a scale. There is always overlap, however, and people may move from one style to another depending on what they are learning.

Strategies and activities for the different types

Each of the styles, however, normally shows preferences for certain strategies. Visual learners tend to write things down and often use different colors. They usually like handouts and visual materials and may need to write out words to check the spelling. However, they often remember where something is on a page so they need to move the material around and remember what they have learned again. Activities which help them may include using photos, mind-maps, color-coded systems for vocabulary or grammar, word searches, crosswords and labeling.

Auditory learners may need to speak aloud or to listen in order to remember what they have learned. They sometimes move in rhythm or sub-vocalize while learning. They often don't take notes but participate gladly in class discussions. As they tend to remember things in the order they heard them, they need to write down the important information and

learn it again. Activities which aid their learning include guided discussions, brainstorming, story-telling, speaking games, describing words to others or matching phrases by listening.

Kinesthetic motoric learners rely on movement and like to stand up and move around the classroom when possible. They may need to try things out physically and learn well through real-life experiences or things they can touch. As they often learn while walking around, they need to write out the important information and look at it again. Activities include drama, miming, role plays, using manipulatives, running dictations, or demonstrating vocabulary or grammar in a physical way.

The kinesthetic emotional learners feel most comfortable when they like the people they work with. They need to connect learning with positive feelings and may need to find their own reasons for learning. It is important for them to be able to express their creativity and need to know they can ask for help. They may need to learn how to put their emotions aside as this can interfere with learning. Activities for this type include personalized materials, telling personal stories, discussions of likes and dislikes, and cooperative learning activities where learners are dependent on each other to carry out tasks.

Global learners tend to remember the whole experience rather than details. They often need to try things out for themselves. They like to please others, value their feelings over facts and are often spontaneous. They also need to take criticism without attaching emotions to it. They learn well when they can unjumble words or sentences, learn to paraphrase, use creative writing and discover rules from the examples (inductive approach).

Analytic learners rely on details and remember specifics. They may prefer to work alone and

are usually self-motivated. They use critical thinking skills, are task-oriented and rely less on relationships with others. They value facts over feelings and can take criticism rationally. They may need to learn to create an overview and not get caught up in the details. Activities which work well are logic puzzles, error correction, true/false activities, and problem-solving. They like to structure and put things in categories and to find examples once they are given the rules (deductive approach).

Inclusivity

It is possible to have activities for all by incorporating a variety of skills necessary to carry out tasks. By making an activity that relies on all four skills, requires both exact answers and feedback from classmates, has structure and details, as well as an element of fun and the need to see the whole picture, it is possible to involve all the learners. We can expand activities to help learners stretch, for example, asking them to write the details after having a free speaking activity or having them act out a text which was in written form. It is important to remember that when we raise awareness of different types of learners, we have a better chance of both establishing rapport with them and helping them to be more tolerant of their colleagues when working in groups. The discussion can also lead to discovering new strengths and successful strategies and increase learner motivation. All in all, being aware of what our learners need and creating an atmosphere which is inclusive and using a variety of activities and modalities may open doors both we and our learners had not even realized were there.

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Acceptance: Letting the Passengers Stay on the Bus

*An inner journey to embrace discomfort with
curiosity and courage*

– **Tiago Carvalho**

Tiago da Silva Carvalho – PhD in Multimedia in Education from the University of Aveiro; teacher and researcher in the field of Cognition, Learning, Instruction and Communication at the University of Helsinki. As part of the WELLS research team, Tiago helped develop a pedagogical course to support teachers' mental health and wellbeing.



Acceptance is the active practice of allowing difficult thoughts and emotions without judgment or avoidance. It involves recognizing these experiences, observing them with curiosity, and continuing to act in alignment with personal values. This approach fosters psychological flexibility, resilience, and a more meaningful, value-driven life – even amidst discomfort.

***You don't have to like it.
You just have to let it be.***

Imagine your mind as a bus. You're the driver. And on this bus? Oh boy... a crowd of loud, critical, anxious, nostalgic, overenthusiastic, and sometimes deeply insecure passengers (not your students, this time... zing!). Each one yapping advice, panic, shame, guilt, or unsolicited reruns of your most cringeworthy moments (again... this is not about the pupils! This is about you!). But here's the twist: you can't kick them out!... But what you CAN DO is accept!

Acceptance isn't about agreeing with these passengers or pretending to enjoy their company. It's about **letting them ride without giving them the wheel.**



What Is Acceptance?

Acceptance, as outlined by Hayes et al. (2006), is NOT passive resignation. It's the **active, conscious willingness to open up to difficult thoughts and emotions**, without trying to push them away, judge them, or sugarcoat them.

It begins with recognition: *"Ah, I'm feeling anxious."*

Then comes the key move: *"Okay, I don't like this, but I'll allow it to be here."*

In *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy* (Hayes, 2006), the opposite of acceptance is **experiential avoidance** – those habits of distraction, denial, suppression, or overthinking that we engage in to avoid emotional pain. Spoiler alert: they don't work long-term.

So how do we practice acceptance without spiraling into helplessness?

Here are a few exercises!

Exercise 1: Meet the Passenger

Close your eyes and breathe deeply. Picture your "bus" and the emotion you're struggling with. Is it anxiety? Shame? Sadness? See it as a passenger sitting nearby. Imagine what it looks like. Is it tall, twitchy, quiet, loud? What's it wearing?

Now, say to it: *"Hey, I see you. You can stay. But I'm driving."*

You may be surprised how powerful this little mental shift is. This is not compliance. This is acknowledgement without fusion. You're choosing to keep moving forward while letting that emotion tag along.



Exercise 2: Name Without Blame

The moment you name an experience – "This is fear," "That's anger" – you stop being consumed by it. Try this during a stressful moment. Say:

- *"Here's the thought that I'm not good enough."*
- *"There's the feeling of jealousy again."*

You're stepping back and observing, rather than being tangled in the experience. Think of it like watching traffic instead of being stuck in it.

Exercise 3: Curious Observer Mode

The next time you're overwhelmed, ask yourself:

- What does this emotion feel like in the body?
- Where is it located—chest, throat, stomach?
- Is it hot, tight, dull, sharp?

Approach it like a scientist studying a phenomenon. Avoid the label "bad." Be curious. Curiosity is the antidote to judgment. This mindset transforms even discomfort into something interesting—and manageable.

Living with Both Sides of the Coin

Acceptance means realizing that **living a meaningful life comes with the full range of human experience**. Joy and sadness, courage and fear, passion and grief—they all travel together. You can't just cherry-pick the good stuff.

You want a deep connection? That comes with vulnerability. You want achievement? Expect failure along the way. You want love? Brace yourself for possible loss. And that's okay!

But What If I'm Not Good at This?

Nobody is. That's why it's called practice! You'll mess it up. You'll fight feelings. You'll judge yourself for judging yourself. But acceptance can start over at any time (right now even).

Just pause. Take a breath. And welcome whatever is here with these three words: “*This belongs too.*”

Reframing the Tough Days

Here’s a practical tool: At the end of the day, write down one uncomfortable moment. Then ask yourself:

- What did I feel?
- Did I try to push it away?
- What could I have accepted instead?

This reflection builds your "acceptance muscle" – like going to the gym, but for emotional resilience.

Let’s Revisit That Bus

You’re still the driver. The passengers are still noisy. But now you recognize them. You acknowledge them. You allow them space – but you don’t let them steer. The road might be bumpy, but it’s your chosen road. And that’s what matters!



Final Thought: The next time discomfort shows up – and it will – try this: Don’t run. Don’t fight. Just notice, breathe, and allow. Because acceptance isn’t about liking the rain, it’s about learning to dance in it anyway.

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Beyond the red pen: Transforming classroom feedback practices

– Annie Altamirano

Annie Altamirano (MA ELT & Applied Linguistics, University of London) is an independent teacher trainer, international conference speaker, and author based in Spain. Her main interests are differentiated instruction, formative assessment and the use of literature and storybooks to teach values and citizenship. Annie offers training and mentoring services, consultancy and authoring to teachers, schools and publishers.



This article examines how formative feedback practices can move beyond traditional grading to foster student growth. By exploring research-based frameworks and implementing practical techniques, educators can transform feedback into a powerful learning tool that enhances student achievement, develops metacognition, and builds intrinsic motivation while cultivating self-regulation skills.

Introduction

Traditional feedback often involves red-pen corrections that mark errors without providing pathways for growth. Yet research consistently shows that feedback is among the most powerful influences on learning and achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). When thoughtfully designed and effectively delivered, formative feedback impacts student learning by supporting both cognitive development and motivation.

Shute (2008) defines formative feedback as "information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify his or her thinking or behaviour to improve learning" (p. 153). Effective feedback creates opportunities for students to grow by providing insights they might not discover independently.

Feedback misconceptions

Two common misconceptions undermine feedback effectiveness. First, simply returning graded work isn't providing effective feedback—especially when students have no opportunity to use it. Second, detailed correction (like copyediting) removes student thinking from revisions and often overemphasizes mechanics over more important criteria.

A framework for understanding feedback

Hattie and Timperley's (2007) feedback framework identifies four levels:

- 1. **Task-level feedback:** Addresses specific performance aspects and corrects misunderstandings

- 2. **Process-related feedback:** Focuses on how students arrived at responses rather than just answers
- 3. **Self-regulation feedback:** Develops students' ability to self-assess and self-manage
- 4. **Self-related feedback:** General praise without task-specific information (least effective)

Effective feedback must be timely, appropriately portioned, delivered in a suitable mode, directed to the right audience, understandable, and—crucially—actionable.

Practical classroom techniques

Three-question technique

When responding to student writing, place numbered circles at points requiring reflection. Write three related questions below and leave space for student's responses. During the next lesson, allocate 10—15 minutes for students to respond. This approach ensures feedback functions as a diagnostic tool rather than a post-mortem, with all students—regardless of performance—engaging equally with improvement.

Message on a strip

Instead of writing comments directly on assignments, write them on paper strips. Place students in groups of four with their assignments plus comment strips. Groups determine which comment belongs with which assignment. This technique encourages students to read feedback objectively and identify qualities of successful work.



Two stars and a wish

In this peer assessment approach, students provide two positive comments (stars) and one suggestion for improvement (wish) on sticky notes. To enhance quality, collect and anonymously display comments, asking the class to vote on which feedback would be most useful. Create a reference poster of effective feedback criteria based on class discussion.

T-A-G approach

This structured method includes three components:

- **T**ell something you like
- **A**sk a question
- **G**ive positive suggestions for improvement

This approach encourages student voice while keeping feedback constructive and action-oriented.

The feedback loop

Implement this four-step process:

1. Begin with a clearly communicated learning aim
2. Exchange specific, non-evaluative feedback focused on that aim
3. Allow time for revision and application
4. Reflect on whether the aim was met

This student-driven process benefits both feedback givers and receivers, with teachers supporting through structure, modelling, and strategic intervention.

See 3 before me (C3B4ME)

This technique requires students to consult three classmates before approaching the teacher with questions. It encourages peer collaboration and develops students' problem-solving capabilities while reducing teacher dependence.

Preflight checklist

Before submission, assignments must be reviewed by a peer using a checklist of requirements. If the submitted work lacks required elements, the reviewer is held accountable—creating mutual responsibility for quality control.

Conclusion

Effective formative feedback shifts the focus from judgment to growth. When teachers design feedback experiences that are timely, understandable, and actionable—and when students have structured opportunities to use that feedback—learning deepens, and self-regulation develops.

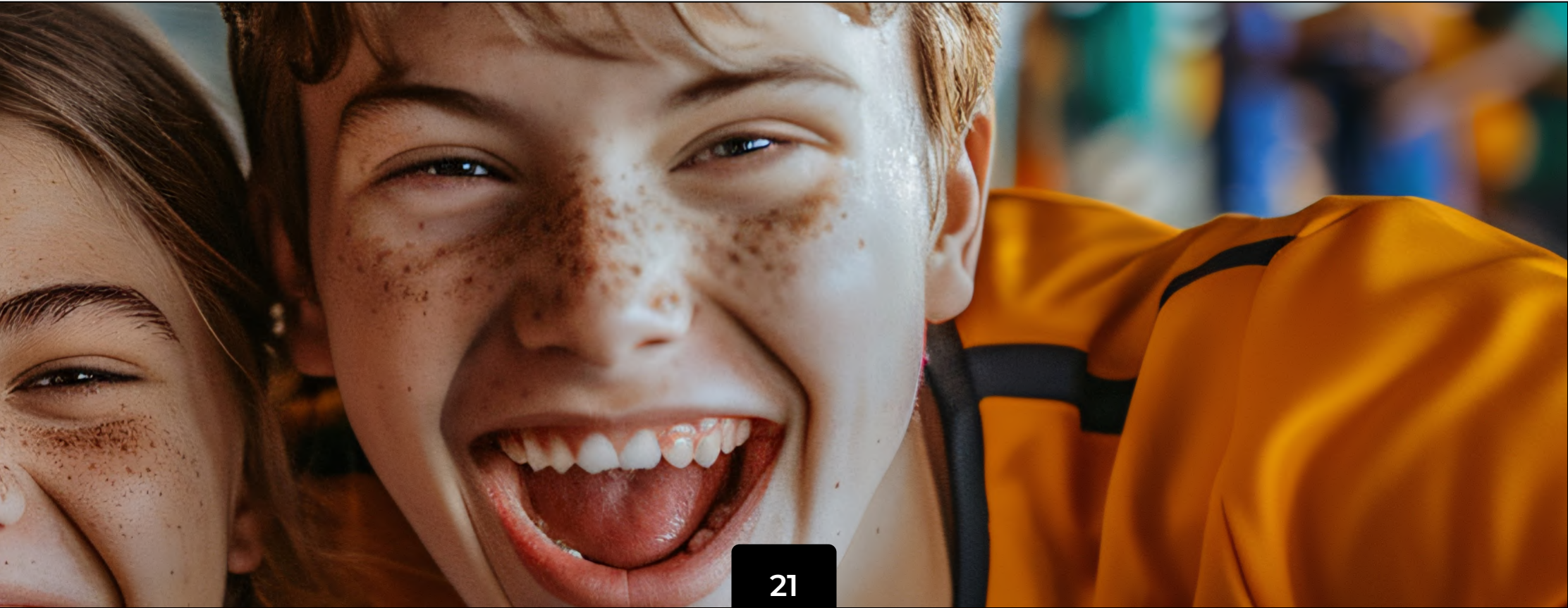
The techniques presented here can be implemented gradually. Start small: model a feedback technique with your whole class, reflect together on its effectiveness, and build from there. As students become more adept at providing and using feedback, you'll observe not only improved work quality but increased metacognition and student ownership of learning—the true hallmarks of educational success.

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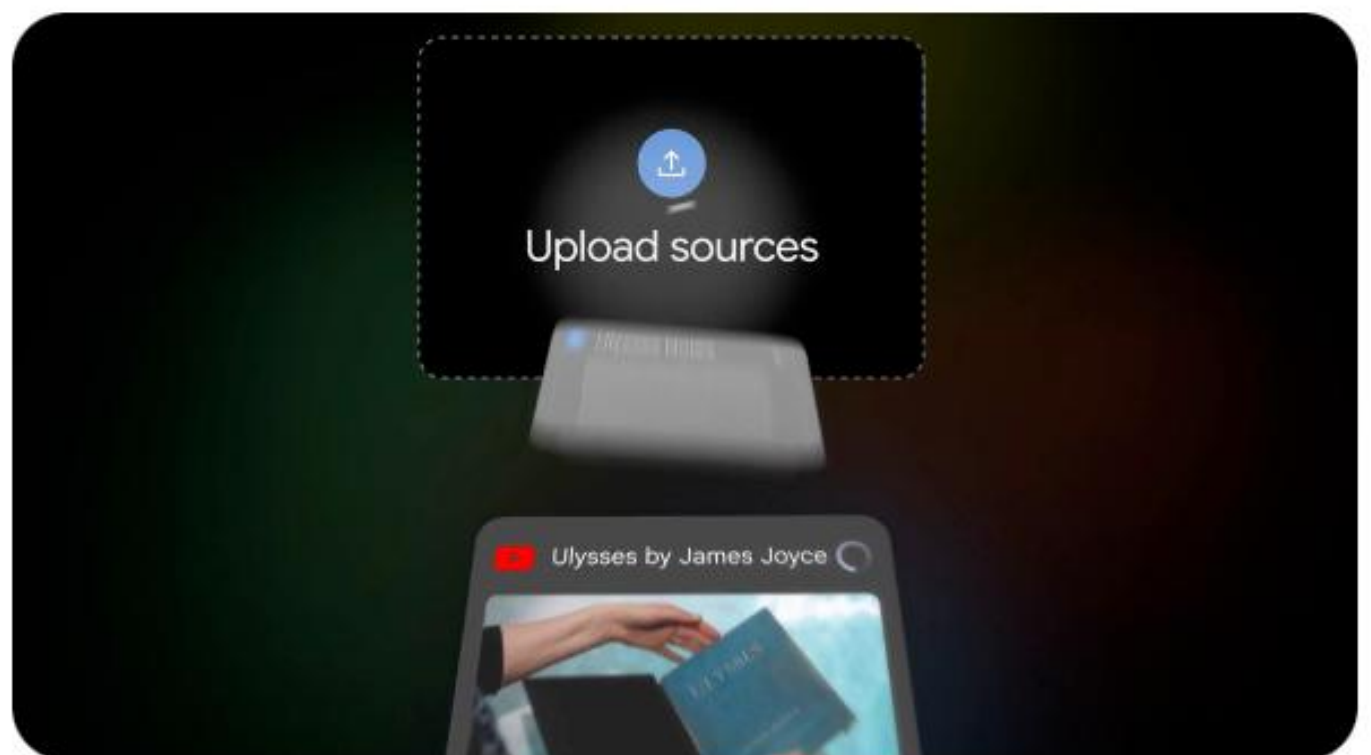


Talk the Talk: (Re)Introducing EFL Learners to Podcasts through NotebookLM

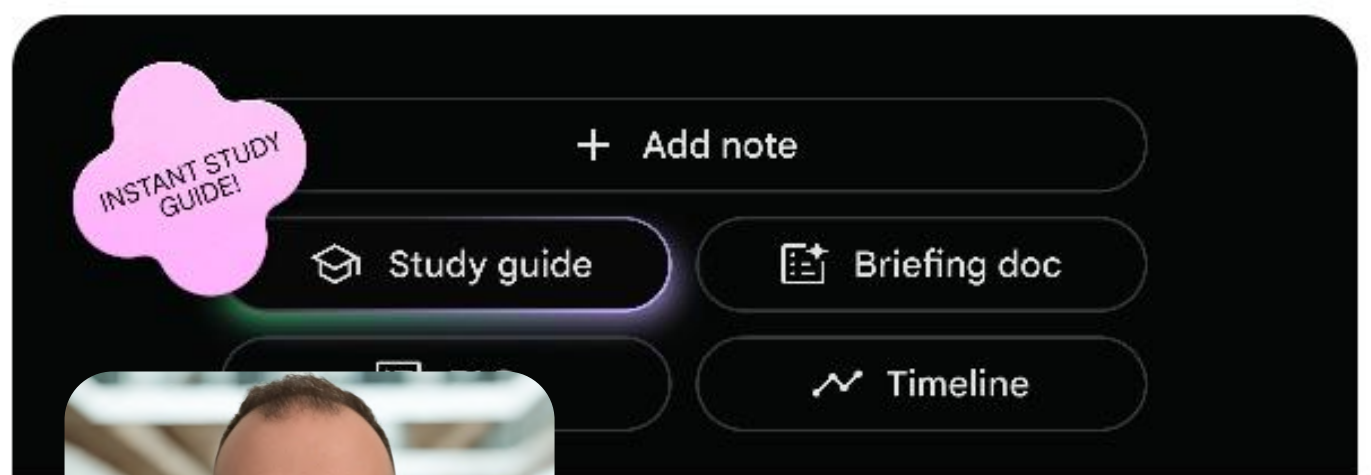
Podcasting is a great way to learn, be entertained, and stay current on a wide range of topics.

— Neil deGrasse Tyson

— Carlos Lindade



Carlos Lindade, APPI member B7249, is a Portuguese Canadian ELT professional who is heavily involved in training future EFL teachers. He holds a PhD in Advanced English Studies from the University of Vigo and lectures at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto (FLUP). He is a member of the Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies (CETAPS) and a regular speaker at APPI events.



In just two decades, podcasting has evolved from a niche pastime into a potent approach for language teaching and learning. New generative-AI tools—perhaps chief among them **Google’s NotebookLM** with its ‘audio overview’ and ‘interactive mode’—are lowering the technical bar and opening fresh pedagogical possibilities. After surveying the evidence on podcasting in the context of EFL, this article explains what NotebookLM really can do and considers its potential use by teachers and students. Ultimately this article aims to explore how NotebookLM can be leveraged to introduce students to the world of podcasting, while staying aligned with the national curricula and promoting learner agency and digital literacies.

Over the past few years, a steady stream of studies has moved podcasting from a potential fad to a demonstrably effective catalyst for English learning. In Spain, secondary pupils who produced a socially themed podcast outperformed a control group on both oral and written post-tests (Chaves-Yuste & de la Peña, 2023). A mixed-methods study in Colombia found that ten weeks of podcast-based homework lifted low-proficiency freshmen nearly a full CEFR band in listening comprehension while boosting motivation (Delgadillo & Illera, 2024). A 2024 systematic review of eighteen classroom trials adds that learners consistently report higher motivation, greater enjoyment and a sense of control over pacing and replay (Ramirez, 2024). An action-research project with Taiwanese undergraduates found that designing and publishing their own episodes boosted self-directed learning behaviours, metacognitive strategy use and oral fluency in just one semester (Yang, 2025). All of this reflects Panagiotidis’ (2021) earlier meta-review, which argues that podcasts fit learners’ “always-connected lifestyle”, allowing authentic input to seep into the cracks of their day—on their way to school, on their way home, waiting in a queue—without demanding extra timetabled hours. In short, podcasts offer a rare pedagogical “triple win”: tangible skill gains, heightened autonomy, and an authenticity of voice.

NotebookLM: AI producer, host—and conversation partner

NotebookLM began its life as a simple note-taking experiment, but three key updates have turned it into something far more interesting

for ELT. First came Audio Overview (September 2024), a one-click option that ingests whatever multimodal sources is provided— class notes, PDFs, slides, links to YouTube and/or websites—and spins them into a lively, two-host conversation that users can download as an MP3 or stream directly in the browser. Google designed the feature to be a deep-dive discussion of the provided sources. In a nutshell, after finding the appropriate sources and by pressing *Generate*, users will obtain a tailor-made model podcast. Later that year (December 2024), Google layered on Interactive Mode: with a single tap the user can *join* the recorded conversation, wait for one of the AI hosts to “call on” them, and ask follow-up questions in natural language; the hosts pause, respond with an explanation drawn from the same uploaded sources, and then glide back into their scripted chat. In practice this turns a passive listening task into an active retrieval cycle—students predict, question, receive feedback, and immediately hear the language re-modelled in context. Finally, the June 2025 update made it possible to share a notebook (and its audio overview) publicly via a simple link, eliminating account-creation hurdles and letting teachers embed the episode in Classroom, Moodle, Teams or even WhatsApp groups. For ELT material development, these three tweaks collapse what used to be hours of technical labour—scripting, recording, editing—into minutes, while preserving some pedagogic control: you choose the sources, you verify the AI-generated audio, and you decide whether the interactive layer is going to be used by your learners. Because the output is a bona-fide podcast file, and drawing from my own experience, learners encounter the genre’s

real-world conventions long before they attempt their own production, lowering the intimidation threshold and modelling discourse structures that textbooks rarely capture.

Pedagogical pathways—linking NotebookLM to Portugal's *Aprendizagens Essenciais* and the PASEO

NotebookLM's podcast tools unlock at least four intertwined pathways that map neatly onto the national curricula. First, a flipped-listening routine—uploading the content students will learn next, generating an Audio Overview, and assigning it for homework—directly activates the *Aprendizagens Essenciais* (AE) descriptors for listening while nurturing the PASEO competence of autonomous learning: students choose when and how often to replay, developing the self-regulation expected (Direção-Geral da Educação, 2017; 2018). Second, when students feed classroom and/or research notes into NotebookLM to generate their own podcast, they engage several PASEO cross-cutting areas: creativity, critical thinking, and digital literacy. They can later learn to fact-check the podcast, so they learn how to assess the quality of the content. Third, the micro-listening & retrieval cycle afforded by Interactive Mode—pausing the hosts to ask questions builds strategic listening skills and supports PASEO's emphasis on problem solving: learners identify a comprehension gap and immediately source a solution. Finally, the one-click multimodal source-to-speech affordance yields an instant accessibility layer; visually-impaired students or those with dyslexia can access dense course contents aurally, embodying the inclusive ethos of decree-law 54/2018. In sum, NotebookLM has the potential to offer concrete, curricula-aligned scaffold through which in-service teachers can deliver authentic input, foster learner agency, and meet national targets for 21st-century competences.

Benefits—clearly—and the equally clear shortcomings

NotebookLM's rapid rise requires one to balance its main advantages against the limitations that still demand human vigilance. Concerning benefits, NotebookLM's speed is utterly impressive, and speed matters when

weekly contact hours are limited and the workload are barely manageable. Second, the Interactive mode nudges passive listeners toward dialogic engagement. Learners who “join” the AI hosts to request clarification(s) are rehearsing the same negotiation-of-meaning moves that underpin communicative competence (Peters, 2024). Third, and as mentioned previously, it may possibly lower cognitive load and offer visually impaired or dyslexic learners a potential support others take for granted. Finally, early classroom reports suggest a motivational spill-over: once learners acknowledge how impressive an AI-voiced podcast sounds, many want to outdo it with their own recordings—an intrinsic push few worksheets can match (Baskara et al., 2024).

Regarding shortcomings, accuracy remains the most acknowledged flaw. At this stage, every Audio Overview still needs manual fact-checking. Furthermore, Interactive Mode still speaks English only and, crucially, evaporates after playback; neither the spontaneous Q-and-A nor a log of student questions can be downloaded (Google Help, 2025). While this is still important for autonomous study, it limits evidence of learning and frustrates revision. Moreover, accent diversity is also an issue. The AI hosts are modelled on global-north accents and while they are highly intelligible, we risk accent bias (Michel et al., 2025). Pedagogically, NotebookLM offers no native recording, editing or RSS publishing. It is a great tool to introduce students to instant podcasts but empowering them to host their own podcasts is another step and would require the use of other platforms. Lastly, if NotebookLM keeps on evolving and if in the future it is given the ability to evaluate learner's interaction with the podcast, it may count as a “high-risk” educational AI system under the AI Act (Regulation (EU) 2024/1689), which would require schools to document data flows, secure parental consent for minors and navigate the great unknown.

Taken together, these benefits and shortcomings argue for a co-pilot ethos. NotebookLM excels at curating and voicing content on demand. However, human teachers remain indispensable for accuracy, ethical oversight and the irreplaceable warmth of real voices.

Conclusion: NotebookLM as the on-ramp to authentic podcasting

The magic behind podcasts has always been its low-threshold, high-reward blend of authentic language, audience awareness and learner autonomy. Google’s NotebookLM now lowers that threshold even further. Audio Overview compresses an hour of teacher scripting and editing into a five-minute click, giving learners a model podcast that is tightly grounded (hopefully) in the very contents they will study next. Interactive Mode then turns that model into a rehearsal room: students can interrupt the AI hosts, probe for clarifications and rehearse paraphrases before they take the next

step and are challenged to host their own podcast. While the caveats remain—hallucinations, bandwidth gaps, data-privacy checks—with a vigilant teacher these are speed bumps, not roadblocks. NotebookLM won’t replace the messy, exhilarating work of students crafting an original show; it simply gives them a tool they can use in their learning journey and when used innovatively, the creative and linguistic energies can flow where they belong: into the learners’ voices.

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


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INTERNATIONAL ONE-SHEET

Tim Burton's Edward Scissorhands: the monster as a multimodal learning approach in the EFL classroom

"I always like strange characters."

Tim Burton

— Ana Barroso

Ana Barroso is a teacher of English and a researcher at CEAUL/ULICES (Centre of English Studies) at the University of Lisbon. She is currently working at ANQEP, I.P. (Youth Qualification Department)



Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* can be a powerful pedagogical tool to use with upper secondary level students, as it engages them emotionally, fosters empathy, promotes cultural and literary knowledge, and provides a rich resource for analysis and exploration across disciplines. The purpose of this text is pedagogy-related rather than theoretical but it also offers a summary of the film plot and pinpoints the use of gothic fiction as a learning motivational spur into the EFL curriculum.

The deficit of learning enthusiasm and engagement in classroom activities poses several challenges to EFL teachers, and a successful way to overcome this problem is to integrate a multimodal approach that can easily facilitate motivation and learner-centred experiences as these resonate their socio-cultural contexts and personal real experiences.

As literary discourses are mainly used for purely instrumental uses of language in EFL lessons, they also allow students to have meaningful immersive learning experiences and engage in different modes of interaction. Gothic fiction is probably the most popular genre among adolescents as it “mirrors the contradictions which teenagers go through in that delicate period of their lives.” (Maggi 2019: 106) Both the literary canon of the genre, as their contemporary forms approach several themes that express the inner psyche and explore anxieties and insecurities of the individual that puts an “emphasis on liminal spaces and borderlands that characters inhabit as outcasts for their unique traits.” (Nido and Codo 2023: 7) These outcasts often show extremes of emotion, self-revelation, and rebellion against authority, personality traits highly appealing for adolescents.

The classic Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) can help teenagers understand the role of society in creating a *monster* and the position of the social outcast. This literary text can be the starting point to explore the potentialities of Burton's film. More than textbooks or syllabuses, literary texts can be very engaging and entertaining, as they are much more than informative or functional materials and lead readers to “discover the characters' personalities and worlds”. (Bobkina and Dominguez 2014: 251)

By combining a multimodal approach in the EFL classroom, a more stimulating and learner-centred environment can boost students' interest in reading and develop media literacy skills. Learning a foreign language becomes more meaningful to students when linguistic

input encompasses a worldview that is both contextual and universal.

Edward Scissorhands is the story of Edward, a near-complete person, whose creator died before he could finish his greatest creation. Edward was left with metal scissors for hands and has been living in a castle high on top of a hill in total isolation. One day, a kind lady named Peg discovers him and welcomes him into her home and family. At first, everyone welcomes him into the community, but soon things begin to change, and Edward understands he can't fit into society and live a common life as humans do.

The visual imagery of the film is a good way to introduce content in an understandable way, allowing for further linguistic and cultural understanding and interdisciplinary activities. By combining more traditional activities such as oral drilling, skim-reading, role playing, gap-filling, analogue tweet, vocabulary matching or text writing with a variety of media the lesson becomes more enjoyable and memorable for students.

The first classroom activity to foster motivation and interest in the topic might be identifying the key elements of Gothic settings, using some still frames of the film that show the decaying castle where Edward lives. Students contribute collaboratively with words that foster analytical and creative skills, while introducing them to Gothic conventions.

Edward (symbolically a name from the Victorian age), the “Monstrous Other”, with sharp metal scissors for hands, full of scars and with a pale skin evokes Frankenstein's creature: both are monsters because of their appearance. However, as the action evolves, both in the film and in Shelley's book, the reader realizes the actions and interactions of the other characters are what turned them into monsters (both end up committing murder). Their life trajectories become very impactful stories and with a greater emotional resonance to readers and viewers alike. The concept is complex and triggers discussion and debate on loneliness, empathy, social exclusion and peer/social pressure.

A reading activity of several extracts of *Frankenstein* provides students with new cultural insights, increases their linguistic confidence and enhances their understanding of the individual and his/her interaction with society. The students can use AI chatbots to generate background information about Mary Shelley and Tim Burton. Students can also use AI art generators (like DALL E 3 or Deep Dream Generator) to create

original images inspired by descriptions in the book or by scenes in the film. Prompts can include: “A portrait of Frankenstein” and “Edward creating an ice sculpture”. Students then describe their artworks, practicing descriptive language and interpretation.

Students can be asked to write a synopsis of the film and then, by using AI powered story generators (like AI Dungeon or ChatGPT), to co-write in pairs an alternative ending.

While students listen to the film’s soundtrack, they can write from different characters’ points of view (Edward, Peg, Kim): Their diary entries about events and feelings. They can read their entries to the class as a role-play activity.

By using Canva’s AI powered tools, students can design a film poster or a book cover. Then they create a Venn diagram to compare classical and contemporary Gothic fiction. This activity not only helps students recognize its core elements but also encourages them to extend and re-imagine the symbol of the “monster” in different contexts and media.

By the end of these activities, students are supposed to create a *Book and Media Goth Club project*, where different materials related to the topic can be uploaded and shared to encourage interaction and develop reading and media literacy skills to deepen their understanding of the genre and its extensions and subversions.

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The Transformative Power of Theatre: From Naval Officer to Children's Theatre Actor

— Matthew Lloyd

Calliope Theatre Company

Calliope
Theatre Company

I've been lucky enough to visit the theatre a lot over the years. I always think it is a magical moment when the auditorium lights dim and the hum of conversation from the audience diminishes to a respectful silence in anticipation of the performance. The actors understand their cues and their lines, but so do we, the audience: we know when to laugh, when to be silent, and when to applaud. We understand from an actor's face when they are happy or sad, confident or anxious. In the theatre, we are there with the actors in a way that film and television can never replicate, and together we navigate those fine lines between comedy and tragedy, farce and drama.

These days, however, I'm more likely to be on the other side of the theatrical curtain. For nine years, I have been a stage actor with Calliope Theatre Company performing English-language theatre in schools across the whole of the Portuguese mainland. The company's main focus, of course, is the teaching of English. However, it's my firm belief that our performances bring far more than language to the students we see. In addition to supporting the English language curriculum of Portuguese schools, I think theatre joins all areas of the arts and humanities in helping children's social development.

FROM WARSHIPS TO STAGECRAFT

If you've attended an APPI conference, you may already know our work. But, for those unfamiliar, Calliope Theatre Company was founded in 2016 with a mission to bring live English-language theatre into Portuguese schools. We are based in Lisbon, but tour extensively across the Portuguese mainland. Each season, we present three original plays tailored to different age groups and language levels. Younger students enjoy fairy tales like *Snow White* or *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Middle year students get adventure stories like *Robin Hood* or *Sherlock Holmes*. Older students experience adapted Shakespeare plays. Typically, we travel to schools and set up in the auditorium or gymnasium. However, we often hire our own auditorium in cities like Braga or Faro, and schools can visit us. We bring everything needed—lights, sound, and staging—and require only electricity and eager minds.

This has now been my work since 2016. However, my first experience living in Portugal dates back to 2011, when I was serving with the British military at the NATO base in Oeiras.

In my 17 years of military service, I accrued over five years of deployed sea time — on both ships and submarines - served with the Royal Marines in Norway and Afghanistan, and even enjoyed a few desk jobs. I guess you could call my overall experience, 'broad'! Even despite that, a lot of people have suggested that a career move from the Royal Navy to children's theatre is a strange one, and in many respects they are correct. However, there are also similarities. Both involve an attempt to com-

municate ideas to a bunch of unruly and headstrong individuals—either sailors or children— while wearing a silly costume. There's travel, long periods of meticulous preparation... and occasional moments of blind panic. In addition, as a naval officer, I was also concerned with leadership, teamwork and ethos. It's the development of associated characteristics that I believe I am still involved in as an actor — just as readers of this journal will be, as educators.

LEADERSHIP, TEAMWORK AND ETHOS, AND HOW DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ENABLES STUDENTS' SOFT SKILLS

Leadership isn't just about barking orders. It requires knowing both the task and the person being tasked. What's their capability? Do they need reassurance or independence? Before speaking, a good leader listens and observes. Teamwork functions similarly. Effective collaboration means understanding how to relate to others, to contribute meaningfully, and to support mutual goals.

This shared understanding is how I think of ethos—a collective spirit that enables people to act selflessly, whether fighting fires, maintaining systems, or scrubbing floors. Ethos is a collaborative creation of organisational culture, and it surrounds leadership and teamwork, shaping both their method and purpose.

When it came to navigation systems, nuclear reactors or warheads, I was interested in the level of a crew-member's technical expertise. In terms of leadership and teamwork, however, I was looking for emotional intelligence and empathy, and I considered those vital characteristics in anyone proposing to be part of the Royal Navy's future leadership. Military hierarchies aside, I would hope we can agree that those qualities are also pretty handy in developing the soft skills useful in general society! As educators, therefore, we should always be concerned with the development of these skills.

Emotional intelligence helps us understand ourselves, other people, and the contextual environment of the world around us. However, teachers won't need reminding of the impact of COVID-19 on children's social development. Additionally, the digital age, while expanding access to information, can hinder real-life connection. The diversity of humanity has never been more visible and we are arguably more in need of compassion and empathy than ever before.

I don't know exactly where this sits in terms of a school's standard curriculum, but I do know that, outside of the raw academics, school attendance itself forms a fundamental and essential part of children's social development. In fact, school-based recreational activities and cultural participation are recognised in the UN's 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Theatre plays a unique role in fulfilling this right.

THEATRE, A STAGE FOR SOCIAL LEARNING

Now, I'm not about to suggest that watching me pretend to be Sherlock Holmes provokes any 'Road to Damascus' moments among Grade 8 teenagers. I will suggest, however, that the *experience* of live theatre enables the development of many desirable characteristics. If we, as actors, are achieving our aim, our audience will be transported somewhere other than the auditorium in which we're performing. They may be climbing a giant beanstalk with Jack, on a desert island with a group of pirates, or listening to Juliet as she laments Romeo's family name. When students immerse themselves in these stories, they not only observe and understand characters, but they also begin to understand themselves. They see joy and grief, courage and failure, kindness and cruelty. They assess whether reactions are justified, whether behaviour is fair. These judgments, over time, inform their own actions. (The use of theatre to teach morality is nothing new, of course, as students of history will be well aware!)

PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

So, yes, our shows are first and foremost an activity that educators might find brings some fun into the teaching of English as a foreign language.

Our aim is that even the weakest students of the language will be entertained and engaged by the visual qualities of our shows' narratives and recognise some basic vocabulary along the way. But they'll also be experiencing those narratives with their peers. They'll be exposed to stories and characters that they'll be encouraged to understand. With luck, or their teacher's encouragement, they'll use one of our dedicated Study Guides to facilitate a discussion of the shows after the performance. They will empathise. And, most importantly, they'll do all of that while having fun... and fun is an excellent teacher.

Matthew Lloyd
matthew.lloyd.rn@gmail.com

Created in 2016 by **Zoe Kaye** and **Meg Thurin** along with **Mathew Loyd**, **Calliope Theatre Company** features high quality shows, costumes, sets, and study guides that have been carefully designed to 'Educate, Enlighten, and Entertain!' students through interactive English-language theatre.



The author serving in HMS SPARTAN on a visit to the Falkland Islands in 2005.



The author appearing as King Arthur in Calliope's, 'King Arthur and the Stolen Sword'.



Originally from Liverpool, **Matthew Lloyd** spent 17 years serving with the Royal Navy before emigrating to Portugal where he co-founded Calliope Theatre Company. He specialises in Leadership as part of his Master of Business Administration at Cranfield School of Management and evaluated officers and non-commissioned officers on promotion courses at the Royal Navy Leadership Academy. The company have attended and performed at the annual APPI conference every year since 2017.





At the 38th APPI Conference, visitors to the International House Portugal stand raised €325 by buying pre-loved teaching books in aid of charity. The funds raised will support girls’ secondary education in Malawi through a Scottish charity, the **Mamie Martin Fund**.

38th APPI CONFERENCE: Delegates Raise Funds to Support Girls’ Education in Malawi

APPI and the **International House Portugal** language school network have a shared interest in quality language teaching in Portugal and as such the two organisations have been collaborating for many years now and IH Portugal has been proud to be a sponsor of the annual APPI conferences.

This year we introduced a new initiative for teachers visiting the **IH Portugal** stand that we felt was a win-win opportunity for everybody. Our stand offered pre-loved copies of inspiring teaching resource books in exchange for a modest contribution. As teachers we all love books, and these classic books are a really useful addition to the library of any teacher looking for a bit of classroom inspiration.

We were very happy to welcome lots of teachers to our IH Portugal stand and thanks to the interest and generosity of the conference delegates, by the end of the conference we had sold lots of books and raised the amazing sum of **325 euros**, far exceeding our expectations. All the funds raised have been donated to [Mamie Martin Fund](http://www.mamiemartin.org) (MMF), a Scottish charity that advances the education of young women and girls in north Malawi. Secondary education is not free in Malawi, one of the world’s poorest countries, and girls, sadly, face great barriers to accessing education at all levels. **MMF** relies on funding from individual donations to pay the girls’ school fees and also provides some additional financial support for essentials to help the girls make the most of the places they have won at secondary school. In **2024/25 MMF** is supporting **133** girls in seven partner schools.

Education, and educational opportunities for girls are causes that are close to our hearts, and this particular cause is especially close to IH Portugal’s heart. The **Mamie Martin Fund** was set up more than 30 years ago by Janet’s (IH Braga) parents in memory of her grandmother Mamie Martin, a teacher who lived and worked in Malawi in the 1920s and was frustrated by the lack of opportunities for young girls. Sadly, even today girls still face many challenges, but completing secondary education can be life-changing for them and their families. The funds raised by the generous teachers at the APPI conference will fund a place for a girl at a community school for the 4 years of secondary education and could potentially change her life.

So, a huge thank you or “zikomo” to everyone who contributed and see you at next year’s conference.

“Sex equality in education benefits every child”
(UNICEF)

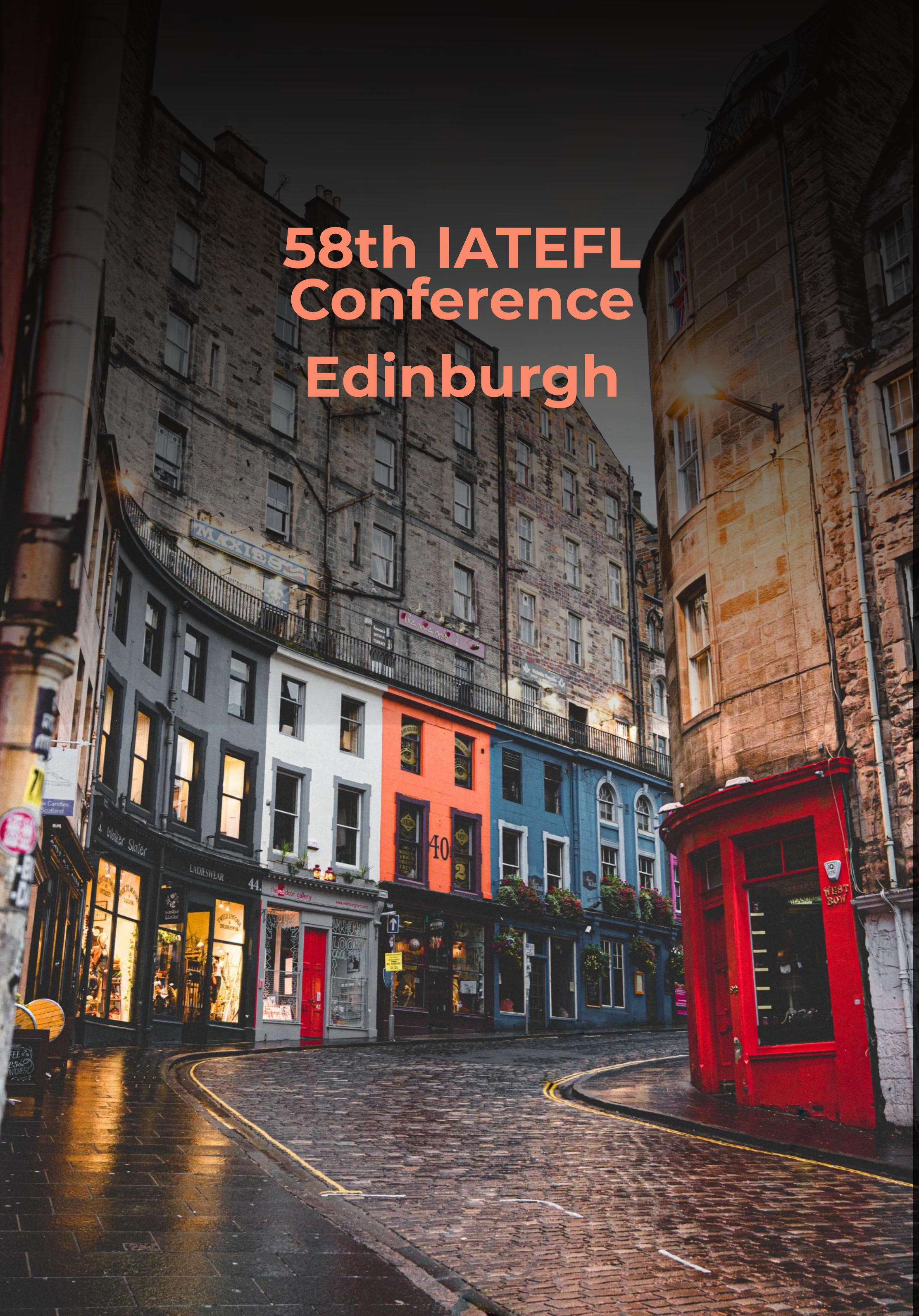
www.mamiemartin.org



Jane Sinclair, IH Braga



58th IATEFL Conference Edinburgh



Associates' Day at the 58th Annual IATEFL Conference – Edinburgh

For the first time ever, APPI participated in the Associates' Day at the IATEFL Conference, held in Edinburgh in 2025. This Conference brings together over 100 Associations from around the world, although not all took part in the Associates' Day.

Every year, IATEFL invites members of Teacher Associations, from all over the world to a pre-conference day where each president or representative is invited to share their work – either through a poster presentation or a session. In return, the representative is entitled to access the full four-day IATEFL conference.

APPI was represented by its president, Sónia Ferreirinha, who presented a poster highlighting the important work the association has been doing with and for its members.

The meeting proved to be a very enlightening opportunity to talk, share and reflect on the achievements and challenges faced by various Teachers' Associations. While the contexts varied greatly from country to country, many common issues emerged, including managing an association, engaging members, promoting Continuous Professional Development, fostering collaboration among associations and a common constraint faced by all: securing and generating funding to remain active.

Our attendance aimed to strengthen our relationship with other Teachers' Associations, establish new contacts, and learn from and with each other's work and experiences. We also sought to build new partnerships that can contribute to the development of each association's efforts – and, in turn, to the growth of the ELT community.

Sónia Ferreirinha holds a degree in Teaching English and Portuguese to the 2.º CEB and a Master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from NOVA University Lisbon.

She is the President of APPI and the Director of APPI's Teacher Training Centre – APPIforma. She is also a teacher trainer and teaches English at kindergarten and primary levels.



Insights from the 58th IATEFL Annual Conference 2025

Beware of the assumption
that the way you work
is the best way
simply because
it's the way you've done it before.

Rick Rubin, *The Creative Act: A Way of Being*

— Helena Lopes



Helena Lopes, APPI member B-6646, is an EFL teacher in the 3rd Cycle of Basic Education and Secondary Education in state schools. She is also a teacher trainer. She holds a PhD in the field of Languages, Literature and Cultures, area of specialization in Foreign Language Didactics, as well as an MA in English Studies.

Insights from the 58th IATEFL Annual Conference 2025*

At IATEFL Conferences, we have the opportunity to connect with internationally renowned experts from around the world, allowing us to invite some of them to the APPI Annual Conference and regional Seminars, hoping to have some contributions to The APPI eJournal and The APPI eNewsletter, as well.

The 58th IATEFL Annual Conference 2025 for English language teaching professionals, in Edinburgh, 8–11 April, was an opportunity to meet teaching professionals from around the world. The insights shared by these professionals pointed to a few key developments in the field of TEFL, many of which, if not all, are particularly relevant in the Portuguese context of education, namely: (1) artificial intelligence (AI) in ELT, (2) assessment, (3) inclusion and special educational needs (SEN), (4) sustainability, global issues and social responsibility, as well as (5) teacher development and training. These five key issues are a starting point to discuss the main areas dominating education policies in Portugal and, consequently, current continuing professional development trends in the field of TEFL.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in ELT

From the multiple sessions that addressed AI in ELT, it is clear that integrating AI in education is now part of the process of teaching and learning foreign languages. It is also a trend that cannot be ignored, not even by those still sceptical or critical about its use. AI brings both opportunities and challenges into the classroom. From the point of view of teaching, using AI to generate content quickly helps teachers with time-consuming tasks, leaving them time for the creative process of teaching. The use of AI can also facilitate and be integrated with some of those creative activities, actively engaging learners. However, one of the concerns in using AI is the fact that it may hinder the development of learners' critical thinking skills. Tasks that imply the use of AI by learners must be designed with a critical perspective, considering both ethical and pedagogical implications. Learning how to manage AI in ELT will certainly be part of many future conferences to come. The debate is here to stay and being part of it will be an opportunity for us to reflect on any assumptions we may hold.

Assessment

Integrated learning and assessment continue to be a priority in ELT. The importance given to

learning assessment and feedback has never faded, but rather expanded, incorporating other practices, such as AI-enhanced assessment methods or adaptative testing methods. Formative assessment is still highlighted as part of the key to learners' success. And it sure does not collide with international standardised testing. Standardised testing emphasises the need to align assessments at a global level, according to a common proficiency scale, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which is recognised worldwide. Looking at the way these standardised tests are designed could even be useful for teachers who wish to improve their testing techniques.

The prominence given to assessment and feedback resonates with current priorities in continuing professional development courses in Portugal. It will remain so, especially when we consider Portugal as taking part in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2025 Foreign Language Assessment (FLA), the OECD's first global evaluation of 15-year-olds' proficiency in English as a foreign language, assessing reading, listening, and speaking. International results will soon bring a new understanding of learners' proficiency level of English as a foreign language, allowing for comparison and identification of best practices.

Understanding how both national and international assessments work should not, nonetheless, contribute to the promotion of a "teaching to the test" methodology, but rather motivate teachers to reinforce formative assessment and feedback in the classroom, effectively integrating learning and assessment.

Inclusion and Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The conference, by offering a range of sessions focusing on both strategies to work with neurodiverse learners and inclusive classroom practices, emphasised the importance of creating accessible and supportive learning environments. There are many learner profiles that teachers must attend to in the EFL classroom. This, indeed, is a pressing issue in the Portuguese education system as well, which, with the support of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, has been undergoing a huge transformation towards a more inclusive education system. The conference highlighted the respect for diversity and pointed out a path towards more inclusive teaching practices in TEFL. Learning about "how to do it" is now

more important than ever, hence the relevance attached to knowledge exchange and training on the topic targeted at EFL teachers.

Sustainability, Global Issues, and Social Responsibility

The diverse range of talks on a wide variety of social issues through ELT brings together different fields of interest. Teaching EFL has never been only about language acquisition, but rather about communication in a global context. To achieve this more effectively, learners need to understand the multiple environments in which they interact. The fact that these talks were held by professionals from around the world brought new viewpoints and approaches to the way we might think about our practice in context. We may all, as TEFL professionals, include the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in teaching, using English language education as a tool for social justice, global awareness, and cultural understanding. However, our approaches may be different, varying according to our perspectives and methods of teaching. Sharing practices through this professional exchange somehow may transform our classroom, helping learners to become more understanding. Learning from other professionals helps Portuguese EFL teachers to challenge their viewpoints, which is especially important when we try to meet the goals set by the Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling or the National Strategy for Citizenship Education.

Teacher Development and Training

The future of teacher development and training is promising in that it will most certainly include a diversity of content and format to support knowledge. The conference was proof of that same diversity, pointing out other areas of interest that can be closely

linked to ELT, such as mentoring, teacher wellbeing, learning environments, visual literacy and many more. ELT conferences, such as IATEFL, or even the APPI Conference, at a national level, are the most relevant for bringing different topics to the table of teacher development.

Teaching EFL is a dynamic and multifaceted profession that requires teachers to be constantly updated. TEFL professionals need to develop their knowledge and skills in different fields, such as language (the core of TEFL), literature and culture, (education) technology, curriculum organisation, and special needs education, among others. This makes TEFL inherently cross-curricular.

Teacher development and training facilitate the empowerment of teachers, helping them to learn, reflect and improve their practices, both with less and more experienced teachers, building a community of professional learning.

To sum up: conferences and creativity

Drawing on the words of Rick Rubin in *The Creative Act: A Way of Being*, a book about art and creativity, "Beware of the assumption that the way you work is the best way simply because it's the way you've done it before". Teaching EFL is, in many ways, an artistic profession. There is also a creative process behind every activity teachers design and there is plenty of room offered to learners to develop language skills in the most creative and effective ways.

Attending TEFL conferences enriches our understanding and opens up new possibilities in how to do our work. This is not to suggest that the way we teach is no longer adequate, but rather that considering other viewpoints may improve our practice, making teaching and learning more engaging and impactful.

Useful Links

To learn more about the IATEFL International Conferences:

<https://www.iateflconference.org/about-the-conference/past-future-conferences>

To learn more about the PISA 2025 Foreign Language Assessment:

<https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/foreign-language-learning/pisa-2025-foreign-language-assessment.html>

To learn more about the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE):

<https://www.european-agency.org/>

To learn more about the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

(The 2030 Agenda) <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

(Topics) https://sdgs.un.org/topics?name=&field_goals_target_id=All

For the English versions of the Students' Profile by the End of Compulsory Schooling and the National Strategy for Citizenship Education: <https://cidadania.dge.mec.pt/documentos-referencia>

To learn more about teacher development and training policies (OECD):

<https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/teacher-professional-learning-and-development.html>

ON THE BOOKSHELF

Judite Fiúza

Understanding Neuroplasticity and Neurodiversity in the Classroom

A Handbook for SENCOs and Teachers

Edited by Anita Devi and Sue Jagger

First published in 2025 by Critical Publishing Ltd.

www.criticalpublishing.com

Published 2025 by Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group

New York, NY 10017

**Anita Devi, Sue Jagger, Amanda Kirby, Sarah Moseley
and Mark Stibbe**

116 pages

ISBN: 9781041057741 (ebk)



Understanding Neuroplasticity and Neurodiversity in the Classroom comprises *Dedication, Acknowledgements, About the editors, About the contributors, Foreword, Icon index, Introduction*, seven thematic chapters, and the *Epilogue*. Throughout this book, reflective questions and practical prompts are provided to support teacher development and inclusive classroom practice.

The ***Introduction*** explains the two key concepts: neuroplasticity—the brain’s ability to change and adapt through experience—and neurodiversity—the recognition that neurological differences such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, or dyspraxia are natural variations rather than deficits. The Introduction calls for teachers to embrace inclusive, strengths-based approaches rather than relying on deficit-focused models.

The **seven chapters**, each authored by experts in the field, follow a structure that contrasts outdated approaches with more inclusive, empowering alternatives. These are: 1st Chapter: *The basics – ABC* by Anita Devi; 2nd Chapter: *Abandonment or acceptance* by Mark Stibbe; 3rd Chapter: *Rejection or rewiring* by Anita Devi and Sue Jagger; 4th Chapter: *Learning or labels* by Sarah Moseley; 5th Chapter: *Disability or determination* by Amanda Kirby; 6th Chapter: *Helplessness or hope* by Sue Jagger; and 7th Chapter: *Sensitivity or self-awareness* by Anita Devi. They follow a similar structure: *Introduction, Chapter aims, Reflection* through a set of questions, *Application*, several *Case Studies*, *Call to Action*, *Key Takeaways*, *Further Reading* and *References and Epilogue*, followed by a topic *Index*.

This book enhances thematic reflections, theoretical explanations and practical suggestions that teachers can apply directly to their classrooms. Real-life examples, reflective questions, and suggested actions encourage readers to reframe how they view neurodivergent learners and how they can adapt teaching to better support a wide range of diverse students.

As an example, let us consider Chapter 4, *Learning or labels*, written by Sarah Moseley. The chapter opens by questioning how educational labels can both help and hinder learners. Labels can sometimes unlock support but can also carry stigma or limit expectations. The authors propose focusing less on categorising students and more on recognising their individual learning potential, using insights from neuroscience to adapt teaching practices. Practical reflections include ways to promote literacy development, challenge assumptions, and nurture learner confidence.

Each chapter concludes with reflective prompts encouraging professional development. Teachers are invited to consider:

- How their language and expectations shape learner experiences
- How to apply an understanding of neuroplasticity to everyday teaching
- Ways to foster a welcoming and supportive classroom culture

The ***Epilogue***, written by Anita Devi, brings the book to a close by reinforcing the idea that inclusive education is not a set of rigid procedures but an evolving narrative where every teacher and student contributes. The *Epilogue* also reminds readers that change starts with mindset and belief in the potential for growth.

All in all, *Understanding Neuroplasticity and Neurodiversity in the Classroom* is an essential read for educators committed to building inclusive, strengths-based classrooms. It effectively links the latest insights from brain science with the practical realities of teaching, offering clear pathways for supporting neurodivergent learners. The book promotes both creativity and critical thinking, equipping teachers to foster environments where all students can thrive—academically, socially, and emotionally.

In short, this handbook is a valuable tool for teachers, SENCos, and school leaders seeking to transform their practice through understanding, reflection, and inclusive action.



Judite Fiúza, APPI member A-1327, holds a degree in Filologia Germânica (English/German) and *Línguas e Literaturas Modernas* (Portuguese/English) from FLUL and the curricular part of a Masters in Anglo-Portuguese Studies at FCSHUNL; taught Portuguese for foreigners at UNL and later at FLUL and has teaching English for 40 years in Secondary Schools.

Judite is retired from teaching and is a member of the APPI executive board.



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APPIforma 2025/26 Plano de Formação Contínua:

As ações de formação acreditadas pelo CCPFC estão identificadas no Plano de Formação, com asteriscos, no campo "Público Alvo":

* Releva na **dimensão científica e pedagógica** para efeitos de progressão em carreira dos Professores dos grupos de recrutamento mencionados (**artigo 9º** do Regime Jurídico da Formação Contínua).

** Releva para efeitos de progressão em carreira dos Professores dos grupos de recrutamento mencionados (**nº1 do artigo 8º** do Regime Jurídico da Formação Contínua).

*** As Ações de Curta Duração (ACD) certificadas relevam, nos termos do n.º 1 do artigo 3.º, do Despacho n.º5741/2015, de 29 de maio, para os efeitos previstos no Estatuto da Carreira dos Educadores de Infância e dos Professores dos Ensinos Básico e Secundário (ECD).

Plano de Formação Nacional 2025/26

(INSCRIÇÕES DISPONÍVEIS NO FINAL DE AGOSTO)

Ação / horas	Formador	Público Alvo	Datas	Local
ACD – Mindful EFL Day 7th Edition	Vários	Professores de Inglês dos grupos 120, 220 e 330***	20 de setembro (9h00 – 13h15)	Plataforma Zoom APPI
ACD 4h – online				
Gratuito sócios APPI				
INSCRIÇÕES				
Actively Learning English with AI enhanced tools	Susana Oliveira	Professores de Inglês dos grupos 120, 220 e 330***	Início: 3 outubro Sessões síncronas sábado - 4 outubro (9h – 10h)	Plataformas Moodle e Zoom APPI

Next Events

32nd BETA's Annual International Conference

27/09/2025 to 28/09/2025

Sofia, Bulgaria

CIEB 2025 - Call for papers

24/10/2025 to 26/10/2025

Facultad de Derecho y Ciencias Sociales - Ciudad Real

CIEB 2025

24/10/2025 to 26/10/2025

Facultad de Derecho y Ciencias Sociales - Ciudad Real

PEEP'25 Meeting

08/11/2025 09:00 -18:15

Online

Latest News

APPI Seminar | Viana do Castelo

The Global Classroom: literature as a tool for intercultural education

10 & 11 October

Viana do Castelo

10/10/2025 APPI

7th Mindful EFL Day

Online training event

3 hours

20th September

26/08/2025 APPI

APPI - Parecer Exame Nacional Prova 550

Parecer Exame Nacional Prova 550

18/07/2025 APPI



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