

The suggested brief list:
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Lewis Carroll)
The Importance of Being Earnest (Oscar Wilde)
Gulliver's Travels (Jonathan Swift)

Professional Development Activities

I chose writing as effective means for these activities. Writing does not seem to be a developed skill among learners and users of a foreign language. If activities are selected and arranged rightly, they would play important roles in helping the learners and users converg with the foreign world and language. The serious difficulty here is that, more often than not, when the foreign language is not used in the society, learners do not feel any urgency for writing in the foreign language.

The writing for the purpose of professional development need not be solely in the foreign language. Writing in any language that we feel comfortable using it, enables to better understand a problem. A teacher may select problems from his/her textbooks, immediate past classes and classroom experiences. There are a good number of unanswered questions in any profession, as Stevick puts it which are worth struggling with. A teacher writing his/her professional life story may come across many of these problems and develop sincere descriptions and develop personal solutions for them. This requires in depth treatment. We expect doing it in the future notes.

References

- Anshen, R. N. 1985. Convergence. In: N. Chomsky. 1986. Knowledge of Language. Praeger Publishers. Xi-xxix.
 West, W. P. 1960. *Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Difficult circumstances*. Longmans.
 Stevick, E. R. 1980. *A Way and Ways*. Newbury House Publishers. Rowley Massachusetts.



دولت و ملت، همدلی و هم‌زبانی

روش‌د برای رشد

نحوه اشتراک:

پس از واریز مبلغ اشتراک به شماره حساب ۳۹۶۶۲۰۰۰ بانک تجارت، شعبه سهراب آزمایش کد ۳۹۵، در وجه شرکت افست به دو روش زیر، مشترک مجله شوید:

۱. مراجعه به وبگاه مجلات رشد به نشانی: www.roshdmag.ir و تکمیل برگه اشتراک به همراه ثبت مشخصات فیش واریزی.
۲. ارسال اصل فیش بانکی به همراه برگ تکمیل شده اشتراک با پست سفارشی یا از طریق دورنگار به شماره ۷۷۳۳۳۱۹۲. لطفاً کپی فیش را نزد خود نگه دارید.

● عنوان مجلات در خواستی:

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- نام و نام خانوادگی:
- تاریخ تولد: ● میزان تحصیلات:
- تلفن:
- نشانی کامل پستی:
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- شماره فیش:
- مبلغ پرداختی:
- اگر قبلاً مشترک مجله رشد بودهاید، شماره اشتراک خود را بنویسید:

.....

امضا:

- نشانی: تهران، صندوق پستی امور مشترکین: ۱۶۵۹۵/۱۱۱
- تلفن امور مشترکین: ۰۲۱-۷۷۳۳۶۶۵۶ / ۷۷۳۳۵۱۱۰ / ۷۷۳۳۹۷۱۳-۱۴

- هزینه اشتراک سالانه مجلات عمومی (هشت شماره): ۳۵۰/۰۰۰ ریال
- هزینه اشتراک سالانه مجلات تخصصی (سه شماره): ۲۰۰/۰۰۰ ریال

lost. No teacher, and in the same token, no learner walks into the classroom without it. Think of the first time you were assigned to teach a class! The first week in any school year is the anniversary of that experience. As I have often said it is like a wild flower in bloom, touch it the bloom is gone. The question is not that learners or teacher lack 'incentives'. The question is that why do they misplace or lose it completely?

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Who scratches my back, but ... ?

What practical relevance the above arguments have for teachers, more specifically, for foreign language teachers? In countries where sufficient budget and 'rich foresights' are not lacking, relevant in-service training programs could help and encourage teachers to spend their free time to grow better teachers. In countries where these lacks are obvious teachers have nobody to turn to other than tip of their own fingers. 'Nobody scratches my back other than tips of my own fingers,' the saying goes. Let me make a brief list of points discussed so far. Then, list a number of activities that teachers, more specifically, foreign language teachers, may get involved, first for incentive-building, then for self and professional development. The main points discussed so far are as follow:

Try to learn how to manage 'not the best that can be done, but what can best be done' – in the existing circumstances.

A few answerless riddles are still worth asking, not for their answers, but for what we do in struggling with them.

Science can give us facts. When we assign them their due values we understand them. There is a hierarchy of facts in relation to a hierarchy of values.

Teachers do not lack incentives.

They easily lose or misplace incentives.

Now a list of activities for pleasure and profit, for incentive-building and for professional development, that can converge the school year with leisure/ spare time:

The question is not that learners or teacher lack 'incentives'. The question is that why do they misplace or lose it completely

First incentive-building:

If on top of my incentive-building activities I offer 'reading and a reading list' I am worried and conscious of the fact that if I fail to share with my readers what I mean by 'reading' and fail to justify the selection, the activity not only fails to serve as an incentive-building but turns out to be a painful time-wasting experience. Non-native teachers of English, who have learned English as a school subject, though they may have the genuine experience of reading in their own mother tongue, when it comes to English, if their knowledge of language is sufficient, they easily turn to their long-practiced habit of *reading* for language learning purposes. The selection I have made to be read at a leisure time is as follows. I need to add that if the books are not available, any play or novel would be good enough for leisure time reading purposes. I have selected plays and novels for a good number of reasons. One reason is that the stories they tell encourage 'convergence', convergence of a reader with a writer, convergence of real world with the world in the story, convergence of language and the world. If the readers manage to read a few pages, then the story helps them to overlook the language, which can turn to be a life-long practice.

of values. Facts may be important, less important, and trivial.

'To be able to arrange facts rightly, to differentiate the important from the trivial, to see their bearing in relation to each other requires a judgment which is intuitive as well as experimental.'(R. N. Anshen, 1986)

'Knowing' gives us facts;'understanding' enables us to move to a higher level of knowledge.

According to the convergence theory knowledge exists in levels. We start with a low level, the knowledge of most common which relates us to nature. When we have fully internalized the particulars of this level then we can move to a higher level.

(5)

Summer Holidays: time to hibernate

Many teachers start their summer holiday when they finish marking their students' exam papers and hand in the grades to their school management. In many third world countries there is no regular pre-scheduled in-service training, workshops, or seminars for teachers to attend. Therefore, metaphorically speaking, they get clicked on to hibernate for the whole summer. It takes only a week or two before their precious year-long classroom experience turn into a fictitious past, a movie seen in the childhood. Teachers should be encouraged and trained to use this time for their future effective teaching, self-development, and professional satisfaction. It is easier said than done. I am aware of the criticism. The analogy often is drawn that expecting teachers temporarily freed from school fray to involve themselves in professional development is very much like expecting taxi drivers from the heart of Tehran to spend their long-needed holiday for taking

courses on maintaining their taxi or on traffic problems. To justify this hibernation period the cynics are ready to show you longer lists of 'unfavorable teaching circumstances' than that of M. West's. People in decision making positions, more often than not, agree with teachers. Of course each has their own exclusive arguments. Teachers refer to overcrowded, classrooms, workload, and underpayment; administration refers to lack in incentives and inadequate knowledge among teachers. Both sides push their arguments too far. Surely overcrowded classrooms, underpayment, and so on do hinder teachers from performing their teaching tasks, but they fail to justify that they do nothing or too little until best schools, best classes, best teaching materials become available. On the other side some teachers may lack in incentives and knowledge, this does not justify being slight and slow in quality pre- and in-service educational and training programs.

(6)

Touch it the bloom is gone!

In the fields of education, educational psychology, language pedagogy, management, and so on frequent references are made to the pivotal function of 'incentive' in the success of professionals and training programs in these fields. Other terms like motivation, desire, appetite, and intent are also used to refer to the same concept. More often than not, the arguments run to reveal that somebody does or does not possess it. As I see it, this is a misplaced and misdirected effort. 'Incentive', the concept with any other name, exists in any being. Let it be a hunter or a scientist in a laboratory. The problem is that it is easily misplaced or

30, 40, or 50 of them in overcrowded classrooms, with little or no equipment.

The list is not, of course, complete and one could easily make a longer list. For teachers who teach in such unfavorable circumstances, M. West offers a piece of advice: ***“Try to learn how to manage ‘not the best that can be done, but what can best be done – in the existing circumstances.’”*** Later in this note we attempt to explain how in our understanding this piece of advice can be carried out and made fully functional.

(3)

Answerless riddles are worth struggling with

E. W. Stevick, another pioneer in teaching English as a foreign language, in his prize winning book, *A Way and Ways* (1981), states:

“Some riddles have no final answers. A few answerless riddles are still worth asking.

They are worth asking not for their answers, since they have none, but for what we do in struggling with them.”

He further adds: We may come to notice what formerly we had overlooked because it was too small, or too distant- or too large, or too close to us. We may see how pieces fit together within what we had always thought were units indivisible. (3)

Some of the questions he cites are as follow:

“Why do some language students succeed, and others fail? Why do some language teachers fail, and others succeed? What may the learners and teachers of foreign languages hope to succeed at in anyway? How broad, how deep, how wide may be the measure of their failure, or of their success?”

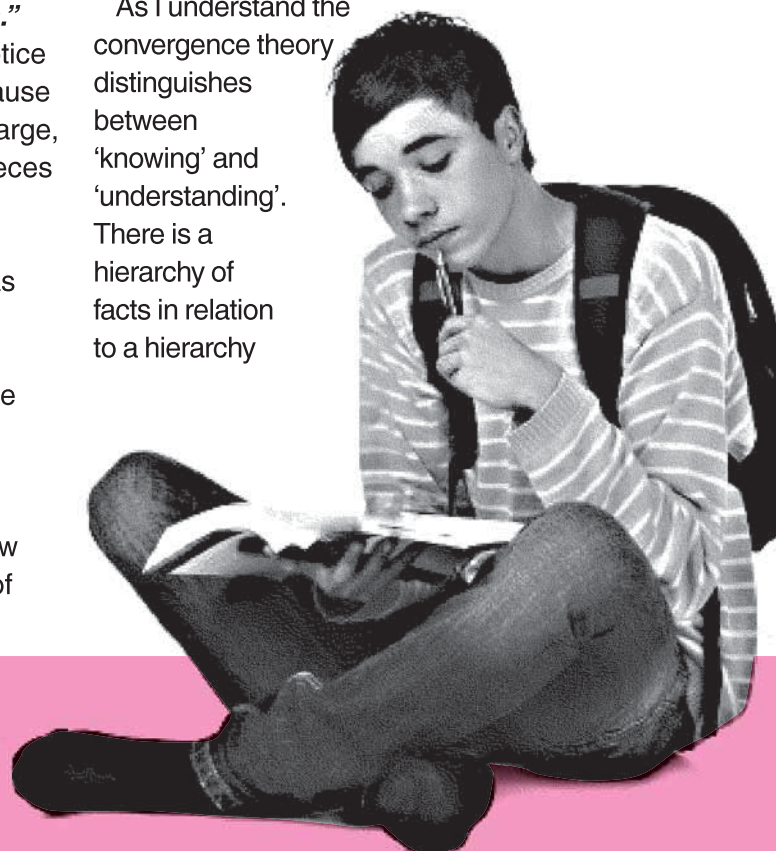
(4)

Independent knowledge has no meaning.

The meanings and arguments of the Convergence theory of knowledge need not be unfamiliar to those involved in language studies, more specifically, in foreign language pedagogy. Compare and contrast your relation with your mother tongue and that with the foreign language that you have recently learned or are still learning in a school as a school subject. Your mother tongue is fully converged in your thought and behavior. The foreign language, on the contrary, is out open for objective observation. There is the least amount of convergence between you and that language.

The convergence theory, as its dictionary meaning suggests, is based on the belief that there is a structural relationship between animate and inanimate matter, between subject (e.g. the scientist) and object (e.g. nature, research question), between the past, the present, and the future.

As I understand the convergence theory distinguishes between ‘knowing’ and ‘understanding’. There is a hierarchy of facts in relation to a hierarchy



The Summer Months and Incentives for Teaching

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Believing impossible things

"There is no use trying," said Alice; "One can't believe impossible things."

"I dare say you haven't had much practice," said the Queen, "When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I have believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

Alice in Wonderland

Lewis Carroll

(1)

Mobius strip: A symbol of believing impossible things

Any strip of paper has two surfaces, a beginning and an end. You may paint its two surfaces in different colors. If you tape two ends together, you get a cylinder-like paper ring. While taping two ends, you give half a twist to one end, and then glue/tape them together, you do not get a cylinder-like ring you get a shape which is called a Mobius strip. This strip demonstrates many 'impossible things'. You no longer have inside and outside surfaces, no two opposing edges. If you take a pair of scissors and cut it longwise, you do not get two separate rings, but one bigger ring. The symbol is used to

demonstrate close relationship between disparate realities and concepts like: man and universe, observer and observed, theory and practice, teacher and learner, and so on. The visual image of a Mobius strip has been used as a symbol for the convergence theory of knowledge. I use it here as a symbol for the convergence of work and leisure time: the school year and summer holidays. Search Google to read more about the Mobius strip.

(2)

Best in the existing circumstances

Almost six decades have passed when M. West, a pioneer in teaching English as a foreign language, in his book, Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Difficult Circumstances (1960), summed up the 'unfavorable circumstances' which make 'TEFLing' difficult. They are as follow (Ordering is mine and is meaningful):

The teachers lack incentives, have inadequate knowledge of English, whose pronunciation is poor, and are seldom fluent and self-confident. They are overworked and underpaid. Their efforts are, moreover, often controlled by the requirements of examinations that discourage experiments... The pupils are often lacking in incentives. There are