Meaningful practice II:
Using, adapting (and creating) literary and other challenging texts

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Date updated: 25/11/19

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Literary and other challenging texts
Why use them and how?

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Key questions addressed in the session

- What is the rationale for using literary and other challenging texts?
- Does the use of such texts lead to improved L2 learning?
  - If so, in what ways?
  - Under what circumstances?
  - What are the outcomes?
- What are some of the conditions for effective use of literary and other challenging texts?
- Summary and ways forward for my own classroom

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Pedagogy Review

"The content taught through the new language should be stimulating and widen pupils' knowledge of the culture, history and literature of speakers of the new language, without compromising the necessary sequencing of vocabulary and grammar."

"Pupils should be taught to pay attention to the detail of meaning through translation, and should extend the range of their vocabulary and understanding through reading short texts and literature."

Teaching Schools Council 2016. *Modern Foreign Languages Pedagogy Review. A review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4. (Chair: Ian Bauckham).* Teaching Schools Council.

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Discuss

- What might we include in 'literary and challenging texts'?
- In your opinion, is it important to use literary texts in your teaching? Why/why not?
- Are literary and challenging texts used much in your school? If so, how successfully?
- In your school, how far do learners:
  (a) develop language and language skills from using literary texts;
  (b) enjoy reading literary texts;
  (c) have the necessary skills to comprehend literary texts?

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The research evidence available about using literary and other challenging texts

- National Curriculum (2014), new GCSE and A levels now emphasise use of authentic texts, including literary sources
- But, impact of using such materials on *school* learners' motivational and *language* development has received little research attention (Paran, 2008)
  - Most studies focus on adults, and on motivation rather than language development
- **What kind** of text?
  Almost no studies compare literary or authentic texts with more functional texts (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Paran, 2008)
- **How** to use the texts?
  - Researchers agree that **how** texts are used is crucial, but debate the most appropriate form of deployment (Paran, 2008)
  e.g., does a 'language' or a 'personal' focus have most benefits?

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Rationale (1) *Motivation – culture & interesting content*

- Lack of interest and low self-efficacy predict dropping MFL (Graham, 2002)
- Learners motivated by intrinsic interest, including interest in L2 culture (Fisher, 2001; Graham, 2002, 2004, 2018; Graham et al., 2016)
- Primary to secondary transition can see less focus on L2 culture – and this transition phase also associated with reduced intrinsic motivation (Graham et al., 2016)
- "Personal relevance", "perceptions of lessons" and "ease of learning" key for choosing to study a GCSE (Taylor and Marsden, 2014)
- Can using literary or challenging texts increase "personal relevance, perceptions and sense of achievement?

"**If we want England's children to get better at reading and to do more of it, we have to give them a diet that is attractive, nutritious and satisfying.** Restricting them to an unbalanced diet, the thin gruel of a phonics-dominated approach, is a recipe for lowering standards and turning children against the written word. (…) **Children certainly need instruction in the techniques, but they only become effective and committed readers through reading texts that interest them**"
(Dombey, 2010:13)

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Rationale (2) *Motivation - affect & emotions*

- Emotions and enjoyment closely linked (Dewaele, Witney, Saito, & Dewaele, 2017)
- Self-efficacy for "expressing thoughts and feelings" and "understanding authentic materials" predict taking a language GCSE (Graham, 2018)
- Literature and authentic texts provide opportunities for emotion, empathy, intercultural understanding and creativity (Duff & Malley, 1990; Malley, 1989), and so lead to more interaction (Kim, 2004)
  - but not always! (Donato & Brooks, 2004; Nguyen, 2016)
- **How** literary and authentic texts are used is crucial (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Paran, 2008)

"**the emotional component is too often ignored, resulting in relatively emotion-free (and therefore often boring) classroom sessions (…) that require little emotional investment and therefore little potential for unpredictability, outbursts, surprise, risk-taking, embarrassment, anxiety … and enjoyment.**
Dewaele, 2015, p.13

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Discuss

What about learning outcomes?
What is learnt through using literary or authentic texts?

Handout 1: Research summary Paran (2008)

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Linguistic outcomes

Study by Maxim (2002)

Method. Beginner learners of German in a US university (after four weeks of daily study). One group read a novel together in class across 10 weeks. A control group studied simpler textbook readings. Assessed through departmental exams and pre-test and post-test.

Findings. The literature group did as well as the control group on most tests, including vocabulary.

Limitations. University learners; impact on oral proficiency not assessed

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Linguistic outcomes   **Study by Woore et al. (2018)**

Method. Year 7 learners read semi-authentic French texts
One group received 'phonics instruction'; another 'comprehension strategies instruction', a third just 'read the texts'.

Findings.

Reading comprehension gains: for all three groups;

Vocabulary gains: small - medium for the Strategies group, medium - large for Phonics group;

Reading aloud: medium-sized gains for phonics groups.

Limitations. No combined phonics/strategies group. Effects did not last when learners reverted to 'normal' texts.

See also Kim (2004), Yang (2001), Scott & Huntington (2002).

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Rationale *(3) "Incidental" vocabulary learning through reading and listening*
('picking up' words when reading for whole meaning)

Vocabulary learning can result from extensive reading and listening, **but** for this to happen (Ellis & Shintani, 2014):

1. Learners need **large amounts** of input
2. The input needs to be **comprehensible and linguistically rich**
3. Learners need to **pay attention** to new linguistic forms in the input (p.190)
4. There has to be mental and motivational **'involvement'**
   (Huang et al., 2012; Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001)

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Incidental vocabulary learning (cont'd) *(amount of words)*

Extensive reading & listening does not necessarily improve 'breadth'
- isn't very *reliable* way of picking up new words

BUT incidental learning **does**

- develop "**depth**" (shades of meaning, collocations, etc.)
- **strengthen** existing knowledge (meet words more times, in different contexts)
- Incidental learning can be improved via **high involvement intentional learning tasks** and **multimodal input** (e.g. reading while listening, if text and audio are synchronised at word level).
- Enhancing '**noticing**' of words during reading and listening can help, especially if learners have to attach **meaning** to the word (can't 'skip' it)
- Training learners in how to work out meaning from context helps them benefit further from extensive reading *(Schmitt, 2008)*

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'Noticing' features essential for learning, but benefits from help

Since many features of L2 input are likely to be infrequent, non-salient, and communicatively redundant, they may go unnoticed unless attention is drawn to them (Laufer & Girsai, 2008: 697).

Poetry offers 'language input which is foregrounded, unusual, and draws attention to itself' (Hanauer, 2001: 298).

Recall from the Grammar CPD, the importance of 'noticing' and attaching 'meaningfulness' to the content!

Der Panther, Rainer Maria Rilke
Im Jardin des Plantes, Paris
Sein Blick ist von Vorübergehen der Stäbe
so müd geworden, daß er nichts mehr hält.
Ihm ist, als ob es tausend Stäbe gäbe
und hinter tausend Stäben keine Welt

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Rationale (4): Increasing the 'Involvement Load'
(Laufer and Hustijn, 2001; Huang, Willson, & Eslami, 2012)

The retention of words depends on the degree of involvement in processing these words.
The amount of 'involvement load' depends on**:**

Need. How necessary is it to know this word to complete the task? How much does the learner 'need'or really choose to do the task?
Recall from previous CPD the idea of '***task essential***'

Search. How hard does the learner have to work to find the meaning of the word?
Recall from previous CPD the idea of '***desirable difficulty/challenge***'

Evaluate. How much does the learner have to think about how to use this word in different contexts or about different aspects of its meaning?
Recall from previous CPD the idea of meeting the same language in '***multiple contexts***'

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What does this look like in practice?

Different involvement loads – which is the higher in each case?

Need

(1) teacher requires learners to use a particular word from a text in a sentence
(2) learner is interested to look up the meaning of an unknown word in a dictionary while reading a story

Search

(1) A learner works out a word's meaning by looking for clues in the words that come before and after it
(2) A word's meaning is provided as a gloss in the margin

Evaluate

(1) After reading, learners complete a gap-fill based on the text, choosing from a set of words, which permits guess work
(2) After reading, learners write a paragraph to express their feelings about the passage, choosing some of the words from the text

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Another example

Philippe Petit – Journal Intime

Je m'appelle Philippe Petit. J'ai 24 ans. Je suis un magicien, jongleur et funambule français. Voici un extrait de mon journal intime.

Le jeudi 8 août 1974. Très tôt le matin, nous relions les deux tours avec un câble de métal…..

- When did Philippe make the famous tightrope walk?

- How old was he at that time?

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Example of working with challenging texts with Year 9 learners: Linguistic creativity in language learning

creative multilingualism

Approx. 600 Year 9 learners of French & German
We explored the impact on:

(Graham et al, ongoing; Hofweber & Graham 2017)

❖Learners' development in reading, writing and vocabulary and creativity
❖Learners' motivation for and beliefs about language learning

Teachers used either
(1) non-figurative, factual texts
OR
(2) literary texts containing figurative language

Both text-types contained similar difficulty of language and addressed similar themes e.g. love, death, migration, otherness

All teachers used the text types in both (1) **'functional'** and (2) **'creative'** ways

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Two approaches to working with texts

creative
multilingualism

Creative approach	
Aim: generate **personal involvement** **('need')**, attention on **emotional content**, **metaphor / conceptual level**	• present images → concept-level activation →ask about **emotions** images evoke • give picture story + ask them to order it with focus on **emotional state** • Learners read text while listening, focusing on expression of emotion through intonation
Functional approach	
Aim: generate **factual information processing**, attention on **form / functional level**	• present images → concept-level activation → ask about **events / facts** images convey • give picture story + ask them to order it with focus on **sequence of events** • Learners read text while listening, focusing on sound-spelling correspondences

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Key findings: Challenging texts can help vocabulary
and pupils enjoy the texts

creative
multilingualism

French:
• For both text types, learners increased vocabulary size by around **300 words** on average,

• Benefits depended on text type, teaching approach, and learners' prior attainment

• Creative approach led to greater increases in reported confidence in reading

French and German:
• No differences in overall enjoyment of literary versus factual texts
   • Attitudes to different texts varied widely
   • Some evidence that learners of French preferred creative activities; learners of German preferred functional activities!

• Literary texts led to increase in creativity, but factual texts did not

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Discuss

• Look at the sample set of activities for exploiting the text 'L'homme qui te ressemble'
• Try to identify how they seek to heighten 'involvement', 'engagement', and 'noticing'
• See also **Handout 4** for a summary of ideas

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Summary so far

- Literary and other challenging texts can be used successfully with KS3 learners, with benefits for vocabulary
- Different approaches and text types needed to suit different learners
- Activities that prompt personal, emotional and imaginative responses need to be used along with focus on vocabulary and grammar
- Pre, during and post-reading and listening activities need to maximise 'involvement':
  - Need (make language task essential and the task intrinsically interesting))
  - Search (establish desirable difficulty/challenge in terms of grasping word meaning)
  - Evaluate (make judgements about language when using it in different contexts)

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Key questions

- What is the rationale for using literary/authentic texts? ✔
- Does the use of such texts lead to improved L2 learning? ✔
  - If so, in what ways?
  - Under what circumstances?
  - What are the outcomes?
- What are some of the conditions for effective use of literary and other challenging texts?
- Summary and ways forward for my own classroom

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Some conditions for effective use of challenging texts:
Learning how to comprehend

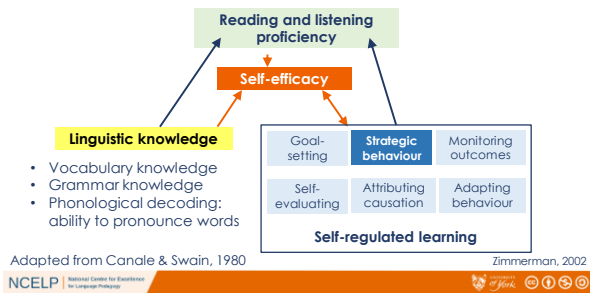**As well as linguistic knowledge, comprehending involves:**

'the ability to engage in a range of strategic processes while reading more challenging texts (including goal setting, academic inferencing, monitoring) (…)the ability to engage in reading, to expend effort, to persist in reading without distraction..' (Grabe & Jiang, 2013, p.4)

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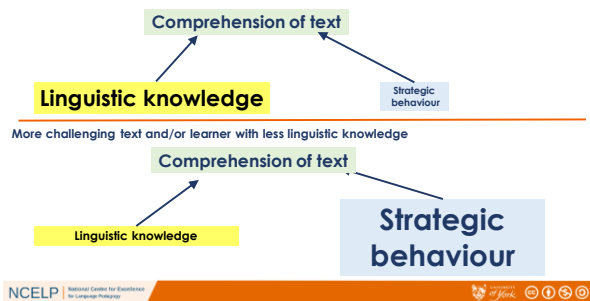**Ability to understand & respond to written & spoken texts**

Reading and listening proficiency

Self-efficacy

Linguistic knowledge

- Vocabulary knowledge
- Grammar knowledge
- Phonological decoding: ability to pronounce words

Goal-setting	Strategic behaviour	Monitoring outcomes
Self-evaluating	Attributing causation	Adapting behaviour

Self-regulated learning

Adapted from Canale & Swain, 1980   Zimmerman, 2002

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Simpler text and/or learner with greater linguistic knowledge

Comprehension of text

Linguistic knowledge   Strategic behaviour

More challenging text and/or learner with less linguistic knowledge

Comprehension of text

Linguistic knowledge   **Strategic behaviour**

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How do KS3 learners read challenging texts? Erler (2003)

- *Guess from the pictures what it's all about*
- *Invent a meaning*
- *Scan for words that look like English and try to guess the meaning of the text from them*

- **The above strategies can be counterproductive if overused and used in isolation**

- **Absence of monitoring:**
Go back to a word or section and double-check that it makes sense

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Is it useful to teach comprehension strategies?

- **What is the research evidence?**
- Evidence of benefits but many studies are with older, more proficient learners (Ardasheva et al., 2017; Plonsky, 2011, 2019; Taylor, 2014)
- For a review of many studies: see OASIS summary Plonsky (2011)

School-aged learners in England
- Macaro and Erler (2008) (Handout 5)
- Recent larger-scale study: 'FLEUR' project, Woore et al. (2018)

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When texts are linguistically challenging, strategies can be taught and be helpful

Text engagement strategies

- *Guess from words around problem word*
- *Think hard about words I might know (i.e. don't give up easily)*
- *Use a process of deduction ("it can't be that because.....")*
- *Use common sense (prior knowledge)*
- ***Remember to read the whole sentence to see if it makes sense***
- Sound out the word or phrase

(Macaro & Erler, 2008)

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Strategy combinations and self-regulation were vital

"we would claim that the readers who had undergone strategy instruction were now better 'orchestrators' of the strategies at their disposal"

Macaro & Erler (2008, p. 114)

"Combinations of top-down and bottom-up strategies need to be brought to the attention of learners and they should be encouraged to use and evaluate these combinations for their effectiveness"
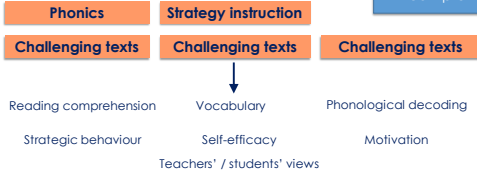
Macaro & Erler (2008, p. 116)

Bottom-up strategies = knowledge and understanding of vocabulary and grammar

Top-down strategies = using your general knowledge (e.g., what is this likely to mean?)

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Slide 1

French Language Education: Unlocking Reading (FLEUR)
Woore et al. (2018)

All groups made similar gains in reading comprehension. Using challenging texts helped reading comprehension.

- Experimental study (Randomized Control Trial)
- Pre-, post-, delayed post-test design
- c. 900 students in 36 schools nationally
- Intervention phase lasted 16 weeks, c.25 minutes per week
- Interventions delivered by usual class teachers

| Phonics | Strategy instruction |

| Challenging texts | Challenging texts | Challenging texts |

Reading comprehension   Vocabulary   Phonological decoding

Strategic behaviour   Self-efficacy   Motivation

Teachers' / students' views
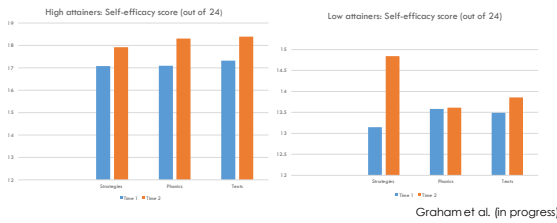
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Slide 2

Greatest improvement in 'self-efficacy' (= reported confidence in own ability) for reading challenging texts for learners starting Year 7 with low general academic attainment and low French attainment

High attainers: Self-efficacy score (out of 24)

Low attainers: Self-efficacy score (out of 24)

Graham et al. (in progress)

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Slide 3

Text engagement regulatory reading strategies

L'éléphant géant et le dragon-cheval de Nantes

I have:
1. Made a real effort to persevere and understand the text
2. Read on to look for the meaning of words I don't know
3. Looked at the co-text (the words before or after the difficult word)
4. Used logic to work out a word's meaning
5. Used my common sense, my own experience, my 'world knowledge'
6. Used my knowledge of English words
7. Used other clues such as pictures or a title
8. Checked that my interpretations make sense

Nantes est une ville française de 300 000 habitants

qui est située sur les rives de la Loire.

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Key questions

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- Does the use of such texts lead to improved L2 learning? ✔
  - If so, in what ways?
  - Under what circumstances?
  - What are the outcomes?
- What are some of the prerequisites for effective use of ✔
  literary/authentic texts – learning to comprehend;
- Summary and key questions for my own classroom

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Pause for reflection!
Talk to the person next to you about the ideas so far.

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Summary of key points from research (1)

- Literary and other challenging texts can be beneficial for KS3 learners
  - benefits for consolidating vocabulary (e.g., when vocabulary has been met previously)

- Along with focus on grammar, vocabulary & phonics, activities that *also* prompt personal, emotional & imaginative responses are beneficial

- Different approaches and different text types suit different learners

- Pre-, during and post-reading and listening activities need to maximise 'involvement':
  - create a need,
  - create a challenge,
  - create opportunity to use in other contexts

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Summary of key points from research (2)

• Teaching a small number of text engagement, regulatory strategies for comprehension can benefit self-efficacy (belief in one's ability) and hence improve persistence with challenging texts

• Self-efficacy (self-reported confidence) of lower attaining learners may benefit from comprehension strategy instruction, when compared to higher attaining learners

• Phonics teaching important for exploiting challenging texts including sounding out words to help access meaning

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Key ways forward for own practice

What do you consider to be the next steps for your own classroom, in respect of using literary and other challenging texts?

Some questions:

• How (a) competent (b) confident are my students at reading and understanding literary and other challenging L2 texts?
• Which approaches to using literary texts would work best in my classroom?
    • How do I need to vary the approach according to the age / stage of learners?
    • How can I best prepare learners?
• At which points in my SOW might I use literary texts?
• How can I monitor and record progress in comprehension and use this information to inform my teaching?

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Key questions

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    • If so, in what ways?
    • Under what circumstances?
    • What are the outcomes?
• What are some of the conditions for effective use of literary & other challenging texts ✓
    • –learning to comprehend;
• Summary and ways forward for my own classroom ✓

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I had a real range of abilities and interests in the class and some of them are never going to be linguists or have any intention of carrying on with the language, so for them to see language in a different context [was good]. The French poem 'Oradour', they found that very moving, a lot of them are interested in history or geography, they enjoyed the content even if they found the language challenging. They liked that it was different and in the real world. They were engaged, more so than in normal lessons - especially the less motivated learners were more engaged.

It was interesting to say how you feel in French rather than just describing things. It was nice to have a different way to learn grammar and vocab. What I liked was talking about how I feel – it's more engaging.

Kids say to me 'Why do we learn languages' because of Brexit type things – I battle against this all the time. That's why I think it's really important for them. In year 9, they do all this baby stuff when they're learning languages. So this is an ideal way of making it more grown up. So I will be thinking about rejigging everything for next year. It has encouraged me to move away from the textbook. The one about the hurricane that went down well because they were doing it in geography at the time, so that was good because it was very topical obviously. They did enjoy it. It was something different for them. It's more grown up than what they were doing. They do this sort of stuff in English and other subjects, why not in French?

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