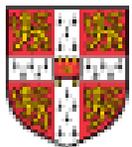
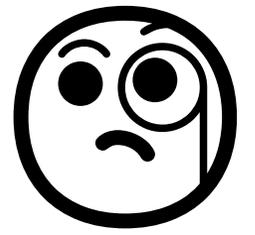


Things that made me go



CAMBRIDGE

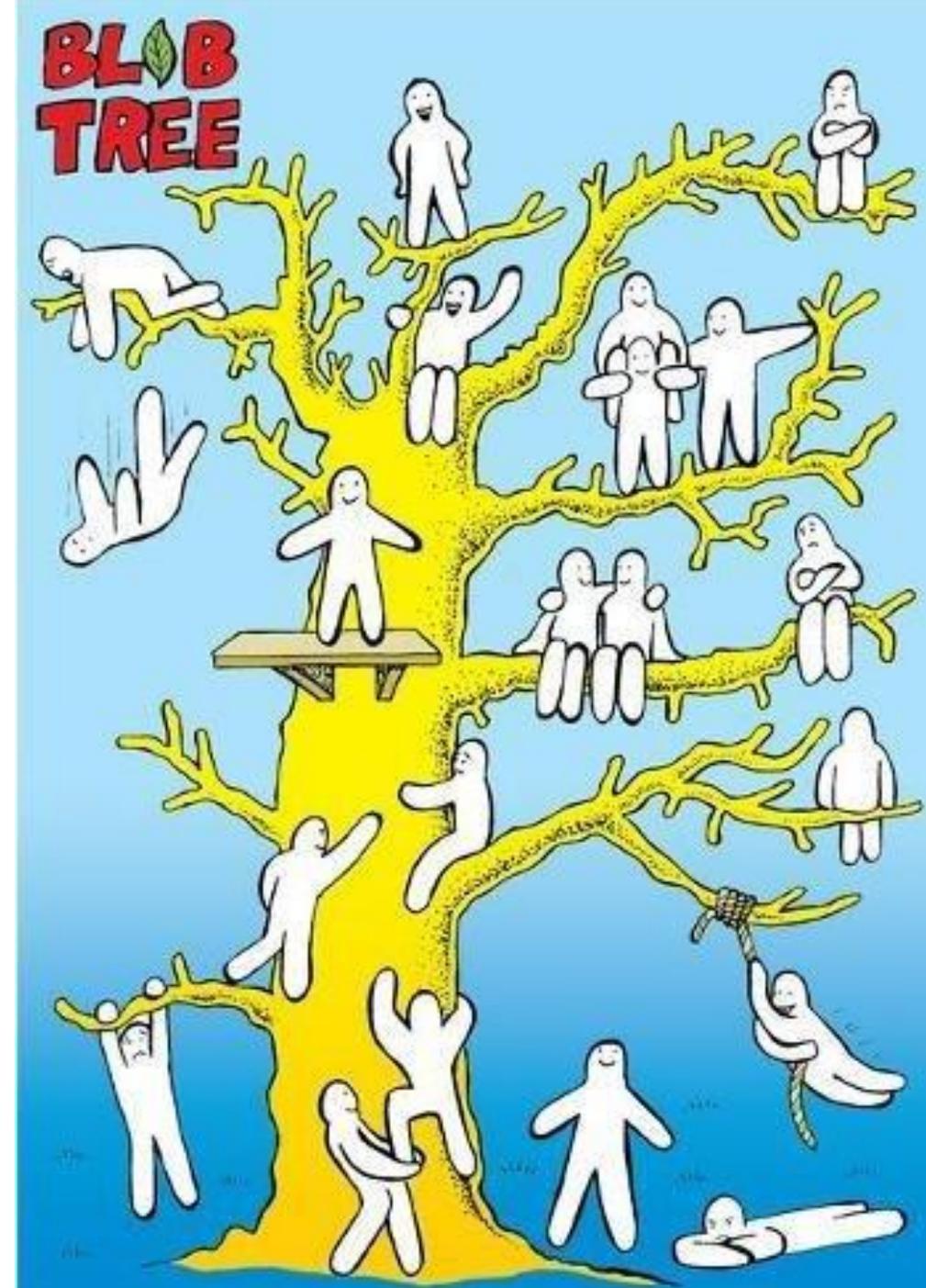
Chris Sowton

@chrissowtonelt

www.chrissowton.com

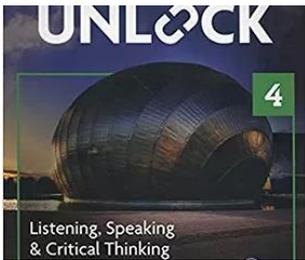
Firstly ... in support of emojis

- They are powerful communicative tools, especially in challenging circumstances
- They can bridge gaps between teachers and students, and students and students – a form of interlanguage
- They allow students the opportunity to express feelings which they otherwise might not have an outlet for
- And while we're here ... **Blob trees** (<https://www.blobtree.com/>)



About me

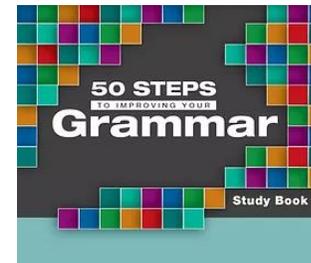
- I've worked in a range of different ELT roles: teacher, trainer, materials developer, podcaster and author
- I've been fortunate to work in many different places: e.g. UK, Nigeria, Nepal, Lebanon, Jordan, China, India, Indonesia &, of course, Palestine.



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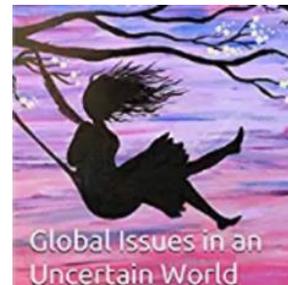
UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

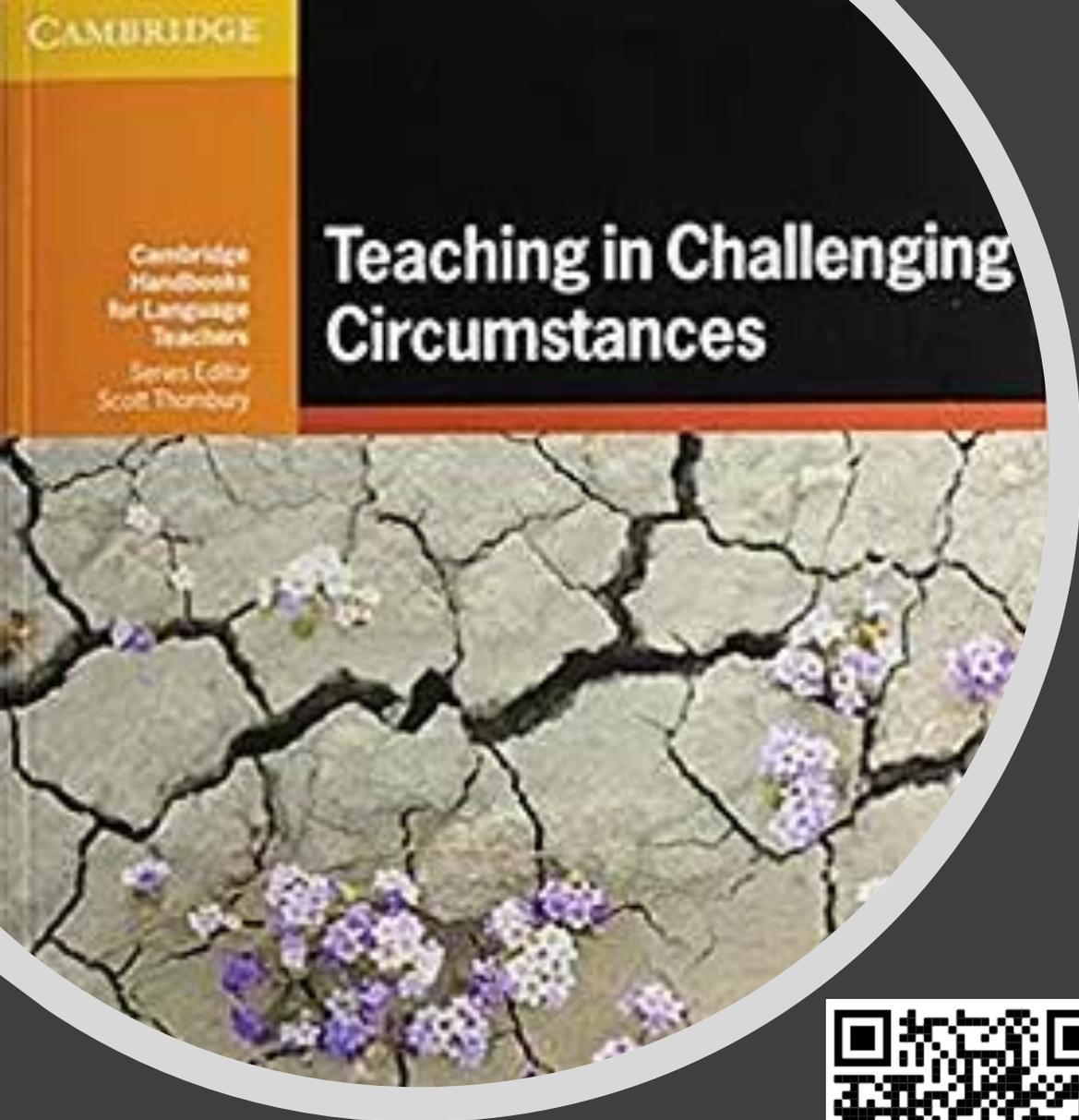


Greenwich
Community
College



Bangkok Office
Asia and Pacific Regional
Bureau for Education



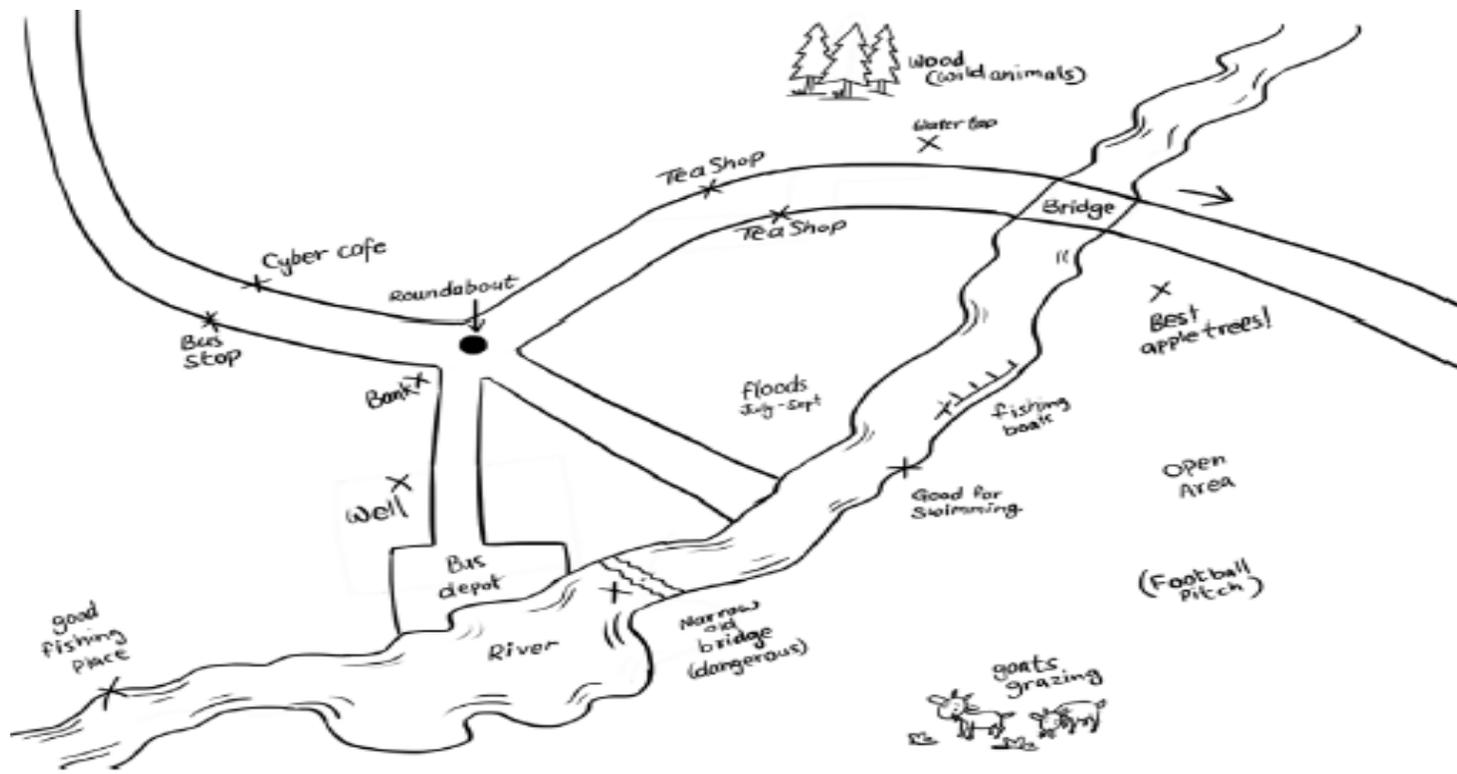


“Washing one’s hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.”

Paulo Freire

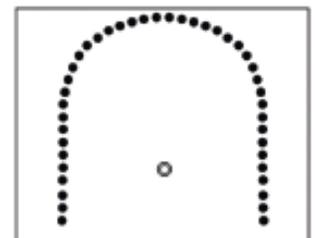
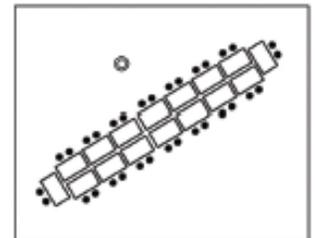
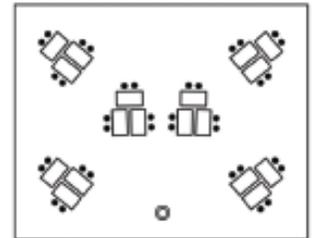
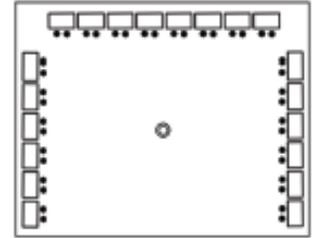
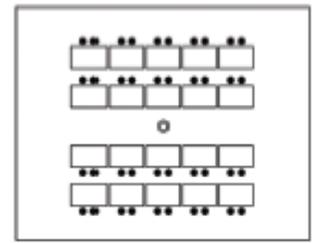


<https://tinyurl.com/TeachingInCC>



ACTIVITY: Listen to the world

- 1 All the students get up and go outside. They should take a pencil and some paper. They walk around wherever they like for five minutes.
- 2 As they are walking, they should write down all the sounds they hear (e.g. *I heard a dog barking*). They should do this in English if they can, or in their L1 if not.
- 3 Students return to the class. In pairs / small groups, they discuss these questions:
What was the sound you heard the most?
What was the most interesting sound?
What was the most unusual sound?
What sound is easiest to make with your own voice? Can you do it?
- 4 Take feedback from the whole class.

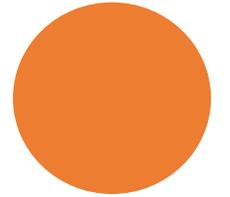


THE HANDS UP PROJECT CONFERENCE PROGRAMME 2022



Overview

- My thoughts today are impressionistic – a snapshot of the teaching contexts within which I've worked – and will look at: *1. What I did 2. What I saw / experienced 3. What I learned.* Focus is on practicality which is hopefully of use.
- Structure of talk will be a classic 'feedback sandwich' – mostly positive but an overview of some frustration / challenges in the middle



Ukraine: teachers as frontline workers

What I did:

- Remote training / support with Cambridge, working with ELT friends and colleagues

What I saw / experienced:

- My first experience of working in an active conflict area, albeit remotely. Questions included:
 - What is the purpose of learning English right now?
 - How do I assess my students in a conflict situation?
 - What do I do when an air raid siren goes off in class?

Things that
made me go

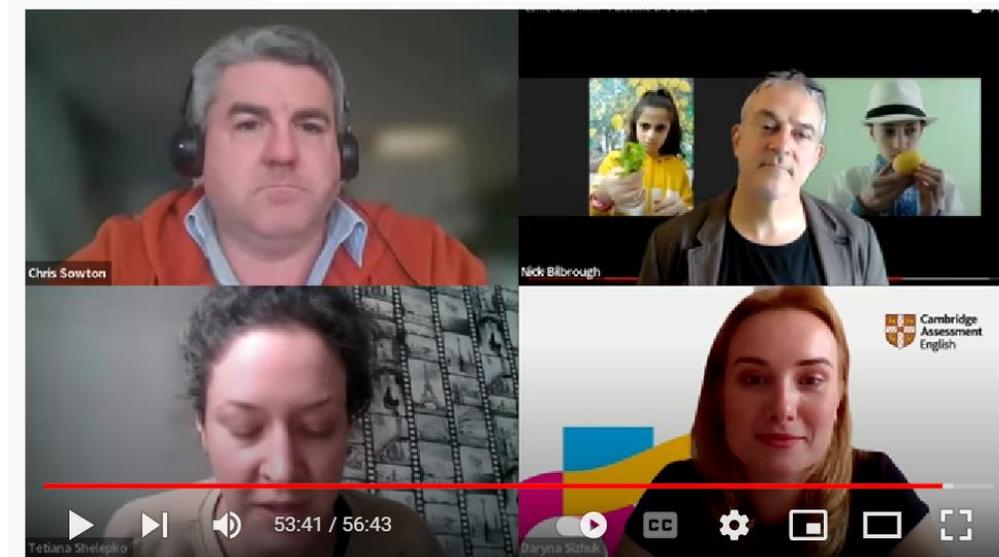


Teaching in Challenging Circumstances Session #3 with Chris Sowton & Sarah Mercer

Ukraine: teachers as frontline workers

What I learned:

- Challenged me to think quick and adapt – e.g. *invisible obstacle course*
- The value of collegiality and of just having a place to be at a particular time
- The importance of specialist skills and knowledge (e.g. drama, wellbeing, conflict) as teachers are on the frontline
- The impact which making materials open source can have (thank you Cambridge)
- That it shouldn't take a crisis to challenge widespread, systemic educational failure



Teaching in Challenging Circumstances Session #2 with Chris Sowton & Nick Billbrough

Jordan: teachers as safe spaces

What I did:

- Qualitative “language for resilience” research with the British Council

What I saw / experienced:

- The emotional and psychological value which students placed on learning language – both conscious and subconscious
- The strong motivation of students in refugee situations
- Significant differences in the ways in which boys and girls are taught

Things that
made me go



Language learning:
attitude, ability, teaching and materials in host
and refugee communities in Jordan



Language for
Resilience

Chris Sowton
September 2019

Language learning has significant psychosocial value

A university teacher on the programme gave three examples of students who had benefited from the opportunities that a language class provides for talking about difficult issues:

One of my students, on a bus, she faced a lady in front of her when she heard her talking over the phone in a Syrian accent. She turned to her and told her you are causing a lot of problems to the Jordanian people.

One student said I have a phobia of aeroplanes ... 'I feel scared and I feel horrified'.

One student talked about her experience of leaving her home ... and how she got to Jordan ... how they were very scared of the checkpoints without papers ... she didn't have any ID papers. She was so afraid her dad wanted her to go back ... but by a miracle they all managed to get to Jordan.

The emotional and psychological value of language learning

I worked in Syria between 1999 and 2012 ... In that time, I did not see the same passion that I saw from the Syrian students here ... their motivation, dedication, eagerness. Syrian students took the easy life for a long time. They were different ... as if they were not my country people. They were trying to find a different path in life and ... started managing their life using the English language ... It wasn't merely a language that was grammar and language ... it was like a saviour ... a way to integrate themselves into Jordanian society ... into the labour market... the education market.

Strong motivation

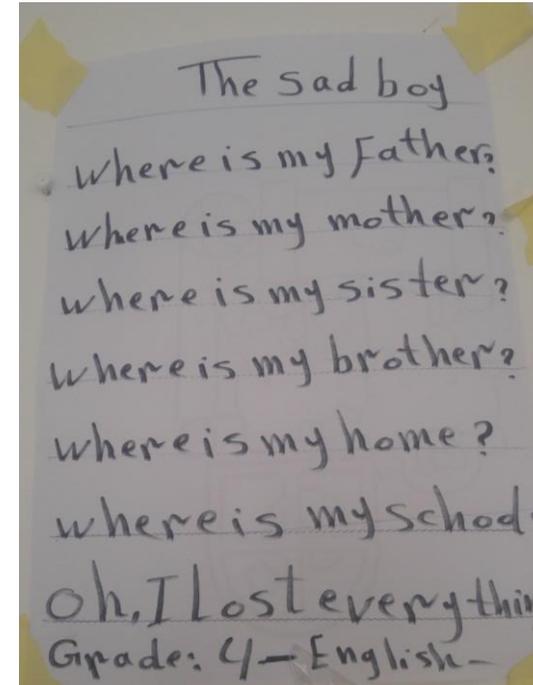
Girls' lesson	Boys' lesson
Girls throw a ball to each other in a circle and say how they are feeling.	Teacher makes a complex grammatical point about the consonant doubling when turning a one-syllable noun into an adjective.
One girl welcomes us in Turkish (which she has learned by watching the TV).	Teacher explains a difficult pronunciation point about the long 'a' sound.
One girl leads the class in doing heads, shoulders, knees and toes.	Boy tries to get friend's attention by waving his arm about (seemingly because he is feeling bored).
One girl is asked to summarise (give a meta-analysis) what they have just been doing – she replies: 'We did a game about decision making.'	Teacher differentiates between British English and American English.
Girls work in groups on creating a presentation. Teacher circulates and supports. Girls are using a mixture of Arabic and English in their discussion.	Boy is brought to the front by the teacher to illustrate a point, but the process is very time-consuming.
Girls present to the rest of the class. Very positive atmosphere. They are all interested and engaged.	Zero opportunity for students to practise the new language by themselves.

Gendered teaching

Jordan: teachers as safe spaces

What I learned:

- The classroom can be a space for imagining different futures, which can reflect positively on the present
- How talking about trauma in a second language can provide therapeutic benefit
- Multilingualism should be valued more – and certified where possible
- Languages are crucial for increasing all forms of capital, but the system doesn't always support this:
 - NGOs working in silos (... and funding)
 - Certification is hard to obtain
 - Tech-first (tech-only solutions)



Palestine: teachers as enablers of latent skills and knowledge

What I did:

- Teacher training on the @Palestine project in Ramallah and Amman (for participants from Gaza) with the British Council OPT – overall programme focused on English for the Digital Economy

What I saw / experienced:

- The extraordinary desire – and demand – for training and self-development
- An openness to new ideas and ways of doing things – 20 / 60 / 20 was more 5 / 55 / 40
- Teachers as agents of social change

Things that
made me go



Palestine: teachers as enablers of latent skills and knowledge

What I learned:

- Even in highly-challenging circumstances, teachers are willing to – and benefit from – play (e.g. snowball fight)
- There is a repository of latent creativity and skills which need – demand – an outlet
- Teachers can make the present palatable and the future desirable
- The virtual world provides opportunities which the physical world isn't always able to – and language is what can facilitate that



General: teachers as deskilled, disempowered, disregarded pawns

Things that made me go



- **Individual constraints:** Meeting a teacher I had worked with in Nepal, and hearing about her headteacher not allowing her to implement her training
- **Stakeholder constraints:** Teachers in Nepal regularly feeding back about parental view on student-led learning = chaos and lack of discipline
- **Systemic constraints:** Emphasis on quantity vs quality (logframe vs theory of change) – ‘number of trainings’ vs impact
- **National constraints:** Language policy in South Sudan (EdD research) – the use of EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction)
- **Geopolitical constraints:** Somaliland – Al Shabab cancelled my training. Teachers are targets, and schools can be the locus of political violence.

Lebanon: Teachers as humans with histories

Things that
made me go



What I did:

- Voluntary training and curriculum development work with Syrian teachers in Eastern Lebanon (MAPS NGO) – also with Syrian educationalists in Beirut

What I saw / experienced:

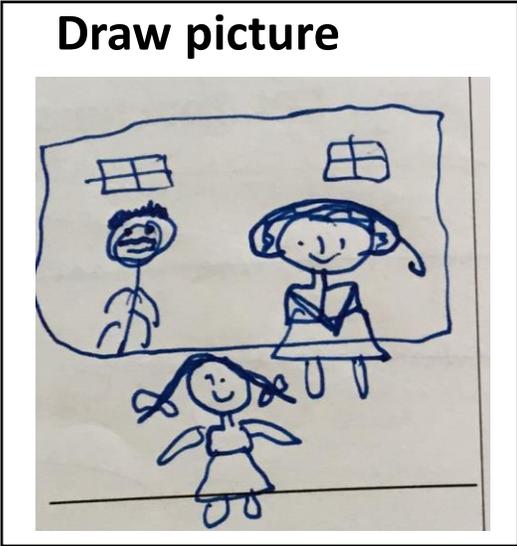
- People's instinct is always to teach as they were taught. Breaking those habits is extremely difficult, especially in challenging circumstances
- Teachers greatly value the opportunity to share how they are feeling – but need prompting. Storytelling is a way in which to achieve this.



Paragraph 3
After hours of searching, they found nothing. They call the police and everyone they knew, but still no response. So the parents felt hopeless and started to imagine bad things to their daughter. Suddenly Noura jumped from behind the curtains, saying: "Don't give up!"

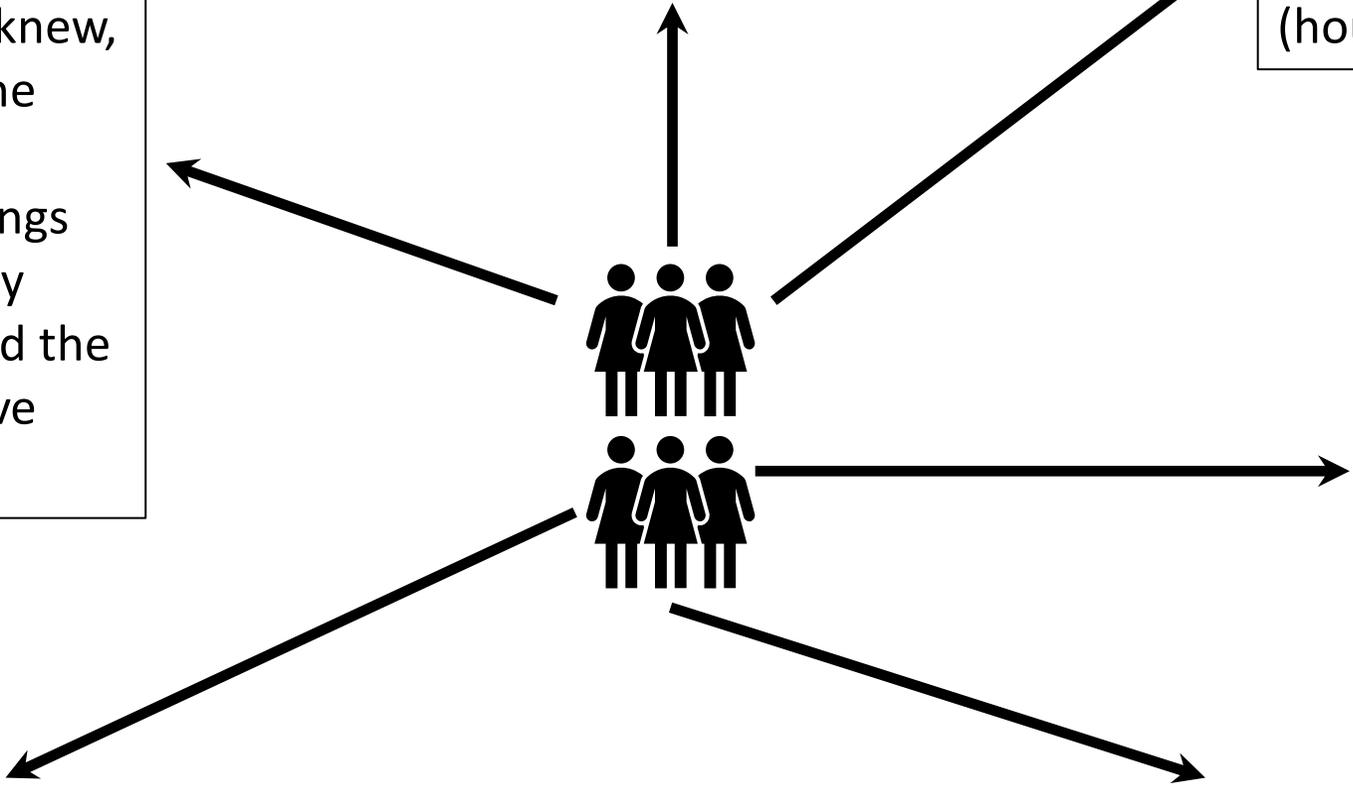
Title
The Surprise

Characters
Father (a bakery man, who own a small shop), mother (house keeper), daughter



Paragraph 2
Their daughter is missing. They came home after a busy day, when they said "Hey Noura, where are you?" There was no answer. The mother started crying, and the father felt hopeless.

Paragraph 1
Once upon a time there were a family of father, mother and a little daughter. They were living in a small beautiful house. The father was working as a bakery and his wife helped him to make bread and sweets.



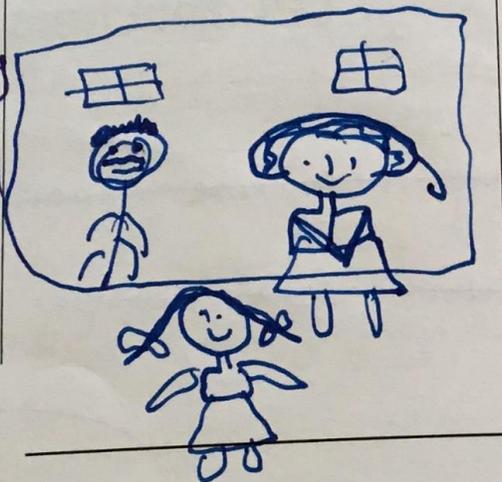
Characters (Stage 3)

father (A bakery man, who own a small shop)
mother, house keeper
daughter

Paragraph 1 (Stage 4)

Once upon a time there were a family of father, mother and a little daughter. They were living in a small beautiful house. The father was working as a bakery and his wife helped him to make bread and sweets.

Picture 2 (Stage 5)



Paragraph 3 (Stage 6)

Their daughter is missing. They came home after a long day, when they said "Hey noua, where are you?" There ~~was~~ was no answer, the mother start crying, and the father felt hopeless.

Paragraph 3 (Stage 7)

after hours of searching, they found nothing. They call the police and every one they knew. but still no response. So the parents felt hopeless and started to imagine bad things to their daughter. ~~Then~~ suddenly noua jumped from behind the curtains, saying:



(student holding an 'a' at the front)

Once upon a time there was a letter 'a'. The 'a' lived on her own.

Q: How do you think the 'a' felt?

(student draws a sad face on the 'a')

Q: How can we make the 'a' feel better?

(students draw as many 'a's as they can in 10 seconds)

Now there were lots of 'a's

Q: How does the 'a' feel now?



(student holding an 'a' at the front)

Once upon a time there was a letter 'a'. The 'a' lived on her own.

Q: How do you think the 'a' felt?

(student draws a sad face on the 'a')

Q: How can we make the 'a' feel better?

(students draw as many 'a's as they can in 10 seconds)

Now there were lots of 'a's

Q: How does the 'a' feel now?

(student changes sad face to a happy face)

Lebanon: teachers as humans with histories

What I learned:

- The value of puppets – linguistically, pedagogically, psychologically
- How learning materials can have positive psychosocial messages embedded – and how important this is when other services are unavailable or severely constrained
- Decontextualised research which has no clear practical impact and which is driven by outside interests is valueless



Indonesia: teachers as trusted guides

Things that
made me go

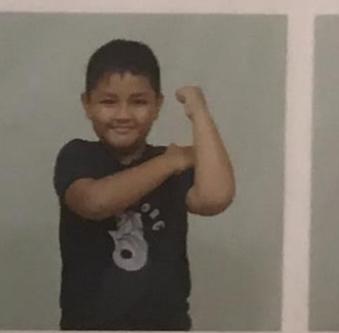
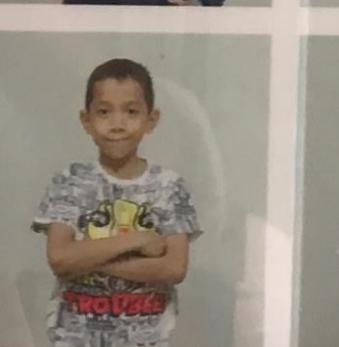


What I did:

- General teacher training with CUP – at language schools and universities

What I saw / experienced:

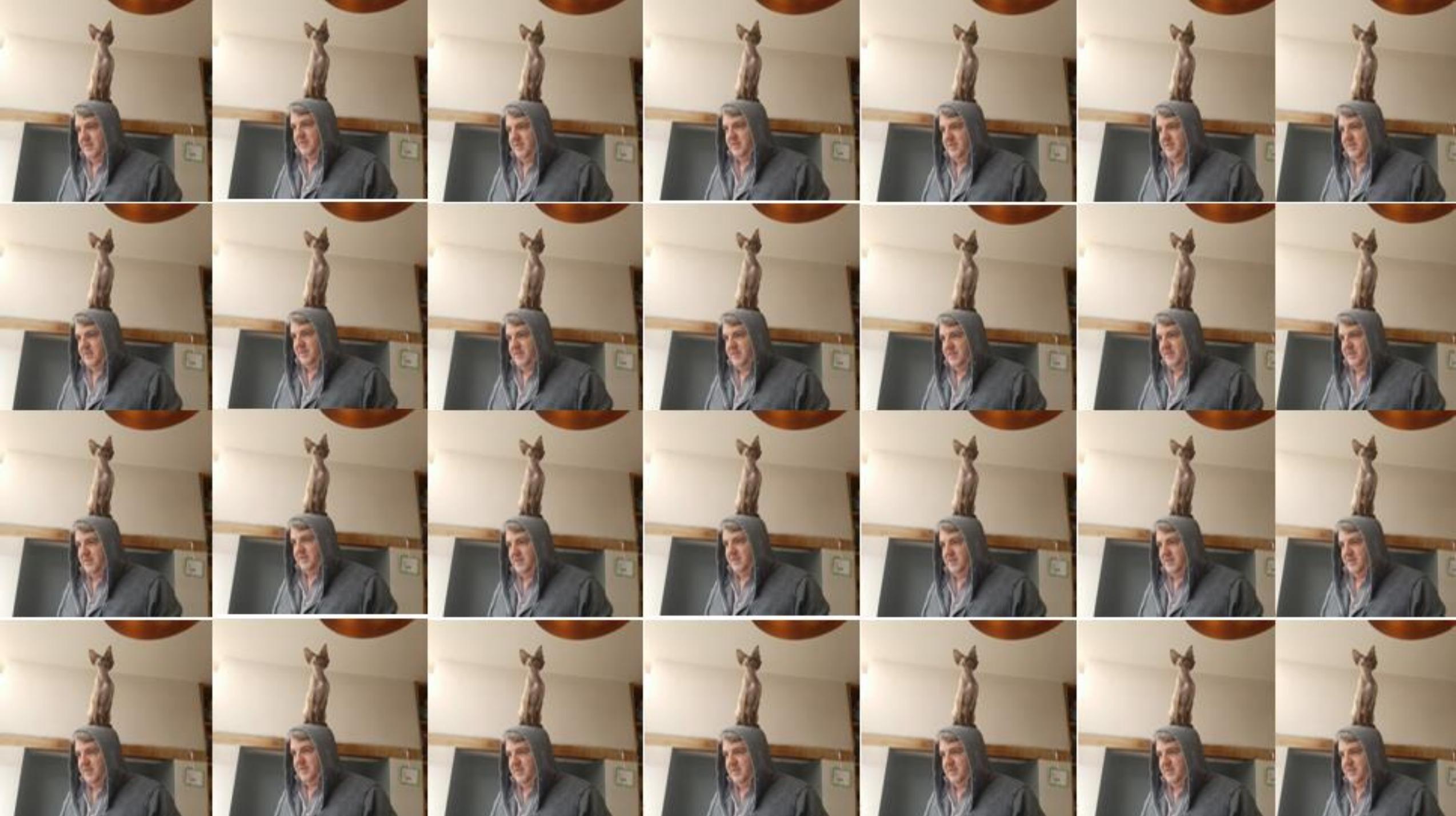
- At a language school: one of the most positive training sessions I have ever done
- At a university: one of the most challenging training sessions I have ever done



Student pictures at the entrance to a language school in Jakarta, Indonesia



Teacher pictures in the same school, hanging next to the students



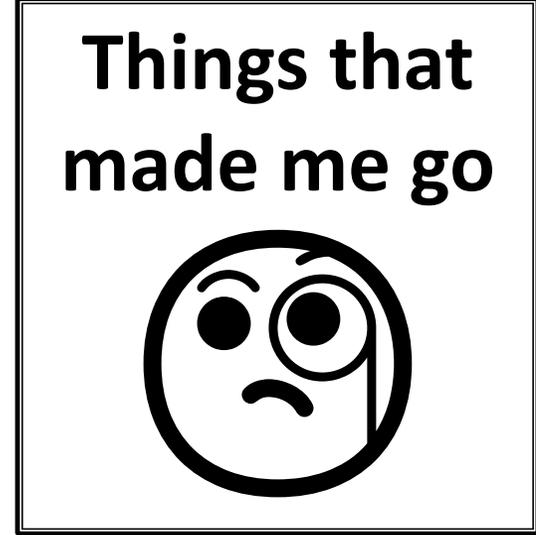
Indonesia: teachers as trusted guides

What I learned:

- Teaching hierarchies based on longevity are complete and utter nonsense
- Teaching hierarchies based on where you teacher are complete and utter nonsense
- Trust is at the centre of good teaching, especially language teaching



Nigeria: teachers as professional who need ongoing support



What I did:

- Training and materials development with British Council Nigeria – Kano Literacy and Mathematics Accelerator (KaLMA)

What I saw / experienced:

- Used a TARL methodology, which I had not come across before – interesting, but complex to implement
- Little or no support in the field for teachers
- Multi-tiered cascades present challenges in the quality of delivery



Nigeria: teachers as professional who need ongoing support

What I learned:

- Radical thinking can help unlock ‘unsolvable’ problems
- Delivering large programmes needs strong admin and structures – without this, it’s irrelevant how good the materials are
- Materials can be a way of delivering CPD and ongoing support to teachers – the training is embedded



Jumping on the Letters

Jumping on the Letters is a fun activity which helps children learn the sound and shape of individual letters. It can also be used to learn the spelling of syllables (in Hausa) or words (in English).

NOTE: Try to follow these steps as closely as possible in your session so as to achieve the main [learning objectives](#)²¹. Later you may decide to do some of the parts differently. Also note that:

- **Words in bold** = words which you say to the children
- Words which are underlined = look at the bottom of the page for more information
- WORDS IN CAPITALS = repeated stages (adapt the Hausa to English)
- *Words in Italics* = learning resources

BEFORE THE SESSION²²

- Make sure you have the following materials:
 - Hausa letter cards
 - English letter cards
 - Chalk
- Decide which letters you want to focus on in the session. You should:
 - Choose between 6 and 10. If you choose too many, it may be confusing for the children.
 - Choose a mixture of letters which are familiar and unfamiliar to the children. If they already know some letters, it can build their confidence
 - It is best to choose letters which they can use to spell out words, so make sure you include at least 2 vowels
- In the middle of the room, write out the letters in a grid on the floor. Or you can place the letter cards on the floor. Writing out the letters makes it easier for all children to see. For example:



d	a
i	n
m	o

DURING THE SESSION

Stage A – 20 minutes. Focus on Hausa (Whole Group)

A1. Welcome the children into the room²³. This will help them relax. When children feel more relaxed, they learn language more effectively. Make sure they are all sitting in a circle.

A2. Say: “**Today we are going to learn about Hausa letters. Who can tell me some Hausa letters?**”

A3. Do Think, Pair, Share²⁴.

²¹ Learning objective: The language (e.g. letters / words / sentences) which you want the children to learn within the session.

²² Before the session: It's important that you prepare for the session so that you make the most of the time you have with the children. It takes only a few minutes to prepare for this session.

²³ Welcome: You might ask questions like: 1. How are you feeling today? 2. What lesson have you just had? 3. Have you done anything fun today? 4. What are you going to do later?

²⁴ Think, Pair, Share: 1. Children listen to your question and think about their answer. 2. Children present their ideas to their partner. 3. Pairs share their ideas with the whole group.

A4. Say: “**What letters did you say? Can you see any of these letters written on the floor?**” The children should identify these letters. Let them stand up and point to the correct letters. Do a choral drill²⁵.

A5. Ask for a volunteer²⁶. Say a letter (e.g. a). She or he has to jump on it. Repeat this with 2 more letters (e.g. m and d). See the diagram below:

d	a
i	n
m	o

d	a
i	n
m	o

d	a
i	n
m	o

A6. Repeat this process several times with different children.

A7. When the children understand the activity, ask for two volunteers. One child will be the ‘jumper’ and the other will be the ‘facilitator’. The ‘facilitator’ will now say a letter for the ‘jumper’ to go on.

- If the jumper is correct, get the children to say well done
- If the jumper is incorrect, get them to say where they should have jumped

A8. Repeat this process several times. Different children will play the role of ‘facilitator’ and ‘jumper’.



STAGE B – 20 minutes. Focus on Hausa (Small Group)

B1. Say: “**Well done. You are very good at this. I now want you to play the same game but in groups. Can you do this?**” Elicit²⁷ the task which children think they have to do.

B2. Divide the class into groups²⁸.

B3. Give each group a set of ⇒ *Hausa Letter Flashcards*. Then:

- Together, the group find the letters written on the floor. They place the letters in a grid in their part of the room
- One child is the ‘facilitator’. One child is the ‘jumper’. The other children in the group will check that the jumper goes on the right letters
- Children change roles



You should walk around the room and:

- Help any groups who aren't sure what they have to do
- Provide support and advice
- Encourage the children

²⁵ Choral drill: 1. Clearly say the letters on the floor. 2. The children repeat your pronunciation. 3. Check in groups / individually that they can say the letters accurately.

²⁶ Ask for a volunteer: Don't make anyone volunteer if they don't want to. Don't choose only loud or strong children. Give many children the chance to take part. Make sure you have a good gender balance (girls as well as boys).

²⁷ Elicit: Ask the children to say what they think. Don't just tell them what to do – they should try and work it out by themselves.

²⁸ Divide the children into groups: The booklet contains details of this. The groups should be as small as possible.

Promoting realistic, accurate & accurate images of teachers

⚠ TRIGGER WARNING: “Woke leftist nonsense” © Daily Mail

Teachers in general – but specifically in challenging circumstances:

- Should be seen as frontline workers
- Provide safe spaces
- Are humans with histories
- Act as trusted guides
- Enable the development of latent skills
- Require ongoing support

Resources

- [Teaching in Challenging Circumstances – free online version](#)
- [My research in Jordan](#)
- [Sample lesson from Lebanon](#)
- [TICC YouTube Webinars](#)
- [www.chrissowton.com](#)
- I have loads of materials about all sort of things and I am very happy to share them

Any questions?

Please feel free to contact me via Twitter (@chrissowtonelt) or through my website, www.chrissowton.com

