

How can we teach vocabulary and grammar more communicatively?

This is the transcript for Series 3, episode 2 of the TeachingEnglish podcast. You can find out more about the words highlighted in the transcript in the show notes for this episode.

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

teachers, ELT, communication, vocabulary, grammar, classroom, school, British Council, students, challenges, context, language, learners, textbooks, education, English, communication, communicative, language teaching

Welcome to Series 3 of Teaching English with the British Council: the podcast for English Language Teachers around the world.

In each episode we look at a critical contemporary issue in the world of ELT.

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'That's how CLT comes to save us. When you teach in a communicative way, it's enjoyable but at the same time you have a purpose.'

'Very often I went to the classroom with a question: Why am I teaching this to the students? So, as a teacher I think it is essential for you to identify your reasons.'

'I always see the classroom as sort of a safe rehearsal space so they can make their mistakes without it having any consequence.'

'... no purpose or joy and that's really what language learning should, should be about.'

This is episode 2: How can we teach vocabulary and grammar more communicatively?

Chris: Welcome to episode 2 of Teaching English with the British Council, Series 3.

We'am: Thanks for all the listener feedback from episode 1, and for all your comments and questions on the TeachingEnglish Facebook page.

Chris: If you enjoyed listening to episode one, please don't forget to like and subscribe or even leave a review, because it really does help to spread the word.

We'am: In this episode, we'll be looking at how we can teach vocabulary and grammar more communicatively.

Chris: We'll begin by looking at specific strategies and activities for teaching vocabulary and grammar, followed by a more general discussion on the subject.

We'am: For our first interview this episode, we speak to Jo Cummins, who is an ELT trainer and writer.

Chris: Welcome to the podcast, Jo.

Jo: Thank you.

Chris: Jo, maybe you could just begin by describing your own understanding of what communicative grammar and vocab teaching means.

Jo: I think what it really boils down to, for me, is manufacturing which – this is gonna sound like an **oxymoron** – but manufacturing more real communication situations in the classroom to try and facilitate students being able to move from **passive vocabulary and passive grammar**. We've all had the students that can understand the grammar and the, you know, know lots of vocabulary when they see it written down, or they can do gap fills perfectly, but when they're producing, when they're speaking or writing, they have trouble using it correctly. So I think by creating more of a communicative environment, it's being able to, as a teacher, help students bridge that gap from the passive to the active. I always see the classroom as sort of a safe rehearsal space for students. So they can make their mistakes in a classroom without it having any consequences. They can get feedback, but trying to find situations that are more relevant to their lives or just to find things that they're more interested in, so that they can communicate more confidently.

Chris: I think that's a really nice way of putting it, like, calling it a rehearsal space, because, you know, speaking another language is a sort of performance, you know, and if you haven't learned your lines or you haven't rehearsed anything beforehand for a play or whatever you're doing, it can be so challenging to then do that with real people, as it were.

Jo: Yeah, exactly. And I think that's sort of the idea behind the classroom is it is a really **safe space** and it is the space where you can get all your mistakes out the way. People are going to try and understand and be patient with you. By giving as many opportunities as we can to students to do that in a way that is supportive and is communicative. We all know that the best language learners are often the ones that are willing to take a few risks every now and then to push their learning. So I think that, yeah, by being able to sort of instil a bit of confidence is, is really important.

We'am: You mentioned that at the beginning that it's about manufacturing a situation, so maybe, from like a practical point of view, what are some activities or situations that we can manufacture to kind of introduce grammar and vocabulary in a communicative way?

Jo: Yes, there's quite a lot of different ways of doing it. There's some sort of classic activities like the **information-gap activities**, so you might have two different students in doing pair work, and they both got different information that they need to share. So things like **jigsaw readings**, where you might need both to read the same text, but you've got different information in the text that you need to complete, but I'm also a really big fan of task-based learning and project-based learning as ways to create a wider-ranging communication and a more authentic group work. And I think that it is a really useful way of rehearsing and practising grammar and vocabulary. For example, you might want to do a project about coming up with a proposal to make your school more environmentally friendly. And as a teacher, you would say 'OK, so they're going to need some vocabulary about the environment, things about recycling or rewilding'. But also thinking about 'OK, so what grammar are they going to use when they're going to be discussing this task?' You might want to look at things like modals and sort of things like making suggestions, like 'We could do this' or 'Why don't we do that?' sort of functional language. And then also, maybe they're going to

present their ideas or come up with some sort of report and you might want to talk about future forms like 'we will do this', 'we're going to do this', 'we're hoping to do this', and use that as a way of inputting the language. And I think project work works really nicely because you're giving them sort of more authentic ways to use the language that you're inputting. You're actually giving them things that they can then put into practice directly when they're communicating. But I do think it's very important that when we're doing this, that you are very clear about those aims. And then at the end, sort of review, 'OK, so what sort of, what language have we used today? How do you, how well do you think you've used that language?'

Chris: It's a way of empowering the students, giving them agency, but for some teachers, though, that might feel slightly scary as well?

Jo: Yeah, absolutely. And some vocabulary, some grammar, you can predict that they're going to use, but also, yeah, you have to be ready to respond. But I think especially with things like project work, if you do it over the course of several lessons, it does give you a chance as a teacher to think 'OK, so this is the area that they, you know, they've been making a lot of mistakes in', or 'they're not, they haven't quite got the language to discuss this'. And you can go away and prepare something for the next lesson. You know, if you're doing a project, you don't need to do every lesson on it, but you could maybe do, like, half an hour every class. Yeah, I think it's a slightly different role as a teacher in that you're, yeah, you're facilitating and you're helping and responding to the needs that arise.

Chris: There might be some of our listeners who agree completely with what you're saying and want to do that more **project-/ task-based focus**, and all the rest of it, but the curriculum which they're expected to use can be very restrictive. You know, for example, like an **analytical curriculum**, which, you know, module one is the past simple, module two is, you know, this word set and so on. So they are constrained by their textbooks, their curriculum and so on. What would you say to teachers in that situation, how they could still teach that content which the students need and may be examined on, but in a more communicative way?

Jo: I think you can combine the two. If you're doing the past simple, you can definitely do something where you're thinking, you know, you're going to be discussing something that happened in the past – what was your town like 100 years ago? – you're still going to be using the grammar that comes up. Communicative doesn't always have to come back to speaking. I think sometimes we forget about writing as a productive skill, chatting and sharing things online and responding to each other through writing as well that you can set up in a way that would help support a curriculum.

Chris: So it's almost giving teachers that confidence or saying to the teacher to be confident that if you've got, say, an activity in the book which is ten sentences with a sort of **cloze test** on the past simple: scrap that. For homework, go and talk to your grandmother, your grandfather and say about what your town looked like 50 years ago, whatever it is, and write ten sentences in the past simple on that issue.

Jo: Absolutely. And I think, you know – and I say this as someone who writes textbooks – obviously every exercise in a textbook isn't going to be relevant to what your students in your classroom are, so, so don't feel constrained by that. If you have a better idea. If you have something that's going to be more interesting and more engaging, then don't be afraid to take that and run with it. You can do both. Some grammar points you, they might need a more direct method of teaching and some that you might feel like they, you know, you can have a bit more freedom with and I think that's fine to sort of find a balance there as well.

Chris: And, Jo, if we could just ask as well, you talked about the importance of seeing communication both as speaking and as writing as well. They're both, both those productive skills. You know, when I started

teaching a long time ago, they were fairly distinct skills, but nowadays, with Facebook posts, WhatsApp message groups, tweets, etc., etc., there's a blurring between those genres or between all those text types, as it were. How can you support students with, with that and, kind of, in terms of the kind of language, the kind of structures they should be using?

Jo: Yeah, I think, yeah, it's really interesting, isn't it? I think when the telephone kind of came in, everyone said writing is gonna die, and now it's had a resurgence of, like, online and social media and things. Yeah, I think it is important. I think it comes back to when you're learning vocabulary, or you're learning lexical chunks and things, vocabulary is kind of one of those things, like, when we're getting students to record vocabulary, and I'm quite a big fan of sort of having vocabulary notebooks, or nowadays people can kind of, there's sort of online apps, you can record vocabulary. It's not just about writing – OK, this is the word and this is what it means – there's so much more information that we can include in that which comes in sort of the register, how formal it is, its **collocations**, sort of example sentences, all of those things we can encourage students to think about when they're recording their vocabulary, which I think is really useful. And looking at real-world examples of this. And also, you know, encouraging a classroom that's open to, for them to bring, you know, 'I've seen, I've seen this online. I don't understand it. What does this mean?' I think that that's, you can have really useful learning moments by being open to students bringing things like that in, and sometimes it's OK as a teacher to say 'Oh, I'm not sure! I'm going to have to go away and have a look into that as well!'

Chris: It's interesting what you're saying about the influence of students' **L1s** in the process there as well. How it can kind of, can help with that acquisition of language but also, hopefully, by adopting a more sort of multilingual approach to learning English and other languages, we're seeing there isn't just this one-to-one, **binary correlation** between, like, this word and this word, or this grammatical structure and this grammatical structure. You know, each language is unique in that way. There may be similarities, but there are those differences as well, but highlighting them and kind of thinking about that can be really helpful.

Jo: Yeah, and it's, yeah, it's a tricky world to negotiate, I think, isn't it? When you're learning a language and you're learning. You know, you might see things written down and you think 'Oh, that's a nice new phrase'. But, you know, you don't want to write that in your essay when you're writing your exam, and learning what's appropriate in what situation – the same in speaking and writing – is a challenge, I think, for a lot of learners.

We'am: Thank you so much for sharing with us and for all these great ideas.

Chris: Thank you so much, Jo, really appreciate your time.

Jo: No problem, bye.

We'am: I'd like to go back to the phrase that Jo mentioned, 'safe rehearsal spaces', if you can tell us a little bit more about it, Chris?

Chris: Yeah, I really liked that phrase. And it's something that whenever I've done teaching or been training, I think is really, really important. I think sometimes I've heard a lot of teachers say 'my students never say anything', 'they're scared of saying things', 'they can't speak', 'they don't speak', all of these kinds of things. And teachers really feel this. But I think a lot of the time is because we ask them to do things which are too difficult, which are too complicated. And the reason they don't say anything is because they haven't got the actual language to do it or they haven't got the confidence to use words they're not

familiar with. So they stay within their safe talk. They just use the words and language which they are confident in, which will often be at a lower level than they're actually at.

We'am: So it's more of thinking about the classroom as a safe place to practise and rehearse your lines.

Chris: And to take risks, I think was what Jo said as well. And I think, you know, you can only develop as a user of another language if you're prepared to take risks. You know, language learning is all about making mistakes, about challenging yourself, but it's really hard to do that with a native speaker or with a skilled user of that language. So we have to create those opportunities, and that's where I think, I've used a lot of **role play** in my teaching before as well, because I think what students benefit from there is that they can almost hide behind a particular character, they can be someone else. So if they're worried about making mistakes, it's not them who's making the mistake, it's the character that they're playing. It's the doctor, it's the dentist, it's the pilot, it's the nurse, it's whatever it is, so they are more willing to take those risks because they will, don't feel that they will be laughed at by their colleagues or, you know, whatever it may be, which I think certainly with teenagers especially is a real fear.

We'am: Yeah, and there's a sense of safety and security when we also talk about manufacturing a situation where learners are supposed to think of the situation, put themselves in that role and act it. The manufacturing element helps them be a little bit detached as humans, like, less vulnerable, actually to speak. So that helps them to produce the language.

Chris: I think it can help in all sorts of ways, because it can help them develop skills like empathy as well. Imagine you are an older person, for example, and you have to look at it from their perspective. So you can actually help students develop greater understanding of their community, of their society, as well as it being an opportunity to develop those good language skills as well.

We'am: There was also a mention of task-based learning, project-based learning. These are also great ideas, also gap-filling kind of activities, but with task-based learning and also project-based learning, it allows you also to work on this for several lessons, so it extends the period, so you actually maximise the benefit.

Chris: Yeah, and you actually see how language is used as well, because you're not just doing. I think that's often the problem of just using gap activities, cloze activities, these sorts of things. Language learning is just reduced to knowing the right answer to something. And that's not what language use is about. It's about using the language for a particular reason, for a particular purpose, to achieve some kind of goal. And, like you say, with project learning, task learning, you do that across a series of things. You're learning all the time, it's dynamic, it's changing, you're working with others, you're researching things, the teacher can advise, point you in the right direction, all of those kind of things, and it feels much more like real life. You're actually using that language for something. We're not looking at vocab and grammar as something separate from language but as absolutely within the language, which is driving the language forward. So it's kind of, it's really seeing the value of it, the practical aspect of it. Something that I've always been kind of really sad about is going to a staff room, for example, and just seeing books which are vocab practice exercises, grammar practice exercises. My heart really sinks.

We'am: I feel that pressure when I see textbooks, and children just filling the gaps or matching without any purpose or joy.

Chris: There's no purpose or joy. And that's really what language learning should, should be about. It's something that's easy for teachers to do. I think sometimes, in more challenging circumstances, you have very large classes and not many resources. You can understand why teachers do that. I do understand it, but they're not developing their language competence.

We'am: So an easier way, I think, for teachers to think about it is that tasks replicate real life, so that when I do this task, by the end of it I'll be able to do something in real life.

Chris: I think there's, there's a step we can add between the safe rehearsal space of the classroom and, you know, the wild, as it were, of talking to a stranger, which is things like going into a museum or an art gallery and talking to one of the **curators** there, one of the people who will look after the things there. Often, they're just standing there, they're quite bored, they haven't got a lot to do necessarily, but I've encouraged language students to go up to them, to talk to them. It's often a very, very positive experience for both the student and the museum curator as well, because the student is able to practise their language, they know the curator is there in a particular sort of semi-formal role, but then also the curator is learning something from this young person, is able to share their knowledge and their passion for the things in the, in the gallery or the museum that they're in, and so it can be a very positive two-way experience.

We'am: Yeah, that's a really nice idea, actually.

Chris: In our next interview, we'll be speaking to **Luis Carabantes** from Queen Mary University in London, who is going to talk to us about CLT: communicative language teaching.

We'am: Welcome to the podcast. Luis, what are some of the key underlying principles of teaching vocabulary and grammar communicatively?

Luis: OK, this is very interesting for me because normally the teaching of grammar and vocabulary within a more communicative **paradigm** of language education, there's lots of misconceptions about that, and there's this famous paper by **Thompson in 1996** where he writes that very often communicative language teaching is understood as not teaching grammar and vocabulary. For some reason, people are going to learn them by **osmosis**, or I don't know how, and a lot of us in ELT have said 'Well, that's not really true. And, in fact, one of the elements of communicative competence is the development of a **linguistic competence** which entails, of course, language and grammar, or vocabulary and grammar. We know that whenever we communicate, we're doing it in a specific communicative context, and that needs to be highlighted in the classroom, in the materials or in the design of instruction. Another one is authenticity. We should give inputs to the students that reflect real language use. Although this principle, authenticity has been debated as well, because not everything that comes from the study of **linguistics** necessarily translates into practice or teaching practice immediately.

Chris: I mean, this episode is about vocabulary and grammar. But do you think that distinction between vocabulary and grammar is, is helpful or unhelpful? Or should we be looking at those two things as being more closely linked?

Luis: Well, yes. **Because every sentence will have vocabulary or even smaller grammatical constructs**, like a phrase, you will have vocabulary anyway. And sometimes you can communicate with phrases. And, by the way, I don't want to associate communicative ..., or the teaching of grammar and vocabulary in a communicative paradigm only with speaking, because it's also writing.

We'am: And in a classroom context, how do we strike this balance between encouraging clear communication and also maintaining some accuracy?

Luis: It's complicated sometimes, especially when you're trying to make a point about grammar, and this probably takes us to another principle in CLT, which is feedback and the ways in which we give feedback in the classroom. So I never lose focus that we're there with the purpose of communicating, so meaning should be, in my view, the target, and that's **a dangling carrot** in the activities that we do. So that's what we should be doing. Our aim is getting some message across or communicating something.

Chris: I know you've done some work on sort of curriculum and so on as well. In many countries I've worked in, the English language curriculum often focuses or prioritises knowledge of language rather than ability to use language – that sort of linguistic understanding that I can recognise the third conditional or I know what the present continuous looks like – rather than the ability to convey meaning, functionality and so on. How do you see that issue playing out?

Luis: I think that's a very multifaceted problem because often teachers in classrooms, depending on the context, of course, they need to sometimes prepare students for certain types of examination that highlight grammar and vocabulary. For example, I'm currently writing an article on the writing of teaching materials and I'm discussing how those participants that I worked with, some teachers, how they had a very strong focus on grammar and vocabulary. And whilst I don't see that as a problem in itself, they always did it at the expense of meaning and communications. So in those cases, I'm very sympathetic of what happens to teachers in those contexts because I'm aware that they need to follow a curriculum. Very often they're not even allowed to adapt the coursebooks that are given.

Chris: And if they do something else, you know, parents or students themselves may say 'But this won't be in the exam. This will be in the exam.' And it's hard, isn't it, for them to deviate from that?

Luis: It's very hard. What I do sometimes with my students, I teach them what you call curriculum development and materials evaluation, and what I suggest is 'well, if you're struggling with covering the coursebook, maybe start by the end'. Because in the end, you will have all the communicative activities, all the speaking tasks, the writing tasks, that sort of where using that grammar and vocabulary is needed. If you're going to spend, like, one day covering half a unit just to sort of teach the students certain grammar or certain vocabulary, I doubt that they're going to learn it anyway. So I would rather ask them to write something immediately and where they have to use it.

We'am: I also wanted to ask you, because you worked in different contexts, do you feel that in different countries or contexts CLT is viewed differently or students interact with it differently?

Luis: I remember when I taught in Chile, and I can tell you an anecdote. I left a school, and the students were complaining that they were not studying enough grammar and vocabulary, that they were in a language classroom where language was not being studied. How can we deal with that when there are certain expectations about what learning a language is? So we need to strike a balance between those two, I think, without letting down our students, but also changing their own sort of understanding of what learning a language is as well. One of my last jobs in Chile, I needed to ... I can't remember exactly what I had to teach, but I said 'Fine, we're not going to waste time with that. So I'm going to ask you to record a documentary about an environmental problem in the city where we live'. And they came up with these documentaries and then I said 'Fine, so next class, we're going to project the documentaries. Bring popcorn, because we're going to sit and you're going to watch.'

Chris: This is a new approach – the 'bring popcorn' approach – to language teaching. I like that!

Luis: Yeah. But, you know, like, very often and when this is an issue in many, many countries is that English is learned for no obvious reason. And that was a problem for me, in Chile. I'm from the south of Chile, and I learned English there, and I taught English there as well. And very often I went to the classroom with the question: Why am I teaching this to the students? So as a teacher, I think it is essential for you to identify reasons, because very often, learning English is associated with better job prospects, but we can't really go into a classroom with primary school students and tell them 'Well, it's gonna get you a better job'.

Chris: It's often seen as a, like, as a, almost as a proxy for something else? You've got your English for specific purposes, English for academic purposes, but, like you're saying, English for no particular purpose.

Luis: Yeah. We've got an acronym: TENOR – teaching English for no obvious reason.

Chris: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. But then, like you say, it's more to sort of show your suitability for work, for getting to university, for whatever it may be, rather than actually speaking to, not just native speakers but, you know, most non-native speakers of English speak with other non-native speakers of English.

Luis: Yeah, exactly, absolutely, yeah, yeah. I dare to say that most of my interactions, having lived in London for almost ten years now, it's with non-native speakers of English. So the reasons for learning English can vary from place to place, but we have to be very realistic and also not make assumptions about why we're learning English, because I'm aware that there's a lot of socio-economic sort of push there, very often that's not the case. Most of my students, they are now professionals. They don't really need English on an everyday basis.

We'am: That's how CLT comes to, you know, to save us. When you teach in a communicative way, it's enjoyable, small tasks, but at the same time, you feel like you are communicating and you have a purpose.

Luis: Yeah, and I think that's, that's, in fact, one of the principles is bringing real-world tasks that will somehow mesh well with the students' cultural backgrounds, with the students' communicative needs, and so on. So that's very important, and that's where the current incarnation of CLT comes in, task-based language teaching. So English is taught with immediate effect of accessing some form of information for educational purposes.

Chris: But, like you say, if you're teaching in a communicative way then you're also developing those other skills of, you know, listening to people, confidence development, flexibility, all of those kind of really important language skills.

Luis: Yeah, and, you know, what's these days creating a lot of misconceptions about CLT is, sometimes, is global coursebooks. Sometimes they illustrate a certain way of teaching and learning as if it is communicative, but it's not really like for some – most – coursebooks today when you look at the table of contents, they foreground grammar and vocabulary. And again, whilst I don't have any problem with teaching grammar and vocabulary, because they're required and necessary for communication, it seems to me that they are illustrating that as the actual subject matter, do you know what I mean?

Chris: So you would rather, you would want to start with what you can do with the language, and these are some of the words, these are some of the structures that can be used to ... for that function.

Luis: Yeah, yeah, when you choose tasks, for example, normally they will require certain linguistic elements that are sort of repetitive, and you can sort of highlight to the students and say 'Well, this is, very often we use this sort of grammar structure, so vocabulary is to convey this type of information', and the students sometimes can discover that on their own as well.

Chris: It's interesting what you just said there as well, Luis, about noticing, and how we can encourage students, like you say, to, to notice those structures or notice those words that are common in particular genres or particular text types or whatever it may be. And, again, so maybe part of good communicative vocabulary and grammar teaching is empowering students to be able to do these things themselves.

Luis: Yeah, and if they're interested, they will do it.

We'am: Well, those are all brilliant ideas, Luis. Thank you so much for sharing with us today.

Chris: Thank you so much, Luis. We really appreciate your time.

Luis: You're very welcome.

We'am: So first, let's discuss the idiom that Luis used of 'dangling carrot'.

Chris: Dangling carrot, yes. Have you got any idea what it means, We'am?

We'am: You did explain to me, but now you need to explain again because it's a good one for the audience.

Chris: So, a dangling carrot. So sometimes on beaches in the UK, people will ride a donkey on the beach, and in order to make the donkey move, their owner will put a stick with a carrot on the end on the donkey's head, and the donkey will walk after it because it's trying to eat it. So we use it as an **idiom** to mean something which you want, something which you desire, something which is motivating for you. So Luis also mentioned this idea of TENOR: the teaching English for no obvious reason. A very good abbreviation, and certainly one I've seen in a lot of my experience teaching around the world. Is that something you've come across as well, We'am?

We'am: It's very useful to know this term, teaching English for no purpose or no obvious purpose, because you will meet a lot of students who come to English classes but with no specific purpose on why they want to learn English. Sometimes it's just, you know, time, to spend time doing something useful, but in most cases, in my context, is to be able to access better job opportunities and to be able to access education, because curriculum in universities it's, most of it is in English.

Chris: Absolutely. One of the first teaching books I ever read, it used another idiom which was that of '**jug and mug**', where students were basically being filled with knowledge poured from the jug, who was the teacher, into the mug, who was the student. And there was no way of actually saying what that language learning was for, it was just literally filling them up with that. It's something that **the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire** talks about a lot as well – **the banking model of education** – and it's almost like you're just depositing knowledge inside your head without actually doing anything with it. And I think that's one of the challenges, more generally, that English language teaching faces around the world is, is why are people doing, what are we doing it for? What are we trying to achieve with that? Is it literally just creating students who've got that knowledge so that they can progress to the next level without actually ever using that language? Or are we trying to do something different with it? Are we trying to teach other skills? Are we trying to enable

more cross-cultural communication and things like that? And I think that's one of the big challenges that English language globally is facing.

We'am: Yeah, and in most English language teaching context, you'd find students who've never been sometimes outside the country. And this, this material is written by people who maybe are based in the UK, for example. So that also cultural aspect, it's a gap for students. In one of my lessons, I replaced, like, the material with something about olive harvesting, which is something all Palestinians relate to and can talk about, but once you teach them the language, then they become more motivated to communicate or express in a context that they, that is familiar for them, which is **olive harvesting**.

Chris: I've heard this from We'am many times, because she did once very kindly give me some of her olive oil from her family's farm, and it was absolutely delicious. So I can verify that that is definitely true.

We'am: I'm really glad that you like the olive oil.

Chris: What did you make of what he was saying about authentic language, We'am?

We'am: From my understanding from what Luis said – and he made a really good point that authentic language is not something that you just take from known media outlets or popular newspapers or maybe popular books – it's something that everyone use and it's in daily life and we can capitalise on it basically. It could be something from social media, for example, content from social media, from TikTok, which is very popular among teenagers. It could be something you read and that sparks attention or that is familiar for that context you are teaching in. Sometimes it doesn't have to be headlines just in English language. The headline could be in their native language. I do that with my Arabic learners, Arabic-speaking learners. And it's always, like, intriguing for them to see something in their mother tongue written on social media maybe, and you just use that idea, kind of, to make a conversation and then after that you teach the communicative language or the functional language.

Chris: So several of the questions we got on the, in the Facebook group were about 'How do I make vocab teaching fun?', 'How do I make grammar teaching fun?' Well, one of the ways, I think, is about asking students to produce text, whether that's spoken text or written text, about things they actually want to talk about. Too often, we force them into sort of writing or speaking about things they're just not interested in or in a format they just don't care about. But if we ask them to sort of, yeah, write a **WhatsApp message** about this or do a Facebook post about that or write a Twitter thread about something different, then we're actually using a format, using a type of language they're much more familiar with.

We'am: Fun for teenagers might not be what is the definition of fun for us or for younger adults, let's say. So it's always good to see the jester in the class – What do they like? What they don't? What do they use? – and just have this information in the back of your head when you design or when you deliver your lesson.

Chris: Exactly, because your idea of fun, We'am, is writing your PhD, right?

We'am: It's very fun. So much fun.

Chris: Yeah? Does your supervisor agree?

We'am: I can't say anything.

Chris: Thank you for listening to episode 2 of Teaching English with the British Council, Series 3.

We'am: We hope you found the interviews, discussions and tips from our teachers helpful in rethinking some of the ways we approach the teaching of grammar and vocabulary.

Chris: You can find more tips, information and insights on the British Council TeachingEnglish webpage, along with the transcripts, show notes and bonus material.

We'am: In our next episode, we'll be asking the question: Do I need to sound like a native speaker?

Chris: Until then, goodbye.

We'am: Goodbye.