Up Close and Personalised

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Images courtesy of Manu Martín and Ricard Closa

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| Personalisation leads to meaningful, memorable language-learning – no news there – but what IS personalisation and how should it work in ELT? This workshop puts this ‘buzzword’ under the microscope and looks at practical, non-intrusive, effective routes to personalising content (via the Twilight Zone), trying out some engaging activities on the way. |

**Coursebooks**

Can you think of any personalisation activities in your current coursebook?

Do they match this definition of ‘personalising’?

“Personalising. I’m avoiding the word ‘personalisation’ as, for me at least, it has connotations of activities of the “Now tell your partner about your last holiday / Describe your house / Write five sentences about your brother‘ type, and that is **not** what I think personalising language input for learning means – at least not for teens. Let me explain (sudden memory of Basil Fawlty sticking his finger in Manuel’s eye…).”

Personalising is about creating our own associations, in order to memorise and consequently learn language. “We form our associations following the twists and turns of our life-route…… voluntarily and personally. We also decide what’s relevant, what we need in order to express our lives (flowering plants, car parts, first aid techniques…), and what isn’t. In an ESL context, this aspect is marginally easier, but most teenage English language learners in the world are in an EFL classroom, where relevance is in shorter supply.” <https://macappella.wordpress.com/2012/04/04/a-matter-of-confidence-personalising/>)

**Think about these three questions:**

What do teens really talk about?

What do they NOT like talking about?

What’s *The Twilight Zone*? Why is it an important consideration in learning / teaching?

**Personalising activities**

Using students’ external lives

Using students’ inner lives (the imagination)

**External**

* Selfies
* Identity ‘This is me’ mosaics
* Standing scrapbooks
* Smartphones: photos / playlists
* Poem skeletons using Useful Language boxes
* ‘Tell me lies’
* ‘Wacky’ questionnaires
* The Opinion Essay using ‘Frenemies’ from ELTpics

**Inner**

(The last four above cross over into this area.)

Try engaging the senses and/or use music, your voice, images, etc. to stimulate the imagination. There is little more personal than a person’s inner thoughts and images.

* ELTpics for ‘white lies’

- Making excuses

* Images in other subject coursebooks to personalise language AND other subject content
* Images in the mind – using written questions (as the Wacky questionnaires, above)
* Using music
* Using your voice
* Using wordclouds

**Useful links**

www.flickr.com/photos/eltpics/sets/

www.picmonkey.com

www.wordle.net

http://takeaphotoand.wordpress.com/

http://macappella.wordpress.com/

http://bcnpaul1.blogspot.com/2011/02/barefoot-teaching-journal-mobile.html

