

Your favourite website: Any website where I can stream episodes of *The Walking Dead*. Love the series and the genre, in fact. It's the way that the plot rebounds over the human characters because the zombies represent a characterless constant, a rotten baseline threat, as it were. What I've always found unsatisfactory about war films is the fact that one side needs to be dehumanised or left unknown, unexplored, for the viewer to be able to identify with the other. *TWD* zombies seem a perfect vehicle to get round that issue. There are normally a few students in each of my classes that follow the series and for right or wrong I can't help respecting them just a little bit for it – but I don't use the series in class.

A gadget you can't live without: I don't currently have a mobile or a tablet or anything like that. So no pings, ringtones, whistles, updates or notifications for Chrissy Boy. It's peaceful and I like it. I do have an MP3 which has survived my washing machine. I listen to that most days on my way down from the village where I live into Seville, where I teach – Prince, bluegrass, Charlie Garcia, Alabama 3.

Something you'd never throw away: I grow chillies and what I try to do is to save at least three or four seeds from any particularly good varieties or batches.

Who or what inspires you? To tell you the truth, I still get off on the idea of putting ideas out there. As time goes on, it's slightly different because instead of developing material for my own classes then later forging that into a presentation, the two run more or less parallel to each other right from conception now. I imagine that's the same for quite a few of my friends on the conference circuit too. If before it was about ego or the high of performing, conferences like TESOL Spain now act more as a kind of catharsis – giving some higher sense of purpose to the challenging moments of day to day teaching.

Useful teaching tools: Pencils. Pens. Paper. Stuff like that. I already have four whiteboards in my classroom. For the last couple of years I've been sharing the room too, so other teachers are getting to play about with those as well. From a methodology perspective that makes me happy. I'd love a classroom where *all* the walls were writable surfaces.

Your favourite lesson: Between 2000 and 2005 I was the 4^oESO English teacher in a semi-private school in Seville. One year I was so determined that my students were going to go on to high school knowing their irregular verbs that over the course of a month I generated four batches of individual tests for all 27 students, where each test was slightly different from the others and each student was tested 1-1 at the teacher's desk during regular class time. Communicative language teaching it really wasn't but I remember after the last lesson, when we'd finally got through all the tests and all the verbs and everybody had passed, one student told me it was the first time he'd realised he could actually really *learn* something – in

terms of intentional exercise and information retention. I'm generally known for whacky creative stuff but that was good to hear at the time.

Your favourite bits about your talks: In the Saturday talk on Young Learner activities I'm very happy with the snaps I've taken of students doing a range of kinesthetic/psychomotor tasks over the last few years. They are activities that I don't think my audience will have seen before and that I hope they enjoy. In the Sunday session, which is more about teens, I think I like the theme, the mindset and the general stubbornness of the talk – especially some of the grittier analogies. It's a talk which is very much grounded in my regular contact hours.

A lesson you've learnt while teaching: So many. I'm still an introvert at heart but teaching's taught me how to think about other people more and enjoy groups. I've learnt not compete with my colleagues. I've learnt that things work better the more I understand what my DOS (director, co-ordinator, senior teacher etc.) does. Same goes for the school admin. staff or secretary. But I've also learnt how to avoid those wearing conversations with strangers outside of class time that feel like you're giving someone an unscheduled English lesson. I've learnt how to tell teenagers off but frame it in such a way that they don't hate me – and I've learnt to reassure them that I don't hate them either. With the really little ones I've learnt to work formulaic and/or repeated sentences into a range of activities and that these can sound a lot more impressive than single word items.

I've also had lots of very good tutors and trainers. One of them taught me to be myself in the classroom and not to try to be 'the teacher'. That was a good lesson. Another taught me the value of learning the names of my students in the first couple of minutes of a new course. That was a good one too. A third taught me how to read what teachers write about their lesson plans or methodological recommendations line by line and move by move. I liked that one too.

Hope the remaining preparations go well and look forward to seeing everyone at the conference.

Chris