

From the authors

My learning to learn journey began in the early 1980s at Ealing College of Higher Education in West London. Barbara Sinclair and I were responsible for running intensive, four-week summer courses for European Youth Leaders and Young Workers on behalf of the Council of Europe.

At this time, the Council of Europe was promoting autonomy in language learning, and a principle aim of the courses was to equip the students with the skills and strategies to carry on learning English. The courses also highlighted the need for teacher support materials.

My passion for helping students learn how to learn was ignited – and *Learning to Learn English*, published in 1989, was a result of this work.

The 80s also coincided with the global expansion of introducing languages into the primary curriculum, and my journey entered the world of primary education. I discovered that children are competent, insightful and spontaneous commentators on their own learning experiences, which links well with the development of learning to learn.

In 1998, I opened the first teaching centre for the British Council in France specialising in teaching children and teenagers. I made learning to learn an integral part of our approach: methodology, course information, lesson planning, induction and teacher training.

Nayr Ibrahim, one of the first teachers to join the centre, embraced this approach. Together, we began developing classroom and teacher development materials.

This book represents the evolution of our work, which we hope will reach future generations of children and teachers.



Gail Ellis

My contribution to this book is a result of 18 years of working with children in Portugal, Cairo, Hong Kong and now in Paris, as a teacher, teacher trainer, writer and manager.

When I joined what was then designated as the Young Learners Centre at the British Council in Paris in 1998, I was embarking on a wonderful journey that deepened my understanding of how children learn, which taught me that children are active learners in their own right.

By engaging the child, not only in the language learning process but also in the learning to learn process, I discovered that teaching and learning are reciprocal and that children, too, were agents in their own learning.

If initially I was listening to children instinctively, it was when I met Gail Ellis that I discovered a theoretical basis for metacognitive awareness and learning to learn, which would impact on my teaching, my action research and my teacher training.

My collaboration in *Teaching children how to learn* has consolidated a number of beliefs in my own teaching practice – ie systematic introduction of reflection opportunities throughout the lesson, assessment for learning as a whole-school approach – and informed my PhD methodology, which is based on eliciting the children's voices on their living and learning in multilingual spaces.

We hope this book will also be a journey in *your* discovery of learning as a reflective process, of the children as active participants in meaning making, and of the teacher as creator of optimum learning and teaching conditions in the primary English classroom.



Nayr Ibrahim

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Wilbur's toolkit



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