

## MY LEFT-FIELD LESSON

# Language of the street

*Protest banners, graffiti and even sewer covers can inspire lessons*

GUY SHARETT

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THE OCCUPY protests that have swept the world over the past few years have taught many people many lessons. But one lesson the organisers perhaps did not expect has led to a change in the way I teach Hebrew to foreign students.

The shift began because my students were frustrated that the banners they saw at Occupy protests in our city of Tel Aviv seemed nonsensical. They weren't, of course, but when we are learning a language we often fail to recognise the importance of history and context. The banners simply used language that we don't tend to learn in the classroom.

This was an interesting lesson for me, and one that led me to start holding classes in and around Tel Aviv using a portable whiteboard.

The resources of the city are plentiful: I use shop fronts, street signs and anything else I come across to teach language and history. The words on sewer covers, for example, are really interesting. In Hebrew, the word for "municipality" has changed since the 1950s, when there were reforms in our orthography. So, today, the old spelling for "municipality" means "chives". From this small sewer cover, we begin to learn a lot of history.

My students and I journey into all sorts of environments. One favourite is the spice market. We learn the names of the delicacies, with their roots in Arabic and Farsi, which demonstrates Tel Aviv's diverse cultural heritage. We also visit the historic Trumpeldor Cemetery for an insight into the lives of

ALAMY

## TOP 10 REAL-LIFE LANGUAGE RESOURCES

### 1 Das Kino

*Krieg der Sterne* may not mean much to students, but tell them that the film involves lightsabres and a small green being with big ears and they will soon work it out. The titles of Hollywood favourites translated into German will get cinephiles excited about learning the language. [bit.ly/DasKino](http://bit.ly/DasKino)

where they would be found – in a shop or on the street. [bit.ly/SignsFromLife](http://bit.ly/SignsFromLife)

### 3 Road test

Ensure that your students can navigate the roads of Europe with confidence by giving them a quiz that tests their translation skills. [bit.ly/RoadTestLesson](http://bit.ly/RoadTestLesson)

### 4 House points

Get your class perusing property in this Spanish translation exercise featuring house and flat adverts. [bit.ly/HouseLanguageLesson](http://bit.ly/HouseLanguageLesson)

### 5 French factor

Reality television may be a much-derided art form, but this resource uses the French version of *The X Factor* to lead



students into a discussion of the country's music and culture. [bit.ly/FrenchFactor](http://bit.ly/FrenchFactor)

### 6 Manga method

Introduce manga comics to language lessons with resources

from the Japan Foundation. [bit.ly/MangaMethod](http://bit.ly/MangaMethod)

### 7 Advert assistance

Awaken your students' inner critic with German advertisements so awful that your classes won't be able to

D 14

6 BUSSIÈRE-DUNOISE

D 48

i LA CELLE DUNOISE 10

Le Vignaud

0,4 LA G<sup>DE</sup> BREUILLE

### 2 Signs of life

Ask students to translate these French signs and say



the famous political and artistic figures of the city. And we use bumper stickers and graffiti to understand contemporary culture.

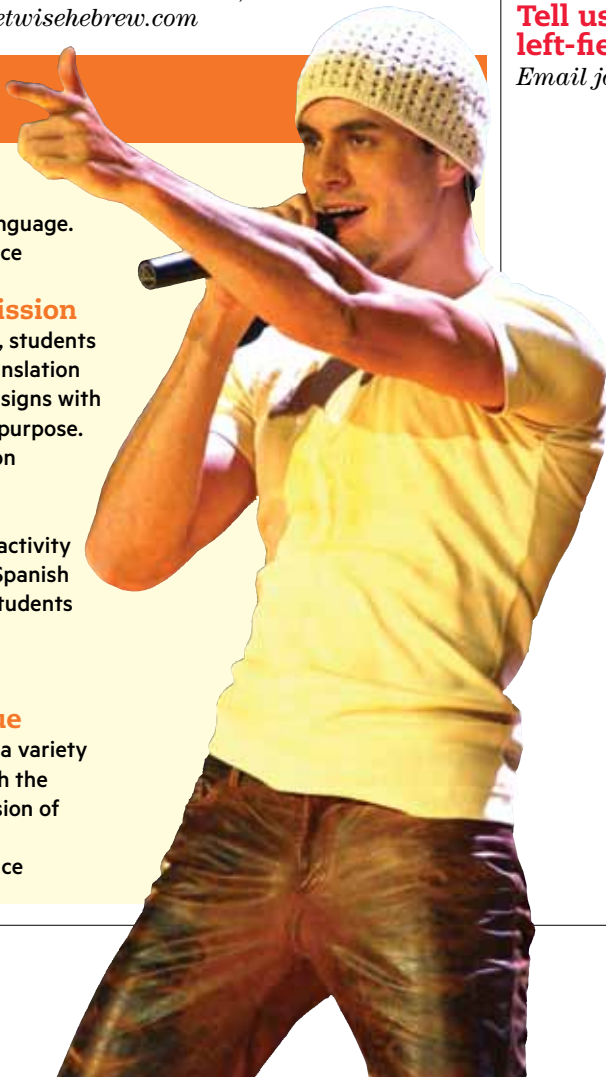
It's not all about being outside, though. I also use *HaKochav HaBa*, the Israeli version of *The X Factor*, to teach my students about the fundamentals of Israeli society. We gather around the television with a mint tea and I show them how to decipher all the inside jokes and stereotypes, and the inner workings of the Israeli music scene.

This new approach has had a massive impact. The best way to break down complex grammar and colloquialisms is by looking at the world around us. Because it's real life and contextual, my students remember things much better than if we were merely reading from a dull textbook.

They still have difficulties, of course. We each have our own linguistic inner self and we don't all take on a new language in the same way. Some students are faster at picking up grammatical structure, but that does not mean their understanding of speech will be good. They all need a lot of support, because every student has a different story and different needs. It's a bit like therapy, really.

All the students benefit from this real-world approach, and they seem to really enjoy it. After the lesson on the sewer cover, I got a message from a student saying, "I just spotted the same structure on the sewer cover next to my house. I was so excited!" This sort of enthusiasm makes it all worthwhile. ●

*Guy Sharett teaches Hebrew in Tel Aviv, Israel. Find out more at [www.streetwisehebrew.com](http://www.streetwisehebrew.com)*



stop themselves engaging with the language. [bit.ly/AdvertAssistance](http://bit.ly/AdvertAssistance)

**8 Matching mission**  
In this matching task, students must rely on their translation skills to pair German signs with descriptions of their purpose. [bit.ly/MatchingMission](http://bit.ly/MatchingMission)

**9 Pop process**  
This comprehension activity enlists the help of a Spanish pop group to teach students the language. [bit.ly/PopProcess](http://bit.ly/PopProcess)

**10 La musique**  
Listen to songs from a variety of genres – and watch the videos – for a discussion of *la musique française*. [bit.ly/MusicFromFrance](http://bit.ly/MusicFromFrance)

**Tell us about your left-field lessons**  
Email [jon.severs@tes.co.uk](mailto:jon.severs@tes.co.uk)



## BACK TO BASICS

Poetry can be alienating if students are unfamiliar with its conventions, but these resources will help to show sceptics that, as William Cowper put it, 'there is a pleasure in poetic pains'

### 1 Poetic licence

**What is it?** A sorting activity that asks students to match poetic devices to their definitions

**What users say** "Wonderful. I took out your examples for the students to be able to add their own from the poems we are studying." [bit.ly/PoeticLicence](http://bit.ly/PoeticLicence)

to the idea of poetry." [bit.ly/PoeticOpening](http://bit.ly/PoeticOpening)

### 6 Devices advice

**What is it?** A high-level overview of poetic devices, suitable for post-16 students  
**What users say** "I love it. Am going to adapt for the poetry we are studying. Fabulous – more please." [bit.ly/DevicesAdvice](http://bit.ly/DevicesAdvice)

### 2 Only connects

**What is it?** A Connect Four-style game, won by identifying examples of poetic devices

**What users say** "This is a brilliant resource for students of all abilities and has led really well into a lesson exploring poetic techniques. Fantastic." [bit.ly/OnlyConnects](http://bit.ly/OnlyConnects)

### 7 Now the news

**What is it?** An activity in which students create "blackout" poetry by deleting words from newspaper articles

**What users say** "This is a wonderful idea. Thank you so much for sharing it." [bit.ly/NowTheNews](http://bit.ly/NowTheNews)

### 3 Wonderful words

**What is it?** A handy list of definitions relating to poetry

**What users say** "This is a really useful resource for me as a graduate teacher, perfect for reminding me of all those words I learned all those years ago. Brilliant." [bit.ly/PoetryGlossary](http://bit.ly/PoetryGlossary)

### 8 Poetry matters

**What is it?** A place mat of poetic devices and techniques that students can refer to when writing about poetry

**What users say** "Nice and simple. This is something I'm sure I'll use over and over – will laminate a class set." [bit.ly/PoetryMattersMat](http://bit.ly/PoetryMattersMat)

### 4 Unseen? Unfazed

**What is it?** A selection of exercises that will help students to practise responding to unseen poems

**What users say** "Amazing – worked brilliantly as a carousel activity for top-set students." [bit.ly/UnseenUnfazed](http://bit.ly/UnseenUnfazed)

### 9 Tweet talk

**What is it?** A writing activity inspired by Twitter that challenges students to create a poem in 140 characters

**What users say** "Really useful resource and a modern way to approach the topic. This could easily be incorporated into a unit of work on poetry." [bit.ly/TwitterPoems](http://bit.ly/TwitterPoems)

### 5 Poetic opening

**What is it?** Worksheets that can be used as prompts for discussion of poetry and exercises to get students writing their own

**What users say** "A clear and simple introduction

### 10 Diamante lights

**What is it?** A presentation for introducing students to different poetic forms such as acrostic, diamante and haiku

**What users say** "Very helpful resource." [bit.ly/DiamanteLights](http://bit.ly/DiamanteLights)

