



English Teaching (and Robotics) at Campion School, Warwickshire

I started by giving students a context for their creative writing: 'it's 2034 and humanoid robots are integral to our daily lives' and then set them on solo writing challenges linked to one of 6 individualised contexts (NAO Olympians, My Best Friend's a Humanoid Robot, NAO in Schools, NAO Community and Health Care Support, Eco-Warrior NAO and Police Force NAO). They later came together in teams to share their creative responses and used the public critique approach to 'like' each others' ideas, imagery, powerful vocabulary, effective language features and successful structural choices. Students then enjoyed collaborating to create a 'team' piece, using features of everybody's creative work.



The end results were fantastic; monologues, poems and stories expressed students' imaginative ideas about the future of humanoid robotics and everyone enjoyed being involved and feeling valued...

The class were enthused and enthralled by the topic of humanoid robotics; every student was able to produce imaginative, lively writing which was humorous and moving but also thought-provoking and philosophical.

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE ROBOT

We had an short session familiarising ourselves with the Choreographe software. We soon came to terms with it and got beyond the basics, utilising features such as object recognition and face detection. We later learned how to animate NAO to bring him to life. The students couldn't wait to apply their newly acquired skills to their fantastic creative writing.

RESPONSE OF THE STUDENTS

Every Year 8 student absolutely loved working with NAO! Learning how to program each NAO energised, enthused and challenged all of the students in the class. Through trial and error, evaluation and collaboration, each group programmed NAO to speak, gesture, and move to bring great creative writing to life.

“We...worked to the best of our ability until we finally had a piece to be proud of. During this time, we all collaborated to animate the robot: he was walking, making gestures, we even made the robot's eyes change colour – from flashing to random eyes!” - Tierney

“Some students had the exciting job of assisting the robot to recognise objects needed to then tell the story. Other students inputted the stories into the program. NAO then repeated them and brought them to life! Whereas others had the rousing job of animating NAO. So, a pretty long day was had! But all the hard work paid off and we had a robot that was programmed - ourselves!” - Molly-Rose

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER...



By the final 'Showcase' session, we were able to celebrate the outcomes of hours of hard work and our Headteacher was excited about seeing what students had achieved too. Nerves were tangible: Would our creative writing really come to life? Would the NAO really follow the program that had been written by the students?

Whilst Olympic NAO cleverly recognised the gold medal he won in the heady days of his athletic career, Home-Help NAO

recounted a day-in-the-life of a humanoid in the home and Police Force NAO explained how his highly developed sensors and bionic strength made the local streets safer. However, Community NAO struggled to recognise the ASDA bag which would trigger his monologue about his community service in helping the elderly carry their heavy shopping home! Despite this, all of the students were

proud. They were proud that they had created a great piece of writing together; they were proud that their ideas did actually come to life; they were proud that they had learned new skills and had a unique, inspiring and challenging experience; and they were proud that they had been resilient when they had experienced failures. They had learned so much – and I was proud of them.

THE DAY THE HUMANOIDS CAME...

...TO CAMPION SCHOOL. A GROUP OF YEAR 8 ENGLISH STUDENTS WORKED WITH SIX NAO HUMANOID ROBOTS TO BRING THEIR STORIES AND POEMS TO LIFE...



THE NAO EFFECT...



Students returned to English lessons with a renewed energy; not only were they even more 'thirsty' for knowledge, understanding and an opportunity to showcase their literacy skills - relationships had developed too. I had enjoyed seeing their range of talents and how they had challenged themselves whilst working with NAO. Their support of each other had grown too; they had further recognised each others'

skills and creative abilities and it was great to be able to build on this in subsequent lessons.

For students, writing with a 'real' sense of audience and purpose always leads to powerful creative writing. Therefore, when I asked students to write a magazine article for the school magazine based on their experience of working with NAO – the quality of their writing was excellent. Within just 50 minutes, students had crafted a well-structured, lively and technically secure response.

Undoubtedly, the richness and variety NAO had added to the English curriculum had fired up a renewed pleasure in writing; students used a broad range of conventions, they wrote with greater accuracy and were keen to redraft, redraft and redraft again... they wanted their writing to be perfect!

"We had lots of fun with NAO and learnt many new things. We had some trouble - but we got through the challenges in the end. My favourite part of the day was when everyone watched my group's final piece because I never thought we would get that far! Our final poetry performance went really well and I was so proud of it because we worked extremely hard for 6 hours; and the hard work finally paid off! I was inspired by the robots and felt so privileged to get the chance to work with them - maybe one day, so will you." - Chloe

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