

# THE 49<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL IATEFL CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION IN MANCHESTER FROM 11 TO 14 APRIL 2015

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IATEFL is undoubtedly one of the largest and most dynamic ELT communities in the world. This association has its international conference once a year. This year the City of Manchester hosted the 49<sup>th</sup> IATEFL Conference.

As a member of ELTA Serbia and a member of its Board, I was given a great opportunity to represent our association at the IATEFL conference.

The conference unofficially started with Pre-conference events and Associates' Day on 10 April. The conference itself lasted from 11 to 14 April.

The Associates' Day was a chance for representatives of the Teaching Associations (TAs) to get together and discuss matters of common concern. It was also a great chance to meet old friends and colleagues and make new friends from all corners of the world. The Organizing Committee planned several useful presentations for the representatives of the associations.

Caroline Moore and Marjorie Rosenberg's presentation *How to use IATEFL online events to support your members* was a neat overview of the previous web conferences and satellite events supported by IATEFL.

George Pickering, IATEFL SIG Representative, held a presentation *New IATEFL training scheme* where we were acquainted with IATEFL in numbers and a forthcoming online course for the TAs. Mr Pickering announced the launch of a 10-week course for the representative of the TAs with the following topics: leadership and management style, managing teams, strategic planning and membership.

IATEFL Patron David Crystal, OBE, gave an interesting presentation *World Englishes: Where next?* This presentation was "the accent on accents" since David Crystal shared witty and fascinating facts about the myriad ways in which English is spoken. We were acquainted with an

entertaining yet expert book about accents *You Say Potato* and we were encouraged to visit the website [yousaypotato.net](http://yousaypotato.net) supported by Panmacmillan.

The conference started on 11 April. The participants enjoyed five plenary sessions and over 500 sessions consisting of talks, workshops, posters, forums, SIG open forums and more. At this year's conference there were five plenary sessions presented by the following speakers: Ann Cotton, Carol Ann Duffy, Joy Egbert, Donald Freeman and Harry Kuchah.

The title of Donald Freeman's talk was Frozen in thought? How we think and what we do in ELT. Donald Freeman pointed out that English language teaching is full of ideas such as "teachers have to or ought to do". We are burdened with numerous challenges – from national policies and standards for teaching to administrative procedures and day-to-day work in ELT classrooms. He refers to this process as being "frozen in thought". Teaching today is characterized with myths – common beliefs that serve a purpose and they are not right or wrong. These myths include the following: (1) the myth of *direct* causality, (2) the myth of *sole* responsibility, and (3) the myth of *proficiency* as the goal. Thus the field of ELT has become immobilized in a critical sense by these ideas and what they mean for what we do as teachers and teacher educators.

The former ELTA President, Radmila Popović, had an interesting workshop *The artsy side of teaching*. She reminded us of the possibility to observe language teaching through the lens of art. We may consider teaching in two ways: Teaching is an Art, and Teaching is a Science. The truly effective teacher, the one who can generate learning in the classroom, will be both a good scientist and an imaginative artist. Teaching artistic work is not just about teaching students to make art; it is about engaging students as artists who develop the original work and also develop new ways to create art. Radmila Popovic singled out three ranges of teaching: (1) structured practice vs. free application, (2) creative constraints vs. open ended, and (3) fragmentary vs. finished work.

The current ELTA President, Olja Milošević, won International House John Haycraft Classroom Exploration Scholarship. The title of her talk was Understanding group dynamics in the English classroom. Olja Milošević presented findings of a small-scale research carried out in two high school groups to discover ways that can facilitate creating a collaborative atmosphere.

The above overview is just a tiny drop of numerous events, presentations and exhibitions at this year's IATEFL Conference.

The jubilee 50<sup>th</sup> Annual International IATEFL Conference will take place in Birmingham next year.

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