



ELTA
Newsletter

MARCH-APRIL 2017

ISSN 1820-9831 (ONLINE)



ELTA Newsletter

ISSN 1820-9831 (Online)

ELTA – English Language Teachers' Association
Nemanjina 28, 11000 Belgrade
Serbia + 381 (0) 63 210 460 + 381 11 36 11 644 ext. 110
elta.kancelarija@gmail.com
Olja Milošević, ELTA President
serbia.eltapresident@gmail.com

Editor-in-Chief:

Maja Jerković, Vocational Medical School, Zrenjanin, Serbia

Co-editors:

Branka Dečković, Vocational Medical School, Kragujevac, Serbia
Milena Tanasijević, English Language Lecturer, Belgrade Metropolitan University, Serbia
Zorica Đukić, The School of Pharmacy and Physiotherapy, Belgrade, Serbia
Vicky Papageorgiou, ESL Instructor, Metropolitan College, Thessaloniki, Greece
Bojana Nikić Vujić, MA, The School of Pharmacy and Physiotherapy, Belgrade, Serbia

Proofreaders:

Vicky Papageorgiou, ESL Instructor, Metropolitan College, Thessaloniki, Greece
Milena Tanasijević, English Language Lecturer, Belgrade Metropolitan University, Serbia
Zorica Đukić, The School of Pharmacy and Physiotherapy, Belgrade, Serbia
Maja Jerković, Vocational Medical School, Zrenjanin, Serbia

Editorial:

Vicky Papageorgiou, ESL Instructor, Metropolitan College, Thessaloniki, Greece

Cover designer:

Marija Panić, ELTA - English Language Teachers' Association, Belgrade, Serbia

Website:

<http://elta.org.rs/elta-newsletter/>

Send your submissions electronically to:

newsletter.elta@gmail.com

The authors bear full responsibility for the content of their articles.

ELTA Newsletter is published bi-monthly.

Dear colleagues,

Already in the middle of spring, and, at the same time, not very far away from the end of school year, we all feel the need to pause a little, spend some time connecting with colleagues, read some articles written by dear and/or more experienced colleagues, identify with others' experiences, find answers about problems arisen in our classroom practice or just think about them. Our March-April issue hopes to be first and foremost an interesting and useful companion from us to you for this time of the year.

In this issue, we are so honoured to host an incredibly interesting article and a wonderful interview from a great lady and a talented colleague. **Maria – Araxi Sachpazian**, Chair of TESOL Macedonia-Thrace, was kind enough to give us an interview for the **A day in the life of** Section where she talks about her ventures as an educator who runs a very busy life and how she copes with it and her experience so far as the new Chair of the Teachers' Association in Northern Greece. In the **Feature Article**, **Maria** tackles on a sensitive topic, this of the ethics of observing teachers, making significant remarks which most of us would agree with. We are sure that a lot of us will identify with several of the situations that **Maria Sachpazian** describes.

In the **Creative Corner**, we can read the 6th chapter of **Ken Wilson's** novel *The Duke's portrait*, which is highly anticipated in every one of our issues! In the **Borrowed From** section, this time we are hosting **Philip Kerr's** much talked about article, *ELT as industry*.

In the **Academic Corner**, **Zorica Trbulin** walks us through the theory about the three models which help us gain our teacher's expertise, in her article *Three Models of Becoming a Professional*. We are also happy to have **Yuliya Speroff** share an article with us for the first time. It can be found in the **First Aid Kit Section** and focuses on fluency and how we can help our students succeed it.

In the **IT Column**, **Nina Kisin** talks about pre-digital assessment and *how to Assess* students' knowledge of that they have seen. As always, **Branka Dečković** brings us all the details about the **Upcoming Events** and conferences.

Two of our colleagues have also shared their experiences from Conferences and Events they organized or participated in in the **ELT Flash** Section. **Jelena Spasić** takes us on a 'mental' trip to the 24th International IATEFL Slovenia Conference (last March) which she seems to have enjoyed tremendously. **Brankica Skorković** gives us a detailed description of the thirteenth English Show in Užice Grammar School, *United Sounds of Music*, through the words of the contributors themselves, the students who organized it. They all agree! It was a great hit!

Last but not least, **Igor Medvedev** in the **Students' Corner** shares his experiences of the 57th International Mathematical Olympiad which took place in Hong Kong last July.

In every issue, we strive to prepare for you articles of a variety of topics that we hope will interest you. We also try to gather 'voices' from different backgrounds, colleagues more or less experienced, more or less acclaimed authors who have 'something' to say to all of us. If you like our work, please support it. You can do so by becoming a member of our association and being part of our family, by just reading us, by submitting an article. We would love to hear from you and you can do that by contacting us at newsletter.elta@gmail.com.

Till the next issue, stay well!

The Editorial Team

A day in the life of.....

Interview with Maria- Araxi Sachpazian

Vicky Papageorgiou, ESL/EAP instructor, Metropolitan College,
Thessaloniki, Greece



Maria-Araxi Sachpazian [BA education & RSA dip/tefl (hons)] is the owner of *Input on Education* (www.input.edu.gr), an e-consultancy firm that provides academic, business support and IT solutions to Foreign Language Schools. Maria has wide experience as a teacher, teacher trainer, educational management specialist and materials' developer. She is also

the current chairperson of TESOL Macedonia-Thrace, Northern Greece.

Vicky: Dear Maria, thank you for your time and for agreeing to give this interview!

Maria: Thank you so much, Vicky. I am so honoured to be talking to the members of ELTA Serbia and to you.

Vicky: Maria, you are an extremely busy and successful teacher, businesswoman, presenter, manager. I can go on and on with the variety of your roles... Do you miss quiet days at all?

Maria: I am blushing now. Thank you. I am indeed busy and I do miss changes in the pace of my work but I feel that quiet days are a thing of the past. I don't know if it's simply me and my many priorities or if it's Greece and its financial situation but I find it very hard to reject projects or to decline invitations to present, therefore I always end up with more that I had initially bargained for. I must say, though, that I believe this is the greatest gain for us, the generation that had to suffer from the Greek financial crisis during our most productive years. This crisis has shown us what we can accomplish and how much we can do. Personally, I wouldn't have ventured to teach abroad

nor would I have invested in my own company, though keeping it is far from easy.

Vicky: Can you then describe a typical day in your life?

Maria: My days vary depending on what I have to do. I am an early riser so I am up round 6:30-7:00 and it's usually my priority to walk Brandy, my seven-year old beagle dog. I make a point of setting out my work programme and the things I need to work on before I go to bed the previous evening so after breakfast (or rather while I have breakfast) I hit the books. Planning and in general my pedagogic deliberation is my first priority, no matter what else I have planned for the day. If I have Input projects or meetings with clients I either plan ahead or wake up earlier. My days are full of phone calls, skype meetings and also a lot of writing but I like that a lot. After lunch time (which in Greece is round two) I start my teaching day which usually finishes round 10:30 in the evening. Then I either see friends or go home and plan my next day. Fortunately, I can concentrate everywhere so I feel blessed that I can work equally well in my office, in my classroom, in the living room or at an airport.

Vicky: You are also Chair of TESOL Macedonia-Thrace and this year you organized your first TESOL Conference. Can you tell us what you consider the biggest challenge of organizing big conferences?

Maria: This is an easy answer. Money. As I told the TESOL MTH members in the AGM this year, the resources of TESOL are changing. Publishers and exam boards are still eager to help but they cannot help in the way they used to some years ago. Nowadays, TAs have to prove their worth both to the members and to the stakeholders and the money that comes from membership is equally important as the money that comes from sponsorship. A second challenge, which is still closely related to the first one mentioned, is the fact that TESOL MTH does not employ any staff or have a physical office. This means that we have to do everything ourselves and sometimes this is difficult as we are all volunteers with jobs, families.

Vicky: You are also the owner of INPUT on Education, a company that provides consultancy to language schools. How can small language schools take advantage of consultancy in such tight economic times?

Maria: Small schools were the very reason I was inspired to start Input on Education. While private schools and large Chains of Foreign Language Schools can afford to employ their own specialists, smaller schools cannot do so. The upshot of that is that owners end up playing all the roles and this means that sometimes they either get too isolated, and therefore easily scared and demotivated, or they cannot deal with certain aspects of their extremely complicated role. That's why we have many FLS which do great work on an academic level but they have nobody to promote this and publicise it to the target audience. We also have the other example, of the school that produces a great flyer but has little substance below to support this. In this case, clients come and register but leave as soon as they realise that there is little connection between the flyer and the reality of the school. This is where IoE (*Input on Education*) comes in, with affordable, value-for-money, customized services we study the school and its people and suggest practical solutions.

Vicky: Recently, you gave a seminar on 'Lesson Planning for Creative Teaching' at City College in Thessaloniki. Can you tell us more about it? Also, allow me a second question, why does creativity in the classroom matter now more than ever?

Maria: First of all, I would like to thank Dr. Paschalia Patsala for suggesting me as a speaker and her colleagues for their help, support and warm welcome. I was very happy when this particular topic was chosen as I feel strongly about it. Lesson planning is one of my favourite topics and I believe that it has been both misrepresented and misunderstood. As a student and an RSA candidate, I remember pouring over one single lesson plan for hours and thinking what that would be like if I had to plan for 3 or 4 lessons. This is the most common problem. The process of lesson planning and the pedagogical deliberation that goes with it, is first presented to students of TEFL as very

meticulous and time-consuming one. I don't mean that it is not or that experience does not make things a bit easier. What I have seen is that most novice teachers go from the ultra-detailed lesson plan to nothing at all. Some teachers go as far as to suggest that lesson planning is a luxury. For me, it is far from a luxury. It is a necessity and an absolutely essential part of teaching which is based on the teacher's knowledge of the material, the students and their needs and the aims that need to be accomplished. The message I tried to put forward at City College was that it makes little difference if the lesson plan is written or not, if it's typed or handwritten, if it's on a post-it or a special notebook what makes the greatest difference is the teacher taking some quiet time to sit down and see how to arrange the steps and stages of the choreography so that the lesson can have fluidity, cohesion and the learners are engaged. Getting learners to understand the connection between what they do in class and its usage when using the language is part of this and it cannot be accomplished when teachers go mechanically from exercise to exercise without doing much to put their own finishing touch to the material. Having said that, I don't want to think of teachers as over-dependent on their lesson plans to the point that they cannot replace a colleague or make the necessary changes if the existing lesson plan does not seem to work.

Vicky: What are your plans for the future?

Maria: I plan to go on teaching because I feel that no matter what other things we do in our field (training, blogging, material writing, consulting) once we stop teaching we gradually become irrelevant. I am also planning to work a bit more on webinars for Input on Education so as to make sessions more affordable for teachers everywhere and finally, it is part of my plans to write a short volume on consulting based on my articles in ELT NEWS.

Vicky: I wish you all the best and a lot of success in all your ventures. You deserve it!

Vicky Papageorgiou is an ESL/EAP instructor with approximately 20 years of

experience, mainly with adult learners. She holds an MA in Education (Open University of Cyprus) and an MA in Art (Goldsmiths College, UK) and she has also been awarded a PGCE in Technology Enhanced Learning with distinction from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David . She studied in Greece, Italy and the UK but also participated in an international project for the McLuhan program in Culture and Technology for the University of Toronto, Canada. Her fields of interest are Technology enhanced learning, Art in ESL, critical thinking, Inquiry Based learning and teaching adults. She is currently based in Thessaloniki (Greece) working as an ESL/EAP instructor at Metropolitan College.

The Ethics of Observing Teachers

**Maria-Araxi Sachpazian, Owner & Managing Director Input on Education,
Chairperson TESOL Macedonia-Thrace, Northern Greece**

Keywords: Observer pollution, performance anxiety, observation, quality controls

Introduction

It is fair to say that a lot of ink has been spilt on the study of the practices which are related with observing teachers. Observations have been recognized as an invaluable tool in teacher education and in in-service training, but still teachers feel that this particular tool does little to help them hone their skills. This article aims to explore the reasons why teachers are led to feel so and it also sets out to examine the part the observer plays in the success of observer. Finally, we will look at observation with a growth mentality in mind so as to examine what is needed on the part of the observers to help teachers develop through the use of observations.

Pre-conceived ideas observers may be carrying

The notion observers have regarding their role in observations and their status in comparison to that of the teachers, significantly affects the way observations are carried out. Let us first examine who the observers are. Usually, in an in-service training setting (which is more the focus of this article) the observer is going to be the Director of studies who, in some cases (for example in the Greek LTO context), is also the owner of the school. This means that, in a context where peer observation is infrequent or even non-existent, formal observations are carried out by hierarchically senior members of staff for appraisal reasons. Seeing observations like this we can surely understand why they do not serve as a training tool, but rather as a source of stress and performance anxiety for the teacher. Added to that, if the observers are not practicing teachers at the moment, they might be overly

critical of the teacher or they may discount the fact that what is to be observed is the teacher's endeavour to outline a meaningful, engaging, cohesive lesson as well as their ability to actualize this lesson by constantly adjusting the lesson plans to the needs of the learners. Therefore, a lesson for which the teacher has worked very hard may not work for reasons other than the teacher's skills, for example the learners and their ability to work when observed or the teacher's estimation (or in some cases overestimation) of the learners' abilities. Finally, in case observers are still practicing teachers in the same school or chain of schools, they need to be mindful of the possibility of them projecting their own weaknesses on the lesson they are observing.

Apart from feelings of superiority and inferiority which might come into play, another equally important feature is the process through which they are carried out. We will be examining the following features of the process:

Frequency

Support given to teachers

Affective filter factors

Frequency

In some LTOs, the strive for quality (or the need to "fabricate" competitive advantages), leads the academic management of the school to exaggerations and to the over-exposure of teachers to observations which leads the latter to feel that they are constantly under the microscope, a feeling akin to what learners experience when the emphasis of their course is on testing and not on teaching & learning. This can also lead teachers to have a well-rehearsed lesson (or set of activities) with which they feel comfortable and which they use when they are being observed. I have called this way of teaching "teaching observation-style" and the greatest drawback it features is the fact that the teacher cares more about the optics, what the lesson looks like, rather than what it feels and what learners gain out of it. In general, too

frequent observations disrupt the flow of the lessons and also affect the rapport between teachers and learners. It is my belief that both teachers and learners stand to learn a lot more if they are given the chance to grow rather through too frequent testing.

The lack of observations or very infrequent observations also has many drawbacks. First of all, teachers who are never observed fall out of touch with their own skills and although there are many other ways to examine and explore the complicated topic of teacher of teacher efficacy, the lack of observations may deprive the teachers from a chance to notice their over-reliance on technology (or lack of) or their overuse of L1 in class. Therefore, the lack of observations is not beneficial either.

Support

One of the things an observer will first address is the support teacher has given to the learners and the ability of the teacher to get the learners to see beyond the occasional mistake to the learning and the growth that takes place. It seems rather hypocritical that observers themselves fail to do so for the teachers they observe.

First of all, we need to discuss how ethical it is for any member of staff, regardless of rank, to simply open any classroom door and walk in unannounced, without any kind of warning. Hard-core supporters of observation claim that this is the only way to truly test the teachers' level of preparation, but I beg to differ. Teachers who have been hired via proper channels, through trustworthy procedures and are considered professionals should be treated as professionals and as adults, not as children. Another aspect that makes unannounced observations unethical in my eyes, is the fact that the teacher is not given the chance to go through a "pre-observation" stage. This stage plays a crucial role in the development of rapport between the teacher and the observer. Furthermore, this is the stage during which the

observer is a supportive advisor whose experienced eye goes through the lesson plan, spots potential issues which are then brought to the teacher's attention. The way the teacher deals with these comments and how s/he defends or amends the lesson plan is the real gain and constitutes the teacher's growth. Finally, unannounced observations have one more weakness. They deprive the teachers from the right to know the criteria based on which their lesson will be judged. To take this a step further, for experienced teachers, it would be interesting to see the observer and the teacher devising a joint set of criteria which mark the points the teacher wants observed. Seen under this light, observations do not seem threatening since the teachers have ownership of and control over the process.

Affective filter factors

Krashen (1982) states affective filter factors as the most important that can block learning. Namely, when learners are stressed, either because they are experiencing performance anxiety or because the atmosphere of learning is not particularly encouraging, owing to the fact that parents and teachers are overly critical. In such cases learning is blocked and learners revert to their comfort zone, exhibiting a narrower range of skills than the one they truly possess. As teachers, we are familiar with the psychological aspect of learning but it is very often that we forget how important affect is in the learning of the teacher.

Applying what was described before in teacher education, we can understand that if teachers are not supported during the process of observation, or when they feel that observation is carried out as punishment, because parents have made complaints or because management is trying to find reasons to fire the teacher, there are greater chances of teachers failing rather than succeeding. Furthermore, observations carried out for these reasons defy the very reason why observations are needed. The essence of this endeavour is to help teachers, experienced or novice, to grow stronger and develop greater confidence in their skills so that they can reach a point at which they can be

fair judges of their own lessons.

The conduct of observers during the observation

The most crucial stage in any observation is the “while” when the observer has to actually be in the class while trying to “self-erase” so as not to affect the normal running of the lesson. Classes have their own dynamics and socio-dynamics which means that the addition of a pair of eyes and a whole person whose agenda is a bit of a mystery for the students affects the way the class works. Therefore, observers have to comply with a strict set of rules in order to carry out successful observations which yield reliable findings.

The first and most important rule is that the observer must make as little noise and try to get as little attention from the students as possible. The observer should sit somewhere close to the exit so as to come and go without disturbing the class. Secondly, there should be no interaction between the class and the observer. Observers should not be asked to take part in games played in class as they should be focused on their task which is note-taking. The latter needs to be done quietly, without any visible signs of discomfort or criticism on the part of the observer. In those cases, when due to rules of the school two members of staff need to observe one teacher, communication between these two people should be strictly avoided as the slightest comment might undermine the teacher’s confidence.

It is safe to assume that observer pollution will occur even in the best cases when observers are careful not to interfere with the flow of the lesson. It would be safe to say that even the extra positive stress or positive performance anxiety the teacher experiences is also due to observer pollution, which shows that there are cases in which observer pollution can work to the benefit of the teacher.

Lack of closure

Even in LTOs where observations are carried out in the best way possible, teachers may not receive timely feedback or when they do, it might be just a hasty meeting. This is one more reason why observations may fail. At the same time, it is deeply unethical as it shows that managers and DoS expect teachers to invest their time preparing for observations while the managers themselves do not take the time to give balanced feedback.

If the *pre-stage* incorporates the element of support and puts forward the idea that the observer believes in the teacher and if the *while - stage* is the time for the observer to see the actual skills of the teacher, the *post-stage* is the one that relies more on the growth mindset of the LTO and the people involved in observations. This is because at this stage teachers can engage in self-reflection and self-assessment. Based on the observer's comments, an action plan can be drafted and teachers can set their own short and long term goals. Therefore, missing out on the post-stage or reducing to an email and a short (or even long) written comment seems to be wasteful and also disrespectful to the teachers and the effort they make.

Concluding thoughts

The artificial nature of observations is hard to be missed by any person involved in the science and practice of teaching and learning. Despite that, observations are still one of the most reliable and effective tools available to use which approach teaching as close as possible. The tool itself is not flawed as long as those using it are aware of its shortcomings and weaknesses. What causes most problems is the training (if any) of the observers, their pre-conceived notions regarding their status in relation to that of the teachers they observe and the little care that has been given to causing as little observer pollution as possible. Following some ethical principles and applying some of the often-quoted practices we apply for our learners' learning, can

lead to observations helping teachers honing their skills. These practices also set a precedent and create an atmosphere of growth that encourages teachers and makes it worthwhile for them to invest time and effort in observed lessons.

Bibliography

White, R. Hockley A. Der Horst Jensen J. and Laughler M. (2008). *From Teacher to Manager: Managing Language Teaching Organizations*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

Randall, M. and Thornton B. (2001). *Advising and Supporting Teachers*, Cambridge Teacher Training and Development. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press. .

Krashen, D. (1982), *Principles and Practices of Second Language Acquisition*. UK : Prentice-Hall, International English Language Teaching.

Sachpazian, Maria-Araxi. (2013). "Assessing the Unassessed or the Unassessible: Issues of School Evaluation". In Pattison, (ed), IATEFL 2013 Liverpool Conference Selections (pp. 191-192). UK.

Sachpazian, Maria-Araxi. (2016). "Three ways to use observations effectively"ELT News. Retrieved from http://www.eltnews.gr/teaching_resources/1401-3-ways-to-use-observations-effectively

Maria-Araxi Sachpazian [BA education & RSA dip/tefl (hons)] is the owner of *Input on Education* (www.input.edu.gr), an e-consultancy firm that provides academic, business support and IT solutions to Foreign Language Schools. Maria has wide experience as a teacher, teacher trainer, educational management specialist and materials' developer. She is also the current chairperson of TESOL Macedonia-Thrace, Northern Greece.

The Duke's portrait
A novel by Ken Wilson

Chapter 6

The most awfully disreputable women

A week after the Goodgames discovered that they were destitute, Horace walked to Ernest's house in Pelham Crescent to ask his brother for a loan. It had been a cold November day, and there was a touch of frost on the ground now that night was approaching. Horace walked up the grey and white mosaic path to the house. The path was lined on either side with a row of large pots, containing all manner of stiffly manicured exotic plants. Not a grain of soil was out of place. Ernest liked things to be just so.

There were lights on in the house, but no reply when Horace knocked at the door, so he walked round the side and through a metal gate into the back garden. He had only been to the house two or three times before, and had never the long manicured back garden before. He heard the noise of laughter coming from somewhere and looked down the garden to see where the sound was coming from.

There were two small buildings in the garden. One of them was the shed that his son Charles had inhabited when he was a student and the other was a white chalet partly hidden by trees at the far end of the lawn. The sound was coming from that direction.

He walked down the garden and stopped outside the chalet to listen. There was a window facing the garden but hardly any light emanating from the structure, so Horace couldn't see what was going on. There was definitely more than one person inside and whatever they were doing was causing a lot of merriment. When Horace stepped onto the porch, the board beneath his foot creaked and the laughter stopped. He heard furtive whispers from inside. He knocked loudly on the door and opened it.

It took his eyes a moment to adjust to the dim light, which was provided by a single candle on a white wicker table with a glass top. The room was full of sweet-smelling smoke, and there were several wine bottles and glasses on the table and also a large ashtray, containing the remains of

narrow hand-rolled cigarettes.

Next to the table was a sofa made of the same material as the table, and on the sofa were three men, one of whom was Ernest. The trio had frozen in a most unusual tableau and were all staring at the new arrival. One of the men broke the silence.

"Ernesto! I didn't realise you'd invited another friend."

"I didn't," said Ernest. "This is my blasted brother."

As soon as Horace had set off in the direction of South Kensington, Leonora took ten shillings from the pile of coins on his dresser, walked out of the flat and hailed a taxi in Earl's Court Road. Diana was staying at her apartment in Swiss Cottage in order to attend some social functions in the capital. When Leonora telephoned her and said she needed to talk about something, Diana invited her round for dinner.

On the way, Leonora reflected on her friend's life: Diana, the honourable Lady Grimshaw, not yet forty years old, already the widow of an immensely rich Viscount, who died aged fifty, leaving her to lead the life of a very merry and very wealthy widow. In the spring and summer, she had more invitations to dinners, grand parties and weekends in stately homes than she could handle, and on long winter nights, she had a stable of young men in London and Dorset to help her pass the time. Somehow she managed to keep all her adventures a secret from the press. There was never a whiff of scandal about her and she was welcome in the finest houses in England.

Some women had all the luck.

Over dinner, Leonora described her new situation.

"Good Lord," said Diana. "You do have the most abominable luck with men. Pity you didn't stick it out with Teddy. You could have been living the life of Riley now that he's gone and abdicated."

"I don't think I could have dealt with that," said Leonora. "He does like to go off with the most awfully disreputable women."

"Yes, like you and me," said Diana. They both laughed, but inside Leonora wanted to cry. After dinner, they sat in front of the large beige marble fireplace in the drawing room and drank copious amounts of sherry. Leonora looked at the painting over the fireplace.

"Is that one of Horace's watercolours?" she asked.

"Oh no, it's something I bought from Horace's son. I forget his name."

"Charles," said Leonora.

"Yes, that's right. He sold it to me. It's a Horace Tuck."

"Never heard of him. Is he fashionable?"

"Apparently so. A chap I know says that Tucks are changing hands for hundreds of pounds at the moment, so I'm thinking of cashing in. I've got someone from Christie's coming to value it next week."

"I didn't realise you knew my stepson," said Leonora. "How did you meet him?"

"Polly introduced us," said Diana.

"Ah, I see."

"How is Polly, by the way?"

"I have no idea," said Leonora. "That child is a law unto herself, and takes after her father far too much for my liking. I haven't seen her since the wedding, and I haven't a clue where she is or what she's doing." She continued to stare at the painting. She went closer to see if it was signed. "Are you sure it isn't one of Horace's?"

"I hope it isn't," said Diana. "With the greatest respect, I won't be able to sell a Horace Goodgame for hundreds of pounds."

Beneath the painting, leaning against the carriage clock on the mantelpiece, there was a gold-embossed card. It was an invitation to a shooting party the following weekend.

"Who's the Duke of Burfaughtonleigh?" asked Leonora, slurring her words a little.

"Apparently, it's pronounced Burley," said Diana. For some reason, they both found this immensely amusing and rocked with laughter.

"Who is he?"

"He's an old buffer, but a very persistent one," said Diana. "Ever since Eustace died, he's been pestering me to join one of his weekend parties at his pile in Gloucestershire."

"What's he like?" asked Leonora.

"No idea," said Diana. "Never met him. He's just another old rogue who thinks that hitching up with a widowed Viscountess will help him clamber up the social register. I get invitations like that all the time."

"Are you going?"

No. I have ... other plans for next weekend," Diana said, a smile spreading across her face.

"One of your Lyme boys?"

"Two, actually."

Leonora thought about inviting herself down for the weekend, but then had another thought.

"This Burfaughtonleigh chap, is he a bachelor?"

"Bachelor or divorced, I imagine. He must be if he goes round inviting to weekend parties and

Ken Wilson

The Duke's portrait

doesn't put a wife's name on the invitation," said Diana. "You can find out by having a look in Debrett's."

When Diana left the room to answer the telephone, Leonora picked up the invitation and slipped it into her handbag.

Ken Wilson is an ELT author and trainer and has worked in English language teaching for more than forty years. He's written more than thirty ELT titles, including a dozen series of course books, and also writes radio and TV programmes, sketches, songs and drama resources.

His first ELT publication was an album of songs called *Mister Monday*, released when he was 23, which at the time made him the youngest published ELT author ever. Since then, he has written and recorded more than two hundred songs for English learners.

Until 2002, Ken was artistic director of the English Teaching Theatre, a company which performed stage-shows for learners of English all over the world. The ETT made more than 250 tours to 55 countries on five continents.

ELT as an Industry

This article was originally published in *IATEFL 2016 Birmingham Conference Selections* (ed. Tania Pattison) Faversham, Kent: IATEFL pp. 75 – 78. Later, it was posted on the [Adaptive Learning in ELT](#) blog.

Authors of the article are **Philip Kerr & Andrew Wickham**

Keywords: assessment, blended learning, testing, Common European Framework, coursebooks

ELT publishing, international language testing and private language schools are all industries: products are produced, bought and sold for profit. English language teaching (ELT) is not. It is an umbrella term that is used to describe a range of activities, some of which are industries, and some of which (such as English teaching in high schools around the world) might better be described as public services. ELT, like education more generally, is, nevertheless, often referred to as an 'industry'.

Education in a neoliberal world

The framing of ELT as an industry is both a reflection of how we understand the term and a force that shapes our understanding. Associated with the idea of 'industry' is a constellation of other ideas and words (such as efficacy, productivity, privatization, marketization, consumerization, digitalization and globalization) which become a part of ELT once it is framed as an industry. Repeated often enough, 'ELT as an industry' can become a metaphor that we think and live by. Those activities that fall under the ELT umbrella, but which are not industries, become associated with the desirability of industrial practices through such discourse.

The shift from education, seen as a public service, to educational managerialism (where education is seen in industrial terms with a focus on efficiency, free market competition, privatization and a view of students as customers) can be traced to the 1980s and 1990s (Gewirtz, 2001). In 1999, under pressure from developed economies, the General Agreement on

Trade in Services (GATS) transformed education into a commodity that could be traded like any other in the marketplace (Robertson, 2006). The global industrialisation and privatization of education continues to be promoted by transnational organisations (such as the World Bank and the OECD), well-funded free-market think-tanks (such as the Cato Institute), philanthro-capitalist foundations (such as the Gates Foundation) and educational businesses (such as Pearson) (Ball, 2012).

Efficacy and learning outcomes

Managerialist approaches to education require educational products and services to be measured and compared. In ELT, the most visible manifestation of this requirement is the current ubiquity of learning outcomes. Contemporary coursebooks are full of ‘can-do’ statements, although these are not necessarily of any value to anyone. Examples from one unit of one best-selling course include ‘Now I can understand advice people give about hotels’ and ‘Now I can read an article about unique hotels’ (McCarthy et al. 2014: 74). However, in a world where accountability is paramount, they are deemed indispensable. The problem from a pedagogical perspective is that teaching input does not necessarily equate with learning uptake. Indeed, there is no reason why it should.

Drawing on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for inspiration, new performance scales have emerged in recent years. These include the Cambridge English Scale and the Pearson Global Scale of English. Moving away from the broad six categories of the CEFR, such scales permit finer-grained measurement and we now see individual vocabulary and grammar items tagged to levels. Whilst such initiatives undoubtedly support measurements of efficacy, the problem from a pedagogical perspective is that they assume that language learning is linear and incremental, as opposed to complex and jagged.

Given the importance accorded to the measurement of language learning (or what might pass for language learning), it is unsurprising that attention is shifting towards the measurement of what is probably the most important factor impacting on learning: the teaching. Teacher competency scales have been developed by Cambridge Assessment, the British Council and EAQUALS (Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality Language Services), among others.

The backwash effects of the deployment of such scales are yet to be fully experienced, but the likely increase in the perception of both language learning and teacher learning as the synthesis

of granularised 'bits of knowledge' is cause for concern.

Digital technology

Digital technology may offer advantages to both English language teachers and learners, but its rapid growth in language learning is the result, primarily but not exclusively, of the way it has been promoted by those who stand to gain financially. In education, generally, and in English language teaching, more specifically, advocacy of the privatization of education is always accompanied by advocacy of digitalization. The global market for digital English language learning products was reported to be \$2.8 billion in 2015 and is predicted to reach \$3.8 billion by 2020 (Ambient Insight, 2016).

In tandem with the increased interest in measuring learning outcomes, there is fierce competition in the market for high-stakes examinations, and these are increasingly digitally delivered and marked. In the face of this competition and in a climate of digital disruption, companies like Pearson and Cambridge English are developing business models of vertical integration where they can provide and sell everything from placement testing, to courseware (either print or delivered through an LMS), teaching, assessment and teacher training. Huge investments are being made in pursuit of such models. Pearson, for example, recently bought GlobalEnglish, Wall Street English, and set up a partnership with Busuu, thus covering all aspects of language learning from resources provision and publishing to off- and online training delivery.

As regards assessment, the most recent adult coursebook from Cambridge University Press (in collaboration with Cambridge English Language Assessment), 'Empower' (Doff, et. Al, 2015) sells itself on a combination of course material with integrated, validated assessment.

Besides its potential for scalability (and therefore greater profit margins), the appeal (to some) of platform-delivered English language instruction is that it facilitates assessment that is much finer-grained and actionable in real time. Digitization and testing go hand in hand.

Few English language teachers have been unaffected by the move towards digital. In the state sectors, large-scale digitization initiatives (such as the distribution of laptops for educational purposes, the installation of interactive whiteboards, the move towards blended models of instruction or the move away from printed coursebooks) are becoming commonplace. In the private sectors, online (or partially online) language schools are taking market share from the

traditional bricks-and-mortar institutions.

These changes have entailed modifications to the skill-sets that teachers need to have. Two announcements at this conference reflect this shift. First of all, Cambridge English launched their 'Digital Framework for Teachers', a matrix of six broad competency areas organised into four levels of proficiency. Secondly, Aqueduto, the Association for Quality Education and Training Online, was launched, setting itself up as an accreditation body for online or blended teacher training courses.

Teachers' pay and conditions

In the United States, and likely soon in the UK, the move towards privatization is accompanied by an overt attack on teachers' unions, rights, pay and conditions (Selwyn, 2014). As English language teaching in both public and private sectors is commodified and marketized it is no surprise to find that the drive to bring down costs has a negative impact on teachers worldwide. Gwynt (2015), for example, catalogues cuts in funding, large-scale redundancies, a narrowing of the curriculum, intensified workloads (including the need to comply with 'quality control measures'), the deskilling of teachers, dilapidated buildings, minimal resources and low morale in an ESOL department in one British further education college. In France, a large-scale study by Wickham, Cagnol, Wright and Oldmeadow (Linguaid, 2015; Wright, 2016) found that EFL teachers in the very competitive private sector typically had multiple employers, limited or no job security, limited sick pay and holiday pay, very little training and low hourly rates that were deteriorating. One of the principle drivers of the pressure on salaries is the rise of online training delivery through Skype and other online platforms, using offshore teachers in low-cost countries such as the Philippines. This type of training represents 15% in value and up to 25% in volume of all language training in the French corporate sector and is developing fast in emerging countries. These examples are illustrative of a broad global trend.

Implications

Given the current climate, teachers will benefit from closer networking with fellow professionals in order, not least, to be aware of the rapidly changing landscape. It is likely that they will need to develop and extend their skill sets (especially their online skills and visibility and their specialised knowledge), to differentiate themselves from competitors and to be able to demonstrate that they are in tune with current demands. More generally, it is important to recognise that current trends

have yet to run their full course. Conditions for teachers are likely to deteriorate further before they improve. More than ever before, teachers who want to have any kind of influence on the way that marketization and industrialization are shaping their working lives will need to do so collectively.

References

Ambient Insight. 2016. The 2015-2020 Worldwide Digital English Language Learning Market. http://www.ambientinsight.com/Resources/Documents/AmbientInsight_2015-2020_Worldwide_Digital_English_Market_Sample.pdf

Ball, S. J. 2012. Global Education Inc. Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge

Doff, A., Thaine, C., Puchta, H., Stranks, J. and P. Lewis-Jones 2015. Empower. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Gewirtz, S. 2001. The Managerial School: Post-welfarism and Social Justice in Education. Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge

Gwynt, W. 2015. 'The effects of policy changes on ESOL'. Language Issues 26 / 2: 58 – 60

McCarthy, M., McCarten, J. and H. Sandiford 2014. Touchstone 2 Student's Book Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Linguid, 2015. Le Marché de la Formation Langues à l'Heure de la Mondialisation. Guildford: Linguid

Robertson, S. L. 2006. 'Globalisation, GATS and trading in education services.' published by the Centre for Globalisation, Education and Societies, University of Bristol, Bristol BS8 1JA, UK at <http://www.bris.ac.uk/education/people/academicStaff/edslr/publications/04slr>

Selwyn, N. 2014. Distrusting Educational Technology. New York: Routledge

Wright, R. 2016. 'My teacher is rich ... or not!' English Teaching Professional 103: 54 – 56

Three Models of Becoming a Professional

Zorica Trbulin, Military Academy, Belgrade, Serbia

Keywords: teacher development, expertise, three models, practice, theory, self -reflection, raising awareness, change, interweaving

Introduction

All of us strive to gain expertise in our field of work and become professionals. If we narrow down this idea to acquiring expertise in teaching, we get a very broad picture made out of many different activities. Most of these activities merge into a broad term of teacher development. As we walk along the teacher development path, we gradually enter the magic world of our higher teacher self. But in order to feel all the bliss which is hidden there, we must commit. This means that we must (among other endeavors) try hard to excel in our profession.

Theory tells us that there are three models which help us gain our teacher's expertise. (Wallace, 1991).

The craft model

The craft model focuses on class observation and taking advice from more experienced teachers. This model has proved to be beneficial in its own way and is still much used in many educational institutions. However, evaluating the efficacy of the craft model may raise several issues.

First of all, since craft model means learning through imitating, it often causes frustration among the young teachers who start feeling uncomfortable in their own skin. This is why novices should use their imagination and creativity, gradually creating their own teaching style. But developing our characteristic way of teaching must not exclude our readiness to change. Wright (1996) explains: "When we become used to a particular way of teaching, one which we are comfortable with, which suits our nature and the nature of the people we teach, we hang onto it tenaciously. It is our lifeline, our professional persona which enables us to face a group of individuals every day and attempt to help them learn. To suggest that we change is in itself a threat. But we can and do change." (1996:8).

Another drawback of the craft model or "simple model" as Wallace calls it (Wallace, 1991:6) may be that some experienced teachers, due to lack of motivation for self-development, stick to the outdated teaching methods. This can lower young teachers' work enthusiasm and

make them stagnate in their growth.

Finally, the craft model overlooks much needed theoretical approaches to foreign language learning and teaching. There is, however, another model, which focuses on both theory and practice.

The applied science model

The applied science model is “the traditional and probably still the most prevalent model underlying most training or education programmes for the professions, whether they be medicine, architecture, teaching or whatever.” (Wallace, 1991:8). This model implies that professional competence is gained when teachers acquire scientific knowledge and then apply it to practice.

Most of us have experienced one aspect of the applied science model through attending different seminars, courses or conferences. Teachers usually feel at ease with this model while creating diverse classroom activities or being explained how to use teaching materials. However, when it comes to theoretical issues, we get a different picture. My so far teacher trainer experience has shown that whenever I tried to insert more theory in my course sessions, the level of teacher’s response was decreasing. In their feedback forms, the majority of teachers stated that they enjoyed doing practical activities, while they found theoretical content unnecessary. However, the applied science model will only prove to be beneficial if the teachers manage to bridge up the gap between theory and practice. Many authors wrote about this theory-practice gap. Ramani (1987:3), for example, writes:” Teaching practice sessions are often marked by a heavy reliance on procedures, and participants are trained to use particular techniques without being required to understand the theoretical assumptions underlying them. As a result, teachers often see themselves as “practitioners” who have little or nothing to do with theory.”

Understanding theoretical aspects helps us to raise our awareness level. Consequently, we start reflecting on our teaching practice. This leads us to another model which focuses on teachers who improve by reflecting on their past experiences.

The reflective model

Wallace (1991:17) describes the reflective model as following: “I have proposed the

“reflective” model as a compromise solution which gives due weight both to experience and to the scientific basis of the profession. I have suggested, therefore, that the teacher education has two main dimensions:

- received knowledge which includes, among other things, the necessary and valuable element of scientific research, and
- “experimental knowledge” which relates to the professional’s ongoing experience. “

According to Wallace (1991), the reflective model means that teachers “move” through a reflective cycle. The first step is putting our previously acquired experimental and received knowledge into practice. Then we reflect on the experience and decide whether the applied activity was successful or not. If we are not satisfied with the result, we try to find the best way to make corrections.

Reflecting on our experience is beneficial because it motivates us to examine our beliefs and assumptions about teaching. By examining them, we find the way to change them gradually. But we cannot do this alone. Farrel (2004:59) explains why sharing our experience with others is an important element of change:” Through storytelling, personal beliefs become explicit, and in being made explicit they can be changed, where change is warranted and a new or different story results, we behold differently.”

Although the term reflective teaching has been much used nowadays, we cannot say that there is a unique approach to its meaning. Some teachers consider it as just “thinking” (they reflect on their classes) and some understand it as using different data (questionnaires, class feedback forms, or evaluation sheets) in order to reflect.

Regardless of the different approaches to what reflective teaching may be, there are certain steps that all reflective teachers take: they think about their classes and, if there is a need for change, they plan and act differently.

Conclusion

The three different models of teacher development may make us wonder whether one of them can be considered as the best or “magic” model. Although the reflective model is thought to be most sophisticated, my teacher/trainer experience has led me to a conclusion that none of the three models alone can cover a wide span of teacher’s development needs.

For example, junior teachers in my department frequently observe my classes. Being a senior teacher, I often observe theirs. Then I try to give them some constructive feedback (craft model). Having received their feedback, some novice teachers reflect on the spotted problems and turn up with their own solutions. Then they try to apply their solutions to practical situations, telling me afterwards about the experience (reflective model). Besides, teachers working in my institution (the Military Academy in Belgrade) regularly attend teacher training courses (applied science model).

Finally, we may conclude that the three models of development unite by interweaving and that we grow professionally experiencing them all. However, it is up to teachers (and trainers) to consider the best aspects of each model.

References:

Farrel, T. (2004) "The Tree of Life: From Teacher to Teacher – Educator" in Hayes, D. (ed.) *Trainer development: Principles and practice from Language Teacher Training*, Melbourne: Language Australia Ltd.

Ramani, E. (1987) 'Theorizing from the classroom'. *ELT Journal*, Vol. 41/1: 3-11.

Wallace, M. (1991) *Teacher Training: A Reflective Approach*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

Wright, T. (1996) "Changing Roles, Changing Teachers: The Development puzzle". *Plenary paper delivered at first MICELT Conference, Penang, Malaysia*

Ms. Zorica Trbulin has been teaching ESP at the Military Academy in Belgrade. Having completed a one year course organized by Peacekeeping English Project, Ms. Trbulin is now an ARKA teacher trainer. Through PEP, PELT Project (Serbian Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence Programme for English Language Training) and British Council she attended a variety of courses in the country and abroad.

The Fantastic Speaking Fluency and Where to Find It

Yuliya Speroff, Freelance English Teacher, and Teacher Trainer, Russia

Helping learners understand and develop speaking fluency

Keywords: speaking fluency, definition of fluency, communication strategies, Paul Nation, 4/3/2

Whether you are teaching English as a second or foreign language, in a private language institution or a state university, a large number of students will say that the reason they want to learn English is ‘to be able to speak English fluently’. But what exactly does that mean? And how do we help our students get there? On the face of it, it seems simple enough: fluency means speaking English ‘easily’ and to become fluent you have to practice speaking. However, fluency is a complex phenomenon and developing fluency requires more than just practicing speaking. This article will focus on speaking fluency, which is arguably one of the most important aspects of language proficiency – after all, we ask people if they *speak* English (or any other language) rather than read, listen or write in it.

Various definitions of fluency emphasize its different aspects, such as speed of delivery, discourse features, and automaticity of production. Richards & Schmidt, for instance, define fluency as “the features which give speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including native-like use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions” (2002:204). Additionally, Nation & Newton (2009) define fluency as an observable skill demonstrated when learners take part in a meaning-focused activity with speed and ease and without a great deal of effort and attention.

In order to understand how fluency can be improved, first some factors that might hinder fluency will be examined, and then ways of alleviating those factors and thus helping learners develop speaking fluency will be discussed. One such factor is insufficient linguist knowledge. When learners have to search for words/phrases as they speak, they invariably slow down, hesitate and pause. This hinders fluency and makes it difficult for learners to get their message across. Additionally, learners can become stuck trying to remember a word they need, constantly referring to their dictionaries or the help of their classmates or the teacher. One solution to this is to teach your learners some communication strategies such as circumlocution (or paraphrasing) that will help them cope. Strategies like circumlocution can help learners get the message across even if they do not have sufficient vocabulary (Dorneyi & Thurrell, 1991). For instance, you could introduce learners to expressions to use when they cannot remember a name of a person or a thing, e.g. relative clauses (*it*

is a thing which), talking about functions (*you use it to + infinitive*) and then allow learners to practice using these phrases by playing word-guessing games like Taboo. In Taboo, learners explain words or phrases for their partner(s) to guess but cannot mention certain words, e.g. ~~blog write Internet~~. By restricting their use of words, learners are forced to find alternative ways of defining something, thus training them in circumlocution. Higher-level learners can be challenged by introducing a time limit or 'banning' even more words that can be used for definitions. In my experience, most learners find word-guessing games enjoyable, and they work especially well with younger learners. Another such game is 'hot seat'. It involves a student sitting with their back to the board, the teacher writing a word or phrase on the board and all the other students in the group trying to get the student in the chair to guess the word/phrase by defining it without saying the word itself.

Another solution that would help the learners to avoid frequent pauses in which they search for words (and things to say) is adding a brief preparation stage before a speaking activity. During this time, you should encourage students to write down useful words, opinions, and questions for their partner in preparation for a conversation. By allowing learners to take notes, they can marshal ideas and lexis for their conversation which helps them avoid getting stuck in search of things to say or how to say them. In addition, taking time to prepare before they speak helps learners feel more confident about completing the task. One thing to avoid here is students writing down their entire speech and then simply reading from their notes – not much fluency practice there! In order to not let this happen, I sometimes furnish my students with Post-It notes – the small size of the notes means the students can only make the most essential of notes.

Finally, Goh (cited in Bohlke, 2014) suggests providing language support for fluency activities as a way to ease the cognitive burden on learners. This can include pre-teaching or reviewing key vocabulary and lexical chunks before speaking activities. For example, a short brainstorming session before a speaking activity can bring up useful language for the task, e.g. asking learners to suggest ways to agree/disagree before a debate, writing them on the board and adding phrases yourself if you feel they need more.

Another factor that may negatively affect fluency is affective, i.e. emotional factors (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). They include a number of non-linguistic issues that may have a negative impact on developing speaking fluency because they inhibit learners' willingness to engage in speaking activities. One such factor is anxiety related to speaking English in front of other people, which can be caused, for instance, by a non-cooperative atmosphere in the classroom. Anxiety can also be caused

by fear of making mistakes. In Russia, learners are often put off speaking for this very reason (“I won’t be speaking English until I can speak it perfectly!”).

What can we do to alleviate students’ anxiety about speaking which stops them from working on their fluency? For one, we can conduct speaking activities and tasks using familiar topics. Nation & Newton (2009:9), suggest that in order to develop fluency, learners need to “make the best use of what they already know”. This applies not only to language, but also topics. This involves, for example, getting learners to recount personal experiences, talking about the last time they did something, or voicing their opinions on the topics they have personal experience with. Choosing familiar topics helps lessen learners’ anxiety about speaking because the content of the talk comes from their own experience. This could also mean that textbook materials need to be adapted to make them more relevant to the students’ needs, interests, and level of knowledge. For example, changing a role play about a town meeting in an imaginary town about an imaginary problem to a role play set in the town you and your students are in and which touches on a problem your students can relate to.

And last but not least, the condition that can help learners develop fluency as well as relieve some of the anxiety about speaking is opportunity for repetition. Nation & Newton (2009:157) suggest “repeated practice on the same material so that it can be performed fluently” as an effective approach to developing fluency. To ensure that learners do not become bored with repeating the same message, they suggest changing the audience for each subsequent retelling and introducing a time limit. A technique that incorporates both suggestions is 4/3/2. This technique, designed by Paul Nation, involves speakers delivering a short talk (e.g. talking about the person they admire, or about the last time they did something exciting) 3 times. When the learners first tell their story, they speak for 4 minutes, then for 3, and the last telling lasts 2 minutes. With lower levels, you could reduce the time to 3/2/1 or 2/1/30 seconds. Through reducing the length of time the learners are required to speak for, the pressure is on them to make their talk more concise, as well as to speak faster. In addition, repeated performance means that learners get more speaking time than if they told the story just once. Research (Nation, 1989) shows that 4/3/2 helps learners increase the rate of speech and reduce pauses and hesitations. In addition, repeat performances help learners build confidence in speaking.

Another technique that makes use of repetition is pyramid discussion in which learners rank ideas or choose from a number of options individually, then in pairs, in small groups, and finally with the whole class. Learners have to justify their choice repeatedly, and the gradual increase in the number of people they talk to allows them to build up to speaking in front of the whole class. For examples, students might decide on a list of items they want to bring on a camping trip, rank places of interest in

a particular city, rank travel destinations, or decide on a line-up of performers to perform at a local festival. Requiring students to come to a common solution and agree rather than just exchange ideas will make the activity more communicative and focused.

Similarly, *Find Someone Who* activities involve repeating the same question(s) to different people in class in an attempt to find somebody who matches the description (e.g. *Find somebody who has been to Paris*) and help learners acquire high-frequency chunks (*Do you often, Have you ever*).

In order to manage fluency activities effectively and, in particular, to help students change partners, fluency lines or fluency circles can be used. The normal procedure for fluency lines is for students to be divided into two groups: A and B. Ask everyone who is A to come and stand in a straight line. Once they are ready, ask students from the B group to come and line up facing the A group. Students are given a time limit to take turns asking and answering their questions. Once the time limit is up, ask the students to stop speaking. Next, ask the first person from the A line to move to the end of the line and the rest of the students shuffle to the left to fill the gap, thus creating new pairs. Repeat until the students come full circle, i.e. the first student ends up in their original place in the line. As a follow-up, ask the students to report on the most interesting/original answers they heard or one opinion they agree with and give them feedback on the instances of good language use and errors you noted. If you are using fluency lines for 4/3/2, the procedure is similar but with one exception: first, only student A gets to speak, delivering their talk to 3 different partners (Student B), who can listen and ask questions. Once Student A is finished telling their story, it is Student B's turn to do the same. A variation on this activity is fluency circles. In fluency circles, students sit in two concentric circles, facing each other. Students speak to the person opposite them and when the time is up, the students in the outer circle shift to the right. Continue the activity until the outer circle has moved enough times to have spoken to every student in the inner circle.

To summarize, speaking fluency is a multi-faceted concept whose development can be aided by a number of classroom activities that are aimed at enabling students to get their message across without losing fluency despite the gaps in their vocabulary, and by providing language support and opportunities for preparation, repetition and speak on familiar topics.

References

- Bohlke, D. (2014). Fluency-Oriented Second Language Teaching. In Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Snow, M. A. (Eds.). (2014). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Dornyei, Z. & Thurrell, S. (1991). Strategic competence and how to teach it. *ELT Journal*,

45(1), 16-23.

Nation, P. (1989). Improving speaking fluency. *System*, 17 (3), 377-384.

Nation, P., & Brown, R. S. (1997). *Teaching Speaking: Suggestions for the Classroom*.

Retrieved from http://jalt-publications.org/old_tt/files/97/jan/speaking.html

Nation, P., & Newton, J. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL listening and speaking*. New York: Routledge.

Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. Harlow, Essex, England: Longman.

Yuliya Speroff is originally from Russia and has lived in several countries including the UK, New Zealand and, most recently, Turkey where she spent three years teaching English and coordinating the work of the Curriculum Design and Materials Development office at an Intensive English Program at a private University in Kayseri. Yuliya has been teaching English for over nine years, including two years as Director of Studies at a language school. Yuliya attained her CELTA in New Zealand in 2012 and her DELTA in 2017. Currently, Yuliya is working as a freelance English Teacher and Teacher Trainer in Novosibirsk, Russia. Yuliya's research interests include developing effective materials and using technology in the classroom.

On Pre-Digital Assessment (*How To Assess Students' Knowledge of What They Have Seen*)¹

Nina Kisin, Novi Sad Business School, Serbia

Keywords: pre-digital assessment, video material, testing

In what follows we are going to describe the situation in which FCE² students are learning English with the help of the video material, *Temptation of Chocolate*³. A teacher might encounter difficulties in creating an effective way to assess students' progress in learning English during video presentation.

The material created to help is as follows:

- Printed version of the test to be used *before*, as well as *after* watching the video presentation. An attempt is to check students' knowledge of the topic and vocabulary and to integrate the four language skills.

The first part of the test, *Before watching* refers to positive and negative effects of eating chocolate. Students need to write them in the table provided. The second part, *After watching*, serves to "decipher" the presentation (*Temptation of Chocolate*). Students give a short answer in no more than 100 words to the question: *What makes chocolate tempting?* In addition to this, students think about the synonyms for temptation. Next, students discuss if chocolate has changed over time and finally, do the matching exercise.

This way of assessing is successful. First, it makes students think "outside the box". Next, a lot of attention is paid to Student Speaking Time (SST). Besides, students imply their worldview, *weltanschauung*, and, possibly, their knowledge of the first language (L1). Accordingly, the affective filter is immediately lowered, which is an incentive to successful language learning. In addition, students are given an opportunity to discuss one of the main topics of the video

¹ The idea for this paper arose from the competition *New Writing Award* organised by The Cambridge University Press ESU (July, 2011).

² First Certificate in English

³ *Temptation of Chocolate, New First Certificate-Masterclass* (Simon Haines and Barbara Stewart), Oxford University Press

presentation.

In our opinion, teachers should not rely on Teacher’s Book exclusively. They should create materials and actively involve into the teaching process. Thus, teaching stays the greatest act of optimism.

Last name, first name:

I. *Before watching*

Think of some positive and negative effects of eating chocolate. Write them in the table provided below. The first one has been done for you.

Positive effects of eating chocolate	Negative effects of eating chocolate
00 reduces stress	obesity

.../ 10 (2 pts each)

II. *After watching* – “deciphering” the presentation (Temptation of Chocolate)

a) Give a short answer (in no more than 100 words) to the question below.

01. What makes chocolate tempting?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

.../ 20

b) Think of at least five synonyms for temptation and write them in the space provided below. The first one has been done for you.

00.	Temptation:	seduction
<hr/>		
<hr/>		
<hr/>		

.../ 5 (1 pt each)

III. *Imagine and speak, guess and think!*

a) Think about and discuss the question below:

In your opinion, has chocolate changed over time? If so, can you describe how and why?

.../ 20 (content, fluency, vocabulary, grammar: 5 pts each)

b) “Chocolate” is how we say it in English, but guess how chocolate is referred to around the world:

le chocolat	Ukrainian
csokoládé	
σοκολάτα	Spanish
cioccolato	Danish
шоколад	German
чokolado	Hungarian
00 chokolade	French
el chocolate	Macedonian
Schokolade	Italian

Greek



.../ 8 (1 pt

each)

References:

Haines, S. and Stewart, B. (2008) *New First Certificate Masterclass: Student's Book*. OXFORD University Press

Kisin Nina was born in 1988 in Trebinje (Bosnia and Herzegovina). In June, 2011, she graduated in English language and literature at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad. In September, 2012 she defended a master's thesis in the field of linguistics at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad. In October, 2012, she enrolled in doctoral studies at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad. She is currently writing a doctoral dissertation in the field of Business English teaching methodology. She teaches Business English at Novi Sad Business School.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Conferences
- Summer camps
- Webinars

CONFERENCES

** Call for papers still open for some of the conferences, check it out*

✓ **51st IATEFL Conference 2017**

Date: 4-7th April 2017 (PCEs 3rd April)

Place: Glasgow

For more, follow the link: [51st IATEFL Conference 2017](#)

✓ **ELTA Albania International Conference, "From the English Classroom to the real-life challenges and careers!"**

Date: 28 - 30 April 2017

Place: Elbasan, Albania

For more, follow the link: [eltaalbania](#)

✓ **Sixth International Conference on Language and Literary Studies**

Date: 19-20 May, 2017.

Place: The Faculty of Foreign Languages (Alfa BK University in Belgrade)

For more, follow the link: [Sixth International Conference on Language and Literacy Studies](#)

✓ **15th ELTA Conference**

Date: 20-21 May 2017

Place: Singidunum University, Belgrade

For more, follow the link: [15th ELTA Conference](#)

✓ **ELT Forum Conference – Helping Teachers Grow**

Date: 9-10 June, 2017.

Place: Ekonomicka univerzita v Bratislave

For more, follow the link: [Helping Teachers Grow](#)

✓ **4th International TETA Conference**

Date: 16-17 June, 2017

Place: Bosanska Krupa, Bosnia and Herzegovina

For more, follow the link: [The 4th International TETA Conference](#)

✓ **26th BETA-IATEFL Annual International Conference, Learning and teaching languages: Creating bridges to the future**

Date: 22nd – 25th June 2017

Place: Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, Department for Information, Qualification and Lifelong Learning, Varna, Bulgaria

For more, follow the link: [26th BETA-IATEFL Annual International Conference](#)

✓ **The 12th National and 16th International ATECR Conference - ELT Signposts**

Date: 8-9 September 2017.

Place: Brno, Czech Republic

For more, follow the link: [ELT Signposts](#)

✓ **26th IATEFL Poland Conference**

Date: 15-17 September 2017.

Place: Bielsko – Biala

For more, follow the link [IATEFL Poland Conference](#)

✓ **The 18th INGED International ELT Conference, The Winds of Change**

Date: 20 - 22 October 2017

Place: Istanbul Aydın University, Preparatory School

For more, follow the link: [The 18th INGED](#)

✓ **Colloquium 2017- 36th Annual International Colloquium, Language Connects People**

Date: 17-19 November 2017

Place: Télécom ParisTech, 46 rue Barrault, 75013 Paris

For more, follow the link: [Language Connects People](#)

SUMMER CAMPS for STUDENTS

[Open-courses in Devon](#)

SUMMER CAMPS for TEACHERS

[*SOUL Camp for teachers of English - Location Slovakia*](#)

[*SOUL Camp for teachers of English – Location Serbia*](#)

WEBINARS

✓ Macmillan webinars

[*Macmillan webinars*](#)

✓ OUP webinars

[*OUP webinars*](#)

✓ NILE Webinars

[*nile-elt*](#)

24th International IATEFL Slovenia Conference, 9th – 12th March 2017, Terme Topolšica

Jelena Spasić, "Oxford School" , Leskovac, Serbia

Keywords : IATEFL Slovenia, conference, report

A few days before the conference, a colleague of mine posted a photo on Facebook and wrote: "Presenting at a conference abroad for the first time." I was barely able to write "Bravo" and applaud with a sticker, when a certain unpleasant fluttery feeling coming from my tummy began to work its way towards the head making one hidden fact perfectly clear – *I, too, am presenting at a conference abroad in just four days! WOW! Breathe deeply, breathe deeply, do not panic, everything is going to be all right. Phew... okay, I`m not panicking. Yet.*

Shortly after, I was already on a bus to Ljubljana (a joyful 12- hour ride), when another colleague posted on Facebook (no, I`m not addicted to fb, it`s just a way of getting some useful information): "Silently packing another suitcase for the conference with 6 pairs of trousers, 54 T-shirts, some lovely skirts, a fancy T-shirt". *Oooohhhhhhhh! Have I packed all those things? What will I be wearing for four days? Breathe deeply, breathe deeply, I travel light and besides, I`ve got everything I need. Phew ... okay, I`m not panicking. Still.*

Eventually, I did get to the conference with one suitcase (my workshop safely tucked on a USB flash drive), and still a fluttery feeling in my stomach. A bit later than I had planned, but what can you do when you live 803 km away from the venue and still firmly believe in continuing professional development?! A quick shower and I was ready for the international evening on the first day of the conference. Naturally, I had no idea what that might be, otherwise I would not have brought two dried red peppers as a symbol of the town I came from. Luckily, my knowledgeable colleagues brought some "Najlepše želje" chocolate, "Smoki", "Plazma", some pear and plum brandy and most importantly homemade "vanilice" (a huge gratitude goes to Božica`s mum for saving the day for all Serbian conference participants). Amidst Austrian Gugelhupf, Bosnian cheese and meat pies, Slovenian sausages, all kinds of bread and cheese from Croatia, a variety of sweets and snacks from Hungary, Macedonian peanuts and wine and a photo of the beloved Queen of England, the conference had officially begun. And it immediately accomplished its mission - the differences were put aside and all the nationalities were brought together making closer and stronger relationships and achieving the

conference motto "I teach, therefore I learn" to, among other things, overcome the differences and be tolerant, compassionate and human. The following two social evenings were only the added value - the Irish dancing lessons had us spinning and running and gasping for breath. Although we did not move much further from the first basic clumsy steps, we had so much fun. And Lip sync battles - well, let me just say that there is a very thin line between teachers and world famous performers.

However, the fun was not only reserved for the evening. From early morning to late afternoon, there were plenary speakers, talks, presentations and workshops to cater for different tastes and give some serious food for thought. The opening plenary on the issues for education technology and continuing professional development in an online environment was given by Huw Jarvis who briefly argued that computer assisted language learning is obsolete and that we need to go beyond. Mark Almond talked about the art of language teaching and power of rapport but he went beyond the mainstream language teaching methodology and discussed some other practices and theories giving insight into a more multidisciplinary approach in the classroom. The closing plenary was given by Steven Lever who talked about the 21st century teachers who provide a skill set for the learners that would enable them to meet the constantly changing demands of modern life. A complete revelation for me was Peter Medgyes who gave another plenary talk in a soft and very personal, narrative tone and made us all wonder to what category of teachers we belong – the strict and scary, the firm but fun, or the soft and shaky one. Really – what category of teachers do you belong to? No in-betweeners, please.

As for the workshops, numerous fellow teachers were more than willing to share their own ideas on how to create a fun, inspiring learning atmosphere in the classroom, ideas on how to pass on the knowledge and sparkle with creativity and diversity, ideas on how to acquire skills necessary not only for language acquisition but for everyday life as well. You could pick between online learning and the old fashioned vocabulary and grammar games, you could learn how to develop super minds thinking skills and use art, videos and pictures in an ELT classroom, you could hear how stories, drama and poetry enhance language learning or find out how to create your own books and theatres together with your students, you could play with Lego bricks or smart phones in the classroom, you could learn how to overcome lack of confidence and improve communicative competence, create imaginary islands in the classroom, have science experiments or start your own language camps – the choice is yours and obviously, the sky is

the limit for both teachers and learners.

The 24th International IATEFL Slovenia Conference once again confirmed that it is indeed "the coziest conference in Central and Eastern Europe". The facts that the participants were so close and connected with each other, be it in the speakers` halls or by the pool, that the food was delicious, the hotel comfortable and the weather fantastic only contributed to it, helping me along the way to completely forget the fluttery feeling and uneasiness from the beginning of this amazing journey.

Till the next conference ... ☺

Jelena Spasić is a devoted mother of two boys, an enthusiastic English language teacher with almost twenty years of experience, a proud co-owner of a private school for languages "Oxford School", a bookworm, a nature lover and an all-know-how wonder woman. Apart from insisting on continuing professional development, teaching and having fun with all-levels-4-to-16-year-olds, she likes to explore and contemplate upon diverse human nature through writing.

United Sounds of Music

Brankica Skorković, Užice Grammar School, Serbia



Keywords: show, performance, music, project

The thirteenth English Show in Užice Grammar School, held on 24 November 2016, definitely moved the boundaries of all previous shows, at least in the number of participating students. About 60 of them worked hard for about two months as singers, players, designers of stage, poster, invitations... genre clips producers, technical support, choir singers, coordinating everything themselves with minimal supervision of their teachers. The organisation was at a high level, with some professional touches and great technological help. Not everyone who wished to watch this show was able to enter this small venue for the event of such proportions!

This project was a remarkable opportunity to express creativity and push the boundaries. We created something that this school had never seen before. Designing the stage was easy compared to the building process. Despite that, we had an incredible time doing both. Being a part of this project made me very proud. I am glad to be able to have something like this to look back to when I finish high school. Quite an experience!

- Jelena Rajović, show coordinator and production designer

Since the beginning, we wanted to make a “serious” show that will be remembered. We planned it carefully and we stuck to it. When we started, there weren't many people but as the time passed the number increased. In November, we started the scenography and we already had a plan, which Jelena and I already had made. The school helped us a lot and provided us with the materials. We spent every day in the school making the setup for it. The show was awesome. The stage was great, the people filled the room, and the musicians were awesome. The winners were the ‘metal heads’ with the song ‘Iron man’. Special thanks to our technical support, Prosa , Kojo and Ziljo. I'd like to say thanks to everyone, especially the members of jury and all the competitors for the great night.

- Tomislav Bakić, show coordinator and production designer





The atmosphere was electric and the air was filled with love and excitement. The whole event was incredibly well-organized. There were 12 groups representing 12 different genres of music. Between their performances, we were able to watch short clips about the following genre, and it made the time between watching the artists even more enjoyable. The crowd was truly ready to party, the vibe was amazing! Three members of the jury announced the winner. The best part of that night was when all the groups came out on the stage and started celebrating. Everyone was so happy and it didn't matter who the winner was because everyone had a great time! They were having so much fun so that we, in the audience, wanted to join them on the dance floor. Once again, the night was a total success and we are looking forward to the next one!

- Kristina Žilić & Kristina Radojičić, students from the audience

When it comes to the technical side of this event, it was no walk in the park. This time it was different than any other event so far. It was the first event where the tech team was set behind the scene, which created additional problems for us but was a great improvement to the overall appearance. One of my duties was to create a short video for each of the twelve genres and display them before performances. At first, it seemed rather simple, but it turns out it's not that easy to represent an entire genre with three songs. Another problem was staying synchronized with all the musicians even during the unanticipated events such as improvised song parts and prolonged performances. Luckily, we were able to make everything work and, in the end, I can safely say that, with this competition, we took things to a new level!

- Aleksa Kojadinović, technical support

I had a lot of fun hosting United Sounds of Music and I also got a lot out of that experience. I enjoyed everything from our rehearsals to the actual show. It was amazing.

- Teodora Ostojić, one of the hosts



Throughout the night there was a PP presentation running. Me and my buddy Alexa were in charge of that. We made the presentation that contained various videos and images that were relevant to the thing that was happening on the stage. It took a lot of time to make it right, and a lot of practice to master timing the slides. In the end, the practice and the hard work paid off and it was truly a one of a kind experience for the whole crew and I'm sure the audience felt the same.

- Marko Vučeljić, technical support

I was one of the participants in this show. Me and my friends were singing a song from Jessie J "Wild". I'm very satisfied because the most important part of the preparations for the show was the process itself, which was very productive, and we helped each other in all sectors, we came closer and I met many new friends. I'm looking forward to participating in new projects like this!

- Krisitina Kostić, participant/singer



I was very excited to participate in the show. Since I'm a freshman, this was a great chance to present my band "Kratki sa vremenom" ("Short of time") to the whole school. As soon as we walked on stage, we felt like we were born for it. Everyone was screaming, everybody loved us. I'm looking forward to more shows of this kind. Who knows where we can end up!

- Mihailo Todorović, member of the winning group





*I certify that I have the right to publish these photos.

Brankica Skorković has been working as a teacher in Užice Grammar School since 2005, was a participant of the YETI program in 2007 and is also an authorised court interpreter.

**57th International Mathematical Olympiad in Hong Kong, 9-16
July 2016
- Some Impressions -**

**Student: Igor Medvedev, 3rd grade
English teacher: Mirjana Savić Obradović
School: Mathematical Grammar School, Belgrade**

International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) is the biggest and most prestigious maths competition for high school students (20 years old or younger, who aren't enrolled in a university). The first IMO was held in Romania in 1959 with 7 participating countries. The contest is organised annually, and every year it is held in a different country. This year's IMO took place in Hong Kong, with 109 participating countries, totalling 602 students from all around the world.

Each country is represented by a team of up to 6 students (only very small countries send fewer than 6 people) who are chosen through that country's team selection process. The process differs from country to country, and in Serbia it has four stages: municipality level, regional level, country level, and Serbian Mathematical Olympiad. The first three are one-day contests, and serve to select the best 32 young mathematicians in Serbia, out of which the best 6 are chosen on the two-day Serbian Mathematical Olympiad. My hard work has paid off and I have been among the top 6 students of Serbian Maths Olympiad.

Out of 6 of us, 5 were (including me) from Mathematical Grammar School in Belgrade, and there was one boy from Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj Grammar School in Novi Sad. Besides us, the team included a team leader and his deputy, of whom the latter was traveling with us.

Because tickets are significantly cheaper on weekdays than on weekends (9 July was Saturday), our flight was on 6 July, and we had two days to explore Hong Kong on our own.

Our plane took off in the morning of 6 July and, with a short stop in Abu Dhabi, we

arrived in the morning of 7 July. We took a short train ride from the airport to the city, and a shorter one by metro to a stop near the hotel where we were going to stay for the next two days.

The moment I stepped outside the metro I was astonished. We found ourselves in a forest of large buildings, each at least 15 stories high. Between them there ran narrow streets, crowded with people hurrying to finish their business. Hong Kong means "Fragrant Harbour" in Chinese, and already I knew where it got its name from: the air was filled with strange smells of food, coming from all kinds of different small restaurants, and of sea, coming from the Kowloon bay. Hong Kong is made of two parts- one is on an island of the same name, and the other is on the mainland, and they are separated by the Kowloon bay.

The island part, which we were on, was the "main" one, and above it rose the Victoria peak, a very big forested hill, higher than most of the skyscrapers, with villas and a shopping mall on top.

Since the hotel is near the centre of the city we first went there. In the centre, the view of the sky is dominated by huge skyscrapers, of which two stand out: the Two International Finance Center (2IFC), a 415m high building (88 storeys and 22 high ceiling trading floors), the second highest building in Hong Kong, and the highest on the island part, and the Bank of China Tower, a beautiful building with extraordinary shape, the fourth highest in the city.

Although Hong Kong is a modern city, carefully planned, it doesn't feel too modern. Here and there one can see parks, oases of green in the sea of steel and glass, beautiful gardens with fountains and trees and flowers. Situated between the high buildings, there were comfortable benches, a nice place to rest after a long walk. Attracted by the height of skyscrapers, we decided to go to Hong Kong's Monetary Authority Information Centre, not because we wanted to see the making process or history of the Hong Kong Dollar, which you can do there, but because it is situated on the 55th floor of 2IFC, and the entrance is free. Up there the high buildings still surround you, but it has a beautiful view of the bay and the harbour.

When we finished enjoying the view, it was already late afternoon so we went to the port and got on a ferry boat. The ferry boat, which is surprisingly cheap, is the easiest way across the bay. There, from the esplanade, a beautiful panorama of the city can be seen. High buildings spread across all the field of view and contrast the forest green background. With an opening to the sea on the right, and an orange-yellow setting sun, it is truly a mesmerizing view. Every evening at 8, there is a spectacular light show. The music is played from the (somewhere hidden) speakers, and the buildings light up with all the different colours, making it look like the lights are dancing to a fun Chinese song. After spending some time there, we headed back to the hotel via Hong Kong Metro. The Hong Kong Metro is one of the many engineering marvels which keeps the city running and stable. I had heard many stories of how East-Asia's metros were exact, and I wasn't surprised when the train arrived in the exact second it had been predicted it would. We had a quick and pleasant ride, and went to eat and then to sleep.

After spending some time especially in the hotel and the streets of Hong Kong I started to realise how everything is tightly packed in the city, for example the width of the streets is usually only enough for 2 cars, also the sidewalks are barely enough for three people to walk side-by-side, and the most shocking of all: the room for two persons at the hotel was only 11 square metres-including the bathroom! The reason for this is that the hills around the city are so steep that you can't build on their sides, so the city cannot spread by width or length- the only way is up, and the space is very limited and valuable.

Considering that we were on the other side of the globe, in a different culture, it is no surprise that the food there was quite different than our food. For the simple reason that the competition was very soon we were cautious about what food we were eating. The street cuisine-a mix of different tastes from all over the world with a base of Cantonese traditional cuisine was thrilling to think about. On the other hand, there were the familiar Western fast food chains, with their normal menu. Because everything else was unfamiliar, and above all looked and smelled funny, we decided for the worse but safer option- chain fast food. Frankly, even McDonald's is different there: they offer all kinds of weird stuff: for example, a Hello Kitty fish burger (yes, the cat from the children's cartoon) - it's just like the regular Filet-O-Fish we have in Serbia, but with a big slice of

pineapple!

To return to the story, the next day, in the morning we went to Po Lin monastery, a Buddhist temple, like the ones we see in the movies, which has become a very popular tourist attraction since the extraordinary Tian Tan Buddha statue was built. The immense bronze statue, 34 metres high, sits atop a hill, and can be reached by climbing 268 steps. The temple, which is about 40 km far from the city, is surrounded by forests and nature, is also well-known as the 'Ten Thousand Buddhas Temple', for its many statues and carvings and pictures of Buddha.

Later, we headed back to the city and had a stop at Pizza Hut to have some pizza. There we had one more surprise: out of 15-20 pizzas that were on the menu only two didn't have peach or pineapple. The next thing we went to see isn't really a tourist attraction, but I think it's a must-see if you are in Hong Kong. The Ozone bar, on the top of the highest building in the city, the highest rooftop bar in the world, on 118th floor, a dizzying 490m above sea level. Like the bar itself, the prices there are astronomically high, but, it was worth it for the amazing view it gives. Since it is a rooftop bar, so it has an open top which makes it even scarier, but unless you have a fear of heights it is a truly wonderful place to be.

On the morning we met the IMO organisers who had already arranged the coaches to get us from the centre to the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, where the event itself would take place. The university is situated in the south-east part of the Hong Kong's mainland, and the campus is stretched along the slope of a hill, from the top all the way down to the sea, 15-20 high buildings, with a winding path going in between them. As soon as we settled in our rooms and got outside, I started seeing familiar faces- the people I had known from the past competitions, especially from the teams of the Balkan countries. Even though I knew they would be coming, it was a pleasant change for all the people I had been seeing in Hong Kong were unfamiliar, very different than the ones you see in Europe.

To return to the subject, the event continued, and the next on the schedule was the

opening ceremony. The ceremony itself included some music composed by world known composers, long performances, boring but necessary speeches and presentations of all the teams. By the end of the ceremony you could feel the atmosphere getting tenser, at least, I was getting tenser. Either way, everybody was impatiently waiting for the competition the following day.

Speaking about the format of the competition itself: it's very simple, 2 consecutive days, each day you get a paper with 3 problems and 270 minutes to solve them, each question worth 7 points. (The questions are not the type of questions you usually get in school or on standardized tests, they're proof-based and involve much more thinking and much less calculating.)

It was the day! Seeing 600 people pouring in the big sports hall of the university made me feel a bit anxious. Everyone sat at their designated desk. The clock was ticking. The rain was beating on the roof of the hall. A strange calmness was in the air, it made me relax and focus. Because we were in the sports hall, they sounded the standard sound used for sporting events to mark the start of the exam. To me it almost sounded like a war horn. A papery sound was heard, of the people opening the envelopes with the problems in them. The test started, and soon it ended. All in all, it went well. We were pretty satisfied with what we did. The second day of the competition went by equally quickly.

Anyway, the tests were finished and now it was time for fun, and the people became more light-hearted and cheerful. Next on the schedule were the official excursions, and the first one was to Disneyland. I had never been to Disneyland before, and I loved this one in Hong Kong. Disneyland is divided into 5 areas, each one with a unique theme from the world of Disney. It really felt like being in an idyllic fantasy world, and we had so much fun that we even forgot about the competition. Next we went to the famous Victoria peak. To reach the top of the hill, you take a tram that goes from Hong Kong, climbing steep hillside straight to the top (or you could get a bus which is boring). From up there, the view of the city is amazing. The roofs of all the high buildings can be seen, the buildings that looked so massive, and endless from the bottom, now look like little sticks. It's amazing what a shift of perspective can do. After taking lots and lots of pictures there

(even some Asian people, who we were strangers to us, asked us to take pictures with them because we're so tall and different) we took a descent, again by tram, and headed towards Temple Market. Temple Market, a street market 15 minutes on foot from the downtown, is a colourful mix of stands selling traditional Chinese souvenirs, handmade art and cheap tech and toys and clothes. There you can find almost anything you could think of, and the merchants are more than willing to co-operate by adjusting the price if you are convincing enough. After buying some things, we headed back to the university. We had so much fun, but nevertheless the anticipation was slowly but surely brewing inside each and every one of us, just some didn't show it. Although we already examined copies of our work and knew approximately how many points we were going to get, it still wasn't 100% sure, and the jury was sometimes unpredictable. Luckily the results were not far from what we expected so it wasn't a big shock when we heard them. To be brief, we could have done better, but even so most of us were satisfied with the scores. In all honesty, some weren't really happy, but that is what the competitions are all about.

Eventually, the closing ceremony came. The closing ceremony, the most formal part of the competition, was held in Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition centre, a Sydney opera House lookalike, no less elegant and majestic in its design, right on the bank of the bay. First it was the awarding ceremony: some music, performances, speeches again, and the medal awarding. Hearing your name being read in an awkward Hong Kongese English dialect, standing there on the podium, hearing an ovation and feeling the weight of the medal on your neck, and knowing that your work paid off, is truly an extraordinary and unforgettable experience. I won a bronze medal, which is a very good result, especially, in the second grade.

After that the formal dinner was held, in a great spacious hall, with the ceiling ,at least, 15 metres high, on one side there were great wooden doors with modern design, which were more like rectangular pillars that were fixed, and on the other side there was a big podium. The elegant and rich dishes came and went: some were very familiar while the others looked and tasted strange. I was very happy for the great result I had just achieved, but also sad because it was almost time to say goodbye. The next morning we said goodbye to other teams, and went to the airport for a flight back home.

To summarise, IMO was an amazing experience and will always have a special place in my memory because of all the new things I've learned, all the new places I've explored, a wholly different culture I've enjoyed and all the new friendships I've made and all the old ones I've strengthened during my stay in Hong Kong. I hope that one day I will have a chance to visit The Fragrant Harbour once more.



COPYRIGHT © 2017 ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION (ELTA SERBIA)
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.