

IATEFL Slovenia Newsletter

AUTUMN ISSUE 2010, no. 49



im

Conference announcement

Last part of classroom secrets

Book week activities

and a whole lot more -> open the newsletter and find out :)



Conference announcement

18th **annual IATEFL Slovenia conference**

2 KUL 4 SKUL

will be held at

Terme Topolšica, 10th – 13th March 2011

With key speakers

Leni Dam, Lindsay Clandfield

and others to be confirmed

For updated information on the speakers,
registration forms and speaker proposal forms,
please check our website

www.iatefl.si

As every year, the conference will provide superb education,
socializing, relaxation, and fun.

We are looking forward to seeing you all again.

Registration is open to any member of the public who wishes to attend the conference. Registration fees differ depending on when you register and the delegate's membership of IATEFL SLOVENIA or IATEFL. We strongly recommend that delegates register early and take advantage of the early-registration and member rates. In order to register, conference participants should send a completed registration form and a completed IATEFL SLOVENIA membership form (if they wish to join IATEFL SLOVENIA and be entitled to member rates) together with proof of payment to the address on the registration form.

Editorial

Hello,

This time I intend to be more up-to-date ☺

I've recently heard that Slovene principals have (finally?) begun to bring back teachers' authority, which got lost somewhere at one point in time. Do you think they'll succeed? Will we get a more teacher-friendly classroom?

We hear a lot about how classrooms should be learner-friendly, but not much is said about how to make it easier for us to get through the working part of our day. Unfortunately, I know only two "species" of teachers – the ones who are too kind and get run over again and again and the others who are very strict. As far as my observations go, neither of these two types is 100% good. I understand the reasons for belonging to either group and most teachers these days (no matter which group they belong to) have a little authority.

Most of us say it's the school system we have to blame. I don't agree that it's only that – do you?

Let's see whether they'll change anything or not – for our good, of course.

Enjoy all the challenges that come up this year and let's read about them in IN! You're welcome to share your thoughts on anything that's on your mind. Send your contributions to info@iatefl.si.

P.S. My apologies to Miss Marša Meznarič, who was not mentioned as the author of the article "18th Annual Hupe Conference in Opatija, Croatia" that was published in the previous issue.

Dolores Malič



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Resources

Fun with photos

Sandra Vida verifies the advantages of visuals.

It has often been said that a picture is worth a thousand words so, since foreign language teaching is about words, using visuals during teaching would seem logical. With images all around us it would seem odd to try to disregard them in a situation as powerful as language teaching and learning. This is probably the reason why modern course books are full of colourful pictures.

Nevertheless, a picture is not only a selection of colours, forms or objects. Each one has a story behind it – and the good news is that the story is different with every viewing. There are no limitations, and in an educational setting a picture offers the possibility that all answers are correct. This takes away the burden of trying to get the correct answer, wanting to copy what has been said before or focusing on repeating one single structure, which is often the case in foreign language learning. To elicit stories, dialogues and personal information from the learners, a teacher only needs to prepare a series of pictures, photos or drawings and 'go with the flow'. Pictures will not, of course, provide the actual words, but they will equip the learners with a framework they can build upon.

A language lifebelt

Visuals are widely used for teaching children, yet still fairly neglected when it comes to teaching adults. The techniques used with the two groups differ considerably. With children, pictures are mostly used for describing what can be seen in them. With adults, they can be used for describing things that cannot be seen directly. Instead, the picture is used as a prompt to guide the general direction of speech and offer a challenge to each learner to be creative.

In a way, pictures offer a lifebelt in the sea of language – and teachers who fail to use them will inevitably lose some students. To avoid this, they should use pictures as often as possible and in a variety of situations. New and different techniques and methods are always emerging, but I will describe some of the activities that I use with my classes.

1. Borrowed identity

For this first activity I prepare a set of photos of people – the more varied in race and background they are, the better. Personally, I find the photos of people in *National Geographic Magazine* are good, but of course there are no limitations on where you get them from.

I spread the photos over the floor in the classroom or on the tables and ask the students to look at them and choose one. There is no initial instruction needed as the students can easily grasp the idea from the example I give and, at this stage, it is better if they don't know what the task will be as this could influence their choice. I myself choose a photo of a person as different from me as possible (opposite sex, different race, etc).

When everyone has chosen their photo, we sit in a circle so that everyone can see the other people and their photos. I start by showing my photo and introducing myself with what is obviously the name of the person on the photo and thus take on the identity of the photo in my hands. Then I ask one of the students about their name, where they come from and so on, and also encourage other students to introduce their new characters. We start with introductions and basic information about their families, occupations, lifestyle and so on, and go on to more and more detail, which the students provide themselves. It often happens that a student asks *'What? Where do I live/work?'*, but I just say something like *'How do I know? It is your life, not mine!'* and soon they all play the game. Often, they don't even need to be encouraged to ask each other questions, as the need comes from the activity itself. After some time, they even get so immersed in the fictional lives of their characters that they start matchmaking, finding each other jobs or whatever else the characters might need.

This activity can be easily adapted for any language learning situation, as the teacher can set the environment or relationships between the people in any way appropriate, for example a business meeting or job interview. Some of the characters are chosen to be the interview panel or whatever else is suitable and the rest could be looking for a new job, trying to persuade potential customers or whatever.

2. Big family

This second activity can be used as a follow-up to 'Borrowed identity' or can be done separately. The students, each with a different photo of a person in their hands, form groups of six to eight (even ten is possible). Their task is to come up with a plausible story that explains how all these people are members of one big family. At first sight, this seems like an impossible task, especially if the people in the photos come from different races, backgrounds, etc, but when the students get immersed in the task, they come up with fantastic stories that would beat any



soap opera. Lost sons go to faraway places to come back again with new wives; children get adopted; they get married or divorce each other for reasons you cannot imagine!

I have experienced many great lessons with full student input and a high level of emotional engagement with this activity.

3. **Out and about**

Again, this third activity can be used as a follow-up to 'Borrowed identity' in which the students keep their original photos, or it can be a separate activity with the students choosing new photos. Some students identify with their new identity so much that they wish to explore it further, whereas others may wish to choose a new persona. All variants are possible and acceptable in this activity.

The students, each with their photos, pair up or make groups of three. They then work together to make up dialogues involving their characters in different settings. These dialogues can be spoken or written and the settings can be given by the teacher or suggested by the students. Examples might include at a bus station, in a library, in the boss's office, at university and so on. The situations can be easily tailored to the students' needs.

Having a second identity provided by the visuals is extremely important here, as often students who are naturally shy, silent or lower in the class hierarchy are able to open up in their new identities and find the courage to say what they would normally not dare to. The visual and the new identity it provides are a safety net that offers the confidence that is so vital when learning and using a foreign language.

4. **Story writing**

If your set of visuals includes other things, such as landscapes, objects or animals, it can easily be used for a group story-writing activity where each person participates in the story with their picture, combining them all into one unit.

5. **Fortune telling**

If you have enough pictures for each student to take several, they can use them as fortune telling cards – in pairs they tell each other's fortunes according to the pictures they chose.

Once you have a set of pictures, the possibilities are enormous. The visuals themselves will often suggest a task – you just need to open up your mind to the ideas and take them to class.

Even if you have no ideas about how to exploit a certain picture, it is well worth bringing it to class anyway and just asking the students about how they think it could be of use. You might be pleasantly surprised. It often happens that I find a good, interesting picture but I have no idea what to do with it. But I laminate it and store it with the rest of my pictures anyway and very soon somebody finds a way to use it – given the opportunity, of course.

In my opinion, this fits perfectly with the current recommendation that teachers should give their students more control over their learning. It isn't the teacher who needs to bring ideas into the classroom – it is the students. It is our mission as teachers to allow them to have their own ideas and help them to verbalise them. Visuals are one way of doing this.

This article was first published in English Teaching Professional, Nr 69.

Upcoming events

Below is a schedule of upcoming events, including the dates, the places and the contact persons.

October

14.10.

Primary school competition – schools

▶ tjasa.lemut-novak@iatefl.si

15.10.

Secondary school competition, second year– schools

▶ beti.kerin@iatefl.si

16.10.

Seminar

9⁰⁰ - 17⁰⁰

▶ Ekonska šola, Prešernova 6, Ljubljana
sandra.vida@iatefl.si register your workshop
Register for seminar: izobrazevanje@iatefl.si

November

18.11.

Primary school competition – state

▶ tjasa.lemut-novak@iatefl.si

20.11.

Secondary school competition, second year – state

▶ beti.kerin@iatefl.si

February

2.2.

▶ Secondary school competition, third year – regional
beti.kerin@iatefl.si

March

9.3. - 13.3.

IATEFL Slovenia annual conference in Topolšica 2 KUL 4 SKUL

▶ sandra.vida@iatefl.si – register your workshop
▶ jasna.sedmak@iatefl.si – sponsors, advertising in conference and brochure, organisation and co-operation with exhibitors

▶ jasna.dzambic@iatefl.si - organisation and student helper
co-ordination

▶ konferenca@iatefl.si – register for the conference

21.3.

Secondary school competition, third year - state

▶ beti.kerin@iatefl.si

May

20.5.

Competition award ceremony – Topolšica

How to spend active and relaxing holidays at the same time as a teacher

by **Janja Mavsar**

This summer holiday I decided to go on an English course in England because I wanted to improve my English knowledge as a teacher. The course title was 'The Reflective English Teacher'. Our teachers were Simon Parker, Mark Andrews and Yvonne Maxwell and the course was situated in a little town called Barnstaple. Before I came to England I was full of expectations. I thought that the course would be only indoors, for example, but I was wrong. Almost every day after our lessons we went on trips to neighbouring villages, towns or the coast. I have learnt a lot about English culture, habits and also some new approaches how to teach English.

When I got to England, all the teachers who were attending the course met at Heathrow airport. From there we all went by bus to Barnstaple, stopping off at Stonehenge on the way. I was amazed by Stonehenge and think that I will remember it all my life. After four hours of driving from London we arrived in Barnstaple. There we met our host families. My host was very welcoming and I learnt a lot of new words and expressions from her.

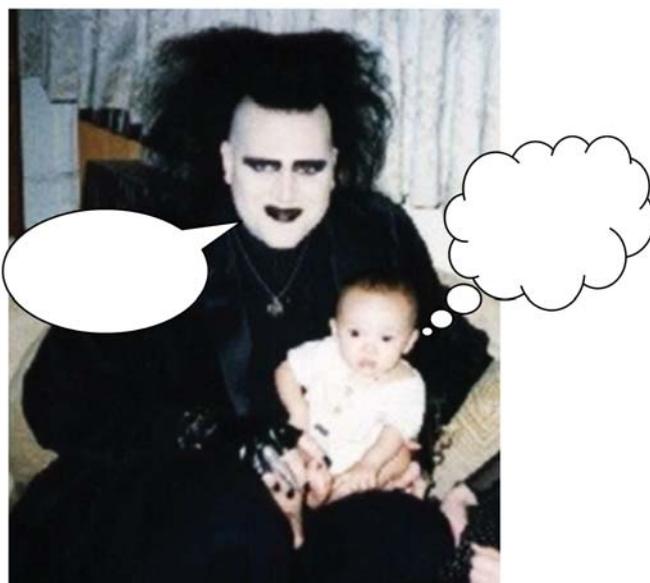
Next day, on Monday, we all met up in a pub. There we introduced ourselves and after that two men showed us the town and told us a lot of interesting things about it. After that we went to a museum in Ilfracombe and to Woolacombe Beach. I was so excited because I was seeing the Atlantic Ocean for the first time in my life. In the evening I spent my free time with my host. We talked about the next day, when we had some useful lessons about dialogue and drama.

Our teacher, Mark Andrews, showed us how to motivate pupils with only an empty cereal box. You can use it to learn new words or to repeat different types of food. This method is very simple to use. First of all, all you need is a box of cornflakes to attract pupils' attention. Then you start to cut it into pieces. You give each piece to a pupil and this pupil reads the text on it aloud. After that you emphasise new words by repeating them. Then you discuss them with the pupils. In this way you make learning vocabulary more interesting to pupils because at the beginning of the lesson they start to wonder what are you going to do with the box. You can do the same to repeat different types of food. You cut different types of food from the box in front of the pupils and then you give one piece of the box to each pupil. Then they look at the picture and say what's in it. If somebody does not know which food is it, other pupils can help out.

Simon Parker showed us some techniques for how children can practise dialogue. Some of these were disappearing dialogue, different games, screaming out the dialogue... I especially liked the last one because it is very simple for children and also for a teacher

to prepare. A teacher puts a new dialogue on the blackboard and then pupils practise it by screaming their part of the dialogue as loudly as possible. Simon told us that screaming out the dialogue is a very relaxing technique for children, because in this way they do not pay attention to whether anybody is listening to them.

One amusing and very easy way of attracting children's attention is making a dialogue from funny pictures. You put one funny picture on the blackboard and children have to rethink what the people in the picture are saying or thinking. Then you discuss their ideas. An example of a suitable picture is the one below, but you can find more at www.awkwardfamilyphotos.com.



On Wednesday we learnt some five minutes activities and how to use images in class. I liked the game Slap, which was presented to us by Simon Parker. You put different kinds of food on the blackboard and then you invite two pupils in front of it. The teacher says one kind of food and pupils must find it as quickly as possible and slap the correct picture with their hand. The pupil who is slower goes out and another one comes in.

This day we also went to a small village near the seaside named Clovelly, which is unusual in that you cannot drive through it by car. After this trip we all went to a restaurant where we tried that typical English dish called fish and chips. I must say that, although it contained quite a lot of fat, it was very delicious.

On Thursday we did not have lessons because we visited the county capital of Devon, Exeter, and an amazing old stately home named Knightshayes. I will always remember Exeter's stunning cathedral.

On Friday we spent all the day in the school. The teachers introduced us to two games (Taboo and Don't Say It) and some other activities. Two of the activities that were presented to us by Yvonne Maxwell were connected with creative writing. You can help children to write a story by giving them some words that they must use in their story or you can be the leader and you start telling the story to the pupils. Each time you stop telling it they must continue your sentence. For example: Once upon a time lived a princess named Sue. She was very happy because she lived in a big castle but unfortunately one day.... (What negative thing happened to her?). She was very unhappy because of this but luckily... (What positive happened to her?). In this way teacher leads the storytelling and children complete it.

The most important thing that teachers told us is that we must involve children in learning and take them outside of the classroom.

Anyway, the days passed by very quickly, we saw some other interesting places and soon we had to say goodbye to each other, which made us all very sad! I must say that I made a lot of new friends on the course. Some of us also discussed returning to Barnstaple and going on another course maybe next year. On the whole, I really think that the course was fun and I have learnt a lot. I would recommend it to other English teachers, especially beginners like me.



Janja Mavsar is a teacher of 1st to 5th grade and English teacher for young learners, working at Podbočje Elementary School.

VIP Corner

- <http://www.esl-galaxy.com/>
Here you can find printables and downloads for grammar and vocabulary, including crosswords, games etc.
- <http://www.cartoonstock.com/> Use cartoons to make your lessons even more interesting.
- <http://waze.net/oea/> Oral activities for different levels.



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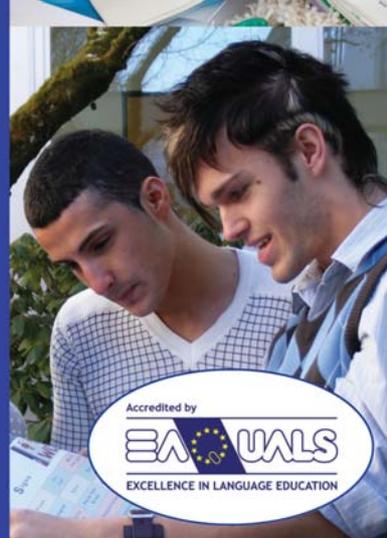
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Book week activities at Danila Kumar Elementary School

by **Petra Cerar**

On 23 April 2010, Ljubljana became the World Book Capital. How did we make the international students of Danila Kumar Elementary School aware of this and how did we present some English translations of successful Slovenian authors to them?

The week from 19 April to 23 April in the Primary Years Programme (grades 1–5) of Danila Kumar Elementary School was quite different from all the regular school weeks, since it was devoted to all kinds of books and their main purpose – reading. In general, students are involved in daily sustained silent reading as part of their English lessons, which is why they are already getting into the habit of reading for pleasure. However, the purpose of the cultural book week was to promote it even further and to introduce some Slovenian writers and folk literature as well.

The activities were spread throughout the whole week, so every day 1 or 2 lessons were spent on group- or pairwork. In grades 1, 2 and 3 a discussion about the importance of reading and books took place. The older PYP students from grades 4 and 5 expressed their opinions without the help of the teacher in the initial stage. In both cases, the students' preknowledge and thoughts without the intervention of the teacher were recorded by means of key words. They were written down in the centre of a poster, while students' ideas with the help of various resources were added to it outside the centre. This is how the very informative class web-posters came into existence, and they were put on display in the school building.

Grade 1 students explored some simple Slovenian folk songs. Since the vocabulary was quite archaic, they needed to look some words up in the dictionary. Together with the teacher,

they observed the topics and imagery of the poems. In their final task they had to illustrate the poem they liked best.

Grade 2 students were dealing with Frane Milčinski Ježek and an English translation of *Zvezdica zaspanka* called *Twin-kle Sleepyhead*. They watched a video in Slovene and tried to figure out the plot of the story. Afterwards, the students checked their predictions while listening to a CD of the story in English.

Svetlana Makarovič's lifestyle seemed highly interesting and unusual to the third graders, who made a timeline of important events in her life so far. Another challenge was that of putting parts of the story text *Cosies on the Flying Spoon* (*Kosovirja na leteči žlici*) in the correct order.

Grades 4 and 5 joined forces and did some research about Andrej Rozman Roza and his work *How Oscar Became Detective* (*Kako je Oskar postal detektiv*). They split into smaller groups by interest: writing a short summary, acting the story out, making a comic strip and writing poems.

The last day was the actual day of Ljubljana getting the Unesco title World Book Capital for a year. Students were taken to the city centre, where they enjoyed various events (the book fair) and performances (puppet shows and so on) prepared by the Slovenian Writers' Association. They also visited the National and University Library and had a quiz there. In the end, they joined the raising of the flag on Mestni Trg, where Andrej Rozman Roza was the host of the ceremony. And the students felt extremely proud because they knew so much about him!

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A global era of information

by **Lindsay Clandfield**

We are living in an era of information. The spread and penetration of broadband, high speed access to the internet has made huge amounts of information available at our fingertips. This has created what some call “sovereign individuals”. Sovereign individuals are empowered because they have access to new learning opportunities, can sell their own ideas, services or products directly to others; and can access a wide variety of information to make their own choices about all aspects of society, from political engagement to healthcare. Among these sovereign individuals are, probably, many of our students who can now access this information, and can do it quickly.

But because all this information is out there, we are often unsure what is accurate and fact and what is opinion or, worse, false and misleading. To succeed in an information-rich world one has to learn how to discern, analyse and evaluate what one sees or hears.

Many of the texts being proposed for learners in classes around the world are not always helpful in getting learners to do this. They may be interesting, but on a superficial level only. Texts in language teaching materials can be trivial and about invented people. Sometimes the content of texts is incidental, as they are primarily being used as a vehicle to present a grammar or vocabulary point. There is no incentive to go into any depth about the information presented, instead the teacher and students plough on to get to the language exercises, which are completed, corrected and considered “covered”.

Other texts may be about a curious human interest story, serving as a springboard to discuss a relatively “safe” issue. Sometimes it is unclear whether the story or characters are in fact real or invented, as little is made of the source of the text even if it is authentic. Again, the text is to be digested quickly and easily so that the speaking may follow. It has been argued that communicative language teaching approaches, with their emphasis on verbal face-to-face interaction, have neglected the development of learners’ ability to read, discuss, think and write critically about texts.

To really help students engage in this kind of activity, I believe that three basic conditions need to be met:

1. That texts and topics be interesting and provocative. The best kind of text is one which catches the students’ attention and makes them think. However, this does not mean teachers need only select texts or topics their students already know about (e.g. “my students love football so I will always bring in football texts”). The teacher’s own enthusiasm and judgement about the interest level of a text is equally important. Education is also about learning things you didn’t know about before, not just things you do.
2. That learners and teacher can critically interact with the text. Good texts in this respect allow the possibility of critically questioning the content of the text, or trying to analyse the author’s point of view. Literary texts work very well for this, and they are a vastly underused resource in language teaching materials. It’s also important that the source of the text also be made clear. Is it from a newspaper? If so, which one? When was it published? What information do we know about the author that will help us come to a better understanding of the text?
3. That texts and topics be rooted in the real world. If a text provokes interest then this can be followed up outside of class. The teacher can set students tasks to find out more about the author, the source, the story or alternative arguments and critical views by searching the web. The means knowing how to use search-engines efficiently, a skill which should be taught in every classroom.

If these three conditions are met, then we as teachers can go further than simple comprehension and skills development. We can ask about issues and connections between the text and local or global realities. Whose culture is being portrayed? Whose identity? Whose reality? What are the implications and assumptions being made?

This kind of critical engagement is a goal worthy in itself, but it may also help to make the material, and the language we wish to focus on, more memorable. It’s a win-win situation.

Lindsay Clandfield is an award-winning writer of materials for teachers and learners of English. He is the lead author of Macmillan’s new series for adults, Global. He is also a teacher and teacher trainer. Lindsay lives in Spain.

Murphy, I love you

by **Vesna Gros**

One evening at the IATEFL Slovenia conference 2010, Mr Murphy decided to be nice to me for a change and let me experience a streak of good luck – not only did I win quite a considerable number of books in the raffle, but also left the conference with the main prize, a two-week Pilgrims course, in my pocket. And so it happened that in early August 2010 I was whizzed off to the airport, joined Marina for a glass of wine up in the air, braced myself for a daunting night train ride, arrived in Canterbury at an hour not to be named, made friends with night wardens, was flabbergasted by all the rabbits staring at me (must have been the wine), and fell into bed, as exhausted as could be.

Hardly did I realize where I was or what was happening to me when I was led into a classroom with 18 EFL teachers from all over the world and a familiar face, which turned out to be Tim Bowen, our lecturer whom I had previously met at the IATEFL Slovenia conference 2010.

That's us, the fantabulous 20, among others Sylvia, who taught us how to yodel, Christian, who took me to Whitstable, Friederike, who generously fed me, Aurora and Carme, whom I went partying with, and the one and only – our all-time favourite teacher Tim. I attended the 'Methodology and Language for Secondary School Teachers' course and got out even more than I had expected. I'm not yet officially a secondary school teacher and have so far taught smaller groups of mostly primary school pupils at the Department of Foreign Languages at Pionirski Dom, the Youth Culture Centre and Language School in Ljubljana. However, I'm planning to find a job as a secondary school teacher once I graduate, and that's why I chose this course, hoping to get the best preparation for a successful start to my career as a secondary school teacher. The course focused on developing all four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), with emphasis both on how to deal with teen-

agers and make them interested in a topic and on improving the teacher's own vocabulary and English language skills by doing a lot of exercises on spoken grammar, collocations and tricky vocabulary. Much was learned during the lessons, but coffee breaks were equally important. There I could discuss new ideas with other teachers in a vibrant atmosphere in the park outside the classroom.

A cup of coffee, lemon teacakes, and a group of teachers relaxing in the sun is all it takes to stir up one's creativity. Although built by a former prison designer, the university and its grounds made me feel free. However, they could not surpass the feelings I experienced when I strolled around Canterbury. The quaint city with its impressive cathedral and the river Stour put a smile upon my face every time I went there. I didn't manage to go there as often as I would like, though, since the course and other afternoon activities were keeping me as busy as a bee. I attended quite a few optional workshops, learned the basic salsa steps, joined some teachers for my very first tai chi lesson, and laughed my head off at a drama class with Peter Dyer.

Now I understand why 'Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages' (Chaucer, Canterbury Tales). Canterbury is a great starting point to explore the south coast of England, so I made my way to the seaside at the weekend. I visited Whitstable and fell in love with it in an instant, then continued to Herne Bay and Dover, which apart from the castle didn't impress me much. On Sunday, my Slovak flatmate and I caught a train to Brighton. We missed the annual gay pride parade by just one day, but had fun in the idiosyncratic town anyway.

All in all, my stay in Canterbury was a great experience, my course was top-notch, the rabbits were there indeed (it wasn't just the wine after all), so I guess all I can say is: Mr Murphy, we're usually not the best of friends, but on that evening in Topolšica all I could think of was I LOVE YOU!



4-day trip to London – 1st prize of 17th IATEFL conference quiz in Topolšica, Slovenia

by **Urška Ravnjak, Marjeta Smrdel, Bojana Mihelač, Katarina Grmek**

In March 2010 there was a whole evening quiz programme organized by IATEFL Slovenia at the conference there. It had ten topics and each had ten questions. There were many groups competing to win the prizes, but there was one which was in the lead all the time. Its name was "Razstavljalci", meaning "The Expositors", and its members were all young women who had a great time answering the questions. The quiz host had some difficulties in pronouncing the group's name, but despite this fact they still won in the end! Bojana Mihelač, Urška Ravnjak, Marjeta Smrdel, Petra Bizjak and Katarina Grmek were more than excited to have won the 4-day trip to London. And now, six months later, they can even tell you how autumn London looks like. Some of them were there for the first time, some of them not, and one even stayed at home for the simple reason that she's expecting a baby! So here are some first-hand experiences of the trip.

Katarina: "The weekend was unforgettable! It was not my first visit to London, but it was definitely the best one! I finally got to visit Madame Tussaud's which I wouldn't if I hadn't been in such marvellous company. We went shopping in Camden Town, Covent Garden, Portobello Rd and of course Oxford Street. Every moment was filled with laughter and joy. Thanks to the great organizing committee of IATEFL Slovenia our bag

of memories is now full of great moments to keep us company throughout the whole school year."

Urška: "Visiting I-love-London-and-Britain souvenir shops, minding the gap, eating food while walking to the meeting point, drinking coffee in Notting Hill on a nice sunny Sunday afternoon, waiting for being counted at the wall, going up and down on kilometres of escalators, hugging George, Brad and Robbie – it's never been so much fun!"

Bojana and Marjeta: "It takes more than one ingredient to make a perfect mixture and we had the good fortune of having them all! Excellent organization, wonderful company and nice weather made our trip a memorable and special experience. We visited dinosaurs in the Natural History Museum, took our pictures with the Royal family and laughed at countless examples of British humour."

Creating wonderful memories is the best motivation to learn new things, meet people and visit places... or take part in a quiz. IATEFL conference and Twin Travel Agency have enabled us to do all of the above.

We would like to thank **Twin Travel Agency** for organizing such a wonderful trip to London and of course for offering it as the winning prize of the quiz.



A must for every teacher every year – Pilgrims teacher training course

by **Marina Sokolovič**

As the summer was approaching, people asked me the usual question ‘Marina, are you going to the seaside this year?’ With all the happiness that there is in the world I answered, ‘No, I’m going to England. I won a teacher training course.’ I should mention that I do not particularly like going to the seaside. I prefer visiting cities and my favourite place on Earth is England. And on the first day of August, fed up with the 35 degrees Celsius, I packed my big suitcase and headed to Canterbury to spend the best two weeks of my life at the University of Kent attending a Pilgrims course. As soon as I boarded the plane – which I almost missed! – the Pilgrims experience could begin.

I have never considered myself a lucky person and I still don't. But if you ask my friends, they will tell you that, as far as teacher training courses are concerned, I was born under a lucky star. When I won the training course for a second time in a row, my friends forbade me to take part at the raffle next year. I know they were just kidding but I promise to take just the books and leave the main prize for other teachers next time! 😊

I decided to attend the course for primary teachers, since I teach mainly young children. We had the best teachers, Sharika Dohnalova and Hania Kryszewska, who showed us many playful activities for very young learners. Their lessons were interesting, fun and extremely useful for me because I had just started teaching. I learned many new games and songs which I will use this year with my youngest students. Moreover, I was so inspired during their lessons that I decided to write my thesis about the project work with very young children. If last year I had known what I know now, my life would have been easier and less stressful. I had a chance to meet a lot of lovely teachers from all over the world; most of them were Spanish, so I have even picked up some Spanish on an English course in England!

We had a very busy schedule, with classes from 9 to 5 and then optional lessons in the afternoon and evening. Nevertheless, we still had time to chat in the pub in the evening. After the classes we had a chance to relax with salsa, yoga and tai-chi. On the first day, a charming elderly tourist guide showed us the main tourist attractions of the historic city of Canterbury. We saw Canterbury Cathedral, the Marlowe Theatre, Kings School and many other medieval buildings. The city welcomed us and gave us more than we could possibly expect. A handsome young boatman (these were his words 😊) showed us Canterbury from a different perspective – the





river boat. We enjoyed a wonderful experience with Canterbury Historic River Tours. The scenes were amazing; the only misfortune that interrupted the pleasant atmosphere was the English rain.

The days went by so quickly that before we knew it, the weekend was upon us. We spent the free days exploring the county of Kent. I am honoured to have been able to eat a sandwich in a little town called Sandwich, had lunch at the beach in Deal and saw the magnificent Dover Castle. Unfortunately, we did not have enough time to go inside, but we are determined to come back and visit it some other time. On our last day, Vesna and I went to a beautiful seaside town known for oysters and lavender called Whitstable. There we saw a small local shop which carried my name. It was already closed, unfortunately, so I wasn't able to buy any souvenirs for myself there.

After two weeks, with an empty wallet, two too-heavy suitcases (I had to buy one because I bought too many books) and sick and tired of English weather, I was ready to go home. I should not be so pessimistic, though, since I learned more than I had expected, met the most amazing teachers and made dear, life-long friends from other countries. I have grown professionally as well as personally with the help of Pilgrims teachers and staff. Those were the best days of my life and I recommend the course to every one of you – **it is a must for every teacher every year!**

Contact list

Since we have recently created new e-mail addresses for each board member, please make sure that you are sending the e-mail to the right contact person and/or to the right address.

For more information on WHO IS WHO, please visit our website www.iatefl.si.

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The SEETA online community – get online and get active! www.seeta.eu

by **Jasna Džambić**, *IATEFL Slovenia board member and representative on SEETA*

The SEETA Community is a collaborative online community of twelve Teachers' Associations in South-East Europe run by volunteers.

This May, SEETA marked its second anniversary by organising a presentation at the 8th International ELTA Serbia conference in Belgrade. The ELTA Serbia conference has a special significance for SEETA because the SEETA platform was launched at the 6th International ELTA Serbia conference in Belgrade in May 2008. This presentation was also an opportunity for the conference participants to put faces to the names of the people behind the virtual scenes of the platform, namely Anna Parisi, the SEETA Community Manager, Jasna Džambić, the representative of IATEFL Slovenia on SEETA and one of the platform moderators, Vesna Novičič, the moderator of the SEETA music section, and Nataša Jonović, the representative of ELTA Serbia on SEETA. The presenters offered participants a chance to explore the platform, discuss future projects and share ideas for new activities on the platform. This event was also an opportunity for some of the SEETA committee members to meet and discuss future plans face-to-face. All in all, it was a celebration of two years of successful running of a unique regional network that has opened new ways of collaboration among the TAs in South-East Europe.

There is a wide range of activities provided on the SEETA platform, from online events with guest speakers and informal discussions in the so-called SEETA weeks to social forums and more. There are also many conference reports for the SEETA members to take a look at and perhaps find some useful materials, for example the conference report from our own 17th International IATEFL Slovenia conference, March 2010 (visit the SEETA platform to take a look and download useful materials from the workshops).

- ▶ Also available are many other reports from previous years and many other interesting events and discussions which were hosted on SEETA and can be found on the SEETA platform, such as the following: **SEETA World Open Forums**

Some of the previous open forum discussions and online courses were hosted by Scott Thornbury, Mario Rinvolucrí, Penny Ur, Gavin Dudeney, Nick Peachey, Jamie Keddie and many more.



The most recent forum discussions are:

- *Lindsay Clandfield:*
Coursebooks of the future: Adopt, adapt or abandon?
(June 2010)
- *Radmila Popović:*
Teaching Young Learners: To start early or to wait... Is that the question?
(June 2010)
- *Penny Ur:*
The publishers and us
(September 2010)

Many hosted discussions are to take place in the following months with online guests:

- *Nada Vuković, Nataša Jonović and Dragana Milanković:*
Fire starter or fire fighter? Dealing with critical incidents in the classroom
(15–20 October 2010)
- *Nicky Hockly:* **mLearning: An introduction. An overview of mLearning or mobile learning, also known as 'learning with handheld devices'**
(23–29 January 2011)

Everybody is welcome to join in and participate in the discussions. Join us at www.seeta.eu.

There are also some new features and areas which can be found on the SEETA platform:

- ▶ **an ongoing Q & A forum, 'What I wanna know is...'**, hosted by **Philip Kerr**
Phillip Kerr helps you answer **'Everything you always wanted to know about... ELT, but never found the opportunity to ask.'**
- ▶ **the regular Monthly Guest Blog, 'My working week: A teacher's diary of a week in the classroom'**
Bloggers give us their insights, thoughts and reflections concerning the work of a teacher. You can read about their week and add your comments.
- ▶ **SEETA Music**
SEETA members are invited to publish playlists of their favourite music. Each month has a new SEETA DJ.

See you online! ☺

How to help weaker students to be more successful

by **Cilka Hančič**, *Srednja šola, CIRIUS Kamnik*

Our school is specialised in working with physically handicapped students, but every year we get more and more students that have learning difficulties too. Very often their weak points are in learning foreign languages.

One advantage of our classes is that they are much smaller than in other secondary schools. So every student can have the individual attention of the teacher. The teacher can explain the subject matter more than once so that the student can understand the rules and use the structures appropriately.

Fortunately our classrooms are very well equipped, so we use the computer and projector a lot. Thanks to the new Headway editions, many not-so-difficult exercises are now available on the internet. Just go on www.oup.com/elt/headway and choose the structure you want to practise with your students. My students like doing these exercises in class for revision and also at home when they're studying for tests.

I think that revision before tests is very important. I usually choose exercises that revise the grammar and the words of the lessons. To practise only grammar is not enough: it has to be grammar in context. The texts should be lifelike but not so difficult, with a lot of known vocabulary.

It is also very important that the teacher encourages those weaker students to be more active in class, even if they make more mistakes. You have to praise their progress and avoid criticizing them when they do something wrong. Also you can include pair-work or group-work so that students can help each other.

Some exercises can be given as homework, but we have to tell students to try to do their homework themselves and not just copy from the exercise key. When we check their homework next time in class we can correct mistakes if there are any.

Before we write tests, we always do a lot of revision. I usually give students copies of different exercises that revise the grammar structure we're going to test. Students can work on examples individually or in pairs first and then we check the answers as a class. They usually have enough time to get the right answers. With some of my students the time available for doing exercises is very important, because either they have some difficulties with writing or they need more time to read and think about the answers. I am always happy when the students pass first time, so we don't need to repeat the test.

Sometimes even students who otherwise have problems with English decide to read books in English and compete in Bookworms organised by Oxford University Press. And although they may not receive many points in the final tests, they're happy to participate in the competition. In April 2010 we also took part in a competition for vocational schools – Poliglot 3.

I think that most students find the new student's books and workbooks interesting and that they are more motivated to learn foreign languages than they used to be. So if we, their teachers, help them as much as we can to get better marks, they will also be encouraged to learn more effectively.

If we give students enough opportunity to show us what they've learned in our lessons and we don't just look for their incorrect use of grammar and vocabulary, they will certainly have more courage to speak English in class. We have to help them not only to speak correctly but also not to worry too much about their mistakes in order to avoid the loss of their confidence.

In this new school year I've got a lot of new students. Some of them are very good at languages, but there are a few that can hardly say a word in English. I hope that within a few weeks they will improve their knowledge to the point that they will be able to participate in class work more actively. I'll try to be more patient with them and encourage them to speak, even if they make a lot of mistakes.



*POLIGLOT 3 – April 2010, Competition for vocational schools
We were part of the audience during the final performance
(you can see three of our students in their wheelchairs).*

Classroom secrets: How Slovenian teachers teach English

Part four: Teachers' rapport with learners

by **Mojca Belak**

The research among students of English about English lessons they were given in primary and secondary school (it was carried out at the Department of English, University of Ljubljana in October 2008 and included 296 students) showed what respondents think of their teachers' language knowledge, the use of extra materials in class and teaching methods. As rapport with learners is one of the crucial ingredients of a successful lesson, it was mainly covered in the last section of the questionnaire on how Slovenian teachers teach English.

23. Did you correct your teacher if they made a mistake?

Some students thought that the question checked how good their teachers' English was, but this is not what replies to this question really show. If the relationship between the teacher and their students is good, students will care enough for the teacher and their learning to correct the teacher. If, on the other hand, students are taught by a teacher who thinks of themselves as perfect, students will not dare or care to correct their instructor.

Primary school results show, not surprisingly, that more than one quarter of students (26%) always corrected their teachers (they would, wouldn't they), and almost a quarter (23%) did so sometimes. At this level 20.6% never corrected them, and 13.2% didn't notice any mistakes.

The situation in secondary school is different. There is a sharp rise in those who always corrected the teacher (44%), while 27.7% of attentive observers followed suit only sometimes. Modest 4.7% didn't notice any mistakes the teacher might have made.

At the Department of English, 35% of our students always correct teachers of Practical English classes, 16.5% indulge in this sometimes, and as many as 14% don't notice our mistakes. This, of course, doesn't mean that we don't make mistakes. We do. They are an important part of learning.

Primary school children often don't know enough English to be able to spot teachers' mistakes while teenage learners in secondary school tend to be much

more critical and like to show off their knowledge by correcting the teacher frequently. This also shows they feel comfortable in their English classes, are engaged in work and care enough to say what's wrong when mistakes inevitably happen. They get a bit less critical as students of English probably because at this stage they learn about different uses and meanings of language. Sentences that were supposed to be wrong on the secondary level now prove to be right (e.g. I can help you make a career in film – if you'll let me. The teacher has a duty not to confine themselves to the needs and wants of individuals. She insisted that he go into rehab before she would marry him.). Besides, they have grown up a bit and can tell a slip from a serious mistake, so they do not jump at every semi-wrong utterance that comes from the teacher.

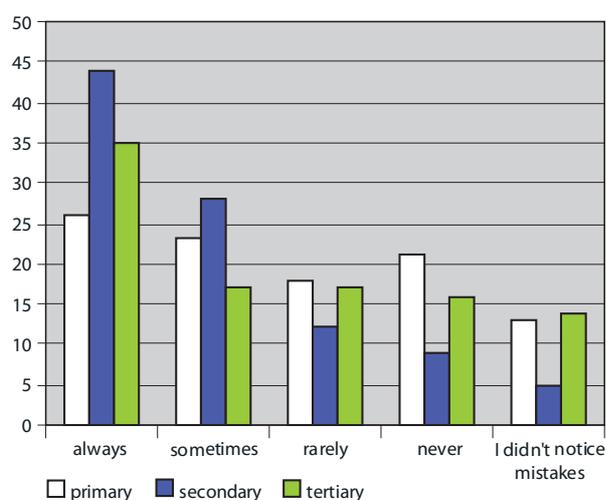


Table 8:
Did you correct your teacher if they made a mistake?

24. Did you like English classes?

English classes seem to be well liked. 80.7% of respondents liked them in primary and 79.1% in secondary school. Only 9.8% didn't like them in primary school, and 12.2% disliked them on the secondary level, while 7.8% and 4.4% didn't care about them either in primary or secondary school. These replies are not very surprising – after all, the respondents are students of English: most of them must have liked English or something about it to decide to study it further. Their motiva-

tion and attitude towards language studies in general is probably also the reason why as many as 93.5% of them claimed that they like Practical English Classes at the Department of English. Only 3% don't and 2% don't care about them.

25. Did you like your English teachers?

The higher the level the more students seem to like their teachers. 65.5% liked their primary, 72.3% their secondary teachers while 81.5% like their language teachers at the Department of English. I must be fair here and stress that students of English can choose teachers of Practical English Classes, and if they don't like someone, they can still a different teacher the following year. This is probably why teachers on the tertiary level got such good results.

The previous two questions are really interesting to compare. Even though 80.7% of respondents liked their English classes in primary school, only 65.5% liked their teachers. 9.8% of students didn't like their classes in primary school, but many more (25.7%) didn't like their teachers.

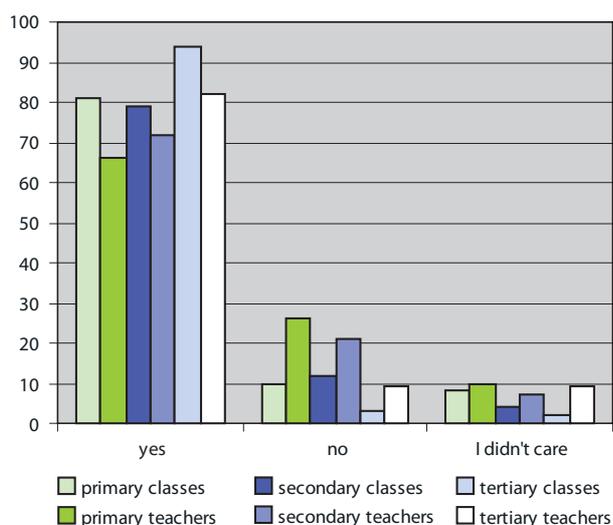


Table 9:
Did you like English classes and your English teachers?

The results show that even though a vast majority of respondents liked their English classes as well as their English teachers, and that teachers of English on all three levels of education were or are, generally, very much liked, students tend to like English classes slightly more than their English teachers.

There were also some differences according to the age of respondents: students in years one and two tended to be more critical about their classes than students in their last two years of studies. Maybe knowing more and learning more about teaching makes students more careful when it comes to criticising other teach-

ers. Alternatively, we could be facing a more grumbling generation in the first two years of studies, a generation which doesn't think twice to state their dislikes clearly.

26. How effective were your English classes?

42.2% of students think that English classes on the primary level were effective. Similar results (40.5%) also appear for the secondary school level. On the tertiary level 37% of students think language classes were effective, while more than half (57%) said English classes are very effective.

Almost one in three students (28%) feel that in primary school English was not very effective. I haven't done any further research but I suppose they were bored with classes because so much time and energy is spent on slower students, while more talented ones have to just wait for their less gifted colleagues to catch up. It is a shame good students get so little attention nowadays as the whole school system tries to be over-politically-correct and leaves better students in the shadow of underachievers. On the secondary level fewer students, one in five (21.3%), think English classes were not very effective. The number of unhappy students falls dramatically when it comes to the tertiary level where only 2.5% of respondents claimed Practical Classes were not very effective. All in all, only very few claimed English classes were a waste of time - 6.8% for primary, 8.8% for secondary and 0.5% for tertiary level. It is not surprising that teaching English on the tertiary level produced such good results - the research was conducted at the Department of English where English is the respondents' field of study.

And the very last question...



27. What do you find most important about a teacher of English? Please mark your answers from 1 to 4 (1 being the most important feature and 4 the least important one).

Possible replies were listed alphabetically:

- good knowledge of English
- modern teaching methods
- official degree of education
- personality – attitude towards students

More than half of students (52.3%) think that good knowledge of English is the most important feature for an English teacher. Next come personality and teacher's attitude towards students. As many as 43.6% thought these are most important. According to students of English, modern teaching methods are not so very important; in fact, almost one in three (28.4%) thought they are the least important. The absolute winner among the least important features, however, is the teacher's official level of education - above the obligatory bachelor's degree, that is: more than half (56.8%) of respondents agreed that it is rather unimportant what level of further education (if any) the teacher reached after they have graduated.

This, again, makes a lot of sense. If a teacher embarks on M.Phil or doctoral studies in Slovenia, they, indeed, read a lot in English, but they don't have to produce anything in the target language at all as in this country both, M.Phil and PhD theses have to be done in Slovenian. Being a bookworm doesn't make you a good teacher. It is practice and practical training that can give you that – besides the obvious talent and a warm personality. It's good to know that all this is also important for our learners and that they see through the M.Phil and PhD titles and know that the real teaching capacity lies deeper and cannot be measured by academic titles.

If I return to the most important feature on the list: our students couldn't be more right in stating that good knowledge of English is very important for the learners. This is a simple fact, which is often neglected. A teacher can be very good at providing visual support, creating beautiful handouts and posters, cutting birds and bees and teddy-bears out of coloured paper or some other material, but if their English is poor, all their visual wonders will do little for their students. This is often overlooked when dealing with young learners in nursery schools or on lower levels of primary school where children get in touch with learning English for the first time. Being young and therefore much more perceptive for language learning, they absorb their teacher's English lock stock and barrel – along with possible mistakes and sometimes poor pronunciation. If or when they get a teacher with a better knowledge of English, children first need to un-learn the wrong bits put in their heads when they were younger before they can embark on any serious language work.

The next important quality English teachers should possess is, according to the respondents to this research, the

teacher's personality which reflects in the attitude towards students. Good teachers are born and made, and if the knowledge of the language falls into the category that can be learnt, good teachers are born with the kind of personality that works well in class. This doesn't mean that our schools are breaking at the seams with loving, just, and maybe even charismatic teachers, but if a teacher possesses such qualities, they are closer to being good teachers. These are the traits that cannot be learnt. A teacher can have a great knowledge of the language and methodology but will still not be very successful in class if they lack personal characteristics and charisma that are vital for teaching.

Conclusion

On the whole the results of this research are quite encouraging. What they also show is that even though they are not experts, learners are very good at assessing their teachers' work. After all, they have spent most time with their teachers and really know the way they teach. Even when students were younger, they could tell whether the teacher spoke good English or not, they could feel that it is the personality shining through the teacher's attitude towards students and their subject that turns an average teacher into a good teacher. By stating this, students have put the teacher in the centre of teaching.

What should teachers do to keep their knowledge of the language and methodology at a high standard? Despite many factors that could prevent teachers from continuous education, English teachers should be constantly interested in English as a language and in our field, teaching. If attending seminars, conferences, and other events in Slovenia sometimes proves difficult or even impossible, teachers could immerse themselves in English at home by watching and listening to English-speaking TV and radio channels, watching DVDs with English subtitles (There are many such DVDs in Knjižnica Otona Župančiča in Ljubljana – they got them from the British Council Resource Centre a few years ago.) Another great opportunity to get in tune with what's new is attending a teacher-training course in the UK. Every year the Council of Europe dedicates a generous sum of money to keep teachers alive professionally. One of the possibilities on offer is Comenius Grants in the LifeLongLearning programme, awarded to a great number of teachers three times a year. In Slovenia Comenius is in the hands of Cmepius, the Slovenian Council of Europe agency.

Better educated teachers can give more to their learners and other colleagues. In the past ten or fifteen years, there has been a great change in our field in this respect. When IATEFL Slovenia was still in its toddler years, it was really hard to find Slovenian speakers for our conferences. Teachers were too shy or thought too little of their knowledge to take an active part in them. It is really encouraging to see how the situation now changed and our IATEFL events pride in many Slovenian speakers who share their practical ideas and approaches with their colleagues. Not surprisingly, in many ways it was IATEFL Slovenia that got the ball rolling all those years ago, and it is just great to see the endeavour of the past presidents and committee members now bearing fruit.

Obvestilo o državnem tekmovanju v znanju angleškega jezika za dijake drugega letnika

Spoštovane kolegice in kolegi!

Tu je nekaj osnovnih informacij v zvezi s tekmovanjem v znanju angleškega jezika za dijake **2. letnika** za šolsko leto 2010 / 2011.

Dijaki naj v **skupini od 3 do 5 dijakov** posnamejo DOKUMENTARNI PRISPEVEK v angleškem jeziku, na katerokoli temo z omejitvijo desetih besed glede na kategorijo. Prispevki lahko slonijo na resnični ali domišljjski vsebini.

Dijaki bodo tekmovali v štirih kategorijah:

- A** za tekmovalce drugega letnika, ki se učijo angleščino kot prvi tuji jezik in obiskujejo katerokoli gimnazijo vključno z evropskimi oddelki
- B** za tekmovalce drugega letnika, ki se učijo angleščino kot prvi tuji jezik in obiskujejo katerokoli 4-letno strokovno šolo, ki se zaključi s poklicno maturo
- C** za tekmovalce drugega letnika, ki so več kot eno leto bivali na angleško govorečem področju in tiste, ki so v oddelkih mednarodne mature
- D** za tekmovalce drugega letnika, ki se učijo angleščino kot drugi tuji jezik in obiskujejo katerokoli gimnazijo ali 4-letno strokovno šolo.

Dijaki, ki tekmujejo v kategoriji A ali C, naj uporabijo naslednjih deset besed:

EPIDEMIC, SWAP, JIGSAW, UTTERLY, OUTWEIGH, MAINSTREAM, SOLITUDE, REGRET, PERSUADE, PRAISE.

Dijaki, ki tekmujejo v kategoriji B ali D, naj uporabijo naslednjih deset besed:

HANDWRITTEN, GRIN, PERMISSION, RENAME, SEVERAL, STRUGGLE, JOURNEY, RARE, STAFF, GENEROUS.

Prispevek ne sme biti daljši od **4 minut**.

Kriteriji pri izbiri najboljše skupine (tako na šolski kot na državni ravni) so naslednji: pravilnost uporabe podanih besed, ustvarjalnost pri uporabi podanih besed, jezik in izgovorjava, splošni vtis in umetniška izvirnost (montaža, uvodna in zaključna špica, kamera, uporaba glasbe itd). Predlagamo, da na šolskem tekmovanju, ki ga izvedete sami po zgoraj omenjenih kriterijih najkasneje do **15. oktobra**, izberete (največ) **sedem** skupin, ki jih prijavite na državno tekmovanje najkasneje do **20. novembra 2010** in sicer tako, da pošljete na naslov **IATEFL Slovenia, p. p.1677, 1001 Ljubjana**:

- posnetek na DVD mediju (označite ime šole, naslov prispevka in kategorijo)
- scenarij/besedilo v tiskani obliki
- izpolnjeno prijavo
- izpolnjeno izjavo
- potrdilo o plačilu prijavnine.

Zbrane posnetke bo komisija, ki je sestavljena iz članov odbora IATEFL Slovenia, pregledala in v predpisanem času javno objavila rezultate na spletni strani IATEFL Slovenia www.iatefl.si

Prosimo, da seznanite dijake, da bodo njihova imena in rezultati objavljeni na spletni strani društva. Če se kdo ne strinja z objavo, na tekmovanju ne more sodelovati. Da so o tem seznanjeni, naj **podpišejo na priloženi izjavi**, ki jo pošljete na naš naslov.

Za kakršnekoli dodatne informacije smo vam na voljo na telefonski številki **041 907 065**, oziroma na elektronskem naslovu info@iatefl.edus.si

Veselimo se vašega sodelovanja in vas lepo pozdravljamo.

Beti Kerin, prof.
koordinatorka tekmovanja



Jasna Cepuder Sedmak, prof.
predsednica društva



Animal crossword

by Andreja Lakner



► **across:**

1. a large bird that can't fly
2. a dangerous animal with no legs
3. in spring it returns back from the warm places in the south
4. the largest land animal
5. a furry animal with long ears
6. an animal with very long neck
7. we look like this animal
8. a sea animal with many "arms"
9. when it's little it's grey, when it grows up it's a beautiful white bird
10. a bird that sleeps upside down in a cave
11. a very dirty farm animal
12. an insect; the female drinks blood
13. it gives us eggs
14. it's a green animal that jumps in grass
15. it comes out of a caterpillar

▼ **down:**

16. it gives us milk
17. it gives us honey
18. it's the largest animal in the world
19. a "dog" that lives in the sea
20. a "flying" rat
21. an insect with black spots on its wings
22. the king of the animals
23. an animal that lives only in Australia
24. it gives us wool
25. a baby dog
26. it carries its house
27. human's best friend
28. a baby cat
29. your mum jumps on the chair if she sees it

The British Council supporting ELT in Slovenia?

Yes we do and we would like to do more.

We are there on every computer with an internet connection. Take a look at <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/> and you will find a cornucopia of resources to help teachers. Click on the "Try" tab and access a huge amount of activities, lesson plans and tips that you can use in your classroom tomorrow. The "Think" tab takes you to lots of articles about teaching English. "Talk" allows you to interact with teachers all over the world. "Transform" helps you think about and organise your own professional development. And the "Train" tab allows you to download training materials or take a look at our online courses. So visit the site, explore and enjoy.

For learners, we have <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish/>. Click on the "kids" tab and see our beautifully coloured site full of games, songs, videos and jokes delivered via, text, graphics, video and podcasts. The "professionals" tab has tons of material for adult learners; even an audio soap opera "Big City, Small World". Clicking the link "For Parents" takes you to pages full of materials designed to help parents help their children learn English. And all for free and all just waiting for you to go to the webpage and click away.

So, the British Council is there in Slovenia helping teachers and learners of English, but we would like to do more. I had the great pleasure of being in Ljubljana and Maribor recently and met with some very dedicated English teaching professionals. We discussed how British Council teacher development courses could be delivered in Slovenia. We focused on a few specially selected courses.

We have a "Learning Technologies for the Classroom" course which helps teachers learn how to use WEB 2.0 tools and applications like blogs, wikis and social network sites in their teaching of English. It also shows how to make the best use of online audio and video opportunities.

We have a "Primary Essentials" course that is designed to help teachers who have been asked to teach English to young learners, but don't have any specific training in how to do this. The course includes how children learn English and how to use activities like songs and games in the classroom.

The Learning Technologies for the Classroom course can be delivered by both face to face workshops and through an online course. The Primary Essentials course is only available online. And because we have a lot of courses that are delivered online, we also offer an "e-moderators" course to train people on how to be an online trainer of our courses.

I was in Ljubljana and Maribor to find out if these teacher development courses would be of use in Slovenia and if so, to find partners to deliver the courses. The British Council can train trainers to deliver courses and is happy to release materials to those trainers, but we are not in a position to organise and run the course ourselves, so we need delivery partners to do this for us. I am still exploring possibilities with those people I met during my recent visit, but if you are involved in delivering teacher training, whether to pre-service and in-service teachers, or have any ideas as to how to get these courses to Slovene teachers, please contact me. My e-mail address is eric.atkinson@british-council.pl.

The British Council is supporting the teaching and learning of English in Slovenia and we would like to do more, but we can only do this with your help.



Eric Atkinson:
Global English for Europe Regional Project
Manager, British Council

How to improve writing skills with Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

by **dr. Marjeta Urbinc**

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary is the oldest among English monolingual learners' dictionaries, since it first came out in 1948, the latest (eighth) edition being published in April 2010. Each new edition brings a myriad of new features that enable the users to have easier access to the information they want to find in the dictionary and, at the same time, improve their speaking and writing skills. One such feature in OALD8 is the new Oxford iWriter and Oxford Writing Tutor. One of the reasons for the development of this tool is research carried out for the 8th edition of OALD which showed that students find writing in English difficult and that for many teachers it is the most difficult skill to teach.

The Oxford Writing Tutor is a 32-page section in the print dictionary and the Oxford iWriter is an interactive tool on the CD-ROM. They are designed to improve writing skills by giving tips and guidance on tackling different types of writing. The Oxford Writing Tutor and Oxford iWriter provide examples of essays, letters, CVs and other practical types of writing, such as writing about a comparison or contrast, presenting a reasoned argument on a particular issue, writing about the data shown in a graph or pie chart, writing reports and reviews. The topics are in accordance with the General and Vocational Matura as well as other school-leaving exams in Slovenia and other countries worldwide. The Oxford iWriter can be used not only for self-study but also as a useful teaching tool in class. It should be emphasized that a teacher can also make use of other features available on the interactive whiteboard-friendly CD-ROM.

Both tools provide models of different types of writing and give detailed guidance as to what tasks are necessary when embarking on a job as difficult as guiding students through the stages of planning, writing and reviewing a range of different written tasks. Models are provided for each task type, showing the structure, notes and sample content. Apart from that, there is advice on choosing the right language, how to use language in order to sound more formal, more objective, or to avoid repetition. The Oxford Writing Tutor and Oxford iWriter lead students through four important stages, i.e. planning (Before you start), choosing vocabulary (Choose your language), writing (While you are writing) and checking the writing (Check). Worth mentioning is the Highlight Academic Word List feature – if a user clicks on this button on the toolbar, any words in the content of his/her writing that are part of the Academic Word List are highlighted in red. The Academic Word List covers approximately 10 % of all vocabulary in a well-written piece of academic writing, which means a student should aim to have about the same percentage of vocabulary items found in this word list in his/her own academic writing. All these functions are a welcome feature for the student and the teacher knowing that essays in the Matura and other exams are marked as regards contents, structure, vocabulary and register as well as accuracy.

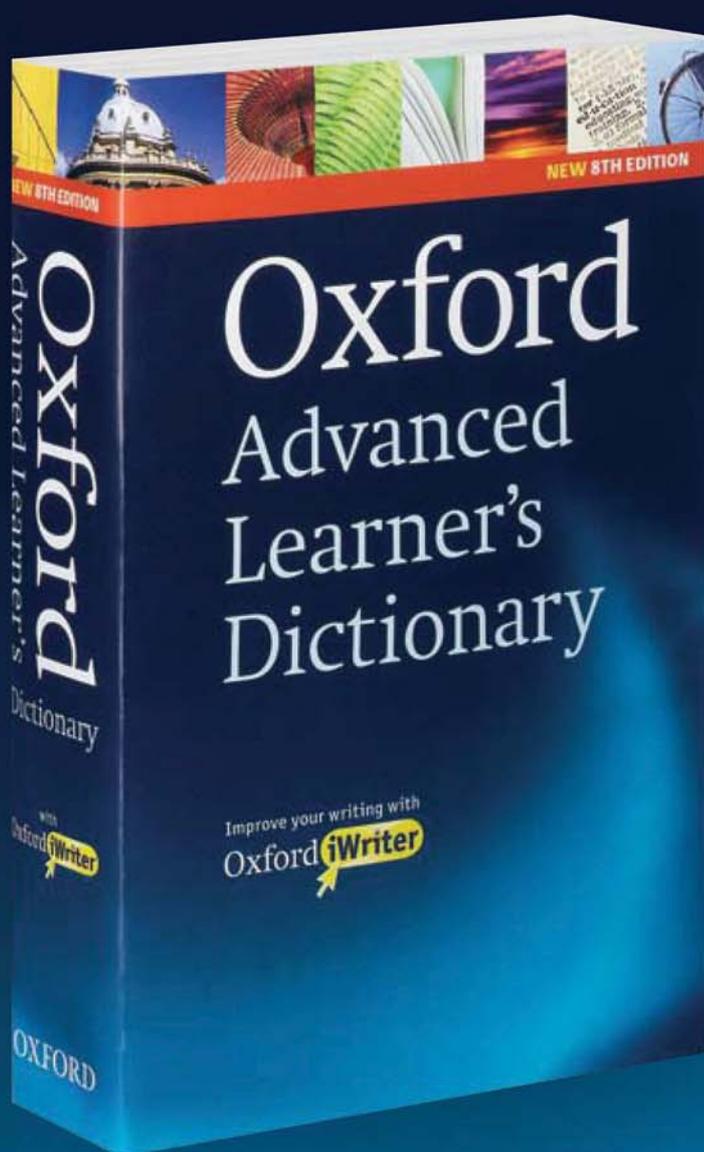
One of the models (Presentation) is a framework that suggests a way of structuring an oral presentation, which can be effectively exploited in the process of preparing for oral exams of all kinds.

The Oxford iWriter interacts with OALD8, which means that a student can simultaneously make use of all the information available in the dictionary. That makes the print dictionary as well as the CD-ROM an indispensable teaching and learning tool, especially in the course of studying for the General and Vocational Matura exams or other national exams.



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