

**Increasing Emotional Intelligence
for Better Business Competence
through Literature in Tertiary ESP Classes
for Agricultural Students**

Katja Težak

Green Friends for Life

Urška Zupin

**Embracing controversy
in the EFL classroom**

Rita Divéki

Is the Queen really dead?

Danny Singh



Critical thinking at a glance (11)

Case Study: Should a plenary speaker be just respectful or generous as well?

Nada Đukić



Different micro cultures promote and value some things. At the same time, they reject openly or overtly some other things. For example, a plenary speaker at an international conference can bore their audience to death, and even disrespect the time assigned to them. On the other hand, they might pour their heart and soul into their presentation, and apologetically continue instead of finishing in due time. In the first case, one might argue that the speaker's ego and arrogance got the better of them. And in the second one, the speaker is probably just trying to be generous with their time and expertise in order to overdeliver for their audience.

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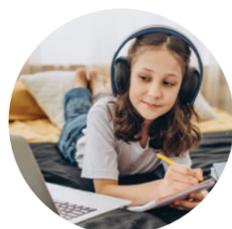
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Editorial

"It's the simple things in life that are the most extraordinary."
- Paulo Coelho

Researchers at One Poll surveyed 6,000 adults in the UK, US, Singapore and Australia to identify all the little things that bring joy. Being somewhere new, finishing a really good book and a breathtaking view top the list. Other favourites include a picnic, listening to favourite songs and feeling the sun on your face. More than half of respondents, 63 percent to be exact, believe they don't get to enjoy life's simplest pleasures often enough, while others feel they don't have enough time to enjoy the little pleasures as often as they should.

Summer is the perfect time to unplug and savour the little things. The other seasons are marked by constant hustle and bustle, back-to-back obligations, and anticipation of what comes next. In the autumn, when school starts, we have a lot to do, from planning to preparing for the first few months of school. As soon as we feel a hint of hectic stress during the winter months, we wonder how we're going to make it to winter break and keep our sanity. And it doesn't stop there. From April to June, we experience a jam-packed schedule of classwork, external exams, and a host of topics that still need to be covered for students to fully grasp a subject. But if you do it right, summer just lingers.

Summer has a sweetness that should be savoured. The beauty of small pleasures like a cup of coffee sipped slowly to be enjoyed to the fullest, watching the sunrise and admiring the world in pastel hues, reading a captivating novel and revelling in the world of fiction, or simply enjoying the calmness of the moment. These little pleasures cost nothing (or at least not much), but they can be immensely satisfying. The above examples are just a few ordinary things I start my summer days with, but the possibilities are endless and can be expanded throughout the day.

On the back cover you'll find a list of tiny pleasures to enjoy this summer. I hope the list inspires you to reflect on the little things that bring you joy, too, or to be mindful of the things we so often let go unnoticed. Of course, you can probably come up with a hundred more things, and it should also be noted that one person's pleasures aren't always pleasures for others. Whatever you enjoy doing, the simple pleasures of summer can turn into a great day that fills your life with magic and offers you experiences that make you feel alive.

In addition to the summer season delights, in this issue of IN you'll also find impressions from our 28th International Conference, a number of interesting reads, and some of our regular as well as new summary features. Don't miss Nada Đukić's regular thought-provoking column (see left) and get in touch if you have an interesting idea, lesson plan, or project to share.

Have a great holiday, relax, soak in the summertime spirit and spend your time doing things that bring you joy.

Alenka Tratnik
Editor

Reference

- One Poll. <https://www.onepoll.us/surveys>



28th

International IATEFL Slovenia Conference TEACHING - Only for the brave

'Teaching: only for the brave' was an apt title for the IATEFL Slovenia 2023 conference. It's always scared me! Since I first went, either eight years ago or since I was eight (it feels like I've been going my whole life so exact chronology is hard to give!) it has always made me, I don't know...up my game? It's scary, because they're a tough crowd. Froth is not enough; they want the real coffee! So as a speaker, it always makes me really ensure that what I have to deliver is top form. Not that one ever feels able to deliver dross, but there is an extra pressure from this crowd of well-known colleagues, I always want to really impress them! That said, it's also a venue, I've always felt, that welcomes experimentation and so asking the room to help me develop complex ideas or new techniques is also, always a lot of fun. Also, their ideas are often better than mine.

As always, it was a blast seeing legendary figures like Jeremy Harmer, Grzegorz Spiewak alongside luminaries like Dr Nora Tartsay, Danny Singh, Uwe Pohl, Dr Claudia Molnar, Sandra Vida, Kristy Kors, Lazlo Németh and Volodja Šiškovič. But also seeing brilliant sessions from people presenting for the first time. And everyone relaxing in the pool or cafe together afterwards. It's an event like no other. Truly, earning the label 'Europe's cosiest conference'. I've met amazing people there, both personally and professionally. It's not too much to say I've made friends for life. Everyone arrives excited, it's like going on a sleepover with your mates when you're 8! Happy huddles of chat, songs, drinks, games and laughter. Finally dragging yourself to bed hours after you swore you'd go, feet aching from dancing, mind reeling with ideas. I go for the people I know already, and keep coming back for the great new people I've met every time. And the things they're all doing! Amazing work! Fresh approaches! Brilliant. If EFL had a secret sect of Ninja monks, they'd all be at IATEFL Slovenia!

While I enjoy speaking at this conference, I'd still go even if they just asked me to collect coats...! I love it.

Thom Jones
Ambassador of Buzz for Express publishing

Great job as always!

Thanks a lot!!!! Well planned and organized, creative and supportive atmosphere, great speakers and presenters, lots of wonderful opportunities.

*A great conference - again - keep up the good work!
I'm looking forward to the next one.
You are awesomeness personified.*

*For me best conference yet - congratulations!
Great speakers, great topics, smooth organisation,
really cool logo this year.*

*Thanks a lot for conference management and care.
For a person who likes to make notes I have lack
of space in this nice and laconic brochure :))*

*I had some FOMO because the schedule was
so packed with many overlapping activities.
But I guess that's a good problem to have.
It was very fun and informative.*

*You're trying so hard, it's a great venue
and everything is well taken care of. Thank you
so much for your effort and enthusiasm!*



*Keep up the great work,
teachers really need such events.*

Conference Poetry Competition



1st place

A Tale of a Hero by Milan Mandeljc

"Not once upon a time,
says this ancient rhyme
there lived a mighty..." "Prince?"
"No, not at all, just rinse."

"I know, a lonely king,
three daughters and a ring?"
"No king would ever fight,
to make the horrors right..."

"Who then, please tell me, Gran!"
"Well, son, no common man,
could survive this place,
horrors that he'd have to face..."

There were heads and eyes,
mostly vicious (some were nice),
t'was hunger in the halls,
and how these creatures sprawl!

Few were tamed by home barns,
some needed tying with a yarn,
others dead, no hope left,
of souls they'd been bereft.

To keep the dark at bay,
comes the hero, come well....they!"
"They? A gender fluid knight?"
"No, teachers! In all their might!

First, morning zombie troupe
brought down in one fell swoop,
and the obnoxious knockers,
late commuters – rocky rockers.

Then the disbelievers,
oh, and over-over-over achievers!
Hell turns more apparent,
there goes the seven headed-parent.

The battle would not cease,
no fight would go with ease:
essays, tests... All hopes are hewn,
luckily there's always June!

And then a silent thank you,
years later out of the blue,
- some learnt teachers were a friend,-
for this story's happy end."

2nd place

A Brave Path by Vesna Gros

Did you want to be a mother hen?
Or did you simply like using a red pen?
Was there nothing else you could or wanted to do?
Or was it just because your mum was a teacher, too?

Whatever the reason, bear this in mind:
You are brave and you are awesome,
You are wise and you are kind.
You make your students blossom,
You leave none of them behind.

And will you get from this teaching
What you want, even so?
I sure hope you do,
But I cannot really know.

What I do know is this:
You are not you from ten years ago.
You change and adapt, you fail and you grow.
The path you have chosen is daring,
But your IATEFL tribe is caring.

Some might take you and your work for granted;
Stay brave and do not consider this tragic.
Reward comes in feeling soever enchanted,
When students find joy in your everyday magic.

3rd place

Not Ed Sheeran

So, now I am a teacher,
It's going to be a blast –
I'll get them all to love me –
I won't even have to ask.

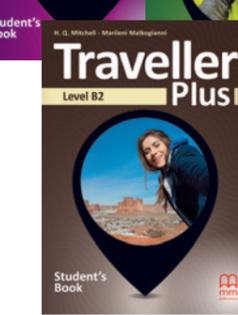
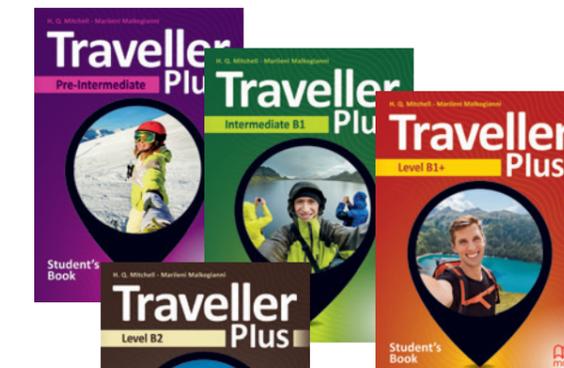
Oh no, it's going badly;
I can't stick to the plan
They're rowdy or they're quiet
I freeze, I choke, I am.

Despairing and self-doubting.
I shake myself and see;
They're children, and they MATTER –
More than knowledge – and more than ME.



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behind you all the way...

Increasing Emotional Intelligence for Better Business Competence through Literature in Tertiary ESP Classes for Agricultural Students

Katja Težak



Katja Težak is an English and German lecturer at the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Maribor and she predominantly teaches future teachers and future agricultural specialists. Her research fields include literature, didactics and a possible blend between the two in EFL and ESP classrooms.

Introduction

In general, literature seems to have gained and lost in popularity in general EFL teaching and is often underutilized as a teaching tool in tertiary ESP (English for Specific Purposes) classes. That means, that we are leaving a vast pool of potentially excellent teaching tools untouched. Literature in the ESP class can contribute immensely towards developing a good expert and businessperson, which are both skills required for a good agricultural expert, especially in a predominantly natural science-oriented study programme and job. Being a good businessperson is part and parcel of being in agri-business, as it requires its professionals to be good salespeople, great negotiators and to partake in a lot of business related networking activities in international contexts. It is my strong belief, that we need to strive for a well-rounded expert who is in touch with the humanities and works on knowing the people and their communities in their expert field, and ESP and specifically literature in the target language can lend a hand in this endeavour.

Literature in EFL and ESP

Literature in EFL has had some fluctuations in its use through time, initially being the main source of input for teaching in language classes in the Grammar Translation Method and was later moved to the periphery during the heyday of structuralism and the audiolingual method (Colie & Slater, 1987, p. 2). CLT also used less literature and more attention was paid to dialogues and conversations. Later developments saw a mild resurgence of literature's use in EFL, but in ESP it is still largely underutilised. (Hirvela, 1990).

One problem that arises in course development and material choice in ESP is still the wide held belief that ESP is only there to address the most basic language elements of the professional field and nothing more, and that decreases its value, as it is capable of fulfilling many more learner/future expert needs as Hirvela (1990) states: "ESP

is capable of far more flexibility than it is generally given credit for. Because of its strict adherence to the principle of catering to learners' instrumental needs, ESP is frequently regarded as a rigid pedagogy, permitting no deviation from materials and approaches which fulfil the exact linguistic requirements of learners vis-a-vis their target situations." As literature does not exactly meet the first association form of a semi-scientific or scientific agricultural article, it often gets skipped over as a learning material, but the next paragraph will point out one of its very important uses in developing a future agricultural expert and agri-business expert, namely emotional intelligence.

Teaching Emotional Intelligence Through Literature

Mai (2018) points out that literature can help develop students' EI because literature is the voice of emotions and feelings: "Each work of literature is a treasure of human emotional experience and emotional intelligence." This makes literature the ideal provider of example and analysis practice and of understanding emotion in the target language for ESP students and all students in general. It can also serve as a reflection on what the students feel themselves and maybe help them identify what they need as humans, language learners and future experts: "Literature may offer us an emotional outlet"; "A great work of art may provide us the opportunity to feel more profoundly and more generously, to perceive more fully the implications of experience, than the hurried and fragmentary conditions of life permit." (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 44, 45)

Research and psychology have also realised the utility of literature for teaching emotional intelligence and have established bibliotherapy, which is a form of therapy and teaching practice where experts specifically teach children and adults how to address their emotions and recognise the emotional states of those around them, which already constitutes the practice of emotional, namely inter- and intrapersonal, intelligence. "Bibliotherapy appears particularly viable for promoting EI (emotional intelligence) because the technique strengthens insight and understanding by pairing literature with mediation." (Cartledge & Kiarie, 2001; Salovey & Sluyter, 1997). Including literature in this way in our ESP classes can provide a whole host of benefits to the students from language improvement through meaningful usage, personal growth and self-reflection, to better understanding the needs of the people they will encounter in their professional life, giving them an advantage in sales and negotiation.

Importance of emotional intelligence in business

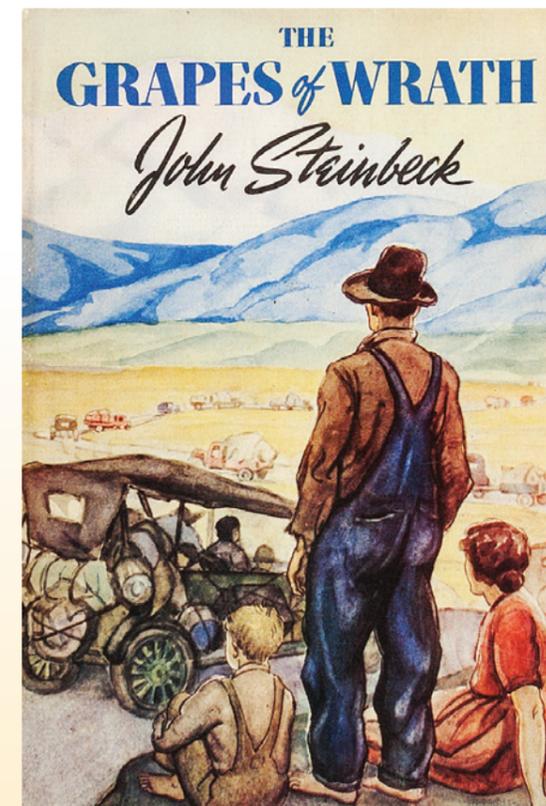
Emotional intelligence has been recognised as one of the main pillars of a productive positive work environment: "For example, the Hay Group states one study of 44 Fortune 500 companies found that salespeople with high EQ (Emotional Intelligence Quotient) produced twice the revenue of those with average or below average scores. In another study, technical programmers demonstrating the top 10 percent of emotional intelligence competency were developing software three times faster than those with lower competency." (Poskey, 2006) The quote indicates that people with a well-developed emotional intelligence perform better in sales positions and those are very prominent for agricultural students, as a big part of their work will include producing and selling their own products or they might take up positions in sales where they sell food, fertilizer, pesticides, farming equipment, and the list goes on.

Another factor future farmers will face is personal happiness and the ability to connect to others in their work environment. When those factors are lacking, the well-being and performance very probably decrease: "Unmet emotional needs cause the majority of problems at work." (Poskey, 2006). This is a facet we can also try and improve in the ESP classroom by utilizing literature and thereby showcasing real language and expressed emotion.

Examples of Activities in Practical Use

There are several components of emotional intelligence which are very important for the work environment of an agricultural expert and that can be practiced through literary texts, such as intuition and empathy, political acumen and social skills and self-expectations and motivation (Poskey, 2006). In my ESP classes we used an excerpt from John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, a novel published in 1939 and set during the great depression in the USA. It depicts the life of a poor family of tenant farmers who were driven from their farm by drought, economic turmoil and banks forcing tenant farmers out of work. They read the excerpt (in the appendix), worked through the problematic vocabulary and then went on to do three activities promoting their communication skills and their emotional intelligence.

Picture taken from: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ad/The_Grapes_of_Wrath_%281939_1sted_cover%29.jpg



Activity 1 focused on pinpointing anxiety indicators. The instruction was the following: "Find the places in the excerpt that indicate land evaluation anxiety. Why are those instances causing the characters' anxiety? What are the financial consequences of bad soil evaluation? What can you do in a situation where someone gives your land a bad business potential evaluation?" This activity was promoting intuition and empathy, which are our awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns (Poskey, 2006). We developed a discussion on compassion with themselves after a work-related set back, or lead them to think about how they could assist a business partner or customer in such a challenging situation and how that could benefit their business.

Activity 2 focused on reframing and tried to promote political acumen and social skills, which include adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others. (Poskey, 2006) The instruction stated: "Find the conditionals that indicate how the narrator wants the land to be different (e.g.: "If the dust only wouldn't fly. ... If the top would only stay on the soil, it might not be so bad. ... If they could only rotate the crops they might pump blood back into the land. Well, it's too late... (Steinbeck, 2006)). Why do you think those are used for this situation? How could you rephrase those in a negotiation context to persuade your negotiators? How would you pinpoint their cooperation?" Those questions were used to find a way to empathise and use empathy to try and persuade our discussion partners to find solutions instead of focusing on problems.

Activity 3 was a practice in self expectations & motivation, which are emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate goal reaching (Poskey, 2006). The instruction stated: "Find the piece of text that talks about generations of families having to obtain this land, what they lived to see on this land and what it means to them. Would you agree that this is sentimental value? Does your farm or your home have sentimental value to you? Do you think your business partners or customers have an emotional attachment to their home-stead? Can your love for your environment motivate you to negotiate for it harder, or will it make you more lenient in your negotiation?" The resulting discussion led us to the opinion, that understanding ourselves and the people we work with can increase our motivation and give us a bigger sense of fulfilment.

The students reacted very positively to the text choice and discussion, despite an initial reluctance to engage in literature, as they were worried the text would be too difficult for them. They reported being pleasantly surprised how beautiful the language was and how much about human emotions could be interpreted from the writing.

Conclusion

After venturing through this article, I think we can safely agree on the fact that literature has indeed a lot to offer ESP teaching and learning. The mere fact that so much of our students' work success depends on their soft skills and not just on their factual knowledge, almost pleads with us to reevaluate the belief that an ESP classroom is merely a place of profession specific vocabulary practice. If we want to develop a farmer or any professional for the future, we need to go broader and include practices and materials that will develop a well-rounded, effective language user who will use their foreign language correctly in the lines, as well as in between the lines.

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Appendix

Excerpt from *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
The owners of the land came onto the land, or more often a spokesman for the owners came. They came in closed cars, and they felt the dry earth with their fingers, and sometimes they drove big earth augers into the ground for soil tests. The tenants, from their sun-beaten dooryards, watched uneasily when the closed cars drove along the fields. And at last the owner men drove into the dooryards and sat in their cars to talk out of the windows. The tenant men stood beside the cars for a while, and then squatted on their hams and found sticks with which to mark the dust. In the open doors the women stood looking out, and behind them the children— corn-headed children, with wide eyes, one bare foot on top of the other bare foot, and the toes working. The women and the children watched their men talking to the owner men. They were silent...

The owner men sat in the cars and explained. You know the land is poor. You've scabbled at it long enough, God knows. The squatting tenant men nodded and wondered and drew figures in the dust, and yes, they knew, God knows. If the dust only wouldn't fly. If the top would only stay on the soil, it might not be so bad. The owner men went on leading to their point: You know the land's getting poorer. You know what cotton does to the land; robs it, sucks all the blood out of it. The squatters nodded—they

knew, God knew. If they could only rotate the crops they might pump blood back into the land. Well, it's too late...

The squatting men raised their eyes to understand. Can't we just hang on? Maybe the next year will be a good year. God knows how much cotton next year. And with all the wars—God knows what price cotton will bring. Don't they make explosives out of cotton? And uniforms? Get enough wars and cotton'll hit the ceiling. Next year, maybe. They looked up questioningly. We can't depend on it. The bank—the monster has to have profits all the time. It can't wait. It'll die... The squatting men looked down again. What do you want us to do? We can't take less share of the crop—we're half-starved now. The kids are hungry all the time. We got no clothes, torn an' ragged. If all the neighbors weren't the same, we'd be ashamed to go to meeting.

And at last the owner men came to the point. The tenant system won't work anymore. One man on a tractor can take the place of twelve or fourteen families. Pay him a wage and take all the crop. We have to do it. We don't like to do it... But you'll kill the land with cotton. We know. We've got to take cotton quick before the land dies. Then we'll sell the land. Lots of families in the East would like to own a piece of land. The tenant men looked up alarmed. But what'll happen to us? How'll we eat? You'll have to get off the land. The plows'll go through the dooryard...

And now the squatting men stood up angrily. Grampa took up the land, and he had to kill the Indians and drive them away. And Pa was born here, and he killed weeds and snakes...An' we was born here. There in the door—our children born here. And Pa had to borrow money. The bank owned the land then, but we stayed and we got a little bit of what we raised...It's our land. We measured it and broke it up. We were born on it, and we got killed on it, died on it. Even if it's no good, it's still ours. That's what makes it ours—being born on it, working it, dying on it. That makes ownership, not a paper with numbers on it...

And now the owner men grew angry. You'll have to go. But it's ours, the tenant men cried. But if we go, where'll we go? How'll we go? We got no money. We're sorry, said the owner men... You're on land that isn't yours. Once over the line maybe you can pick cotton in the fall. Maybe you can go on relief. Why don't you go on west to California? There's work there, and it never gets cold. Why, you can reach out anywhere and pick an orange. Why, there's always some kind of crop to work in. Why don't you go there? And the owner men started their cars and rolled away.

What you didn't not know about blended learning, and you were afraid to ask

Małgorzata Szulc-Kurpaska
Sabina A. Nowak



Małgorzata Szulc-Kurpaska, Ph.D. is an assistant professor at Witelon Collegium State University in Legnica. She is a co-author of teaching programmes for pre-school and lower primary education, a coursebook for the first grade of primary education entitled Sparks published by Oxford University Press and methodology books, namely Teaching and Learning English. Education for Life (2022), Teaching English to Young Learners (2012) published by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN. Her professional interests involve researching foreign language acquisition in children, pre-service and in-service teacher training, language learning strategies, classroom interaction, creativity in language learning and teaching, individual learner differences, teacher identity, teacher and learner well-being, teacher and learner engagement.



Sabina A. Nowak, Ph.D. is an assistant professor at the Institute of English Studies at the Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland. She works in the Department of English Language Education, where she teaches Didactics, Assessment, ICT for Teachers, and lectures on CLIL. She holds Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics (English Philology) and M.A. in Tourism. She is the co-author of the methodology book Teaching and Learning English. Education for Life (2022). Her current interests stem from a deep belief in the importance of developing teachers' competences in the area of action-oriented learning, ICT, and learner-centred pedagogy.

"Learners can benefit from the fact that space and distance do not matter anymore."
(King, 2016, p. 2)

Watch

"What blended learning looks like in the classroom?"
<https://youtu.be/NPvreKWaKjY>

Blended learning is also referred to as *hybrid, mixed or b-learning* (Maciaszczyk, 2009). It combines traditional teaching with different forms related to *online learning, e-learning, distance learning or virtual learning*. Stockwell and Tanaka-Ellis (2012) identify four new environments for language learning: face-to-face, blended, distance, and virtual worlds (p.71). By face-to-face (f2f) environment the authors mean a context in which the students interact directly with the computer individually, in pairs or small groups. Teachers in these environments monitor students' work and provide support while software delivers content, instruction, and assessment. Typical activities would involve preparing a presentation, displaying the outcome of a project, or conducting research. In distance environments, students are separated from the teacher (they do not learn in the classroom), and they can decide where and when they want to study (White, 2003, p. 8). Communication with the teacher is carried out using web-based tools and platforms, such as Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) (Hockly, 2016, p. 143), Learning Management Systems (LMS), such as Moodle or Blackboard, or by means of the tools for computer-mediated communication (CMC).

Edmodo (www.edmodo.com) is one of the social learning platforms which enables the teacher to organise classroom, assign tasks, follow progress of the learners, offer feedback and upload materials (Lewis, 2017, p. 66). It also makes it possible to incorporate apps to the website by the teachers to meet the needs of the students. The interface of this platform is similar to Facebook and learners have access to a wall (also known as *virtual board*) to which they can also add links, pictures and videos. The wall may also provide a forum for group or class discussions (Stannard & Skip Basiel, 2013, p. 166).

Even though the idea of blended learning appeared for the first time in the year 2000, to refer to learning in the classroom supported by e-learning, at present it has expanded into integration of different forms of learning and teaching such as learning strategies (Gajek & Stadnik, 2017), learning environments, and learning styles (Marsh, 2012, p. 3). Foreign language learning strategies in the digital environment entail strategies exploited with online dictionaries, strategies used while referring to linguistic corpora, informal learning strategies with the Net resources and strategies applied in mobile technologies (Gajek & Stadnik, 2017). Stockwell and Tanaka-Ellis (2012) define environments as "not only the technological artifacts, but also, among other things, the curriculum, the classroom (or lack of thereof), the learners and teachers, and the skills and

the backgrounds that they bring with them” (p. 71). We should, therefore, make it clear that a blended learning environment is not only the context and the technological devices, but also the lessons, the curriculum, the student’s and teacher’s roles, and the skills involved in this process. Blended learning is explained in an elaborate way by Sharma and Barrett (2007) who state that:

Blended learning refers to a course which combines face-to-face classroom component with an appropriate use of technology. The term technology covers a wide range of recent technologies, such as the internet, CD-ROMs and interactive whiteboards. It also includes the use of computers as a means of communication, such as chat and email, and a number of environments which enable the teachers to enrich their courses, such as VLEs (virtual learning environments), blogs and wikis. (p. 7)

Staker and Horn (2012, p. 8) distinguish 4 models of blended learning: the Rotation model, Flex model, Self-blend model, and the Enriched-Virtual model. In the *Rotation-model* students switch among the online learning and face-to-face learning. This model can be implemented in four different types: Station-Rotation, Lab-Rotation, Flipped-Classroom, and Individual Rotation. In the Station Rotation type, the whole class may rotate between activities or learners are divided into groups and one works with the teacher while another one performs activities by themselves (pp. 8-9). The Lab-Rotation type allows the learners to leave the classroom and rotate among different locations at school, e.g. the learning lab designed for online learning (p. 9). The Flipped Classroom involves students alternating between online learning from remote location and face-to-face practice in the classroom under the teacher’s guidance (p. 10). The Individual Rotation is a more individualised model in which each student has a personalised schedule and does not have to move from one station to another (Staker & Horn, 2012, p. 11). The *Flex model* modifies the schedule of online and face-to-face classroom depending on the progress made by students. In the *Self-blend model* the students may enrol on online courses to supplement traditional face-to-face classrooms. The *Enriched-Virtual model* is similar to the Flipped Classroom as students may change between online learning and traditional classroom instruction, however, they may not have the obligation to attend the classroom every day of the week if they pass the course (p. 15).

There are certain factors which need to be considered while planning blended learning. One of them involves complementarity, which means that blended learning should contribute to achieving the educational aims, meet students’ needs and that it should incorporate different components in a consistent and supportive manner. In this way a connection is established between what is being taught and practised in the classroom, and what is learned and performed online or through other modalities. The next issue which needs to be tackled is the use of various media available to suit different needs and styles of learning. Students ought to be assisted in terms of such aspects as academic, affective, and technical development. To find the right blend, the teacher should convey the message to the learners that they are not the only deliverer of knowledge and that students can learn from each other by

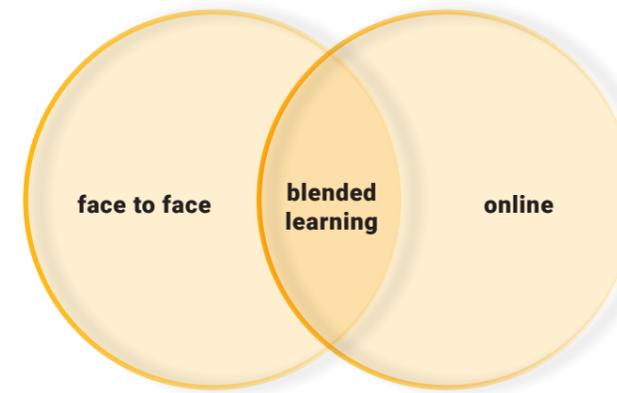
means of forums and blogs in which they can discuss the issues from the course. This academic support may also allow the teacher to have an insight into learner problems as they exchange ideas more freely among themselves in peer-to-peer and group interaction. Forums and blogs also allow more reserved students to voice their opinions as in the classroom they may not have the courage or the time to participate because it may be taken by more outgoing peers. The teacher may initiate a new topic every week and each student should contribute to it at least three times a week. With time, the topics may be introduced by the students themselves and the forum may be moderated by the learners’ taking turns in doing so. By means of these online forms of interaction a learner community may be created to build the sense of belonging and to support the members, both academically and emotionally.

For this reason, Marsh (2012, pp. 16-18) proposes the following steps to implement blended learning successfully:

- **Online: prepare for class (see: “Flipped Classroom” further developed in this article)**
Some students may want to get ready for lessons by preparing some terminology which will be introduced by the teacher during the next lesson unit. In this way they may activate their top-down knowledge, revise what they already know, remember some words, allow the new information to be linked to their existing schemata.
- **In class: focus on communication**
Encourage pair and group activities to foster communication during the lesson. Student-to-student interaction should be enhanced in the classroom time. This enables their participation in discussion on topics that are interesting for the learners and promotes the social skills of listening to each other and responding to what they hear.
- **Online: review, extend and consolidate**
Students can revise and consolidate the material at their own pace and in their own time. They may also get encouraged to enter real life interaction with other users of the target language. This online study might also enable them to improve their writing skills, as communication online is predominantly in the written form.

One major concern about blended learning is about preparing both the teacher and the learners to exploit modern technologies confidently and comfortably. The teacher’s role in blended learning is to stimulate motivation, monitor progress, provide feedback, enhance confidence in the learners and decide which elements of the course can be replaced with technology. The teacher’s concern is to enhance output in the students but in order to achieve it, the learners must be provided with sufficient input (watching videos, listening to podcasts, reading texts, being exposed to authentic language). Blended learning is learner centred in the sense that the themes of classes should be related to the interests of the learners, they should address learners’ needs and they should foster active learning. Students will benefit from being able to decide when they want to learn, rather than being limited only by the time of the classes. However, the teacher may encourage the learners to plan their own learning, to motivate them to work systematically or to monitor their progress by offering advice. The teacher may also assign project work to enhance group work which may result in a presentation delivered

in class or online. The intention is to integrate the best practices of in-class work and online learning to provide optimum conditions for language learning. Graham (2006) anticipated that “[...] we can be pretty certain that the trend toward blended learning systems will increase” (p. 7). As King (2016) recommends: “[t]he key to a successful blended learning approach is to use the strengths of each medium appropriately, combining the two different learning environments in an integrated way so that each medium complements the other” (p. 3).



Activity 1: “Find your blend!”

Complete the following table with the points relevant for blended learning (Olejarczuk, 2014, p. 60).

	Traditional learning	e-learning	Blended learning
Place	Classroom	e-learning platform, Web 2.0 tools	
Communicating with students	Direct during classes	Not limited	
Time	Limited by the class time	Unlimited online meetings	
Materials and resources	Traditional coursebook	e-learning resources	
Participation in classes	Face-to-face	online	
Feedback	Direct, oral, immediate, real time	Written, real time or delayed	

- Follow these stages for designing your blended learning:
1. Set the aims for class
 2. Specify the activities for the students to do online before the class
 3. Identify the activities for the learners to do in class
 4. Design the activities for the students to do online after the class

Name the components of blended learning you incorporate in your teaching. Ask your learners to contribute with their ideas on how to blend classroom learning with online learning. What themes have you suggested for them to discuss in the forum/chat box on Teams/blog? What themes have they put forward? What have you learned

about your students’ problems in learning? How have they managed to help each other? How have you responded to their problems? How will you monitor their progress? How will you assess their achievement? Do you think your learners need blended learning?

Flipped Classroom

The **Flipped Classroom** (FC) has become a buzzword recently. It is a form of blended learning.

Watch the video to learn more about the similarities and differences between flipped classroom and blended learning <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50Bx49XTTg>

The term was coined by Bergmann and Sams (2012) and it is a key component of blended learning. It is defined as “a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in this subject matter” (FLN, 2014). Even though the FC integrates face-to-face traditional methods of teaching with distance learning, there is one substantial difference. The Flipped Classroom changes the order in which learning takes place. This is especially important in the context of quality education because the cognitive processes which tend to refer to lower order thinking skills (LOTS: remembering, understanding, applying) are done by students at home. The most challenging cognitive processes of higher order thinking skills (HOTS analysing, evaluating, creating), which are usually given to students as homework, are done in class. Keene, Onchwari, and Oigara (2014) explain FC as a “technology-based method of learning that reverses instruction, moving homework or more learner-centred activities into class time even as it moves traditional instruction (i.e., lectures) out of the class into the homework slot using videos or other audio-visual means.” (p. 17). It entails providing the students with pre-recorded asynchronous videos (Podcasts, Infographics, online textbooks, web resources) followed by in-class exercises. In other words, schoolwork is done at home and homework is done at school.

The Flipped Classroom Method of Instruction (FCMI) has been successfully applied in various educational contexts, starting from primary schools to higher education levels. There are four pillars of flipped learning (FLN, 2014), known as F-L-I-P™, including the teachers’ roles that accompany their application:

1. Flexible environment

The teacher establishes spaces and time frames for students to interact and reflect on learning, observes and monitors students’ work, provides the students with different ways of learning.

2. Learning culture

The teacher gives students opportunities to engage in meaningful activities and scaffolds their work by offering help and providing feedback.

3. Intentional content

The teacher prioritizes concepts for learners to access on their own, creates relevant content (usually videos) for the students, and makes the content accessible.

4. Professional educators

The teacher is available to all students for individual or group feedback in real time, conducts ongoing formative assessments during the class time through observation and records of performance to inform future instruction, as well as they collaborate with other teachers, reflect on how the process unfolds, and take responsibility for transforming the teaching practice.

There are different ways of implementing the flipped approach in the English language classroom. When planning a flipping classroom, the teacher may provide input (usually short, instructional video a few minutes long) that is understandable for the learners. It is important not to overload the students with materials (reading, listening, watching). The teacher should avoid content that is offensive or abusive and prepare the material with a definite aim which could be linguistic or non-linguistic. The teacher may plan exercises or tasks for the class time, as well as monitor and moderate the skills learned. It is crucial to evaluate the results and reward students’ effort with verbal praise, badges, grades, or any other form of appreciation for their work, which may seem attractive to students. The teacher may provide counselling and guiding whenever learners need it, to support learner’s development.

The main challenges of Flipped Classroom are usually connected with poor quality videos or materials provided by the teachers. Some learners may find the content of the video unattractive and be bored with poor task design in the classroom. It often happens that instructions are too long, explanations are not clear, and the tasks are too challenging for learners. Some web-based resources may not be updated or are irrelevant for learners. When no feedback or evaluation procedures are given, learners may not develop their e-literacy well at the required level. For more ideas on flipped learning you can read digital newsletter published by FlippedLearning.org., (<https://flippedlearning.org>) entitled *Flipped Learning Today* and visit the website <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hLOUlbAgs0>.

Activity 2: Teacher roles when using videos

Study possible teacher roles when using a video (URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Un7ldcQt1k>) in a language classroom.

1. How much time would you devote to conducting the activities in the table below?
2. What instructions (questions) would you provide learners with before and after the video?
3. How much time would the learners have to perform each of the activities?

Possible teacher roles	Lesson procedure	Time
Flipped classroom T prepares some content/input in a PowerPoint presentation or Prezi.	T uses an application to capture the screen (e.g., <i>ScreenPal -formerly Screencast-O-Matic</i> , or <i>Loom</i>) to record a video tutorial for Ls.	
Before watching T activates Ls’ schemata (background knowledge) Sherlock Holmes	T asks display questions: <i>What do you know about Sherlock Holmes?</i> <i>How much can you tell us about Dr John Watson?</i>	
While watching T focuses Ls’ attention during the task by using the ‘Freeze frame’ technique.	T stops the video (“freezes” the screen) at a given moment of the video to let learners predict or think about how the story proceeds. T asks the following questions: <i>Why does SH borrow a mobile phone?</i> <i>In what context do we use the expression “bright young things”?</i>	
After watching T mediates the follow up activities	T provides Ls with opportunities to contextualise and use target language in meaningful situations (“pushed output”) 1. Ls role-play conversations 2. Ls write a new criminal/detective story. 3. Ls play the online game CLUEDO (Ls select a suspect, weapon, room) http://www.sherlockian-sherlock.com/bbc-sherlock-cluedo.php	

Case study 1

Olejarczuk (2014) describes an e-learning ESP course at Poznan University of Technology with the use of the Moodle Platform in which 30% classes were planned online developing the soft skills in the students and 70% of the classes were carried by the teacher in the classroom. The soft skills component included negotiations, presentations, assertiveness, body language, stress management, effective time management, motivation at work and business correspondence (Olejarczuk, 2014, p. 64). The online component involved a task online, using online dictionaries, editable dictionaries, crosswords, watching short films, completing interactive exercises. Students received individual feedback on their online exercises. The face-to-face component of the course practised hard skills in language learning.

Case study 2

Cambridge Language Centre organised Cambridge University Language Programme (<https://www.langcen.cam.ac.uk/culp/culp-general-courses.html>) in 2000 in which 30% of classes are conducted online and 70% face-to-face. The online materials were developed at the centre to enhance listening and reading skills of the participants but also speaking and writing activities were included which prepare the students for classroom performance. When teachers get to know the participants progress better, the programme may become adjusted more to their individual needs. With growing competence of the students, the blend was modified to 70% of online classes and 30% of teacher fronted classrooms. In this way teacher support is more adjusted to when the participants need it and the students become more independent in their language study.

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The 12th ELTAM MK Conference

Exploring and Sharing the Art of Teaching

Jožica Nuč



Jožica Nuč has a degree in English and German. She has worked as a language teacher for 39 years and works at VIZ II. OŠ Rogaška Slatina. She is the co-author of an English course book for primary schools "Reach for the Stars". She has conducted many Comenius projects and language projects with her students. She has held several workshops at international conferences, including the Language Label Event, the SOCRATES, LEONARDO DA VINCI, and YOUTH FOR EUROPE, IATEFL Slovenia, ELTA Belgrade, HUPE Croatia, and IATEFL Liverpool conferences. In her free time, she collects 'The Little Prince' books and travels around the globe.

At the beginning of September 2022, members of IATEFL Slovenia were invited to apply for a free place to attend the 12th ELTAM MK conference in Struga, North Macedonia. The costs of the conference fee and accommodation would be covered for a member in return for writing a report on their experience for the IN magazine. I applied for this task and was subsequently chosen to represent IATEFL Slovenia at the conference.

The conference took place on 8th and 9th October 2022 at the Hotel Drim in Struga, North Macedonia. A dinner was organised on the evening of the 7th October for all the guest speakers and representatives of partner organisations. Since it was my first time attending an ELT conference in North Macedonia I didn't know what to expect, but I experienced the warmest welcome ever! I had a problem with my car, but Aleksandra Popovski, whom I had never met before, immediately organised for her husband to have a look at it – first that very evening and then again – the next morning.

I really couldn't believe it! The two of them will forever stay in my heart as the kindest people I have ever met in my life! The conference opened with a plenary talk by George Kokolas entitled 'The Zest Vaccine'. In his opinion, zest is considered as one of the fundamental strengths for a positive psychological mindset. He indicated that zest can serve as a bedrock for the development of positive feelings during teaching. I couldn't agree with him more as teachers in Slovenia have gone through some tough time when returning to face-to-face instruction following distance learning during the covid epidemic.

The next plenary talk was entitled 'Alternative assessment: how to correct learners' errors without lowering their motivation'. Maria Davou showed us how to give corrective feedback to learners in a practical manner, without demotivating them. Together, we explored ways to track our learners' progress while helping them become more autonomous and independent in their learning.

Between plenary talks, workshops were conducted by teachers and representatives from North Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and the United Kingdom. As a Tina Turner music lover, I loved the workshop, 'Tina – simply the best' delivered by Anita Jokić from Prva Riječka Hrvatska Gimnazija in Rijeka, Croatia. This workshop was intended for teachers who love interdisciplinary lessons and wish to practise all four core skills with their students. We connected grammar, vocabulary, songs and stories, enjoyed an amazing life story of Tina Turner, listened to great music, watched a video, did a bit of acting, expanded our vocabulary, played a quiz and had ... a lot of fun!

The first address on Saturday afternoon, 'Teachers and gatekeepers they face', was given by Aleksandra Popovski. Her talk looked at teachers' working conditions and the gatekeepers who prevent any real change to occur in teaching. While listening to her, I realized that the working conditions for teachers have become more and more complex and difficult, as more demands and responsibilities have been imposed upon us.

The next plenary session, 'Graffiti, rich tapestries, and the art of belonging', was delivered by Tyson Seburn. He spoke about how to implement a pedagogy of belonging to learners and use visual art that already surrounds us.

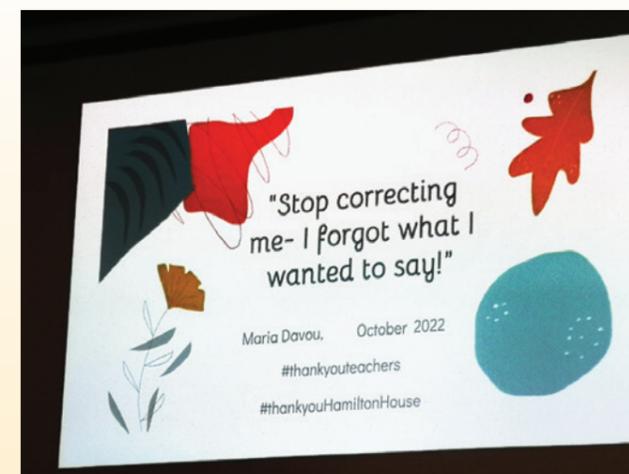
The workshop that impressed me the most that day was 'Teaching English to YL – it's always easier with some magic' by Sanja Rašković. She is an extremely energetic and positive presenter! She took us on a magical adventure in storyland, where we barely had time to breathe. This proved once again that if we, as teachers, don't like an activity, our students won't either.

During the conference, I also caught up with some really wonderful teachers and people who I continue to meet at other ELT conferences. I also had a chance to walk around Struga, buy myself a Macedonian Little Prince book and try some of the delicious Macedonian food. On Sunday morning our hosts took us to Ohrid to discover some of its treasures and traditional foods.

A fellow EL teacher from Croatia joined me on my journey home, providing me with some company. This was my way of paying back all the wonderful hospitality I had experienced at the conference.

All in all, there were some great talks and plenaries, national and international speakers, a positive atmosphere, I have made many new friends, and much more... I will definitely be going back very soon!

I would recommend any IATEFL member to take the opportunity of attending an international ELT conference. It's worth it for all aspects of your teaching and personal growth. Even though you may soon be retired! 😊



Malta's Top Notch Learning Experience

Nataša Forjanič



Nataša Forjanič is an English teacher at Davorin Jenko Primary School Cerklje na Gorenjskem. She has been teaching children from 4th to 9th grade since 2004 and still finds it inspiring to be able to make an impact on children's lives by facilitating their learning process and personal growth. Being a teacher was perceived as a dream job in her teenage years, but has proven to be a real challenge in recent years. Although teaching might be one of the hardest jobs ever, she believes it is also one of the most rewarding.

I have always enjoyed travelling. It not only helps you improve the language skills by putting you out of your comfort zone, but it also allows you to expand your cultural awareness and sensitivity. When Davorin Jenko Primary School, where I work, got into an Erasmus+ job shadowing programme, I was thrilled to be a part of it. In June 2022, my colleague and I travelled to Malta to improve our English and get a glimpse of how English is taught at a language school. Besides that, we were very eager to chase new experiences, see the Maltese culture, swim in the crystal clear sea, bask in the sun, and taste delicious food.

Why Malta? The only norm we set was that English had to be the official language of the country we were visiting. When choosing from the list of English-speaking countries, Malta would stand out for its language learning tradition, its rich cultural heritage, and its great climate. In Malta, people speak English and Maltese. The latter is like Arabic and sounds entirely different from English. You can hear people speaking both languages everywhere: in the streets, on busses, in shops, schools, hotels, restaurants, but in tourism English is a go to language. We met an English teacher, half Maltese, half British, who confided in us that he preferred English to Maltese by far.

We arrived in Malta on a sunny day. It was scorching hot with temperatures around 35 degrees Celsius. A taxi driver picked us up and drove us to our hotel. He didn't find it right away, which made us feel uneasy at first, but once you see the densely populated cities on such a small surface, you understand why finding a small hotel would be a problem. Luckily, everyone speaks fluent English in Malta. We expected to get a room with a breath-taking view over the ocean and awe-inspiring Maltese architecture, but instead we got a room overlooking a construction site. However, first impressions are not to be trusted. During our stay we got to see amazing places that unveiled all the beauty Malta is known for. But on that first day, we had to remind ourselves what the purpose of our visit was, which was to observe other teachers in class, acquire new teaching methods, and actively use English throughout the day. We could hardly wait for our first session to start.

The language school we visited was a small boarding school that offered lots of different courses for different age groups. The students we met came from all over the world, they were of different ethnic backgrounds, with varied knowledge of English and of different ages. It was a variety of nationalities that made the learning experience so much more exciting for us. However, I have to say that the head of staff wasn't too welcoming on our arrival. At first we were mistaken for Slovaks instead of Slovenians, which made us a bit uncomfortable, but once we settled in and got our daily schedules, everything went on smoothly.

Lessons last longer than lessons in public Slovenian schools: they are 90 minutes long. Students have two 90-minute lessons a day plus additional courses available to choose from. The groups are small. There are fifteen or even fewer students in each group. Students are assigned to a group according to their level of English. If it improves during their stay, they can change groups and teachers. The classrooms are small with a whiteboard and chair desks. There are no projectors, radios, or interactive boards. The students work with their cell phones.

Our first job shadowing lesson was with a proper Brit. She was hilarious, well-educated, had great rapport with her students, and made the lesson so fun that we wished we could spend every day in her classroom. She taught an advanced group of students whose English was near perfect. It felt like being back at university. The level of English was proficient, and the topics were challenging; they called for discussion and argumentation. When we talked about politics and media news, I felt like a fish out of water at first, but then I managed to relax and soon shared my view on the topics. We had to join in although we were just "observers". That's how the teacher introduced us to the group. She would use expressions like "Join in, there's no charge" and "Come in, if you're beautiful" and, of course, even if students were late, they could join the lesson without further ado. She had a cup of English tea on her desk, talked to the students on Zoom as well as students in the classroom with ease and let the lesson unfold spontaneously. The students themselves had a big impact on the lesson dynamics. I really liked that. It was also interesting to hear how students from different parts of the world talked about the topics mentioned above: The Turks would link media news to ways of manipulating people, the Italians to news being sensationalized whether the Japanese pointed out a gap between the perception of media news between older and younger generations. The teacher was very opinionated, but encouraged everyone to express their views freely as long as they were rooted in reality and personal experience. Although there was a lot of talking involved, she would constantly make notes in her notebook and then wrote words to remember on the board, gave examples of use in different contexts, named synonymous words, etc. It was a perfect and enjoyable lesson.

There was a teacher who was autistic. He had to be prepared in advance that two more teachers were going to observe his lesson. He struggled with making eye contact (even with his students), but nobody was really bothered by that as students were used to and liked his way of teaching. He would repeat most of what he said at least two times, but his English was great. The students revised grammatical structures (adverbs of frequency), which could easily turn into a tedious lesson, but was far from that. He encouraged his students to work in pairs, compare notes before checking the correct answers, and draw on their own personal experiences to consolidate the target language. There were plenty of exercises where everyone, including us, had to be fully engaged. We walked around the classroom, talked to one another, made notes, conducted short interviews, played guessing games, and just chatted away.

We also enjoyed spending time with a Polish teacher whose English was almost native-like. She was very methodical, precise, warm, and professional. She was well prepared but spontaneous as well. In one lesson she would cover all four skills: listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Everyone had to speak, everyone was involved. Students worked in pairs and small groups, mimed sentences from cooking recipes, did role plays on different topics, talked about topical issues, etc. While acquiring new vocabulary, she would correct wrong pronunciation but in a very subtle way. There were *bears* and *bares*, *beards* and *beers*, and lots of laughter. All grammar was taught in context, rules would never be explained in a vacuum, but always supported with examples from the texts they had just read or video clips they had just seen.

Not every teacher was great. There were some who offered little or no support to beginners, who should have full support along their learning process. This made me and my colleague so nervous that at one point we almost took over the lesson ourselves. Such examples of teaching make you realize it is not enough to teach without awareness of how your students feel and what level they can achieve. Great teachers should sense when their students struggle and facilitate them in every possible way. Nevertheless, students from a poorly managed class still tried hard to make progress because they were motivated to learn the language.

To conclude, I must say that working as a language teacher at a language school comes close to a dream job. Students are motivated to learn, classes are small and participants come from different countries, which makes up for a great learning experience. The cultural diversity creates an environment teachers can work with time and again. Having motivated students in class makes teaching seem very natural and effortless. Moreover, what's great about a multilingual classroom is the fact you can never resort to your own native language to help your students understand a word or grammatical structure. You must find a way to get the message across. Malta gave us an insight into how important self-motivation is when trying to learn any language, and how the inability to speak in your own native language creates an urgency to learn the target language. All in all, the trip was a great success both inside and outside the classroom and would highly recommend it to all adventure seekers and lovers.



Green Friends for Life

Urška Zupin



I have a degree in English language and Sociology and have worked as an English teacher for more than ten years. I have taught adults as well as kindergarten children in different language schools and currently teach pupils aged 9 to 15 at Davorina Jenka Cerklje Primary School. I started participating in different Erasmus+ projects in 2020. In my free time I like travelling and baking.

2020 was the year in which our school started to participate in an Erasmus+ project called Green Friends. It dealt mainly with sustainability, environmental issues and taking care of the environment. The project brought together students and teachers from Palermo (Sicily, Italy), Düren (Germany), Málaga (Spain), and Cerklje na Gorenjskem (Slovenia).

During the first two years, students worked on creating the Green Friends' logo, organised several cleaning actions in the local environment, explored local environmental issues, and participated in a school competition for the cleanest classroom.

The first aim of the project was for the students to find local environmental problems and present them to the partner schools. After that, the students tried to find solutions to the problems and formed posters in Canva which were intended to address the local community with an intention to limit the pollution. Therefore, the students spent several lessons making posters in order to make farmers use less artificial fertilizers, make people produce less waste and also clean after their pets. In this way, the students not only learnt about the main topic of the project, but also acquired a new skill – working with Canva.

Finally, after the COVID-19 situation allowed it, came the time for mobilities. Since the leader of the project is from Spain, our first mobility was held in Málaga. During this time, we got the chance to experience the hospitality of the Spanish and their unique sense of humour. On the first day they gave us a welcoming ceremony during which they showed us their traditional dance – flamenco – performed by one of the students and his mother. This was followed by beach volley and two sightseeing tours – by bus and by boat. Some of us even had the privilege of seeing dolphins jumping out of the sea during the sunset – a mind-blowing scene one could never forget. The following day was marked by environmental workshops. The students first did some arts and crafts on environmental issues and were later given a talk by the AndaLimpia association (Go, clean). They explained Málaga's biggest problem – the pollution of the sea – and presented some pictures of waste found in the sea and posed a provocative yet important question: "Would you like to eat plastic?"

Of course I do not have to explain our answer. Nevertheless, we were then faced with a terrifying fact that we do, in fact, all of us eat plastic. We eat plastic because we eat fish and fish eat microplastic because they mistake it for food. AndaLimpia members also explained how long it takes for different waste to decompose. At this point, the Slovenian students felt great because they could confirm that we are already doing a lot to help save the environment. Our school is practicing waste separation, our school cafeteria uses bulk packaging, students bring their own reusable bottles, and we have drinkable tap water.

Later that day, we had a cleaning action at the Guadalahorce river mouth. We found a significant amount of trash, most of which were wet wipes wrapped around the rocks at the beach. Despite that, we were comforted by the fact that such cleaning actions are not a once in a year event, but are continuously carried out by different schools as well as kindergartens from the local area.

On Wednesday, we walked to Hospital Noble (United Nations' building) where we were given a speech about Agenda Málaga 2030. They explained how Málaga is planning to evolve by 2030 and what goals it needs to accomplish



in the field of the environmental problems. The students even participated in a prize quiz and were therefore really motivated to learn something new. This was followed by the capoeira workshop at the Misericordia beach. Needless to say, our students absolutely loved both the workshop as well as the beautiful beach and warm sea, which they could enjoy whilst swimming right after the second cleaning action was completed.

The next day was a cultural day in Alhambra. On the way there we could experience the hectic way of Spanish driving. We tasted their typical fruit cherimoya and saw the effect that the lack of rain has left on vegetation. On the last day we got the chance to enjoy their typical party with music, dancing and of course – paella. All the families that hosted our students were really hospitable and although most of the parents didn't speak English, that didn't stop them from talking to us (the teachers) explaining that our girls were 'estupendas' (fantastic). The students formed a bond with the Spanish families and parted their ways in tears, hardly waiting for the next mobility in Slovenia where they could finally see each other again.

One of the most important goals of all Erasmus+ mobilities is the aspect of English language learning. We all know that students in the classroom aren't always motivated to use English as a communicating tool and rather than that resort to their mother tongue. Either because it's faster and easier or just because they do not want to bother. This is why mobilities like the one we participated in, are so important. They provide a chance and motivation

for students to practise speaking English. Students not only use the already-known vocabulary, but also make use of their phones to find things they want to say but couldn't beforehand. One of the students came to me one day saying "Teacher, you won't believe it! I actually used Present Perfect today." And I think this is what mobilities are all about – providing a chance for students to practise foreign language learning in the real world and actually seeing why we learn certain things at school.

All the teachers really enjoyed watching them carry out their everyday conversations without any pressure or teachers correcting them or telling them to use the correct form of the verb. As a result, pupils formed a lifelong bond with families from Málaga. They connected on Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and other social media and are now in daily contact with them, either through emailing or video calls – practising all the aspects of English language learning without pressure or constraint.

During my last job shadowing mobility in Malta, I witnessed a language course in which there were 5 or more different nationalities of students in one classroom that included fewer than ten students of different ages. The best part of this experience was acknowledging that students' only reason for speaking English is the fact that they are not able to understand each other in any other way. This is the motivation that our pupils lack and will never be able to acquire. Not unless we as teachers reach out and provide a chance for them to participate in Erasmus+ projects.

Bearing this in mind, I cannot help but wonder why we do not give this chance to all of our students. Why isn't it obligatory to visit a foreign country for a month and live with a family with whom one can only communicate in English?



Embracing controversy in the EFL classroom

Rita Divéki



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Introduction

In today's globalized world, it is crucial to empower students with the skills to navigate complex and occasionally controversial issues (UNESCO, 2014). As English has become the global lingua franca, it is increasingly used as a medium for discussing complex, controversial topics ranging from global to local issues (Gimenez & Sheehan, 2008). In this context, EFL teachers have a unique opportunity and as educators, a responsibility to foster critical thinking and global competence in their students by facilitating discussions on controversial topics in a sheltered environment. Despite the challenges from both the teachers' and learners' part, encouraging debate and promoting respectful dialogue can have numerous benefits for language learning and personal growth (Oxfam, 2018; Sampedro & Hillyard, 2004; Starkey, 2005). This article will explore the importance of discussing controversial issues in the EFL classroom, it will provide some practical tips for creating a safe and engaging environment for brave discussions, and finally, it will outline some activity ideas with the help of which students can be encouraged to take a stand in the classroom.

Why deal with controversial issues in the EFL classroom?

There is a myriad of reasons why the EFL classroom is a perfect space for addressing potentially contentious topics. One reason is that in many countries, the curriculum now includes the discussion of controversial issues (Oxfam, 2018) as part of their language learning objectives and in line with this, the students are also tested on whether they can talk about complex issues at language proficiency exams. One part of preparing our students for these exams is actually involving them in activities revolving around such topics to develop their basic language skills (Sampedro & Hillyard, 2004). Discussing controversial issues in the EFL classroom can also help students develop thinking skills (i.e., critical-, creative- and analytical thinking) (Oxfam, 2018; Pereszlényi, 2022). By exploring different perspectives on complex issues, students

can learn to evaluate information and arguments, form opinions, and express themselves in a logical and persuasive manner. Moreover, young people need to explore their beliefs and values: as they grow and develop, they often begin to question the world around them and form their own beliefs and values. Exploring controversial issues in the EFL classroom can provide a safe space for students to discuss and reflect on these beliefs and values, helping them to develop a better understanding of themselves and the world (Oxfam, 2018). In addition, many controversial issues, such as politics, immigration, and human rights, directly impact our students' lives (Oxfam, 2018). By discussing these issues in the EFL classroom, we can help students understand how these topics affect them and their communities. Finally, by incorporating controversial issues into the EFL classroom, teachers can help students develop into active and responsible global citizens (Oxfam, 2018; Starkey, 2005). By encouraging students to engage with important issues and to consider their role in the world, teachers can support students to become more aware of their responsibilities as members of a global community and eventually help them create a better world.

Creating the optimal environment for dealing with controversial issues

Creating a safe and respectful environment for brave discussions is essential when it comes to teaching controversial issues (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2017). *Safe space* refers to an environment "free from violence" that allows for learning experiences in physical safety (Gayle et al., 2013, p. 2), while another interpretation suggests it is an inclusive group for underrepresented students to express their ideas and views in a classroom (Gayle et al., 2013). On the other hand, *brave space* emphasises risk-taking in a safe environment for students to explore different perspectives, challenge assumptions and think about different ways to act for change (Bigelow and Petersen, 2002). Controversy arises regarding the degree to which safety is relevant and useful in difficult dialogues. While some believe that the classroom needs to be a safe space for students to share their views and opinions, others argue that safety in the classroom does not necessarily mean being without discomfort, struggle or pain, as learning and growing involve stepping out of one's comfort zone (Arao & Clemens, 2013). Overall, there may be little point in sheltering students from difficult conversations in a world that abounds in complexity; instead, it would be beneficial to embrace controversy in the classroom and learn to "manage conflict and not prohibit it" (Boostrom, 1998, p. 408).

To create an optimal atmosphere for discussing challenging issues, teachers need to have special characteristics. These include being non-judgmental and unbiased, devel-

oping ground rules for discussion, being comfortable with conflict or raising controversial ideas, being respectful and supportive of others' opinions, being encouraging and requiring active participation in class, and demonstrating caring (Holley & Steiner, 2005). Moreover, the Council of Europe (2015) identified three types of competencies teachers need to address controversies in class effectively, namely, personal competencies, professional competencies, and educational competencies. Table 1 shows the competencies that may be worth developing for everyone who would like to embark on dealing with complex issues in their classes:

Table 1

Useful teacher competencies for dealing with controversial issues in class

Professional competencies	Theoretical competencies	Practical competencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of one's beliefs and values Awareness of the impact one's beliefs on their teaching of controversial issues Awareness of and self-reflection on the pros and cons of revealing one's own beliefs and values to the students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding how controversy arises and the ways it is resolved in a democracy Understanding the role of teaching about controversial issues in education for democratic citizenship and human rights education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using a range of teaching roles to take stances according to the circumstances Managing controversial subject matter sensitively and safely through the implementation of teaching techniques Presenting issues fairly Handling spontaneous questions and remarks of controversial nature with confidence + creating teachable moments

Note. Based on *Teaching controversial issues: A professional development pack for teachers* (Council of Europe, 2015)

There are different activities that may help teachers in creating a safe space. First, some authors (Oxfam, 2018; Szesztay, 2020) agree that it is worth agreeing on the participation guidelines or setting the ground rules, and Szesztay (2020) suggests that these guidelines should be created together as a group, with everyone contributing, to give students a sense of ownership over them. It may be worth agreeing on these guidelines at the beginning of the school year, creating a poster/infographic featuring them and displaying them in the classroom, so that the group could refer back to them anytime, either during challenging discussions or after the discussions, in the reflection round.

Students could also benefit from discussing what makes a fruitful conversation. Analysing videos where people debate controversial issues could be a great basis for this (e.g., the YouTube channel, *Jubilee* has many similar videos). While watching the video, students could write down useful sentence starters for expressing one's opinions, language for interrupting politely, and expressions for agreeing or disagreeing with someone. After watching the video, they could also reflect on what went well and what did not go well in the discussion. The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change's *Essentials of Dialogue* booklet (2017) is also filled with useful activities with the same purpose. One activity from the book is "Rights respecting sentence starters" (p. 32). To encourage students to use these sentence starters, the teacher could print them out and cut them up. One possible activity is to ask the students to lay these out in front of them, assign them a controversial topic to discuss (possibly one where they may need to disagree), and ask them to turn around the slip they have used in the

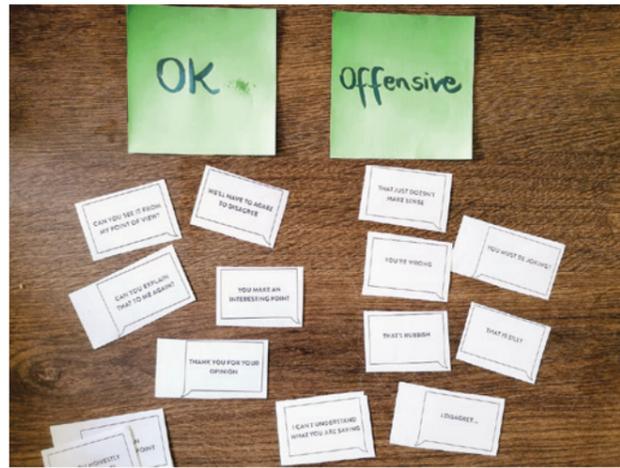
conversation. Figure 1 shows a picture of what the activity looks like in real life.

Figure 1
Rights respecting sentence starters – in action



In a similar vein, in the *Offensive or OK?* activity, the students can be asked to decide which sentence sounds offensive and which one does not. This activity can generate a lot of discussions, given that the students' level of sensitivity may not be the same, and some phrases are also context-, body language- and tone-dependent. Figure 2 shows a possible interpretation of this activity.

Figure 2
Offensive or OK?



Encouraging students to take a stand – some good practices

Some students may be hesitant to share their views with their teacher or with other students, and when asked to express their opinion, the only sentence they may utter is “I don’t know”. Nevertheless, in some situations (e.g., exams), they will not have the choice; thereby, it may be beneficial for them, in the long run, to be kindly encouraged to always take a stand, at least during their English lessons. In what follows, I will list a few activities that have helped my students consider their perspectives and express their ideas in front of others.

1. Taking a stand physically

1.1 Opinion line activity

In this activity, the teacher poses a statement or question related to the topic and asks students to position themselves along a line in the classroom based on their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. For example, if the statement is “Single-use plastic should be banned” students who strongly agree with the statement would stand at one end of the line, while those who strongly disagree would stand at the other end of the line. Once students have taken their positions, they are given the opportunity to explain their reasoning and engage in a discussion with others who share similar or opposing views. Finally, students could be asked to explain their position in front of the whole group.

1.2 Four corners activity

In this activity, the teacher provides four different opinions related to a statement and assigns each statement to one of the four corners of the classroom. For example, if the statement is “It’s the supermarkets’ responsibility to reduce food waste”, the four different opinions could be *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. Students are then asked to choose the statement that they most strongly agree with and move to the corresponding corner of the room. Once students have moved to their corners, they can discuss the reasons for their choice with their classmates. The teacher can then facilitate a class discussion in which students share and compare their opinions on the different statements.

1.3 Switch places if//put a finger down if...

These two classroom activities both have the same aim: students need to signal if a given statement is true for them or not in a low-stakes manner. In the *switch places if...* activity, the students form a circle, and the teacher reads out some statements. They need to switch places with another student if the statement is true for them. At the end of the activity, they can reflect on how many times they switched places with someone, and it could also easily become a way to shuffle the students and pair them up for another speaking activity. Even TikTok trends can inspire classroom activities, mostly when it comes to asking students to express opinions. In the *put a finger down* activity, the students put up both of their hands, stretch all their fingers and listen to the teacher’s prompts. If the given statement applies to them, they need to put one finger down. After the teacher listed all the prompts, the students have to look around and reflect on their experiences with their partners.

1.4 The boxing match

In this activity, the teacher has to divide the classroom to *agree* and *disagree* sides. The teacher reads out a statement, e.g., *Same-sex couples should be able to get married* and asks the students to pick a side and sit in the corresponding chairs. Before the discussion starts, the teacher should let the students know that they can change where they sit whenever they want to. The teacher should facilitate a full-class discussion on the topic and encourage as many students to share their views as possible. Whenever someone changes their seat, the teacher should ask them to tell the group why.

2. Organised discussions

2.1 Think-pair-share

This technique involves students first thinking about a question or topic on their own, then discussing their ideas with a partner, and finally sharing their ideas with the entire group. This approach offers several benefits, including allowing students time to think independently before discussing with others, which can help reduce anxiety and increase confidence when presenting ideas to the whole class.

2.2 Story circles

In this technique promoted by Darla Deardorff (2020), the teacher should split the class into groups of 4-6 people and each member is required to share a personal story, such as the first time they noticed differences in skin colour or a time they felt excluded, for 3 minutes while the other group members listen actively. Then, in the next round, each person has 15 seconds to share what they found memorable in the stories. The entire group then shares their experiences and reflects on the activity. This technique aims to encourage students to listen and empathize with others, promoting a more inclusive and understanding classroom environment.

2.3 Giving roles to the group members

To add structure and encourage participation in group discussions, teachers can assign roles to group members (Selby & Pike, 1988; Szesztay, 2020). These roles may include helpful roles such as *organiser*, *questioner*, and *provocateur*, as well as unhelpful roles like *chatterbox*,

flatterer, and *extremist*. Each student must participate in the discussion according to their assigned role. By taking on a different role than their own, students may be able to maintain a reflective distance from their opinions and learn how to respectfully discuss important points. Additionally, after the activity, students can reflect on their roles and the roles they typically play in everyday discussions.

2.4 Debate formats

There are several popular classroom debate formats that teachers can use to engage students in discussion and critical thinking. For example, in *structured debates* (OECD/Asia Society, 2018) students need to form groups and either support or oppose controversial statements. As in this format, group creation may be randomized, the students might need to articulate views that are different from their own, thus they need to learn how to step into other people’s shoes and develop their perspective-taking skills. Another popular technique for classroom use is the *fishbowl debate*: this format involves a small group of students who sit in the centre of the classroom and engage in a debate while the rest of the class observes. The observers can take notes and participate in the discussion once they feel they could help out the ones in the middle.

3. The role of visualisation – listing, ranking, and organising

Students can use common thinking frameworks to structure and articulate their ideas. Creating a list of ideas, such as the advantages and disadvantages of compulsory elections or arguments for and against the statement “Women are paid less” can help students organize their thoughts and consider diverse perspectives (Woodward, 2011). Ranking exercises are also effective tools for stimulating critical thinking and can be considered task-based activities. For example, in a diamond ranking exercise (Oxfam, 2018), students receive nine statement cards and must negotiate which statements are most important, second most important, of moderate importance, second least important, and least important. While the organizing principle may vary, the activity helps students reach a consensus and express their opinions to the whole class. Finally, students could also use graphic organisers to organise and present their ideas. Graphic organisers can take many forms (e.g., concept maps, charts, diagrams) and they are advantageous because they may help students understand and analyse controversial issues and make connections between ideas. Some creative and free visual organisers are available from Classroom Doodles (<https://www.classroomdoodles.com/graphic-organizers.html>).

Conclusion

If we consider ourselves educators, it is crucial to prepare our students for the realities of the world we live in. Given that young people have to navigate a really complex world today, where it is getting increasingly difficult to interpret what is going on, part of our job is to tackle such complex issues in our classes and prepare our students to address them as well. Dealing with controversy in class is not an easy undertaking, as it requires global-minded teachers, who are willing to create active, inclusive, learner-centred classrooms, where the emphasis is always put on real-life, meaningful topics. First, however, teachers need to create a suitable atmosphere for dealing with controversial topics, a place where students can take risks and encounter

opinions different from their own. Then, as was shown in the article, teachers can make use of many activities with the help of which students can be encouraged to explore their own and other students’ views and take a stand on sometimes contentious issues. It is much hoped that these guidelines and activities will help like-minded colleagues *embrace controversy* in their own classes as well.

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A bridge to mindfulness practice in your classroom

A way to introduce mindfulness to (teenage) students

Špela Casagrande



I have always felt that being a teacher was my cup of tea. Now, after more than two decades of teaching, I must say that my passion for this profession has not diminished one bit since then. Having had the opportunity to teach in adult and vocational programmes, elementary and secondary schools, as well as centres for refugees, my mission always stays the same – to make learning a fun activity, and not a dreaded chore. Fascinated by new approaches to lecturing, I am always open to new ideas, while I aim to share my well-tested tips and tricks with other educators.

What is mindfulness?

To start with – what is mindfulness and what is the use of it? Mindfulness is awareness of our inner world. It is learning to observe our thoughts, emotions and other present moment experiences without judgement. Mindfulness techniques involve breathing methods, guided imagery, and other practices to help body relax and reduce stress. It has become very popular in our hectic world. You have probably heard of it and might have tried to practise it yourself. However, when we struggle for every single minute of our students' attention, many teachers might feel hesitant to introduce mindfulness practice into their classroom.

It is a fact that the generation of our students is overwhelmed with all kinds of screen and media information which stimulates their brain very effectively in a way that requires constant brain activity. Therefore, we can assume (and have been proven right only too often) that their "monkey minds" have problems to calm down and concentrate. The so-called blue light from the screens and the intensive colours they emit, make the real world, the world we actually live in, under-stimulating and uninteresting. It makes any kind of deep concentration overdemanding and the focus on their inner world unattainable.

However, mindfulness can help us overcome these obstacles. It can help students not only to focus, but also feel their bodies, observe their thoughts, calm down and last but not least, recognise their true needs.

Even if we as teachers are aware of these benefits, our students definitely do not consider practising breathing or meditation as beneficial. You can definitely have a silent classroom, but the silence while writing a test or practising

grammar exercises differs a great deal from the silence you achieve when practising mindfulness. If they are not frantically busy on their devices, they are naturally restless and talkative. That is why telling them to sit still with their eyes closed will not be greeted with enthusiasm, but can instead evoke some resentment on their side.



How to start?

Here is a set of exercises you can use as a bridge from a classroom of restless students to a classroom of students eager to practise true mindfulness and benefit from it.

As a teacher myself, who has been using these techniques for years with students of different age groups, I understand that the introduction of them is often the most challenging part. In my experience, some exercises might work better on some days with certain classes than others – and if they don't work with some groups, don't lose heart.

I suggest you keep repeating each exercise for about a week and encourage students do them more calmly and observantly each time. Carry them out in the order that is stated from 1 to 5. This process will gently evoke their awareness, normalise doing such exercises in your classroom and prepare them for more advanced techniques.

It's important to mention here that there is no need to explain the reasoning behind these exercises to your students to gain their initial cooperation. Just believe in it and you will be persuasive enough. I would also advise that you don't call it mindfulness at all. Let it be a game and your instructions just a part of it. You might find them to be a great way to brighten up your lessons.

1) Make silence

For those who have been practising mindfulness, the idea of making silence is silly, if not outrageous. Silence, after all, is not something we make within ourselves, but something we find. In my experience, however, this particular exercise is a fabulous way to start observing silence within us and around us.

Tell your students to follow your instructions carefully. They can spend 10 seconds making any noise they feel like. It could be screaming, yelling, stumping, etc. After 10 seconds, give them a sign to stop and they should sit with their eyes closed and observe silence for 20 seconds. Then repeat. You will be surprised how much the noise tires them out and how relaxing they find the silence that follows.

Make sure your colleagues know what this exercise is about before you start, to prevent misunderstandings in case your walls are not completely soundproof.

The next time you do this exercise, extend the time to 20/40 seconds if possible.

2) I spy with my little eye

This is an old game but also a very good introduction to mindfulness. It teaches the students to observe carefully. This exercise can be done in the classroom or some other place in or outside your school. Make pairs. Students will silently observe the surroundings and each other, until someone says: »I spy with my little eye... something stained/ broken/ orange...« and the other has to guess what the student has observed. Students take turns at this. It might happen that those who have never managed to stand out in the classroom will excel at that activity.

3) See something for the first time

Another good practice for beginners is to choose an object and spend 2-3 minutes in silence observing it as if they have seen it for the first time. You can choose your hand for example. We have all seen our hands millions of times and now we could take a completely new look at them. Observe the knuckles, the veins, the shape of nails, some spots on the skin maybe, find something you have never paid attention to. Do it thoroughly, in detail, and in complete silence. If you feel the class will benefit from this, students can report their observations to their partners.

Each time choose different objects, their faces in the mirror, an object – they can walk around and observe it, they can select whatever comes to mind or whatever you can use in your classroom.

It is also possible to make such an exercise into an excellent public speaking practise in case you decide students should share their experiences.

4) I feel just like...

This exercise is an extension of the previous exercise and is also wonderful if can be done outdoors.

Students take time to pick their own object of observation – a new leaf on a tree, a part of a pavement or a bar of and old fence. They do it in silence. What they are looking for is oftentimes something they can relate to, something that expresses how they feel at the moment.

Once they find it, they spend some time observing it and then report to the class or write it down so that they can keep it more personal. For example: "I feel worn out like this wooden board. It has many scratches on the side and that is just like the anxiety I feel today."

We teach students that there is no judgement present – everyone can relate to whatever they feel like and it is imperative nobody judges them. In my experience, you might not get excellent results the first time, but gradually they might open up and dare to express their feelings more openly.

5) Release tension

This is a group exercise which enables every individual to express themselves fully.

Students should sit in a relaxed position with their eyes closed. They breath in together, observe how they feel, and as they breathe out, they make a sound that expresses how they feel at the moment. Encourage the exhale to be as long as possible to get rid of the uncomfortable feelings they might be keeping inside.

When they feel relaxed, they should only murmur for as long as the exhale lasts. We continue for as long as it is needed for the whole class to reach the relaxed murmur.

When practicing mindfulness becomes easy

Once you have crossed the bridge, you have a good chance your students will get used to your unusual practices and will become aware that they benefit from it. They will realise that mindfulness gives them tools they need to cope with the pressures of everyday lives. On the internet, you can find many ideas for short and effective mindfulness practises you can choose from and can adapt them your students' needs (see References for more ideas).

Even if you might feel such activities take up too much of your precious lesson time that you could spend revising the spelling of irregular verbs they still have problems with. Yet, by doing these exercises, they will instead learn how to cope with stress and therefore develop better communicative skills. Using mindfulness in the classroom might as well be a way to address other qualities in our students that are perhaps underestimated in our school system.

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Classroom insights: Lessons in happiness

Alenka Tratnik



I am an orderly creative teacher, an avid book reader, and a nature lover. Teaching is my passion, travelling is my dream, and irresponsible people are a thorn in my side. If I wasn't a teacher, I'd be a wildlife conservationist.



Feeling happy isn't easy or straightforward. But we have the opportunity to change something about how we feel, and there are tools that can help us do that, and a consciousness that can change things. This article describes what I call "happiness lessons", in which I ask students to explore what it means to be happy and how they can increase their mindfulness and self-confidence through self-reflection. Happiness lessons are about choices, engagement, and passion. Students research various positive psychology topics and create presentations, make a video, read books and articles, and write journals. By raising students' awareness and self-reflection, we can help them build character, understand human behaviour, and hopefully become happier, more conscious, more self-determined, and more empowered individuals.

How it all got started

Even if I tell my students to research what they want and entice them with examples like "Why do you think power ultimately corrupts?" some will inevitably ask if I can assign a topic for them. Others admit they've googled "research questions" in hopes of finding something interesting. Students like these are not generally empowered by choice. They're overwhelmed and frustrated by the variety of options – a frustration that looks like apathy and ends with them saying, "I've no idea what to choose. Or, "I don't know

what I'm interested in." For these students, the lack of a strong sense of self not only inhibits their ability to make choices, but also further reinforces their insecurities.

I believe that my students, future managers in crisis management, sports management, engineering, HR and IT should develop as many soft skills as possible during their studies, including the ability to make informed and quick decisions. Instead, their difficulty in making decisions is evidence that they need more self-awareness and self-reflection. Fortunately, productive self-reflection is a skill that students can improve. This way, they can see the choices they're given in class as encouragement rather than frustration. Ultimately, the ability to self-reflect, the ability to draw meaning from experiences, is a life skill that is related to the ability to be happy.

I've tried to leverage this correlation in my teaching. After reading an inspiring article on positive psychology (Max, 2007), I came up with the idea for lessons in happiness and I began collecting examples, assignments, and tasks from positive psychology in hopes of incorporating them into a lesson appropriate for my students. I picked up some ideas from Happiness 101 by D. T. Max (see above), The End of the Rainbow by Susan Engel (2015) and The Happiness Project by Gretchen Rubin (2009), both of which make a compelling case for investing in our understanding of happiness and how to achieve it. I quickly noticed that when I framed questions about knowing oneself around the idea of being happy, students were highly receptive to exercises in self-reflection. The lesson in happiness was so successful that it became an important part of my teaching and is now integrated into all my courses.

Before I begin teaching the topic, I slowly introduce my students to the idea of happiness. We talk about what it means to be happy and consider definitions such as well-being, joy, contentment, and fulfilment. In our online session (30% of our tutorials take place online), students are asked to choose a quote about happiness that resonates with them, explain how they connect with it, and reflect on their classmates' quotes. After talking about happiness in general, we move on to the practical part, which is about the students. Even though many of them are a bit leery when I introduce the topic (as one student said, "What does this have to do with business English?") and the amount of reading and written work they're expected to do, the feedback I get at the end of the year on the happiness assignments is always overwhelmingly positive.

Exploring what matters

I give my students a series of experiential assignments designed to make them happier, working their emotions the way an athletic coach might work their muscles. Happiness,

after all, is the total subjective experience of our positive emotions. The first two tasks are about distinguishing between feeling good, which positive psychologists believe only creates a desire for more pleasure (they call this syndrome the hedonic treadmill) (Pennock, 2016), and doing good, which can lead to lasting happiness. In this context, students are asked to first do something they enjoy (e.g., go shopping, pursue a favourite hobby, etc.) and then perform an act of selfless kindness, i.e., do something good for others (e.g., visit an elderly relative, help someone carry groceries, donate to a good cause, etc.). I also ask them to write down their daily activities, thoughts, and experiences with emotions. The results of the assignments are inspiring: when students do something they enjoy, their positive emotions don't differ, but when they practise prosocial behaviours, they report a significant increase in positive emotions, feelings of happiness, joy, and pleasure. That is, they learn that doing good is good for you.

In the next assignments, they're to report on their attempts to go into "flow." Energy drinks, video games, and chocolate may be highly useful avenues for achieving a flow state, but to enter flow, students are rather asked to do something they're good at, be it playing basketball, singing, or talking to their friends. Several studies (Waldinger, 2015) have found that meditation enhances well-being. Another assignment is to meditate for 10 minutes for three days in a row and to be mindful twice a day and report on the results. Finally, students are asked to choose one memory they'd spend an eternity with – a task inspired by the Japanese film "After Life".

A happiness journal

Over the course of the lessons, students complete dozens of assignments that eventually culminate in a happiness portfolio consisting largely of a guided journal. Requirements include reading selections such as How to Meditate for Beginners on the Ten Percent Happier website, The Case for Having a Hobby (Saxena, 2018), and The Science of Accomplishing Your Goals (Lopresti, 2016). Students also take notes and comment on podcasts such as You 2.0: Why We're Bad at Predicting Our Own Happiness – And How We Can Get Better (Gilbert, 2017), and TED Talks such as, What Makes a Good Life (Waldinger, 2015). Close reading requires multiple readings to discern the importance of details, analyse the use of rhetoric, and discover underlying assumptions and biases.

The research component I include in the portfolio asks students to pair various topics with happiness or positive psychology and generate a research question based on that. Students delve into our library databases to find answers to their questions, such as Which country is happiest? What is the relationship between sibling order and happiness? What jobs do the happiest people have? Can people who have suffered trauma ever be happy? What is the relationship between happiness and wealth? They're genuinely interested in the answers to their questions and look forward to hearing other students' research findings and sharing their own.

Students also write goal statements, self-assertions, narratives, thank you letters, and various essays. They keep a one-sentence happiness journal for a week, modelled after

Rubin's (2009) one-sentence journal. They also participate in and conduct surveys, such as the Happiness Survey and the like. I ask them to write about the generalisations they can draw from surveys and to write a report about surveys conducted on a sample of respondents. The self-reflection assignments ask students to read closely the text of their own lives. By developing an expertise about their own lives, they become more willing to make future decisions. The ultimate goal of the happiness portfolio is to empower students to read their own stories closely so they can better shape their own futures.

At the end of the happiness journey, students are required to create a video inspired by any of the assignments which seems to be a fitting way to tie up the journey. We share these videos, which, not surprisingly, are often beautifully creative and crafted productions.

Final thoughts

A single course is certainly not enough to make measurable gains in terms of identity formation, but the positive reception of the happiness lessons by my students has unequivocally demonstrated that self-reflection skills can be nurtured and can have a significant impact on increasing student engagement. Ultimately, I hope that students learn the important lesson that in coming to understand themselves, they will be empowered to make future decisions more actively and with more joy. Learning about themselves can help students see that all learning is an affirmation of self-worth and an essential component of growth.

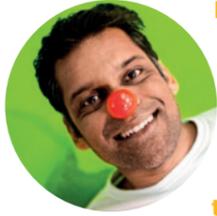
One of the greatest benefits I've discovered since implementing the lessons in happiness is that my students have gotten to know themselves better and I've gotten to know my students better. I celebrate their stories of resilience and I applaud the challenges they embrace in formulating their goals. But most of all, I know that this work is critical to our shared humanity.

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Is the Queen really dead?

Danny Singh



Danny Singh, born and raised in London, but now based in Rome and Canterbury, gives creative English language lessons and teacher training courses all over Europe. He also offers stimulating monthly presentations on language related issues at Rome's biggest international bookshop and has his own YouTube channel which contains a series of interactive English video lessons. He is author of two books, "I was a happy man...then one day I came across Laughter Yoga" and "Learning English through the mind and the body" and is currently working on his third book, "Life is full of surprises". He regularly attends Pilgrims TT summer courses as a Guest Speaker.

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Menu

- The Ambassador meets Danny Singh
- The Queen is dead
- Are Queen really dead?
- The Queen meets Danny's mother
- Is the Queen really dead?

The Ambassador meets Danny Singh

The subject of the Queen and the monarchy has been controversial on many occasions, but none more so than at the IATEFL Slovenia conference 2023, where having arrived for the official opening ceremony of the conference and looking forward to tasting some home-made wine and rakia accompanied with a range of savoury delights, I was told that the UK residents needed to meet the UK ambassador who happened to be there. Once I'd hastily managed to sip some champagne that had kindly been offered, Jeremy Harmer recognised me and said that the Ambassador wanted to have a word with me. What could she possibly want? Was I finally to be rewarded for all my hard work and dedication to the UK? Not quite. She introduced herself, then mentioned that she'd noticed the title of my workshop in the programme and wondered what it was all about. I then proceeded to give an outline of what was planned for that session, when it suddenly dawned on me as to why she was asking the question. She had made it clear during this short introduction that she was highly sympathetic to the Queen and any high charged attack or abuse of the Queen would be frowned upon. I therefore ventured to reassure her that I had no such intention and insisted that everything would be fine.

The Queen is dead

In 1986, The Smiths, a popular band from that period came up with a song entitled, The Queen is dead. It was a critical attack on both the Queen and the monarchy, however, it wasn't in any way particularly offensive and indeed no radio or TV station ever considered banning it. Morrissey, who was the lead singer of the band and responsible for most of the lyrics created by the band had a way of being critical, direct and satirical at the same time. I'd highly recommend that readers of this article have a listen to this song before proceeding any further. In this way, you can develop an idea of Morrissey's style and get in the mood for the rest of this article. Although I am not a fierce critic of the Queen or monarchy, this is actually one of my favourite songs by the Smiths, both for the lyrics and the upbeat music.

Are Queen really dead?

On 24 November 1991, the news came through that Freddie Mercury, the lead singer of Queen a group that had rocked the country with some amazing music during the 70s and 80s had died of the HIV virus which was rife at that time. Music fans were in shock. The tabloid press on the one hand acknowledged him as a great singer, while on the other criticized his lifestyle and looked upon his death as a kind of punishment for having committed a variety of sins, the most important one of which was having had homosexual relationships. The band itself was in shock and decided to organise a tribute concert to honour him and raise awareness of this disease which was destroying so many people's lives.

The concert was held at a packed Wembley stadium in April 1992 and featured not only the expected friends of Freddie who sympathised with his homosexual views such as George Michael and Elton John, but bands like Def Leopard and Metallica. This made the event an even bigger success and raised thousands of pounds for research into fighting the HIV disease. Since then, there has been a film called, Bohemian Rhapsody focused primarily on their "live" aid performance in 1985 which made them the standout band on that amazing day. Various Queen tracks have been re-released and even today in 2023, Queen are still considered one of the greatest rock bands in the history of music. The artist may have left us, but his music lives on. As if this isn't proof enough, at the IATEFL Slovenia conference in 2019, Freddie Mercury, yes the man himself, made a surprise appearance, proving that whatever you read in the press, one thing is for sure, Queen are not dead.

The Queen meets Danny's mother

Now that you've all finished listening to Bohemian Rhapsody and a few other excellent Queen tracks, we can move on to the core of this article. I usually present this first picture to my students and probe them with questions. Do you recognise anyone in the picture? What's the location? Who are the other people in the photo? When was



this photo taken? This often stimulates animated discussion, especially over the age of the Queen at the time of the photo. Once we've exhausted as much information as we can get from this photo, I show them the second one, which was taken just a few seconds after the first. Students are then asked to discuss what might have happened to create this scene where everyone in the picture has burst out laughing. Here we often get a wide range of opinions about what has happened.

The photo was in fact taken in November 2001 and the Queen was opening a new section to a day centre in London which my mother regularly attended. Just before the Queen entered the room, the director announced that her majesty was arriving, upon which my mother asked what they should do. The director replied that they should just carry on playing their game and act as if the Queen wasn't even there, which is precisely what they did. However, before that, my mother asked the director what they should do if the Queen asked them about their game, to which the director replied, "Do you really think the Queen is going to ask you about your game?" "I suppose not," replied my mother and so they continued. Naturally enough, once the Queen saw that she was being totally ignored, she asked the fatal question about the game which resulted in everyone, even the serious director laughing out loud, not something that happened often in front of the Queen.

Is the Queen really dead?

In an average group of ten students, there is usually one who believes that my mother is one of the characters in the photo, while the other nine are often totally oblivious to this fact, which also adds to the entertainment in this lesson. These two photos are the public face of the Queen, but once the cameras were turned off, my mother who had previously regarded the Queen as a formal, distant kind of person, noticed that she was extremely humane and compassionate, which aside from being a complement to the Queen, is a sign that she was publicly performing a role and therefore acting, which was indeed one of her great passions. Queen Elizabeth may have officially passed

away on 8 September 2022, however, her experience of living through an array of UK Prime Ministers and almost a century of historic events, not to mention the pleasure she has given many ordinary people means that her legacy remains intact.



How much sleep do teachers really need?

Danny Singh

Menu

- **My first Sunday morning Experience**
- **When coffee becomes educational**
- **How lack of sleep can seriously damage your health**
- **Daylight saving time**
- **How can we sleep better?**

My first Sunday morning Experience

Despite having attended the last ten consecutive IATEFL Slovenia conferences, I had never before been invited to give a Sunday morning talk. This did not appear to be an ideal time to give a talk, at least not if I wanted to have other people in the same room. Many people would already have left by then, others would be preparing to leave, hastily clearing their rooms, trying to fit everything into their cases, queuing for what seemed like an eternity to check out and pay for their rooms, others would be socialising, saying their last goodbyes, hugging old and new friends and colleagues. Only those who were a glutton for punishment would come, those who never knew when enough was enough, those who had a resilience that went far beyond the four days allowed for this conference.



I myself was sleepy, as I often am in the morning, especially when forced to get up early and give a talk. Nonetheless, there was a strong sense of positivity, especially as my pub quiz team had somehow arrived in 2nd place the night before, despite the presence of several strong looking teams in the room. I felt that this was an even greater achievement than the victory back in 2014, where our team had been full of superstar galacticos, like the Real Madrid football team. Instead, this team was a kind of Real Sociedad or Villarreal, humble, hardworking, determined and proud of its roots.

When coffee becomes educational

I first became interested in this topic when I accidentally came across a book while having a coffee in a well-known bookshop in Canterbury in the UK. As I knew from my own personal experience that sleeping more had helped me overcome feelings of flu, light colds, headaches and other illnesses, I had expected to find a few additional benefits from sleeping more, instead of which I discovered a plethora of serious threats and damage to your health that could be caused by failing to sleep the required amount of hours. After this initial shock, I found other books on the subject and realised that this was becoming quite a fashionable theme. Most of the writers and contributors are neuroscientists, which means they have done some sort of research and are not just speaking from the top of their heads, however, like most scientists, they often tend to classify everything into boxes, black and white, forgetting the humanistic aspect of these tests, which is that every single person is different, hence the results of their tests will vary from person to person. Just to give a couple of random examples, all the experts say that both drinking coffee and doing exercises late in the evening can seriously reduce your ability to sleep, however, I often take a short sharp espresso late in the evening and almost always do some yoga, stretching and breathing exercises before bed, yet I rarely have any difficulty going to sleep.

How lack of sleep can seriously damage your health

The first important question on this subject is how many hours a night you sleep. That's how I opened up the session and as expected there was a wide range of answers, from five up to nine hours. The experts may not always agree on everything, but one thing that they definitely agree on is the ideal number of hours needed which is seven to nine. Anything more than that and you are oversleeping and damaging your body, but anything less than that and you really are in some danger. As many teachers do not sleep more than five or six hours during the week, the risks are real.

The main benefit of sleep is that it basically refreshes us, recharges our batteries and cleans out many of the bad

toxins that we carry. It also sorts out all the input that we have received during our waking hours and refines the memory. A lack of sleep means that these procedures are not carried out properly and the first effect is memory loss. An Alzheimer related protein builds up which can lead to dementia. Linked to this is the mental and physical deterioration of the brain, ultimately leading to permanent brain damage.

Lack of sleep also affects our virility and therefore ability to reproduce, even in twenty-year olds. Our immune system is weakened, which leaves us open to catching a range of diseases, one of which is cancer. Indeed, nightshift work has officially been declared as carcinogenic by the international agency for research into cancer (IARC).

All of the above effects are bad enough, but the biggest shock (at least for me) was still to come. Sleep acts as a kind of medication, like a reboot of the system and if you don't get enough, in other words, if you sleep less than seven hours a night, you have a 200% higher risk of a heart attack or stroke. Sleep helps to lower blood pressure, as it has a calming effect on your system, so skipping a few hours here and there really can increase the risk of doing some damage.

Daylight saving time

Twice a year in Europe, we change our clocks. In Spring, clocks go forward by one hour, which means that we initially get one hour less sleep and that the days suddenly seem to last much longer, while being slightly darker in the mornings. In Autumn, the reverse happens, we get an extra hour to lie in on what is usually a cold chilly morning, the mornings seem a little brighter, but then darkness seems to arrive in the middle of the day. This change in time affects our rhythm, at least at the beginning, but like everything else, we get used to it until the next change. It affects our sleeping patterns, in some cases we are constantly yawning, in others we have more difficulty falling asleep at night, but these are small issues compared to the real health issue.

According to studies done in the UK since 2014, during the week that follows clocks going forward in the spring resulting in the loss of an hour's sleep, there is a 24% increase in heart attacks, while in the Autumn, there is a reverse trend with a reduction of 21% in cardiovascular diseases. Traffic accidents increase or decrease as do other incidents, all linked to tiredness and lack of concentration caused by lack of sleep, blood pressure changes according to the reduced or extra sleep and so on. With this in mind, the question here is whether the benefits of moving clocks forward and backward twice a year outweigh those of the damage to health and increase in deaths caused by these very changes.

How can we sleep better?

The arguments that have been put forward so far have come primarily from Matthew Walker and his book, "Why we Sleep". His conclusion is that if you don't sleep those seven to nine hours a night, you are doomed. However, Arianna Huffington, who has written "The Sleep Revolution" says that if we are unable to get our quota of sleep at night, as will happen from time to time during busy work

periods, deadlines that need to be met etc., we can try to recoup our energy by using power naps. These are short twenty-minute naps, that you have at regular intervals during the day. Just the effect of closing your eyes for twenty minutes is a benefit, even if you don't actually manage to doze off and when you do wake up, you won't be feeling totally groggy as often happens when you have a real one-hour nap in the middle of the day.

Dr. Jen Gunter meanwhile, asks the question, "Do we really need to sleep eight hours?" Her idea is that if we become too obsessed with this phenomenon, we'll do ourselves more harm than good. If our blood pressure is at a decent level and our general health is good and we find that six hours appears to be enough for us, then that's fine, we shouldn't force ourselves to sleep that extra hour just because it's deemed as not being sufficient.

In relation to sleeping better, there are several things that can be done to produce a better quality of sleep. Firstly, light is fundamental, reduce strong lights as the evening goes on, keep away from phones and other digital equipment in the last hour before you go to bed so that your mind can relax, have relaxing music on in the background, maybe have a warm soothing drink, such as a camomile tea or hot water with honey and lemon and before going under the sheets, try some gentle stretching exercises to smoothen the back, some breathing to calm yourself down and some meditation to focus your mind and empty those chaotic thoughts before you hit the sack. Sleeping improves and maintains our skin, we often talk about needing our beauty sleep. As for dealing with daily problems, the best solution is often to sleep on it, that is, go to bed and the natural medication that occurs will help you to find the solution once you've woken up. That's how I solve most of my problems, go to bed and sleep on it, what seems to be an insurmountable problem, then when I wake up, I either have the solution or discover that there never really was a problem.

Sleep has often been regarded as something which gets in the way of our normal active life, however, it is now clear that sleep is as important to our health as is regular exercise, drinking water and the quality and quantity of food that we consume, so however much you sleep, makes sure it's enough for your needs.

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An interview with ...

Jasna Šebec, 2nd year Secondary School Competition Coordinator



Jasna Šebec - mother, wife, dreamer, soul searcher, friend, confidante, traveller, creative chaos-maker, thinker, enquirer, realistic optimist, wholehearted teacher.

Who is your professional inspiration and why?

I have had the honour of meeting and becoming friends with some excellent and inspiring teachers and ELT-professionals, who have shaped me into the teacher I am today. Beatrix Price, Jeremy Harmer, Mojca Belak, Alenka Tratnik, Helena Miklavčič, Uwe Pohl, Mark Andrews (and many more). They have showed me what is possible in language teaching, how to stay true to oneself and how to keep the spark alive. In addition to all of these wonderful people, I also like to see my future self as my professional inspiration – someone who I want to become. If I visualise it, it is easier for me to follow that goal. "Be the woman / teacher you want to look up to." kind of vibe.

Most memorable teaching experience?

It is hard for me to pinpoint just one moment, because there are moments on a weekly basis, when I am reassured that the path I have chosen is the right one. A moment when I get a hug from a student or when someone brings me coffee, moments when the whole class listens with great attention, moments when we are all having a bad day and just need each other to talk to and not learn English for a day ... it is the moments when we are honest to and safe with each other and when we are creating a space to grow as human beings rather than the teaching moments. I like to see teaching as school for life, rather than just teaching subjects. It gives me more motivation and I like to think that I am transferring this philosophy to my students as well.

What's the biggest challenge for you when it comes to teaching teenagers?

It is most definitely the motivation. Maybe not even those

of students, but my professional, personal and general motivation. I am constantly asking myself if I am doing enough, am I attentive, professional, personal and empathic enough, where I should draw the line (still learning how to do that). It is an ever-learning process and I am sometimes struggling to see the bigger picture. And struggling with the fact that not all students can be saved, that not all will enjoy my lessons and that not all of them will excel in English or will be willing to hear what I have to say and take what I have to offer.

When are you most productive?

It used to be late evenings, but since I've been a mother, I am too tired to do much in the evenings (and I've learned to appreciate my free time more). So my productivity varies, but I know that I usually work best when I'm under time pressure (which is definitely not good for my health, I know that as well).

Would you rather be besties with Virginia Woolf or Margaret Atwood?

Virginia, for sure! To finally get that room of one's own!

What advice would you give to your young self?

Don't overthink, don't complicate and know that everything is going to be fine, even if it looks the world is crashing down around you. ☺

Favourite English word?

Serendipity and solitude – at the moment; however, they change.

Paper book or e-book?

PAPER BOOK! The smell of books is unbeatable ...

Tea or coffee?

Always coffee.

Words to live by ...

"Not my circus, not my monkeys." The sentence that has helped me keep my sanity quite often lately.



How come...?

Why is the ocean salty?

The ocean gets its salt from the earth. Rocks have salt in them. Plants have salt in them. And there is salt in the soil. The rain falls and washes the salt out of the soil and into the sea. Rivers wear down the stones and carry more salt into the sea. You don't taste the salt in rivers because it doesn't have a chance to collect in them. You do taste it in the ocean because the ocean has been collecting salt for millions of years.

What are freckles?

Freckles are little brown spots that you can't wash off. Some people have them on their faces and other parts of their bodies. Freckles are formed in the skin by a certain kind of colouring matter that we call melanin. If your mother and father have freckles, you probably will, too. Sometimes you can get new ones by staying out in the sun because the sun causes the melanin under your skin to make new freckles.

Why does a bee make honey?



A female bee makes honey in a special stomach that's like a little factory. But first she goes to a flower for the same reason you go to the supermarket. The flower contains the raw ingredients of honey. She sips the sweet flower juice called nectar up through her mouth – which is shaped like a tiny soda straw – down into her honey stomach where it becomes the most healthful kind of sweet a person or a bee can eat. If she ate all this honey herself, she'd get too fat to fly. So she wings back to the hive to feed the baby bees a delicious treat made out of honey mixed with flower pollen.

What is a falling star?

When we see bright lights moving through the night sky, we say they are falling or shooting stars. But they aren't really stars at all. A star is a heavenly body that shines by its own light. A falling star is really a small, stony mass we call a meteor. We cannot see meteors until they enter the earth's atmosphere. Then, friction makes them so hot, they glow with a beautiful, fiery light until they fall to the ground and burn out.

How do streets get their names?

Before streets had names, people had to say "Turn right at the old oak tree and follow the brook over the mountain." So they decided streets should have names. Guess what they named the road near the old oak. Oak Tree Road. By the brook? Brookside Way. On the mountain? Mountain Avenue. Of course, some streets are called Avenues, Boulevards, Lanes and Ways. Usually, Avenues are big streets and Boulevards are even grander, while Lanes are little and winding, and Ways are even squigglier. Almost every town has a main street. It's usually the most important street. (Probably when the town was new, it was the only street.) Some streets, like Lee Avenue, are named for families who started the town. Others, like Roosevelt Avenue, for famous people. Other for what is – or used to be – on the street, like Windmill Road. What do you suppose is on School Street?

How did sandwiches begin?

A long time ago in England there lived a man called the Earl of Sandwich. One day he was sitting at his table writing. He sat there a long time and he got very hungry, so he asked his servant to put a piece of meat between two slices of bread and bring it to him. No one had ever heard of doing such a thing before. But it was the servant's job to serve. So he gave the Earl exactly what he asked for: a piece of meat between two slices of bread. It must have tasted good because the next time he asked for a piece of cheese between two slices of bread. And the time after that he asked for a piece of chicken between two slices of bread. And before you could say peanut butter and jelly, everybody was eating this marvellous invention – even the servant. But no one knew what to call it. So they named it after the man who thought it up. And forever after two slices of bread with anything in the middle was called a sandwich.

Source

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Day out of Days

by Sam Shepard

Van Horn, Texas: (Highway 10)

Little waitress doesn't get it, when I push my half-eaten steak away and ask her for dessert, that I really want dessert. She thinks there's something wrong with the steak. There's nothing wrong with the steak. I'm just ready for dessert. Another thing she doesn't get is that I have enough cash in my left boot right now to buy a small car or half the town and when I ask her if she wants to take a spin around the dusty block she doesn't understand that either. She thinks I have ulterior motives. I tell her I've just come from "the land of milk and honey." She backs nervously away with my half-eaten steak on the plate and bumps right into the chef coming out of the swinging chrome doors of the kitchen.

Chef wants to know what's wrong with my steak and I tell him nothing—nothing's wrong with the steak. All I want is dessert and she giggles as though the implication is that she's the "dessert" and the chef picks up on this and decides I'm seriously demented road trash and starts asking me to leave. I tell him I haven't finished my lunch yet and that I was very much looking forward to the butterscotch pie. He says the pies just came out of the oven and they're too hot to cut and I tell him I don't mind waiting but he says he can't cut into any of them because it would sacrifice the whole pie just trying to get a single slice out of it. I tell him sometimes sacrifice is necessary. I can see them all steaming behind him on a Formica shelf, lined up like little locomotives—puffing away. He tells me it's going to take quite a while. It's going to be at least an hour. I tell him that's fine, I'll just go out and buy a paper and come back. I'll stroll around the town and take in the sights. He says there are no sights; there is no town. But I tell him I'm a big fan of desolation. I'm fascinated by the way things disintegrate; appear and disappear. The way something very prosperous and promising turns out to be disappointing and sad. The way people hang on in the middle of such obliteration and don't think twice about it. The way people just keep living their lives because they don't know what else to do. He says he has no time for small talk and leaves me staring at the sugar.

Majesty: (Highway 101 South)

We stop in a place called Smith's in Paso Robles and order turkey-gumbo soup and lemon-meringue pie with black coffee. This ensemble somehow fits together

although it sounds as though the tastes might clash. The theme from *The Godfather* is playing on the jukebox; very dreary and always reminds me of that shocking scene with the decapitated horse head. What goes on in Coppola's mind? How could a guy come up with that? You must have to be Italian.

The skinny waitress here has the worst skin I've seen in a long, long time. She seems to be drowning in Clearasil, poor thing. Already suffering and she's barely sixteen. The decor in here is very weird: old-time meat hooks hanging from the ceiling, unless maybe they're ice hooks. Either way it's incongruous for a roadside café, it seems to me. After blowing laboriously on his gumbo soup, Dennis, out of the blue, starts telling me how his aunt had a stroke recently and can't remember the names of things. Some sort of aphasia or something. She seems to recognize the object itself but can't remember the correct name for it. Like "door" might become "key" in her mind or "dog" might turn into "bug."

Close but way off. I remember that happened to me once when I was a kid—not a stroke but the confusion about naming a thing. My mother became very alarmed about it and marched me over to the icebox. She threw the door open and began hauling out things like a cube of margarine, for instance, holding it up close to my face and demanding that I pronounce the name of it. I knew it wasn't butter because we never had butter but I couldn't remember the other name so I called it "majesty." I remember the panic on her face, as though she suddenly thought she had a cabbage head for a son on top of everything else she was worried about like the old man and taxes and the price of milk.

I think it may have also been the extreme heat back then. We were having one of those desert heat waves that summer where it would sit and swelter around a hundred and twelve at midnight for days on end. No rain. And this was in the time before air-conditioning was even thought of. The hills were all black and smoky from wildfires and when you breathed in you could taste the ash on the back of your tongue. At night I would have dreams where the clouds would just ignite into flames.

Anyway, I don't know why it was that I suddenly had this little spell of not knowing what to call things. It didn't last long but it was as strange to me as it must have been for my mother. I absolutely could not remember the name for margarine. That's all there was to it.

Source

- <http://www.sam-shepard.com/fourdays.html>

to feed your soul

School Holidays

by Paul Warren

Do you remember the sunny days
When you knew they would never go away
And the morning sun would shine through the blinds
And happiness would be forever kind

Did you ride your bike as fast as you could
Taking corners and pedalling hard as you should
And sunsets in pastel colours in the sky
As the days on end would fly by

Did you count the waves as they came in
On the white sand as you jumped in and out again
And not a day was wasted each and every one
As Summer Holidays we're meant to have your fun.



<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/school-holidays/>

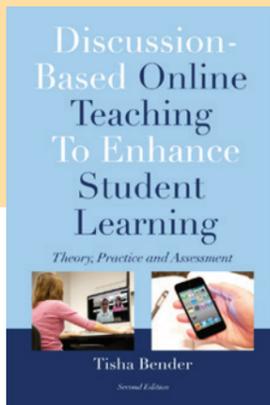
Between the covers

“Reading gives us someplace to go when we have to stay where we are.”

Mason Cooley



A book is like a friend who never leaves you. It is packed with knowledge, new information, insights into life lessons, helpful advice, friendships and hardships, love and fear, and much more. In this feature, there are recommendations and reviews that take you on a journey into the pleasures of books and reading. And on that journey, you can explore new territories, learn new things, and expand your horizons. Discover your next favourite read and send us your book recommendations.



Discussion-Based Online Teaching To Enhance Student Learning: Theory, Practice and Assessment

by Tisha Bender
Published 2012, pages: 256.
Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing.

About the book

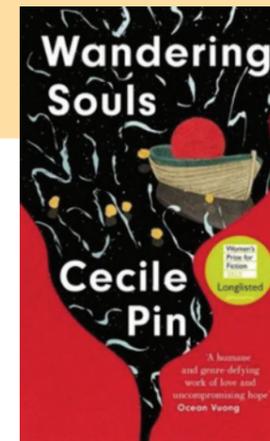
A classic on online learning offers insights and practical ideas drawn from the author's classroom practice and extensive research into the latest online teaching and learning literature. In particular, Tisha Bender explores whether the existing paradigm of teaching and learning has changed, not so much because of the advent of the Internet, but because of the potential gap between the expectations and practices of students who are "digital natives" of the digital revolution and those of their teachers. She addresses the question of whether we need to change our teaching to reach students and make them enjoy their education.

An excerpt from the book

(Can the Mind Exist Independently from the Body? p. 7)

Students generally like to have a sense of belonging. When they attend a class on campus, they become familiar both with the room in which the class is held and with the regularity of attendance of the inhabitants in that room. There is, in other words, a sense of predictability in terms of environment. Feeling included in a group is an important factor for encouraging the true potential for learning to take place. But is it possible for a class that does not occupy spatial coordinates to still generate a feeling of *place*? Given that students in an online class are working remotely, often some distance from each other, does the association of "distance" and "learning" constitute an oxymoron? After all, education is surely about the meeting of minds, not their separation.

Dreyfus criticizes the possibility of learning without physical presence, as is done via the Internet in online classes. His book, *On the Internet*, covers the "hype" of hyperlinks (as he does not think it leads to intelligent information retrieval), asks just how far distance learning is from education, talks of how a "telepresence" is necessarily disembodied and therefore inadequate.



Wandering Souls

by Cecile Pin
Published 2023, pages: 256.
London: HarperCollins Publishers.

About the book

It's not every day that you pick up a book and the writing constricts your chest, causing you to take many breaks from reading because you feel like you're constantly holding your breath. Cecile Pin's debut novel, based on her family history, is heart-wrenching and heart-warming. The novel is about a Vietnamese sister and her two brothers who flee Vietnam after the fall of Saigon and find a permanent home in Britain. Struggle, loss and disappointment were ever-present and it took them a long time to settle into their new home as best they could.

A sweeping, compelling and deeply moving story of heritage, survival, family and hope.

An excerpt from the book

(November 1978 – Vung Tham, Vietnam, p. 3)

There are the goodbyes and then the fishing out of the bodies – everything in between is speculation.

In the years to come, Thi Anh would let the harrowing memories of the boat and the camp trickle out of her until they were nothing but a whisper. But she would hold on to that last evening with all her might, from the smell of the steaming rice in the kitchen to the touch of her mother's skin as she embraced her for the last time.



Sisters

by Daisy Johnson
Published 2020, pages: 224.
New York: Riverhead Books.

About the book

Sisters is a haunting story about two sisters caught in a powerful emotional web and wrestling to understand where one ends and the other begins. Born just ten months apart, July and September are thick as thieves, never needing anyone but each other. Now, following a case of school bullying, the teens have moved away with their single mother to a long-abandoned family home near the shore. In their new, isolated life, July finds that the deep bond she has always shared with September is shifting in ways she cannot entirely understand. A creeping sense of dread and unease descends inside the house. Meanwhile, outside, the sisters push boundaries of behaviour—until a series of shocking encounters tests the limits of their shared experience, and forces shocking revelations about the girls' past and future.

A powerful and deeply moving account of sibling love and what happens when two sisters must face each other's darkest impulses.

An excerpt from the book

(July, p. 9)

Dead skin, I say, running my finger along the sink, and September glares at me and marches through the door. My teeth feel furry with the long journey, the cheese-and-onion sandwiches we bought from a service station somewhere. I remember, suddenly, that we have left behind our toothbrushes, propped up on the sink in the old house, the house we will not be going back to. I go into the sitting room to tell September but she is upstairs; I can hear her moving around. Some of the dirt shifts in the ant farm, as if something just moved through it. Warm air comes beneath the front door and down the chimney. I want to hear my voice against the white walls. The room has the feeling of having been busy moments before. I say September's name as quietly as I can but even that is too loud. I can feel all the rooms behind me. It is impossible to face every part of the house at once; I look in the kitchen and the pantry but they are empty, filled only with the murmur of the low lights. I go up the stairs fast, two at a time. Something behind me, something on my heels. Except, at the top looking back, there is nothing there.

TINY PLEASURES TO ENJOY THIS SUMMER

-  TAKING AN EARLY MORNING WALK. ✓
-  ENJOYING YOUR FAVOURITE FOOD OUTSIDE.
-  SENDING A MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE OUT TO SEA.
-  TAKING ON A DIY PROJECT. ✓
-  DANCING WITHOUT A CARE IN THE WORLD.
-  STARGAZING.
-  TAKING A DIP AT A LOCAL SWIMMING SPOT.
-  BLOWING BUBBLES.
-  FINDING A SHADY SPOT OUTSIDE AND DELVING INTO A GOOD BOOK.

-  WALKING BAREFOOT IN THE GRASS.
-  PITCHING A TENT IN YOUR BACKYARD.
-  SWINGING ON A SWING. ✓
-  MAKING SOMEONE SMILE.
-  MEDITATING OUTDOORS.
-  RUNNING THROUGH A SPRINKLER.
-  GETTING A MASSAGE.
-  NIGHT SWIMMING.
-  MAKING A SANDCASTLE.
-  COOKING A NEW RECIPE.
-  INDULGING IN THE FEELING OF KNOWING IT'S SUMMER.