

# ELTAM NEWSLETTER

[www.eltam.org.mk](http://www.eltam.org.mk)

## PRESIDENT'S NOTE



We spend 1 January walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance this list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives...not looking for flaws, but for potential.

Yes, my dear friends, another year of hard work is behind us, a year when we entered the following period of 10 more years of successful existence and presence in our country. I believe you are as proud of that fruitful period of ELTAM as I am. Now, when I am at the end of my presidential route within 2012, I just have to summarize the things which made me most thankful and happy having been a part of. I shall point out just one, the last activity that ELTAM has all the credits for performing, input and given efforts above all. That is the brilliant ELTAM project of the European Day of Languages, held on 26 September 2011. Therefore, please allow me to express my deepest gratitude to all the ELTAM members who took an enormous part in it and left their hearts on the field. We did a great job, despite all the obstacles we came across, but the results are what count in ELTAM's portfolio. I hope and strongly believe in the future of our projects, activities and the prosperity of ELTAM.

This 2012 will bring about another year of hard and inspirational work of ELTAM. There are our well known and already established activities, like the competitions for primary and secondary school pupils, but also a new one which we've added and will start from this year - the competition for private secondary schools as well. Meanwhile there are many International Conferences in the region for ELTAM's representatives to participate in as part of many years of quality partnerships with the associations in the region. Of course, ELTAM's 7th Conference is coming this year in October and I do hope we'll continue with the EU project for the European Day of Languages as part of ELTAM's projects.

At the end I'll point out the role of all our members, our dedicated Board and people who support us and our mission. The colossal misunderstanding of our time is the assumption that insight will work with people who are unmotivated to change. Communication does not depend on syntax, or eloquence, or rhetoric, or articulation but the emotional context in which the message is being heard. And that's what we in ELTAM do - we communicate, we motivate teachers to keep up with the changes in the educational system, and we give our best so that the message is being heard.

Yours faithfully,  
Elizabeta Hristovska Iceva

## **EDITOR'S NOTE**



At the beginning of my first Note as an Editor of the ELTAM Newsletter, I'd like to send a few words of gratitude to all those who have contributed in their own unique way in this issue - I appreciate the work that you have wholeheartedly put into the writing process, the experiences that you have shared both inside and outside the physical classroom, as well as the challenges you have come across and decided to put into words for the ELTAM readership.

It's fulfilling to take over the 'ship' and lead it through both smooth and rough periods. The following quote summarizes my feelings about not hurrying to get to the end and reach the target for its own sake, but valuing the 'rocky ride,' and it could easily apply in my situation as well: "We are so often caught up in our destination that we forget to appreciate the journey, especially the goodness of the people we meet on the way." I can state with certainty that the people I personally met throughout this first Newsletter journey for me have made their mark.

This expanded January-April 2012 issue, which will continue in this vein in the future, contains several novelties, as well as slightly modified parts that all make up an informative ELT guide for your own reading. The consistency refers to the first part, now with an added joint title, *Viewpoints*, and consists of a variety of articles ranging from two reports of events in Macedonia, a recap of how SOL has worked for an English teacher and some teaching methods employed, the ELT situation in Kenya, the benefits of e-assessment in the context of seventh graders, six 'villains' in ELT, steps on how to be a great English listener and discussion about the challenging aspects of the textbook. The section on *Interviews* (with an ELT expert), the *Students' Corner* (written by students of the English language who are aspiring teachers), *Practical Activities and Tidbits* and *Unique Works* (creative works of literature) are novelties that have become a fixture from this Newsletter onwards. Why don't you apply for a ELT Conference in the region? Take a look at the *Calendar of Events* at the end of this Newsletter. In addition, if you (or your pupils/students) would like to contribute in any possible way, send me your ideas. You have all the needed information in the part titled *For Prospective Contributors*.

ELTAM's activities are continuing in this period as well, with the planned Regional and National Contests in April and May. The Essay Contest is already underway and the next issue will review it. The International ELTAM Conference will take place in October 2012, so continue reading the Newsletter to stay informed of all our future activities.

This issue rounded off very well, now let's see what lies for us in the future.

Sincerely,  
Aneta Naumoska

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## » EUROPEAN DAY OF LANGUAGES «

**We speak a different language, but we all play, sing and enjoy our childhood!**

**By: Aneta Naumoska**

Following the initiative of the Council of Europe, The European Day of Languages is celebrated every year on 26 September in 41 countries. Last year, for the first time in Macedonia, **ELTAM** - the English Language Teachers' Association of Macedonia, participated in the celebration of this European day through organizing an event that was of national character. For that aim, with the support of the British Council Macedonia, an art competition was organized in several primary schools in Skopje, Stip, Strumica and Struga, which began on 5 September 2011.



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On 25 September 2011, beginning at 11:00, at "Shkolka" in the Skopje City Park, the celebration officially started, with stands from several European countries (being represented by members of their respective embassies located in Skopje). Around 200 pupils were in the background prior to the event, setting everything up and being as active as they could in the preparation process beforehand. On the main stage, there was a specific program for the celebration that lasted several hours. The representative of the EU Info Centre and the ambassadors present added a unique touch to the event. A multitude of pupils from primary schools, as well as from the Children's Cultural Centre, were the main 'actors' on stage during the whole celebration. Firstly they greeted everyone present in many European languages, acted out a play in several languages and recited short poems in an enthusiastic manner. While at the same time, surrounding the stage there were active Creative Corners whose main activities included face-painting (with the European countries' flags), jointly drawing the flag of the European Union as well as of the other countries, and playing the memory game. All of the pupils who were rewarded in the art competition received their prizes. Vlatko Ilievski, the famous Macedonian singer who represented Macedonia at the Eurosong Contest in 2011, hosted the whole event and provided musical entertainment throughout.

As an international association, which covers the private and state sector from primary to tertiary education, and as promoters of English in Macedonia, ELTAM's initiative to celebrate this day in Macedonia and to join the European language family was met with approval. Thus, judging by the smiles on the childrens' faces that day, we can conclude with certainty that our aim of bringing together and illustrating all the languages that are spoken by our students, teachers, parents and friends of the world, was worthwhile and successful. We hope to follow this tradition in 2012 as well.

*Aneta Naumoska, M.A., works at the Department of English Language and Literature ("Blaze Koneski" Faculty of Philology) in Skopje and is the ELTAM Newsletter Editor. Her first book, Gender Marking in the English Language, was published in December 2010.*

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## **ELT ESSENTIALS**

**By: Aleksandra Popovski-Golubovikj**

Why did we decide to do something like this?

Well, first of all, the idea came after doing the course on TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners) in 2011, as part of the E-Teacher Scholarship program. The scholarship offers several courses to choose from and any course gives excellent insight into that particular area. The program is conducted through the US Embassy around the world and it is part of the State Department Educational program.

I have always been interested in TEYL and this was a great opportunity to refresh my knowledge, learn something new and then share.

After doing 10 weeks of intensive reading, writing reflective essays, a thematic unit plan, and a training plan (you get 40-60 pages of reading on Thursday and you need to write a reflective essay by Sunday), I felt I had something to share with my colleagues. I approached Valentina Kikerkova who did the same course the previous year, and Aneta Naumoska who did the course on Critical Thinking that spring, with the idea to organize a series of workshops.

In order to reach as many teachers as possible we decided to do it in three different centers – Struga, Skopje and Bitola. The training is divided in 3 cycles with 4 workshops in each cycle and so far, we have finished the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle in Skopje and Struga. We plan to finish it in Bitola in the near future (if we get just a little help from our fellow teachers from Bitola in finding a venue free of charge - we would be eternally grateful). We, as trainers, are doing the workshops on a volunteer basis, which means that we do not get paid for holding the workshops. That is how enthusiastic we are about our profession. The workshop fee is used for paying our travel costs, the printing of certificates and refreshments for the participants.

I am happy to see that there are teachers who are eager to learn something new or even just to refresh their knowledge because we need to keep up with the constant changes in our educational system.

'Teachers must be encouraged - I almost said 'freed', to pursue an education that strives for depth of understanding.' (Howard Gardner)

'We must give more attention to the interplay between the science of teaching - pedagogy - and the art of teaching... A teacher must be anchored in pedagogy and blend imagination, creativity and inspiration into the teaching learning process to ignite a passion for learning in student.' (Peyton Williams, President ASCD 2003)

*Aleksandra Popovski-Golubovikj is the General Secretary of ELTAM and is the school director and teacher at the Private Language School "Elite" in Struga.*  
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## **Making the Most of SOL Courses in Devon**

**By: Mark Andrews**

This is the first in a series of three articles which look at the experience of going to another country when you are a young school student or as an older English teacher, and the potential impact of this on motivation for learning English and willingness to embrace “otherness” and broaden horizons.

All three articles will focus on the experience of a 10-day immersion in language and culture, for both school students and teachers at SOL (Sharing One Language), an organisation which is 20 years old, based in North Devon and which several Macedonian teachers have already been a part of on the July summer courses for teachers.

Going abroad when you are young to learn a language can be a life-changing experience. Suddenly something which is just a school subject can become part of your identity and enrich your life in ways which you only really appreciate much later.

You are confronted with difference, new experiences both positive and negative, and if structured well, with both pre-course and post-course activities, a course abroad might lead you to empathise more deeply with other people and other cultures, to understand your own culture better as well and to become more proficient in the language you are learning.

### **My own experience as a 16-year-old in West Germany**

I’ve often wondered who or what made me open up to other languages and cultures and I always come back to my German teacher, John Manfield at Wolverhampton Grammar School who encouraged me to spend ten weeks on a scholarship in West Germany at the age of 16.

It was there where I got to know a very different school culture from the one I had been used to, without school uniforms and “sitzenbleiben”, a strange idea for me, that if you didn’t get the necessary marks you had to “remain sitting” and do the whole year again.

In the two families I stayed in I saw a dishwasher, a bread cutting machine and an ITT cassette recorder for the first time, as well as being told to comb my hair properly before breakfast and take my shoes off when I entered the house. The families I was staying in were both well-off, one a “Zeit reading” forester and the other an architect. I was wowed by machines to cut bread and an ITT cassette recorder. The daughter of the family, Daniela, had got an ABBA tape and the Swedish group had just won the Eurovision song contest with “Waterloo”. I was so jealous, not of the bread machine but of the cassette recorder. At home we’d only got one of those reel to reel things and this ITT machine looked so cool.

I was also taken to the border between East Germany and West Germany, climbed a tower and looked over into what was the German Democratic Republic. It made a huge impression on me and became something I was curious about for the rest of my life.

These experiences were the most formative experiences of my earlier years. I came back not only much better at German, but much more motivated to learn more German. It also whet my appetite for travel abroad in general and I think I can safely say I would never have gone on to study languages at university without that experience. It was a very influential period of my life. On returning my German teacher remarked in my school report: “His sojourn in Germany has added a new dimension to his German studies.”

### Diary Writing

At that time I kept a diary/vocabulary book in which I wrote down the new things I was confronted with both to learn the language and to make sense of the new experiences. Diary writing can be a very important way of reflecting on new experiences and understanding them better and on recent SOL courses we have decided to foreground diary writing much more, reading the diaries during the course and commenting on them, spending some time in class working on how to write diaries and sharing experience.

On a recent Slovak course students were asked to paste this message from me into their diary before they arrived in Britain and then in class we went through the questions later.

Dear Students,

My name is Mark Andrews and I will be one of your course tutors in Barnstaple at SOL.

1) What bits of English did you notice on any signs as you went through the border at Dover at the sides of the road or anywhere else?

2) Write down 3 words which describe how you felt when you crossed the border and entered the United Kingdom.

Take photos of:

1) A bit of language that you see on any sign or in the shop or on a T-Shirt or anywhere at Winchester and Stonehenge.

2) Something that you consider very different from Slovakia on the way from Dover to Barnstaple.

3) Something that you notice in either the kitchen, living room, bedroom or the bathroom in the host family on their first evening that is different from your bedroom or bathroom in Slovakia. See you all soon.

-- Mark

This was one of the pictures one of the students took and then we talked about the use of the word “rocks” as both a verb and a noun.



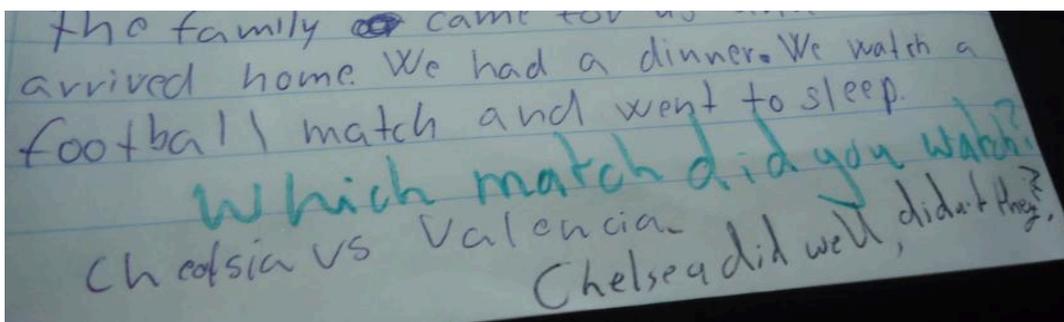
In class we then worked with different emotions the students had felt at the beginning of their time in England completing sentences such as “I was really confused when...I was embarrassed when....I was disappointed when.....I was really happy when.”



It is important to work on the diaries in class as it shows that they are valued and considered to be a key part of the course. It isn't enough to just say “write a diary”, time really has to be set aside for this.

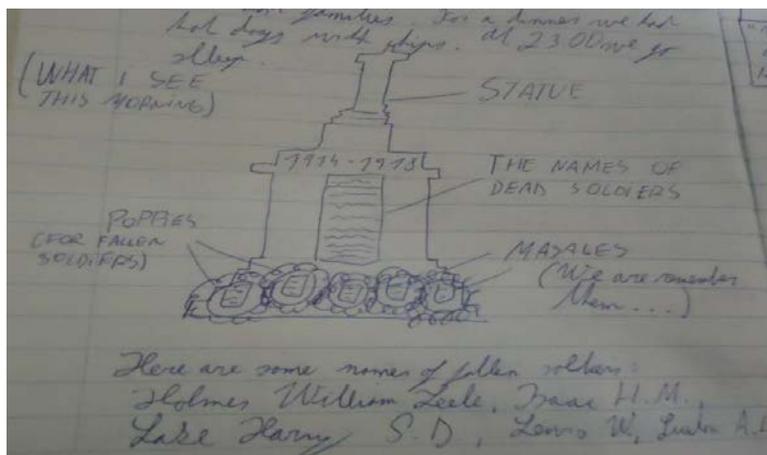


The fact that the students received regular feedback meant that they were more motivated to write in them during the rest of the course. Interactions developed between teachers and students such as the following: “we watch a football match and went to sleep.....which match did you watch?..Chelsea v Valencia.....Chelsea did well, didn't they?”



Diaries in language learning, reflecting on one’s progress and setting future learning goals are very much encouraged in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Documents. On short courses abroad they can also be invaluable in making things memorable and a lovely souvenir if you stick things into them and make little drawings as well.

This was a lovely drawing of the remembrance monument we went to see in Barnstaple by one of the Slovak students.



Finally, getting students to write diaries might not always be easy as you can see in this little video here.....

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bovaWuWVJXA>

but don’t be put off and if you ever do take students abroad on a language and culture course, think about making diaries a central part of the experience, I don’t think you will be disappointed, neither will the students!



*Mark Andrews works in Budapest. He has been teaching at ELTE university since 1996 and before that worked as a teacher trainer in the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. He also co-ordinates the IATEFL Hungary Culture and Literature Special Interest Group.*

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## **INTEGRATING LANGUAGE & CULTURE**

### *RAISING CULTURAL AWARENESS AND DEVELOPING LANGUAGE SKILLS FOR A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE IN BRITAIN*

**By: Emilija Krsteva**

Having had the opportunity to attend the annual ELTAM conference in Skopje in October 2010, as well as the immense fortune to be named the lucky winner of the summer school for teachers of English in North Devon, organised each year by the SOL (Sharing One Language) charity foundation, I can firmly state it has indeed been an experience one could only wish for or dream of happening.



Even though I have been in contact with English virtually all my life, since the age of 4, until that point, the summer of 2011, I have never had the chance to visit England before. So, it was my very first time in the UK. Initially, when I landed at Heathrow Airport, I was dumbstruck by the immensity of it, but, after a moment or two, I was quite comforted to see that it was fairly easy to find your way around it.

Upon our diverse group of teachers gathering at the airport and meeting the bright and welcoming face of Grenville Yeo, SOL's Executive Director, and Mark Andrews, our downright inspirational and ever-cheerful tutor, we set on our way to the first stop (Stonehenge) of our 11-day dreamscape journey. We got on board the coach waiting for us, and away we went, not a minute to lose, everything running according to schedule. What I first came to notice, take in, and deeply admire was the breathtaking landscape on both sides of the road. Macedonia has lovely scenery, too, but my very first view of England from the window of the bus had a power of its own. As we travelled along, Mark (on the mike) informed us of the background of each place we passed through prior to reaching Stonehenge, which is a story of its own, one you can only fully grasp if you see it firsthand. Serene, surreal, soothing, and sedative, to sum it up in a few words.



After Stonehenge, it was time to meet our host family at the bus station. They waited for us patiently, gave us a big smile and a bear hug to go with it. SOL accommodates both students and teachers in host families, which is a wonderful way to get to know life and culture in the UK from the point of view of

“ordinary” people. Though my fellow teacher / roommate from the Czech Republic and I were quite weary from the flight and the trip to Stonehenge, it felt extremely nice to be so warmly welcomed into their home. Our hosts showed us around the house, which appeared not as big on the outside as it was on the inside. I took some photos of the rooms in order to make a comparison of the homes in the UK and those in Macedonia.

From the first day we started exploring the town of Barnstaple, emphasis was put on doing fieldwork. As a teacher of English in Macedonia, I came to realise that both teachers and students are limited as to the amount of fieldwork they can actually do, mainly due to lack of finance, large number of students in one class, or unsuitable conditions in schools, which is why it was truly helpful and insightful to be a part of this course, since it centres on performing fieldwork by using English in a natural context and environment, sans the fear of making a mistake in speech, knowing how most students tend to lose courage to speak in class. The fieldwork we did was thoroughly thought out, carefully guided and surveyed by our two amazing tutors, Mark Andrews and Uwe Pohl, but it was a great asset, too, to have had the freedom to go beyond the tasks given at hand and use English the best way we knew how to find out even more about the life of English people, by asking them various questions, discovering their attitude and stance on current social topics, and being able to record mini-interviews of sorts, go through them as many times as we would like later on, and use them as authentic material in the classroom.



One of our first destinations was to visit the local pub called The Watergate and ask the manager a few things about its history. Bars, pubs, as we could gather, have long ceased to just be places where people would go and grab a drink or two (and get drunk, eventually), but have grown into places where the whole family could come for a meal for a reasonable price and enjoy themselves.

Barnstaple, and the whole area of North Devon, in general, is quite the place to visit, abounding in marvelous beauty and exciting history. Tom Evans, better known as Tom, the Town Crier, gave us a tour to remember round the town of Barnstaple and spoke of its famous history and places one simply must not miss when there: the Strand, the Library, the Open Market, the Shopping Centre, the Old Railway Station, etc.



Tim Brownings, our tour guide, gave a new dimension to the way a town's story is told. On our way to the Atlantic Ocean, for instance, he mentioned, with his charmingly humorous and teasing voice, how the Old Railway line had changed into a cycle track, that there used to be a military airfield with only one helicopter for helping people in need, spoke of the prevailing wind from the west, the international surfing competitions, and so on.

During our visit to Croyde Beach, we had two tasks to attend to: feel the temperature of the ocean on our skin, and feet (depending on courage), as well as conduct and record interviews with the lifeguards on the beach to acquire their opinion on Baggy Point, a protected National Trust Heritage site. The Baggy Point lodge was planned to be brought down by a London developer, so a hotel could be built there, but local people objected to it, mainly due to thinking that the hotel would ruin the view, would not bring as much profit as expected and was better off being built someplace else.



They say you should not leave Britain until you have tried British cider. Though I am no drinker, I took a sip (half a pint) and, to be honest, it is worth trying. Also, it is always nice to sit back and relax after a day bursting with all kinds of outside activities, as was the time we were taken to a traditional fish and chips restaurant, The Pelican, in order to have a taste of Britain's traditional meal. As much as we savoured the delicious cod and crunchy chips, a teacher's work is never really over, so our fieldwork this time was aimed at the staff, who kindly spoke of a certain amount of money needed for a chemotherapy ward to be opened at Barnstaple Hospital, for which purpose the restaurant had done a raffle to raise as much money as possible as a donation. That day was rounded with a remarkable folk night, specially organised for all teachers and their host families to hear traditional English sing-along songs, as well as for teachers to perform folk songs from their own countries, which ended up to be incredibly fun.



Our trip to Torquay was another memorable one, because we could actually spend time at the Grand Hotel, where Agatha Christie, the well-known British writer of crime fiction, spent her honeymoon. We were taken to Agatha's suite to see the way the apartment was arranged, still as it had been many years back. It all gave the impression of her being present there, at that time. Tourists are given a chance to rent the apartment for as many nights as they would like, but for quite a hefty price. After all, it was the place where Agatha surely must have gained loads of inspiration.

For me, personally, the visit to Tintagel was a genuine treat, because I have grown up with the story of Merlin and of King Arthur and his valiant knights, so it was truly unbelievable to be able to climb the seemingly unending steep stairs in order to get to what was supposedly the actual remains of King Arthur's castle. And, when we got to the top, what a site it was!



The Beyond Boundaries exhibition was another highlight of our fully engaging journey. When going to exhibitions, one generally tends to attain a sense of tranquility and detachment from the world outside. There were quite a few pictures you could spend your whole day analysing, or you could just give it a glance and decide you preferred a different style, something more detailed rather than obscure, but, in the end, every picture is open to interpretation. In my view, the exhibition was entitled Beyond Boundaries, because as is the case with music, dancing, acting, and other types of art, painting also transcends time, stereotyping, the view of life most people have. Art, on its own, is a world where there are no boundaries, both for the artist and the common man alike.



We were fortunate to hear the teaching experiences of our guest, Fred Ovey, during one of our indoor sessions, who offered us his insight on what it meant to be a good teacher and how one could or should approach and embrace the art of teaching. The main thing, he said, was to always stay positive, for both sides' benefit. All students are to be treated as individual beings, each with their own separate needs and feelings, rather than as a part of a large group. Empathy is a tool teachers should try to develop and strengthen over time and with experience. Praising and encouraging students, giving credit, constructive criticism and feedback for the all the work they have done is a good way to point them in the right direction and boost their confidence to use the language as much as possible, and to focus on communication instead of any language mistakes they might make.

My first-ever stay in Britain brought many new things to me as a teacher, as well as person who has always yearned to visit the UK. All of us gained a lot more understanding of one another's cultures through the places we went to and the people with whom we engaged in conversation. I would say that a culture is something that defines you and gives you identity, and this course gave all teachers (from Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Poland, Bulgaria, Germany, Ukraine etc.) the chance to interact and exchange opinions of the customs in their countries, at the same time immerse themselves into the life of British

people, and perceive the similarities and differences of their cultures. I can simply affirm that this course has helped me embrace the warm feeling of being an integral part of a group of aspiring, experienced and enthusiastic teachers of English, who I have shared both cultural and work-related experiences, as well as truly enjoyed their company during our social time, on field trips and nights out.

Depending on the target group, I can try to incorporate most or all of the things I have learned here into my own lesson planning and way of teaching. Fieldwork was one aspect I especially appreciated, because it gives enough security and confidence to speak the language in a normal life situation, minus the stress and observation, so I would definitely give my best to consolidate fieldwork with everyday lesson planning. It makes the process of learning more effective, less passive, and much more interesting, ultimately. Language is about communication, after all, certainly not only to be confined in the classroom. Both students and teachers can greatly benefit from a course the likes of this, understand and accept different cultures and ways of living, explore and embrace the magic of England, upgrade their knowledge of English, meet new people and maintain contact for life.

For my part, this way of learning suits me much better than spending the majority of the day in a classroom. If the opportunity presented itself again one day, I would definitely love to return and relive all these unforgettable moments. So, I deeply thank ELTAM and SOL for offering such life-changing opportunities to teachers and students of English, and I would dearly recommend this and all other courses organised by SOL to anyone who wishes to breathe in the spirit of England.



***Emilija Krsteva*** works as a Teacher of English at the "Cyril and Methodius" Primary School in Skopje.

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## Kenya Calling!

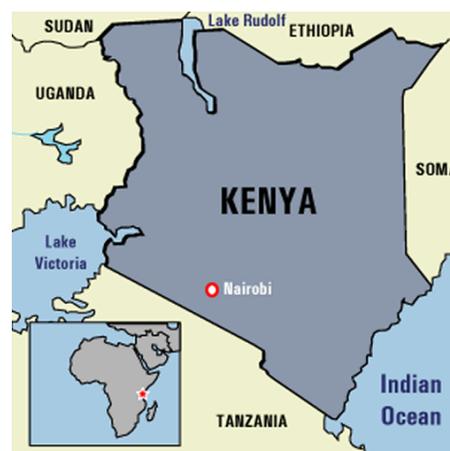
By: Charles Tasma

**Adiedo Secondary School  
P.O. Box 130  
Kendu- Bay**

Hallow Colleagues,

I know some of you must have heard something about Kenya. In the past we dominated some of the international channels either for athletics or politics: it normally gets hot during such seasons.

However, I am not calling to talk about Kenya in general, but to ask to be allowed to share the ELT situation in your Newsletter. Firstly, to introduce myself, I am Charles Tasma and I teach English in a rural high school in the western part of Kenya. Our school is close to Lake Victoria (the second largest fresh water lake in the world). We also border several physical features: a Crater Lake, hot springs and Homa Hills. All these are a result of a once active volcanic activity. For centuries now, they have never shown any sign of activity.



It takes four years to finish the high school curriculum here and we begin by discussing simpler concepts which take a spiral model until we reach more complex ideas. English is the official language, therefore it's a medium of instruction for all the subjects taught at both primary and high school level. Of course Kiswahili is also offered as a compulsory subject but other languages like German and French are optional and offered by a few schools.

Depending on the population of the region in which a school is located, teachers of English normally have a full schedule of classes as it is a compulsory subject. This is normally coupled with serious understaffing since at the University not so many train to teach English and some of the ones who qualify move to other sectors. The situation is worse in remote rural areas as again most people would want to teach in urban areas. This has an impact on the quality, for example students in urban areas speak much better English than their rural counterparts, the reason being that they have more teachers who give them the needed attention as they are not overworked. In rural schools however, such as where I teach there is an average of one teacher of English per 150-200 students and a minimum of about 40 contact hours per week (10 hours for each class).

At a high school level, the skills of listening, speaking, writing and reading are taught, as are grammar and literary appreciation. Literary appreciation comprises the equally important sections of drama, prose and poetry. Each must be taught at least once a week in every class.

Most of the ELTAs in our country have their activities guided by the Department of Quality Assurance and Standards. This is a Directorate at the Headquarters of Ministry of Education entrusted with ensuring all the learners receive a similar quality of instructional materials and personnel, for attainment of similar objectives within a similar span of time.

Some of the responsibilities of the ELTAs, all of which we accomplished this year, are:

- *In-service practicing of teachers of English Language on emerging trends of instructions;*
- *Coming up with a uniform scheme of work, for uniform instructions;*
- *Writing quick-read revision materials for students and teachers;*
- *Setting, co-coordinating and marking joint evaluation tests for students;*
- *Giving motivational talks to students, on language assessment and acquisition.*

It is at times necessary that our in-service modules be made to include units covered in neighbouring countries like Uganda and Tanzania, since in most cases we invite a few of their officials to attend then share with their members when they get back to their countries whatever they had acquired.

However, the worrying issue is that not all ELTAs operate with similar strength. Circumstances are sometimes extreme and organizational structures different. The differences notwithstanding, the performance charge remains the same.

Western Kenya (where we are), Central, Nairobi and the Rift Valley have some of the most active ELTAs and this had made the regions benefit quite a lot, even in terms of teachers of language being awarded scholarships to study the language in the UK.

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## Six Villains in English Language Teaching

By: Lindsay Clandfield

Mwahahaha!



Every profession has its bad guys. For doctors, it may be the evil pharmaceutical companies. For soldiers, it's the enemy army or the "top brass". What about English teachers? Well, I think there are six kinds of villain that are invoked at our conferences, in our methodology books, during workshops and especially on blogs. Here they are, in no particular order.

### 1) The old-fashioned teacher

Curious that the first villain is actually a teacher. Now, of course I don't mean teachers like you dear readers. Never. No, I mean the infamous "old-fashioned" teacher. The kind of teacher that bores his/her students. That punishes them for no good reason. That beats students (thankfully these teachers are not so common now one hopes). That humiliates them. That is inhuman (as opposed to the good "humanist" teachers). And even more unforgiving, the kind of teacher that uses old-fashioned methods. Recently, this villain could be the kind of teacher who refuses to incorporate technology into his/her teaching. That old-fashioned teacher is one who we love to hate or, at best, pity.

### 2) The backpacker teachers

Our second villain is another teacher, but this time of a different ilk. The spectre of the backpacker teacher is often raised as part of the lament of lack of professional standards in English Language Teaching. And many of us have met (or, gulp, were) backpacker teachers in the past. The worst kind of villain in this category is the teacher with no qualification, no teaching experience who will give classes for just enough money to cover beer costs. Needless to say, this kind of teacher is favoured by villain number 5 below.

### 3) The publishers

The ELT publishers, and especially the really big ones, are always a good target in a blogpost or general rant along the following lines: They're commercialising education! They're moving in on "our" social networks like Facebook and Twitter! They're giving away too much (flooding us with junk!). They aren't giving away enough (why can't I have another ten sample books and CDs to pilot?! They put on a practical workshop at a nice hotel, gave a free lunch and then had the sheer audacity to try and... *sell us a book at the end of it!* They ignore too much raw talent (especially true if you've been turned down). The publishers are sometimes

viewed as bottomless pits of money, making “billions”, and really just out there to hoodwink honest-to-goodness hardworking teachers and the poor students. They are our very own version of Big Tobacco, the Arms Industry or Big Pharmaceutical. Choose your metaphor!

#### 4) The coursebook authors

These are more a villain of the lesser kind, perhaps only lackeys to the real culprits above. The more villainous the coursebook author is tends to be in direct proportion to how successful they are. Which means that the authors of books such as Headway or Interchange are sometimes thrust in the role of arch-villain in our ELT pantomime. Their work stifles teachers’ creativity, imposes a foreign world-view on classrooms around the world, or are simply out-of-touch with students’ reality and needs.

#### 5) The private language school owners

The small-time crooks of our profession. They are really just interested in “bums-on-seats” and make huge gobs of cash by fleecing the students and cheating teachers at every opportunity. This is combined with trying to sell fake visas (if they are based in the UK) or evading tax (if they are based anywhere in the world). Finally, they don’t really know anything at all about education and tend to neglect or exploit the raw talent that works for them (when they aren’t trying to get in bed with them).

#### 6) The grammar syllabus and exams

Not human, these twin evils are more akin to monstrous demons that control language courses everywhere. They frog-march publishers, coursebook authors, teachers and students through their all-powerful totalitarian system and make us dance to their tune. Like death and taxes, they are the inevitables in our world. And are often loathed for it.

Now, are there any villains I’ve left out of our pantomime? Education ministers perhaps? The Common European Framework? Certain kinds of student?

**This blogpost first appeared on Lindsay Clandfield's blog (<http://sixthings.net/>):**

<http://sixthings.net/2010/09/12/six-villains-in-english-language-teaching/>



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## E-Assessment with Seventh-Grade Students

**By: Marko Marinkovic**

E-assessment is probably one of the most teacher-friendly technology concepts which can make piles of paper and endless hours of marking completely unnecessary. Speaking of e-assessment in language teaching, it is also known by the term CALT (Computer-assisted language testing). If it is to be performed properly and used for official tests, it usually requires a computer lab (classroom) with a sufficient number of workstations, so all students can take the test at the same time, under the supervision of their teacher.

For the purposes of this research, I used seventh-grade pupils. However, e-assessment can be applied to virtually any grade, providing that the pupils have at least very basic computer skills. Since a computer lab was not available, I had to resort to Internet-based testing as an alternative for this experiment. The testing platform was eQuizzer ([www.equizzer.com](http://www.equizzer.com)), which is a free online tool that allows easy quiz (test) creation and monitoring of student results. The idea was to allow students to take their test from home, whenever they want to. This method does have a huge downside – the possibility of cheating, but in the given circumstances and since it was an experiment, students were asked to do the test on their own, they were given a limited amount of time and promised that the results would not affect their grade. Moreover, the testing was done near the end of school year, when there was a clear idea of abilities and knowledge of each student, so if anyone of them did extraordinarily well they could be suspected of cheating. Again, this does not provide one-hundred-percent assurance, but those are at least some measures of precaution.

The first step in the testing process was the teacher preparatory work in setting up the test and student accounts. Each student got their own username and password printed on a piece of paper, and they were not allowed to show or share it with other students. The list of students in the group is sorted and shown in this way:

Username	Last, First	Password	Class	Account
22527	 Pavle	pavlec	Top Score 3	05/23/11
22522	 Aleksandra	aleksandrad	Top Score 3	05/25/11
22528	 Milija	milijalj	Top Score 3	05/23/11
22525	 Dalibor	daliborm	Top Score 3	05/23/11
22526	 Nemanja	nemanjan	Top Score 3	05/23/11
22523	 Neda	nedar	Top Score 3	05/23/11
22524	 Andjela	andjelav	Top Score 3	05/23/11

*Figure 1: eQuizzer student accounts (Students' last names are blurred for privacy reasons)*

Having set up the accounts, the second step was to set up the test. The topic of the test was the use of future forms, and it consisted of 24 questions, 17 of which were gap-fill and 7 multiple-choice questions. In this case, multiple-choice questions are generally easier to set up, since the teacher offers all the possible answers. In the case of gap-fill questions, there is a slight complication because the teacher has to be aware of all possible correct answers and their spelling varieties, so for example, if the verb ‘finish’ was supposed to be in the future tense, the possible answers are ‘will finish’ or the short form ‘’ll finish’. The same goes for the ‘going to’ forms, which could be, in the third person singular, ‘is going to finish’ or ‘’s going to finish’. If the test is more advanced and there are more possible correct answers and their spelling varieties, the preparation has to be very thorough so that the automatic checking and marking system does not mark the correct answers as wrong.

The last step in this process was to check the results of the test. When any of the students had completed the test, the results were presented, including the percentage of correct answers for each student, and a separate view of each student’s test with the answers they provided, just as it would be the case with a paper-based test. The following image is a screenshot of the summary sheet of the test results for all the students in the seventh-grade group:

Student	Original Score	Time Stamp
[blurred], Aleksandra	91.6% 22/24	05/25/11 11:10:47 AM Timed Quiz: 00 hrs, 28 mins, 33 secs
[blurred], Pavle	87.5% 21/24	05/24/11 09:33:05 AM Timed Quiz: 00 hrs, 21 mins, 54 secs
[blurred], Dalibor	70.8% 17/24	05/24/11 06:12:11 PM Timed Quiz: 00 hrs, 25 mins, 17 secs
[blurred], Milija	70.8% 17/24	05/25/11 09:00:43 PM Timed Quiz: 00 hrs, 29 mins, 10 secs
[blurred], Neda	62.5% 15/24	05/24/11 10:25:16 AM Timed Quiz: 00 hrs, 30 mins, 00 secs
[blurred], Andjela	50.0% 12/24	05/24/11 07:26:30 PM Timed Quiz: 00 hrs, 30 mins, 00 secs
[blurred], Nemanja	45.8% 11/24	05/25/11 10:44:10 PM Timed Quiz: 00 hrs, 26 mins, 03 secs

Figure 2: eQuizzer test results summary (Students’ last names are blurred for privacy reasons)

These statistics offer a wide range of possible interpretations and conclusions. First of all, most of the results are in accordance with the performance of each student on previous tests and assessments – the most talented and most hard-working student in the class had the best score (91.6%). The second student on the list had a score which is by some 5 to 10 percent higher than his usual performance, while the others were mostly consistent with their previous results. Secondly, only two of seven students used the entire amount of

time they were given (30 minutes) which suggests that students were given enough time to answer the questions, review their answers and submit the test. None of the students had problems with the technology since they were previously given instructions on how to use the testing software. Again, in an ideal case the testing would be performed in a computer classroom and we could almost eliminate the possibility of cheating, which in this case we certainly cannot. However, a great level of consistency of the results of this test with the previous results of each student show that cheating can be ruled out as a factor in this experiment.

Finally, we have to list all the benefits of such a testing system:

- It saves time – these tests need to be prepared, but so do paper ones and the amount of time spent is not significantly different in any of the two cases. However, e-assessment eliminates correcting and grading, which can be extremely time-consuming.
- It saves money – if a school already has a computer lab, there are free software applications which can be used. Paper copies of tests accumulate costs to very significant amounts of money.
- It can include multimedia (videos, sounds, images).
- The software archives and sorts all the test results so they can be easily accessible when needed.
- It provides immediate feedback to students and teachers.

The bottom line is that a system like this one is a huge help for teachers, but again, it is far from being a tool which can replace them. Another important thing is that **e-assessment tools are not able to grade spoken response and complex written answers** - they are able to record them, but it is the teacher who has to evaluate their quality. As it has already been said, the technology principle presented in this experiment remains in the domain of a very helpful tool, but it has to be set up and complemented with teacher work in order to produce the best possible results.



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## Be a Great English Listener

**By: Nate Hill**

*The following is only part of a guide titled Be a Great English Listener: 4 Learning Steps You Need for Better Listening (which can be downloaded from [www.TweetSpeakEnglish.com](http://www.TweetSpeakEnglish.com)). This guide will teach you what you need to know to become a great English listener. Many people know they should be listening to English everyday, but quickly get discouraged because they don't see any improvements. If that's you, I hope this guide will help.*

### **How the Most Successful Learners Listen**

There's been a lot of research in the last twenty years about how foreign language students should study to improve their listening skills.

This research has identified a lot about what successful listeners do that others don't. Most of those students rely on strategies they didn't even know they used. They just did it.

However, becoming aware of the strategies they use, what works, when it works, and why it works, usually results in even faster learning and improvement.

Anyone can learn how to think in this same way, and with practice, you'll be able to discover the best strategies that work for you to improve your own English listening comprehension.

I can't say it'll be easy in the beginning, but start small and try to follow this way of thinking in your studies. Before long, you really will become a self-directed learner, have more fun learning, and improve your listening skills faster than you ever have before.

To get started, you just need to structure your studies around four main skills:

Organize, Manage, Monitor, and Evaluate—Or OMME.

#### **Organize**

Before you even start listening, you need to spend time on organizing your listening plan. It will help you define the purpose for listening and structure what you're listening to around your goals.

##### **• Set listening goals**

To think about goals, think about your problems and what you want to be better at. Why will you listen to something? How will it help you communicate something you want or need to communicate? Keep your goals very simple and measurable.

- **Plan how to reach those goals**

What kind of things do you need to listen to in order to reach the goals you defined? Ask your friends on Twitter and Facebook to help you find the types of listening you think will help you reach your goals. Whatever the listening is, make sure it is natural English.

- **Plan learning tasks**

You need to give yourself a task before listening to anything. What information do you need to understand from this listening? Without knowing that, you won't know if you're successful or not. Remember, successes give you motivation to continue the process.

To decide on a task, you must think about what you know about the topic or the type of listening. You can use the title name, a description, or other resources to predict what the listening will be about.

Common listening tasks include: Taking notes about specific details; Summarizing; Identifying main ideas; and Learning how to do something.

There are many more tasks you can do with listening. Think about them or search online to make a list that you can choose from. Share any good ones you find with other learners online.

### **Manage**

The next step is to manage your studies. It's important to keep these things in mind before and during listening.

- **Understand what your learning style is**

If everyone learned in exactly the same way, teachers and education systems would have an easier time making people happy. Identify how, when, and in what setting you learn best. Try to only study in a way that is compatible with your style.

- **Think of what strategies to use and test**

I will tell you more about what makes a good strategy in a few pages. The important thing to remember is that no strategy is good or bad. It either works for you, or it doesn't. Just because one works for someone else doesn't mean it will work for you.

Keep testing and use what you'll learn in the Evaluate step to find the best strategies that help you listen better.

- **Look for any practice opportunity you can find**

Take action to find any chances in your day to day life that let you practice your listening skills and strategies. OMME should always be your guide for any practice, even when you're "out in the wild", so remember to use what you learn in your controlled study times.

- **Let the task be your focus**

Remember, the task is a short term goal to achieve a longer term language goal. Achieving this task will teach you the strategies that work for you so you can repeat similar results over and over.

### Monitor

Monitoring happens while you're doing a listening activity. Identifying problems while listening is the goal. Keep the two points below in your mind to know how you are doing on the current task. If there is a problem, you'll be able to think about how you can improve it in another attempt.

- **Check your progress on the task** (Are you focusing on the right information?)

If you feel that you are able to hear the information to help your listening task, that's great. If not, however, there might be a better task for this specific listening. Identify if the problem is the current task by trying a different task.

- **Check how well you are understanding** (If you're lost, why? Wrong strategy?)

It takes a very long time and a lot of listening experience to feel that you understand almost everything. Most of the time you will feel like there is a lot of information you don't understand. That is why we give ourselves tasks—to focus on less information so we can practice our listening skills.

If it's too difficult to understand the information, and you've tried a few different tasks, you need to ask if the problem is the strategy you are using. If that doesn't seem to be the problem, is the topic one you aren't very knowledgeable about? Do you need to focus on learning a little topic-specific vocabulary before trying again?

These are the kinds of questions that should be going on in the background of your mind while you listen. Monitoring can be difficult to remember, but is very important. The key is to practice doing it while feeling relaxed and in control. Eventually, it will happen automatically.

### Evaluate

Self-evaluation is very important and you should never skip it. Keep notes about your studies in a separate notebook, and do your evaluation immediately after each listening (first time, second time, etc.).

Over time, you'll be able to see patterns. These patterns will show you what strategies work best, and for what task they work best with.

- **Give yourself a score on how well you accomplished the task**

Rate how well you completed the task on a 1 - 5 scale. This could be based on how you feel about your efforts, or on information accuracy. If you don't have a transcript of the listening, try to find someone who can help you check.

- **Give yourself a score for how well you think you used the strategy**

This time, you want to grade yourself on how you used the strategy. Again, give yourself a 1 - 5 score, but this time it is how you felt about the strategy. Write down what the strategy was, and any notes you want. Was the strategy easy to use? Difficult? Did it match your learning style? Did it feel comfortable?

Think about these kinds of questions when evaluating.

• **Decide if the strategy/strategies you used helped you with the task**

Before, you graded how the strategy worked for you. This time, you want to grade how the strategy worked for the task. Give it a score of 1 - 5. Did it help you complete the task? Why or why not?

**Last Notes on OMME**

OMME doesn't have to be a linear process. It's meant to help you observe your own learning so you can make changes and learn in the way that is best for you. The most important thing is to be honest with yourself and with your progress.

If you need to go back and make easier goals; then do that.

If you need to think of better tasks or strategies to achieve those goals; change them.

This is a way of thinking, and it is similar to how good teachers structure their classes. The good news is, you're the only student. So you can always do what's best for you. Nothing is set in stone and can be changed at any time.

OMME helps you think about how you learn, and if you keep things simple enough to follow a routine every day, you'll discover the best ways to improve your listening comprehension.

I've adapted OMME from Cognitive Language Theory research. While I'm focusing on its benefits for helping you improve listening, this is really a way of thinking that can help in any of your language learning pursuits.



*I'm an English teacher living in Japan. I started TweetSpeakEnglish.com to reach a wider number of students through the internet, and help them learn more about natural English, pronunciation, and becoming better speakers and listeners.*

*If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions about the guide, please **email** me at [nate@tweetspeakenglish.com](mailto:nate@tweetspeakenglish.com). I'd love to hear from you!*

*If you or anyone you know might be interested in working with me on translating this to your native language, please send me an email. I would really love it if early English learners could also understand and start using the principles in this guide to start improving their English skills.*

## The coursebook challenge

By: Darren Elliott

This article was first published in *English Teaching Professional* Issue 69, July 2010 and is reproduced here by permission of the copyright holders, Pavilion Publishing Ltd.

**Darren Elliott** asks some questions and offers some answers about textbooks.

This article starts from the premise that there is no such thing as a bad textbook. Most of the time the books we use are well-designed and written in careful consideration of sound pedagogical research. However, the difficulties arise when we try to use textbooks exactly as they are, without thinking about the needs, skills and circumstances of the particular set of students sitting in front of us. We should remember that the teacher's guide is just that: a guide, and that a major part of our job as teachers is making the most out of our textbooks. Some, like the dogme-ists, might dispense with the textbook altogether. I've taught such courses myself, and count them amongst the most rewarding I've been involved in. Nevertheless, in many situations (for teachers and students alike) a textbook offers security, clear goals and a framework for study. It may, too, be handed down to us from above – in which case we need to learn to make the best of the materials we are given.

### Choosing your book

#### ! Questions to ask yourself

##### Choose a textbook you are currently using.

- Were you involved in its selection?
- What is it that you like and dislike about it?
- Do you think the students would say the same things?
- What does the author believe is the best way to teach and learn a language? Do you share those beliefs? Do your students?

For those of us in a position to choose our own textbooks, the options can be bewildering. The coursebook market is extremely competitive these days, which means that publishers' representatives will be happy to send you samples for review, offer suggestions and advice, and may even come to visit your institution to talk through your options. Most conferences, even the smaller ones, will have publishers' stands and there will often be sponsored presentations from authors or representatives to introduce new products.

Gathering information, then, is not difficult. Sifting through it all is the challenge! Your actual starting position should be the students, but textbook decisions often have to be taken before you have even met your students. In such a case, you will have to draw on the information you have (test scores, student profiles) and your experience (or the experience of those around you) to find a book

In many situations (for teachers and students alike) a textbook offers security, clear goals and a framework for study.

which is generally appropriate for a class of its type.

Jeremy Harmer has an excellent checklist for textbook selection. He encourages us to focus on both the practical (price, availability) and the methodological (cultural appropriacy, language skills). Sometimes it is surprising to hear students' feedback on the textbooks they use. For example, the size and weight of a book can be very important to them – I suppose if the book is one of many that you have to heave around all day, you will appreciate a more compact edition!

Evaluation before, during and after the course is also very important. Inevitably, what looks like the perfect textbook before the course starts will throw up some unexpected obstacles when classes are underway. How we react to them, and what we learn from them, is key. Of course, once teaching begins we can begin to gauge the students' reactions, both formally (through questionnaires or class activities) and informally (classroom atmosphere or energy).

Finding out what the rationale behind the book actually is can be harder than it sounds, although it is a very necessary enterprise. The explanatory notes in the introduction to the book, the teacher's guide or in the publisher's catalogue may give us an idea, but from a marketing perspective the publishers have to make every new textbook sound innovative and fresh, yet similar to another successful series you are already comfortable with. By going through a unit carefully, one can make assumptions about the pedagogical beliefs of its authors. For example, if the grammar point is carefully laid out at the opening of the unit we can probably assume that the author thinks form should be taught explicitly before practice. On the other hand, if grammar is tucked away in the back of the book or in a supplementary handbook, the author probably prefers learners to discover patterns through using the language. Aspects which will influence the way a textbook is put together include attitudes towards L1, fluency/accuracy balance, learner autonomy, error correction, integration of skills, ways of learning vocabulary and many others. If you find that your fundamental beliefs as a teacher are incongruent with those of the author of your textbook, you may need to change the book (or at least change the way you teach it).

Finding out what the rationale behind the book actually is can be harder than it sounds.

## Using your book

### ! Questions to ask yourself

**Choose a unit from a textbook you are currently using. Look at each activity and the unit as a whole.**

- How would you arrange the activities, and how many classes would they take to teach?
- Would you drop any activities? Why?
- Are there any activities which need no alteration?
- Which activities would you change? How and why?
- Do you know/use all the supplements that come with your textbook?

If you don't get to pick your own books, or even if you do, then you will probably want to put your own spin on things. At the macro level, you have to fit the book into your syllabus. How much time do you want to spend on each unit, and in what order do you want to teach them? Then at the micro level, each lesson will be comprised of one or more textbook activities. Neville Grant gives us five options for each one: adapt, replace, omit, add or use. I would add one more option (move), but other than that, I think this summarises the choices available to the teacher very succinctly.

So *when* do you do *what*? Here are some of the most common reasons for doing things differently:

### 1 'It's too difficult!'

It may help to add a couple of extra stages of pre-task set-up. Maybe you need to pre-teach some of the vocabulary; perhaps you need to make a skeleton conversation into which lower-level students can plug their

own language. You may need to set a reading as homework, rewrite it in simpler language or exchange it for another reading. It might be a good idea to use the tapescript in a listening activity before playing the audio.

## **2 ‘It’s too easy!’**

You probably encounter both 1 and 2 in the same class sometimes. Is there any way you can build some flexibility into the activity to enable the more able students to expand? Once the more capable students have finished the discussion questions in the textbook, ask them to make two more of their own. If some students read quicker than others, ask them to go back through the text and find their favourite word, or an example of the present perfect continuous.

## **3 ‘It’s too fiddly!’**

Some textbook activities involve a lot of flicking backwards and forwards between pages, or complicated rules, or elaborate scenarios. It is worth thinking about streamlining your activities to get the most language out of the least instruction. Efficiency is an important element of classroom management. If an information-gap activity requires one student to look at page 39 and the other to look at page 40, you know that they will both end up flicking between the two. Remove the temptation and the confusion by making handouts and having the students close their books.

## **4 ‘It’s boring!’**

For some students, perhaps. Can you keep the activity but change the context to make it more relevant or interesting? You know about your students’ interests (both professional and personal), so utilise that knowledge. Addition (in the form of supplements) or adaptation can make the class much more interesting. Don’t forget, too, that students have paid for their book. If they don’t use it, some of them might get disgruntled. Omission is acceptable within reason, but the students will wonder why they bought the book at all if they use less than half. If you do change activities, you should let them know which part of the textbook they can refer to later.

## **5 ‘It’s irrelevant/inappropriate!’**

It is not difficult these days to find locally-produced textbooks or local editions of international books, but there may still be readings about outdated celebrities, pictures considered ‘racy’ in your milieu, or activities pitched too young or old for your learners. You may need to substitute more interesting or appropriate material. Who is in the news in your area? Keep up with current trends and issues which are relevant for your students by reading the business section of the paper or trade magazines, by watching popular TV shows or by asking your students who or what they care about. (Bear in mind, though, there is nothing worse than a trendy uncle!)

## **6 ‘The book doesn’t meet my goals!’**

The goals here could be the students’ goals, the course goals or the teacher’s goals. Imagine a class of young businesspeople who are required to take the TOEIC test at the end of the course. Most of them are just interested in chatting about this and that and learning English that way. The textbook the teacher has been given has no listening activities. The teacher is interested in teaching through drama. This is a mismatch in every way. Yet some of the elements are fixed, others can be accommodated. The course goals, in this case, are immovable – failure to perform in the test equals failure in the course. But the teacher can ‘sell’ their ideas to the students and work with what the textbook has to meet everyone’s goals. Remember the interplay between these four elements (book, course, learner, teacher) and remember that the easiest to change is probably the book.

## **7 ‘It’s too thin!’**

If your textbook doesn’t offer enough to fill a class, it may be that you are not exploiting the language to its fullest. Reading exercises can yield vocabulary and grammar work. Dialogues can be practised as dramas,

drilled, adapted to gap fills, rewritten, dictated ... sometimes we move on too quickly without allowing the students time to get to grips with the language, especially if we teach the textbook as it is all the time.

### 8 'It's only a book!'

If you only use the textbook, you may be missing out on the supplements that come with it. These days, it seems that no series is complete without a CD-ROM, DVD, workbook, interactive website, test-making kit and complementary kitchen sink! It is quite easy to ignore these elements, but they can be excellent not only for classroom supplementation but for additional work outside class. Make sure you are familiar with the extras and advise students as necessary to help them work on their problem areas.

Beware, though – sometimes it is just not realistic to expect students to do everything offered with a set of course materials, and don't let the book dictate the pace of your class. If you have to rush to get through it all, you have a problem. I find it better to choose a book with less material and to personalise it.

### 9 'I only have one student!' 'I have 30 students!'

How will your student introduce a partner to another student when he is the only learner in the room? Won't it take forever to listen to 30 two-minute presentations, one by one ... and what do the other 29 students do while they are waiting for their turn? Using pair and group formations can solve the second problem, and creative alterations such as board games or card games can keep one-to-one classes fresh.

### 10 'It doesn't fit!'

Many textbooks these days are 'multi-syllabus'. That is, they are designed to teach everything, from grammar to vocabulary, across the four skills and including a variety of functions. If you want to focus on speaking, a reading or writing activity dropped into the middle of your textbook can interrupt the flow. In addition, you may find two or three distinct teaching points in one unit. Moving activities around, using the natural breaks in the class and managing your whole syllabus holistically (not just lesson by lesson) can all help. There is no harm in leaving an activity for later if it doesn't fit today.



Despite innovations in technology and methodology, the textbook still has life in it yet. Using a textbook needn't be a safe or lazy option, but should be one of a number of tools which we use to help our learners learn. I hope this article has given you a few ideas to help you do that.

Harmer, J *How to Teach English* Longman 2007

Grant, N *Making the Most of your Textbook* Longman 1987



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## **An Interview With A. Suzan Öniz**

Starting from this issue onwards, the ELTAM Newsletter will be publishing interviews with ELT professionals, i.e. each issue will contain one interview with a person who has done their share in promoting the English language in their own country. Thus a multitude of countries will be introduced.

A. Suzan Oniz has the honor of being interviewed first and what follows is a short description of her place in the ELT world as well as her thoughts on the posed questions:



A. Suzan Öniz has been an instructor, teacher educator, tester, coordinator and tutor of the UCLES-RSA diploma and certificate programs, and Smart Class instructor at METU. For several consecutive terms she has served as the vice-president, editor, and webpage person for INGED (the English Language Teachers' Association in Turkey): <http://www.inged.org.tr/> She has recently retired but continues her work as INGED board member, editor and webpage person. Her areas of interest include vocabulary teaching using data bases and concordancers and teacher education. She holds a PhD which focuses on how teacher educators can change themselves while they are busy training and educating others.

### **1. How did ELT become your life calling?**

- By chance ... At University, in order to receive credits, while trying to decide what course to take, I ran into a Professor who I really liked. He advised me to take education courses over the following three years towards a teaching diploma and, upon my soft objections to the idea of becoming a teacher, added that having this diploma on the side would be useful later. At that point in my life, I wasn't interested in teaching at all especially because I had been a very "active" (or "naughty" as some of my teachers complained to my parents) student in high school who couldn't sit still and was bored veeery quickly. I graduated with honors from high school but I think I gave some of my teachers a pretty hard time. So I did NOT want to be the "teacher" of such kids. I did follow my professor's advice though and when I applied to the then Prep School (now Department of Basic English) of the Middle East Technical University (METU), just to have an interview experience behind me but got accepted, I took the job. I loved the responsibilities involved, the different possibilities that our Department offered teachers who were willing to try things (teaching in pilot projects, developing supplementary materials, working in the testing office). Each new experience reinforced my wish to continue. And I have been an instructor there for 35 years!

**2. "We think of the effective teachers we have had over the years with a sense of recognition, but those who have touched our humanity we remember with a deep sense of gratitude. (Anonymous student)" Who has been your greatest ELT influence? Is there any quote or book that you particularly remember which has made you reconsider your teaching practices?**

- Sheelagh Deller is the major influence in my life as a teacher educator! I first met her at her 'train the trainer' course and was utterly taken by her teacher and trainer persona, her incredibly patient way of letting participants figure things out, the planner Sheelagh who set up a two-week course for future trainers based on their wishes and needs. I learned the value of anonymous feedback from her, how to add diversity to my training or teaching sessions, how to turn boring exercises into learner-centered learner-generated activities. My whole teacher training/development outlook changed and I believe I decided working with teachers was what I wanted to do from then on. Sheelagh reinforced my belief in 'The customer is always right,' a saying that we have in Turkish and I've based my evaluation of teachers' feedback on this. It forced me to "blame" myself or to focus on my planning of a session, the choice of materials, the timing. This also carried over to my teaching. I'm ever so grateful to having attended Sheelagh Deller's course because it opened a new page for me.

**3. You have attended and presented at many Conferences in Turkey and abroad. What three characteristics must a Conference have in order to be a successful one? Could you mention at least one that has made a lasting impression on you and share a memory of it for the ELTAM Newsletter readership?**

- Tough question ... I was the co-organizer of the last METU ELT Convention in 2009 and we kept asking ourselves this question. One of the main attractions is the plenary speakers. They should be ELT professionals that participating teachers would learn from, be motivated by and want to listen to. If participants feel that this is a rare chance to listen to this particular speaker, that is ideal. Another important feature is e-sessions and the availability of IT for presenters and also participants. The last feature is the venue. Teachers will wish to experience a new place, a new culture, new food, new ways. The social aspect of the conference is also very important. That's why the coffee breaks should allow for teachers to socialize and so should the evening plans.

One unforgettable conference memory for me relates to years ago when an ELT conference was organized by the British Council at Hacettepe University. Ankara and us had the great fortune to hear Penny Ur (I sat on the floor, right at her feet in an overcrowded room just to be there and hear this wonderful person whose *Grammar Practice Activities* later became my practical activities bible!) and the great Henry Widdowson. I can't tell you how awesome this was for me! Value vs. significance, text vs. discourse and so forth! I

couldn't really grasp everything he said because his presentation was so intensive with no redundancies to allow the listener's tokens to fall. I just sat there in total awe and concentration not believing that this was happening! I read (and reread the article later and realized how much I had not got at the conference!) But the most unforgettable memory was the party at British Council Director Alan Mountford's (ESP guru and Director of BC in Ankara then) house where we had great food, drinks and long discussions with our famous guests with this fabulous evening ending with everyone dancing. I got to dance with Henry Widdowson! I couldn't believe it! Henry Widdowson, the god of ELT dancing with me☺ That was AWESOME and I still get a thrill!

**4. What is the ELT situation in your country? What kind of role does the state play in promoting linguistic competence of English?**

- I haven't taught in the secondary system so it is very hard for me to comment on this. All I can say is that the debate whether children or young adults should learn science in the mother tongue or in a second language (English mainly) is still going on. The number of hours of English instruction varies according to the type of school (private vs. public vs. specialized schools). Since the beginner classes in our Department are getting more and more crowded, it is obvious that the secondary school hours allocated to English are insufficient. We are getting more students whose English proficiency is quite low.

**5. How is technology incorporated in your teaching context and has it become an essential teaching aid? Are teachers well informed of the technological advances in ELT?**

- How? In our department, classes have projectors and internet connection so if instructors wish to show clips live or stored, they can. There are two Smart Classes where all students can sit at computers and work through materials with the instructor. Some of the course books have CDs and web pages that students and instructors can make use of.

Essential? It's a supplement that brings in extra materials and motivation. In our intensive 3-5-hour classes with the same teacher, even OHPs can motivate students. Many of our students have never written on a transparency before and thoroughly enjoy coming up to the front standing by the projector and explaining their work on the OHT.

Teachers: Some are not as enthusiastic as others. The reason is I think related to personality types. I believe there is an additional intelligence: Technical Intelligence. I started out as a 'lab instructor' and worked in a language lab in the audiolingual era. Dealing with tapes and buttons and flipping little switches to listen or talk to students in booths with headphones seemed to make some of my colleagues uncomfortable. That was

many years ago and today the same seems to apply. Some instructors embrace technology with ease and gusto while others do so with hesitation.

Our teacher training unit tries to keep the staff up to date. I think, however, most of the interested instructors find out things for themselves. So the short answer to your last question is: Yes, the instructors who enjoy IT are well informed.

**6. In your opinion, can students benefit from all that modern technology, especially regarding the skill of speaking, or are there more drawbacks?**

- Yes they can and they do. Nowadays most of our students have phones that can do almost everything a laptop can do, so some students are really into IT. OK, I have to admit they are more into games but most of these are in English, so they learn some English while playing games. They have also discovered that Google search in English yields much more info. Regarding speaking: I guess only those of our students who have (girl/boy)friends online talk to them via Skype or Messenger and so practice speaking. I don't think this language skill gets to be practiced much when students are left on their own. In the Smart Class, instructors can arrange for students to do speaking practice but this is often not on a very regular basis.

Drawbacks? Certainly! Plagiarism for one. Even when they prepare presentations, instructors need to emphasize how to borrow material; otherwise the presentation is the words of someone else.

**7. What is the biggest challenge that ELT practitioners are faced with in this era in Turkey?**

- Poor pay and inadequate preparation at some universities.

**8. Can you predict a realistic ELT scenario in ten years' time through illustrating a classroom situation?**

No, I'm terrible at such predictions. One thing I can say is that teachers will always be needed. Students who really are here to learn enjoy the human interaction and the social aspect of being in a class with others. It will be always be great help to beam additional sources into the class or student's private room but the living classroom is here to stay especially when learning a language.

## Save Your Voice and Discipline the Students

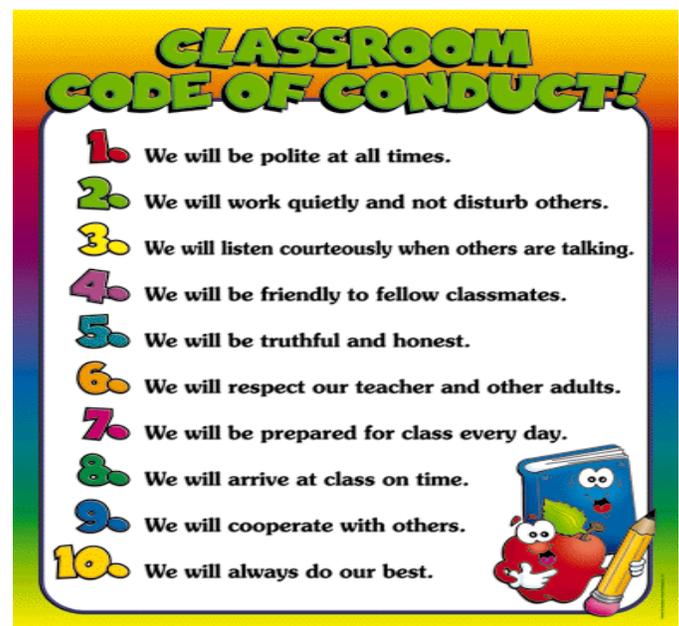
By: Sofija Strumenikovska

Have you ever been on the verge of losing your voice and your students are still naughty? Yes, of course, you have! Almost every teacher has experienced it. It is the most widely used mechanism for bringing silence in the classroom. However, this practise usually causes side effects. Instead of zipping up their mouths, the students become louder and more disobedient. It is especially the case with students in primary schools as they are very energetic and want to do everything that is creative and amusing all at the same time.

As a fourth-year student and a future English teacher, I am really concerned about how I will deal with these kinds of students. Thus, through classroom observations, reading books about classroom management and attending workshops of such a kind, and talking to experienced teachers, I have come up with some ways of silencing the disruptive students and creating a comfortable and productive classroom atmosphere. So, current teachers and teachers-to-be, here is a list of some effective tactics:

- **Create a Code of Conduct** - The very first moment when the teacher enters the classroom and meets their students, it is advisable for them to create the so-called Code of Conduct and present it to the students. Actually, it is a set of rules which are written by the students and their teacher on a huge piece of paper. The paper should be placed on a wall in the classroom so that everyone can refer to it at every time. Besides, a certain punishment should be made in case someone does not respect the rules.

- **Act immediately and resear the students** - Provided that disruptive behaviour is noticed, the teacher should try to discipline the students immediately rather than just wait for them to stop talking. Furthermore, the teacher can change their discipline tactics and resear the students so that the rebellious students will sit with the well-behaved ones. In such a way, the lack of discipline in the classroom will not be a problem anymore.



- **Change the activity** - Sometimes, the students might not really like the activity that they are supposed to do and they will start fidgeting and talking. Hence, the teacher should give the students another more appealing activity to do so that any disruptions in the classroom will be avoided. For instance, if the students should read a long text silently and answer comprehension questions, which is a rather boring activity, they will quickly start talking with their peers and ruin the discipline. That is why the teacher should change this activity to a more interesting one, such as asking the students some personal questions related to the topic of the text.
- **Use tongue twisters and instant games** - Tongue twisters are very useful when the teacher wants to bring about silence. Whenever the teacher notices that the students are energetic and not in the mood for following the lesson, they should write a funny tongue twister on the board and ask them to say it out loud by gradually increasing the speed. It will exhaust yet calm down the students. Similarly, instant games will have the same effect. It is common knowledge that all the students, especially the younger ones, want to play games. These instant games are perfect for fulfilling the students' needs for entertainment so that right after the games, they will be ready to do the scheduled activities. An excellent example for an instant game is "Simon says" which appears to be very attractive to a great part of students.
- **Compulsory speaking** - When the noise and movement in the classroom is increasing, the teacher should tell the students that they have a compulsory speaking activity for 30 seconds. Actually, when the teacher will clap, the students must speak in a chorus-like manner for 30 seconds. Then, when the students will hear the teacher say "Stop!", they should stop speaking. This way the students' energy will be lowered and it is probable that disorder in the classroom will not be caused.
- **Silence sign** - This is a positive anchor that is used for achieving silence. When the teacher puts their hands over their mouths, it means that the students should stop talking. Even they can imitate their teacher so that they will be subconsciously told to be silent and pay attention to their teacher.
- **Move around** - It is understandable that the teacher might sometimes not feel very well so they might have to sit down rather than stand. Nevertheless, there are some teachers who are seated almost all the time and complain about disruptive behaviour. Well, sitting down is not a good choice if one wants to achieve positive classroom atmosphere. The teacher should move around and monitor the students so that they will not do whatever they want to do. Actually, the students should be aware of the kind of superiority that the teachers have.



- **Build positive rapport with the students** - The students deserve the smile and the positive attitude of the teacher. As Phyllis Diller (American comedienne and actress) once said: "A smile is a curve that sets everything straight." They like it when they see their teacher in a good mood, full of enthusiasm and telling jokes every now and then. Therefore, the teacher should put on their happy face before they enter the classroom.

Also, what is very important for the teacher is to learn the students' names and try to make eye contact with them. The students feel more comfortable when they are "labeled". Then, the teacher should interact more with the students so that active learning will be emphasized. In addition, the teacher should post their office hours and keep to them, and give the students their emails (if they are at a more advanced level and only if the teacher feels that they are responsible enough). In this way, the teacher increases accessibility to their students and makes them feel that they can contact the teacher whenever some problems related to the subject arise.

Last, but certainly not the least, I must say that the students are the mirror of the teacher. There do exist various ways of disciplining the students but if the teachers lack competence, have poor classroom management skills and do not plan the lesson in advance, everything that they do will be useless and the students will behave as they want to. Anyway, the classroom discipline does not always depend on the teacher. In some occasions it is up to the school policy and the inadequate materials that the teachers are obliged to use in the classroom. So, teachers, I do believe that your work is really difficult but I encourage you not to give up. There are hard times in every profession and you should try to overcome them. It is worthwhile, though!



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## What makes Christmas merry?

### A brief history of yuletide adjectives

**By: Katherine Connor Martin**



From Happy Easter to Happy Halloween to countless Happy Birthdays, our felicitations hardly vary from one celebration to the next. Christmas is the notable exception, with the dominant descriptor being *Merry*. We wish our friends a *Merry Christmas* but a *Happy New Year*. Is there any difference?

Not everyone's Christmas is merry. *Happy Christmas* has its partisans too, but they are geographically restricted. According to the Oxford English Corpus, Irish Christmases are far more *happy* than *merry*. A significant minority of British Christmases are also *happy*, but American and Australian Christmases aren't very *happy* at all. These geographic distinctions were not always so strong. The urtext of American yuletide, Clement C. Moore's 1823 poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas", closes with the lines:

But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight —  
Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night.

However, in the nearly two centuries since this first appeared, "happy" has fallen so thoroughly out of use as a descriptor of Christmas in the US the famous last line is now often quoted with "merry" instead.

### **Christmas greetings from the Tower of London**

*Merry Christmas* is hardly a newcomer. It is actually the earlier of the two phrases by more than a century. In 1534, it is attested in the exceptionally un-jovial environs of the Tower of London, in a letter from the condemned bishop John Fisher to Henry VIII's trusted minister Thomas Cromwell. It is difficult not to read

irony in his closing lines to a man who orchestrated his imprisonment: “And thus our Lord send yow a mery Christenmas, and a comfortable to yowr hearts desyer.” More festively, the English West Country Christmas carol “We wish you a Merry Christmas” is also thought to date to the 16th century. It is tempting to give the refrain of that ubiquitous song some of the credit for the common distinction between a *Merry Christmas* and a *Happy New Year*.

### Have yourself a happy and sober holiday

*Happy Christmas*, then, is the interloper. Analysis of historical databases shows that, Ireland aside, *Merry Christmas* has always been much more common than this later phrase, which first came on the scene in the 17th century. The earliest examples of *Happy Christmas* refer more to joyousness at the birth of Christ than to the gaiety of the festival celebrating it, as in a 1676 reference to “The voice of truth, the Angel of peace who giving himselfe vnto us, gave the first happy Christmasse, and peace on earth to men of good will.” By the 19th century, though, as shown in Moore’s poem, *Happy Christmas* was typically just a synonym of *Merry Christmas*, and they were often used interchangeably.

However, *happy* got a boost in the latter part of the century, when the temperance movement, especially in England, began to emphasize a semantic distinction between *Merry Christmas* and *Happy Christmas*, with use of the former being discouraged because of its association with alcoholic revelry. The following dialogue appears in an 1872 publication of the Band of Hope movement:

Annie: I hope you will have a *happy* Christmas, whatever you may mean by a *merry* one.

Mary: I mean what I say. What do *you* mean by a merry Christmas?

Annie: Well, many people understand it to mean a jovial, drunken Christmas. They cannot spend the day without using intoxicating liquors; but I don’t believe in them, and I hope I never shall.

These suspicions were not unfounded. The word merry can be used in British English as a synonym for “tipsy”, and historically, the Christmas season *was* a time of intemperate revelry. Those aspects of the holiday were among the reasons it was banned by 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-century Puritans in both England and the New England colonies, and they concerned the Victorian temperance movement as well. The success of the campaign for “Happy Christmas” in England may explain the greater popularity of that phrase in the British Isles to this day.

### The rise and fall of merriment

*Happy Christmas* didn’t make the same inroads in the United States, and in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, its use began to decline. For example the usage of *Happy Christmas* in the *New York Times* peaked in the 1920s, with *Merry Christmas* solidifying its already dominant position. Mass culture probably helped to solidify *merry*’s dominance. Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* (1844), which features many a “Merry Christmas”, was a popular annual tradition on US radio in the 1930s, and holiday songs like *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* were heard in films as well as over the airwaves. However, *Merry Christmas*’s pre-

eminence soon faced a new challenge, and its usage (again as charted in the *New York Times*) reached a highpoint in the 1960s. This time, it wasn't just *merry* that faced competition, but also the word *Christmas* itself. It is probably no coincidence that use of *Happy Holidays* and *Season's Greetings* started picking up steam around the same time *Merry Christmas* peaked, gaining popularity as an appeal to greater cultural sensitivity in a society becoming more conscious of religious and ethnic diversity.

### In defense of "Holidays"

*Holiday* has been a controversial term in some quarters in recent years, described by some as a politically correct slight against Christmas. The singular *holiday* does smack of euphemism when used to modify a word which is only used in the context of Christmas ("holiday wreath", "holiday tree"), or substituted for *Christmas* in a greeting. (This superficial inclusivity can often be ludicrous: my daughter recently watched an episode of a British children's program which featured a man in red and white robe decorating a tree, carrying a bag of gifts, and wishing viewers a "Happy Winter Holiday".) But in phrases like "holiday recipes", it usefully encompasses latkes as well as gingerbread, and when used as a seasonal greeting, "Happy Holidays" is an apt acknowledgement of what is in the United States a full two months of overindulgent celebration, beginning with Thanksgiving, spanning December's multitudinous offerings, and ending arguably not with the New Year, but with the Super Bowl in early February. It may not be idiomatic, but why not make merry for them all?

**This article first appeared on the Oxford Dictionaries blog ([blog.oxforddictionaries.com](http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com)):**

<http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2011/12/what-makes-christmas-merry/>

*Katherine Connor Martin is a lexicographer in OUP's New York office and (in honor of her half-Icelandic daughters) is wishing everyone a **gleðileg jól** this year.*

## The Origins of Christmas Traditions

### **Boxing Day**

Boxing day is celebrated in the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and some other Commonwealth nations. It was originated by the rich and powerful of old England where their workers would go for the holiday. The day after Christmas, the Masters and Mistresses of the castle would give to their employees



their clothes, shoes, tools and food for the year. These would be packaged in boxes. As England changed, it was then the servants of the castles that would bring a box to their Masters to be filled with coins instead of clothes or tools. Today, Boxing Day is better known as a bank or public holiday that occurs on December 26, or the first weekday after Christmas Day. Boxing

Day is primarily known as a shopping holiday, much like the day after Thanksgiving in the United States. It is a time when shops have sales, often with dramatic price reductions. In England, Scotland and Northern Ireland it is traditional for the Premier League, Scottish Premier League and Irish Premier League respectively, as well as the lower divisions and rugby leagues, to hold a full programme of football and Rugby League matches on Boxing Day. Traditionally, matches on Boxing Day are played against local rivals.

### **The Candy Cane**

The origin of the candy cane goes back over 350 years ago, when candy-makers were making hard sugar sticks. The original candy was straight and completely white in color. A church official bent the ends to make it look like a shepherd's crook. They were passed out at the services to children to keep them content during the services. It wasn't until the 1900s that the stripes were put in the candy canes as we know them today. No one knows who exactly invented the stripes, but Christmas cards prior to the year 1900 showed all-white candy canes, while Christmas cards after 1900 showed illustrations of striped candy canes. Around the same time, candy-makers added peppermint and wintergreen flavors to their candy canes and those flavors then became the traditional favorites.



## The Pickle Tradition

This is how the "pickle" legend goes: "A very old Christmas Eve tradition in Germany was to hide a pickle ornament deep in the branches of the family Christmas tree. The parents hung the pickle last after all the other ornaments were in place. In the morning the most observant child who would find the pickle would receive a treat or an extra gift from St. Nicholas."

## The Christmas Tree

The custom of erecting a decorated Christmas tree can be historically traced back at least as far as 15th century Livonia and 16th century Northern Germany. According to the first documented uses of a Christmas tree in Estonia, in 1441, 1442, and 1514, the Brotherhood of Blackheads erected a tree for the holidays in their brotherhood house in Reval (now Tallinn). On the last night of the celebrations leading up to the holidays, the tree was taken to the Town Hall Square where the members of the brotherhood danced around it.

While some take it that the Christmas tree is a Christianization of a pre-Christian winter rite, others see its origin in the "tree of Paradise" used as a prop in the medieval mystery plays that were given on 24 December, which as well as being Christmas Eve is in some countries the day of the liturgical commemoration and name day of Adam and Eve. To suggest the Garden of Eden, a tree decorated with apples (to represent the forbidden fruit) and wafers (to represent the redemption) was used as a setting for the play. The apples were replaced by round objects such as shiny red balls and the wafers were replaced by cookies of various shapes. Candles, too, were often added as the symbol of Christ. In the same room, during the Christmas season, was the Christmas pyramid, a triangular construction of wood, with shelves to hold Christmas figurines, decorated with evergreens, candles, and a star. By the 16th century, the Christmas pyramid and paradise tree had merged, becoming the Christmas tree.

Both setting up and taking down a Christmas tree are associated with specific dates. Traditionally, Christmas trees were not brought in and decorated until Christmas Eve (24 December) or, in the traditions celebrating Christmas Eve rather than on the first of day of Christmas, the 23 December, and then removed the day after twelfth night (6 January). To have a tree up before or after these dates was even considered bad luck.



## The Four Skills in a Cultural Context: A Lesson Plan

**By: Aneta Naumoska**

### **Introduction**

As teachers of English, we all acknowledge the fact that lesson plans are somewhat of an obligatory task which is recommended to be done before each lesson. However, this is easier said than done! The main advantage of a lesson plan is thinking that you have every single minute under control, but the main disadvantage is quite the opposite - no teacher ever knows exactly what will happen during the course of a lesson and what exactly might go wrong. Nevertheless, lesson plans give teachers a direction towards which they should move, and facilitate their transition from one activity to the other. Teachers often rack their brains on ways of incorporating all four skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing) in the teaching context, yet the element of culture, which represents a significant link in the chain, is most often missing in the list of pedagogical objectives. This article proves the point that teachers can indeed make students knowledgeable not only in the English language, but also in the wide realm of English culture, incorporated in the language elements and language functions and presented through the teaching materials. What follows is a thorough lesson plan on the topic of *St. Valentine's Day*. I would recommend this combination of activities connecting all four skills and culture, to all EL teachers worldwide, just to enrich their students' cultural experience!

### **Lesson Plan: ST. VALENTINE'S DAY**

Please note that the general objectives of the lesson precede the lesson development. This example of a lesson plan incorporates many truths of the EL classroom, and thus proves that it shouldn't be read as one specific lesson, but as an article that contains a multitude of explanations for further use.



- **OBJECTIVES:**

- Pedagogical:

- Broadening students' knowledge of St. Valentine's Day (the history);
- Creating an atmosphere of cooperation among students (group work).

- Educational:

**a) Language elements:**

- Vocabulary: - Introduction of new words, concepts, phrases and names, e.g. god, holy, to be no good at, prayer, Romeo and Juliet, Be My Valentine (the teacher helps them elicit the meaning of the new vocabulary), as well as revision of words already learnt.

- Pronunciation: - When students make mistakes while reading, the teacher should not correct the word immediately after it is incorrectly pronounced, but rather after he/she finishes, then read the student's sentence correctly (by listening to the teacher who is the perfect model for them, students quickly notice their mistake and try not to make it afterwards).

**b) Language functions:**

- Expressing likes/dislikes (Valentine's Day traditions, love songs).

**c) Language skills:**

- Listening: - to the teacher and the instructions (the whole lesson);
  - to their classmates;
  - to the singing teddy bear;
  - to the song ("I Say A Little Prayer").
- Reading: - paragraphs on the handout (Valentine's Day crossword puzzle) - silent reading/reading the sentences out loud;
  - scrambled sentences (the song).
- Speaking: - giving their associations of the teddy bear, the objects surrounding them in the classroom, Valentine's Day, poems, songs (giving their opinion).
- Writing: - Valentine cards (short love poems);
  - the missing words in the crossword puzzle.

- **TEACHING MATERIALS:**

- heart-shaped balloons, teddy bears, bookmarks, CDs (love songs), candles - to grasp the Valentine's Day atmosphere;
- Valentine cards - brought by the teacher, and drawn (written) by the students;
- handouts - "The Story of Valentine's Day," the song "I Say A Little Prayer;"
- colorful poster - made by the teacher, containing lively pictures (connected to the holiday) and a larger version of the crossword puzzle on the students' handout ("The Story of Valentine's Day);
- CD player - to listen to the song.

- **FORMS OF ORGANIZING CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:**

- individual work (making Valentine cards);
- group work (crossword puzzle, song).

### Lesson Development:

- **Introductory Part (7/8 min.)**

Before the lesson on culture (St. Valentine's Day, to be more precise) starts, the teacher decorates the classroom with small heart-shaped balloons, teddy bears, bookmarks, CDs with love songs, as well as other presents given on 14<sup>th</sup> February. This is done (and should be done to every such lesson) to make the students feel comfortable in this newly-created atmosphere and to lower the level of tension. By seeing the crossword puzzle (a colorful one that the teacher previously made at home) put up on the board, they will certainly know what the lesson is going to be about (the teacher not having said anything yet).



The lesson begins by asking them to listen to a singing teddy bear that is held by the teacher. The teddy bear repeats the phrase I LOVE YOU over and over again. They are then asked what comes to their mind first when they hear that, what associations they make, what holiday is connected to all the objects in the classroom, etc. As they start giving various words out loud, the teacher writes them on the board and leads them to the correct answer (St. Valentine's Day). The topic is uncovered at this point (previously having been covered under a piece of paper), and the teacher finally tells the students what they will be discussing. The topic should not be directly revealed to the students, they must search for it using clues around them.

Students are then asked what people usually do on this day, what they give as presents, and other questions about the ways of celebrating. Once again, the teacher's task is to lead them to the answer that he/she is looking for – writing Valentine's Day cards (to whom are they sent, what kinds of texts are written on Valentine cards). Students share their own experiences about whether they have written any kind of love card (and addressed it to somebody). The teacher reminds them of the traditional love poem:

*Roses are red,  
Violets are blue,  
Sugar is sweet,  
And so are you.*



Instead of the teacher doing the speaking, he/she only starts reciting the poem, and they must fill in the poem by using the appropriate words whenever he/she makes a short pause. The poem is only an introduction to the next activity, in which the teacher hands out each individual student a piece of paper (a card) that they must write (with their own text) as a Valentine's Day gift to an imaginary addressee. They are

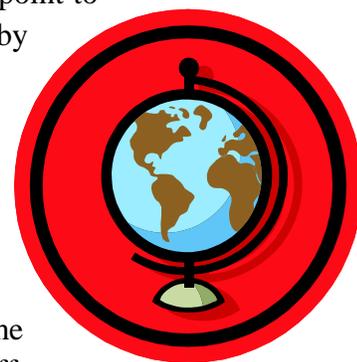
put in the position of a secret admirer sending their loved one a beautiful and sincere card. Previously, the teacher reads a few Valentine cards in order for the students to get the idea of what kind of text they need to write (short, yet concise). In the course of their individual work, the teacher acts as an observer. After their estimated time has passed, a volunteer reads his/her poem out loud to the rest.

Moving on to the next part of the lesson, the teacher tells them that the history of St. Valentine's Day will be now discussed.

**- Comments:** *Why have an ordinary classroom every single time the students enter it? Try to experiment with the space given to you as teachers! Decorate it with objects you can find at home connected to the topic, and if need arises visit the local supermarket or stationery office and buy whatever is appropriate for the context! Another point to have in mind is keeping them in secret about the lesson, at least for the first couple of minutes. Let them have their say first and see where they will lead you, then uncover the topic. Believe me, they will be grateful for this!*

- **Main Part (15 min.)**

Now that the topic of St. Valentine's Day is well under way, this is a good point to present it in more detail. Students, having previously contributed to the lesson (by giving the teacher as many words as they could think of as associations of this holiday), the teacher once more asks them to share their knowledge and experiences of February 14<sup>th</sup> (what they know about its celebration, what people do, whether it is celebrated in their country, what other holiday is celebrated on that day in their country, whether the students celebrate it at all, in what way, etc.). Students will probably like to answer these questions because it gives them a chance to describe their likes/dislikes, as well as to add a personal dimension to the lesson. The teacher is there to guide them through a different culture and a different holiday by asking open-ended questions.



The teacher then gives them clear instructions for the next activity: they are divided into four groups, each group receives a small piece of paper containing a list of 28 words and a short paragraph (from HANDOUT 1) which must be filled in by using the words in the list (not all of them will be used), each group receives a different paragraph and they must conclude from the context what word is missing. The students are given an exact time limit, and while they are working in their groups and figuring out the correct answer to finish the sentence, the teacher monitors their work and assists them if they are having any difficulties. As soon as they finish, each student is given a handout (preferably printed on color paper) with all of the paragraphs (the whole story of Valentine's Day) and a crossword puzzle. They realize that their missing words are only one part of the crossword puzzle to which they have contributed (as a group). A student from each group reads their paragraph while another student comes up to the board and puts down the missing words on the Valentine's Day crossword puzzle. The students are activated by writing the words on the crossword puzzle, and not letting the teacher do it instead! Seeing a larger version of the crossword on

their handout will make for a better visual effect, and thus the vocabulary will be securely retained in their memory for a longer period of time. After each paragraph is read, the teacher reads it once more out loud trying to correct any pronunciation mistakes (if made), and explaining the unfamiliar words. The vertical shaded spaces make up the names of two famous lovers in literature, ROMEO AND JULIET. These names open up one more field of discussion as to who they are, why they are so important, etc.

At the end of this discussion, the teacher explains that the end of the lesson will finish on a more relaxed note.

**- Comments:** *Now that they are introduced to the topic, the teacher must make them feel to be significant contributors to the lesson. Cross-cultural comparisons have been successful only if the teacher is there to guide them, which means never let them pass into the dangerous area of stereotyping. Time limits, group work, fill-in-the-blanks activities with more words given than are needed (not all words should be familiar because of the **i+1 rule**) and visualizing their final product are all extremely stimulating for the students.*

- **Concluding Part (7/8 min.)**

The concluding part of this lesson is a song which will make the lesson on Valentine's Day end on a relaxed note both for the students and the teacher. The chief aim of using songs in the classroom is to achieve a connection between both forces (students and teacher) by employing the already learned vocabulary in a meaningful context.

The teacher lowers the barriers between him/her and the students through asking questions that they find appealing, such as what are love songs usually about, what ballads are their all-time favorites, etc. The song title I SAY A LITTLE PRAYER is written on the board, and the meaning of the word PRAYER is explained (both as a noun and verbal form too), if the teacher finds it necessary (depending on students' level of knowledge). The teacher has a specific task, and that is to lead the students to what the song speaks about, to explain and put words in context, in order for them to be kept in students' long-term memory. After the short explanation and conversation, the teacher divides the class into four groups and gives out each group a heart-shaped handout containing one part of the song lyrics, the lines of which are scrambled (HANDOUT 2), but this is exactly the goal of the activity: to improve the students' skills of logic and thinking. Each group receives a different part of the song, and by putting the lines in the correct order, each group's part of the song should achieve coherence. What the teacher does next is play the song on a CD player, while they listen carefully in order to conclude whether they did well, as well as to see how the other parts of the song (and the refrain) go. It is assumed that by following this order, students get the gist of the whole song since they employed the communicative method (speaking to the rest of the class about their own part, listening to the others and connecting both). Each group is then given a copy of the whole song (HANDOUT 3), printed once more on color paper, which is followed by listening to the song for a second time and singing in a chorus. Ending the lesson this way not only diminishes the barrier, but also opens up a whole new horizon for students in terms of understanding culture.



- **Comments:** *Depending on what the lesson is about, trying to employ songs in the EL classroom has proved to be a valuable asset which offers both teachers and students the opportunity of making the learning process memorable, as listening represents as an important skill as the rest of the skills. After the song ends, the teacher might ask the students what the relationship between these people is. Thus, the questions on this topic are endless, and furthermore the approaches are unlimited.*

## Conclusion

No matter what level of English students are at, it is certain that the combination of carefully selected activities (e.g. the making of Valentine cards, a crossword puzzle poster serving as a visual aid, a love song) touching upon most of their senses (e.g. tactile, visual) and the atmosphere created in the classroom will bring about a more positive outlook on culture in general. Aiming to include any aspect of listening, reading, speaking and writing is not an unachievable goal. It is the teacher's job to convey information on language to the younger generations (as wholesome as it can be), while it is the student's job to make links with previous knowledge (the best they can be), and in what better way can this be achieved as through lesson plans.

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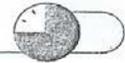
<http://elta.org.rs/new/newsletter/>

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**WINTER** Valentine's Day [February 14th]



# The Story of Valentine's Day

Read the story of Valentine's Day. Choose the correct word to go in each gap and write it in the heart. When you have finished you will find the names of two famous lovers.

- baby books boyfriend boys cards February festival holidays  
 husband in Juno kissed loved men Saturday on people poems  
 post sofa stories take teddy times wall weeks women Vishnu

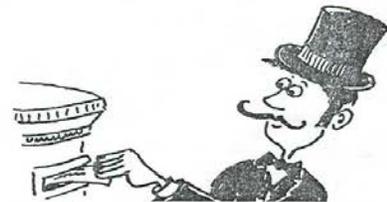
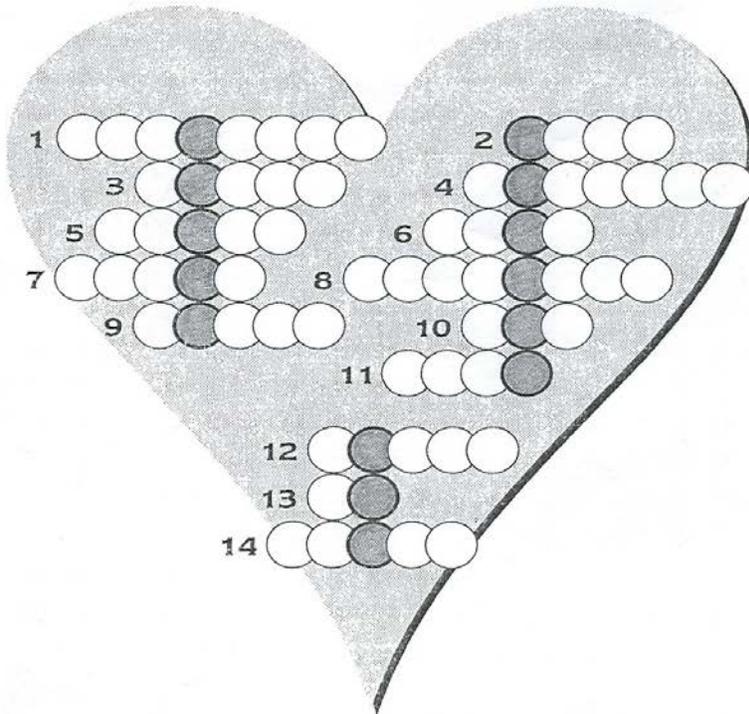


In Roman times people celebrated a festival of love in the month of 1..... The festival was called Lupercalia. It was the festival of the Roman gods Pan and 2 ..... Young men and young 3 ..... played games to find a wife or a 4 .....

In early Christian 5 ..... St Valentine was a holy man. He was killed for his beliefs. Before he died he wrote a message on the prison 6 ..... The message was for the woman he 7 ..... and he signed the message 'Your Valentine'.



The feast day of St Valentine is the fourteenth of February. St Valentine's Day became the 8 ..... of lovers. Young men wrote 9 ..... to give to young women. If they were no good at writing poetry, they copied one from a book. Girls made cards to give to the young 10 ..... The sender of the card was a secret. People never signed the cards.



In the nineteenth century, the postal service started. Now people could 11 ..... their Valentine's cards.



Today you can buy lots of 12 ..... and presents to send 13 ..... Valentine's Day. How about a cute 14 ..... bear, a heart-shaped balloon or twelve red roses?

## Handout 2

The stanzas with mixed lines (one stanza per group):

And wondering what dress to wear, now,  
I say a little prayer for you  
The moment I wake up  
And while combing my hair, now,  
I say a little prayer for you  
Before I put on make-up

Together, together, that's how it must be  
Would only mean heartbreak for me  
Forever, forever, you'll stay in my heart  
And I will love you  
To live without you  
Forever, forever, we never will part  
Oh, how I'll love you

I say a little prayer for you.  
I say a little prayer for you.  
I run for the bus, dear,  
And all through my coffee break-time,  
At work I just take time  
While riding I think of us, dear,

But you.  
My darling, believe me,  
Answer my prayer, baby.  
This is my prayer  
For me there is no one  
Please love me true.



Song **I say a little prayer**

New English File Teacher's Book Pre-intermediate  
Photocopiable © Oxford University Press 2005

### Handout 3

#### Song facts

*I say a little prayer* was originally written for Dionne Warwick by Burt Bacharach and Hal David, in 1967. A year later the song was recorded by 'the Queen of Soul', American singer Aretha Franklin, and it became a very big hit.

## I say a little prayer

The moment I wake up  
Before I put on make-up  
I say a little prayer for you  
And while combing my hair, now,  
And wondering what dress to wear, now,  
I say a little prayer for you

Forever, forever, you'll stay in my heart  
And I will love you  
Forever, forever, we never will part  
Oh, how I'll love you  
Together, together, that's how it must be  
To live without you  
Would only mean heartbreak for me

I run for the bus, dear,  
While riding I think of us, dear,  
I say a little prayer for you.  
At work I just take time  
And all through my coffee break-time,  
I say a little prayer for you.

My darling, believe me,  
For me there is no one  
But you.  
Please love me true.  
This is my prayer  
Answer my prayer, baby.



## **St. Patrick's Day**

The following pages contain tidbits for practical class use as well as an anagram and matching activity related to St. Patrick's Day:

### **JOKE:**

**Q: Why did the man cross the road?**

A: Because there was a leprechaun on the other side with a pot of gold.

**Q: Why did St. Patrick drive all the snakes out of Ireland?**

A: Because he could not afford plane fare.

**Q: What does a leprechaun call a happy man wearing green?**

A: A Jolly Green Giant

**Q: What does it mean when you find a horseshoe?**

A: Some poor horse is going barefoot!

**Q: What happens when a leprechaun falls into a river?**

A: He gets wet!

**Q: What do you call a fake stone in Ireland?**

A: A sham rock

**Q: How did the Irish Jig get started?**

A: Too much to water to drink and not enough restrooms!

**Q: How can you tell if an Irishman is having a good time?**

A: He's Dublin over with laughter!

**Q: Why do people wear shamrocks on St. Patrick's Day?**

A: Because real rocks are too heavy.

**Q & A:**

**Q:** What is the origin of the term "**Luck of the Irish**"?

**A:** It is an ironic phrase. The Irish have been, and are a spectacularly unlucky race. This ironic phrase is misused so often it is embarrassing. The "luck of the Irish" is actually BAD luck, as any reading of Irish history will document. According to an Irish scholar, who had done his Master's thesis on Irish references in the American language, it was discovered that the original and proper use of this phrase goes back to the Old Country and the migrations to America early on. Nowadays many speakers and writers misuse the phrase to imply GOOD luck. A similar twist common in modern American usage is the expression "I couldn't care less." The original and proper form of this expression is "I could care less?" with a question mark. But since writers began to forget the question mark, grammarians began to insist on "I could care less" in order to communicate the intended meaning.

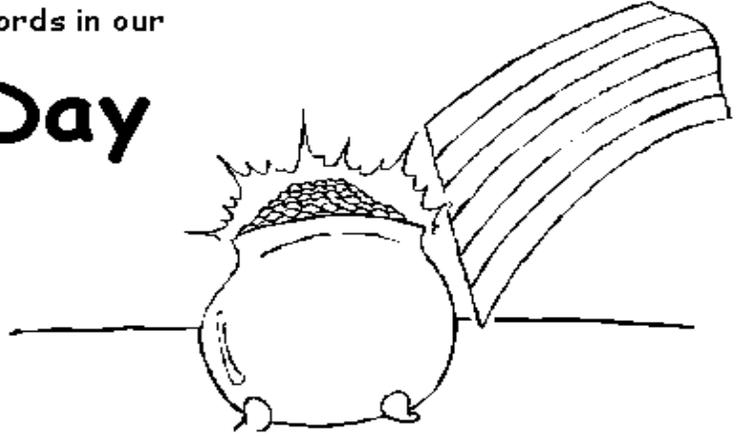
Some trace the origin of the phrase to the US where, during the exploration for gold in the West, there were a high number of Irish people who got lucky, and found their "pot o' gold" in the gold fields of California, or were equally prosperous in silver mining.

The "luck of the Irish" does owe its origin to the U.S.A. When they arrived, they were disliked, treated very badly, despised and hated. Since most Americans at the time didn't think the Irish were capable of such successes, when the Irish did have any kind of success, the Americans called it luck. Hence the term "Luck of the Irish".

Unscramble the letters to find the words in our

# St Patrick's Day Anagram

Hidden Word (circled letters):



a c **h** k m o r s

a d **e** i l n r

a b i n o **r** w

d g **l** o

c k **l** u y

a c i k **p** r t

**a** e k n s s

e e g **n** r

d e **e** g l n

a **c** h m r

**Answers:**

shamrock / Ireland / rainbow / gold / lucky / Patrick / snakes / green / legend / March

**Hidden word:** leprechaun

Draw a line from each picture to the matching word:



Answers:



## April Fool's Day

The following pages contain foolproof fun lesson activities for April Fool's Day as well as a wordsearch:



Nothing helps an EFL class relax more than some good old-fashioned laughter. And isn't that what April Fool's Day is all about?

On this day when so many take the time to play pranks and practical jokes, **give your students the chance to join in the fun**, and who knows? Maybe you'll inspire them to play some pranks of their own. Here are some ideas for April Fool's activities for your class.

### 1. A Prank with Appeal

There's no better way to illustrate the meaning of a prank than to simply play one. You will need a ripe banana and a toothpick. Stick the toothpick into the banana, preferably where there's already a spot. Move the toothpick left and right inside the banana, and cut through the fruit - make sure you don't cut through the peel. Take out the toothpick and repeat five to six times on different spots on the banana.

Now in class, tell you're students you're in the mood for a snack. Give the banana to one of your students and ask him or her to peel it for you – you can pretend you're busy doing something else, like erasing the board. Witness your students' looks of surprise and bafflement as they see the banana has been sliced inside the peel!

**Briefly explain to your students the tradition of playing pranks for April Fool's Day.** Tell them they can play this prank at home, and show them how to prep the banana. Other pranks your students can try at home include *switching sugar for salt* or *replacing fresh eggs with hard-boiled ones*.

### 2. Fool Me Once...

There are a great deal of expressions and phrases with the word "fool". Some of the most common are:

- *Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.*
- *A fool and his money are soon parted.*
- *Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.*
- *A man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client.*

Introduce these, or others, to your students and ask them to explain the message the phrase is trying to convey and to which situations these phrases may apply. This activity is recommended for upper-intermediate to advanced students; however, there are plenty of other shorter expressions that you

may use with students in lower levels, like “*a fool’s paradise*” or “*fool’s gold*”. You will find these and more at [PhraseFinder.com](http://PhraseFinder.com)

### 3. April Fool’s Reading

Here are two great options for **April Fool’s reading activities**:

[The Very Bad Yorkshire Joke](#) – This worksheet comes complete with introduction and follow-up activities. See if your students get the joke!

[April Fool’s Day](#) – HeadsUpEnglish provides this great reading task, which also comes with audio you can download (simply right click where it says *Listen Now* and go to the *Save Link As* option to download the audio file to your computer), plus a worksheet you can use in class.

### 4. Foolish Games

April Fool’s is a great opportunity to teach vocabulary related to humor, namely words like *joke*, *hoax*, *prank*, *trick*, *surprise*, *annoy*, etc... EnchantedLearning.com has tons of worksheets, puzzles, and other fun activities that are ideal for your youngest learners.

### 5. Who Can You Fool?

For this writing assignment, ask students to come up with their own practical joke or prank. Make sure they write the materials that will be needed first, then the steps for the setup, and finally the execution of the prank itself. Walk around and supply hints or ideas as needed. Students share their pranks with the class, then vote for the best one.

### 6. A Fool’s Debate?

This is a great speaking task for intermediate to advanced students, whether they are teens or adults. Discuss what makes a practical joke appropriate or inappropriate? Where should they be played? What lines should never be crossed? When does good old-fashioned fun become a painful embarrassment? Now’s a good time to review the real meaning behind April Fool’s – that it should be a day of fun for everyone, rather than simply a good opportunity to have fun at someone else’s expense.

### 7. Watch Videos - Just for Laughs!

*Just for Laughs* is a hidden camera show that best illustrates the true spirit of practical jokes. Watch some of these pranks on VideoBash with your students and you will have a classroom full of roaring laughter. Discuss people’s reactions: how do they react when they realize they’ve been fooled? Make sure you choose videos that are appropriate to your students’ ages.

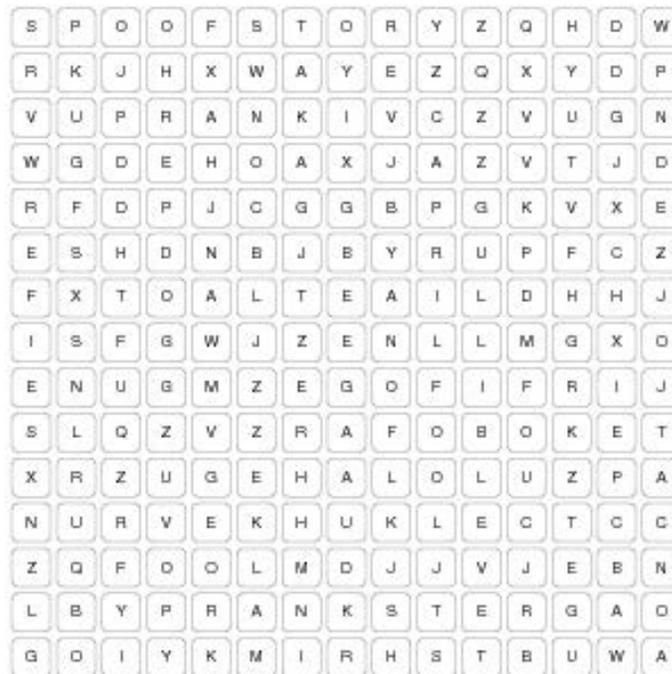
So, if you’ve been focusing too much on grammar lately, or giving your students way too much homework, lighten up! Laughter is the best medicine, right? Forget about reported speech for one day and try these fun April Fool’s activities instead.

<http://busyteacher.org/4833-foolproof-fun-lesson-activities-for-april-fools.html>

## April fool's day wordsearch

Can you find all the hidden words in this word search?

Words can go in the following directions: → ↓



**SPOOFSTORY**

**APRILFOOL**

**PRANK**

**PRANKSTER**

**FOOL**

**HOAX**

**GULLIBLE**

<http://busyteacher.org/>

Starting from this issue onwards, there will be a separate section titled **UNIQUE WORKS**, which will contain poems, short stories and other works of creative writing in English written by pupils and students. Your students are welcome to contribute, so feel free to send in as many pieces as you receive throughout the year.

## TALKING DICE

### The mystery that is a woman



Women. The species that has been fascinating man from the beginning of time. The mystery of womankind has been a secret in their order. It has not been discovered until today. Behold, we present you the woman's mind! Every year, when the clock strikes 12, everyone on this glorious Earth, congratulates each other for another year well spent. On New Year's Eve the cycle begins again. And every woman starts from scratch ...

But we aren't interested in all that mumbo jumbo. We are here to enlighten you with the mystery that is the mind of a woman. It is well known that the majority of the species have developed a soft spot for what we know as the cat. Whether or not this is true, please note that every individual varies. The cat has always been taken as a representative of women in the animal kingdom. Remember that as it will be crucial for later on in this 'guide'.



Let's start with the important stuff already! Ladies and gentlemen, we bring to you the typical **woman!**



Every morning when the sun comes through her green curtains with pear applications that can lighten up anyone's mood, she yawns. A very typical yawn for this species as they stretch their arms in the air, their mouth wide open as if trying to scare the predators away.



For a woman it is very important to step on the right foot first and if they fail to do so, they will be cursed with bad luck all day. Mostly caused by none other but themselves.

With uneven steps they limp towards the kitchen as they place the tea pot on the stove. It is very important they get their morning cup of tea or coffee, depending on the specimen.



The typical apartment normally contains far more than the crucial. The majority prefer that they are situated on the highest storey possible in the building. Very much like the felines in the wild they like to have a clear view of their opponent and prey.

The desk with supplies is located in the far corner of the room with a pencil sharpener on the edge of it, that tends to fall down from time to time.

Also highly important is their favorite romantic musical, most likely placed near the TV or DVD player, but always on display.

Placed on the wall is a frame with a photo of what is supposed to be their trip to the Tower of Pisa or any other famous destination they happen to visit ... or photoshop.



A woman's closet is no mystery. A few pairs of trainers, maybe ice skates for their occasional date to the ice skating rink. T-shirts with fun applications often addressed to their hatred for men, a mini-skirt for tennis, and so on.

Those who are wealthy, with money in their pockets, often show that side of themselves when visiting expensive restaurants, flying with planes as if they were the city metro system, some of them even try extreme sports as kayaking down fast rivers. But let's face it, women are not built for such things.





Their diet mainly consist of salads and low-calorie food. A hot-dog is often a taboo subject among some of them while the healthy tomato is often despised for its staining qualities.



History is very important when studying females. So we came to the conclusion that the most hated object is probably the iron.  
Yes! The iron!  
That smoothing, wrinkle-removing, finger-burning, fire-causing object is the most despised subject among women.



At the end of our research we came across a problem. Not one of the subjects we were testing wanted to tell us anything else but what is likely to be seen with careful observation.

So this is where the research ends.

**Note:**

***No women were injured, insulted or harmed in any way during the writing of this homework.***

***Please note that this is for fun and contains no real facts. Take no offense, this was only an assignment.***

***Ivona Glavincheska, 13***  
***Private Language School 'ELITE', Struga***



## Flower on the doorstep

A single sorrow, a dozen ungranted wishes  
 a memory that slowly vanishes.  
 Those beautiful moments come flashing ahead  
 it's all about an untold story of a love whose flame is now dead.

Here comes me, finding my way through the crowd  
 back at our same old spot.  
 Hoping to find you sitting near the lake  
 with a single flower for me to take.

Just like the other day  
 when I said "I love you, please stay".  
 And you promised you'd always love me and always care  
 for our love was precious and rare.

And then I found a flower and a note  
 with words you meant to write.  
 But the rain had washed them away  
 and you didn't have anything left to say.

So I sat there, feeling the rain, washing my pain  
 took the flower and tried to throw it away.  
 But something stopped me from doing as I said  
 it were the tears that I started to shed.

Those were the last tears I shed for you  
 whose love supposed to be faithful and true.  
 But now I'm getting stronger, you know  
 I have finally let you go.



I took the flower you left on the doorstep  
 left it on our bench and let my heart lead my footsteps.  
 Now I can finally realize and see,  
 that we were never meant to be.

*Jasmina Shashko, 14*  
*Private Language School 'ELITE', Struga*

## **Starmisty and Stardusty**

There were two stars in the sky, Starmisty and Stardusty. They had been best friends since their early childhood, they lived side by side and were the brightest sparkling stars in the sky of all.

But, one night they started to quarrel.

Starmisty said: "I shine more beautifully than you!"

Stardusty answered: "No, no, I am the one who shines more beautifully and more brightly than you!"

Since they started this war between each other, they moved their position in the sky, Starmisty on the one side and Stardusty on the opposite side of the sky. They were not shining at all anymore as they were so sad about this.



One night the Moon turned to both of them and said: "You are best friends, you should get along again! Look, you are not even shining anymore! You have to stop this war between the two of you!"

Starmisty and Stardusty hugged strongly and smiled to each other and became best friends again as they realized that they cannot live without each other.

*Ana Marija Nikolovska, Class 7b  
"Dimitar Miladinov" Elementary School, Skopje*

## The Magic Potion

Once there lived a fourteen-year-old girl, Karina, who was in a constant struggle with her rival, the evil dwarf Brokun. Brokun lived in a large palace on an island in the middle of the sea. Karina lived in a huge mansion by the sea; she had a secret laboratory in the lagoon. She had magic tools and potions there and what helped her most of all was the talking book *Abortakus* which could decode anything she liked.

One day Brokun the Dwarf made a big mistake, which he thought it was not, of course: he sent evil thoughts to the citizens in this country to start hating each other. The two biggest cities, Technoid and Marstro, were getting prepared for a big war. Brokun seemed to have taken away their peace and transformed it in a war.

Karina knew she was the one who could help. She opened the talking *Abortakus* and asked what to do to stop Brokun's evil deed, and the book decisively replied: "You need only three things to defeat Brokun: 1. The hank from the shelf, 2. The bottle no. 71, and 3. A horse tooth! You should mix them all well and wait for 5 minutes and 3 seconds!", and immediately closed. Karina did so. Then she took her diving equipment and set off on a trip to Brokun's palace. As she arrived there, she silently went out of the sea and took off her diving equipment. She secretly went inside the palace and what she noticed first was Brokun's main assistant, Jervizo the Dwarf, who had just let out the peace in the air; it stayed there for a few seconds, in pink and white colours.

Karina took the ready potion out of her inside pocket and threw 5 drops from the magic liquid right in his face. This helped her petrify Jervizo and she instantly took the peace which was still floating in the room. At that very moment, when she tried to leave the room, another dwarf came in and started shouting for help for the other dwarfs to come. The peace was still in Karina's hands, she didn't let it drop for anything in the world! The dwarfs like small balls were running around trying to catch the peace. Karina started running and throwing drops from her magic potion to them, and suddenly entered another room where she saw something pink and felt a terrible smell – the smell of Brokun's evil magic. She realized that pink was the colour of the wars, and white – the colour of the peace. She was really a witty girl who always knew the shortest and quickest way to solve any problem. What did she do then? She quickly took Brokun's sucking machine, the tool he used to send the evil thoughts to people; she noticed a white and a pink button on it. Karina quickly turned on the pink one when all of a sudden the peace came out and the evil stayed inside, making a very strong flash. It was so strong that Karina had to cover her eyes. The peace flew away to the warring cities, Technoid and Marstro. The evil stayed inside the sucking machine forever. Karina hurled the machine through the window, and it fell on the ground but it didn't break – it simply disappeared.

A cannon filled with olive branches exploded. These olive branches started to fall all over the surface of the sea. Then all the ugly, evil, horrible fishy and algae creatures transformed in beautiful ones. Karina found herself in a thicket, on the island which was disappearing. She instantly took her diving equipment, dived back into the dark water and swam back home.

Brokun, the evil dwarf, disappeared together with all his dwarf-assistants and his palace, too. People in Technoid and Marstro lived in peace ever after.



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*Iskra Bojkovska, Class 7a*  
*"Dimitar Miladinov" Elementary School, Skopje*

## Peace Rules in the Kingdom of Eloise

Behind seven lakes, seven hills, seven snowy mountains and seven seas there lived Princess Eloise with her parents. They were not her real parents; they found her as a little baby by the riverside nearby their kingdom, took her without hesitating and loved and raised her like their own child, so they proclaimed her a princess. Years went by. Eloise grew up to be a very beautiful teenager. But, they found something strange when they found her, it was her wand. They didn't know how to use it. Eloise was tiny but with a big heart; she didn't want to give orders to the servants and maids, she used to help the cooks in the kitchen, she always tidied her room. Not a single day did Eloise live without helping people around her, otherwise she thought it would be a vain day.

One day she decided to take a walk outside the fences surrounding their castle. That was one of the many droughty days. The sky was shining high in the sky. She called her best friend and they went to the nearest town. Eloise was so surprised when she didn't see what she expected to see; she was thinking that everything was as the same as in the castle she lived. But it was completely different: on the one side of the town people were quarreling, and on the other they were fighting for food. She was flabbergasted from the riots she saw there. She grasped her friend's hand and they ran away to the castle. That night Eloise couldn't fall asleep. She felt restless and she had the feeling of big responsibility.

She was a princess in the kingdom, but the people didn't live happily. At dawn she remembered her mother's words when she was a little child about some wand. She got out of her bed and immediately took the pink box. And it was there – her own wand! It was shining like gold and she couldn't hold her breath looking at it! But, there was a problem: she didn't know how to use it! She tried everything: *Abracadabra! Hocus pocus!* – but all in vain. When dawn ended and the sun started shining brightly in the blue sky, the princess was ready and she set off to the town.



The same sight she saw there. And, unlike the previous night, her wand functioned perfectly now! With only one stroke her wand made out shining little balls which, when touching people made them happy, satisfied and they gained power and strength to fight the injustice with hard labour and work. Eloise merrily went around waving her wand and making everybody happy; as if a new sun started to shine above the town. Peace and harmony ruled. The sight was magnificent! However, the Princess didn't know that every strike with her wand made her palace disappear, part by part. When she returned home, there was nothing left from the castle. There was only a little shed where her parents stayed. They were amazed and confused how they got there. Eloise supposed how this all happened. Teardrops rolled on her cheeks. She was the only guilty person for that. She told everything to her parents, but instead of scorning her, they started praising and hugging her. They said: "Eloise, was it you who managed to spread peace among all the people in our kingdom?! We tried so many things to solve this problem, but they went on with their fights and quarrels. Is there anything more important than people to live in peace, harmony and understanding? Now you see that nothing can function without them!"

A wide almost magical grin covered the Princess's face. She knew that she had lost her kingdom forever, but she had something much more important, something that fulfills each heart, that makes people happy, something that in case people do not have, the world would disappear – PEACE!

*Kala Netkova, Class 8a*  
*"Dimitar Miladinov" Elementary School, Skopje*

Jagoda Trajcova, who has been teaching at the School of Economics in Veles for 40 years, sent these works of poetry written by her students. They are amongst the awarded ones in the Poetry in English Contest, as part of the 15-year-old tradition at the school. Namely, since the Annual School Day in October 1997, her students have been asked to make an attempt in the field of poetry writing. The topics have varied every year, depending on current events or the students' bright ideas. Many of the students at first didn't believe that they had a "poetry bone" in their body, claiming that they couldn't possibly produce poetry, which luckily proved to be a false statement.

No corrections have been made to the poems, so what is given are their authentic works.

The following poems were written in honor of the school patron (celebrating the school's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in October 2010):

War, poverty, injustice,  
He chose to fight against it  
Yearning for freedom.  
Is all that remembered?  
Sometimes yes.  
Here is the  
Evidence.  
They who fought for justice  
Hallowed will be.  
End is not the death,  
Heroes they are called,  
Everlasting  
Revolutionaries,  
Ones who never die.

*By: Blagoja Petrovski*

### Dedicated to the European Day of Languages

**E**urope is my home,  
**U**p and down,  
**R**ight and left,  
**O**pen your eyes.  
**P**eople living their lives  
**E**verywhere you go  
**I**n this beautiful land.  
**S**o many things to see,  
**M**uch, much more to do.  
**Y**oung or old,  
**H**ope that you will join me  
**O**n my way to Paradise.

*By: Marija Petrusevska*

### A verse dedicated to the end of high school days

**F**riendly people around the globe,  
**A**nd all the animals in the woods and oceans,  
**R**epeat with me the words of love,  
**E**veryone and forever:  
 “**W**herever we are, we are together!”  
**E**arly in the morning or  
**L**ate in the night,  
**L**isten to that voice deep inside ...  
**Y**ou are mine, I am yours  
**O**ver the mountains, or sky, or sea ...  
**U**ntil the stars are shining  
**A**nd the birds are singing,  
**L**ove will keep us together!  
**L**isten and say: Farewell, you all!

*By: Kristina Kirovska*

## **- Calendar of events -**

### ***March 2012:***

- 1-4 March:** Slovenia, Terme Topolsica - 19th Annual IATEFL Slovenia Conference  
(<http://www.iatefl.si/>)
- 9-11 March:** Spain, Bilbao - TESOL-SPAIN 35th Annual National Convention  
(<http://www.tesol-spain.org/>)
- 19-23 March:** UK, Glasgow - 46 IATEFL Annual International Conference and Exhibition  
(<http://www.iatefl.org/>)
- 28-31 March:** USA, Philadelphia - TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo  
(<http://www.tesolconvention.org/>)
- 31 March-1 April:** Bulgaria, Ruse - 21 BETA-IATEFL Annual International Conference  
(<http://www.beta-iatefl.org/>)

### ***April 2012:***

- 19-22 April 2012:** Croatia - 20 Annual HUPE Conference, Opatija  
(<http://www.hupe.hr/>)

### ***May 2012:***

- 18-19 May 2012:** Serbia - 10 ELTA Conference, Belgrade  
(<http://elta.org.rs/>)

## **Instructions for prospective contributors of articles**

The ELTAM Newsletter is published three times a year (January, May, September) in an electronic version. The deadline for contributions for the next issue is **20 April 2012**.

What's important to keep in mind is that the article must be ELT-related, covering any issue relevant in English language teaching (the focus being on your country's specific context), preferably mixing theory and your own unique experience. The topic isn't fixed, but try to make the ideas fresh and applicable in a classroom situation. There is also no limit as to the type of classroom - it can be about primary, secondary or tertiary education. Another suggestion would be to send in a review or report of a past Conference (seminar, workshop or other event) that you have attended and would like to share with the readers. You could also send in a lesson plan with a detailed description of the steps and the teaching techniques incorporated in it.

Regarding the Students' Corner, students of English Language are invited to write and send in their articles which should contain a brief theoretical view of an ELT issue (of their own choice) combined with their opinion and perspective of it.

Invite your pupils/students to contribute to the "Unique Works" section with a poem or short story in English they have written.

Don't forget to add photos and pictures in order to make the article aesthetically and visually pleasing. A picture or two does wonders for the readers!

In terms of word count, the article should be between 800 and 2,200 words.

Add your name, workplace and email address at the end of the article, in addition with a photo of you for inclusion (no hard feelings if you don't want a photo of you published). If you have any other contact information you'd like to give out (Twitter account, Facebook profile, your own blog/website), write it after your email, so that interested colleagues can contact you via any form of communication.

Send in the article as a Microsoft Word document (it will be converted into the appropriate format afterwards) to the **Newsletter Editor, Aneta Naumoska**: [a\\_naumoska@yahoo.ca](mailto:a_naumoska@yahoo.ca)

Feel free to contact me via email if you need more information regarding the article requirements, or if you simply get writer's block.

If you have anything you would like to share with the ELTAM readership, feel welcome to send it. Even if there is a topic you would like to be covered in the following issues, please let me know. So what do you have to contribute? I'll be waiting for your article!

## ELTAM Contacts

### (Who's Who in ELTAM)

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