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Cover photo: Graz, Austria
Dear BETA Members,

Since this issue of our E-Newsletter almost coincides with the beginning of the school year, I would like to avail of the opportunity to wish you a very successful and fruitful school or academic year.

I hope you have enjoyed the summer holiday, that you have had a good rest and now you are healthy and refreshed, full of new ideas and energy, and ready for the new start.

I wish you great luck and new successful projects!

On behalf of BETA-IATEFL Committee,

Zhivka Ilieva
President of BETA-IATEFL
Editors’ Corner

Dear Readers,

When you read this issue, September will already be setting in and we will be preparing for the new school year ahead. In the BETA-IATEFL E-Newsletter, we hope, you will find useful information and inspiration to begin school with a positive mindset and make your teaching more enjoyable and powerful.

This issue opens with Andy Thatcher’s feature article on *Creative Liberation through Creative Limitation* in which he provides a needed insight into the role of limitation and focus for inspiring learners’ creativity and offers practical ideas for teaching writing in the classroom.

Maybe some of you have been involved with the initiative “Забавното лятно четене” over the summer. In his article “Summer Reading’s Awesome! Забавното лятно четене!”, Bill Templer makes valuable points for encouraging literacy development through recreational reading in L1 and L2 and the development of English Learner Summer Programmes (ELSP). Bill also suggests relevant ideas and links to some very good websites and resources.

Still in the spirit of book reading, we turn the spotlight on Ivan Angelov’s doctoral research in the field of American Literature. Ivan introduces us to Philip Roth and the themes of self-determination and letting go in *The Human Stain* and *American Pastoral*. We would like to provide opportunities for the dissemination of new developments and research in various aspects of English language learning and teaching in Bulgaria and abroad, so if you are interested in submitting your work...
for publication, we would love to hear more about your research and advance in the field.

The section Interview with... marks the first in a series of interviews Tanya Bikova is conducting with various individuals involved in language learning and teaching. Read Tanya’s interview with Zhivka Ilieva, the current President of BETA-IATEFL, to find out some interesting things you may not know about Zhivka – how she became involved with BETA and IATEFL, her reflections on the future of BETA, her hobbies and interests.

In addition, this issue brings to you reports on conferences and workshops attended by BETA members: ELTA Conference 2014 (Zhivka Ilieva); the ECML workshop Empowering Language Networks (Sylvia Velikova); and the Fourth Annual KETNET Conference and the Teachers’ Associations Strategic Development Training Program (Zhivka Ilieva).

Next, in the Poetry Corner, there are moments of pleasure and inspiration brought to you by Roger McGough and his poem The Way Things Are.

Finally, you can learn about events coming up in the world of ELT. We hope many of you will make plans to attend the highlight of the year for BETA and the ELT community in Bulgaria – the 24th BETA-IATEFL Annual International Conference in 2015!

We hope you enjoy the issue. As always, your feedback and submissions are most welcome.

Sylvia Velikova, Issue Editor
Andy Thatcher has been teaching English Language and Literature since 2000. In that time, he has taught undergraduates at the University of Exeter, groups of Swedish, Austrian and Chinese teenagers, members of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, adults with severe learning disabilities, children from top London private schools and, for the past six years, English teachers from across the EU via International Projects Centre, Exeter. He is also a writer for children and adults and, like many, many others, is still waiting for his lucky break. Email: andy.j.thatcher@gmail.com

Mind the Gap: Making English Language Literature Relevant

Creative Liberation through Creative Limitation

Andy Thatcher

One of my favourite teaching moments comes up each time I run one particular activity. In this, which I have run with both adult and teenaged learners, students are asked to dramatise a folk myth using sentences of no longer than five words. Because I like my adult students to work still harder, I add that the speaker must change with each new sentence. Each time, a student will challenge me as to why I have placed these restrictions on the group: this activity is harder than it might sound. Each time, I give the same answer: because it focuses the mind.

Western creative practice has inherited many myths from Romanticism. One of these is that the creative mind must be unfettered and free to express itself spontaneously and individually. Such a myth regularly occurs when the subject
arises of formatting fiction for commercial sale, which is a primary function of any good literary agent or editor. Writers are deemed, by many, to be above such petty concerns. And yet consider the case of classical Islamic art, which, unable to use physical form, developed a decorative style which continues to influence and inspire. Similarly, consider the haiku in all its various forms. Whether following the Western 5-7-5 syllable count or using the Japanese dictionary of acceptable seasonal haiku terms, or kogi, its compact form has delivered works of profound and globally-enjoyed beauty.

This is because limitation forces one to be creative: it activates our facility for problem-solving, an aspect of human creativity even more fundamental than a capacity for empathy, intellectual reasoning or visualisation. As such, I do not give my students opportunities to express themselves creatively, so much as give them problems to solve.

For example, I regularly teach sessions on writing about a place, a cornerstone of powerful fiction. I begin by asking students to write about a place where they felt a strong emotion, but to describe it without articulating either the emotion or what happened to the student. Instead, they must describe the place in such a way as depicts the emotion; for example, the light could be warm, or the seats comfortable, if the description is of a positive emotion. The pieces are then read out in small groups and the group members must then guess at the emotion and, where possible, the event which happened there. I have taught this to hugely diverse students – both native-speakers and not – and the activity always succeeds and has, on occasion, resulted in the students becoming emotional themselves. This is precisely because students are not allowed to write freely. The activity forces them to make careful decisions about their writing, reflect more
deeply on their experience, and focus on communication. In other words, it is precisely how professional writers are able to engage their readers and setting limits allows student writers to experience this for themselves.

“Write about your holidays” is the archetypal start-of-year writing activity across the world and teachers will no doubt be familiar with the varied, frequently disappointing responses that it delivers. Aside from student reluctance and reticence, being given such a blank canvas is an intimidating thing: all those many weeks to choose from. “Write about something that went wrong during your holidays” gives a student much more to work with, as does “Write about something unexpected that happened during your holidays.” This immediately narrows the canvas. You might then really up the game by asking the writers to start each new sentence with a different first letter. They might moan, they might challenge, but I guarantee that they will produce better work. And, perhaps secretly, they might even enjoy themselves.
Bill Templer is a Chicago-born applied linguist with research interests in English as a lingua franca, Extensive Reading theory & practice, critical pedagogy and Marxist transformative educational ideas. Bill has taught English and German in the U.S., Ireland, Germany, Israel, Austria, Bulgaria, Iran, Nepal, Thailand, Laos and Malaysia. He has been connected with Bulgarian education since 1991. Within IATEFL, he is active on the committee of the SIG Global Issues (http://gisig.iatefl.org/about-us). Bill is an editor at the Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies (www.jceps.com). He is a widely published translator from German and is now based as an independent researcher in Shumen. Email: templerbill@gmail.com

If we are serious about encouraging literacy development, we need to be serious about providing access to reading materials. Clearly, this is not happening. [...] Given access to books, young people read.

(Krashen, 2010, p. 26)

With summer here, there is always something that has been long termed in research the “summer learning loss.” This loss is demonstrable in Bulgaria and
elsewhere, because learners are not in classrooms, and lots of kids and teens are just not reading much of anything, in many corners and countries.

Before you read more, watch this brief video for kids “Summer reading’s awesome!” from the town of Georgina in Ontario, Canada: <goo.gl/rn6bUh>. It sends a message badly needed in today’s Bulgaria as well.

DOWN THE “SUMMER SLIDE”
As READING IS FUNDAMENTAL (RIF) tells us:

Something is waiting for many children every summer, and their parents don’t even know it’s out there. It's called the ‘summer slide,’ and it describes what happens when young minds sit idle for three months. Children who do not read over the summer will lose more than two months of reading achievement. Summer reading loss is cumulative. By the end of 6th grade children who lose reading skills over the summer will be 2 years behind their classmates. RIF provides resources for parents and teachers to keep kids reading throughout the summer and beyond.

You can explore the RIF site here: <goo.gl/CvUAXg>. Importantly, they remind us:

Low-income children and youth experience greater summer learning losses than their higher-income peers. On average, middle-income students experience slight gains in reading performance over the summer months. Low-income students experience an average summer learning loss in reading achievement of more than 2 months. Summer learning loss contributes to the achievement gap in reading performance between lower- and higher-income children and youth. Research demonstrates that while student achievement for both middle-
and lower-income students improves at similar rates during the school year, low-income students experience cumulative summer learning losses over the elementary school grades (RIF, 2014).

An important question is what school learners read during the summer or whether they read at all, in Bulgarian, English, other languages. A recent article by Donna Lasinski (2014) is well worth reading. In “Curing the Summertime Blues,” she talks about the need for school kids to read independently during the summer months and the decline in English that is identified, for example, among ELLs (English Language Learners) in the U.S. over the summer months. The number of ELLs from immigrant families is rising dramatically across the U.S. and many school districts find it hard to cope with the challenges that poses.

Lasinski stresses:

Unfortunately, research into the impact of summer learning loss on our students, including English language learners (ELLs), has been thin. [...] On average, reading performance scores decline by an average of one to two months during summer without reading practice. The loss of reading skill is not dependent on a student’s race, gender, or IQ. Reading loss only varies based on a student’s economic status, with low income learners often losing more than two months of reading performance. [...] Summer learning loss impacts all students but impacts fragile learners the most and must be addressed to close the achievement between learners.

In an excellent article, Arancibia (2014) also deals with the “summer slide,” and includes an NBC NEWS video “Help kids stay on track with summer reading.” Its
lead-in motto states: “School may be out but summer reading is in.” Well worth watching!

“GETTING KIDS HOOKED ON BOOKS”
Shin and Krashen (2007) argue convincingly for creating summer reading programmes that really work, and providing much greater access for ordinary kids to books that can interest them. It’s about “getting kids hooked on books.” Krashen and other literacy scholars have long stressed the importance of Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) for improving all proficiency skills, including speaking and writing. Krashen’s article “Eighty-Three Generalizations about Free Voluntary Reading” (2009) is revised and reprinted in his collection Free Voluntary Reading (2011a), and is a must-read (available in full online). In another article in this collection, he (2010, 24) states:

The evidence is overwhelming that reading for pleasure, that is, self-selected recreational reading, is the major source of our ability to read, to write with an acceptable writing style, to develop vocabulary and spelling abilities, and to handle complex grammatical constructions. The evidence holds both for English as a first language and for English as a second and foreign language.

He stresses that recreational reading is the key to literacy in any language. FVR through using libraries is crucial. He ends his article: “We must invest in libraries” (ibid., p. 26). Here is a very “cool” video, “Ode to Librarians” (<goo.gl/oC7p2m>), it is quite apropos, especially in Bulgaria today. Arancibia (2014) stresses:

The fact remains that reading provides several benefits. For starters, there’s mental stimulation, vocabulary expansion, greater field of knowledge, memory improvement, stronger analytical thinking skills, improved focus
and concentration, and of course stronger writing skills. Where schools might be letting you down, your local library is there to be the wind beneath your wings.

AND IN BULGARIA?

In an echo to Bob Dylan, Arancibia asks: “where have all the summer reading assignments gone?” Does it sound familiar? One can wonder what is really happening among pupils in grades 1-11 here, especially outside the major cities, and among ordinary kids from lower income strata and the ethnic minorities. Many Bulgarian teachers born ca. 1970 and earlier grew up under a system where a lot of summer reading, then “compulsory,” and taking out books from libraries, was actively encouraged, and books were very cheap, libraries much more frequented by the demographic born ca. 1950-1980, here some photo memories: <goo.gl/QN7UnE>. Today that is much less the case and reality, as stressed by the Center for Demographic Policy (CDP) in Sofia last year (Novinite, 2013):

The first item on the ranking of the CDP draws attention to the fact that Bulgaria has the highest illiteracy rate in the EU. The CDP cites data of the European Commission indicating that 41% of Bulgarian students are not fully literate. Bulgaria ranks 53rd by literacy rate in 2012, after Kyrgyzstan, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkmenistan, and Tonga According to an EC report under the 2012 – 2015 Convergence Programme, Bulgaria has the EU's highest share of people with reading difficulties [...] Bulgarian is a foreign language for many students, with over half of the students in 1,2, or 3 grade having another mother tongue and experiencing difficulties learning Bulgarian [...] Meanwhile, the CDP ranking notes, the IQ level of Bulgarians is falling dramatically and Bulgaria falls behind Mongolia and Kazakhstan. According to CDP data, Bulgaria ranks 47th among 113 countries by IQ level.
This is chilling commentary. A big question: to what extent are the schools actually failing to create “life-long readers,” youngsters who love to read self-selected books on their own, what California high school teacher and researcher Kelly Gallagher (2009a; 2009b) has famously called “readicide”? The average sum spent by a Bulgarian household for books in 2012 was BGN 17, remarkably low (Novinite, 2014)—although the initiative ЗАБАВНОТО ЛЯТНО ЧТЕНЕ in Bulgaria, launched in 2011, is trying to change things. Here their website: (<goo.gl/j90G2d>).

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**ЗАБАВНОТО ЛЯТНО ЧТЕНЕ!**

Some of you may be encouraging the ЗЛЧ programme very directly and have experience with it. That is worth writing about in this Newsletter and elsewhere. How successful is this initiative, and does it in any way involve reading English, not just for learners at the elite high schools?

A rough translation of the ЗЛЧ homepage:

For the fourth consecutive year, the Bulgarian portal for children Az-deteto.bg and City Library are organising a massive summer campaign to promote children's reading – “Summertime Reading Fun!” (<goo.gl/j90G2d>). The initiative takes place within the summer months from June to September and covers the entire country. The goal that the campaign sets is to interest young readers and encourage them to look for
books to read this summer! To facilitate this, children receive required reading lists for students from 1st to 7th grade, and books further recommended by us (biblioteka: <goo.gl/c54U9W>). In a specially designed electronic diary, every child participating records the books read and answers questions about the content of the book. Through the online reader’s diary, in September the “#1 summertime reading city will be identified, the “#1 summertime reading school” and “#1 summertime reader,” as well as the “most read children's book” for the summer of 2014. The “№1 summertime reading cities” for 2011 and 2012 were Sofia and Ruse. Maybe your city can win this year!

Here two videos from the 2013 ЗЛЧ campaign, some inspiring words from Silviya Lultcheva: (<goo.gl/2wEYNH>) and Radinela Buserksa (<goo.gl/vUuzMX>). ЗЛЧ is very much in the spirit of “Summer Reading’s Awesome!” Detski Knigi (2014) also has commented on this programme. The site <http://cheti.me> is also a useful initiative for promoting FVR in Bulgaria, all year around. Templer (2012) explores many ideas on encouraging Extensive Reading in English at all levels in Bulgaria, stressing the need for much more extensive availability of graded readers at a range of levels in school libraries, local libraries and also in bookshops. Krashen (2011b, min. 14:55) stresses: “This is where the research effort should go. How do you get beginning readers that are really compelling?” Ilieva (2013) provides a useful new handbook with 19 sample stories and many suggestions for activities, including drama, and using a range of materials online, along with a CD-ROM, an учебно помагало for future preschool and primary teachers in Bulgaria. Maley et al. (2014), a new collection of poems and stories written by Asian EFL teachers, develops ideas for encouraging students to write poems and short stories about
their own lives, a good adjunct to promoting students’ FVR and progress in expression:

Through poems and stories, students can voice their own life narratives in a relaxed way in which cognition, imagination, dialog, and experience interweave each other. […] We argue that both poems and short stories recognize the subjective experience of the individual; therefore, they are authentic or real-life resources for learning another language, such as English.

EXTRA ENGLISH: LEARNER SUMMER PROGRAMME

Bulgaria may have but needs more English Learner Summer Programmes (ELSP) supported by local school districts. This can involve kids from pre-primary through the primary grades, and maybe beyond. Savage (2014) provides an overview of one prototype in Alabama for kids from immigrant families, pre-kindergarten to Grade 7. Reading can be combined here in inventive ways. What such experiments in ELSP exist here? How can they be expanded and financed? The American University in Bulgaria runs a 3-week high school Educational Summer Camp (ESC) (intermediate level minimum), its fee high for most Bulgarian families, €670 (<goo.gl/N8ZjyU>). ESC features eight 1-week courses, all in English, like Communication Skills, Drama, Leadership Skills, Journalism. Teens choose three.

READING TO CHILDREN AT AN EARLY AGE. THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

There is much clear evidence that reading aloud to children in their home language (by parents, other family members) has an important effect on how they do at school, their school readiness, and their progress in learning the school language (Doyle, 2014). This is called “book sharing” (between young kids and
their parents). One of the study’s researchers noted that “Reading or storytelling in early life predicts how well children will do when they enter preschool, which translates to how they do when they start kindergarten, which is incredibly predictive of achievement later in school and in life” (ibid.). Doyle notes that the research shows clearly: children from families where English is not L1 in the U.S. experience much less “book sharing” with their parents, a point I return to below.

READING TO KIDS FROM BIRTH? CLOSING THE “WORD GAP”

Bulgaria needs something like Reach Out and Read (ROaR) in the U.S. (www.reachoutandread.org/). Among its commitments is to promote reading to children from birth. They are providing low-income families with books they can read to their children from the earliest months and of course later. ROaR has involved some 20,000 pediatricians in the U.S. to work with them encouraging families to read to their children and helping provide low-income families with children’s books. One pediatrician in Colorado commented:

One of my most memorable experiences with Reach Out and Read was both reaffirming and heartbreaking. I was seeing a 5-year-old girl for her well-child checkup. I walked in with a brand new book and started telling her about Reach Out and Read. The mom interrupted and said, “Oh yes! Last year you gave us ‘The Ugly Duckling.’ It was the first book we ever owned at our house. We read it every night.” She turned to her daughter and said with such excitement in her voice, “Now we’ll have TWO books at home!” It shows how important Reach Out and Read is to our families, but it still breaks my heart to think that for some families, two books is such a luxury.

Rich (2014) reports on new recommendations in the U.S. for reading to children from birth as a way to close the “word gap” between children from low-income
families and kids from the middle and higher socioeconomic strata. Research in the U.S has established that by age 3, the children of wealthier professionals have heard words millions more times than have those of less educated, low-income parents, giving the children who have heard more words a distinct advantage in school” (ibid.). And these gaps among children can begin to emerge as early as 18 months. So reading to kids (including “summer reading”) is one definite way to overcome these gaps, and of course promote interest in children in books and free voluntary reading from an early age, even the earliest age. Krashen (2011b) also passionately emphasizes this “social class dimension” in literacy education. Here a RIF brochure you can download on “Reading Aloud to Your Children” (<goo.gl/jGXCAx>).

![Reading Aloud to Your Children](image)

Source: RIF

**BROCHURES GALORE**

And speaking of brochures from RIF, here is one on “Summertime Reading” (<goo.gl/CUWN20>), here one on “Preschoolers and Reading” (<goo.gl/oLakLO>), and here something on “Choosing Good Books for Kids of All Ages” (<goo.gl/Jw8i0a>). Enjoy!
CHILDREN’S FREE READING IN L1 – CHILDREN’S BOOKS IN TURKISH AND ROMANI?

As mentioned, Doyle (2014) indicates that children from immigrant and ethnic-minority families where English is not L1 in the U.S. experience much less “book sharing” with their parents. Often there are few or so books at home in the home language. This raises a key question — relevant for Bulgaria — about literacy and children’s books in a child’s home language and the importance of this for developing general literacy in the national language (if different) and for its effect on the general cognitive development of the child. Krashen (2003) underscores this, citing much research from the U.S. and elsewhere (his article online). Krashen’s interview in Korea (2011b) is also very stimulating, especially in regard to working-class pedagogies and working with children in poverty, stressing that “well-off children have thousands of times more access to books than poor children” (minute 4:04). The impact of poverty and social class on education is carefully analyzed in Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). The authors stress that those who live in poverty are not deficient, despite prevailing media stereotypes in many countries, and in chap. 9, “Poor Kids Need Rich Teaching.” argue with concrete suggestions that “we need to do school differently!” (p. 195).

One can wonder whether Bulgarian ethnic Turkish kids have many or any children’s books in Turkish at home, or access to children’s books in Turkish in local libraries, or can buy in some bookshops. I have asked some teachers working with Turkish L1 speakers and they are unsure. When it comes to books in Romani, of course, there is basically nothing, that is clear, however unfortunate. Kyuchukov (2009a; 2009b; 2012; 2013) stresses the need for developing literacy in Romani (and/or Turkish) among Roma kids in Bulgaria through Mother Tongue First! Bilingual education is a controversial topic here (see
also Gerganov, 2010). Kyuchukov (1999) details extensive empirical research into the difficulties Bulgarian teachers have in teaching Bulgarian as a second language (for which they are not trained) to Roma children who speak Romani or Turkish as L1. He stresses “Teachers of Romany children should be highly qualified and their bilingual theoretical training should be improved. In order to prepare the children for mother tongue education they should have oral classes in Romany twice a week” (1995, p. 66). Kyuchukov (2012, p. 6) notes:

It is considered “natural” that the Romani language is not taught in the schools, although the European Charter of Minority Languages and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights say minority children have the right to study in their mother tongue from the level of kindergarten. Most Education Ministries will not implement such recommendations, explaining that “The Roma do not speak one language,” “Romani is not a real language,” or “there are no teachers in Romani.”

He also observes: “At the same time, Education Ministries will not open university programs to prepare kindergarten or primary/secondary school teachers to teach in Romani” (ibid.). Little has been done to promote Romani L1 literacy in Bulgarian schools, as Kyuchukov (2013) underlines. Kyuchukov (2006) describes a unique home literacy project in Vidin and Kyustendil with Roma families to prepare their children for entering school, by working with stories, an experimental textbook for Bulgarian, plus fairy tales in the two languages, translation exercises. The results were very positive, clearly a programme of children’s books and reading in Romani and Bulgarian, combined with summer reading, is what might be a game-changer in the current malaise of low-income Roma literary training. Are Roma children doing free reading in Bulgarian (and perhaps Turkish) during the summer months? The fairy tales by the German Romantic author Wilhelm Hauff are very popular on
the Bulgarian morning radio; it would be nice to have a book of translations of stories like “Малкият Мук,” “Халифът Щърк,” “Корабът на призраците,” “Джуджето Дългоноско” or “Студеното сърце” in simple Romani language, for example. More solid empirical studies are needed, and Kyuchukov’s work in Bulgaria and also Slovakia (Kyuchukov, 2014) is a psycholinguistically grounded model. RIF has a multicultural literacy campaign in the U.S. that is also relevant for Bulgaria (<goo.gl/DPZa7Z>).

Source: Reading Is Fundamental

“INDIGENIZING” READING IN ENGLISH

Earlier articles here (Templer, 2013a, b, c) have suggested pathways for using materials in English connected with Bulgaria. Summer reading could also encourage that such books were readily available in local libraries and bookshops, something the Ministry of Education could help implement through modest special funding. The only easy children’s picture book set in Bulgaria and published in the U.S. is the short semi-autobiographical tale by Hristo Kyuchukov, My Name was Hussein (2004), about growing up as a Muslim Roma boy in the 1980s during the so-called “Revival Process” (1984-85). It is with very brief simple text (32 pp., A1/A2 level), framed by large illustrations, an excellent reader for beginners. The Ministry of Education could stimulate use of the book in the Bulgarian classroom and place it in local libraries. We need research on how Roma and non-Roma kids...
in Bulgaria respond to such a tale, like *Dobry* (Templer, 2013b) children’s fiction
top excellence, about growing up here in the past. Another relevant short (32 pp.)
non-fiction picture book (*Kyuchukov & Hancock*, 2005) in easy English could also
be used experimentally, especially with Roma children learning English at B1 Level,
introducing them to their own history.

**RESEARCH BECKONS**

Summer book reading is an excellent topic for a research project focus, not just in
Bulgaria. It might also be considered as a research focus within Desmond
Thomas’s (2014) SEETA project getting teachers to do classroom research, in
Greece, Bulgaria and across South-Eastern Europe (see also *Oniz*, 2014). This can
also involve a form of practitioner action research being developed as Exploratory
Practice (*Dar & Gieve*, 2013; *Moran*, 2014), not so well known perhaps in Bulgaria.
And of course, not just exploring independent FVR in the summer, but *all year
round*. Even in Germany, colleagues teaching students at several universities
report that the only novel their students (prospective teachers of English) have
read in English before university tends to be *To Kill a Mockingbird*, nothing more
(personal comm., 6 July 2014). Are some aspects of “readicide” likewise
observable in Bulgaria (*Gallagher*, 2009a; 2009b)? Is this bound up in part with the
emergence of the “Net Gen” in many countries and the impact of their “e-life” on
has suggestive ideas that could help shape such inquiry here. Research is
especially also needed in smaller towns and the countryside. I personally think the
many books by Dr. Seuss, highly popular in the U.S. but largely unknown in
Bulgaria, should be experimented with especially among preschool and
elementary school learners (<goo.gl/O86RWK>). As mentioned, teachers should
be seeking ways to expand *graded reader multiple-copy collections* in all schools
and in local public libraries. This is one of the best investments the Bulgarian Ministry of Education can make for improving EFL reading skills and hands-on FVR.

It would mean a step change in library support. Krashen (2010, 26) stresses:

Governments are spending huge amounts, in the name of literacy, on developing standards and on enforcing the standards through testing, but paying, at best, only lip service to improving libraries. The frequent rationale for not funding libraries is the complaint that “giving them books won’t help; they won’t read anyway.” There are two responses to this complaint: The first is that if there are no books, it is certain that no reading will take place. The second is that the “they won’t read” accusation is wrong. It is incorrect for English reading and for reading in other languages. Given access to books, young people read. […] We must invest in libraries.

Here some cost-free graded readers online: (<goo.gl/eaKsV3>). More such sites needed. Templer (2012, pp.10-11) includes a questionnaire in English for students, “Exploring Your Own Reading History,” that could also be adapted into Bulgarian. Another important focus is using comics and graphic fiction to encourage FVR in English (Templer, 2009), a focus worth in-depth discussion. How many teachers here are experimenting with comics and graphic novels in EFL, with their complex interplay of words and images? Do your students read and enjoy comics or manga in Bulgarian? Ludwig & Pointner (2013) is an excellent new collection of stimulating articles on the topic.

In conclusion: a uniquely stimulating watch is Krashen’s (2011b) incisive 25-min. interview in Korea, it is a classic that will long echo in the mind.
REFERENCE LIST


Self-Determination and Letting Go in Philip Roth

Ivan Angelov

In *The Human Stain* and *American Pastoral*, Philip Roth depicts the life of Coleman Silk and Seymour Levov. The two novels share similar plot structure and treat the same theme of self-determination. Both, Seymour Levov and Coleman Silk, have opted to forge their own identities, regardless of social conventions. Seymour is of Jewish-American descent, but chooses to adopt the lifestyle of the WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) establishment. Coleman Silk is of African-American descent, but opts to pass himself off as white. The decision of the two protagonists to switch their ethnic allegiance is facilitated by their physical appearance. The nature of this decision demands of them to be “respectable citizens” in order to prevent any jeopardy to the social status they have striven for. Paradoxically, Seymour and Coleman aim to achieve freedom from the proscriptions imposed upon them, yet this freedom comes at a price.

In these two novels, Philip Roth develops the theme of maturity. In common parlance, maturity implies being a responsible and law-abiding person, and
apparently, maturity is the personal choice of Roth’s two protagonists. Counterintuitively, the lives of Seymour and Coleman unravel into disorder and chaos. It is only after history, in all its unpredictability, swoops down on the two characters that the two novels diverge in their plot structure. In his novels and stories, Philip Roth investigates the ethics behind the motives of his characters’ choices.

My thesis is that in the two novels, *The Human Stain* and *American Pastoral*, the author Philip Roth puts forward his paradoxical re-interpretation of the notion of maturity and its consequences. The two protagonists’ drive towards maturity ends in disaster for both of them. What the two novels differ from each other is the manner in which Seymour and Coleman manage to process the anguish from the loss. One of them accepts the loss and lets go of life’s defenses. The other one clings, to the very end, to his pre-conceived notions of maturity and responsibility. To show how the author conveys the implied re-interpretation of maturity, by means of the fictional representation of Seymour and Levov, is the aim of this paper.

**THE HUMAN STAIN**

*The Human Stain* tells the story of a 71 year-old professor’s downfall and eventual demise at the hands of a deranged Vietnam veteran. Absurd as this is, the events in the novel parallel another absurd real-life drama unfolding in the summer of 1998 and involving Bill Clinton’s sexual frolics. The title of the book evokes the disconcerting for puritan America fundamental physicality of the human predicament. Yet, the central concern of the novel is broader, and it is more than merely a specific response to the historical events of that summer. As Lyons puts it
The Human Stain is about the dangerous results of a national purity binge and the hypocrisies and sanctimoniousness of the politically righteous. These are people who refuse to acknowledge what the novel calls the shameless impurity of life and the redeeming corruption that de-idealizes the species and keeps us everlastingly mindful of the matter that we are (Lyons, 2005, p. 128).

The author captures this sanctimonious mood in the opening pages of the novel:

The summer that Coleman took me into his confidence about Faunia Farley and their secret was the summer, fittingly enough, that Bill Clinton’s secret emerged in every last mortifying detail…the summer of an enormous piety binge, purity binge…revived America’s oldest communal passion, historically perhaps its most treacherous and subversive pleasure: the ecstasy of sanctimony (Roth, 2001, p. 2).

The narrator Nathan Zuckerman depicts the sheer absurdity of America’s obsession with the private life of one human being, albeit the President, by the sinister sounding rituals of purification, the persecuting spirit, corrective retribution of castration. This frenzy of righteousness, whipped up like a storm in a glass of water by the media, descends upon Coleman Silk for a transgression that is innocuous compared to the perceived malfeasance of the president. It is the sixth week of the semester and Dean Silk asks half-jokingly about two of the students in his course who have not attended the course yet:

Do they exist or are they spooks?

Later that day he was astonished to be called in by his successor, the new dean of faculty, to address the charge of racism brought against him by the two missing students, who turned out to be black (Roth, 2001, p. 3).
Coleman Silk’s desperate call to his colleagues’ common sense falls on deaf ears. In a world of the absurd and the preposterous, rational behavior is not the best strategy for survival. Accused of harboring racial prejudice against his students, Coleman Silk finds himself in a poignantly ironic impasse. The irony in the novel resides in the fact that Silk is of African-American origin: his parents are black; he went to a black school etc. In the words of Kaplan:

The harsh irony driving the novel to borrow from Roth’s “harshly ironic fate” is that Coleman’s secret is that he was born and raised in an African-American family of educators and is not Jewish. This fact might have been the one thing that could have saved him from his downfall, yet it is the one thing that he cannot reveal. The central irony of the novel is thus fuelled by the suppression of desired disclosure (Kaplan, 2005, p. 177).

Coleman is unable to reveal the one thing that can save him. If he admits of his ethnic background, he will destroy the lives of his wife and children, who believe they are Jewish. At seventy-one, it is too late for him to come clean. It seems that Coleman Silk’s sin is that he turned his back on his heritage, his family and fifty years later, fate has decided to hold him to account for his temerity to determine who he is, and to shape his life along his own rules and to his liking.

Coleman Silk, having renounced his former self, embarks upon the greatest project of his life: inventing his new identity, custom-made and tailored to his needs. He sets about creating a new I, free from the obstructions of the we. Coleman Silk’s decision to pass himself off as white is a transgressive act against social conventions, an act of rebellion. According to Kaplan:

Coleman passes himself as white precisely because he cannot reconcile himself to the confines of a world in which race matters. His thinking on
race derives from his idea of freedom from categories. His self-fashioning into a Jew reflects his rejection of the arbitrary nature of race and blood (Kaplan, 2005, p. 182).

The intricate weaving of his new self’s story places enormous psychological burden upon Coleman. Lies, or rather, not telling the truth, become his only line of defense in deflecting his children’s queries about their father’s past. The cost of re-inventing his life is the burden of defusing every probing question that could possibly expose the truth of his blackness. The choice that Coleman has made demands from him to be constantly on the alert, to be strict and disciplined, to be a mature and responsible human being. In Roth’s interpretation, however, maturity acquires new meaning: to be innocent of life’s true nature. In his works, Roth dwells on the fundamental unpredictability of life.

When Steena deserts Coleman on account of his racial background, Coleman is amazed at “how easily life could be one thing than another” (Roth, 2001, p. 33). Later on, when thrown out of a whites-only bar and experiencing the worst night of his life, Coleman confronts the unpredictable, that which is beyond human control:

The outside forces were there. The whole chain of the unforeseen, all the dangers of exposure and all the dangers of concealment- even the senselessness of life was there in that stupid little blue tattoo (Roth, 2001, p. 46).

What the novel’s protagonist has taken upon himself is nothing short of battling the unforeseen forces, an undertaking that is a mere folly. This is the real maturity that Coleman Silk learns the hard way when he is accused of racism. For forty years, he has been trying to structure his life along his own rules, to reinvent
himself. Yet, the product of all his efforts comes unraveling after one word: *Spooks!*

The sheer absurdity of the charge against him shatters his life to pieces. His wife passes away, Coleman loses his university position and the respect that he has been working for all his life. McDaniels says that “Roth’s relation to his contemporaries is more sharply defined if we consider him as a social realist – as a writer who is...concerned with social conventions as they impinge upon character” (McDaniels, 2003, p. 48). Indeed, social conventions, demanding from him to be a responsible and mature individual, determine Coleman Silk’s life. With his life in a tailspin, Coleman relegates social conventions and mores to his past. Finally, after forty years, Coleman comes to realize the futility of maturity and loosens his grip on life, relinquishes his grip on discipline. He demands from Nathan Zuckerman to write the story of his life because no one would believe it if he wrote it himself.

All the restraint had collapsed within him, and so watching him, listening to him – a man I did not know, but clearly someone accomplished and of consequence now completely unhinged- was like being present at a bad highway accident or a fire or a frightening explosion, at a public disaster that mesmerizes as much by its improbability as by its grotesqueness (Roth, 2001, p. 4).

Faunia Farley is Coleman’s 34 year-old illiterate mistress. It is all too ironic then, that it takes an illiterate woman, who is less than half his age, to teach Professor Silk how to enjoy life, how to let go of life’s defenses. She teaches Coleman wisdom that he could not afford until that moment. Until the racist charge and Faunia’s appearance in his life, Coleman Silk is on a quest for purity. He severs all ties with his family in order to expunge the blemish of his blackness; after all, he
chooses to pass himself as white, as someone who is pure, not tainted by any stain. Yet, the wisdom that eluded Coleman for so long is intuitively self-evident to Faunia. In this bleak vision, “there is no hope for redemption or reconciliation. Roth thus demonstrates how we are all stained with the blood of our past and with the immobility of that past” (Kaplan, 2005, p. 182). She knows that we are all tainted, that the “fantasy of purity is appalling” (Roth, 2001, p. 62) and unnatural, that:

...we leave a stain, we leave a trail, we leave our imprint. Impurity, cruelty, abuse, error, excrement, semen – there’s no other way to be here...It’s in everyone. Indwelling. Inherent. Defining...The stain that precedes disobedience, that encompasses disobedience and perplexes all explanation and understanding. It’s why all the cleansing is a joke. A barbaric joke at that. What is the quest to purify, if not more impurity? All she was saying about the stain was that it’s inescapable (Roth, 2001, p. 62).

It is through Faunia that the implied author passes judgment on his protagonist. Coleman’s error resides not so much in the transgressive act of self-definition, but rather, in his self-delusion that purity is the standard that he should strive towards. Faunia reveals to him that purity is nothing but a sham, pretence inimical to life’s fundamental nature. Posnock calls The Human Stain “one of Roth’s most powerful late novels because it explores the temptation of irresponsibility and abjection that mocks the proprietary logic of American individualism” (Posnock, 2006, p. 56). He also adds:

Coleman Silk’s late-emerging abandonment of control reverses the conviction that has hitherto ruled him- the self is a disciplinary project that maximizes freedom by tabooing impulse. Roth discerns fatal purism in the
very assumption, Cartesian inspired, that the self is a project (Posnock, 2006, p. 57).

Coleman Silk eventually comes out of hiding, risking intimacy with another person, and “his gameness is what immaturity matures into when it embraces undefined immersion in the present moment and attunement to the precarious” (Posnock, 2006, p. 195). Coleman’s entanglement with life, his last great fling ends on a tragic note. He and Faunia become victims of her ex-husband, a former Vietnam veteran, who thinks that Coleman is a Jew. Ironically, it is only in his death that Coleman attains the identity he adopted forty years ago. In his drive towards total immersion into a new identity, for total control over his destiny, Coleman Silk ignored the inherent unpredictability of living. He strove after an ideal, refused to be defined by outside forces, such as race, ethnicity. Yet, history caught up with him, spun him around, and eventually killed him for his audacity to dream himself into something different than his initial self.

AMERICAN PASTORAL

In American Pastoral, Philip Roth explores once again the opposition along the purity-immaturity axis. Another similarity with The Human Stain is the protagonist’s decision to leave his Jewish heritage and adopt the lifestyle and social mores of the WASP establishment. Similarly to Coleman Silk, Seymour Levov’s decision to pass himself as white is possible because of his physical appearance. To the narrator Nathan Zuckerman, Levov is “a boy as close to a goy as we were going to get” (Roth, 1998, p. 5), the epitome of an ideal:

The name was magical; so was the anomalous face. Of the few fair-complexioned Jewish students in our preponderantly Jewish public high school, none possessed anything remotely like the steep-jawed, insentient
Viking mask of this blue-eyed blond born into our tribe as Seymour Irving Levov (Roth, 1998, p. 1).

With his Swedian innocence, Levov epitomizes the prelapsarian insouciance that his compatriots yearn for during times of trial and personal drama. This responsibility, however, comes at a heavy personal price. He is “fettered to history, an instrument of history” (Roth, 1998, p. 3). His role at that particular historical moment is to give hope through the symbolic representation of innocence, of purity. Unaware of the consequences, he internalizes this innocence and makes it into his own credo. In order to live up to the expectations of the community and the historical moment, Levov adopts a mature stance from his early years. Yet, in Roth’s oeuvre, maturity is a recipe for disaster.

In American Pastoral, Philip Roth follows a plot structure similar to The Human Stain: the novel begins with the protagonist nearing the end of his life and it is only later on, through a series of flashbacks, that the author unfolds the rich tapestry of his character’s story. By the time Levov meets Nathan Zuckerman, his life is unraveling fast, the regularity and order he strove so hard to attain, just like Coleman Silk did, come crashing down around him, descending into the chaos of the unthinkable. After Seymour Levov dies of cancer, Nathan realizes that ‘there was a noble side to this guy. Some “excruciating renunciations went on in that life” (Roth, 1998, p. 37). In a tribute to another iconic American writer, Roth models Levov’s dramatic persona after the Hemingway hero, whose distinctive feature is to exhibit grace under pressure. Levov’s polished demeanor and blandness take on new significance: a mask hiding stoic acceptance and fortitude. His perfect life comes suddenly to an end when Mary, Levov’s daughter, plants a bomb and kills a man.
Order and structure in Levov’s life metamorphose overnight into chaos and horror. Seymour’s overarching desire is to establish for his family a life of purity, an American pastoral away from the dreadful volatility of the human factor. In his two-hundred year old house, representation of conventional respectability, Levov enjoys the ultimate American dream, confident in the fundamental correctness of it all, never questioning, never doubting and simply being. Yet, the inherent unpredictability of the human factor destroys his Utopia.

With Seymour Levov, Roth creates yet another character that chafes under the confines of his original ethnic and cultural identity. True to his Utopian vision, Levov manages to transcend his Jewishness by adopting all the trappings of the dominant WASP establishment. Seymour Levov shares with Coleman Silk the same liberal view on personal identity: both of them share the firm belief that the self is nothing but the product of personal choice:

...forming yourself as an ideal person who gets rid of the traditional Jewish habits and attitudes, who frees himself of the pre-America insecurities, and the old, contrasting obsessions so as to live unapologetically as an equal among equals (Roth, 1998, p. 49).

In his insistence upon self-determination, Levov constructs his identity upon external appearances, along surfaces. The flimsiness of identity built upon such lines becomes obvious when Merry plants a bomb in the post office, and accidentally kills a man passing by at 5 a.m. in the morning. Unable to comprehend the sheer absurdity of his daughter’s act, Seymour Levov has to wade, in middle age, into “the horror of self-reflection” (Rost, 1998, p. 49). By planting a bomb in the heart of suburban America, Merry Levov becomes the
touchstone that gives the lie to her father’s identity, exposing the underlying falsehood of an identity based on surfaces:

All that normalcy interrupted by murder. All the small problems any family expects to encounter exaggerated by something so impossible to ever reconcile. The disruption of the anticipated American future that was simply to have unrolled out of the solid American past...the daughter blasting to smithereens his particular form of Utopian thinking (Roth, 1998, p. 49).

With his daughter a murderer on the run, a wife in a psychiatric hospital, the Swede faces something that defies his capacity to comprehend, something which does not lend itself to rationalisation or explanation. For the first time in his life, Levov is unable to control reality, unable to fashion it along his notions of order and structure. On the contrary, life has morphed into grotesque, surreal nightmare. Baffled, Levov is groping for clues, for answers to the biggest question of all: Why?

Jerry Levov passes the ultimate judgment on his brother in a conversation after Seymour witnesses the horror of his daughter’s predicament. Jerry Levov blasts away at his brother’s complacency, his decorum, his lack of individuality. In Jerry’s view, Mary’s acts of terrorism are her way to blast at the façade of her father’s respectability. This lack of identity is the reason for Jerry’s criticism of Seymour:

Except that’s what your daughter has been blasting away at all her life. You don’t reveal yourself to people, Seymour. You keep yourself a secret. You certainly never let her see who you are. That’s what she’s been blasting away at- that façade. All your fucking norms. Take a good look at what she did to your norms (Roth, 1998, p. 161).
Seymour is helpless against Jerry’s tirade. He thought “all that façade was going to come without cost” (Roth, 1998, p. 164). However, the cost of “playing at being Wasps” (Roth, 1998, p. 164) is too great- the disintegration of his family. The price which Coleman Silk pays for transgressing the ethnic identity boundaries is the loss of his wife, and eventually, his life. In *American Pastoral*, Seymour Levov pays similar price with the loss of his daughter and his wife. In the Rothian world, identity equilibristic is a dangerous game.

CONCLUSION

In these two novels, Philip Roth depicts two characters who have chosen to embark on an individualistic project, taking an instrumental stance towards their subjectivities, Roth, however, professes skepticism towards any project of purity when it comes to the self. Hence, in these two novels, the author reveals the dire consequences resulting from such individualistic projects.

REFERENCE LIST


Interview with

Zhivka Ilieva

*Tanya Bikova conducted a short interview with Zhivka Ilieva, the current President of BETA-IATEFL. In this issue we share with you Zhivka Ilieva’s answers to the interview questions.*

Zhivka Ilieva was elected President of the Bulgarian English Teachers’ Association (BETA-IATEFL) in April 2014. She is an assistant professor at Dobrich College, Shumen University. She teaches English, TEFL Methodology, Children’s Literature in English and is also a teacher trainer. She has a PhD in Methodology of English Language Teaching. In connection to her scientific work she has classes with primary school students and with very young learners at kindergartens.

For four years she was a deputy director of the college responsible for the teaching process and students’ affairs, and for the organisation of the student teachers’ practice at school and kindergarten. She gave lectures on communicative skills development at KATHO – Katholieke Hogeschool Zuid-West-Vlaanderen, Belgium as part of the Erasmus teaching mobility programme. She runs workshops for primary school teachers and takes part in conferences dedicated to language teaching and teacher training in Bulgaria and abroad.

*Tanya Bikova is a teacher of English at the High School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Blagoevgrad. Since April 2014 she has been a co-opted BETA-IATEFL Committee Member. E-mail: tanyabikova@abv.bg*
First of all, I would like to thank you for this interview. It is a pleasure to talk to one of the most ambitious and hard-working representatives of the English teaching world and teacher trainers in Bulgaria. For those who do not know you yet, could you name an event, a period of time or person in your life that inspired you to, so to speak, fall in love with the English language and later – the decision to pursue a career in English language teaching?

Zhivka:
All my teachers – both at Hristo Botev Primary School and at the High School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences in Dobrich have influenced my way of teaching. All of them worked with great inspiration. They organised outings for us; they enchanted us by reciting poetry and showing the cross-curricular links between all the subjects. One of my English language teachers at the primary school – Alla Tastimirovna spoke 7 languages which impressed me. My teacher of English at the secondary school – Mr Tsukev taught us a new song every Friday – it was great fun. Valya Angelova (at that time, a teacher trainer at the Department for Information, Qualification and Lifelong Learning in Varna) inspired me for methodology and Professor Maria Georgieva (Sofia University) for research with children.

Tanya:
Were there any doubts and difficult moments at the beginning of your career?
Zhivka:
There are difficult moments, there are doubts sometimes. But if you do what you have to without being distracted, everything gets better in a while and bad things are forgotten.

Tanya:
How did you become so involved with BETA and IATEFL?

Zhivka:
As a student at Shumen University, I was involved in a British Council project and read about IATEFL. I wanted very much to become a member but it was too expensive. Then I read about BETA in Valya Angelova’s office at the Department for Information, Qualification and Lifelong Learning in Varna and since then I have been a member of BETA and of IATEFL through BETA. I wanted to be part of them both and now I am.

Tanya:
Which aspects of your work do you enjoy the most?

Zhivka:
The work with the student teachers – we have to help them become good teachers, working with kids, and presenting at conferences.

Tanya:
What projects are you currently working on? Could you tell us a bit more about them?
Zhivka:
My first book came out of print at the end of 2013. I am working on the second one. I love working with children when they are inspired – they achieve so much! It is rewarding! I work on various projects Shumen University is involved in. I work with a few kindergartens in Dobrich on their international projects. Since I love biology and ecology, it all seems very interesting.

Tanya:
Acting as the incoming President of the Bulgarian English Teachers’ Association, what are your views on its future development? What is being done to make it more popular and accessible to everyone?

Zhivka:
We have to increase the number of our members. We started a Happy Day initiative in 2012 and it proved fruitful. It is a challenge to make the association attractive for the many teachers of English in Bulgaria. We have our annual conference and the annual competition; we have our E-Newsletter, and the support of the outgoing team. We have to work hard in order to provide more things – to upgrade, so to speak, to leave something new for the next committee and for our members, of course.

Tanya:
Do you have hobbies outside of the ELT world? Could you tell us something about them?
Zhivka:
Photography, walking, travelling. I love mountains. I love visiting new places, meeting new people, roller skating and skateboarding in my free time.

Tanya:
What would you like to advise the new teachers reading this interview?

Zhivka:
Do not give up even if it might be difficult at times. Work with all your heart and soul!

Tanya:
How would you like to close our interview?

Zhivka:
With a great smile. Wishing health, happiness, prosperity, high professional achievements and great luck to our members and to everyone reading the interview!
Zhivka Ilieva

The 12th ELTA Serbia Conference was held on 16 and 17 May 2014 at the Faculty of Education, Belgrade. I was the official representative of BETA and, first of all, I would like to thank ELTA Serbia and BETA for the opportunity to attend this event.

Thank you, ELTA Serbia and Katarina, for the suitable accommodation and the instructions how to get to the hotel and to the venue!

I missed more than half a day because of the travel – there is a bus from Sofia to Belgrade only twice a week: on Friday and on Sunday. I was happy I was on time for my presentation.

My presentation was entitled “Stories and rhymes with young and very young learners.” It included a bit of theory, a bit of practical ideas and my new story.
The presentations I could visit were:

- The plenaries: “What can adults learn from kids” – David Evans and “Developing artistry in language teaching” – Willy Cardoso;

Some of these were given by the plenary speakers, whose presentations I could not attend on Friday morning.

It is so difficult to choose at this kind of conferences which one of the 8 concurrent sessions to attend. But we have to be happy with what we have and what we can do. In just two days there was a wealth of 6 plenaries and 50 presentations: an amazing mixture of talks, workshops and a panel discussion in the following fields: teacher development; teaching, evaluation and assessment; methodology; young learners; research; literature, media, culture; computers; ESP; writing.

The Dinner and Raffle Party was at an elegant place.

Unfortunately the conference coincided with the floods in Serbia. I am impressed by the solidarity of the Serbians with the people from the flooded areas!

The building of the faculty was near a church – Vaznesenjska crkva and during the sessions we could hear the bells ringing – it was exciting.

The organising committee had arranged a walking tour for the guests. Thanks to Sneza Filipovic we could see the centre of the city and all the sights worth seeing despite the short time we had. We could try all kinds of ice cream and enjoy a
delicious cone or cup of ice cream which was a great experience. We saw the charming streets with pubs and many flowers. Finally we had a cup of nice coffee and went back to the conference.

I learned new things, was inspired for new ideas and projects, met old friends and made new ones. This was an enriching experience in both personal and professional aspects. THANK YOU!

I am looking forward to seeing the articles in ELTA Newsletter and ELTA Journal to read through what I have missed.
Sylvia Velikova is a lecturer and teacher educator at the University of Veliko Turnovo (Faculty of Modern Languages), where she teaches ELT Methodology and coordinates the school-based TP. Former President of BETA-IATEFL (2010-2014), currently she is Editor of BETA-IATEFL Publications. She has been involved in ECML (Council of Europe) and British Council projects related to language teaching and teacher education. Her main interests are in applied linguistics and psycholinguistics (first and second language listening), teacher education and development, and teaching ESP/EAP. E-mail: sylvia.velikova@gmail.com

LACS Workshop
“Empowering Language Networks,”
European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), Graz, Austria

Sylvia Velikova
The workshop “Empowering language networks,” held on 22 and 23 May in Graz, brought together 33 representatives of language teacher associations and other organisations engaged in language education from 26 countries. I was nominated by the national nominating authority of the ECML and funded by the ECML to take part in this forum and represent Bulgaria (and BETA) there. The event facilitators were Terry Lamb (UK), Sigurborg Jónsdóttir (Iceland), and Nadezhda Doychinova (Bulgaria). The workshop was organised as part of the project entitled “Language associations and collaborative support” (LACS) within the fourth medium-term programme (2012-2015) of the ECML.
The ECML (http://www.ecml.at) is a Council of Europe institution based in Graz, whose mission is to promote excellence and innovation in the teaching of languages and to promote more effective language learning. To accomplish its mission and strategic objectives, the ECML coordinates a programme of international projects on language education.

The project “Language associations and collaborative support” (LACS) aims to mediate between the ECML projects and associations of language teachers and other networks at regional and national level. A central project activity, the workshop “Empowering language networks” had the main goal to stimulate the exchange of experience and to help generate ideas for disseminating and implementing the results of the ECML projects in national, regional and local contexts.

The programme of the event included plenary sessions, presentations and group discussions. The workshop began by a welcome to the event and introduction to the LACS project by Terry Lamb (LACS project Coordinator). This was followed by a presentation from Sarah Breslin (Executive Director of ECML), who provided an overview of the ECML and its previous and current programme of projects. In a plenary session Terry Lamb, who is also FIPLV President, spoke about the International Federation of Language
**Teacher Associations** (FIPLV). FIPLV is the only international multilingual association of teachers of languages and BETA joined it in 2013.

My presentation introduced BETA Bulgaria and highlighted various forms in which our association disseminated ECML and its projects for the period from 2008 to 2014.

There were informative presentations by participants from Austria, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia. They focused on the activities of diverse language associations across Europe, their experience and good practice as well as some of the challenges they face. The mediation link persons of the ECML projects PIU and Community gave talks, providing information about their activities.

In group discussions we covered the following topics:

- the value of ECML projects in our own contexts;
- issues on the dissemination and implementation of the ECML projects nationally and regionally;
- the searchable [Directory of language associations and organisations](#);
- the benefits of collaborating and networking with other language associations and organisations involved in language education nationally, regionally, and internationally.

The event concluded with an interactive session in which the attendees produced the frameworks of various collaborative regional projects (that build on ECML).
projects) and presented them in a plenary session. Representatives of language associations and other organisations, providing professional development for language teachers in Southeastern Europe, drafted the framework of a multilingual project involving collaborative partnerships from the region. It is envisaged that this project will be coordinated by BETA.

Three major points of relevance to BETA emerge as a result of the LACS workshop:

- The results/publications of ECML projects are useful tools that promote innovation and excellence in language teaching and learning. Therefore, BETA can more systematically organise activities (e.g. workshops, webinars, round tables, competitions for teachers and students) that help their adaptation and implementation in Bulgaria. In the long run BETA can also compile and produce an inventory of good practices that demonstrate how the ECML projects are used and their impact on English language learning and teaching in Bulgaria.

- It may well be that joining forces with language associations in Bulgaria is the way forward for BETA. Our association can renew and expand contacts and initiate meetings with leaders of all language associations in Bulgaria to share expertise, discuss challenges and develop solutions for addressing them together, including actions for influencing policy. A national network of language associations can be established, working in unison towards common goals.
It would be very useful BETA to foster collaboration as its core value and stay open, network and cooperate with various stakeholders, including language associations on an international scale. BETA has had valuable experiences in maintaining collaborative relationships with IATEFL (and its SIGs) and SEETA in the field of ELT. FIPLV and the LACS project open up further possibilities for developing collaborative links and partnerships with associations representing teachers of various languages and other organisations involved in different aspects of language education.

Overall, the key message of this very successful workshop was that the creative collaboration between language teacher associations at a national and regional level as well as the partnership between them and the ECML, would help associations support more effectively the professional development of language teachers and advance the implementation of innovative pedagogical approaches for quality language learning and teaching – locally, nationally, regionally, and beyond.

USEFUL LINKS:

ECML
Website: http://www.ecml.at
Programme: http://www.ecml.at/Programme
Bulgaria and the ECML: http://www.ecml.at/Bulgaria

LACS
Project website: http://lacs.ecml.at
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/LACS.ECML
Twitter: [https://twitter.com/LACSECML](https://twitter.com/LACSECML)

Directory of language associations and organisations (draft):


FIPLV
Website: [http://fiplv.com](http://fiplv.com)
Twitter: [https://twitter.com/FIPLV](https://twitter.com/FIPLV)
Zhivka Ilieva is a teacher of English and a teacher trainer. She holds a PhD in Methodology of English Language Teaching. Her main interests are in language acquisition, teaching foreign languages to young learners, teacher training, applied linguistics.

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The Fourth Annual KETNET Conference and Teachers’ Associations Strategic Development Training Program

Zhivka Ilieva

In the period 6-11 June I was invited by RELO Budapest to take part in the Fourth Annual KETNET Conference “When Theory Meets Practice: Inspiring Practices” and the follow-up training “Leadership in English Language Teaching”, held in Prishtina.

I would like to thank RELO and the USA Embassy in Sofia for making it possible for me to attend this event.

The travel was so well organised that I started early in the morning on 6th June and was there at about lunch time – just in time to have lunch with Leena from Estonia and Gordana from Serbia. And we could meet before the event had started thanks to Gergo Satha’s suggestion to introduce ourselves in advance. Then we went to the welcome ceremony where we could meet the whole team: Blerta and Zinaide – the KETNET representatives and our kind hosts, Elizabeta from Macedonia,
Aureliana from Romania, Ymer from Albania, and of course Mary Lou McCloskey – our lecturer and a plenary speaker, Gergo Santha and George Chinnery. I was lucky to meet Mary Lou McCloskey still at Vienna airport and have a nice chat about TESOL and becoming a TESOL affiliate.

The KETNET team had organised a wonderful reception with delicious local homemade food prepared by themselves.

The real opening ceremony was on Saturday, 7th June. There were two plenaries: “From teaching what we test to testing what we teach” – Zoltan Rezmuves and “From human rights to conflict resolution: language for peace and cross-cultural acceptance” – Mary Lou McCloskey and 26 presentations in 6 concurrent sessions. After the closing ceremony our team enjoyed a wonderful meal at a nice place recommended by the KETNET team.

On 8th June our kind hosts organised a trip to Prizren for us. We had a delicious Turkish coffee. We visited the fortress, a mosque, an orthodox church and a catholic church. The fortress is at the foot of Shar Planina which reminded me of the traditional songs about Krali Marko and his horse Sharkoliya.
On Monday we started the training. It started with an introduction about TESOL, continued with “Qualities of a leader,” “Strategic planning and planning strategically,” “Communicating with members and beyond. Recruiting and retaining members.” On Tuesday we continued with “Budgeting and financial responsibility,” “Effective meetings,” “Growing leaders for the future,” “Building regional cooperation.”

In the evenings we could walk along the main street, see Mother Teresa Cathedral Mother Teresa Square and finally Mother Teresa Monument, the monument of George Kastrioti Skanderbeg and others and enjoy the local cuisine.

We exchanged ideas for projects, for organizing various events, became friends.
The Way Things Are

Roger McGough

No, the candle is not crying, it can not feel pain.
Even telescopes, like the rest of us, grow bored.
Bubblegum will not make the hair soft and shiny.
The duller the imagination, the faster the car,
I am your father and that is the way things are.

When the sky is looking the other way,
do not enter the forest. No, the wind
is not caused by the rushing of clouds.
An excuse is as good a reason as any.
A lighthouse, launched, will not go far,
I am your father and that is the way things are.

No, old people do not walk slowly
because they have plenty of time.
Gardening books when buried will not flower.
Though lightly worn, a crown may leave a scar,
I am your father and that is the way things are.
No, the red woolly hat has not been put on the railing to keep it warm.
When one glove is missing, both are lost.
Today’s craft fair is tomorrow’s boot sale.
The guitarist weeps gently, not the guitar
I am your father and that is the way things are.

Pebbles work best without batteries.
The deckchair will fail as a unit of currency.
Even though your shadow is shortening it does not mean you are growing smaller.
Moonbeams sadly, will not survive in a jar,
I am your father and that is the way things are.

For centuries the bullet remained quietly confident that the gun would be invented.
A drowning surrealist will not appreciate the concrete lifebelt.
No guarantee my last goodbye is an au revoir,
I am your father and that is the way things are.

Do not become a prison officer unless you know what you’re letting someone else in for.
The thrill of being a shower curtain will soon pall.
No trusting hand awaits a falling star
I am your father, and I am sorry but this is the way things are.

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Small-scale teacher-led Research Project
SEETA in collaboration with Desmond Thomas,
University of Essex
ELT Teachers becoming researchers!

Welcome
SEETA BOOKLET 2013-2014
What advice would you give to new teachers?
Post your article to the forum
to be included in the SEETA Booklet for new teachers!

Young Learners: Tips and Tricks
Amazing Systems for Teaching English to YL - Roleplay
Fortune telling and palmistry - Teaching the Simple Past Tense

Coming Your Way
SEETA Interviews by Philip Kerr
Join the interview with Willy Cardoso

Respecting Diversity
A Social Inclusion project for schools. Open for visit

SEETA Teachers’ Lounge
On-going community forum

How To …..
Find out how to use some popular web 2.0 tools. Read teachers’ experiences and share tips and ideas. Follow how-to videos.
Forthcoming Events in the World of ELT

SAVE THE DATE!

24TH BETA-IATEFL ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The 24th BETA-IATEFL Annual International Conference will take place between 5 - 7 June 2015 at the University of National and World Economy, Sofia.

June 2015

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In 2015 FIPLV (International Federation of Language Teacher Associations) joins forces with CASLT (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers) and OMLTA (Ontario Modern Language Teachers’ Association) to hold the 2015 World Congress of Modern Languages in Niagara Falls (ON), Canada, March 26-28, 2015.

This exciting and rewarding event will bring together over 1,000 participants, including a wide range of national and international language education stakeholders – it is a unique opportunity to benefit from networking and from learning about innovative pedagogies, research, and policy in the field.

Paper submission is now closed, but you can still register as a participant. Please note that the deadline for the early-bird registration is 31st January 2015 and there are preferential rates for FIPLV members (BETA-IATEFL is a FIPLV member).

For details, please visit:

49th Annual International IATEFL Conference and Exhibition
Manchester Central, Manchester, UK
11th-14th April 2015

Pre-Conference Events and Associates' Day, 10th April 2015

Plenary Speakers

Ann Cotton  Carol Ann Duffy  Joy Egbert  Donald Frreeman  Hary Kuchah

Important Dates

Speaker proposal deadline: 18th September 2014

Speaker payment deadline: 16th December 2014

Earlybird Deadline: 29th January 2015

http://www.iatefl.org/annual-conference/manchester-2015
ELTAM would like to invite you to its

8th International Biannual Conference

Managing teaching and learning - making the most of both worlds
Enhancing teachers’ and students’ life and organisational skills

on October 31 - November 2, 2014
in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

The call for proposal is now closed but you can still register as a participant.

Early bird registration - before 15 September 2014.

Please note that BETA has a partnership agreement with ELTAM and BETA members can register for the event at the preferential ELTAM members’ fees.

For further information, visit:
http://www.eltam.org.mk/tabs/view/d88ed2b561fe8b78f6ff0fdee1296a5b
At the initiative of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, the European Day of Languages (EDL) has been celebrated every year since 2001 on 26 September.

This year, in Sofia, the event is organised by:

- Austrian Embassy
- British Council
- Czech Cultural Centre
- Institut Français
- Polish Institute
- Goethe-Institut Bulgarien
- Hungarian Cultural Institute
- Instituto Cervantes
- Educational Department at the Embassy of Spain
- Istituto Italiano di Cultura
- Russian Cultural and Information Centre
- Sofia Development Agency
- Human Resources Development agency
- DG Translation of the European Commission
- OPTIMA.

For more detailed information on the event, visit:

http://www.britishcouncil.bg/en/events/european-day-languages

Official website of EDL: http://edl.ecml.at/
Writing for the BETA E-Newsletter

Have you ever wondered if you should write an article for the E-Newsletter of BETA?

- Please DO! Your contribution may act as a springboard for discussions, inspiration for colleagues or facilitate the work of fellow teachers!

What exactly do you have to do?

If you feel you have something you would like to share:

- Send us your article in MS Word format.
- Send us a photo of you (in jpeg format) and short biographical information (about 50 words) which will accompany your article.
- You will receive feedback from us within 10 days of your submission.
- Please, check the deadlines and the topics of the forthcoming issues. Note that the topics announced are just illustrative; if you would like to submit an article on a different topic, please do. It will be considered for publishing.
- We are looking forward to your contributions.

For further information contact: beta.iateflbg@gmail.com
Notes for Contributors

- Your article must have not been previously published and should not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- The length of your article may vary - short contributions of 300 – 800 words are as good as long ones.
- Electronic submission of your article is preferred to the following e-mail address: beta.iateflbg@gmail.com
- Text of the article: Calibri, 14 points, with 1.5 spacing.
- Headings and subheading: Calibri, 24 points, bold, centred; first letter capitalised.
- Author names and title as well as contact details should be submitted in a separate file accompanying the article.
- About 50 words of biographical data should be included.
- New paragraphs – to be indicated with one separate line.
- Referencing should follow the APA referencing style.
- References in the text should be ordered alphabetically and contain the name of the author and the year of publication, e.g. (Benson, 1993; Hudson, 2008).
- Quotations have to include the relevant page number(s), e.g. (Peters, 2006, p.76).
- Tables, figures or diagrams should be numbered accordingly and included in the relevant part of the text. Each should have an explanatory caption.
- The editors will not return any material submitted, but they reserve the right to make editorial changes.
Established 1991 in Sofia, BETA seeks to build a network of ELT professionals on a national and regional (Southeast Europe) level and establish the association as a recognized mediator between educators and state bodies, public and other organizations.

BETA members are English teaching professionals from all educational sectors in Bulgaria – primary, secondary and tertiary, both state and private. BETA activities include organizing annual conferences, regional seminars and workshops; information dissemination; networking with other teachers’ associations and NGOs in Bulgaria and abroad; exchange of representatives with teachers’ associations from abroad.

We are on the web:

http://www.beta-iatefl.org/

Thank you for your support!