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Dear Readers,

At the end of April, when the spring is in its full bloom outside the window, the natural theme for this issue is transformation. Like nature, we all go through different stages in our effort to form a self, and we often engage in it with others – our students, colleagues, mentors.

Hence, we have prepared for you a bouquet of materials that take different perspectives on transformation. Our first choice is an article by Bill Templer, which explores the potential of two graphic novels for enriching students’ ‘unfolding selves’. We move on to two contributions by practising teachers. First, Alena Chigrinova’s account of an ice-breaking activity she used with young learners. Next, Damyana Grancharova reflects how Searching for truth can transform the traditional classroom, and her reflections are complemented by the unbiased perspective of an observer, Dafina Kostadinova.

We then turn the spotlight on the next stop of Tanya Bikova’s journey through the ELT world – this time her interview is with Philip Kerr, teacher trainer and materials writer.

Still on the topic of journeys and professional development, you can find two conference reports: one on the 8th ELTAM -IATEFL - TESOL International Biannual...
Conference in Skopje, by Irina Ivanova; the other on the recent IATEFL Conference in Manchester, by Zarina Markova.

They are followed by our Swap Shop, where you can meet Sandra Vida with her tips on how to develop students’ listening and speaking skills while listening to Alanis Morissette’s *You Live You Learn*.

As a special treat, we offer you a few moments of delightful transformation: Michael Swan’s *Tiger Dreams* in our Poetry Corner.

As usual, the issue closes with information about forthcoming ELT events.

We hope you enjoy our selection. We look forward to your feedback, suggestions and contributions.

Happy reading!

Zarina Markova, Issue Editor
Great Graphic Novels for Kids: *Kampung Boy* and *Town Boy*

Bill Templer

Learners are often a bit bored with some of what they read in English classrooms. We all know that. As a welcome change, let me recommend two incredibly good graphic novels. Both have simple text: *Kampung Boy* is about a little kid nicknamed ‘Mat’ growing up in a Muslim Malaysian village (*kampung*), his life close to nature, his experiences at school. The sequel, *Town Boy*, follows Mat, moving on to the nearby city as a young teen to attend a boarding school, and all his adventures there, meeting new friends, discovering modern music, falling in love with the enchanting young girl Normah.

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, teaching at VTU, Shumen Univ. for many years and also at the Stopanska Akademiya in Svishtov. Within IATEFL, he is active on the committee of the SIG Global Issues (http://gisig.iatefl.org/about-us). Bill is Editor for Eastern Europe at the *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* (www.jceps.com), and also copyedits for the new CLELEjournal (http://clelejournal.org) on children’s and young adult literature in ELT. He is a widely published translator from German, and a chief translator for the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture (www.dubnow.de) and the Institute for the History of the German Jews (www.igdj-hh.de). Bill is now based as an independent researcher in Shumen. Email: templerbill@gmail.com
They are written by Lat (M. N. Khalid), one of Southeast Asia’s famous illustrators and writers. Lat is the best known and loved cartoonist/writer in Malaysia. The text in these two books, almost like comics but actually pioneering graphic novels, is basic English. The scenes depicted are relevant to kids everywhere growing up; the pen-and-ink illustrations are quite detailed, very funny. These images, which your learners will enjoy, form a good basis for teaching some aspects of visual literacy. There are many questions you could ask about the drawings as kids follow the engrossing story. Mat is in a sense Lat. It is the fictionalised memoir of his own early life (born in a kampung in 1951). The tales are recognized as international classics.

Personally, I really love the book Kampung Boy, and worked with it for several years while teaching in Malaysia. Here is a brief video: <goo.gl/As3FuO>. Kampung Boy is 144 pp., Town Boy 192 pp. Often, the short text is also handwritten by Lat into the drawing. Like a scene from school where Mat is required to stand in front of the class next to his strict teacher Mrs. Hew, while all the other pupils laugh at him. The text reads: ‘But I was rather bad in arithmetic and my work was often shown as a bad example.’ Mat is very good though in art classes.
The language combined with the unique drawings is memorable. Pulverness (2007: 6) stresses that ‘we are more likely to retain new language items when we encounter them in memorable contexts. Extensive reading of stories that are amusing, scary, exciting or romantic offers a wide range of contexts that will make new language easier for learners to recall – and to use.’ All picture books – and especially graphic novels for the young – provide illustrations that children can discuss, interpret and use as a visual stimulus for their own drawings and presentations. Faber stresses:

Considering this generation’s predisposition towards visual input, comics and graphic novels should be recognised to be a useful resource to awaken the students’ interest in literature, to foster their reading and analytical skills and to educate them about narrative strategies and storytelling techniques. (Faber 2014, online)

Looking at graphic novels, Templer (2009) tells teachers it is ‘high time to experiment,’ and touches briefly on Lat’s ingenious work. Kaminski (2013) presents intriguing new findings of a qualitative study with young learners (age 8-9) encountering an English picture book in a German primary school. Bland
reminds us that the story world is a ‘microcosm of children’s culture,’ and that ‘... high-quality children’s literature can help students learn to map the world story by story, while successfully acquiring competences such as visual, literary and intercultural literacy, concurrently with language acquisition.’ (Bland 2013: 5)

My suggestion to Bulgarian teachers: experiment with these two brilliant graphic picture books by Lat in your own classroom. I think your pupils will find them great texts to read and reread, especially Kampung Boy. The books can be found in fairly inexpensive second-hand copies at abebooks, most under US$ 8-9 (<goo.gl/tjtwPr>). Use them in class at high-beginner level or beyond, write up your findings, give a workshop/conference presentation or publish (even here in the Newsletter). School libraries could purchase the book in multiple copies. Ask your director (or inspector) to help find funding for such books. Good picture books are needed in school libraries, local libraries, and yes, in university libraries as well, here in Bulgaria and Southeast Europe—and in many other corners of the shrinking globe. How many simple graphic novels in English does your school library have? I imagine not many. How many comic books? How many really good picture books? Probably few. But this is how you can get kids to enjoy reading, independently, on their own (Templer, 2014).

Useful would be empirical classroom research among Bulgarian and Balkan learners, and in many other countries, about how they respond to these beautifully written and illustrated picture books from Malaysia, little known in this part of the world. Are they effective in improving learners’ knowledge of English, energising their love of reading and sparking new interest in other cultures, customs, lifestyles and religions? Lütge (2013) explores challenging directions in teaching ‘otherness’ and tolerance for difference – ethnic, cultural, social, sexual
and religious – through children’s literature. Most local learners know very little about Southeast Asia or Muslim villagers there. Here is their graphic stepping stone. As in the case of the ancient Chinese tale *The Monster Nian* (Templer, 2015), this is a bridge built of simple fiction to a very different Asian culture: very multiethnic (Malay, Indian, Chinese, indigenous tribal), multireligious (Islam 60%, Buddhism 20%, Hinduism 6%, Christianity 9%) and multilingual, some 140 different languages ([www.ethnologue.com/country/MY](http://www.ethnologue.com/country/MY)) across a country of 30 million. They can also compare with what they know about village life in Bulgaria decades ago and today, what has changed – and what has not (Templer, 2013). In his writing, Lat looks back in warm, sometimes ironic nostalgia to the small *kampung* he grew up in, its simple rhythms, values and traditions, secular and religious, closeness to nature, strong ties to other villagers. These are also texts helpful to build a sense of ‘internationalism’, in Byram’s (2012: 377) sense of international bonding for a more equitable and democratic world, inclusive societies that value creativity and diversity. It is part of the ‘moral education’ of learners that should always be part of the EFL classroom.

Here is one brief review of *Kampung Boy*:

*Kampung Boy* is a favorite of millions of readers in southeast Asia. With masterful economy worthy of Charles Schultz, Lat recounts the life of Mat, a Muslim boy growing up in rural Malaysia in the 1950s: his adventures and mischief-making, fishing trips, religious study, and work on his family's rubber plantation. Meanwhile, the traditional way of life in his village (or *kampung*) is steadily disappearing, with tin mines and factory jobs gradually replacing family farms and rubber smallholders. When Mat himself leaves for boarding school, he can only hope that his familiar *kampung* will still be there when he returns. *Kampung Boy* is
hilarious and affectionate, with brilliant, super-expressive artwork that opens a window into a world that has now nearly vanished. (<goo.gl/G8yQNH> from ‘goodreads.com).

More ‘goodreads’ reviews, often written by young students are here: <goo.gl/0Foa4Q>. Other reviews of Kampung Boy can be found online: <goo.gl/AcZZcz>. Read the excellent review there from Kirkus, a U.S. magazine. Kampung Boy (1979) was republished in the U.S. in 2006 by <firstsecondbooks.com>, and has become quite popular with young Americans. Town Boy (1980) was republished by them in 2007. Firstsecondbooks specialises in graphic novels for readers of all ages, take a look at their fascinating catalogue. One of the outstanding graphic novels they have published is Zahra’s Paradise (2011), set in contemporary Iran (<goo.gl/d4gu0w>) and very highly praised, illustrated by Khalil, here are some pages (<goo.gl/kP6BhW>).

Here is a brief review of Town Boy:

Malaysian teenager Mat makes a life-changing move from the quiet kampung village where he was born to Ipoh, the rapidly industrialising nearby town. Living far from his rural roots at a boarding school, he discovers bustling streets, modern music, heady literature, budding romance, and through it all his growing passion for art. The companion novel to the critically acclaimed Kampung Boy, Town Boy offers more of Lat's delicious storytelling and enchanting pen-and-ink artwork. At once exotic and familiar, his cartoon world builds a bridge for readers into another world, another culture, and another time (<goo.gl/0tEuZC>).
More reader responses to *Town Boy* here: <goo.gl/F3R3pE> Youtube has videos, from a Malaysian TV series (26 episodes) based on and entitled *Kampung Boy*: <goo.gl/6abKMS>. Lat also wrote a picture book *Kampung Boy: Yesterday & Today* (1993): it compares village life in the 1950s with the many changes in the 1980s and 1990s, likewise available at abebooks, low-priced. Learners will enjoy all three volumes. Experiment, you will see.

In Malaysia, the former British colony of Malaya until independence in 1957, English is used a lot in education today, especially at universities and in the bigger cities, and in the national media, such as the daily paper *The Star* (<thestar.com.my>). English is learned from early primary, but today many Malaysians finish secondary school and are not confident with English, especially with speaking skills (Hamid, 2014). The national language is Bahasa Melayu, similar to Bahasa in Indonesia, the main Malay-speaking country. But some Malaysians, especially of Chinese and Tamil Indian origin, speak English at home, along with varieties of Chinese or Tamil. The environment that Lat describes is one where Bahasa Melayu is the main language of the village, the traditional Muslim kampung.
Some Bulgarian teens might even think of studying at university in Malaysia. There are many international students from around the world, studying at very high-quality universities, with relatively low tuition and daily living costs, and with English as the medium in many subjects. At the University of Malaya where I taught several years, we had students from numerous countries, East and West. They really liked UM, Malaysia’s top-ranked university. Based on her case-based study of Bulgarian exchange students abroad, Velikova (2014: 60) notes: their international experiences can be seen as life-changing journeys of learning not only about diverse countries, languages, and cultures, but also about the students’ own unfolding selves [...] the students reported to have acquired greater respect for cultural and linguistic diversity, enriched foreign language repertoire, creativity, enhanced self-efficacy and personal resilience to handle challenges and the pressures they bring.

Studying in Malaysia can be a ‘life-changing journey of learning’ for Bulgarian students, including learning, like Mat does, about their ‘own unfolding selves.’ Learners and their teachers can find out more here: <studymalaysia.com> and <goo.gl/Cdp6Ks>. For starters, watch a brief fun video from Monash University in Kuala Lumpur, where several international and foreign exchange students comment on their life in KL <goo.gl/Mv3Qnp>

Learn more about the author Mohammad Nor Khalid (a.k.a. Lat): <goo.gl/hGri6V>. His boyhood nickname back in the village was ‘Lat’ (‘stocky’), from Malay ‘bulat’ (‘round’). Here are numerous illustrations from his books: <goo.gl/HWlMAj>. In December 2008, Malaysia issued a set of special commemorative postage stamps with drawings, immortalizing Lat’s Kampung Boy and Town Boy, including one of Mat sketching his very strict, exacting teacher Mrs. Hew. Experiment with these
graphic tales and your learners will want more. Learning English can be fun, reading can be life-changing. The curriculum needs fresh graphic air.

References


I have done this activity with a group of children who have been learning English for three years. There are 6 boys and 2 girls in the group. They are quite noisy but very motivated. My students love arts and craft, which helps them to share their likes and dislikes. For this activity I need a ball, flashcards on the topic of activities and hobbies, coloured pieces of paper. The grammar structure you can practise is *I like / don’t like doing* and the corresponding question forms and short answers. I found the game on the internet and adapted it to the level of my students.

Before you start the activity it is necessary to review the target vocabulary. So I started with presenting the flashcards (hobbies and activities). I asked my students to sit on the carpet and I introduced the flashcards by asking them ‘Do you like…..?’ Then we played *What’s missing*, I asked my students to close their eyes and count to ten and while they were counting I took some cards and asked them to guess the missing cards. Then we played *Miming*. I started to mime one of the activities and they had to guess. If they guessed the word, they had to ask me a question starting with *Do you like ...?* and naming the activity I was miming.
question form was written on the board. I answered Yes, I do, if their guess was correct, or No, I don’t, if was not. After this illustration, my students started taking turns and miming some of the activities.

Then I presented them a paper plane. I played music and we all started to make paper planes. I asked my students to write one thing that they like doing and one thing that they don’t like doing on a plane. But I asked them to keep their sentences secret. While they were writing their sentences, I was monitoring to help each student. Next, I gave instructions: ‘In a minute you’ll stand up. When the music starts you will start to fly your planes. When it finishes, you will pick up one of the planes but not yours’. I also mimed the instructions. I show how I fly the plane, then I pick up my own plane and say: ‘Oh no, it’s mine. I don’t want mine. I’ll pick up another one. Then we started the activity. After that my students all took their seats and I gave the next instruction: ‘Look, I have got somebody else’s plane. I don’t know whose plane it is. I have to find the person. I have to ask questions. Can you help me with the question I can ask?’ My students gave me the question and I put it on the board. Then I gave new instructions: ‘In a minute you’ll stand up. You can walk round the classroom and ask the question to find the person whose plane you have got.’ While they were asking the questions I was monitoring. They walked and asked the questions. When they finished, we took our seats and shared the information that they got.

My students really liked the activity. They said that they would like to do it every lesson as we do the question ball. They were all engaged and they got enough practice of the question forms Do you like doing...? and the short answers Yes, I do / No, I don’t. They also reviewed the vocabulary from the previous year and shared some new personal information.
This activity is one of the variants of classical mingling activities. The difference is the paper planes you use to engage young learners more. You can adapt it to different levels. You can ask very young learners to draw some pictures on the plane, on the topic of food, for example. For young learners you can use different grammar structures (for example, *Have you got ...? Can you ...?*) and practise them in a similar way.

Challenging Students while *Searching for the Truth*

Damyana Grancharova

The idea of debating on the *Searching for the truth* issue came as a result from my teaching experience, the school traditions connected to communication with other institutions and their representatives, my students’ needs and requirements, etc.

It has been a real challenge for me to teach physics in English. The atmosphere in class is different from teaching physics in Bulgarian and from teaching English. The students are different. And the role of the teacher who teaches science in a foreign language is
different. I often cooperate with lecturers from the Department of Germanic and Romance Studies (Dr Dafina Kostadinova) and the Physics Department (Dr Kaisheva) at the South West University ‘Neofit Rilski’, with Mrs. Stoimenova and Mrs. Solachka from Blagoevgrad Regional Inspectorate of Education, with the school director, Mrs. Popova, and last but not least, with my students’ parents. They were all invited and attended our event “Searching for the truth” that took place in May 2014.

We all know that nowadays students need a challenge. They want to go deep into a specific problem and then show the others what they know, understand and how competently they can talk about it. They have their own opinions. They feel ready to defend them and debate with others. Proposing something different from a regular physics class in English to the students is always a great idea. In such cases they feel that they are in control, which is very important to young people.

First of all, high-school students want to be treated with respect. They are all a little bit tired of having ‘teacher-talking’ classes. Hence, I decided to do something different if not unusual for our context. The idea of the project came instantaneously: Searching for the truth. In contemporary physics a lot of controversial theories can be seen. One of them is the debate Has a man ever landed on the moon? That was the topic for my last-year debate.

I was really surprised when I saw how many of my students were ready to work after school. They wanted to do research on the Internet: they are a computer generation and they feel comfortable when using the Internet.
Second, students want to compete. They want to win. They want to be the best. I find it quite easy to notice such students in every class. Sometimes I do not even have to propose anything. It is the students who ask me if they can do something different, something that they are interested in. What I notice is that they are really interested in everything that is not in the students’ book. What is more, they love mystery. We all know the enormous effect of magicians on us, the people. Well that is physics! If you study, understand and know physics more than the others, then you are the greatest magician. You can fool everybody. Once, I received an inspiring letter from one of my students that I would like to share:

*Physics is my favorite subject. It became my favorite because of my physics teacher. She was the one who motivated me most. When she was teaching she was speaking with such an inspiration that I could see every formula and every law inside her eyes. That made me really motivated to understand everything and to apply it into experiments. I often asked her if we could do an event – a physics one. She agreed to do a debate, and then we had a physics evening in our school. My classmates often ask me why I like physics so much and what I’m trying to explain to them is that physics is not boring at all – in fact, everything in this world involves physics... Gravity is what keeps us on the ground. Physics is something really special for me. It develops my way of thinking, develops my calculation and analytic skills and helps me understand how everything around me works and gives me the opportunity to organise everything. Physics is a challenge that was given to me by my teacher and I am really glad that I met such a motivated person who showed me the hidden message in physics...*

As a teacher I wanted to challenge my students and see if they were able to use the enormous information on the Internet. My little experiment was to tell them
to do an Internet search and then tell me the websites that they were going to use for the debate. It was not surprising that the first and sometimes the only website that they mentioned was Wikipedia. I realised that I had to start with information regarding ways to tell which sites are trustful and reliable, especially when natural sciences are concerned. I suggested that I helped them but they wanted to do it on their own. I let them. I knew that they would make some mistakes. However, those were their own mistakes and they could learn from them. Sometimes when we try to help and protect students, we make a big mistake ourselves.

Physics evening is an event at our school which occurs once a year. Every year I choose a different topic. Last year I decided to do the debate *Has a man ever walked on the moon?* The students were divided into two teams defending two opposing viewpoints: *A man has walked on the moon vs A man has not walked on the moon.* I gave the students the opportunity to choose which team to be part of. They had 10 days to get ready for the debate. They could use any materials for their presentation. At the end both teams had well-prepared multimedia presentations, posters with graphs and pictures for the audience. The students had 12 minutes to present their completely different views on the subject matter. Then, they had 15 minutes to ask questions to each other. Finally, by filling in a survey, the audience had to decide who was more convincing and choose the winner.

The event was open for both students and parents. I strongly believe that the relationships between teachers, students and parents are vital. The pupils want to show how good they are at school and to make their parents proud of them. Most of the parents are very supporting which has a great impact on students’ learning, behaviour and performance.
Students’ achievements depend on the quality of teaching. Effective questioning and assessment is the key in modern education. Effective teaching is not easy; it requires solid subject knowledge, skills to transfer and apply it in the classroom, diligent preparation for every class, introducing different learning strategies, thoughtful distribution of time between theory and practice. I try to convince my students that they should not be afraid to take risks and to defend their own believes. What makes the whole process more challenging and rewarding is the fact that teaching is done through communication in English.

Teaching is a job for people who are open-minded, ready to listen and learn from students; teachers are not afraid of making instantaneous decisions and students can trust and rely on them. They know that to be a role model in the classroom is so demanding. The great teacher should be a leader, a person who can inspire. Only then will our students inspire us back.
Searching for the Truth: a view of an Observer

Dafina Kostadinova

I have worked as an English teacher for about 15 years now. My practice is connected to teaching English to adults. I am aware of all the advantages and disadvantages of teaching a foreign language. I know how it feels when your students not only demonstrate a good command of English but they do it in the best possible way showing confidence and competence. The event I was invited to proved that teaching and studying English is a rewarding process. Damyana had asked me to listen carefully and take notes of her students’ errors. As usual, I expected errors due to emotions and nervousness, as well as errors typical of Bulgarians speaking English. However, the whole event was held in fluent English. It was remarkable that despite the emotions while taking turns in the debate, the students discussed confidently issues related to physics with all the necessary scientific terminology in grammatically correct English. I must admit that I tried to take notes of the produced errors. Only one girl who was in a hurry to present her opinion within the limited time made 3 mistakes in the word order regarding the indirect questions in English. I believe

Dafina Kostadinova has worked at the South-West University since 2000. She has taught Practical English Classes Integrated Course, Business English, Written and Oral Translation, Specialised Translation, Contrastive Analysis, Global English, Introduction to General Linguistics, etc. In 2012 she defended her PhD Thesis ‘Structural Interferences in the Production of English by Bulgarians’. Email: dafinakostadinova@yahoo.com
that this girl can self-correct if asked. The other participants made some minor mistakes that more or less should be considered as slips of the tongue. As a whole, the students’ performance in English was ‘real English’: no deviations from the norm, grammatically correct production of English, very good speaking skills, etc. At the end of the heated debate we, the audience, had to vote for the team whose idea was more convincingly defended by filling in forms. The winner was the team that supported the idea that man did step on the Moon: they were better at presenting the facts and supporting and defending their views. I must emphasise that both teams spoke English fluently and the audience were happy to be part of this event that turned out to be a celebration of knowledge.
Interview with
Tanya Bikova
Interviews Philip Kerr

Philip Kerr is a teacher trainer, lecturer and materials writer who has been involved in English language teaching for thirty years. His publications include the coursebook series *Straightforward* and *Inside Out*, and the methodology books *How to Write Vocabulary Presentations* and *Practice and Translation and Own-language Activities*.

He lives in Vienna and is a committee member of TEA (the Austrian English Language Teachers’ Association).

Tanya:

Philip, thank you for agreeing to this interview. What attracted you to the field of ELT? In your interview with David Hill, published on the SEETA website, you say: ‘Many of us, after all, became language teachers in the first place because we loved literature.’ I think it might be true for native speakers but non-native English speaking teachers are motivated by other things as well, so is that what really inspired you? Who are your favourite authors?
**Philip:**

My love of literature indirectly led to me becoming a teacher. I graduated with a degree in literature and had no idea what to do next. I became a teacher. I think my story is not so uncommon. It was only after a year or so that I discovered that I actually liked teaching.

My favourite authors? I read relatively little fiction these days, but there are a few writers like Ian McEwan, Jonathan Coe or David Mitchell whose books I read as soon as they are published. But I read a lot of other stuff – linguistics, psychology, history, politics. Right now, I am reading Naomi Klein’s *This Changes Everything*, an investigation into the relationship between climate change and neoliberal economic policies. It is a hard-hitting book, similar in many ways to other books by her like *The Shock Doctrine* and *No Logo*. I thoroughly recommend it.

**Tanya:**

Congratulations on your book *Translation and Own-language Activities* (Cambridge University Press, 2014) being shortlisted for the English-Speaking Union HRH Duke of Edinburgh English Language Book Awards. You talk about ‘the return of translation’ and I agree that we need translation in class even at higher levels occasionally, to illustrate meaning. On the other hand, translation skills need practice from the very beginning. You mention the low percentage of accuracy of Google translator for different languages, which shows that the human factor is still important. At conference presentations, you advise teachers to find out first their head teacher’s view on using L1 in class. My question is who should be the authority to decide when and how to use translation in class?
Should teachers not be the ones to decide guided by the different circumstances or do we need permission or a clear statement of the policy of the Ministry of Education or somebody else?

**Philip:**

I think this is a complex question, and the answer cannot be simple. I do not think it is primarily a question of who *should* or *should not* make educational decisions. The history of education reform around the world is full of examples of top-down (e.g. ministerial) decisions which have failed to have any impact in classrooms because teachers have simply ignored the directives. Some of these decisions have been well-intentioned and well-informed; many others have not been. Teachers are often in a better position than methodologists or ministerial advisors to judge what is appropriate in their classrooms. But at the same time, it must be acknowledged that teachers are generally pretty resistant to change, of whatever kind. Lasting, meaningful changes are only likely to come about when there is a discussion between all relevant stakeholders about the desirability of a particular change. The problem is that there is rarely much dialogue.

The banning of the students’ own language in many teaching contexts is only one example, among very many, of generally accepted teaching orthodoxies which are not backed up by any research. Others which are very important include the teaching of English to very young learners, the use of syllabi which are dominated by discrete-item, sentence-level grammar, or the attempt to tailor instruction to different ‘learning styles’. There needs to be an ongoing, open dialogue between teachers, researchers and ‘authorities’ ... but I do not see this happening
anywhere! In the meantime, teachers have little choice but to nod in the direction of ministerial directives, and to quietly carry on doing what they think is best.

**Tanya:**

At the first IATEFL web conference you said ‘most of the adaptive learning software is not good’, having in mind Rosetta Stone, Duolingo, Babbel, etc. Could you recommend something then?

**Philip:**

I have no problem with flashcard systems, such as Anki or Quizlet, so long as we acknowledge their limitations. On my blog, [http://adaptivelearninginelt.wordpress.com/](http://adaptivelearninginelt.wordpress.com/), I have written about such systems and given practical advice about how teachers can use them. With other systems, including the ones you mention, I would not say that it was a complete waste of time to use them, but the claims that are made are vastly inflated. For example, one relatively new adaptive product, Lingvist, claims that you can learn a language using their software in 200 hours. Learning a language is not easy, and it requires work. Anyone who suggests that there is some sort of magic bullet is, in my view, a charlatan.

Next year (2015), we should start to see some adaptive products from big publishers like Pearson and Macmillan. I’m not especially optimistic about what they will come up with, but let us wait and see.

**Tanya:**
When did you join the Teachers’ Association in your country and SEETA and how long have you been in charge of *Coming Your Way: SEETA Interviews by Philip Kerr*? What experience and emotions has it brought you?

**Philip:**

I have only been living in Austria for a couple of years, and I joined the teachers’ association here as soon as I arrived. Like you, I am on the committee. Before that, I lived in Belgium, where there was not a teachers’ association. Recently, one has been formed (BELTA), they are doing great things, and I was very happy to support them in their first conference. Because so much of my time is now taken up with TEA (the Austrian teachers’ association), I am no longer involved with SEETA. I cannot remember how long I was involved with SEETA. It was since the early days, at any rate. What did it bring me? The same as any involvement in any voluntary teachers’ association: the opportunity to share ideas, a bit of fun from time to time, the chance to meet new people, and to work with these people to promote the things that we jointly care about. It is also refreshing to do things with people like Anna Parisi (at SEETA) who have so much energy and enthusiasm. They can help renew one’s own energy and enthusiasm.

**Tanya:**

Could you name some of the most interesting people you have interviewed?

**Philip:**

I wouldn’t want to single out any of the people who kindly agreed to be interviewed for SEETA. All of them were very interesting in different ways.
I have been lucky to interview a lot of different people over the years. Very recently, I interviewed Neil Selwyn for an online event being organized by the Global Issues and Learning Technologies Special Interest Groups of IATEFL. The event will be taking place in November 2014 and more information can be found about it here: http://www.ltsig.org.uk/ltgisigevent/?p=1. Neil is a researcher at Monash University in Australia, and he is interested in the uses of technology in education. His work is not terribly well known in the world of ELT, but I think it ought to be.

One other interviewee from the past who stays in my mind was Barbara Seidlhofer. It was at the time of the publication of her book *Controversies in Applied Linguistics*. Barbara is probably best known for her work on English as a Lingua Franca, but she has written on many other subjects and she is always worth reading.

**Tanya:**

What is the source of inspiration that keeps you in this job?

**Philip:**

Two things: the people I work with (whether they are students or colleagues) and variety.

**Tanya:**

All teachers have memorable moments in their careers. Do you mind sharing one of them?
**Philip:**

I realize to my horror that I have now been teaching for thirty years, so there have been quite a number of memorable moments. But perhaps one of the most powerful memories is also my first memory of being in an ELT classroom. It was on my first day of working in a lycée on the outskirts of Casablanca in Morocco. There were 45 students in the class, many of whom were only about four years younger than me, and I froze as I began the lesson. I just could not remember what I had planned to do. After a few embarrassing moments of silence, the students began asking me questions (in French) and we then spent the lesson chatting, in French, about music, football and their other interests. With the benefit of hindsight, it probably was not such a bad way to start.

**Tanya:**

What project are you working on now and what are your professional plans for the future?

**Philip:**

I usually have a few projects on the go at any one time. Right now, I am working with Cambridge University Press and Cambridge English Language Assessment on a project connected with their online professional development resource, Cambridge English Teacher [http://www.cambridgeenglishteacher.org/](http://www.cambridgeenglishteacher.org/) . At the same time, I am involved with the development of a new online vocabulary learning program, which will be launched some time next year. Finally, there is a new coursebook project which I am hoping, perhaps over-optimistically, will get seriously underway in the next month or two.
As for the future beyond these projects, I have no idea, really. As long as I can continue to combine teaching and training with writing, I will be happy enough!

**Tanya:**

Do you have hobbies outside the ELT world? Could you tell us something about them?

**Philip:**

After my family and my work, there is not all that much time left for other things. I travel a lot for my work, and enjoy that. I will often add on a few days to a work trip in order to see a bit more of the town I am in. Living in Vienna, I would love to be able to go to concerts and operas much more often. But there is never enough time …

**Tanya:**

Many thanks, Philip!

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This interview was taken on 23.10.2014. Since then, *Translation and Own-language Activities* has won the Best Entry for Teachers of the English-Speaking Union HRH Duke of Edinburgh English Language Book Awards and has been shortlisted for ELTons Innovation in teacher resources.
Irina Ivanova

In the autumn of 2014, I had the privilege to be the official BETA representative at the 8th ELTAM (English Language Teachers’ Association of Macedonia) international conference which was held in Skopje from 31st October to 2nd November 2014. The conference, entitled "Managing teaching and learning - making the most of both worlds", was focused mainly on enhancing teachers' and students' life and organisational skills, but, as it is usual for this kind of event, it hosted presentations on a variety of topics in the field of ELT. The event was attended by speakers and guests from a lot of countries, including the UK, the USA, Serbia, Turkey, Greece, Kosovo, Albania, Slovenia, Croatia,
Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, and Bulgaria.

The Pre-conference event, held at University American College, was a panel discussion on continuous professional development, moderated by Branko Stojanovic from Cambridge University Press Belgrade. The panelists and participants discussed different models of professional development and their applicability to a variety of teaching contexts.

The conference took place at the premises of Cinematique of Macedonia where participants and guests could see some interesting old photos, posters and machines from the early days of Macedonian film making. ELTAM president Elizabeta Hristovska-Iceva opened the conference with the special address of the Macedonian president Gjorge Ivanov to the participants and then gave the floor to V. Colby, USA Public Affair Officer and E. Zaprova, Director of British Council Macedonia.

The first plenary speaker, Suzanne Mordue from British Council Istanbul, spoke about the importance of continuous professional development and the need to "upgrade" to the latest version of teacher, as she had put it metaphorically. She presented the British Council teacher development framework, consisting of 6 levels - starting, newly qualified, developing, proficient, advanced and specialist, and recommended some useful resources and support.
The second plenary talk for the day was given by Kate Mulvey, an English language fellow at the University of Pristina in Kosovo. It focused on alternative assessment and its importance as an option for differentiating assessment practices. The speaker presented different models, common practices and principles of alternative assessment and suggested some ideas for their implementation in class.

The second day plenary sessions were given by George Kokolas from Express Publishing, who spoke about creating conditions conducive to boosting students' brain power, and Rakesh Bhanot from SOL, who gave an interactive session on the nature and the interrelations between teaching and learning. The session concluded with participants putting their thoughts and ideas inspired by the talk in envelopes with an option of sending them to a fellow teacher - an original and inspirational way to make new friends and a create a community of enthusiastic researchers and practitioners.

I tried to attend as many talks and workshops as possible, which was sometimes difficult, given the fact that there were four parallel sessions. I liked the talk by Ivana Bankovic on increasing young learners' reading comprehension by using pattern books, readers' theatre and story mapping, and the idea of increasing students' motivation for extensive reading, which is extremely important at times when children tend to neglect or opt out of reading. Another presentation I found really interesting and useful was "EFL pre-service teacher perspectives on performance assessments" by Anzhela Nikolovska, a lecturer from "Blazhe Koneski" Faculty of Philology. Performance assessment was presented as an alternative to traditional assessment and its advantages in pre-service teacher training were supported by results of a survey with trainees. As it is impossible to
write in detail about all presenters, I would just mention Gregor Pirs and his workshop on creativity in sensory learning, Ljubica Ruzinska and her ideas of "flipping" the classroom by collaborative activities which engage students in the process of learning, and Susan Mordue's talk on the importance of observation as a tool for peer learning and academic management.

I would like to mention the talks of the other Bulgarian participants which also attracted a big audience. Ellie Boyadzieva and Simona Bali talked about myths and beliefs in modern ELT, and more specifically about the inapplicability of the 'learner autonomy' to the practices of the language classroom, and Desislava Zareva shared some good video-making and video-using practices. My talk on own language use, code-switching and translation ended with an interesting discussion with a group of young Macedonian teachers.

Apart from the traditional book exhibition, there was a fundraising stand organised by Vesta Zena, where the participants could try some delicious local food, and a Halloween party and dinner with a prize draw and a parade of Halloween costumes and masks.

Although the conference schedule was very busy, I had a couple of hours for sightseeing in the beautiful city of Skopje. I quite liked the grandeur of statues and the intimate
atmosphere of the old Bazaar, but most of all I liked the young, friendly and enthusiastic teachers and students from Macedonia.

I would like to thank my colleagues and friends from BETA for giving me the opportunity to go the conference.
It is not the destination, but the journey, that matters:
The 49th Annual International IATEFL Conference and Exhibition,
Manchester, 11th-14th April 2015

Here I am standing in front of Manchester Central, looking forward to my third IATEFL conference, armed with a camera, a notebook, a tablet, two memory sticks, a conference brochure, a long list of the sessions I would like to attend, and a bit shorter list of the people I would like to talk to. I am well-prepared, resolute, optimistic. I am going to participate in stimulating discussions, give an engaging talk myself, discuss projects, meet new people, accumulate wisdom ... in short, I will have a great conference! And, just as important, I will write a great conference report as soon as I get home!

Two weeks later I am staring at the computer screen struggling to find the right voice to convey the magic of an event which brought together over 2500 delegates from over 880 countries, and which contained over 500 talks.
workshops, signature events, forums, poster presentations ... to say nothing of the social programme packed with daytime tours and evening events.

Golden Rule # 1: When you are in doubt about how to begin a conference report, start chronologically.

My IATEFL conference started with the Associates Day, which traditionally aimed at networking, training on subjects such as projects, encouraging membership and volunteering and other challenges of mutual interest. This year, David Crystal’s talk ‘You Say Potato’ was a special treat, but the highlight for me was the poster presentation session, in which we had the wonderful opportunity to get to know the work of 13 English teachers’ associations. The day finished with a reception where we were welcomed by Carol Read, IATEFL President, and Susan Cooley, the Lord Mayor of Manchester. Then we, in turn, welcomed Julian Sayarer and Thom Jones, the two cyclists who had covered 1,120 km from Frankfurt to Manchester by bike to raise money for IATEFL Projects.

The grand event, however, started on Monday with an opening address by the President, followed by the first plenary session: Frozen in thought? How we think and what we do in ELT by Donald Freeman. To me this was one of the most thought-provoking talks which still needs mulling over. I will not go into detail – the talk was recorded and is available at https://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2015/session/plenary-donald-freeman - but I am tempted to give the bottom line, especially since it matches my current way of thinking: Our teaching is replete with myths. Myths in themselves are neither right nor wrong, though – it is our task to question them and distinguish between their useful and misleading aspects.

B E T A  E-N e w s l e t t e r  I s s u e  1 6
38 | P a g e
After the official opening of the conference, it was time to make choices, and very often these were difficult ones – I sometimes wished I could split myself and go to at least three simultaneous events. Now, running through my notes, I am glad to see I had my fair list: a balance between ‘names’ and less vocal, less known presenters; native and non-native English speaking teachers; men and women; East and West, Black and White, and the full spectrum in between. It made for a colourful miscellany of opinions, discoveries and achievements - sometimes complementary, sometimes competing. Here is a short description of several sessions, each of them significant to me in a different way:

# 1 and #2 are a workshop and a talk which I was absolutely delighted to discover: Mila Angelova’s *How to make speaking assessment more reliable*, where participants did real-time speaking assessment, and Nataliya Yordanova’s *The challenge: motivation and productive skills through technology*, which described how AVO-Bell-Sofia teachers used virtual learning environment to boost their learners’ productive skills.

# 3 is *Creating intercultural ambassadors through English in Nepal* given by the Regent Scholarship Winner Sagun Shrestha: a case study of how teaching English could foster intercultural awareness, tolerance and active citizenship. I enjoyed this quiet, measured talk given by a modest man with a sense of mission, and I liked even more our conversations afterwards. While I am writing these lines Nepal is still shaking, counting its...
earthquake victims in a spreading natural and humanitarian disaster. I am looking at the present I got – Buddha eyes, the symbol of wisdom – and my thoughts are with Sagun, his family, friends and colleagues. I do hope I will hear from them again.

An interview with Sagun and two of his Nepalese colleagues is available at https://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2015/interview/interview-umesh-shrestha-ushakiran-wagle-and-sagun-shrestha

# 4 is the British Council Signature Event: Identifying and developing the skills and knowledge a teacher needs. Speakers: Tim Phillips, John Tomsett, Ines Kayon de Miller, Anthony Gaughan. What is the nature of teaching? What is quality teaching? What is learner achievement? These were some of the questions raised while the new British Council framework for continuous professional development was being presented. It would be unrealistic to expect one framework to give answers to such complex questions, especially when some of its components seemed more convincing than others, but what resonated with me was the synergy between the panellists, their shared concern for teachers’ well-being and love for the profession. The discussion was a gratifying experience, and I left it with the impression that the participants would keep searching for their own answers to the above questions. To me, the talk raised even more questions. A reiterated statement at the event was that transformation starts from within, but are we not aware that sociopolitical contexts can foster or deter development? What happens when a teacher does not feel a need for professional growth? Do we have the right to impose continuous development? And what happens with a society which does not recognise teachers’ development as a priority?
The BC Signature event can be viewed at https://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2015/session/british-council-signature-event. I would love to hear your thoughts.

#5 and #6 are two plenary sessions connected with the people of Africa: Ann Cotton’s *The justice and imperative of girls’ secondary school education – a model of action* and Harry Kuchah’s *ELT in difficult circumstances: Challenges, possibilities and future directions*. If I had to recommend one IATEFL talk only, it would be either of them. It was both humbling and inspiring to listen to the stories of two visionaries devoted to the cause of education: stories about poverty, deprivation and exclusion, but also about commitment, sacrifice, and, ultimately, transformation. I will pause here to give you some time to watch the recordings. https://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2015/session/plenary-session-ann-cotton https://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2015/session/plenary-harry-kuchah

Informal discussions at a conference are not less important than the formal ones, and IATEFL Manchester certainly offered plenty of opportunities for a chat. Recollecting my conference encounters, I am surprised to discover that I had conversations with people from 29 countries on six continents. They were all fascinating experiences, but there was one that I would like to single out and share with the Bulgarian readers of this report – the conversation with Patsy Lightbown. We were discussing teachers’ engagement with research and comparing impressions and findings when she said ‘Bulgarians are special’.
And she went on to describe how intelligent her Bulgarian students were and how they stood out among the others. This was one of the nicest things I had ever heard from a non-Bulgarian, but it set me thinking. Would Bulgarian students be as praiseworthy in ten years’ time? Could we give them enough incentive not to leave Bulgaria? Would we be able to transform our country so that we could bring our intelligent young people back home? This is a daunting task that needs our joined effort, energy and hope. Will we be able to deal with it?

No conference report can be complete without a description of the social programme. To me two evening events stood out. The first was the British Council-hosted evening, for its excellent organisation, quality wine, impressive venue, and, most importantly, for the pleasurable conversation with Nazli and Mustafa Güngör (INGED Turkey) and Les Kirkham, the outgoing IATEFL Associates Coordinator. The second was the International Word Fest for its intimate atmosphere, the opportunity to enjoy the melody of languages I did not understand and the power of poetic expression.

One more distinctive feature of IATEFL Manchester, which made it markedly different to me, was the great number of voices arguing for paradigm shifts in the profession. I was able to discern two trends: one for boosting creativity in language teaching and learning; the other one for a more even distribution of power - the latter encompassing recognition of the importance of L1 knowledge.
and use, raising the status of the non-native English speaking teacher, raising the status of the teachers themselves through more teacher-friendly access to knowledge, empowering teachers through providing assistance with self-initiated, teacher-led research. All these complex issues have been part of the profession for quite a while and only time will tell if critical mass for real transformations will be achieved, but even if it is not, the generated discussions will certainly broaden the spectrum of English language teaching and learning.

All in all, my 2015 IATEFL Conference was thought-provoking, exciting, memorable. I saw a lot; I learned a lot. And I missed a lot. I wish I could have followed some discussions more closely, but I was limited by time and space. I stacked these discussions in my collection of unattended talks and events, my anticonference (1). Does this anticonference represent the person I would like to be, or the one I would be, if I did not have to be what I am now? These thoughts bring me back to Donald Freeman’s plenary and his concluding remarks on the virtue of not knowing. Shall I ever find the balance between the known and the unknown, the knowable and the unknowable? Shall I reconcile myself to the thought that we can never learn the right answer? It is not the destination, but the journey, that matters. Or is it?

- - -

My deepest respect to all the IATEFL volunteers for the brilliant organization of this unique event. I would like to thank BETA-IATEFL for the financial support which made my participation in the 49th IATEFL Conference possible.

Swap Shop

Alanis Morissette: You live you learn

Sandra Vida

Level:
Pre-intermediate, Intermediate, Upper intermediate

Usually, I do this song quite early on in the school year. It sets a good basis for the learning environment and offers a new perspective on learning.

Step 1
Ask students if they like learning. I have only had rare students answer yes to this question so it is only natural to ask them also why they feel so negative about learning, how do they learn, where and when. Ask also how often they learn. If you have a very big group, you might want them to do this in smaller groups. Depending on the class, I sometimes tell them that by the end of this lesson, they will feel completely different about learning. This often triggers their attention, because they (as teenagers do) want to prove me wrong.
Step 2
Tell students to listen to the song very carefully and write down any words they catch and understand. I warn them beforehand that the first 2 lines are the most difficult and that they shouldn’t get discouraged by them. This task is good from more points of view:

- Students need to practice their listening skills and keep listening even if it is hard. Very often, my students just stop trying if they judge the text too difficult.
- Very often, they understand words but do not know how to write them. They sometimes get quite creative at this point. Fortunately, it is mistakes like this that we learn most from.
- Students see how an accent can lead them astray into thinking they hear something completely different from the actual lyrics. They hear words that are not in the text at all or misinterpret them. (they think they hear ‘hi’ instead of ‘I’ and similar)

Do not forget to praise them at this point for sustaining their concentration despite the difficulty of the task.

Step 3
Ask students if they managed (even if that was not the task) to understand what the song is about. Then go through the lyrics together, starting with the chorus, but after each line, you ask them specifically about their experiences. For example:

You cry, you learn – ‘Have you ever cried in your life? If not – Have you seen other people cry? Why? Did you learn anything from it?’
You love you learn – ‘Have you been in love? What did you learn from it?’
I usually give a lot of emphasis on the last line (You ask you learn) and point it out that they only rarely ask questions and that school has somehow managed to teach them that asking is not ok. I stress the fact that it is their duty to ask when they do not understand something.

Step 4
Go back to the beginning of the lyrics. Ask them why they think she recommends all those things. The answer is always ‘because you learn something from it’. If they ask or do not know what exactly you learn, set it as homework to try and report in the next class.

At the end of a lesson, ask them again, if they like learning and how often they do it.

The song and its lyrics are available at http://lessonswithmusic.com/alanis-morissette-you-live-you-learn/#more-509
Tiger Dreams

Michael Swan

Girl
one day
you will meet a tiger.
You and the tiger
face to face.

What will you do?

I know you.
You will hold out
to the tiger
on your bare hand
a small globe
spinning,
throwing light at all angles.
And you will tell the tiger your dreams,
and a special thing
that only you know.
And the tiger will come close,
press her muzzle to you
– if she were not a wild creature
you would swear
it was a kiss.
And in her turn
she will tell you a secret.

For a long time
you will share each other’s eyes.

You will go away
pad, pad, pad;
and when no one is looking
you will wash your fur
with your rough tongue.

And the tiger
will tell your dreams
to her babies.

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Michael Swan’s poetry collections
‘The Shapes of Things’ and ‘When They Come for You’
can be obtained through his website
http://www.mikeswan.co.uk/poetry/
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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
13th ELTA Serbia Conference
A TASTE OF 21ST CENTURY TEACHING

15th-16th May 2015

Singidunum University Belgrade

Online learning
Communication
Flipped classroom
Technology
Gamification

Plenary speakers: Deborah Healey, Hugh Dellar, Paul Dummett, Rob Dean, Rakesh Bhanot, Biljana Radić-Bojanić, Pedro Moura

http://elta.org.rs/2014/12/02/13th-ela-conference/
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 capitalized.
- 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, 2006:76).
- 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!

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ISSN 1314-6874