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Dear reader,

The January-February issue of the BETA-IATEFL E-Newsletter (no. 39) brings us insightful papers full of practical ideas for our classrooms, some suggestions for introspection and a refresher of the methods we apply every day. This issue's finale presents two inspirational accounts of past conferences.

Bill Templer's paper is once again a treasure trove of useful practical advice and all sorts of materials, neatly tucked into a comprehensive article. Full of directions, his contribution could be of use to teachers of English at any level (A1/2 but also B1/2) and in virtually all circumstances. The ideas we are provided with are ready to use and one can tailor them easily for one's own specific needs. I personally plan to use *Hard Earned* in my writing classes, as part of the English Practice we teach in English Philology and similar majors at Plovdiv University. Find out more about Exploratory Action Research and Pizza in Bill's paper.

Through case studies Mariya Neykova presents an approach to teaching methodology that can prepare future teachers and make them take a confident step into their own classrooms. This paper discusses how to react in – or think/evaluate/prepare for – different situations that can occur in any classroom. Mariya presents two case studies and explores the literature on the subject.
Frankly, as teachers we often have to expect the unexpected, so thank you Mariya!

Students should be encouraged to use their super tech powers for good! According to Milka Hadjikoteva they should not necessarily separate school work and entertainment at any cost but find a way to enjoy the work they have to do. She provides a theoretical background against which she then presents different educational tools, platforms, websites, devices, applications, games, etc. to help us put theory into practice.

Last but not least, you will find some reminiscences from Gergana Georgieva and Yordanka Nikolova who represented BETA at two important events. Gergana will tell you all about the 10th ELTAM International Conference, held on 19-21 October 2018 in Struga, Macedonia, and Yordanka – about the 27th International IATEFL Poland Conference. Hopefully, you will enjoy the accounts of their visits! And there are photos, too!

Please note that there are some changes in style and heretofore the E-Newsletter will be strictly following MLA 8th edition. You will find other minor points in the Notes for Contributors section.

I believe that in this issue you will find ideas for further research, advice you can trust and information to keep you up-to-date, presented by seasoned professionals, frequent contributors and dear colleagues. Feel free to get inspired and send us your work, presentation of classroom experience or project! Or why not send us a letter to let us know what you thought about some of our recent
papers? Publications and commentaries, as well as inquiries, should be sent to the Editorial team at betaiatefl.publish@gmail.com.

Happy reading!

Issue Editor

Polly Petcova
Teaching an Award-Winning Aljazeera Docu-Film Series, HARD EARNED, on the Real Lives of Five Working-Class American Families

Bill Templer

Introduction

The present paper centers on teaching an award-winning documentary film in six parts (a total of some 285 min. viewing time), aired by Aljazeera (AJ) in 2015 and

Source: https://tinyurl.com/y45mowvb Aljazeera

Bill Templer is a Chicago-born applied linguist and translator, with teaching/research interests in ELF, American literature, critical pedagogy, Jewish history and minority studies. He has taught English/German at universities in 10 countries, including in the Bulgarian cities of Shumen, Veliko Turnovo and Svishtov. Bill is on the GISIG/IATEFL Committee (gisig.iatefl.org), is active in TaWSIG, and on the Board of www.jceps.com. He is based as independent researcher in eastern Bulgaria.

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readily accessible online: >Hard Earned<. It suggests teachers could also do some Exploratory Action Research (EAR) on student responses, gathering empirical data. *Hard Earned* provides a deep authentic look into the working lives of five different low-income US families trying to ‘get by’ in difficult circumstances. Much memorable dialogue, strong visuals (that students can describe) and often gripping narrative, everyday colloquial language. The series takes a singularly penetrating look at whether the American Dream is still alive and well in the 21st century post-recession America. We can also do Exploratory Action Research: how do students respond, what do they actually learn, how much does it improve their listening proficiency, their lexis, spoken syntax, hearing working-class Americans talk about their experience-as-lived, the daily struggles they are involved in? These are genuine topics for empirical research. Here is a brief introduction to the series and each episode. Here a 1-min. trailer and background material about the series, online here in full.

This is a docu-filmic, real-life study unit for students at mid- and upper Intermediate level (B1/2), but also beyond, and even at lower A2 level, selecting smaller excerpts: like this of server Emilia in Chicago or that of mall sweeper Percy’s Black family in Milwaukee. It can serve as an online approach that stresses Extensive and Free Voluntary Listening (EL/FVL) and EV (Extensive Viewing) to improve language skills. It will also stimulate more curiosity about realities for ordinary Americans talking about their dreams, hardships, “living paycheck to paycheck.” AJ notes: “*Hard Earned* follows five families around the country to find out what it takes to get by on $8, $10, or even $17 an hour. The series turns an intimate lens on a group of 21st century American dreamers. They fight against all odds to thrive, when it takes everything they have to simply survive.”
The unit is integral to American Studies and socio-economic realities in the US today. Thinking about the issues and questions this topical documentary film series raises, such as student debt, is also relevant for civics, Граж. Об. and discussion about equality, inequality, social justice for the many — issues important in democratic education everywhere. What is resilience, how people toughen up, learn to cope and ‘make ends meet.’

Moreover, it will be intriguing to discover and discuss how young Bulgarian students often dreaming of building a new life abroad after emigration westward perceive these daily realities of survival among working-class Americans. Such a series can also be used in advanced writing classes and EAP to encourage students to write on (as essays or in journal form) what they see and sense, and read about in supplementary articles (some hyperlinked below). A brief section in the paper deals with ‘empathy’ and how it can be honed in teaching EFL as a powerful prism for understanding others, their experienced-as-lived: in this case learning to >empathize< with the people whose stories are presented here. You really get to know them.

Students can be more energized to explore podcasts, films and the other wealth of material that is highly authentic and available online. Extensive Listening (EL)/Free Voluntary Listening (FVL) and Extensive Viewing (EV), and also Free Voluntary Surfing (FVS, one of Krashen’s terms, see below) need to be inventively fostered as a core component of students’ e-lives.
Introducing **Hard Earned**

The link to all six episodes is directly above. The first episode, THE AMERICAN DREAM, begins with this text, spoken by a narrator: “Companies have had to lay off 1000s of workers. People can’t afford to keep up with the cost of housing and food. Five families work low-wage jobs in 21st-century America. At work and at home, they look for the strength to keep going.” [Voices speak:] “You don’t retire * My family’s looking at me * It feels like there’s no way out * Medical bills * Student loans * Daycare * Credit cards” Narrator: “Can these Americans, young and old, afford to dream when it’s hard enough just to survive?”

**Episode 1: THE AMERICAN DREAM**

The series begins at a restaurant, Rosangela’s Pizzeria, in Evergreen Park, a suburb on the far south side of metro Chicago. We meet the server/waitress Emilia Stancati, aged 50, born in Italy in 1965, emigrated to Chicago at the age of 10, and begin to hear her story, here an excerpt. She speaks fluent English with a working-class Chicago accent. But when Emilia first came to Chicago, she didn’t know English, just Italian, like many young immigrant kids. Her job waiting on table is strenuous; she works in Rosangela’s just one day a week, because hard to get full-time at such a restaurant where jobs are so coveted. Where does she work full-time? On a personal note: I was born and grew up in Chicago’s North Park, 27 miles from Emilia’s Italo-American neighborhood, a big city indeed. On Google Maps, students can find Chicago, locate Evergreen Park (and North Park).
We hear from Emilia and then are introduced to Takita, a young Black American girl. She works at Walgreen’s in downtown Chicago, a huge drugstore chain. A drugstore in the U.S. can be almost like a supermarket, selling many things, not just medicines. We meet Akita’s boyfriend De Jaun (DJ). Students can describe what they see. Sections can be repeated. Then we meet Jose working near Washington, D.C. He is Latino.

Teachers can watch the episode and see what is more understandable. What less clear. Students will not understand everything said, but this can be experimented with. Sections can be stopped and repeated. The episode ends with a strike at Walgreen’s: Strike for 15!. Students will learn more about that demand growing across the US, a minimum wage of $15 an hour. The federal minimum wage is at least $7.25, and in some states, cities the minimum wage is higher. In a few cities now, after a struggle, it has been recently raised to $15. Many employers oppose this wage hike. Why is the first episode titled >The American Dream<, a central core of the American national mythology? Students can discuss, write about this animated film on the AmDream’s collapse. The film is entertaining, critical, 8.9 mil. views!

**Exploring the full series**

The second episode is ROCK BOTTOM. Hilton, an immigrant from Mexico, works for Google in California, and his life is introduced. What does ‘rock bottom’ possibly mean, as in the expression: “we hit rock bottom”? The third episode is
MINIMUM WAGE. The fourth is DREAM DEFERRED, here an excerpt from *Percy’s family* in Milwaukee. The fifth is FIGHT FOR FIFTEEN, centering on union wage struggle, such as the movement >Fight for $15<. The sixth and final episode is NEW BEGINNINGS. Here a synopsis of all six episodes. Teachers can work their way into the series and decide how to use. Perhaps students will concentrate on just one episode. Others will get curious and want see several episodes. Maybe students could be divided into groups of three/four, and they concentrate on watching one episode and then reporting to the class on what that saw, learned, could and couldn’t understand. There are a multitude of options and angles teachers can experiment with. Students will surprise you with their responses.

This article cannot provide lesson plans but teachers can themselves work something up (see below). It is also possible to concentrate on the story of one of the five families, because they reappear in each episode. Emilia’s story is compelling, for example. And she speaks very clearly, and stands alone. These are visual/sound texts with great diversity in speech, visuals, people’s everyday lives and problems, their dreams. Many specific facts are related as well, about the US economy. About hardships like student loans, because tertiary education has become so expensive in the US. Students should learn to write down these ‘facts,’ try to remember a few. They can also discuss 34 series photos. Very convenient is that learners can watch these videos on YouTube at their own leisure, can themselves learn to listen, repeat sections harder to understand. Find favorite sequences. And begin to empathize with these real people. An interesting exercise is to ask students to imagine how these people’s lives are today, four years after the film was made. Students could roleplay being interviewed by Aljazeera on a
return visit, as a person in *Hard Earned*, 2019. What has changed for the better, the worse? How has life changed, the US changed since 2015?

**Honing student empathy as a lens of discovery**

This animated lecture by Australian philosopher Roman Krznaric, “*The Power of Outrospection*” (2012) is worth presenting in depth as a discussion focus after students have familiarized themselves somewhat with aspects of *Hard Earned*. It is a superb introduction, highly thought-provoking, to the need for compassionate understanding and empathy in everyday life, moving toward what Krznaric envisions as a “revolution in social relationships.” To complement that, in interview, Kieran Donaghy of IATEFL and the Visual Arts Circle stresses how reading fiction can teach us *all* to *empathize* better in our lives, social awareness, why empathy is so central in ELT, both for students and teachers to develop. Students should also read and discuss Donaghy’s paper at the IATEFL (2017) Brighton conference, “Empathy in ELT: stepping into your students’ shoes.” It also has useful questions like “How would you feel if you were X”? — a character in a story, a film, like the characters in *Hard Earned*. And provides numerous A-1 references for pursuing ‘empathy’ further.
Extensive listening (EL)

Here an introduction to EL, which is vital for students to improve their understanding of spoken English, and of course their proficiency more broadly. Work on using *Hard Earned* can be seen as a component in student EL and Free Voluntary Listening (FVL). This another good introductory article on Extensive Reading and Extensive Listening. Alan Maley (2018) is *must-reading* on Extensive Reading (ER). Templer (2012) discusses both ER and EL. Students should begin to listen to a range of genres of spoken text online, even on their smartphones, including American stories at VOA LearningEnglish, and podcasts on lots of topics at CBC in Canada and BBC.

Model mini-lesson plans

Perhaps teachers could adapt some sections of the material for working with students on a very focused *mini-lesson plan*, just a few minutes of one of the episodes: *like Emilia* at work, or this excerpt (great!) with Emilia getting an offer to speak about substance abuse, and this from *Percy’s Black American family* around the table in Episode 4. This might be workable even for students at A2 level, young or older. One good source to give you ideas on drafting such a film lesson plan is Kieran Donaghy’s site Film English. Another is the Visual Arts Circle. A third is Cinema Inspirations, with lesson plans submitted in a competition GISIG/MAWSIG organized in 2018; excellent as a model is Helen Strong’s detailed lesson plan on the film trailer for *Ten Billion*. Also a model are eLesson Inspirations archived at the GISIG site.
Engaging in collaborative EAR

The Smith/Rebolledo (eds.) Handbook for EAR Exploratory Action Research is certainly a possible framework, preferably working with a few other teachers, as Richard Smith suggests in his excellent introduction on video (76 min.) to EAR: Part I and Part II. Such research can be imagined and implemented in a hands-on, hearts-on approach to teaching, experimenting with multiple aspects of Hard Earned. See also Smith’s Champion teachers: stories of exploratory action research.

Richard Smith gave an introductory webinar in 2018 on >Exploratory Action Research< for UNRWA teachers in Gaza, at the invitation of the superb Hands Up Project. Here Part 1 and Part II. See Slimani-Rolls and Kieley (2018), Exploratory Practice for Continuing Professional Development. An Innovative Approach for Language Teachers, a new EP book; cf. also Judith Hanks on Exploratory Practice. Smith et al. (2016) explore ideas about “innovative, teacher-friendly publishing of practitioner research” (see also Online Research Communities and Anne Burns on action research [AR]). Needed are Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs) that you can form locally, or online, energizing robust Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Building that especially from the bottom-up. This superb site also has links to 103 Resource books accessible as pdf download that the BC has issued — such as Language for resilience: Cross-disciplinary perspectives — 59 Milestone publications, 53 Research papers, some Masters dissertations and other such materials, an A-1 research cyberlibrary. You can do EAR, present findings to BETA & beyond.
**E-life research**

One excellent new paradigm is Violeta Jurkovič, “Online informal learning of English through smartphones in Slovenia.” *System*, 80, February 2019, 27-37. It is an outstanding exemplar of grounded empirical research on student *e-life* in a Balkan country, accessible online. Watching and discussing *Hard Earned* as a docu-film is also part of *e-life*. Learner and teacher *e-life* are crying out as a crucial focus for EAR and grassroots empirical practitioner inquiry in the tangled jungles of TEFL research.

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**Income data on US working life**

Students can read and discuss this article, and compare with the situation elsewhere, and in their own country, about how much an average waitress earns in the US, also presented [here](#). Percy in Episode 4 earns $8 an hour (near minimum wage) as a shopping mall sweeper. This on income inequality in the US, and this on poverty stateside. Students can compare with income levels in Bulgaria. What about teachers’ salaries in the US? — see also [this](#) and data by separate states. Students can compare states and wonder: if you were a teacher looking for a new job in the US, where might you go? Oklahoma? Alaska? Students can also explore GlassDoor to compare salaries for a whole range of jobs, lower-wage and better: dentists, airline pilots, janitors, electricians, computer technicians, dishwashers and other professions. Students can search for some profession of their choice and see the result regarding salary for the big city of Atlanta. They can wonder about the equivalent for the same job category in...
Bulgaria, and perhaps research that online. As mentioned earlier, this on the Fight for $15. Students can also compare *Hard Earned* with another Aljazeera documentary series (2014): *In Between in California*. Here => further resources from AJ on issues such as ‘student debt’. And as above recommended, supplement by discussing the *American Dream’s Collapse*.

**Through a critical economist’s lens**

As a broader framework to combine with *Hard Earned* as a study unit, Prof. Richard Wolff can give teachers and students unique insight into the economic problems in the US and elsewhere, aspects of our “dysfunctional economy.” Here a brief talk on unemployment. This an excellent Rick Wolff lecture on “Economic Justice, Sustainability and Transition Beyond Capitalism.” His website: [Democracy at Work for Economic Justice](http://www.democracyatwork.org) is also very stimulating, with ‘worker co-ops’ as a focus, here one brief animation. Prof. Wolff’s website [Economic Update](http://www.economicupdate.com) is great to explore. This is also a mode of EL/FVL, and FVS: there are now 190+ Rick Wolff videos online.

**Free voluntary surfing**

In July 2007 Stephen Krashen published an online article in *UFLT 3(1) “Free Voluntary Web-Surfing”* (pp. 2-9), strongly promoting what he terms FVS (Free Voluntary Surfing) as an approach to a new Internet pedagogy in TEFL that, in some ways like Free Voluntary Reading, is neglected. He notes: “The best use of
the computer, given today’s technology, may be the most straightforward: Free Voluntary Surfing, simply encouraging EFL students to wander through the internet and read what interests them, following their interests from site to site, and from site to print” (p. 5), and presents a strong case for encouraging and empirically researching “FVS and Language/Literacy Development.” Read that article and apply Krashen’s insights and suggestions on FVS in the context of working with Extensive Viewing and Free Voluntary Listening as cousins of Free Voluntary Reading.

Pizza anyone?

And to close, if you watch Episode 1 THE AMERICAN DREAM, it begins with a visit to Emilia working as a server four years ago in Rosangela’s in metro Chicago: again one clip of her at work. Here a brief 2017 video report on this famous restaurant: you can see them making great pizza, discussing the restaurant with the same owner Jack Pesce. Students will enjoy the pizza’d scenes, contrasting with the Hard Earned themes of struggle. This is Chi town, people relaxing no matter what, taking a tasty break. Yet Emilia is not around, maybe she still works one shift a week there, maybe not. What do students think? She’s one tough lady.

Source: https://tinyurl.com/yxw84e9u Aljazeera
How it All Started: 
Teaching Through Case Studies in an FLT Methodology Course

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Modern education in foreign language teaching methodology is expected to bridge the gap between knowledge acquired at university and its implementation in the classroom. In their quest for interactive forms of learning, teachers explore various methods and approaches, among which case-based teaching stands out as a form of learning by doing, within which theoretical knowledge is applied to solve concrete problems. It is impossible to cover the vast array of problematic situations in which a foreign language teacher might be involved at work. What is quite possible, though, is to prepare the students for the most common types of disruptions of classwork, so that they will be able to transfer their knowledge and skills to the concrete situations they have to cope with and react adequately and efficiently.
Case studies in the sphere of pedagogy

Teaching through case studies involves active learning which guarantees a deeper understanding of the issue at hand and longer durability of knowledge, i.e. the period in which the acquired knowledge is retained in the memory and used in the process of reasoning. The implementation of theoretical knowledge to solve a concrete problem enhances the durability of knowledge and serves as a basis for the positive transfer of skills, techniques and strategies from one context to another.

Traditionally, the problematic situations a teacher has to deal with are divided in two groups (Figure 1): (1) related to the cases of disruptive behavior in class or to deficiencies; (2) related to language learning. Such a division is largely subjective since the two groups merge and overlap and very often the solution of a discipline problem has a beneficial effect on the student’s overall performance in class.

**Figure 1.**
Undoubtedly, prospective language teachers benefit a lot if case studies of both types are incorporated in their training programme. Initially, the case studies are formulated by the lecturer but at a later stage this responsibility may be delegated to the students who can draw on their personal experience as students or even as teachers.

When designing case studies, their underlying characteristics should be taken into consideration. Georgiev (2011) defines case studies as follows: (1) Case studies tell real stories; (2) These stories are told differently by different teachers and by the same teachers at different times; (3) The type and the subject of the case study determine the final decision; (4) For some case studies the decision is definitely one, and for others there may be multiple decisions; (5) The decision may be predictable or there might be an arbitrary decision/decisions; (6) In some cases, importance is attributed to the final result and the conclusions that follow, while in others importance is attributed to the effect of the discussion itself; (7) In addition to providing knowledge on the subject, the case study method is designed to create teamwork habits with all the ensuing consequences for the learner’s education, future practice and social life (cf. Georgiev, 2011: 13).

Interaction and group work are an intrinsic part of teaching through case studies. Discussions are essential for the process of evaluation of the problematic situation and for the final decision. As Vesselinov points out, access to information does not guarantee education and intellectual growth, since knowledge and skills are mastered in dialogue (cf. Vesselinov, 2018).
Sample case studies

Sample 1

Description

In an English language class of fourth graders there is a new student. The boy often tries to talk to his classmates and distract them from their tasks. He does not complete the assignments given by the teacher. When asked to read a sentence in English, he distorts the words intentionally, making his classmates laugh. As a result, they cannot concentrate on the exercises. The teacher takes the boy to the headmaster, insisting that his parents come to the school immediately.

Comment

Calm, low-stress atmosphere is believed to be a major factor for effective learning and foreign language learning is no exception. Still, even when a teacher has achieved the balance between friendliness and control, there might be a disruption of some kind like the one described in the case study. The issue has to be addressed in order to help the new student adapt to the working atmosphere in class.

The manner in which the students are reprimanded matters a lot, so a teacher needs to choose the way and time for that very carefully. Lavery (2009) suggests ways of “telling off” students without confrontation, e.g. by using non-verbal
signals first. If this does not work and the teacher has to reprimand the student, they should do it with great care, e.g. they should make an effort to keep calm, be fair, avoid empty threats, etc.

**Sample 2**

**Description**

Mr. Nadal is 72. He is Spanish and he studies English in a class for senior citizens. He is a very diligent student, he makes a lot of effort to learn the language but he has a serious hearing problem. The teacher does not feel that she should accommodate her teaching style, so as to help Mr. Nadal practice listening and do the listening exercises effectively.

**Comment**

For a senior citizen, enrollment in a language course is both a learning and a social experience. It is a good excuse to go out and meet people who they share the same interests and problems with. Usually the atmosphere in such a class is friendly and relaxed, and the students are motivated to study. Still, some of them might have age-related health issues, e.g. poor hearing or eyesight, which should be addressed with care and consideration.

There are various ways to support students with impaired hearing in a foreign language class. Donaghy (2016) suggests effective techniques for accommodating “the aging ear”, e.g. repeating, adjusting the volume for the listening exercises,
speaking clearly and looking at the students while speaking, so that they can make use of lip-reading, etc.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that the method of teaching through case studies provides the prospective foreign language teachers with a powerful tool for dealing with difficult situations in their professional life. Problems regarding disabilities, discipline or language learning cannot be completely avoided. What a teacher should be prepared for is how to address the needs of their students promptly, respectfully and efficiently.

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лингводидактологията в пространствено-времевата ситуация на ХХІ век. Към читателя. Чуждоезиково обучение, том 45, кн. 1, 7-8. София]
The Role of Foreign Language Learning Applications and Websites in (E-)Learning English as a Foreign Language

Milka Hadjikoteva

Advances in information technology have influenced the way a foreign language is mastered. From a very early age children learn how to play games online and later on many spend most of their time on the net, using social networks to chat. However, they tend to communicate mainly in their mother tongue. They strictly separate what they are taught at school and what they do in their spare time. In fact, it is possible to encourage them spend at least some time on their own being enjoyed by practising a foreign language, especially English. There are numerous websites which provide edutainment, associating education with entertainment. Edutainment may be regarded as the modern form of e-learning, encouraged by teachers and efficient for learners especially in the area of mastering English as a foreign language.

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Over the years e-learning has proved its suitability for all age groups and all levels of language competence (Neykova 2015). As a form of e-learning, blended learning creates the necessary conditions for alternating in-person classroom interaction with asynchronous electronic distance learning with no prevailing importance of one context over the other (Neykova 2014). Through the integration of the traditional classroom environment with the electronic learning environment, students can benefit from the advantages of electronic learning and the traditional classroom methods of foreign language teaching (Neykova 2013). In addition, mobile technologies contribute to the formation of a learning context which stimulates asynchronous self-paced learning (Neykova 2018). Using foreign language teaching websites may be regarded as part of blended learning since it provides additional opportunities for autonomous learning.

J. L. Holland’s theory of personality types (1973), based on research in higher education, recognizes the existence of various personality types and leads to the conclusion that learners’ potential to expand their knowledge and develop their skills in a foreign language is better catered for whenever the congruence between their personal and occupational characteristics is higher. This conclusion may be applied to both young learners and adults, having in mind that they have different interests and preferences how and when to learn. It is essential that learners should be encouraged to study according to their preferences and at their own pace. Undoubtedly, today most learners would prefer to use the advances of technology and make use of their wearable devices.

Nowadays there are numerous possibilities for high quality online communication carried out on e-learning platforms. Some of them are ready-made, e.g. Moodle,
or designed by an educational institution, e.g. the NBU E-Platform in Teaching Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes (Stambolieva et al. 2017a). E-learning platforms offer opportunities for both individual and collaborative work, for self-study and peer teaching, etc.

FLL websites for educational purposes also tend to increase in number and type. Many educators find them invaluable because they may be used without any restrictions imposed on the practice process. Students may use their wearable devices, including mobile phones, tablets, etc. which allows for a full control over the place, the pace and the time of practice. As regards FLL websites, there are numerous useful ones targeted both at young children and adult learners.

Many young learners of English have already been well-acquainted with a number of applications of games they have already played for fun. Examples of such applications are 4pics1word and Akinator (Hadjikoteva & Neykova, 2017). 4pics1word is an educational game played by millions all over the world. It seems simple to play it because the four pictures appearing on the screen have a word in common. However, it takes much knowledge and ingenuity to guess it. The game helps enrich vocabulary, boost thinking and develop observation skills. Akinator aims to develop the skills of asking questions, a major difficulty for learners at lower levels of English as a foreign language.

Consequently, the use of FLL websites makes the practice of English as a foreign language fun. The atmosphere is relaxed and the learners may acquire knowledge and skills in a way different from the one in their classrooms. FLL practice may function as a supplement to face-to-face education. EFL learners benefit because
they use their computers or wearable devices which they feel at ease with and practise English at the same time. The result of blending e-learning or m-learning and traditional classroom education is beneficial for the learners in a number of ways, especially boosting their confidence, encouraging their own initiative and nurturing their enthusiasm.

Today m-learning is rapidly gaining popularity in the sphere of foreign language practice. New Bulgarian University has already integrated m-learning in the courses of English as a foreign language since there is an increasing number of language learning applications and websites designed by institutions and publishing houses with long-standing traditions in the development of FLT coursebooks and resources. Students are enthusiastic about using ELL websites because they can easily see its potential for their academic, professional and personal development (Hadjikoteva & Neykova 2017).

There is a huge variety of mobile applications and websites for foreign language practice and learners may be guided to choose the ones which would best meet their needs. They can easily master their listening, reading and writing skills, improve pronunciation, enrich knowledge about grammar and vocabulary and even practise translating sentences. By using mobile applications and ELL websites learners become more confident speakers as well. They have to cope with a number of factors while speaking (Hadjikoteva 2017) which may prevent them from a successful performance. Mobile applications may be used to boost learners’ self-confidence and provide them with opportunities to drill and practise. Practice-oriented applications like English Grammar in Use, Raymond Murphy and LearnEnglish Grammar (UK Ed.), British Council are free to use and install
(Hadjikoteva & Neykova 2017). The former has been designed as a mobile application used not only as a supplement to the main coursebook in an English language class but allowing students to work at their own pace in a relaxed, low-stress atmosphere but for self-study as well. The latter, *LearnEnglish Grammar (UK Ed.)*, British Council, aims to improve grammar skills. Learners at any level may practice to rearrange words to form sentences, group words into categories, drag and drop the correct word, etc. It is possible to get instant feedback whether the answers are correct. Thanks to it students may develop test-taking strategies, since it is possible to time oneself.

Translation-oriented websites and applications like *Glossika* ([https://ai.glossika.com/](https://ai.glossika.com/)) and *Memrise* ([https://www.memrise.com/](https://www.memrise.com/)) provide free of charge practice of over twenty languages, including English. *Glossika* may be used anywhere on any wearable device. It stresses communication with confidence in real-life situations. Its algorithm automatically adjusts to a learner’s level, pace and schedule. There are various topics to choose from like dining, travel, social life, etc. *Glossika* provides mainly audio training, developing listening, pronunciation and translation skills. By translating and repeating whole chunks of language, learners get confident to respond in various situations which helps developing their speaking skills as well. *Memrise* free version offers over 200 language combinations, allowing to learn and review. It provides listening and translation practice, encouraging learners both to repeat and write down useful words and phrases. Learners practise at their own pace and according to their schedules. There are numerous native speaker videos and chatbots as well which together with a number of features like Grammarbot, Difficult Words Mode,
Speed Review, Listening Skills Mode, Video Mode and Learning Stats are included in the pro version.

FLL applications and websites are possible to be made use of both in the classroom and in learners’ spare time. They assist the process of self-study since learners, both young and adult, nowadays make use of technology which allows for an instant access to various resources. Their use does not hinder developing the skills necessary to collaborate in a classroom, on the contrary, learners may peer-study and join their efforts to perform better while using the applications and websites. It is possible to encourage learners through the use of technology to become autonomous users of a foreign language, developing their skills to comprehend, process and use the information needed to progress while using certain applications and websites. It is inevitable that their practice is going to equip them better to enhance their performance in real-life communication.

References:


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“The Meeting Place for Experts” – The 27th International IATEFL Poland Conference

Yordanka Nikolova

The 27th International IATEFL Poland Conference, “The Meeting Place for Experts”, was organized in Wroclaw on 21st-23rd September 2018, generously hosted by Wroclaw University of Science and Technology and its Department of Foreign Languages. It was a most memorable event, with a record number of presentations and almost one thousand participants.

There was a broad spectrum of sessions to choose from, as well as a chance to socialize and relax with other conference participants. The Conference was a grand manifestation of both the standards and the traditions of IATEFL Poland, impressive with its interesting, inspiring and well-organised events. It truly gave an opportunity to experience the Polish community of English language teachers, leaving the Conference inspired with new ideas and teaching tips.

This annual conference is one of the highlights of the year for teachers of English in Poland, attracting participants from various places in the country and from abroad. With its rich programme of more than 150 presentations, this Conference gave the English teachers the chance to get together, exchange ideas and make professional contacts with people working in all the different fields of ELT. It also offered the opportunity to visit the exhibitions stands of leading publishers and
peruse their latest ELT publications. What made the Conference a great success was its attractive programme and the excellent organization work.

After having contributed to the BETA 2018 Burgas Conference last June, 2018, I am really grateful to the BETA-IATEFL Committee for choosing me for their official representative to the IATEFL Poland Conference. My sincere and heartfelt thanks go to the Polish Conference organisers as well, and in particular to Joanna Leszkiewicz, IATEFL Poland President, and her team, for a most hospitable and caring welcome.
Margit Szesztay, IATEFL World
“Educate and Empower”
Reverberations on the 10\textsuperscript{th} ELTAM International Conference
19-21 October 2018, Struga, Macedonia

Gergana Georgieva

I remember the wonderful feeling of exhilaration when I understood that I had gotten the chance to take part in the 10\textsuperscript{th} ELTAM (English Language Teachers' Association of the Republic of Macedonia) Biannual International Conference which took place in Struga from 19\textsuperscript{th} to 21\textsuperscript{st} October 2018. While I was preparing for my trip, I was thinking about what a motivating event this was going to be and, indisputably, it was a truly invaluable experience and a great success in every way!

Not only was I delighted because I was going to represent BETA at ELTAM’s jubilee conference, but also it was going to be my meeting with a huge number of

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enthusiastic educators who are always eager to share personal and professional knowledge. That is why it is not accidental that the title of ELTAM’s birthday conference has been thoughtfully chosen: *Educate and Empower*. This theme, as it may be inferred, offers various topics in the area of ELT. I was also glad due to the fact that I had already met a few remarkable Macedonian colleagues at BETA-IATEFL Annual Conferences and online and I was willing to see them again as well as in person.

*With my dear friend Kiro Jordanov*
The conference was held at Hotel Drim – one of the most conspicuous buildings against Struga skyline. The city itself lies on the shore of Ohrid Lake and is of immense cultural significance in the Republic of Macedonia. The conference was attended by speakers, guests and exhibitors from all over the world, including the UK, the USA, Italy, Spain, Malta, Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo, Albania, Greece, Turkey, and Bulgaria.

On the first day, President Aleksandra Popovski warmly welcomed all participants at the organization’s 20th anniversary and wholeheartedly appreciated the cooperation with ELTAM’s partner associations by giving them special awards.
The first plenary session was dedicated to a very important task of each English teacher - designing materials for teens and adults. It was presented by Fiona Mauchline and focused on the workings of the human brain and the challenges the “brain knowledge” presents us with in order to create engaging, motivating, efficient and memorable materials. Marina Shokeva examined certain classroom techniques for developing critical thinking, since life nowadays requires more than just pure knowledge. She looked at techniques based on storytelling (methods of deduction and prediction) to practise listening, speaking, grammar, and develop critical thinking by focusing students’ attention on things on which they could make inferences using logic.
Fiona Mauchline, SOL - Not rocket science but brain science: designing materials for teens and adults

Marina Shokeva - Classroom techniques for developing critical thinking
Despite the fact that the conference was on a very tight agenda, the organisers made it possible to give us an unforgettable tour of Ohrid (the "Jerusalem of the Balkans"), which is about 15 kilometers away from Struga. Narcisa Blazevska and Emilija Paunkoska made delegates’ stay even more educational and enjoyable by taking us to Ohrid’s most historical monument - Samuil’s Fortress - and an amazing boat ride at sunset. I can say without a doubt that the time spent with my Macedonian friends has been worth every second.

Samuil’s Fortress
The second day started with a plenary talk by Jon Hird who addressed the issue of dyslexia. He laid emphasis on the selection and design of texts, tests and exercises that are appropriate for dyslexic learners of English. The workshop was quite practical since it looked at instances of various ELT materials that are dyslexic-friendly and ways teachers could adapt those materials or produce their own.
George Kokolas devoted his plenary to the development of speaking skills in an ELT class. He explicitly stressed upon fighting students’ reluctance to perform speaking activities. The speaker gave some remedies related to coping with situations when the student does not want to speak and underlines that speaking practice should be “a must have” from the early years of learning.
There was such a diversified array of sessions to choose from! Inspired by Jon Hird’s talk on dyslexia, I selected Marija Dzonova’s recommendation to combat this problem via the SoftEnglish method. She examined the right path to finding the correct activity for a student suffering from dyslexia because the educational system simply does not recognize the issue.
The last plenary for the day was the one by Daniel Xerri who placed value on creativity being of utmost significance for language education. The speaker carefully looked at the very meaning of the word “creativity” and encouraged teachers to be creative and to teach creatively.
My presentation related to teaching Eurospeak to International Relations students was on the same day. I was happy because there followed a lively discussion with colleagues from Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo and Albania. This is one of the best things I find fruitful at conferences like this one – an opportunity to share challenges students are faced with as well as possible solutions that could improve the course syllabus and teaching materials.
Gergana Georgieva - Teaching Eurospeak to International Relations students
The last session was led by Fitore Sulejmani and it was a unique personal journey and a reflection of the teaching process. It proved that methodology books are not sufficient for the reality in class. Flexibility is crucial for teachers since they should be concentrated on what students need most, what the world they are preparing for needs, and how they could be competitive and successful.
What came after this productive day fraught with talks on essential ELT issue was a birthday party to remember. It is fascinating that ELTAM has helped educators
and contributed to empowering teachers and students for 20 years. I am convinced that this exceptional team will continue to do so even more successfully in the future.

Birthday Party

The third day started in a poetic way because the plenary speaker Jen MacArthur explored 13 ways of using poetry in the EFL Classroom. She showed us that poetry could be very powerful for teaching English for it taps into students’ creativity, enables us to know ourselves better and helps in exploring culture. Jen provided the audience with different ideas for reading and writing poetry with students of various levels of English language.
Jen MacArthur, RELO Belgrade: 13 ways of using poetry in the EFL classroom

There were plenty of sessions to opt for in between the plenaries such as the magic of storytelling, the great escape from the classroom routine, techniques for incorporating songs, using visual materials in ESP classes, standardized tests vs authentic assessment challenges, the importance of exams and how they affect test-takers, literature and modern trends – much ado about nothing, and many
others. Despite my desire to attend most of the workshops, I could be present at only four of them. The first one was about some creative ways of using ICT in inclusive EL classroom. Certain online and offline activities can definitely contribute to engagement, motivation and creativity in the classroom.

Jovanka Jovanchevska presented the European requirements for competence of EL teachers. She discussed in detail the necessity to revise the framework of higher education requirements for teachers, educational programs and professionalization of already existing staff.

Another workshop that I found worth attending was the one connected with teaching spoken English with the animal vowel chart. Using animals to represent vowel sounds can be effective for students to practice the pronunciation of sounds due to the usage of visual and auditory cues.

The last talk I was able to be present at was Valentina Kikerkova’s workshop. She analyzed researches according to which good old paper flashcards can be replaced by digital ones that could have a greater impact on students. Vocabulary learning and practicing could be more efficient through the usage of DFs in a world where technology has sped up and is shaping the future.

The closing ceremony was meaningful, interactive and emotional. These three days passed very quickly but they will surely be some of the most memorable ones in my life as this event brought together one-of-a-kind professionals and great people!
I left Struga with considerable excitement, optimism, encouragement and strength to implement all the ideas I had been given thanks to the incredible event at Hotel Drim. Everyone I met at ELTAM International Conference has educated me to be a creatively empowered teacher and has served as a source of stimulation to be more understanding towards students’ needs.

A big salute to my colleagues from ELTAM for their tremendous work, perfect organisation of all resourceful activities, and last but not least, I wish to say that I truly acknowledge their amiable attitude!

In closing, I would like to express my deepest sense of appreciation and sincere thankfulness to BETA Committee for trusting me and providing me with the
opportunity and financial support to be an official representative at the inspiring conference in the hospitable city of Struga.
Forthcoming Events in the World of ELT

BETA-IATEFL Annual International Conference

28th BETA-IATEFL Annual International Conference to be held 3rd-5th May 2019 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Follow the conference and news section on our website for more information: http://www.beta-iatefl.org/

IATEFL monthly webinars

For further information, visit: http://www.iatefl.org/web-events/webinars

IATEFL SIG Webinars

For further information, visit: http://www.iatefl.org/web-events/sig-webinars

TESOL Online Courses & Virtual Seminars

For information visit: http://www.tesol.org/attend-and-learn/online-courses-seminars

BETA Partners’ Forthcoming Events

BETA members can attend the conferences for the registration fee paid by the members of the Host Associations
• 17th National ATECR Conference ‘No Limits’, Hradec Králové, 14-15 September 2018
• 27th IATEFL Poland Conference ‘Wrocław 2018 – the Meeting Place for Experts’, Wrocław, 21-23 September 2018
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: betaiatefl.publish@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: betaiatefl.publish@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 and a photo should be included.
- Author names should not appear in the file of the article itself.
- New paragraphs – to be indicated with one separate line.
- Referencing should strictly follow the MLA Style (8ed.).
- Italicize the titles of sources that are independent (they are published on their own and considered containers, e.g. books, anthologies, etc.), but use quotation marks for the titles of sources that are contained in larger works (e.g., short stories, articles, poems).
  - The Awakening  (book)
  - The Metamorphosis  (novella)
  - “Literary History and Sociology”  (journal article)
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Web site)
- “Free Will” (article on a Web site)

- For quotations use double quotation marks, cf. examples below.

- In-text citations must include exact page numbers. Follow this example,
  According to Naomi Baron, reading is “just half of literacy. The other half is
  writing” (194). One might even suggest that reading is never complete
  without writing.

  or

  Reading is “just half of literacy. The other half is writing” (Baron 194). One
  might even suggest that reading is never complete without writing.

- The same reference must appear in the Works Cited list at the end of the
  paper, e.g.

  Works Cited

  Baron, Naomi S. “Redefining Reading: The Impact of Digital Communication

- 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 discard any material submitted, but they reserve the
  right to return papers for further editing when they do not follow MLA Style
  8th ed. or common rules for academic integrity. The editors can make
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  templates provided.
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/

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