

Issue 5, Summer 2015

Cover Story
Training Teens
to Learn Lexis
with
David Dodgson

Including
Richard Miller
Rob Szabó and
Peter Rutherford
Dimitris Primalis
Maria Theologidou

the bel**ta** bulletin



The Books Issue

featuring Pete Sharma
Milena Tanasijevic
Jurgen Basstanie

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Started by:  James Taylor

News



Blog

Lexical Sets/Topic Vocabulary by Andrew Walkley

POSTED BY VEDRANA VOJKOVIC
ON JAN 31, 2015

In our next webinar for Sundays we will be joined by Andrew Walkley. Andrew has almost 25 years experience as a teacher, trainer and materials writer. His current coursebook series is Outcomes (National Geographic Learning). As he's interested in getting teachers more with language and getting closer to meeting their students' language needs, he's the co-founder of Lexical Sets company...

Teaching Introverts in the Classroom by Phil Wade

POSTED BY VEDRANA VOJKOVIC
ON JAN 24, 2015

We are delighted, once again here at BELTA, to have a blog post by Phil Wade. Phil Wade teaches Business English to executives and academic courses to university students. He uses technology to enhance his classes and maximise both in the classroom and outside. In this Introduction I have recently come across a few articles and posts about the challenges of teaching introverts in companies and also in classrooms. This got me thinking about...

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A Word From The President

Hello and welcome to the latest issue of the BELTA Bulletin. Hopefully you are getting ready for summer and if you are one of those teachers who get some weeks off, I hope you enjoy some well deserved rest. If, like me, you work in a private language school and don't have that opportunity, I hope you find the time to recharge your batteries and enjoy some sunshine!

This is the first issue of the Bulletin since our BELTA Day in April. If you came to this year's event, I hope you had a rewarding day. The BELTA team are very happy with how everything went and we can't wait for next year already. And if this is your first issue of the Bulletin since becoming a member on April 25th - happy reading!

At BELTA we aren't resting on our laurels, and we are already looking forward to our next event, our second TOBELTA online conference. Created in collaboration with TESL Toronto and taking place over two days, it promises to offer a great selection of talks, delivered right to the comfort of your home. Make sure you check our website, social media pages and newsletter to keep up to date with this event and our other Sunday With BELTA webinars taking place throughout the rest of the year.

Thank you as always to all of the contributors to this latest issue of the BELTA Bulletin and to our



*James during his BELTA Day 2015 presentation
"But What Is A 21st Century Teacher?"*

tireless editor Vicky Loras. If you would like to contribute in the future, please contact her, we'd love to hear from you. Thanks for your support of BELTA and, as always, I'm very keen to receive your feedback, so if you'd like to get in touch with me, email me at president@beltabelgium.com.

Best wishes,

James Taylor
BELTA President



A Message From The Editor

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our issue right after the BELTA Day – it has been over two months already!

In some countries of the world, summer holidays are upon them and teachers and students alike are getting ready for a long or shorter summer holiday. In some countries though, the school year is progressing normally. No matter which of the two categories you belong to, we guarantee that this issue will be great company for the holidaymakers and a huge source of new ideas and inspiration for the teachers going on with their teaching!

In Meet the Board, we interview our BELTA Vice President, Co-Founder and Sponsorship Officer, Ellen DePreter.

Our regular columns are here to inspire us once again. Pete Rutherford and Rob Szabó share their new instalment of On The Radar, with a touch of the IATEFL Manchester Conference. Dimitris Primalis shares his latest experiences in Mea Culpa.

We are very fortunate to have reviews of three great books from three equally great educators – and we thank them very much for all their work! David Dodgson reviews Top IELTS Speaking Tips by Jenny Bedwell and Phil Wade, Milena Tanasijevic reviews Wiktor Kostrzewski's book Brave Language Learning, and our very own Jurgen Basstanie chose Business English Writing Skills. A Writing Survival Kit by Timothy Byrne.

As for articles, no shortage of great ideas there either! David Dodgson has also written a great article for us on lexis and Maria Theologidou shows us how to spice up our lessons in Part 2 of her articles. We also have a great collaboration with ELTAS, the English Language Teachers Association of Stuttgart – a huge thanks to Pete Sharma for his article on writing a book for the first time, and Jennie Wright, the Newsletter Editor, who shared it with us!

From all of us at BELTA, we wish you happy reading and great learning moments for you and your students!

Thank you all so much,

Vicky Loras
BELTA Bulletin Editorial Officer



The BELTA Bulletin Issue 5 Summer 2015

Published by the Belgian English
Language Teachers Association

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The more trends change, the more principles remain the same – A report on BELTA Day 2015

Richard Miller

After a week of warm spring sun, clouds flew in for the weekend which made it a little easier to crawl out of bed, earlier than usual for a Saturday, and go up to Brussels for the third BELTA Day. James Taylor, BELTA President, opened with a warm welcome and overview of BELTA including, but not limited to, resources, networking, and links to other ideas. He talked up the team and launched an invitation to participate that was impossible to resist.

James passed the baton to Hugh Dellar who spoke on Technology and principles in language teaching. Now it's a practice, not a principle, of mine to never read manuals until it's too late. So, consistent with standard behaviour, my preparation for listening to Hugh did not include reading the title of his presentation. That made it a little eerie when I sat down to write up my notes, checked his title and noticed the word 'principles' was at the very centre of my scribbles and, from the form of my notes, they took precedence.

Communication felt like the heart of the message for although the general focus of the day revolved around technology, its usefulness or lack thereof, Hugh's use of the word 'coherency' struck a very strong chord. It underlined the need to think strategically, deter-



mine students' needs and figure out the best way to help them reach their goals. He said '... a language teacher's job is to teach language, not technology'. During a short interview afterwards I asked if it was also fair to say a language teacher's job is to teach communication and, happily, he agreed.

And it was with that in mind that I sat down to listen to Katherine Thoreson and Patrick Matthews give their presentation on Language Pedagogy & Regionalism: A Comparative Presentation. They gave some very thoughtful insights into the different paradigms between teaching English in the U.S. and teaching it in Europe. However, a moment of be-

lief and amusement cropped up from a question in the audience on the bias towards British English over American English (or the other way around) within the academic world. It sounded like there was a bit of a debate or difference of opinion to suggest one is preferred to the other. As a Business English teacher, this sounded very strange because the type of English a particular student needs depends on their circumstances. One student may need to deal with a number of British clients or companies: focus on British. Their new CEO may be from Ohio and their new CFO from Iowa: focus on American. They may have to speak down the phone to an over-worked manager in a noisy facto-

ry in Asia whose grasp of English is even more tenuous than their own: focus on whatever works but most important of all – get the job done! In each instance the fundamental principle is to develop understanding and work out how best to communicate. It comes down to critical thinking.

Which led very nicely into the second key note speech by John Hughes, Critical thinking in the age of screenagers. John gave insights into questioning evidence, recognising perspective, and exercises in how to express and support one's arguments. His demonstration of getting students to develop their own critical thinking sent an electric buzz around the room. He followed that with an equally invigorating exercise on perspective. Unfortunately I didn't get a chance to talk to John afterwards, but he set the afternoon aglow with his presentation and it was also an excellent demonstration on how to kick on after a lovely lunch.

After that I wandered over to James Taylor's presentation: But What is a 21st Century Teacher?. The main point I took from there was that it was not the job of an English teacher to teach the use of technology, but it is their job to teach students to learn. That was another principle that really struck home. Direct contact with any student is bound to be limited, but a student's need to develop is continuous. A certain degree self-reflection on their part and guidance from the teacher should help set them on their path.

Finally, deviating from my intend-

ed path, I had a change of heart and decided to listen to Anna Varna on Let's open up our brains – neuroscience in the classroom. It was an absolute treat. It was also full of content. It was so full of content I'm still trying to digest it. Every note taken has a star and an order to look into it further. Anna discussed the way emotion stimulates the brain, the importance of tagging a stimulation as important and that learners need to personalise information. There was probably a lot more but, quite frankly, I was overwhelmed.

It was a day when I'd really wished I could have been in five places at once, because every presentation I attended was excellent and thought-provoking. Musing on the train on the way home two thoughts hit me. The first, humans are complex, and just as a medication may not work exactly the same inside every individual, no single learning tool is going to provide universal benefit.

The second thought was towards an old carpenter I knew. This guy could make or fix anything and he could carry everything he needed in two hands. For him it was far more important to know how to use a tool well, than to have an ever-expanding collection of them. The same seems reasonably true for learning tools. Select only those needed to get the job done and that will differ from student to student. But they are ours for only a short period of time. Eventually they must learn to develop themselves so it may be a good idea to start with the principles then move on to the tools.

About Richard:



Richard graduated from the University of Maine with an honours degree in History and a minor in German. Upon graduation in 1981 he moved to the United Kingdom and bounced around a while before landing a job with a bank, first within Customer Service but shortly thereafter, within the IT Department as a Capacity Planning Specialist for mainframe computers. In 1996 he moved to Belgium to take up a position with a consultancy company supporting the financial industry. In 2013 he started teaching Business English from a purely business perspective and now divides his time between training in Business English, Technical Writing and Good Clinical Practice as well as developing a presence as a Community Musician.

BELTA Day 2015 In Pictures



BELTA Day 2015 In Pictures



Training Teens to Learn Lexis

David Dodgson

One of the biggest differences between learning a first (L1) and a second language (L2) is time. Whereas a young child is exposed to language repeatedly on a daily basis, the L2 learner is often restricted to a few hours a week in class, with limited exposure to new language and fewer opportunities to recycle. It is this lack of repetition that Thornbury (2002) cites as a major factor in forgetting vocabulary.

Therefore, students need to develop ways to notice and organise new lexis they encounter, so that they are more likely to retain it. In this article, I will present five strategies that in my experience have helped with this, followed by a discussion of how I have applied these ideas with my teenage EAL students at an international school.

1. Learner Coaching

In order to engage in effective lexis learning strategies, learners need some 'coaching' (Thornbury, 2002). This is especially important for teenage learners, as 'they can also begin to move away from the 'here and now' and learn words that are not visible and touchable' (Pinter, 2006: 91). This facilitates the possibility for them to engage with a greater range and use of lexis. However, as they have just begun to reach this stage,

they need training and exposure to different methods of learning lexis to help decide what works best for them. Everybody learns differently and students of this age in particular have a tendency to be individualistic, so it is worth spending the time to talk to them about when and where we encounter new words and phrases and different ways of recording them such as notebooks or using mobile devices. Personal stories of what has worked for you when learning languages is also a good idea to inspire them.

2. Recycling of lexis in productive tasks

One way to ensure repetition (and therefore retention) when learning a language is to make a conscious effort to use new words and phrases when speaking and writing. This is apparent in the end of unit productive tasks in many course books. However, learners should not stop there. They need to use the word or phrase repeatedly and get feedback on it. Such feedback on meaning, register, structure, and pronunciation helps the learner refine their understanding of the lexis and subsequent use of it. Repeated over an extended period of 'distributed practice' (Thornbury, 2002: 26), vocabulary is much more likely to be retained.

3. Comparison to other known words

Reference to the familiar often helps learners process and understand new information. In the context of language learning, this can occur through identifying synonyms thus linking a new word or phrase with one that is already known (Harmer, 2007). Differences in meaning or use can then also be explored, adding to the learner's depth of understanding. This comparison can also take place between L2 words and L1 equivalents. These words may be similar or completely different but the process helps establish a link. It also allows the learner to explore what Thornbury (2002: 19-20) terms as 'real friends' (cognates), 'false friends' (words that appear to be similar but are not), and 'strangers' (terms with no L1 equivalent). This awareness can aid the L2 learner in remembering vocabulary and avoiding common errors.

4. Building semantic networks

In addition to synonyms, hyponyms help L2 learners make connections between words. By establishing a 'vocabulary hierarchy' (Harmer, 2007: 36), students can consciously create and update networks of words in their minds, in the same way a child does when learning its L1. Semantic networks

are also useful for helping learners both create connections and recycle previously learned vocabulary. Pinter (2006: 89-90) cites the simple example of encountering a word like 'sandwich' and then brainstorming possible fillings for it as a way to reinforce the new word by connecting it to other food items. Such 'mind maps' can be useful for introducing new vocabulary as well as creating the opportunity to recycle.

5. Written records

The above processes can be made even more effective by incorporating them into a written record. The aforementioned mind maps can be produced in the students' notebooks or on poster paper for display in class. Groupings of synonyms and hyponyms can also occur in the same way. Many teachers also promote the use of 'vocabulary notebooks' to record new words and their L1 translations, often grouped by topic. Selivan (2012) takes this one step further, suggesting the use of 'lexical notebooks' in which learners record not only the word, but also the phrase they first encountered it in and any other collocations or synonyms the learner already knows. This results in a 'diary' of new and known lexis, which acts as a permanent record of learning.

Putting Ideas into Practice

I teach EAL in an international school, working with groups of multi-lingual teenage students who need support with English for their core subjects such as maths, science, history, and geography. This means that although they have more exposure to English than they would in an EFL context, they still have an immediate need to become familiar with the necessary vocabulary for their subjects and a general desire to engage in everyday communication with their Anglophone peers.

Early in the academic year, I en-

gaged the students in a discussion about learning languages. I asked how they used English away from EAL class, how and where they encountered new words, and how they then deciphered and learned them, emphasising that language learned naturally is just as important as that studied at school (Budden, 2012). I also asked them if they recorded this language in any way. This discussion helped the class explicitly address the area of learning lexis and enabled an initial exchange of ideas for noticing and recording new vocabulary.



Cover Story

I then set a homework task for students to experiment with recording vocabulary by noting down any new or interesting uses of English they encountered before our next class. The source could be their other lessons, a film, song or video game enjoyed at home, or a conversation with an English-speaking friend. I encouraged experimentation with capturing the lexis either by noting it down on paper or using a mobile device to record an image or sound clip. We then shared these snippets of language the next lesson, focusing on their meaning and exploring their relationship with other words through English synonyms and word groups and through L1 translation and comparison.

This activity was repeated periodically until the students started to bring up words or phrases they had encountered independently. They were also encouraged to record new lexis when engaging with

language in EAL class. Throughout this time, I demonstrated and encouraged them to experiment with different methods of recording this vocabulary. They were familiar with creating 'word lists' already so I encouraged them to try 'lexical notebooks' as outlined above. Other techniques such as creating word cards and drawing mind maps were also shown and tried out.

Now, the students have each settled on their preferred way of recording vocabulary. Some keep pocket notebooks, another supplements her notebook with Post-It notes, and another has a folder on his tablet full of categorised photos, video and audio clips, and notes. They have now started to pay close attention to the language they encounter inside and outside school and, in order to encourage sharing and further experimentation, I have initiated regular peer-to-peer exchanges in which the students teach each other about lexis they have

learned recently, how they encountered it and how they recorded it. This allows them to progress by sharing with their classmates and exposing each other to different ideas for personalised learning.

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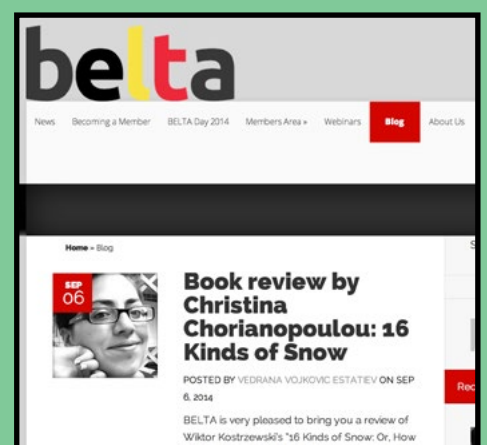
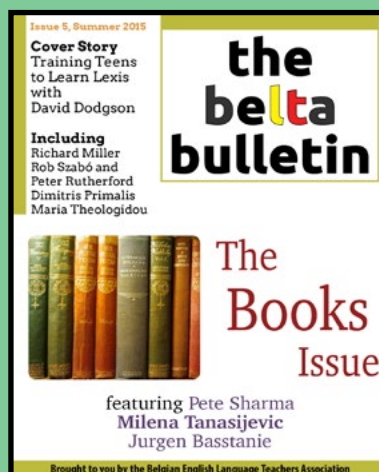
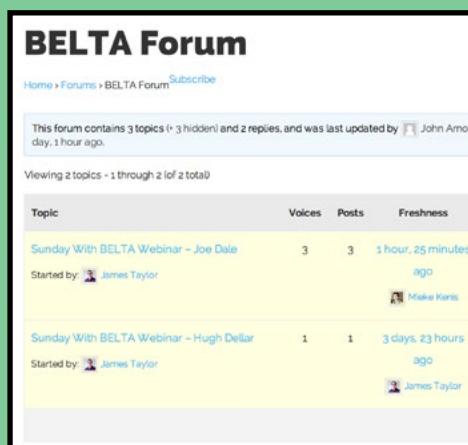
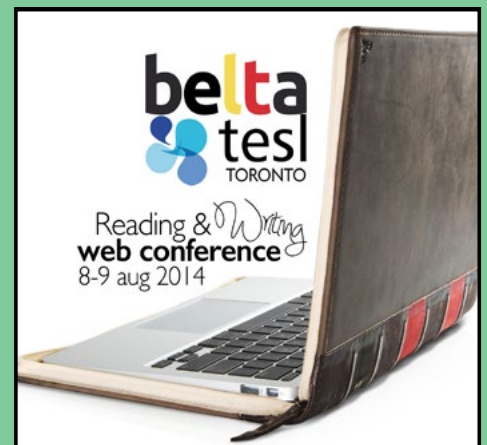
About David:



David Dodgson is a language teacher and language school coordinator at an international school in Gabon. He has also worked extensively in Turkey and has experience of working with children, teens, and adults both in general English, ESP and EAP. He also works as a freelance teacher trainer and has written interactive online materials for websites such as BBC Learning English. He believes personalising the learning process is the key to success in the language classroom and has a strong interest in using and adapting authentic input for learners of all levels. He blogs at davedodgson.com and also runs eltsandbox.weebly.com, a site dedicated to game-based learning.

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Dimitris Primalis is revisiting his most common mistakes in his 20-year teaching career and is sharing tips and hints on how to prevent or cope with them.

About Dimitris



Dimitris has been teaching English as a Foreign Language for more than 20 years to a wide range of levels and age groups. He has written five test books for Macmillan and is the winner with Chryssanthe Sotiriou of the 2013 IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG scholarship. He is interested in integrating technology into the syllabus and likes to share his experiences in education writing articles and blog posts and giving workshops at conferences such as the IATEFL, TESOL France, TESOL Macedonia-Thrace, Northern Greece and ISTEK. He works at Doukas primary school in Athens, Greece.

Mea

Too much work and no personal life

The weekend had been awesome! I'd attended a wonderful conference with excellent talks on linguistic matters, and workshops with original ideas and projects I would never have thought of myself. I had spent most of the previous week marking, planning and teaching and I'd been looking forward to that event. Full of new ideas about how to improve my teaching, I entered the classroom feeling that my lesson would bring a breeze of fresh ideas and enthusiasm in class. In fact, it was quite the opposite...

I must have repeated the same clichés several times and the topic seemed not to touch the students at all. "Hold on", I thought. "Music has always been a catchy topic, sparking discussions and boosting learners' engagement in class. Maybe the class is not having a good day." Then it occurred to me that students' behaviour often reflects what they receive in class. It took me several hours to think about the lesson and realize what had happened.

Expectations from the other stakeholders (parents, teachers, administration) are constantly rising and most teachers end up spending more and more of their personal time on their teaching duties. On top of that, more and more administrative work is added every year including reports, data entry as well as extra activities such as school plays or seminars. This usually leads to a feeling of physical exhaustion and lack of originality in everyday practice.

Below you can read some tips that may be of help:

When not in class:

- ✓ Allow time for your personal interests or activities that help you relax.
- ✓ Read books and watch films that are not directly related to ELT.
- ✓ Spend time with friends and family.
- ✓ Keep in touch with the real

culpa...

make Jack a dull teacher

world: watch the news, walk in the streets, go shopping.

- ✓ Feed yourself with real food and do not live on coffee and junk food. They only make you more edgy.
- ✓ Get as much sleep as you can. A teacher that has rested has a clear mind and can deal with any incidents or prevent mini classroom crises more effectively than when sleepless.
- ✓ Take up any kind of physical exercise. You will be surprised by how active and full of energy you will feel after a couple of weeks.

At school:

- ✓ Give your students more opportunities to express their interests.
- ✓ Incorporate a new activity to break the class routine and receive feedback from learners.

- ✓ Reduce TTT (Teacher Talking Time) and alternate forms of interaction.

DON'T:

- Stretch your schedule with extra work that is not necessary
- Give into the temptation to be involved in too many projects or write two blogposts a week. Even without them, you are still a conscientious teacher.
- Think that you are not doing enough for your class if you have already achieved the learning goals.
- Expect innovation and change to work overnight. Instead of wearing yourself out with unnecessary stress and pressure, be patient and allow enough time for everything to fall into place.
- Set overambitious or numerous aims at the beginning

of the year. If the initial ones are achieved halfway through the year, you can always set new ones.

- Blame yourself for everything that goes wrong in class. Be fair and try to make an objective assessment of the situation and the factors that have caused it.

I believe that teachers are among the hardest-working people. Apart from the cognitive part, they often need to support their students psychologically and boost their confidence. Knowing that they are role models, they often burn themselves out in their attempt to rise to the occasion. Yet it is because of this that they need to look after themselves, so that they can cater for their students' needs and support their efforts to learn.

An Update Following The Recent IATEFL Annual Conference in Manchester

Rob Szabó and Peter Rutherford

The 49th IATEFL Annual Conference, held in Manchester in April, was something of a turning point for our radar chart model of communicative competence. Pete and I presented the idea to a full and interested room, with people no less distinguished than Hugh Dellar, Joann Salvisberg-Smith and Rudi Camerer in attendance. Indeed, there was not enough room for everyone, as Evan Frendo, who had been unable to get into the room, informed us after the fact. We were approached by

academics from Germany and Russia asking about the possibility of joint projects in their countries. While flattering, this all served to confirmed something we already believed: an integrated test of communicative competence is an idea, for which the time has come. We are under no illusions as to the amount of work that lies ahead of us, our collaborators and colleagues.

We were fortunate enough to see Barry O'Sullivan, Head

of Assessment Research & Development at the British Council, talking about test validity in Manchester. The American Educational Research Association defines validity as "the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores entailed by proposed uses of tests." Basically, we need to be very clear about what our test measures and what it can and cannot be used for. As yet, we have developed a visual tool for expressing communicative



with Pete Rutherford and Rob Szabó



competence, as well as a series of case studies that illustrate the various soft skills that we believe are as critical to successful communication as is linguistic accuracy. The next step for us is to develop a set of additional rubrics that can be used in conjunction with traditional vocabulary and grammar rubrics, in order to simultaneously test the different aspects of communicative competence. The practical challenges involved in this task are not to be ignored. Would this entail recordings of students? Would we

require two testers? Would we need to train expert assessors?

There are various radiating lines of open questions that link to this core question of validity. What is our position on English as a lingua franca? Which English should inform our lexico-grammatical rubric? What about pronunciation? What is normative? How should we weight the various competences? Are they equal in importance? Is this one test or many? How long would the test be? What is optimal? Would

About Pete and Rob

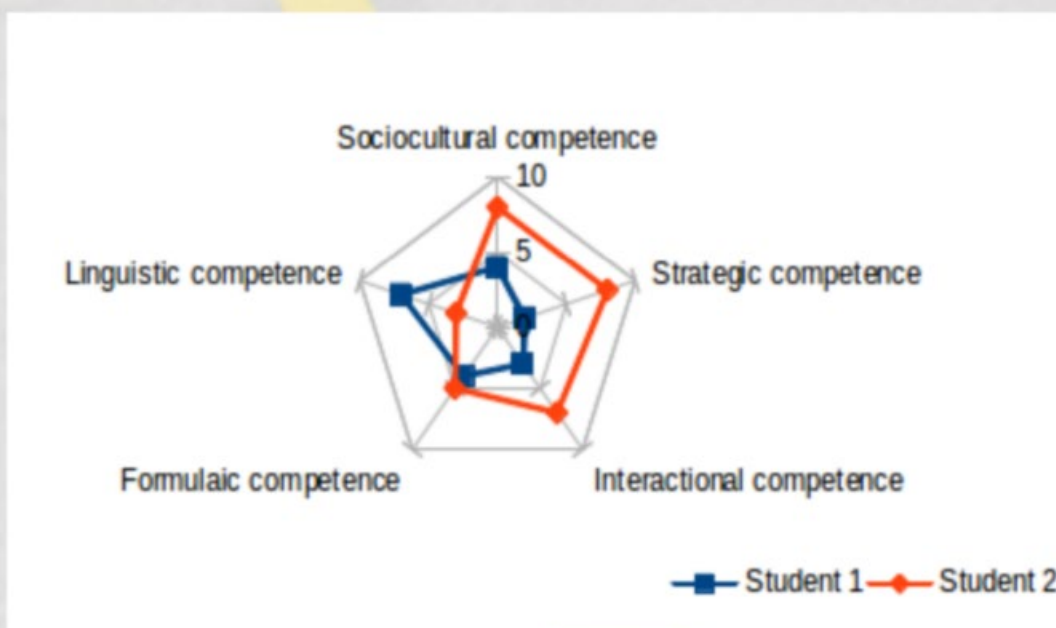


Pete Rutherford is a Düsseldorf-based business English teacher and teacher trainer employed by Marcus Evans Linguarama. He started in education and training in 2003, as a high school business economics teacher, and has worked in Germany, Spain and South Africa. He is a member of the IATEFL BESIG online team.



Rob Szabó specialises in facilitating clear and effective communication between individuals, departments and companies. He is currently completing his Master's degree in Education with a specialisation in Applied Linguistics, his research interests lying in the areas of sociolinguistics, intercultural communication and job mobility.

Radar charts



language schools be interested in it? Human resource departments? How would we ensure inter-tester reliability? What if mainstream academia moves beyond the competence model we have used as a base?

Pete and I will be presenting the idea as it stands in September to the Hamburg English Language Teachers Association (HELTA), thanks to Andreas Grundtvig's generous invitation. We are also currently working on our proposal for our presentation in Barcelona at the 28th IATEFL BESIG Annual Conference. This is no mean feat, given that the deadline for proposals is in May and the actual

conference is in November. Where will we be with the idea by then? Better to underpromise and overdeliver.

What we can say, however, is that we emerged from Manchester emboldened and more sure than ever that we are starting to get close to an idea that captures the attention of people in the business communication and English training world, and that is an exciting prospect. As we enter the uncharted waters of communicative competence testing (for us at least), we would like to take as many BELTA Bulletin readers and colleagues along with

us as we can - as collaborators, testers, and critics.

In the following two installments of this column, Pete and I will discuss and share the intercultural business case studies that we have developed and look at assessment rubrics. If you'd like to collaborate with us on this, please get in touch via email.

Pete Rutherford / Email: pete.rutherford@peterutherford.de
 Rob Szabó / Email: rob@szabohome.eu

Our Cover Photo



This issue's cover photo was taken by BELTA Co-President Mieke Kenis.

These small books originally belonged to one of my mother's cousins. He bought most of them in 1946 I read on the first pages, next to his name. They ended up in the house of my parents (neither of whom spoke English) but the youngest of their four children, the English teacher, wanted to have them of course so now they stand on our piano. They express my love for English, literature, books and old things and I browse through them now and then, cherishing them like a precious treasure.



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The First Time I Wrote a Book

Pete Sharma

I have always described myself as an 'accidental author', in that I never set out to be an ELT writer. Nobody was going to write the specific book that I wanted to read, so I had to write it myself! In this article, I'll retrace the steps leading up to the writing of my first book, *CD-ROM: A Teacher's Handbook*, published in 1998 by Summertown. I'll start by relating two incidents.

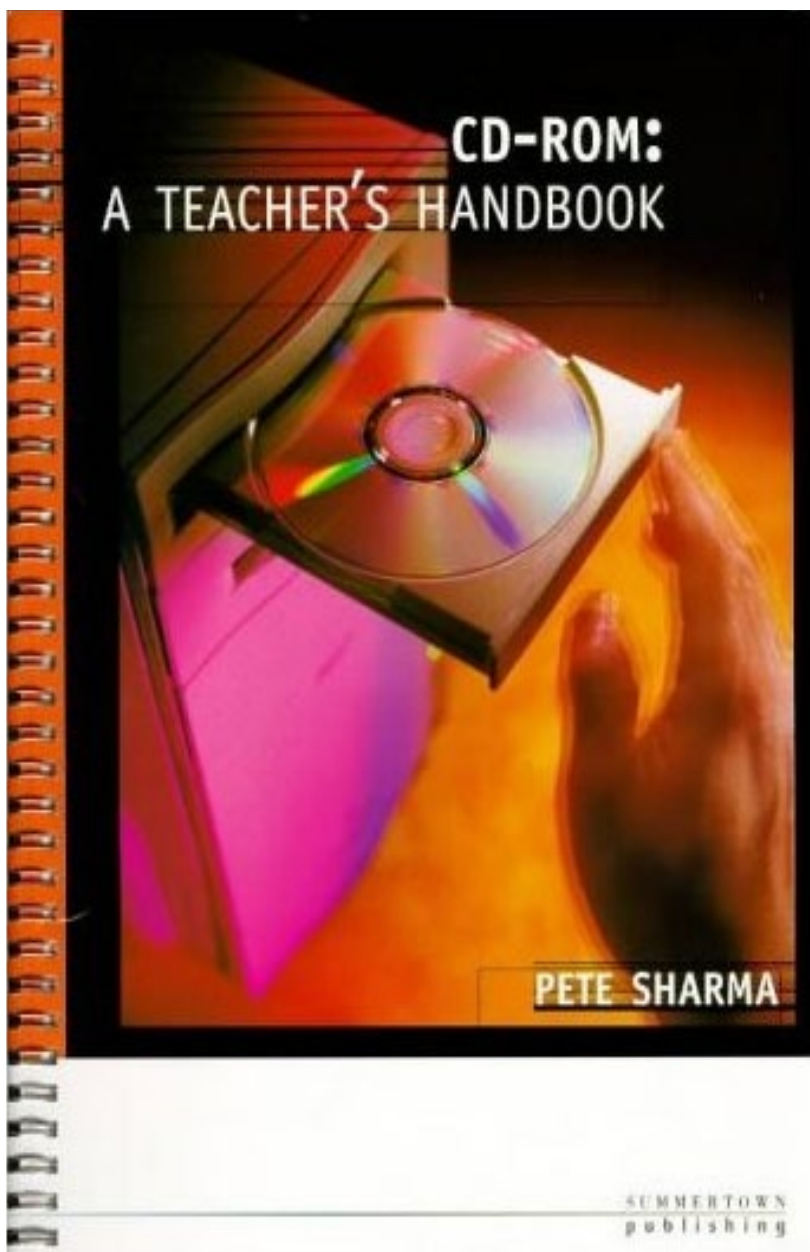
The first happened in Hastings. In 1994, I was doing a teacher training course, and one afternoon the well-known writer and trainer Adrian Underhill was regaling us with exotic tales of his trip to Japan. Mixed in with anecdotes about hot springs, Adrian gave us some advice: "Never let the institution you work for dictate your own professional development". In other words, if you want to go to a conference, but you cannot get sponsored by your employer, pay for yourself and go anyway.

At that time, computers were beginning to become popular. Naturally enough, I wanted one. It wasn't in my employers' budget yet, so instead of doing the sensible thing and waiting, I heeded Underhill's advice and went out and bought one. The result of that decision was that I became an early adopter of technology.

The second incident happened at an IATEFL conference in Brighton. I vividly remember the first time I saw a demonstration of a CD-ROM,

soon after its release in 1993. The disc was the LIED (Longman Interactive English Dictionary). In the presentation, I saw hyperlinking for the first time – that is when you click on a word in a definition, you go directly to the definition of

that word. Around the same time, I saw another early CD-ROM – one in the English for Business series from Wolverhampton University. Again, you simply clicked to access specific information directly, rather than having to find some-



thing in a linear way by fast-forwarding a VHS or cassette tape. The analogue era was over; the digital era had begun, and I was truly smitten.

Both incidents led me to become an avid follower of CD-ROMs. I explored many discs, acquiring a wealth of knowledge, but still I wanted to learn how I could use them in my teaching. Unfortunately, I found no books on the subject. I realised that a book on using CD-ROMs in language teaching didn't exist. I wondered: Could I do it myself?

I asked luminaries in the industry whether such a book would have any appeal. I was told in no uncertain terms that "CD-ROMs would disappear in two years' time and be superseded by the Internet". It's now 2014 and the latest academic dictionary has...a CD-ROM in the back of it. Ah, the perils of making predictions about technology! Ignoring conventional wisdom, I drafted my proposal for a book and got in touch with all the major UK ELT publishers.

Getting my proposal accepted was far from easy. I still have the rejection letters. One such letter included the immortal rebuff: "We would be delighted to publish your book, providing it refers to technologies not yet invented!" Ha ha. Of course, I know what the writer meant. The time it took then to publish a researched topic

for a teacher development book was years. Nevertheless, that's quite a tall order – to write about something not yet invented!

One day in my office, I was pouring out my tale of woe and rejection to Louis Garnade, the then owner of the former Oxford English Book Centre. "I'd love to write a book", I said. "I'd like to start a publishing company", was his reply. It was one of 'those moments' and from this exchange, the niche Summertown Publishing was born. My CD-ROM: A Teacher's Handbook came out as Summertown's first book and the rest, as they say, is history.

This is not the place to write about the journey of writing this book. The agony and the ecstasy of the reader's reports; the hunt for an editor; the first proof of the sumptuous cover; the learning curve leading to the moment when I first opened the box to reveal the first copies...suffice to say that I would never have opened that box if I hadn't been inspired by one person's advice, hadn't ignored conventional wisdom, or had the luck to meet a maverick entrepreneur.

Editor's Note: *We would like to thank ELTAS for allowing us to republish Pete Sharma's article, which was first published in the Winter ELTAS Newsletter, 2015. Many thanks to the Editor, Jennie Wright.*

About Pete:



Pete Sharma is a Director of Pete Sharma Associates Ltd, a consultancy and training organisation: www.psa.eu.com He is a pre-sessional lecturer in EAP (English for Academic purposes). Pete has co-authored many books on learning technology, ELT materials and multimedia materials.

Top IELTS Speaking Tips (e-book) by Jenny Bedwell and Phil Wade

David Dodgson

Love them or loathe them, international standardised language tests have become an important area of ELT in the last several years. Tests like IELTS are now being used not only for international students seeking entry to English-medium universities, but also for visa applications and for improving employment prospects. In turn, this has given rise to a plethora of preparation materials – special training courses, collections of sample papers, and study books based on exam-task types can be found everywhere, online and off.

Top IELTS Speaking Tips is a short-form e-book from iPassIELTS designed, as the name suggests, to help students prepare for the speaking section of the exam. The question is: can a short e-book provide a sufficient range of useful advice in a market already awash with study guides and preparation materials?

This book aims to do that by tapping into the experience of the tutors, materials writers and examiners on the iPassIELTS team to compile a list of 'top 5' tips for each of the three sections of the IELTS speaking test. Authors Jenny Bedwell and Phil Wade also include examples of useful language and tips on avoiding common mis-

takes: "...things we see again and again that really hold people back and lose them 1 or 2 bands."

It is all written with the candidate in mind – indeed, it is they who are the target audience, not the teachers. Therefore, the language has been carefully chosen to be

accessible to the L2 learner. This is also an advantage of the book being short, as it lowers the risk of overloading the second language reader with too much information. The language used and the length of the book make it suitable for learners of a strong B1



level and up, as a self-study resource.

The book begins with an overview of the three parts of the speaking test including the format, purpose, and, most importantly for the learner, what the examiner is looking for. The next three chapters focus on each part of the test, providing the top five tips, sample questions and answers when necessary, and useful language for implementing each piece of advice. These tips address matters of content such as giving reasons for and adding extra information to your answers, and also advise on language issues, like using a variety of expressions and appropriate linking words. All of the tips make sense and reflect what I have told students preparing for IELTS over the years. Of course, when we say it in class it doesn't always sink in, so if our students have this advice to hand on a personal device, it will help them remember.

The next chapter focuses on classic mistakes made in the speaking test and how to avoid them. These again address issues of language use and content, but intonation is also mentioned. I have seen students freeze and/or become very serious and monotone in exam situations before,

so a reminder about speaking with expression and in varied tones is very useful here. There is also a separate chapter on specific grammatical and lexical errors that will be familiar to anyone who has prepped intermediate level students for IELTS. Again, the reinforcement the book offers is important for students here.

Returning to the question asked at the beginning of this review (can a short e-book provide a sufficient range of useful advice in a market already awash with study guides and preparation materials?), I would say this book can certainly be a highly useful addition to the exam training a student needs for IELTS. The language is pitched at the right level and the short length means it focuses on the main points. It could also be easily read or re-read by a student as a last-minute recap on the day of the test. It would probably not work as a stand-alone product, as it does not include much in the way of sample questions. However, this is not the aim of the book. It works best as a supplement to a candidate's exam preparation, and as a collection of tips it achieves its goal. I would certainly recommend it to any students asking for some extra support as their exam approaches.

About David:



David Dodgson is a language teacher and language school coordinator at an international school in Gabon. He has also worked extensively in Turkey and has experience of working with children, teens, and adults both in general English, ESP and EAP. He also works as a freelance teacher trainer and has written interactive online materials for websites such as BBC Learning English. He believes personalising the learning process is the key to success in the language classroom and has a strong interest in using and adapting authentic input for learners of all levels. He blogs at davedodgson.com and also runs eltsandbox.weebly.com, a site dedicated to game-based learning.

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Brave Language Learning by Wiktor Kostrzewski

Milena Tanasijevic

Quite an adventure! This book shares a positive attitude towards language learning from the first line on. It advocates a creative approach to learning languages.

The first large section of the book concentrates on the issue: Why? It is further subdivided into several sub-questions.

The first of these, McLanguage: Here is what I did with folks like you in the language schools represents the role of almost everyone in a language school. It draws on perspectives of teachers who are expected to follow prescribed syllabi without paying much attention to individual students (making them feeling rather guilty about it), directors of studies who cannot change much in the daily routine of running a business (which a language school definitely is), good language learners who are often bored at classes, not so good language learners who are sometimes bored by the good ones... It does represent the full picture of the industry where all individual members are expected to fulfill a certain role, without having much to say about the vicious circle they are all in.

The second sub-section: 5 Magic Phrases in Language Learning – and 5 Uncomfortable Questions represents an effort to explain

what the core of the business of language schools is. The author attempts to demystify some phrases which are primarily used for marketing purposes and shares his ideas why they do not work. The first phrase is: naturally and it represents a possible method of acquiring a language naturally, as first language acquisition goes. The author claims that it would be impossible to replicate the experience of acquiring the first language for a subsequent one since the context of exposure would inevitably be poorer, and the learners would have passed the stage where the brain is in the plasticity stage.

The next phrase the author chooses to discuss is: scientifically proven. He argues that there are new methods based on theory (or rather theories), but none of them have been scientifically proven yet. Another phrase would be focus on speaking. The author argues that it would prove to be convenient for a teacher to provoke a discussion in class and allow students to buzz. Yet, it would seem that speaking a language would not be the same as using the language. Furthermore, the author discusses the issue of effortless, fast and cheap language training. He argues that learners need to be aware that effortless language

learning is not happening. As for the cheap and fast solutions, they are possible, but compromise on quality. The last bit concentrates on how quickly new products and approaches evolve in the industry, mostly in terms of technology. The author worries that schools might be prone to using them simply to stay on track and attract customers.

The author proceeds to introduce some brave language learners. Those are people who were brave to step out of the comfort zone of what is handed over to them and took steps to investigate if they work for them. They are brave since they managed to break the routine and engaged in somewhat different approaches to learning: individual classes, relaxing during classes, learning by doing...

The book explains how we can all become brave in language learning. We would start by choosing our syllabus, mostly guided by the questions of what we need and what we want. The author is careful to explain the difference between the two and why it matters for learners to actually get involved in what was usually assumed to be the role of teachers – choosing their syllabi and even test content. The author explains that publishers are fighting a battle with technology and trying to

catch up with the novelties, thus making coursebooks full up to the brim with activities.

The author advises learners to be careful when choosing their teacher. He encourages learners to investigate the roles of a teacher, since their job is much more than pure teaching. The best approaches for learners to deal with teachers, according to the author, are the following steps: specific request, reasonable justification and follow-up. Teachers know their jobs and know what works well in particular learning situations, but still learners need to be more specific in explaining their needs.

The next section deals with language tests which are tools which work well to investigate progress. The author advises learners to become more engaged in choosing their own tests, as well as to appreciate them, rather than fear them. Learners need to be able to check what they CAN DO with the language they have acquired.

The benefits of the entire idea of making language learners brave enough to shape their language learning process are numerous, but the author concentrates on the following: learners can save on choosing the best material working for them; they can see more immediate results and experience joy in the language learning process.

The second large section of the

book is titled: How? It is very neatly organized. The author suggests ideas regarding how learners can become more engaged in their learning process by using available tools and means. Each of these is clearly explained with the following questions answered for each:

- What is it?
- How does it help me?
- What is it going to cost me?
- What's missing from it?
- What's next after it?

The tools investigated are the following:

- Duolingo
- Memrise
- Street (in the literal meaning of it)
- Evernote
- Quizlet
- Podcasts
- Monolingual dictionaries
- Online newspapers
- Online TV
- Culture centres
- Libraries
- Creative Commons
- Penpals
- VOIP (voice over internet protocol) exchange
- WWOOF (worldwide opportunities on organic farms)
- Street (again, this time in the context of living in the country where the language being learnt is spoken)

The final part of the book provides

extra resources which are password-protected with a small riddle for keen learners.

Overall, the author draws on the experience of being a language teacher and generously equips learners with possibilities to take full responsibility of their language learning process, which actually implies providing learners with skills and tools, in order to become more autonomous.

About Milena:



Milena has been working in the field of ELT for 15 years, as a teacher in the private language schools sector, as an ELT instructor at Belgrade Metropolitan University where she teaches and develops blended and distance General English and ESP courses, as a teacher trainer for in-house training for novice teachers, for Business English teaching (for LCCI) and teaching with technologies (for ELTA Serbia and the British Council), as well as an ELT researcher, since she is completing her doctoral studies in Applied Linguistics at Belgrade University. She likes learning from her PLN, so she has attended and presented at numerous conferences and events in Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, Poland, France, the USA.

Business English Writing Skills: A Writing Survival Kit by Timothy Byrne

Jurgen Basstanie

Business English Writing Skills was written to fill a niche. Timothy Byrne, the author, felt that there was no proper publication that covers the various written genres that business people need in their jobs today. Therefore, Byrne decided to write a survival kit himself aimed at students and non-native speakers in business at a B2-C1 level.

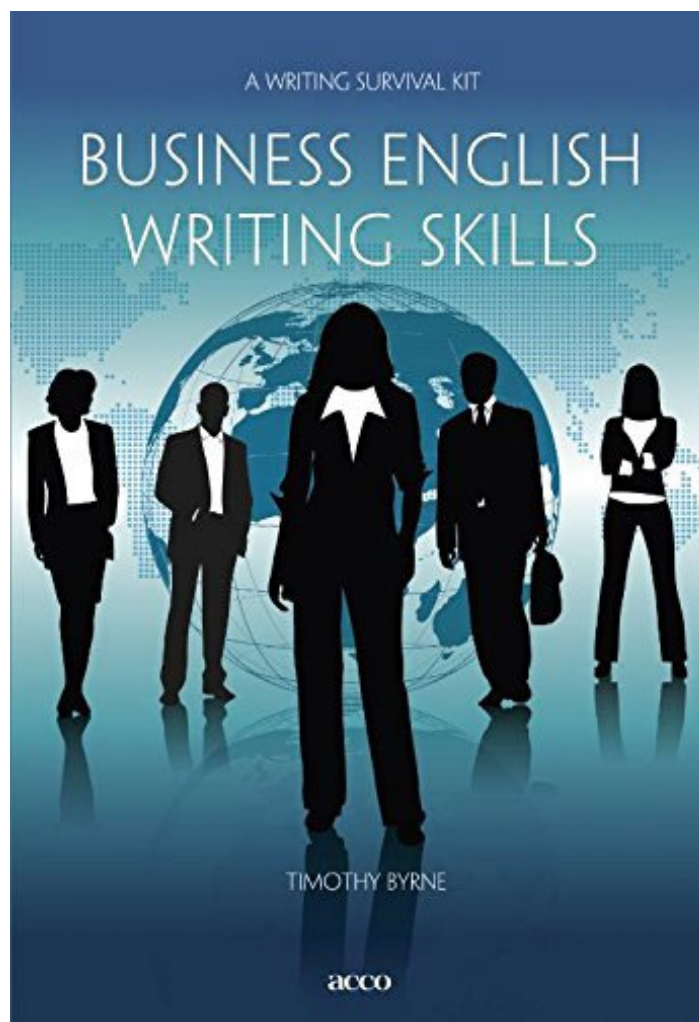
The strength of the book is that it has brought together a number of relevant genres and that for each of them it presents a sample text, which it then discusses and analyses in detail, so the reader knows why it is written the way it is. Then the reader is invited to try for himself with some well-designed assignments. Model answers to those assignments are available on the internet.

Eighteen genres are selected as the ones that people in business need today: writing speeches to introduce a person, writing business letters and emails, giving instructions, writing reports describing change, writing minutes of meetings and so on. They are put in a random order for the reader. Would it have been an idea to group some of the eighteen genres, so separate letters, reports and summaries genres are put together?

Most of the genres selected make sense and are indeed highly fre-

quent in what people in business need today. Some, however, are often left to specialists in a company, not so much to the average business person, like designing an advertisement and an advertising campaign. Others are just less relevant for business purposes, like writing headlines for newspapers and writing argumentative essays. It is no coincidence that no sample text and no analysis has been provided for the latter.

As mentioned above, it might be a useful idea to take some genres together in what could be a more extensive chapter "business reports": writing a report to describe change (Chapter 2), writing about statistics and describing graphs (Chapter 4) and designing a survey and presenting the results (Chapter 16). Byrne bases himself on the IELTS test to stress how relevant describing change is and he has compiled a very detailed



vocabulary list of verbs describing change, of relevant prepositions and types of graphs. It is a shame that the same level of detail is not kept up for language in other units, like in writing letters of recommendation, where the reader has to look for relevant language to use in the sample text. In preparatory material for the exams of the London Chamber of commerce and Industry (www.lcci.org.uk/), business reports are seen as a separate genre and a distinction is made between descriptive reports and argumentative reports.

As mentioned above, the layout of the units is very good. A sample text representing the genre is discussed and language notes are made with relevant questions that make the reader think about what kind of language is used: relevant vocabulary, active or passive mode (with good justifications on why passives are preferred at times), tense and aspect questions, modals used, etc. These notes are indeed properly targeted at a B2 to C1 level. For some units this language analysis is rather limited, for example in writing instructions. I feel that the principle from information mapping could be used here (www.informationmapping.com/en/), an adequate system that allows you to streamline the language on how to give instructions. Business English Writing Skills could go into why present tenses are used, how analogy should be pursued, how variation in language, something that Byrne praises, should be avoided since it only leads to confusion, and on how full sentences can be used in telegram styles adequately.

Sample material to illustrate the genre is well chosen; for example, for business letters and letters of application. It is a good idea that in the case of the job application the job advertisement is also given, so the reader can find out how the letter of application actually replies to the advert in question. My advice would be to devote some attention to speculative writing (where there is no advert that the letter replies to) and to online job applications, which are much more common than the paper equivalents today.

I am also convinced that teachers using Business English Writing Skills will appreciate the quality of assignments in the units and the model answers. Often the input is from a Dutch language background, which may be convenient for learners from Belgium and The Netherlands. With some coaching and when they get proper feedback, the students will certainly be able to improve their writing skills. However, much depends on how well teachers give feedback. The model answer on the internet may provide some good help, but students need to be able to find out how and to what extent their version of the assignment meets the criteria. In the end, business writing, just like writing in general, is about reaching your goal with your text, about targeting your text to your reader, about structuring the information in a logical way, about using the correct and appropriate language for the purpose in question and about using

a layout that is clear and adjusted to the genre. It may be an idea to make lists with criteria along those lines for each of the genres when the assignments in the book are given.

Byrne says that practice makes perfect. That is probably the best advice of all for anybody who wants to improve his or her writing.

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About Jurgen:



Jurgen Basstanie has been teaching English for the last 19 years. He has a Master's degree of Germanic Languages from the University of Antwerp, and a Master in Applied Linguistics from Edinburgh University. He is an advisor for BELTA Belgium.

Board Member Profile

We are once again very happy to introduce you to another member of the BELTA Board: Ellen De Preter, BELTA Vice President, Co-Founder and Sponsorship Officer.

Vicky: Ellen, thank you so much for this interview and the chance for our readers to get to know you better!

Ellen: You are very welcome, Vicky.

Vicky: Can you tell us a few things about yourself, as an introduction?
Ellen: Oh dear, a difficult question. Well, I guess people are defined by what they are passionate about, and for me that includes a couple of things. I love languages, history, music, reading, especially about the history of the English kings and queens at the moment, and I love sci-fi shows and movies. I lived in the United States for a couple of years, but moved back and now I live in a house in Lier, a beautiful town not too far from Antwerp, with my cats Oliver and Stella.



Ellen with BELTA Day 2015 speaker Ioanna Ntaidou

Vicky: And now some things about your work. How did you become involved in the field of education?

Ellen: Well, I rolled into it. I had always been fascinated by history and languages when I was growing up - I still am - and so I knew I wanted to study something that combined those two elements. Studying English, my favourite language, seemed like the thing to do. In other words, I didn't set

out to become a teacher, but when I graduated, teaching English seemed like a natural next step. I should point out though, that right now I'm not teaching anymore. I work as a communications/marketing officer for a company.

Vicky: What is your favourite thing about teaching? Are there

any challenges?

Ellen: There are several things I liked about teaching. Being able to teach kids what you love is just one of them. In addition, if and when you have good chemistry with your class, it is always lovely just to connect with them on a personal level. I loved going to some of my classes, just because

Ellen de Preter (Vice-President)

I loved that class atmosphere and sense of humour. In ways then sometimes, I didn't feel like 'THE TEACHER', I was just somebody who knew a little bit more about a particular subject and I was there to share it with them. However, yes, there are challenges. One of the challenges I was faced with as a teacher starting out, was job security. For the better part of 3 years, I spent my teaching life going from school to school, from class to class, never knowing where I would be teaching next month or if I would be able to pay my bills. One day I found a different job.

Vicky: Thanks for sharing your story! Now on to BELTA again. Why would you recommend that someone become a member of BELTA?

Ellen: Well, I should start by listing all of the great resources like the BELTA Day, our webinars, blogs, the journal we offer when people become members. As a big fan of our social event - another perk - and as the volunteer coordinator on the BELTA Day, I would say that joining BELTA is great because you are surrounded by extraordinary people. I'm not just talking about our board. Our board is a wonderful group of people who I am proud to call friends, but joining

BELTA also puts you in touch with our other members, people who share your passion of language and teaching. One more point: BELTA has a unique international element to it. We are the Belgian English Language Teachers Association, but our President is English, our Events Officer is American, our Secretary is Croatian, our Editorial Officer lives in Switzerland, and we make sure that the people who contribute to our teacher resources are a global mix. In other words, joining BELTA means you make the world your staffroom.

Vicky: How would you like to see BELTA develop in the future?

Ellen: I have so many plans, but I think we are on the right track. We are expanding on the events we offer to our members. Next to an annual BELTA Day, we have an online conference, a train the trainer event and a social event. That's a lot of events for an organisation that's only been around for about 3 years. Of course, in time, I would like to see a two-day BELTA Day with evening events like singing and dancing ;-). I'm sure I will have some heavy persuading to do within the board to get there, but I love the sense of community that BELTA has instilled in me and I want to share that.

Vicky: To close this interview, what advice would you give educators about their teaching lives?

Ellen: Keep developing, because there is still so much to learn and to explore.

Vicky: Ellen, thank you so much!

About Ellen:



BELTA's Vice-President and Co-Founder has been an Anglophile her entire life. Ever since her first IATEFL, Ellen has been hooked to the buzz of English language conferences, and is now our very enthusiastic Sponsorship Officer. She has a Bachelor in Translation and Masters degrees in Journalism and American Studies.

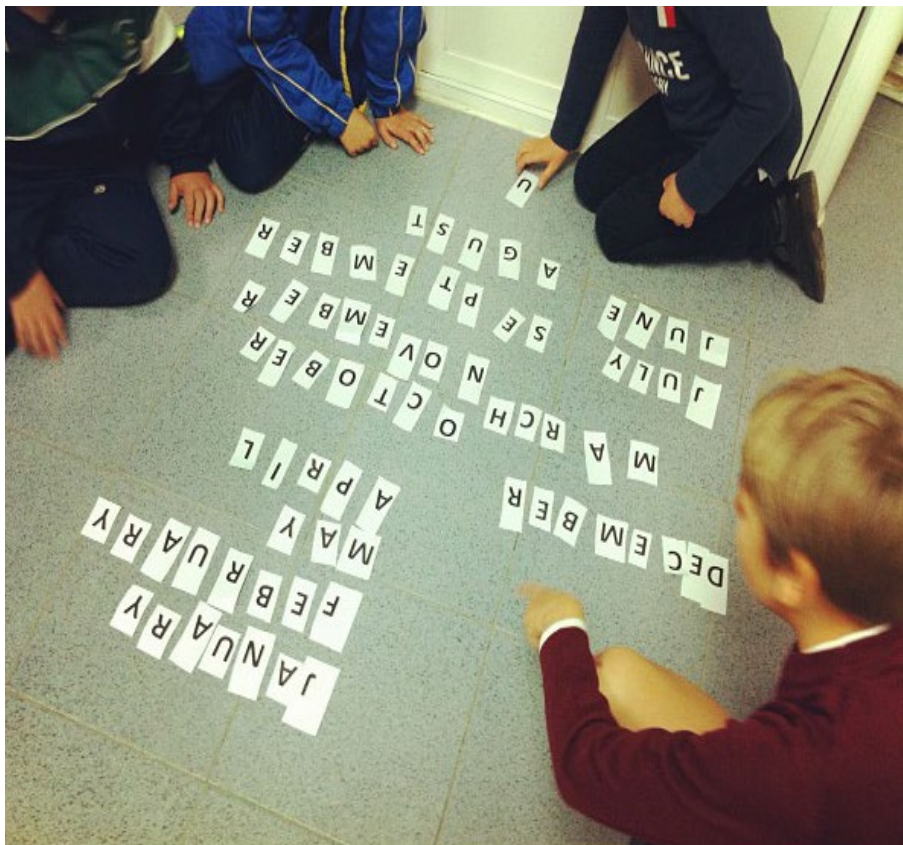
Spicing Up Your Lessons Part 2 - Focusing on Speaking and Listening!

Maria Theologidou

In this second part of creative class activities, I have decided to focus on the two most challenging skills to practise and master: speaking and listening. Although our textbooks are filled with speaking and listening tasks, we are all familiar with how much time each skill takes to improve. Especially in the case of speaking, becoming a fluent speaker is certainly a combination of many different factors which all play their role in making our students more or less reluctant to speak. Once again, adding your own twist to most textbook activities might prove to be life-changing, as your students will see both skills in a new light. It only takes an open mind to make both speaking and listening less frustrating and more enjoyable for your students.

Speaking

- Yes, but...game: We all have students who struggle to give long answers or seem unwilling to respond with anything more than "Yes" or "No". In this game, students are invited to come up with excuses to anything their classmate says, until they run out of excuses! Another variation of the game is to ask your students to reply with anything but yes or no.
- Create video responses/Vlogging: Video responses could



be used for any class activity, from describing the students' daily routine to expressing their opinion on a controversial issue. Instead of asking the rest of your class to respond orally to the views their classmates have expressed, invite them to create their own video responses, too.

- Post-it- notes - Pick and Speak: Write down statements on post-it notes and ask students to walk around the classroom and choose the topic they feel more comfortable talking about. Make sure there are

more notes than your students!

- Story cubes for speaking: Apart from being a great tool for all aspiring writers, story cubes could prove to be extremely useful for speaking practice, too. There are so many different activities you can work on with them! You can have your students act out dialogues, role-play different situations or begin and continue stories.
- Spidergrams/Word Clouds: Students often feel self-con-

scious about the vocabulary they know and how they can use it in their speaking. Before you present any speaking activity, write the topic on the board and ask your students to brainstorm as many words as they can relating to it. You can also ask students to create their own word clouds with vocabulary they feel relates to the speaking topic you're working on in class.

Listening

- Chinese Whispers/Running Dictation: Both of these are class favourites when it comes to vocabulary practice, but how about using them to hone your students' listening skills, too? Divide your classroom into Speakers and Listeners/Writers/Reporters - the list can go on and on. Take the transcript of your listening activity, cut it into parts, tape it around the classroom and have the students work in teams to reconstruct it.
- What comes next: Choose clips from TV series or films - especially funny or unpredictable ones- that have dialogue in them! TV series like Friends or Big Bang Theory are perfect for this activity. Pause the dialogue in parts and ask your class to predict what the speaker will say next.

- Listen to poetry: Listening is also about identifying intonation, rhythm and developing phonemic awareness. Having your students listen to poetry is a great way to achieve all of the above. Try to choose poems that have vivid imagery and figurative language, so that you can spark your students' imagination. Listening to poems can help your class appreciate the music in words and also improve their vocabulary skills.

- Students in charge! - Ask students to bring their own videos/songs /create their own podcasts:

Always leave students room for free expression! Ask them to bring their own videos or songs to class. It can surely help reluctant students develop a taste for listening once they know their musical preferences are respected and valued. In addition, students can create their own podcasts which they can share with their classmates.

- Use music as the background to other activities: We often feel that listening to songs should be about identifying information or filling in gaps, but we seem to forget that music is also a powerful tool when it comes to evoking

emotions. Instrumental music or songs with powerful lyrics (Another brick in the wall by Pink Floyd, for instance) can create the perfect background for activities like free writing. Students can interpret the singer's feelings, write their own lyrics to the song or share how a piece of music makes them feel.

About Maria:



Maria Theologidou has been working as an EFL teacher and translator since 2004. She graduated from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2005 and also holds an MA in Audiovisual Translation from the University of Surrey. She's interested in promoting creativity and fostering critical thinking in the classroom and has presented workshops in TESOL seminars in Thessaloniki and Athens, Greece.

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