

Brought to you by the Belgian English Language Teachers Association

# the belta bulletin

Issue 8, Summer 2016

## Why Evidence Matters

James Taylor

Dictionary skills in a digital age  
with **Julie Moore**

**Including**  
**Marisa Benitez**

Joanna Wrzesinska & Stella Saliari

**Paulina Christiaens and Malgorzata Szwaj**

# the belta bulletin

Issue 8 Summer 2016

- 3 **A Word From The President** *John Arnold*
- A Message From The Editor** *Vicky Loras*
- 4 **Thought Piece - Why Evidence Matters** *James Taylor*
- 6 **Interview with James Taylor**
- 7 **Dictionary skills in a digital age** *Julie Moore*
- 8 **In culture, in class: exploring youth and authenticity in "new pedagogy" at the University** *Marisa Benitez*
- 10 **Using Internet-Based Integrated Tasks in Assessment** *Joanna Wrzesinska & Stella Saliari*
- 12 **Storytelling in a modern EFL classroom** *Paulina Christiaens and Malgorzata Sz waj*
- 13 **Marketplace and Carousel Brainstorming Speaking Techniques** *Ioanna Ntaidou*

## Contribute to the BELTA Bulletin!

If you would like to contribute to the journal, we would love to hear from you.

You can find the guidelines for submission on our website:

[www.beltabelgium.com/the-belta-bulletin/](http://www.beltabelgium.com/the-belta-bulletin/)

## Our cover photo

This issue's cover photo was taken by Victoria Boobyer.

All of the images, except those provided by the authors, were taken from the ELTpics photo sets. They have been used with permission under a creative commons licence, photos taken from <http://flickr.com/eltpics> used under a CC Attribution Non-Commercial license, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>.

For more information on eltpics, including how you can use them in the classroom, go to [eltpics.com](http://eltpics.com).

## Published by the Belgian English Language Teachers Association

**Editor** Vicky Loras

**Designer** James Taylor

### BELTA Board

#### President

John Arnold ([president@beltabelgium.com](mailto:president@beltabelgium.com))

#### Co-President / Finance and Membership

Mieke Kenis ([finance@beltabelgium.com](mailto:finance@beltabelgium.com))

#### Vice-President / Sponsorship

Ellen de Preter ([sponsorship@beltabelgium.com](mailto:sponsorship@beltabelgium.com))

#### Editorial Officer

Vicky Loras ([editorial@beltabelgium.com](mailto:editorial@beltabelgium.com))

#### Advisory members

Joris de Roy, James Taylor and Jurgen Basstanie

All references are available on the BELTA website in our members area:  
[www.beltabelgium.com/forums/topic/the-belta-bulletin-issue-8-summer-2016/](http://www.beltabelgium.com/forums/topic/the-belta-bulletin-issue-8-summer-2016/)

© Each article in the BELTA Bulletin is the property of its author(s) and may not be reprinted without their prior permission.

The publication of an article or advertisement does not necessarily constitute an endorsement by BELTA. BELTA reserve the right to amend or edit for clarity.

# A Word From The President

Welcome to the last edition of the BELTA Bulletin for the 2015/2016 school year. It has been a year of change and growth here at BELTA.

As we mentioned in the last edition, there were some changes to the board recently. Well, there is one more change I would like to acknowledge. As of 1 May, Ada Peters has joined the BELTA Board as the Secretary, replacing Vedrana who left us last February. Ada has been a strong supporter of BELTA for many years; she has presented at two BELTA Day conferences. Her sessions, which are highly interactive, were always a highlight of the day. Ada is a teacher trainer at Odisee in Sint-Niklaas, where she prepares future teachers of English. We are thrilled that she will be joining us and helping us plan another great BELTA Day.

Speaking of BELTA Day, as many of you know, it was a huge success this year. There were around 150 participants, 25 speakers and around 15 publishers represented at BELTA Day. The comments on the evaluation forms confirm what we – the Board – felt at the time: this is an amazing event. All the speakers commented on the organization of the event, while the participants loved the various talks and hands-on workshops. The Publishers talked to a constant flow of participants about their materials and services. All in all it was a great day! If you missed it, please plan now to attend next year's BELTA Day.

Presently, we are working on the plans for the next BELTA Day. It will be our FIFTH! Our fifth already! We can't believe it. We are working on bringing in a well-known plenary speaker as well as more international

and national speakers! If you have any suggestions for the BELTA Day 2017 or if you would like to volunteer in the planning or on the day itself, please drop me a message at [beltapresident@gmail.com](mailto:beltapresident@gmail.com) or send a message to our general email account, [beltabelgium@gmail.com](mailto:beltabelgium@gmail.com).

Finally, I would like to thank all the authors who contributed to this issue of the Bulletin and to Vicky, of course, for putting it all together!

I hope that everyone has a safe and relaxing summer. While you are lounging at the pool or touring a new city, we will be busy planning great and rewarding events for our members!

See you in the Fall!

**John Arnold**  
**BELTA President**

# A Message From The Editor

We are very happy here at BELTA to share with you our eighth issue!

A person very integral to what BELTA is today, is featured doubly in this issue – James Taylor, our Former President and current BELTA Adviser has written our main article Why Evidence Matters and discusses why evidence is important in education. We have also interviewed him and he has shared lots of interesting things about his life, work and BELTA!

We have lots of new writers once again, from all over the globe, and we are very thankful to each and every one of them. All of them also presented at this year's BELTA Day!

Ever wondered how the use of dictionaries has changed now in today's digital world? Julie Moore is here to explain just that and give

us lots of useful tips from her own classes. Joanna Wrzesinska and Stella Saliari are delving into the digital world as well and sharing with us how internet-based tasks can be used in assessment.

A lot of our students love pop culture but can we use it in our classes? Marisa Benitez says yes! and gives us great ideas on how to integrate it and help our students improve their English through it.

Do you love stories? I sure do and so do a great number of our students, regardless of age and level. Paulina Christiaens and Malgorzata Sz waj travel with us through the world of storytelling in the modern language classroom. Ioanna Ntaidou shares her great teaching ideas Marketplace and Carousel Brainstorming Speaking Techniques and shows us how to adapt them in our classes.

Pete Rutherford is here with us once again and his column....

Last but not least, I would like to say a huge thank you to Paulina Christiaens who has been superb at proofreading the issue and offering us her invaluable experience for the Bulletin. Thank you to all the writers, and to you, the readers, our BELTA members!

Happy reading and if you would also like to contribute to one of our next issues, or know someone who would be interested, please contact me at [vickyloras@yahoo.ca](mailto:vickyloras@yahoo.ca) and we will be very happy to include you!

Warmest wishes,

**Vicky Loras**  
**BELTA Bulletin Editorial Officer**

# Thought Piece

Evidence in education is something that is being discussed more and more often in talks, blogs and articles, so it seems like a good time to throw my thoughts into the mix. I think that it's important at this time as it seems to me that EFL hasn't had a particularly strong relationship with research up to this point, especially regarding how the practitioners (teachers) view the work of the researchers.

Generally speaking, I think there are two types of people when it comes to evidence. The first are the people who think that the properly carried out studies are a necessary path in order to progress. The second group aren't worried about such things, they prefer things like 'gut instinct', what they see in front of their eyes, and anecdotes. It seems that there is a lot of the latter in ELT. These two different approaches can be broadly compared to people's view about

science, summed up in the chart below.

But when it comes to education, specifically language education, it can be a bit more difficult as we don't have that basic set of rules that tell us exactly how to teach a language. Context is such a pivotal part of this discussion, and the age, social status, physical and emotional health, academic background, family background, and personal motivation of both the teacher and the learners, as well as the physical environment where the learning takes place, the time of day when the lessons occur and the expectations of the institution where they happen will all have an affect on the final outcome - the ability of your students in English. These factors combine to make my classes not just different from yours but different from each other, and subsequently it seems almost point-

less to think that we can create a complete, unifying theory of language learning.

In the long run, that may be the case but I would argue that rational, evidence-based approach is still vital if we want to move forward towards a better understanding of what we do in the classroom. I think the mistake that the second group of people, the 'gut instinct' types make is that they overestimate the ability of humanity to understand what we see in front of us. There are countless examples in psychology of ways that we are deceived by our brains into perceiving things as we wish to see them, not as they really are. Human beings are very unreliable witnesses, especially when we have a stake in the outcome. This is evident in how people react to the idea that their belief has been proved to be wrong, or is at least unproven. For exam-

Science	Pseudoscience
Willingness to change with new evidence	Fixed ideas
Ruthless peer review	No peer review
Takes account of all new discoveries	Selects only favourable discoveries
Invites criticism	Sees criticism as conspiracy
Verifiable results	Non-repeatable results
Limits claims of usefulness	Claims of widespread usefulness
Accurate measurement	"Ball-park" measurement



# Why Evidence Matters

## James Taylor

ple, this comment I read a few months ago in response to a criticism of multiple intelligences and neurolinguistic programming:

*Although I have yet to come across any scientific proof of either Gardner's multiple intelligences or NLP's VAK styles, anyone who has ever taught a group of teens cannot deny their existence.*

This is the kind of thinking that gets in the way of progress in our field. The first issue is that speaker expects to "come across" evidence and this is unlikely, as it rarely lands in our lap. If they have a genuine interest in checking the data, they will have to go out and find it (which I concede is not always easy). The second issue is that the speaker accepts with absolute certainty the relationship between what she does in the classroom and with her perceived

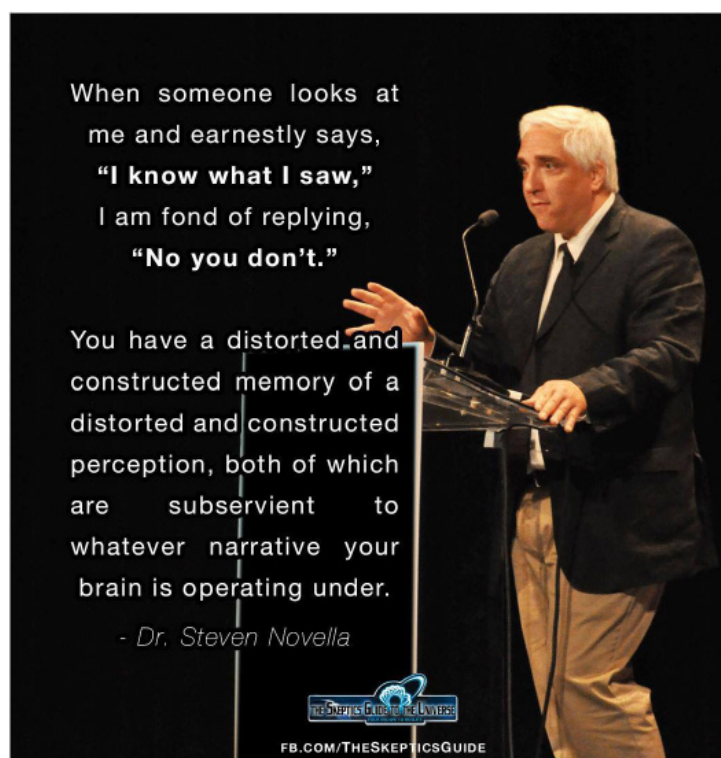
end result. She is certain that one leads to the other, but as I said above, the classroom is a complicated place and the student is a complicated individual. If only the relationship between what we do and the students learning was as simple and direct as she suggests.

As progressive individuals, interested in the development of our field, we need to accept, with humility, that we are all flawed witnesses and poor judges of things that we are invested in. It's a weakness we all share, including the more Spock-like among us. Accepting our human flaws and knowing that well-conducted, extensive research is required as a part of the process of understanding what we do is only a threat to what you believe in if you have chosen to make it a fundamental part of your teaching identity. I'll be the first to admit that I have

beliefs about my teaching that are completely evidence free, but what it is even more important to me is that if you can disprove what I think with well conducted research, I will happily change my mind in a heartbeat. It's what rational thinkers and good scientists do, and I aspire to be like them.

An effective question to ask yourself is "what will it take for me to change my mind?" If the answer is "nothing", then you need to be aware that this is a path that can only lead to the shutting down of any constructive dialogue and an inability to progress, possibly to the detriment of your students. And I'm certain you don't want that.

*Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything. - George Bernard Shaw*



### About James:

**James Taylor**, originally from Brighton, UK, has taught English as a foreign language to adults and teenagers in Brazil, South Korea, Belgium and Costa Rica. He's currently working for Cultura Inglesa in Brasília, Brazil, and is the former President and a co-founder of BELTA, the Belgian English Language Teachers Association. He's also a very active member of the online ELT community, and you can also find him moderating #ELTchat, a weekly discussion on Twitter with teachers from around the world, producing the TEFL Commute podcast, mentoring teachers for iTDi, blogging and presenting at conferences, online and offline.

# Interview with James Taylor

In this issue, we are very happy to have interviewed our very own BELTA Co-Founder, former President and current Adviser, James Taylor! James has been a tour de force in anything BELTA – and he is here to share lots with us about his work as an educator, his adventurous life in general and everything BELTA! I am delighted to be working with him and learning from him. A huge thank you to James!

**Vicky:** James, first of all, I would like to thank you very much for giving us this interview!

**James:** You're welcome, Vicky.

**Vicky:** Let's start with how you got into ELT - how did you enter the field of education?

**James:** I studied Media Studies at university, and it was my intention to work in television or film after I graduated, but the truth is I didn't have the personality or the ambition to succeed in that world. I then did odd jobs for a few years while I was trying to work out what to do with myself.

In that time, I never considered becoming a teacher, until the time came when I didn't really have any other choice. I moved to Brazil in my late twenties and it was pretty obvious that becoming an English teacher was my only option. Fortunately for me, I really enjoyed it and a couple of years later after taking my CELTA, I was hooked and haven't looked back since!

**Vicky:** What a story! Well, you are an English teacher, blogger, co-founder and former President of BELTA, TEFLCommute podcast co-producer, iTDi mentor, ELT-Chat moderator, conference and webinar speaker. How do you manage to juggle all these roles?

**James:** Well, it wasn't always easy, but it has basically been my hobby for the last 6 years. It's been hard work at times, but mostly it's

been immensely rewarding. I've had a lifestyle in the last few years which has been compatible with the commitments I've had, and I've taken things on in order to fill the time I've had available, so it hasn't been too much of a drain, certainly not as much as it sounds!

**Vicky:** How and when was BELTA born?

**James:** BELTA was formed because of two things, a love of teaching associations and the connections that social media made possible. We formed BELTA from scratch because there was no local teaching association in Belgium, an anomaly in Europe, and together with a couple of teachers I met on Twitter, Mieke Kenis and Guido Europeaantje, we decided to do something about it. Five years on from the time when we first met and made that decision, and three conferences, a journal, nearly 30 webinars including our two web conferences, and a blog later, I can honestly say BELTA is the thing that I'm most proud of in my professional life.

**Vicky:** That is a brilliant story as to how it was born! What did you enjoy most in your role as President of this association, and what did you learn?

**James:** It's hard to say what I enjoyed most as there were so many rewarding moments, but I think it was probably the feeling of satisfaction I had whenever I got back

to my hotel after a BELTA Day. All that work that we had done together over the course of the months leading up to the conference had come together, and the engaged and satisfied faces of the teachers was the best pay-off you could hope for.

I learned a lot, too much to include here. It ranged from very practical things like how to run social media accounts, run a website, make posters, and a lot of event management skills. There was also the leadership side of things where BELTA has also been a massive learning experience for me.

**Vicky:** The first ever BELTA Day was in 2013. What are your memories from that day?

**James:** It was a bit of whirlwind, to be honest, but I will always look back on it fondly. I remember many of our great speakers and the small but enthusiastic crowd who attended. I also remember doing my own workshop, one of the first I ever did and being delighted to have got through it unscathed!

**Vicky:** Thank you ever so much for this interview, James! We look forward to having you on with us as our BELTA Adviser.

**James:** I look forward to helping BELTA in the upcoming years. I'm immensely proud of everything we've achieved so far, and I can't wait to see what the team will do in the next few years.

# Dictionary skills in a digital age Julie Moore

When I first started teaching, a dictionary skills lesson involved lugging a whole pile of heavy dictionaries to class. I'd hand them around and get students to look up different types of words to help them get to grips with using a dictionary and to explore the different kinds of information they could find there.

I might send them off on a hunt for an idiom like 'set the world to rights'. They'd all flick confidently to the entry for 'set' only to discover 3 pages of tightly-packed text with 16 verb senses, 15 noun senses, 6 adjectives and something like 17 phrasal verbs – did you know that 'set' is typically one of the longest entries in a learner's dictionary? Then they'd eventually find a little cross-reference note at the end saying that idioms containing 'set' can be found at the entries for the nouns or adjectives in the idiom ... and off they'd go to 'world', only to discover it wasn't there either! Or we might look up a word like 'tough' and spend some time trying to decipher the IPA symbols to highlight the /f/ sound at the end (to contrast with 'though' and 'through').

In a digital age, many of these frustrations have been solved by technology. IPA symbols have been replaced by an audio icon that lets students listen to the pronunciation of a word. Searching for what you want has become immeasurably easier. You just type your query into the search box and as if by magic, you zip straight to the right place. Even if your spelling's a bit awry, you'll probably still get there.

So do we still need to teach dictionary skills? Surely nowadays, our

students can just Google everything. And they're probably 'digital natives' who are more familiar with the online environment than we are, right?

Unfortunately, like much of the internet, the world of online dictionaries is a messy one. There's lots of good stuff out there, but there's also lots that's dubious or inappropriate, and what comes up first in a search isn't always guaranteed to be the former. If I Google 'tough', for example, among the dictionary definitions that crop up are:

- not brittle or tender
- difficult to masticate
- of viscous consistency
- hardened; incorrigible

[From: *dictionary.reference.com*; original source *Random House Dictionary*]

All perfectly acceptable definitions (from a reputable source), but, I think you'd agree, hardly helpful for an intermediate-level learner! In the same search, I also come across:

## tough

- adj. excellent, first-rate;
- used as a positive description of someone or something;
- synonyms include: cool, hot, tight, sweet, awesome, hip, rad and so on.
- Yo, that's mad tough, yo!
- Your car looks friggin' tough.
- *Tough, yo, I'm down.*

[From: *urbandictionary.com*; a crowd-sourced dictionary of largely slang usage]

Again, possibly a valid definition within a particular context, but probably not something that you want to steer your learners towards!

Thus, I think as teachers, we still have an important role to play in guiding our students towards the most appropriate and useful online vocabulary resources. And by that, I don't mean that we just tell our students which online dictionaries to use, but I think we actually need to show them. Demonstrating in class what online dictionaries have to offer, how they can be used and the kind of information and features they contain should be integrated regularly into lessons, not just as part of a one-off dictionary skills class at the start of a term. In fact, online and digital dictionaries are not only an invaluable reference resource for students outside class, but they can be a great resource for teachers to use in class too.

## About Julie:

**Julie Moore** is a freelance materials writer, teacher and teacher trainer based in Bristol, UK. Her background is in dictionaries and vocabulary is still her first love. As well as working on learner's dictionaries and vocabulary teaching materials, she's also written for general English and EAP coursebooks.



# In culture, in class: exploring youth and authenticity in “new pedagogy” at the University

English is often viewed as a language of utility, an international lingo that can be used to cross language barriers in international medicine, business, and politics. When asked why they chose to study English, some of my students – mostly Economics and Politics Majors – would respond that they needed to study English for their professional pursuits, either out of a desire to be a more competitive candidate for an ever-more global job market, or simply because it was a requirement for their degrees (often a way to get ahead of this first reason).

However, many students are likely to give a variety of other responses. They wanted to watch television series in its original language – I have many fans of *Breaking Bad* and *How to Get Away with Murder* in my classes! I have heard some students say that they eventually wanted to live and work in London or New York City. Some dedicated students of political studies said they were very interested in American politics (and the ongoing 2016 election provides no shortage of discussion topics). Others simply state that they have listened to music in English and they want to understand the lyrics better! During a karaoke event, I had a student remark that he had always loved the melody of a certain pop song, but when he understood the lyrics, he realized that it was about an entirely different topic than he had thought.

This second category of motivations all revolve around

one thing: modern culture, and in many cases, contemporary pop culture. English is easier to learn when you can do it in a pinch: you are actually practicing when you check your favorite American celebrity’s Snapchat story, or sing along to most of the Top 40 songs on the radio. For my university students, this component is a huge advantage to their understanding of English.

It is no question that pop culture has a considerable influence on the English language itself with the development of slang and the ever-changing meanings of words. This is a stark difference between English, a descriptive language which mainly relies on its speakers, and most of my

students’ mother tongue, French, a prescriptive language where there is a clearer distinction between official usage and non-official usage (maybe instead of official and non-official it is better to write formal and informal?). What exactly makes English such a dynamic and interesting language for its students can cause a problem for its teachers: how can we properly teach this important component of English when it is, in its essence, off the books? Do we teach it all?

Just a few weeks into my Fulbright grant where my task is to teach university students, I learned that answering “no” to the second question is, simply, not an option. Students’ understanding



Our cover picture by Victoria Boobyer



# Marisa Benitez

of English is so tied to what they hear and read on social media that it is almost impossible to avoid explaining something that they have taken straight from a popular Internet video: I can confidently say that most of my students can explain what it means to be “back at it again...”

Myviewisnosecret:fascinationwith popular culture and its widespread availability in English can certainly be beneficial to attaining fluency, especially with a higher-level group (such as university level and even secondary school students). Too often, it seems as though pop culture related material and other authentic, contemporary texts are

used as a dangling carrot, only to break the monotony of ESL-specific lessons. But there are hosts of other issues with the integration of pop culture: choosing appropriateness, relevance to the course, retaining student attention, etc., without even mentioning the pedagogical reflection that is required for teachers in this situation: how is this lesson changing the relationship I have with the students? Ultimately, I hope teachers will learn to stop worrying and instead to love teaching pop culture.

## About Marisa

**Marisa Benitez** is a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant living and working at the Université de Namur in Wallonia’s capital city. At the university, she gives courses both independently and collaboratively to bachelor and master level students across disciplines. She received her bachelor’s degree in Political Theory and Francophone Studies from Bard College at Simon’s Rock in Great Barrington, Massachusetts in May 2015.

Join us every month for our Sundays With **bel**ta webinars



Find out more at [www.beltabelgium.com/webinars](http://www.beltabelgium.com/webinars)



# Using Internet-Based Integrated Tasks in

The article will discuss the use of Internet-based integrated tasks in English for academic purposes (EAP) assessments of speaking skills. Such assignments require students to use their listening, reading and speaking skills within the same task instead of assessing each skill separately.

## Integrated skills – preaching to the converted?

It is commonly believed that the right approach to teaching authentic communication is that of integrating skills in the classroom. An apt metaphor often used to describe the process is that of Rebecca Oxford (2001) who compared the process of language instruction to creating a tapestry which is made with various strands that must be interwoven effectively to produce a fine-looking whole. Consequently, teaching skills only in isolation is not likely to be reflective of the way language is used in everyday communication, and may not ensure effective preparation for academic performance.

This conclusion was supported by the results of a survey conducted by Educational Testing Service (ETS). In the study, academic lecturers as well as non-native English speaking students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels at 21 universities were asked to rate the importance of performing various academic tasks. The aim of the survey was to identify those tasks which are key to academic performance. The results showed that it is essential for students to integrate skills in order to be successful in a classroom (Rosenfeld et al., 2001). As a result, it becomes crucial not only to use (or continue using)

the integrated-skills approach in language instruction but also to include integrated skills in language assessments.

## Assessment of academic speaking skills

In an academic environment, students need to be able to speak English successfully in and outside the classroom.

In classrooms, students may need to:

- Respond to questions
- Participate in academic discussions with other students
- Synthesize and summarize what they have read in their textbooks and heard in class
- Express their views on topics under discussion

Outside of the classroom, students may need to:

- Participate in casual conversations
- Express their opinions
- Communicate with people in such places as the bookstore, the library, and the housing office

*(Butler et al., 2000: 4-10)*

Therefore, an assessment of speaking skills in EAP should attempt to measure a student's ability to speak effectively with reference to all of those aforementioned situations.

One standardized test which has successfully implemented the integrated-skills approach to assess-

ment is the TOEFL iBT® test. The test measures all four language skills and is used as an admissions tool by universities where English is the language of instruction at both undergraduate and graduate levels. It is also used for immigration, licensing, scholarship and placement purposes.

Within the test, the Speaking and Writing sections contain both independent and integrated tasks requiring test takers to combine the language skills. For a detailed description of the entire test content, please visit the website at [www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/about/content](http://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/about/content).

## How the TOEFL iBT® test measures speaking skills

The Speaking section is designed to evaluate the test taker's ability to speak English in an academic environment. The test taker is asked to answer six questions while speaking into a microphone. The tasks include the following:

- Tasks 1 and 2 are independent speaking tasks about topics that are familiar to the speaker. The test taker is asked to speak on a variety of topics drawn entirely from the test taker's own experience, opinions, and ideas.
- Tasks 3 and 4 integrate speaking with listening and reading. Task 3 involves a campus-based situation; Task 4 involves an academic topic.
- Tasks 5 and 6 integrate speaking with listening. Task 5 is campus based. Task 6 is aca-





# Assessment Joanna Wrzesinska & Stella Saliari

demic.

The integrated tasks require the test taker to integrate English-language skills – listening and speaking, or listening, reading, and speaking. The test taker is asked to base the spoken response on the listening passage or on the listening and reading passages together.

- The entire Speaking section is approximately 20 minutes long.
- Response time allowed for each question ranges from 45 to 60 seconds.
- Responses do not require knowledge of academic content.
- The test taker can take notes to use when responding to the speaking tasks.
- The test taker will have a short time to prepare a response for each of the six questions.

*(TOEFL Teacher Workshop Manual, 2012:28)*

To hear sample integrated speaking tasks and sample test taker responses please download the TOEFL iBT® Interactive Sampler from [www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/prepare/toefl\\_interactive\\_sampler](http://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/prepare/toefl_interactive_sampler)

## Classroom application

The learning objectives underlying the integrated tasks on the TOEFL iBT test can be used to design classroom activities in order to help students improve their academic English-language skills. Some of those learning objectives may include:

- Identifying and summarizing major points and important details from written and spoken sources
- Paraphrasing information from written and spoken sources
- Synthesizing (combine and convey) information from written and spoken sources
- Recognizing and expressing the objective purpose and attitude of a speaker
- Connecting concrete facts and details with related abstract concepts
- Expressing an opinion in relation to what has been read or heard, and support the opinion
- Taking a position and defending it
- Taking and using notes to organize information before speaking

*(TOEFL Teacher Workshop Manual, 2012:32)*

As a result, preparing students for the test will also be preparing them to do well in a university classroom and outside of it and will lead to positive backwash. Preferably, integrated tasks could also be introduced in smaller-scale classroom assessments.

## Additional information

Teachers interested in learning more about integrated task design and scoring in the Speaking and Writing sections of the TOEFL iBT® test are invited to attend the

Propell® Workshop for the TOEFL iBT test. For more information please contact [TOEFLTeacherResources@etsglobal.org](mailto:TOEFLTeacherResources@etsglobal.org)

## About Joanna

**Joanna Wrzesinska** is an experienced English language teacher and trainer conducting the Propell® Workshops for the TOEFL iBT® test across Europe. As an Academic Relations and ELT Specialist she is also a frequent speaker in various EFL conferences in the region. Joanna holds M.A. degree in teaching and has worked both as a teacher and director of studies in the private sector. She is a Pole, working from the Warsaw branch office of ETS Global.

## About Stella:

**Stella Saliari** obtained a degree in English and German Language and Literature from the Technical University Carolo – Wilhelmina zu Braunschweig in Germany. She also holds a MSc in Middle East Politics from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. She worked as a German and English teacher in Greece and as a researcher at the Centre for Mediterranean, Middle East and Islamic Studies in Athens. Since 2011 she has been working for ETS Global in Amsterdam representing the TOEFL and GRE Tests in the EMEA region.





# Storytelling in a modern EFL classroom

*Yet by your gracious patience, I will a round unvarnished tale deliver.*

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)  
*Othello (Act I, scene iii)*

Storytelling is an inherent part of humanity. As cliché as it may sound, our life is a story comprising of many other stories which influence us, our culture, our history, but also allow us to learn about the world. The act of storytelling is involved in every conversation in every environment: at home, at work; on the street, while doing shopping or having coffee with a friend. Our life revolves around stories, hence using storytelling techniques in the ESL classroom is only natural.

Storytelling is a very rewarding language learning approach as it allows to present the language in an integrated way by combining all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing in a meaningful context. Storytelling often has a strong affective impact on learners and may result in establishing positive relations between the teacher and the group and between group members.

Storytelling as such is an aural activity which involves the storyteller who tells the story and the audience who listen to it. However, in the context of foreign language learning it often takes the form of a more complex activity which operates on many levels of conscious and subliminal learning and involves a combination of language skills in the course of what is a sequence of language tasks resulting in the personal-

ization of language content and effective, long-term learning.

As a language learning tool, storytelling involves not only the development of language skills but also fostering some key competences for lifelong learning such as learning to learn, interpersonal and intercultural competence as well as cultural awareness and expression.

Effective storytelling depends on creating the right atmosphere. The atmosphere can awaken learners' interest and engage their attention more readily when it appeals to their senses. Every story needs a key, or a lead-in technique which invites us to follow it. The multi-sensory approach of 'getting into a story' involves using pictures, drawings, mimes, lexis, objects, sound effects and music. The listeners are more likely to be involved if they are given a chance to relate beforehand to the storyline, characters and theme. Therefore, prediction (of what is going to happen, what a character is going to say, what a character could look like and so on) is a useful technique for motivating the listeners who can interpret a story on a personal level. Thus, storytelling promotes creativity and imagination.

It is helpful to combine the act of storytelling with a visual or musical anchor – for example, a gesture, object, tune or phrase which signals the beginning of time devoted to storytelling. Such anchors play an important role in bringing everybody's attention to the present moment and help to focus on the story.

Storytelling activities can be used with learners at all language levels and age groups and lend themselves to many different teaching contexts. Therefore, there are no cut and dried rules of how stories can be used in the classroom. There are, however, many examples of good practices which include the following ideas:

1. First and foremost, storytelling can and indeed should be used for enjoyment and the pleasure of listening to a story. People are *homo fabulens*, innately conditioned by the need of the narrative - to tell stories and be heard.

2. Storytelling provides an ideal context for integrating all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The occasion of listening to a story, often followed by some discussion in groups may be an introduction to the reading of text or brainstorming ideas for a written assignment. In other words, storytelling can act as a trigger to a personalized, meaningful language learning activity which combines language practice on all four language skills.

3. Storytelling, as a technique, can be used to:

- a. Introduce a theme, topic, language structures which are later on discussed in learning units (as a pre-reading, pre-writing task)
- b. Explain a concept, idea or issue
- c. Develop further understanding
- d. Brainstorm ideas for further work with text or visual material
- e. Present new lexis or lexical/grammatical structures in a mean-



# Paulina Christiaens and Malgorzata Szwaj

ingful context

f. Practice language

Stories are everywhere. It is how our lives are structured. "A story, if broken down into the simplest form, is a connection of cause and effect. And that is exactly how we think. We think in narratives all day long, no matter if it is about buying groceries, whether we think about work or our spouse at home. We make up (short) stories in our heads for every action and conversation" (L. Wildrich, 2012). Therefore, employing storytelling techniques in ESL classroom is not only fully justified but highly desirable.

## About Malgorzata:

**Malgorzata Szwaj** graduated with English Philology at the University of Gdansk. She's an English teacher, university lecturer and methodology of foreign languages trainer with over 30 years of experience gained in Poland and abroad. She's also a PILGRIMS international teacher training member and co-author of a Polish edition of Cambridge English for Polish Schools, and Options for English. She has worked as a European Union projects coordinator on projects such as Leonardo da Vinci and Grundvig, as well as a national Ministry of Education project developing key competencies School of Success. She is a co-founder and vice-president of English Unlimited language school in Poland.

## About Paulina

Paulina Christiaens graduated with English Philology at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (MA) and Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (MA).

For many years she has been a teacher, teacher trainer and lecturer at the English Unlimited language school and Teachers' College, coordinator of Language Chamber of Commerce and Industry Exam Centre. She is the co-author of teaching materials for a national Ministry of Education project developing key competencies School of Success and of a handbook of activities from the Creativity in Language Learning Leonardo EU project. She lives in Ghent where she works as a freelancer teaching English to adults.

## Marketplace and Carousel Brainstorming Speaking Techniques Ioanna Ntaidou

Carousel and Marketplace speaking techniques are hands-on, fun and can be tailored to fit different levels and needs. In both activities learners rotate and exchange ideas. I will present a couple of versions and provide attendees with extra ideas on how to use them in different ways. There will also be a demonstration of building a desired state within a classroom, to get a desired outcome. Participants will be guided through a procedure we use in NLP to elicit the states of curiosity and enjoyment.

### Marketplace Speaking Technique

The teacher sets up the desks in the classroom as if they were stalls in a marketplace. Learners form pairs and are given the topic.

One idea could be to sell a destination for a dream vacation or for the perfect honeymoon. Half of the learners are asked to assume they are getting married and their goal is to organize a perfect honeymoon surprise. The other half have a role of a travel agent trying to convince his clients that their offer is the best. They have to decide on one

travel destination to 'sell' as well as their arguments to support their proposal. Each desk is a 'stall' corresponding to a different travel agency. The rest of the class goes around the 'stalls', hear their proposals, ask questions, think of which would be the best deal for them and finally decide on a destination. Then, they swap roles, that is, the travel agents become couples and the couples go behind the stalls and sell. Students will have fun designing the perfect honeymoon, trying to sell their package, and practising the language. Learners gradually ac-





quire more fluency and feel more assertive. At the end, learners are asked to vote for the best 'travel agency' and the best destination for a honeymoon.

An alternative concept could be to try to sell a specific type of vacation. Students present different types of vacation such as alternative holidays, sailing, camping, a luxurious hotel near the beach, a cottage up the mountains, and so on.

Another scenario that adolescents love is to assume they have just finished senior high school and their parents asked them to choose a place to go on vacation and have some rest and fun before their studies at the university begin.

In a different version the teacher can assign learners a topic that needs research beforehand. Students have a few days to collect information and prepare their topic. Learners could work, for example, on organizations that a company could support by donating money as part of promoting business ethics. Such organizations could be WWF, Doctors without Borders, Amnesty International, Greenpeace and so forth. In this case, each stall represents a different organization trying to convince companies to receive a donation.

### Benefits

The teacher can use this kinesthetic activity to help students practice speaking and listening, give and take turns, make recommendations, persuade others, be assertive and creative, use their imagination, exchange ideas and collaborate.

### Carousel Brainstorming or Rotating Review Teaching Technique

The desks in a classroom called stations, need to be arranged into a circular formation using as many desks as the number of groups. At each station, which accommodates one group at a time, a different activity is set out by the teacher who has chosen the topics. Instructions are given. The groups are given 3 minutes to discuss their topic. Then, they must write down their ideas on sticky notes and stick them on a piece of laminated paper. After the allotted 3 minutes, each group should rotate to the next station. Every group must read a new topic, discuss it, and add new information. The students can also connect ideas with arrows or write questions or comments next to the previous group(s)' notes. This process continues until each group is back to their original station. At the end, the class reflects on comments and through discussion the groups convey their ideas.

### Benefits

The teacher can use this brainstorming technique to have students practice speaking, collaborate, review either a book or acquired information, activate background knowledge, learn through mapping, reinforce exploration.

### Suggestions and ideas for using the Carousel Brainstorming technique.

- Students listen to the first half of case study or a story and then use their imagination and predict how the rest goes

- As evaluation tool: 'what have you learnt in today's lesson?'
- Upon finishing a book, to pose various critical thinking questions or as a way to review the book
- Controversial issues
- To draw out students' background knowledge.
- After completing a unit, to pose questions on the covered topics or review the material.

Students may be asked to do some follow-up activities such as organizing the information they have gathered in a specific way, writing a reflective journal on the topic or making a project based on the same concept.

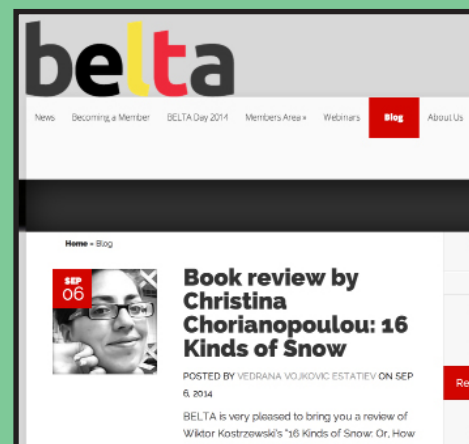
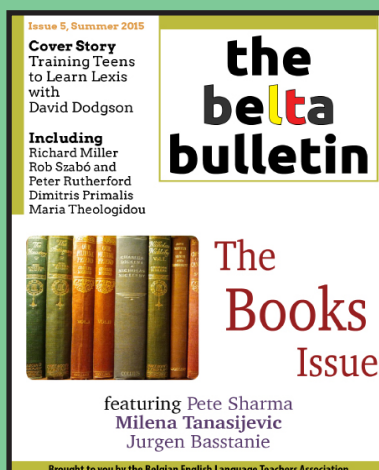
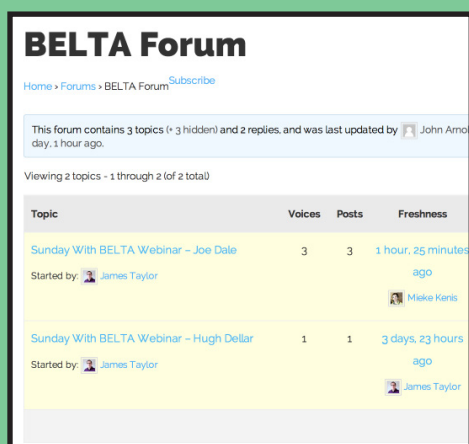
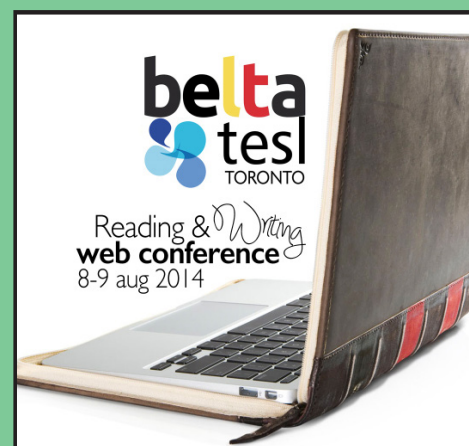
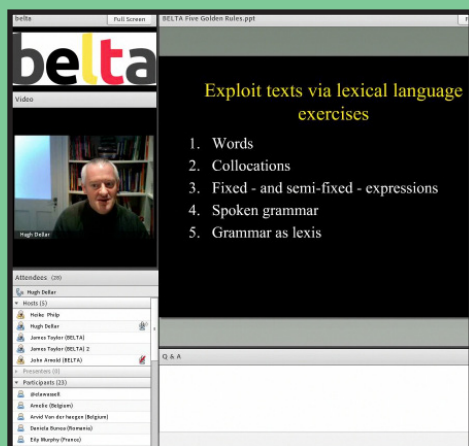
### About Ioanna

Ioanna is a teacher, an examiner, a speaker and founder of the Learning Gamification System. She has studied Business Administration, Psychology, HRM, TEFL/TESOL, Becoming a Teacher Trainer, Teaching Business English, Teaching Young Learners, Counselling Psychology in Education and Children, Marketing Management and Advertisement, NLP (Master Practitioner), Advanced Learning and Teaching Technologies, Teacher Development, Methodology in Teaching, Gamification and holds the CETT.





# make the most of belta



FOR MORE INFO GO TO BELTABELGIUM.COM



Stay in touch  
with... **bel**ta



[facebook.com/beltabelgium](https://facebook.com/beltabelgium)

[youtube.com/user/beltabelgium](https://youtube.com/user/beltabelgium)



e

[beltabelgium.com](https://beltabelgium.com)

[twitter.com/beltabelgium](https://twitter.com/beltabelgium)

