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OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

voices

LINKING, DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROFESSIONALS WORLDWIDE

July–August 2013 Issue 233

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IATEFL 47th International Annual Conference
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A photo-journal by Mike Hogan

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Albert Docks, Liverpool

It was great to be back in my photographer/reporter role again at this year's IATEFL Conference, which was in Liverpool this time. It has, as in previous years, really been a challenge to represent my conference highlights, as there were so many. So, here goes.

Pre-conference events Monday 8 April

On Monday the SIGs had their pre-conference events and representatives from the IATEFL Associates had their annual meet-up. I again had the privilege of sampling a number of the PCEs while taking photos, and started my day off in the Teacher Training and Education SIG (TTEd) where Penny Ur and Jeremy Harmer were leading sessions on lesson observations. Jeremy stated that time is the main feature, or perhaps obstacle, when doing lesson observations. It's not just the time for the observation itself that is necessary, but adequate time should be set aside for a pre-observation meeting with the observee during which a comfortable relationship is established and goals are discussed. It is also important to do the post-observation in the best way possible. Jeremy reminded us that no one can take in lots of feedback and we should keep it to three things. After both speakers gave short input sessions, we were put into small groups to react to and reflect on what was said, and share ideas from our own experience. I also popped into the TD SIG and LT SIG PCEs where the participants were obviously deeply engaged.

After lunch I then went first to Learning Technologies SIG where Kristina Smith was talking about autonomy in online and blended learning before going to Business English SIG where Bethany Cagnol told us how to use Pecha Kucha's in the business English classroom.

Jeremy Harmer at the TTEd SIG PCE

TD SIG PCE

Associates Day

Right: Bethany Cagnol at the BESIG PCE

Below: Michele Hunter and Shiela Vine at the BESIG PCE

In the evening, the outgoing IATEFL President Eric Baber and Lord Mayor of Liverpool Cllr Sharon Sullivan opened the conference and welcomed us all. It was a great opportunity to see old friends and make some new ones.

Above: Outgoing IATEFL President Eric Baber and Lord Mayor of Liverpool Cllr Sharon Sullivan. Below: Opening ceremony delegates

Registration

Jim Scrivener

Day 1 Tuesday 9 April

Although this was my third IATEFL, it was the first one at which I was giving presentations. I was very happy to see so many early risers for my first talk; an 8:15am session on 'How to be a successful freelancer' which looked at organisational issues behind freelancing as well as how to get and keep work. I then dashed to the main auditorium for the opening plenary talk by IATEFL patron Professor David Crystal. He started by quoting lyrics from well-known Beatles songs which contained grammatical inaccuracies due to syntactic blends, and then

David Crystal

presented further examples taken from the internet. These, we were told, arise because of a clash in choice between formal and informal usage. This clash was demonstrated with the two sentences 'This is the man to whom I was speaking' and 'This is the man who I was speaking to', which led to the utterance, *'This is the man to whom I was speaking to'. Blended constructions occur all the time in everyday language as people start a sentence and decide later to end it differently.

After the opening plenary I managed to squeeze myself a spot on the floor for Jim Scrivener's talk on how to 'demand high' despite being told the room was full. Being the IATEFL photographer does have its privileges. 'Demand high' (DH), we were told, is a meme based around the reflective question 'Am I engaging the full potential of my students in class?' Jim stated that modern language teaching is not pushing students and achieving what it is meant to achieve and challenged us to ask ourselves how we can get more from our materials and our learners.

After lunch, Işıl Boy's talk about mobile learning encouraged teachers to use online tools and sites to encourage 'pull' learning rather than 'pushing' content in their direction. If people can learn things when they want and need to, she told us, it is likely to be more effective.

After that I went to a talk about using EFL as a tool, or even weapon, to raise social awareness. Paul Shaw and Katie Quartano showed a number of activities and materials which can be used in the classroom to raise awareness of mobility disability issues by introducing the disability not through the topic of disability but through the activity, for example, playing basketball. Their free lesson plans and activities can be found on their website: www.disabled-accessfriendly.com.

Paul Shaw and Katie Quartano

Willy Cardoso

My last talk of the day was one on dynamic ELT curriculum by Willy Cardoso where he spoke about the balance between coursebook driven lessons and conversation lessons and the relationship between accuracy and fluency.

Above: The IATEFL Scholarship winners get-together. Below: Jeremy Harmer and Steve Bingham

On Tuesday evening, my first stop was the scholarship winner's get-together. I then went to the ERF awards where Jeremy Harmer did some readings from prize-winning ELT readers with musical accompaniment from Steve Bingham before presenting the winner with their awards.

Day 2 Wednesday 10 April

Wednesday morning kicked off with Dr Deniz Kurtoğlu Eken's plenary talk on teacher motivation. After a lively warm-up, which included bringing me and others onto the stage, she told us of her research which looked at teacher motivation, how teachers see themselves and their work, and what teaching staff and those in academic management would like to say to each other. This included a useful list of teacher training and development ideas.

The IATEFL AGM, held during the lunch break, was a good opportunity to learn more

The IATEFL Committee at the AGM

New President Carol Read with the gavel

about the association, how it's run, and who's on the committee.It also gave the members the opportunity to discuss recent activities and future plans directly with the committee. It was also when Eric Baber gave way to Carol Read as the new IATEFL president, who took to using the gavel with great gusto.

In the afternoon, I went to Sanaa Khatter's poster presentation on collaborative discussions

Sanaa Khatter

between teachers from Egypt and Yemen in which they debated issues on curriculum, exams and classroom size and their effects in each country.

Next on my programme was Lindsay Warwick's talk on flipped learning, where she spoke about her experiences in running courses with flipped elements. She suggested first watching instructional videos in class and directly discussing them in class. In order to help teachers wanting to start flipping their lessons, she recommended Ted Ed as an online source of video lessons and accompanying resources which can enable you to flip any lesson.

Lindsey Warwick

Bruna Benedetti Caltabiano

Following my interests in the business side of being an ELT professional, I then went to Bruna Benedetti Caltabiano's talk on how lesson planning can help business planning. This very interesting and insightful talk drew parallels between the two: how class profiles, assumptions, clarity, limitations, specification of aims and objectives, timing and timetable fit; how anticipated problems and possible solutions, and success indicators we may be familiar with from lesson planning can be very easily mirrored to help us create business plans. Her talk lowered the perceived barriers to ELT entrepreneurialism and showed the audience that we all have transferable skills which will be useful for those wishing to take the step.

In keeping with the Beatles references which were coming thick and fast throughout the week, the Macmillan Cavern Club party later that evening was excellent.

Day 3 Thursday 11 April

After the plenary session, I spent the morning exploring the exhibition hall and finding out about the latest courses, learning platforms

Felicitas van Vloten (left) and Lizzie Wojtkowska (right) at the Exhibition.

Browsing books at the Exhibition

Cleve Miller and James Hoyle

Amel Znaidi Abbes & Rachid Tagoulla during coffee

Simon Greenall

The IATEFL Failure Fest with Rakesh Bahnot (pictured right)

and software, and browsing books at stands that had them.

In the afternoon I gave my second talk, which looked at using eWorkbooks to encourage autonomous learning on the move. Then I went to Pete Sharma and Louis Rogers' afternoon talk on differentiation, which looked at scenarios, business mazes, and virtual learning environments, before going to Simon Greenall's talk on the decline and fall of the coursebook. He discussed the reasons why coursebooks are important tools for the transmission of curricula, not only in terms of language, but also other important factors such as 'laying the foundations for improving overall qualities of people' and cultivating talent with innovative and cross-cultural capabilities' as, for example, stipulated in Chinese curricula. Alternatives to coursebooks, such as TBL, Dogme, CLIL and digital solutions, were also discussed, and he reminded us that these alternatives may be very good for specific sets of circumstances, but not all. He concluded by thinking about the changing business models in ELT publishing with the comment that 'if authors are no longer offered royalties, and editors are losing their jobs, we are risking losing a level of professional expertise in our business'. A poignant message for us all.

Coincidentally, Simon's talk in the auditorium was directly followed by the great ELTJ debate. This year, Scott Thornbury was proposing the motion that published course materials don't reflect the lives or needs of learners, while Catherine Walter took the opposing position. Both speakers had convincing and humourous arguments which generated a lot of commentary from the floor afterwards.

Scott Thornbury

The evening's event was the first IATEFL Failure Fest in which well-known faces from our industry were given 4 minutes and 30 secunds to tell the audience of the failures they've experienced in life and, if applicable, how they overcame them. It was a fun event and I recommend watching the recording on the IATEFL Online Website

IATEFL Online

By the way, a number of other talks, interviews and events were also recorded and are available at http://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2013/

Day 4 Friday 12 April

The final day of the conference kept the standard high, first with plenary speaker Susan Barduhn, whose research looked at the sense of identity of the expat teacher. Counting myself as part of this group, I enjoyed being referred to as a postmodern paladin, but could also identify with being a cultural marginal. This, we were told, is someone neither fully in the culture they left behind nor in the one in which they call home.

Later, Rachael Roberts talked about how to use a coursebook and engaging with emergent language. She used nice metaphors to demonstrate that a syllabus should be a framework and not rigid, and that coursebooks should be used flexibly, as their authors intended.

The conference ended with the closing plenary by well-known poet Roger McGough. This sometimes funny, sometimes sad, always touching recital of his poetry was the perfect end to a fab four days.

Roger McGough

For more conference pictures, see my Flickr page: www.flickr.com/photos/irishmikeh/sets and click on IATEFL 2013. Contact: about.me/mikehogan.