

# ELT News

## Tribute to Richard Pemberton

A former committee member of the Learner Autonomy SIG, Richard Pemberton passed away peacefully at home in Nottingham in the early hours of 19 January 2012.

From January 2006, Richard was Associate Professor in TESOL in the School of Education, University of Nottingham, and he had previously worked for nearly 15 years at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. At HKUST Richard was responsible for setting up and coordinating the self-access centre; he was also the leading organiser of two groundbreaking conferences on learner autonomy in language education in 1994 and 2004, co-editing the similarly landmark publications from each conference: *Taking Control: Autonomy in Language Learning* (1996) and *Maintaining Control: Autonomy and Language Learning* (2009), both of which were published by Hong Kong University Press. Convinced from an early age that the one profession he would never join was teaching, Richard changed his mind after doing Voluntary Service Overseas in Lesotho between school and university. Richard taught ESL for eight years at secondary level in the UK and Zimbabwe and at tertiary level in Papua New Guinea before moving to Hong Kong.

While Richard will be remembered for his many contributions to the learner autonomy field over the last 20 years, he will also stay in the hearts and minds of friends, students and teachers all over the world for the quiet, unassuming and invariably humorous ways in which he supported them and enriched their lives. Diagnosed with metastatic prostate cancer in the summer of 2010, Richard continued to live a rich and active life, observing the world with a wry sense of humour, and sharing his observations via his blog with unrelenting honesty and an inspirational degree of courage. Richard is survived by his wife, Norma, and their three children, Natalie, Leon and Louis.

**Jo Mynard**

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## A newly launched website helps teachers shape the world

Following on from Sara Hannam's column in *Voices* 216, the Disabled Access Friendly Campaign group has launched a new website to help you be the kind of teacher that makes a difference for tomorrow. [www.disabled-access-friendly.com](http://www.disabled-access-friendly.com) provides EFL teaching material which can be used in class for skills building, projects or examination practice, but which at the same time stimulates students to put themselves in the shoes of someone with a mobility disability, for a better understanding of their needs and feelings.

You can find worksheets, graded reading texts and a gallery of photos and video clips, all of which will open your students' eyes and maybe yours too! The material has no expiry date and can be used over and over again for new classes of students. It is relevant to ELT teachers worldwide as it is not culturally bound. Much more than just grammar and vocabulary are learned in the classroom. Social skills, empathy,



understanding and critical thinking also play a huge role in the education process. By using the free online teaching material, you can help demystify the issue of disability, break down the barriers that exclude people with mobility disability from many areas of life (and these are not just physical barriers) and address society's sometimes patronising and negative attitudes towards people with physical disabilities.

The website also explains how language centres and schools can make small changes to their premises to facilitate people with mobility disability, as well as provide a forum to share experiences.

By raising your students' awareness of the society in which they live, you can help pave the way for future generations to want and make changes. Let's not forget that people with a mobility disability are disabled more by inaccessible infrastructure and other people's attitudes and behaviour than they are by their own physical situation. It is largely through omission and ignorance that they are isolated, disempowered and excluded from actively participating in everyday activities. So if you can show your students that people with disabilities do not have to be an invisible minority, but vibrant and valued members of society, you will be playing a part in making the future more enlightened.

Even if there are no children with a mobility disability at the foreign language centre or school where you teach, you can still do a lot to help them. Even if you rarely see people with a mobility disability going about their daily business in the streets or shops, or in places of business or entertainment, you can still make their lives better. And all this without ever having to set foot outside your classroom.

It always feels good to put something back into the world. As Anne Frank said 'How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world'. You need only a few seconds to click on [www.disabled-accessfriendly.com](http://www.disabled-accessfriendly.com) and start doing just that.

**Katie Quartano**

*(first submitted for publication to ELT News, Greece).*