

## ELT NEWS

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### [The 47th Annual IATEFL Conference and Exhibition](#)



#### **Liverpool, 9th-12th April 2013**

Over the course of the past 12 years, during which I have attended nine IATEFL conferences, many friends and colleagues have wondered about the value of my going all the way to the UK, to attend a lengthy and expensive conference.

It is not a coincidence that this question has never come from a person who has actually attended IATEFL and the reason for that is that they know that IATEFL is worth making the sacrifice, because it is a springboard to new projects, new knowledge and more motivation.

During those four or five days IATEFL gives delegates the chance to breathe the air of the International English Language Teaching and become immersed in it. To be part of this festivity is a true honour, no matter if one is a teacher, a trainer or a materials developer.

This year picturesque Liverpool, the city of Beetles, set the backdrop for our ELT fest. I had never known that Liverpool was such an amazingly beautiful place. Friends told me that its beauty is new found, owed mainly to extensive renovations made on the dock area.

**By Maria Gogou – Sachpazian, RSA dip/TEFL**

As a native of Thessaloniki I would strongly suggest that our port authorities visit Liverpool to see what can be done to turn ugly docks into a place of culture. The venue, a truly amazing conference centre, offered not only comfort but also all the latest digital amenities.

Needless to say, the organising committee of IATEFL led by President Eric Baber, IATEFL Executive Secretary Glenda Smart and Conference Organiser Alison Medland

did not just meet but exceeded the expectations of the over 2000 participants. In this number we need to add the thousands of viewers of the Liverpool Online Live streaming which has become a feature of this conference.

As plenary speaker Susan Barduhn pointed out, “the Online streaming of the conference really makes IATEFL reach billions of people”.

### **The Liverpool experience**

My IATEFL week started with the PCE event on Monday, 8th April. This year, I opted to attend the Teacher Training and Education SIG, coordinated by Birsen Tutunis, who ran a workshop on What it takes to be a teacher trainer.

Participants were really pleased to spend the day discussing issues related to observations and ways of giving feedback with our two exceptional presenters Jeremy Harmer and Penny Ur, who, along with Simon Greenall, have recently received an OBE from the Queen for their services to English Language Teaching.

The next few days were spent in a panic of dashing from one session to the other, posting on Facebook or Twitting about the conference and practising my own presentation. I wish there was space for all presentations to be included but, alas, I will focus on plenaries only, though readers must have already seen them by now. If not, there is still chance as the material remains on the IATEFL website.



### **Plenaries**

This year the choice of plenary speakers was very indicative of the message IATEFL wanted to put across. David Crystal, Patron of IATEFL, and a scouser (ie a native of Liverpool) was an obvious choice. Along with ex IATEFL president Susan Bardhun, they were the people IATEFL wanted to honour.

Turkish dame de force, Deniz Kurtoglou Eken, was a choice that points out the non-native and truly international streak in the development of ELT, while Jun Liu, ex- TESOL Inc President and Associate Provost from Georgia State University in Atlanta, represented the Americas.

Finally, poet Roger McGough represented the arts and the city of Liverpool. So the blend of the plenary speakers reflected the diversity of IATEFL and also the fact that it aims to cater for the diverse interests of millions of teachers around the world.

David Crystal, in his spirited, entertaining and emotional presentation entitled *The World in which we live in: Beetles, blends and blogs*, used lyrics from the songs of Beatles, as well as material from blogs and websites to present syntactic blends.

### **David Crystal**

Crystal started by pointing out the 'printing' mistake in the title of his presentation and then explained that it was not a mistake at all and that the lyric appears in this form in the song 'Live and Let die'. He then went on to explain that this extra 'in' is actually needed metrically and added that when music calls, grammar obeys. The speaker mentioned that syntactic blends, contrary to vocabulary ones which become part of the language, do not get into the grammar.

They are usually caused because the speaker is uncertain about which form to use, formal or informal, and ends up using both. This can happen more frequently when the distance between the subject of the verb and the verb itself is a long one or when the period of speech consists of many chunks, more than the writer's working memory can process.

David Crystal's plenary highlighted for me the ability of the teacher, in this case the plenary speaker, to make an amusing presentation of a heavy linguistic topic without sacrificing the scientific value of the issues presented while keeping the audience entertained.



On the following day, Wednesday, Deniz Kurtoglou Eken, from Sabanci University, went on stage to give a plenary that was both a presentation of a research and a show with live participants. Entitled *The ELT weather forecast: perceptions on effectiveness and teacher motivation*, Kurtoglou presented a qualitative study which she carried out internationally, in 2013.

Deniz identified certain areas (such as methodology, research, curriculum, assessment, technology etc) and asked participants to discuss their effectiveness in these areas. Some of the metaphors participants came up with were teachers seeing themselves as plate spinners, glorified secretaries or people who are hopelessly in chase of the ELT apple which keeps eluding them as ELT develops.

Next, the speaker presented participants' replies on the issue of giving feedback to academic managers. Although participants expressed their gratefulness to the managers, they also expressed complaints for being seen as faceless workers and about school leadership being decided not on the basis of who is an effective school leader but who is older or has been at the school longer.

### **Deniz Kurtoglou Eken**

In the issue of teacher motivation Kurtoglou presented findings that point out the diverse nature of motivating factors and explained that what teachers find most motivating is better policies, better learning environment and, to some extent, better pay.



On Thursday, we left the weather forecast behind us to cast an eye on The Future of ELT with Prof. Jun Liu as our guide. Jun Liu mentioned that the context of global change needs to be studied so that we can infer the impact those changes will have on what we do.

Liu, stated that in the near future we will need to reconsider if it is of any value to break our schools into departments, and he advocated seeking collaborative learning environments and forming cross-disciplinary teams of teachers. The speaker mentioned that the future of our students does not depend on one teacher, but on groups of teachers.

Liu believes that all the aspects of the ELT field (associations, field study & research and professionals) will be affected by globalisation. Liu re-defined ELT professionals as those who can make decisions or influence pedagogical choices.

These professionals ought to have knowledge, ethics, authority, autonomy, power and view the teaching of English as a full-time, lifelong journey. Liu believes that in the near future ELT professionals will see learners as users of the language, who can acquire knowledge through other means.

### **Prof. Jun Liu**

These language users will learn in global learning ecosystems and as they will be digital natives, they will need to be handled differently from how we have been handling learners so far. Some of the issues Jun Liu raised are whether the users will be educated via textbooks or whether digital literacies will have taken over.

This, Professor Liu described as digital everything and, interestingly enough, he mentioned that these learners will have very little tolerance for completing worksheets unless these can compete in excitement with the computer games they will be playing. Jun Liu ended his plenary by advocating that we should not rely on practices just because they were revered in the past.

On Susan Bardhun, professor at SIT Graduate Institute, took the stage to talk about Language Dealings. Bardhun started her sessions by referring to research she had carried out on the cultural identity of the expatriate teacher. In this research one of the participants said that if English language teaching was the drug, expatriate language teachers were the dealers. In her session Bardhun used this metaphor as well as that of the knight errant, introduced by Dr Bill Johnston.

The ex IATEFL president posed the following questions to introduce the subject to the audience: is the dealer necessary a drug taker? Are dealers exploiters? and What is the purpose of the drug? Remaining in the drug metaphor the speaker wondered if the metaphor changes once we think that the drug is not English but pedagogy, values, culture, or ELT methodology.

Bardhun analysed the concept of the expatriate teachers of English from a post-modernist perspective, and likened expatriate teachers to the knight errant who sought adventure both for self-realisation but also for gain and fame.

The post-modern knight errant (the expatriate English teacher) has the nobility to wish to educate others and is a restless traveller but unlike the medieval Knight errant, does not necessary intend to go back. Susan Bardhun rounded off her session by looking at a new drug, Mandarin as a Foreign Language, and she considered the effects that Chinese expatriate teachers might have as language dealers.

The second plenary of Friday, and the last one of the 2013 conference, added its cultural and non-EFL touch. Led by Liverpool poet Roger McGough, On a lighter note took participants on a short trip to the world of poetry and provided a much needed diversion from professional issues.



This conference was marked by a particularly strong Greek presence, both from Athens and Thessaloniki. Our TESOL TAs can boast for a set of scholarship winners each. Dimitris Primalis and Chrysanthe Sotiriou, from TESOL GREECE were this year's winners of the IATEFL Learning Technologies SIG Diana Eastment Scholarship.

They presented a lively workshop entitled Literature strikes back! Teaching Literature with technology. Paul Shaw and Katie Quartano, winners of the TESOL Macedonia-Thrace Julia Tanner Memorial Scholarship, presented a workshop entitled Lessons in Life that matter.

Always active Marisa Constantinides presented a talk, along with Shaun Wilden, entitled Autonomous professional development begins at home. Luke Prodromou led a workshop entitled Difficult Students: techniques for building self esteem while Nick Michelioudakis gave a spirited and entertaining talk on Implementing Change.

Sophia Mavridi led a workshop on Raising students' awareness of internet safety through ELT while Dina Dobrou presented a talk entitled YLS and Blogging in the Interactive Language Fair.

### **The Greek presence**

Christina Gkonou, PhD candidate from the University of Essex presented a talk entitled The classroom behaviour of ELT learners: agency and anxiety. Natassa Manitsa, of Express Publishing, gave a talk entitled Battle your fears in the ESP classroom, while Carol Everhard presented Peer mentoring as a bridge to successful self-access language learning.

Finally yours truly presented a talk entitled Assessing the unassessed or the unassessable: issues of School Evaluation. Some of these talks/workshops have been filmed, so do visit [www.iatefl.org](http://www.iatefl.org) and the conference page to watch them.

### **Closing Remarks**

Words cannot express my pride in the fact that during such difficult times our two TESOL TAs were so well represented by so many worthy presenters. On top of that

three Greek publishing houses, Express Publishing, Global ELT and MM Publications made their appearance in the Book Exhibition.

Lastly and most importantly, this time we really bonded as delegates from the same country and spent so much time together that often Greek could be heard in the lounges of the BT Conference centre and participants from other countries would ask us where we came from. We put Greece on the IATEFL map and for me this accomplishment counts more than the personal success each one of us met with at this convention.

Let's keep up the good work and see you all at Harrogate from April 1st – April 5th, 2014!

<http://www.eltnews.gr/news/771-the-47th-annual-iatefl-conference-and-exhibition>