

Supplement: The UK's top 100 language schools

# el·gazette

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## Winning UK language schools

From day to boarding, summer to  
year round – who comes out top?

### **HIRING BIAS**

Is online discrimination  
a thing?

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How language tied  
early humans together

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The state of language  
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# The annual rankings

Which are the top ranked English language schools in the UK – and why? After a tumultuous year we publish this year's list

Without mentioning the dreaded C word – we've all heard more than enough about it during the past nearly two years – this has been a tricky time for many, not least the English language teaching sector. So, how have the schools fared? Who's still standing and which ones top our league table?

EL Gazette's founder, Melanie Butler, has spent many hours slavishly going over the results of 112 schools and ranking them for the benefit of those deciding where to send students to and for the schools themselves. Included are 15 areas the schools are judged on, covering such diverse topics as safeguarding to staff management and course design, for a fully rounded picture of each institution. In our 2021-22 rankings supplement, we've also put together the essential key on how to read the table, as well as more in-depth explanatory notes on what a British boarding school actually is (and no, it very rarely resembles Hogwarts), where universities fit in and the benefits of studying for an MA in English language teaching. Turn to page 13 to read all about it.

“This has been a tricky time for many, not least the English language teaching sector”

Elsewhere in the magazine we preview two exciting events: the British Council's ELTons Innovation Awards (page 11), which recognise the individuals, teams and organisations producing original courses, publications, apps and other projects to help English language teachers and students around the world; and ICEF Berlin (page 26), the international education industry's largest B2B networking event, which takes place this year from 31 October to 3 November.

Along with a fascinating look at research findings on how language first emerged and the way in which we learn new languages, we've included an English language teacher's findings on the bias in online hiring (page 32), which will no doubt resonate with many. There's also an opinion piece raising the timely question of how British colonisation has influenced the rise of English language acquisition, though perhaps not in the way you may think (page 30).

Especially for teachers, there's a review of a useful book (page 35) that will help you answer all those tricky questions your students ask and, finally, we catch up with news and updates from around the world as it affects and influences the teaching and learning of English.

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PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK

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# British Council struggles to survive as UK cuts cultural relations to 20 countries

By Melanie Butler

The British Government has slashed its funding to the British Council by reducing the so-called Grant-in-Aid, which covers much of the Council's work on educational development and cultural relations. The money represents just 15% of the Council's income in its annual report, compared to 56% of the Council's £1.3 billion turnover generated by English language teaching and exams.

Reports in the UK press that the Council would not have a presence in 20 countries is exaggerated. The Council has confirmed that, while financial difficulties will lead inevitably to cuts in staff and operations, many of the teaching centres and exam services, which are self-funding, will remain open in countries no longer funded by the Government.

"As a result of a ministerial decision, we will no longer be able to spend Grant-in-Aid in as many countries as we do today," a British Council spokesperson confirmed. "We are still working through what this means for each country."

However, the spokesperson emphasised that, "Where it is still viable to do so, we aim to continue existing teaching or exam operations in these countries."

Grant-in-Aid programming will cease entirely in 11 countries, including English-speaking Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA. Operations in Afghanistan, where many teachers were left in fear of their lives when the UK Government refused to evacuate them, have already closed.

Exam services and online teaching are currently on-going in Namibia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Belgium. In Uruguay, the Council continues to work through its partner the Instituto Cultural Anglo-Uruguayano. Meanwhile in Chile, the British Council Teaching Centre (visited by Boris Johnson in 2018 – see picture above) is continuing to offer face-to-face teaching.

All Government money to these countries for cultural relations has been cut, but the



Boris Johnson, then Foreign Secretary, at the British Council Teaching Centre in Chile in 2018

British Council told the *Gazette*, "In the future we may also deliver additional cultural relations work, provided these can be funded by other sources."

“The strategy of operating online, adopted for Grant-in-Aid work in some countries, is another cornerstone in the Council’s fight for survival”

In an additional nine countries the Council are proposing that Grant-in-Aid programming will be run remotely from a neighbouring country. These include Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Slovakia and Slovenia, where the Council currently runs exam services. In Switzerland, the exam centres are being run by Australia's IDP.

Unless the British Council continues running exam centres at a profit, the Government faces a dilemma in continuing

with its existing migration policy. Currently all migrants to the UK and some international students must take a Secure English Language Test, of which IELTS, with some three million candidates a year, is by far the largest. Exams must be taken in a secure English language test centre, which in the case of IELTS must be run either by the Council or by IDP, one of the world's biggest language travel agencies, which is – or was until recently – majority owned by a consortium of Australian universities.

Does the UK want all the profits from its immigration testing system to end up in Australia?

The strategy of operating online, adopted for Grant-in-Aid work in some countries, is another cornerstone in the Council's fight for survival, as their spokesperson makes clear. "We will also be expanding our online opportunities that will be open to everyone with an internet connection. For example, learning English online, taking part in teacher training or visiting a film or arts festival remotely," they told the *Gazette*.

Council plans to continue to expand its online language teaching will infuriate many in the UK ELT industry, who see its primary role as a partner with the biggest of the UK's three extant

accreditation schemes, the fourth, ABLIS, having folded during the pandemic.

In recent months, many UK schools have called for an alternative to the Council, whose online teaching is seen as "direct competition".

Industry observers argue that in its fight for survival, the Council cannot surrender its income from 250,000 online learners in order to continue to help run an accreditation scheme delivered at cost. Under current UK immigration rules, English UK members are free to apply for accreditation by BAC or ASIC. This would leave the Council free to run language schools in the UK or, a much more profitable option, bring in children and teachers from its existing overseas summer schools, observers believe.

Meanwhile, the British Council is planning major cutbacks: "Despite everyone's efforts, we are clear that we will be unable to sustain ourselves financially in the years ahead unless we take further action," a spokesperson made clear.

"Our estimate is that, sadly, we will need to reduce the overall number of roles across our organisation by around 15-20% over two years. We will do whatever we can to reduce the number of colleagues impacted."

PHOTO BY DAVID LAKE



# Filipino teachers feel impact of China's new rules

By Melanie Butler

Filipino teachers have been among the worst hit by China's crackdown on online English Language classes, part of wide-ranging reforms of China's after-school education industry which has introduced bans on profit-making companies operating in the market for 6-15-year-olds, restrictions on the number of hours students can be taught and, most recently, the announcement that teachers working online with Chinese children must be resident in China.

"Filipino teachers have been among the largest providers of online English teaching services in China since 2010," according to Sixth Tone, an English medium news website owned by a state-controlled media company. Early pioneers of the use of online teachers were 51Talk and ALO7, which set up their first overseas operations in Manila.

In April last year, the founder of 51Talk, Jack Huang, celebrated 10

years of the company's operations in the Philippines with the promise of thousands more jobs to add to the 30,000 teachers already working for them.

Initially, Covid provided a boost to the online tutoring industry in China, with 51Talk, part of the China Online Education Group, seeing 23% year-on-year growth in the first quarter of this year. Further, the online boom provided a boon for the teachers who were laid off when the country's private language schools were forced

**“Initially Covid proved a boost to the online tutoring industry in China”**

to close, many permanently, when the pandemic hit inbound tourism.

One source in the Philippines told the *Gazette* that the local language travel market has “totally



PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK

collapsed. We were getting 70-plus flights a week from Korea full of Koreans coming to ESL schools. Now they have all long gone and the pandemic rages on here.”

At the moment, the online industry is also on its knees, with the market value of the China Online Education Group down 88% in the past 12 months.

“Now China has pulled the plug on online English, thousands of

so-called online Filipino English language teachers have lost their jobs,” says our source.

Students had been choosing Filipino teachers because they were both affordable and professional. English is one of the official languages of the Philippines, and Filipino English teachers possess the same professional TEFL qualifications as their American counterparts.

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By Gillian Ragsdale

Insults and metaphors may have characterised the earliest prehistoric human languages, according to a study by Antonio Benítez-Burraco at the University of Seville in Spain and Ljiljana Progovac at Wayne State University, Detroit, USA.

The classical technique used by linguists compares all languages currently spoken or recorded for similarities and differences, producing detailed trees and maps of how languages have evolved over time. But this method cannot reach back into prehistory beyond 10 thousand years ago and therefore cannot tell us about the very first human languages arising gradually as much as 200 thousand years ago or even earlier. Benítez-Burraco and Progovac have brought together work from linguistics, human evolution and psychiatry to shed light on how speakers of these very first languages communicated.

One of the key features of human thought and language is 'cross-modality': our ability to take two unrelated concepts and merge them into a new concept, often turning something concrete into something abstract. The familiar outcome includes figurative speech and metaphor. If I tell you that I am a 'night owl', you understand that I am not actually a bird. If I call you a 'couch potato', I do not really think you are a vegetable.

The ability to make new meaning that is more than

# Prehistoric languages

## How the Stone Age was more about hurling words than rocks

the sum of the parts requires increased connectivity across the brain such as has occurred during human evolution. This increased connectivity also enables the generation of 'ideaphones' that

“It may not seem like it, but rapid, reactive aggression appears to have decreased during human evolution”

use other senses, such as sound and shape, to convey meaning, for example, 'tick-tock'.

In psychiatry, many conditions are associated with changes in the use of language. In some, like synaesthesia and schizophrenia, cross-modality is increased, while in others, such as autistic spectrum disorder, it is decreased. Alongside these changes in cross-modality, there tend to also be changes in reactive aggression, ie, aggression as a rapid response to a trigger.

In general, increased cross-modality tends to be associated with decreased aggression and this may reflect what happened during human brain evolution. It

may not seem like it, but rapid, reactive aggression appears to have decreased during human evolution, although sadly, premeditated aggression increased and is characteristically human.

A common substitute for physical aggression is to use verbal insults. All languages have a range of insults, such as 'vivid compounds', where two words, often a noun and a verb, are put together to give a negative meaning, for example, tattle-tale and cry-baby in English or *muti-voda* ('muddy-water', meaning trouble-maker) and *vuci-guz* ('drag-butt', meaning slow-moving person) in Serbian. These insulting vivid compounds employ similar mental, linguistic processes to creating metaphors.

Benítez-Burraco and Progovac propose that early prehistoric language evolution involved developing a fine balance between increasing connectivity between parts of the brain and inhibiting pathways in the brain that lead to reactive aggression. This is part of the gradual distancing of language processing from emotion in general, which enables a more considered use of language and the evolution of grammatical complexity.

The general reduction in reactive aggression mirrors the

reduction in aggression seen in domesticated animals. Throughout human history, cultures have tended to put pressure on people to conform, co-operate and be less aggressive – resulting in a form of self-domestication.

Adding the modern-day evidence from a range of psychiatric conditions supporting a connection between brain connectivity, aggression and language, the resulting model of prehistoric language evolution proposes a feedback loop. In this model, increasing brain connectivity and decreasing aggression drive the emergence and use of figurative language, along with using verbal rather than physical aggression, which in turn accelerates the engine of cultural changes, such as self-domestication and further reduced aggression.

As Winston Churchill famously asserted: 'meeting jaw to jaw is better than war'.

### REFERENCE

■ Benítez-Burraco, A. and Progovac, L. (2021) *Language evolution: examining the link between cross-modality and aggression through the lens of disorders*, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 376: 20200188. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2020.018>



# Learning strange new words boosts long-term vocabulary

By Gillian Ragsdale

Learning words that are similar to the learner's native language is easier in the short term, but learning less-familiar words pays off over the longer term, according to a study from Northwestern University and the University of Kansas in the US.

When learning any new language, some words may seem familiar due to the pattern of the letters and/or the sound being similar to words in the student's native language. Some of these are 'false friends', such as *Rat* in German, which means 'advice'. Learners seem to pick up these familiar words more easily, but does this enable or interfere with long-term vocabulary acquisition?

The US team put this to the test by recruiting 38 English-speaking university students to learn sets of pseudowords from computer-generated languages. The students were divided into two groups and each group was given a list of 48 five-letter words to learn.

One group was given a list of words with letter patterns similar to English, eg, 'haner', meaning 'bride' while the other group had less-familiar looking and sounding words, eg, 'vobaf', meaning 'cloud'.

After learning the new words, the students were tested by giving them the meanings and asking them to supply the new word. Unsurprisingly, students learning the more familiar words scored significantly higher on this test.

Two weeks later, the students were given new lists of 48 words. For each group, the new list of words was related to the first list by making letter substitutions, eg, 'hajer' and 'tobaf'.

This time when the students were tested, there was no difference in scores between the two groups. But this does not mean that there was no difference in how successful the two groups were in learning the new vocabulary overall.

In the second lists, the words were selected to be equally similar



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to English for both groups, so any advantage could not be due to direct similarity to English for one group compared to the other (unlike the first test scores).

In the second test, the students who had learned the initially unfamiliar words were significantly more likely to recall the second set of related words. This suggests that if students pay the initial cost in terms of effort

to learn less-familiar vocabulary, they will reap the later benefit of being able to acquire additional vocabulary more easily.

## REFERENCE

■ Marian V. Bartolotti J, van den Berg A and Hayakawa S (2021) Costs and Benefits of Native Language Similarity for Non-native Word Learning. *Frontiers in Psychology* 12:651506. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.651506

## HELBLING ENGLISH

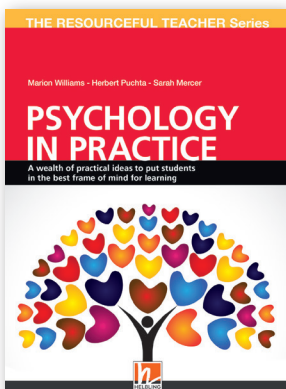
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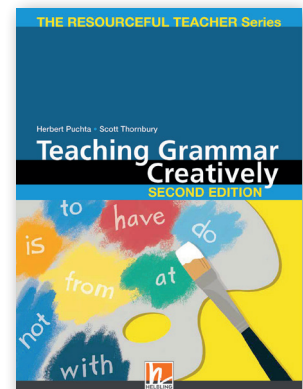


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# And the winner is...

The British Council's ELTons recognise those creating innovations in the field of language teaching. We take a look at those who've made it to the 2021 shortlist

**R**eading the list of finalists for this year's ELTons, ELT's very own Oscars, three main trends emerge: digitalisation, inclusion and cross-border collaboration. With entries from over 20 countries, it's clear these sectors are global.

In the Digital Innovation category, the entry from the Centre for Inclusive English Language Learning (CIELL) is **CIELL-Comics for Inclusive English Language Learning**, the result of a collaboration between a UK university, a Greek college of art and design, a German institute for innovation and a university language centre in Cyprus. Their digitalised offer is "designed to support students with (and without) dyslexia", according to its creators, by offering "an inclusive, gamified approach" to essay planning.

Apps abound in the shortlist. The **Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary** is now on an app; primary kids using Pearson's new **English Code** get their practice materials on theirs; Peachey Publications has an app for teachers and there's a homework one for students from LearnCube.

Apps are not the only platforms. **BOOKR Class**, from Hungary, has a whole library both on an app and in an online classroom version.

Also online is a literacy tool, **Fiction Express** from Boolino SL, based in Spain and the UK, which involves learners in the writing of the site's own stories. For those still hankering for a printed book, there is the wonderfully named **Escape the classroom** from one of two finalists from Perceptia Press UK and Japan.

Digital offerings come in many formats. For online learners there is the online **English Pronunciation Course**, tailored to fit the student's native language, from Luke Nicholson's Improve Your English Accent website.

On video, we have **Days Crossing**, a drama series from New Zealand company Chasing Time English, that uses humour and surprises

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to engage students, and **Sensations English**, using news-based footage. There's also Digital Learning Associates' **Vloggers Academy**, which features professional YouTubers from Jamaica to Hong Kong.

The range of tools used is wide: audio downloads and workbooks for young learners in CUP's **Fun Skills**; Virtual Reality with **Immerse Virtual Language Learning Experience** from the US and the AI behind the personal feedback on IELTS essays delivered by Australia's **Literatu Scribo**.

**“Diversity and inclusion is a theme across all categories”**

Diversity and inclusion is a theme across all categories. For example, Perceptia Press is on the Course Innovation shortlist for **Helping Matters**, a programme for Japanese social workers needing English to deal with the country's foreign residents. Meanwhile, under Student Resources, we find an English course for Paralympic power lifters produced in Germany.

The shortlist for Teacher's Resources covers a wealth of inclusive materials with **Communicating Identities** from Routledge, **Teacher Wellbeing** from OUP and two CUP titles: **Teaching in Challenging Circumstances** and **Engaging Language Learners in Contemporary Classrooms**. And lest we exclude very young learners, they're the subject of **Teaching English to Pre-Primary Children** from DELTA Publishing.

In the Local Innovation shortlist, inclusion predominates with a **Booklet of basic grammar in American Sign Language and pictures for deaf and hard of hearing learners in Oman**; and guidance and

resources for **Volunteers, English Language Learners and Conversation Club** in the UK produced by the Learning and Work Institute with Learning Unlimited and much welcomed by volunteers.

"I am so glad the resources have been converted for online use," one conversation organiser is quoted as saying, "it's exactly what we all need."

Several volunteer projects have made the list of finalists. Former winner The Hands Up project is back in **Facebook Live Team Teaching for the Palestinian English Curriculum** and there is even a **Mosaik Dogme Toolkit** for teachers of refugees, produced with Scott Thornbury.

Cultural inclusion is not left out. From Belarus comes **Converse Across the Universe: Managing Cross-Cultural Communication** by Yelena Golovatch, Margarita Kochan and Yauheni Radzetski, From China we have **Talk about China**. Produced by OUP China with Jingban Beijing Education, this listening and speaking course blends Chinese culture with a world perspective.

Linguistic inclusion is an important concern in a profession where the student's mother tongue and the other languages they happen to speak have been banned from the classroom. All students' languages, including art and social media, is the dominant theme in **Our Languages**, a course for Brazilian teenagers from StandFor with FTD Educação. Another digital language underlies Pearson's **Code English**, which has a STEAM syllabus.

International collaboration is behind **Oxford Discover English**, produced by OUP teams in the UK, Egypt, Mexico, Turkey, Spain and the Middle East. But our vote for global collaboration goes to the Finnish not-for-profit which launched **Link Online Learners**, "a diverse and inclusive global network", with learners and educators in 13 countries, including Australia, Nigeria, North Macedonia and Vietnam.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BRITISH COUNCIL

# The sorry state of UK language schools

By Melanie Butler

Finding out exactly what has happened to the UK language sector during Covid isn't easy. The British Council website only lists centres which are still accredited, not those which are no longer accredited, and doesn't indicate if they've gone out of business.

The only list of closures in the UK was released by the association English UK last December. It listed 30 centres, one of which re-appeared alive and kicking last month.

Right now on the accreditation list, we have operations with no schools, no teachers and a company in liquidation; and those operations which were taken off the list when they went into liquidation and have re-emerged and been re-listed, even though the company is still in the hands of the liquidator. Now the British Council has decided other schools in liquidation will have their accreditation 'suspended' and their names withdrawn from the list pending investigation, but which maybe be re-instated.

It's like a remake of *The Night of the Living Dead*. As one principal put it, "None of us knows who's still in business, who's legit and who's not."

On 9 August the following claim appeared in the *Times Higher Education (THE)*, the newspaper for UK universities: "One in six of the UK's 415 language schools – 69 in total – closed in the first year of the pandemic, with many more to follow." But is that accurate?

Not exactly. To start with, there are not now, were not before Covid and probably never have been 415 accredited private language schools in the UK. At least, that's the case if by language schools we mean privately owned centres largely dedicated to teaching English, or English plus other languages, all year round. Of the 413 accredited centres listed by the British Council as of 1 September, just 271 are described in their inspection reports as private language schools and four of those have been accredited during the pandemic.

If we eliminate schools from that list which do not run year round or which form part



PHOTO BY STOCKSNAP FROM PIXABAY

of a mainstream educational institution, such as a boarding school, further education college or university, the number of private language schools drops to 229. In March 2020, there were 282 private language schools, so the sector has seen a decline of just under 19%.

To be exact, 53 year-round language schools, almost one in five of those trading at the beginning of last year, are no longer listed as accredited. But this doesn't mean they've all closed: judging from their websites, around a third of them are still trading.

Other accredited sectors have not taken such a hit. At the beginning of 2020, the *Gazette* had recorded 100 mainstream education providers – including boarding schools, FE colleges and universities – listed by the British Council as accredited. The number has dropped 13% during Covid, but only one – a boarding school – has closed down, while one other, a state college, is still operating but has closed its EFL department.

Among the 49 centres described on the Council list as 'private language teaching organisations', a term mostly used to describe multi-centre summer operations, just three have gone: two closed

permanently and one merged with another provider.

Altogether, as of 1 September, 72 operations listed as accredited in March 2020 have disappeared from the lists, leaving 409 that were there before Covid plus four newly accredited schools, which is an overall drop of 14%. As far as we can ascertain, only half of those had definitely closed and most of those were year-round language schools.

“So far, it's the year-round language schools that have borne the brunt of Covid, seeing 74% of all exits from accreditation”

So far, it's the year-round language schools that have borne the brunt of Covid, seeing 74% of all exits from accreditation. This would come as no surprise to the UK accreditors if they inspected the financial health of the centres they accredit, but they don't.

An analysis by the *Gazette* of the accounts posted at

Companies House of 60 non-chain operations showed that 30% of year-round language schools had not reported a profit for four years before Covid struck. The number for summer school operations was 90% showing significant profits.

The financial returns for the chains during the same period were scarcely better: paper thin profits or small losses. As one former financial director put it, "We struggle to break even in the year-round market so we can make money from the summer schools." This would explain why chain schools account for 43% of the UK's Covid losses.

Prior to the pandemic, there was a massive oversupply of year-round language schools in the UK market, one which – short of a change of government and a change in the work rights legislation – was unlikely to disappear. Only by bringing our accreditation scheme in line with most of the rest of the world by inspecting the finances of providers can we hope to prevent more carnage going forward.

Covid, as is its wont, has had as its EFL victims the weak, the poor and those with underlying financial conditions. And the havoc it has wrought is not done yet.



Centres of excellence

UK

Language  
Centre

Rankings  
2021-22

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# Top centres more likely to survive Covid

Melanie Butler analyses the rankings and finds our top 100 are weathering the pandemic well

The main difference in this year's ranking is not the number of new entrants in the top 100, but the number whose names have disappeared from the list of accredited centres during the pandemic. A total of 11 centres no longer have accreditation, just under 9% of the 2020 total and well below the 15% drop in number among accredited language centres as a whole.

Overall language centres that score highly on their British Council inspections seem more likely to survive, which is good news. While the private language schools have been badly hit this year, only a very small percentage of those in the top 100 have been affected and none at all in the top 5% of our ranking. Only three year-round language schools and one chain-owned summer operation have disappeared from our list, though. Sadly, all but one, which is currently teaching online, have ceased to trade.

However, the list of *EL Gazette* Centres of Excellence which are no longer accredited includes three universities and two boarding schools: the two highest performing sectors, as we report on pages 22 to 25. None of these, unsurprisingly, have closed for business and neither has the one further education college which no longer appears. These are all sectors which are already accredited as educational institutions and have simply opted out of British Council inspections.

But while the boarding school sector has been growing in recent years, and at least one more is waiting to be accredited, numbers among universities appear to be in slow decline. Fifteen percent of the universities previously in the accreditation scheme have dropped out in the past year, most likely as a result of Covid cutbacks, but perhaps influenced, as we argue on page 22, by the mismatch between the methodology demanded by the inspectors and the skills and language knowledge required by international schools being prepared for their degree course.

The good news from the university sector, reported on page 24, is that in one region of the UK, the north of England, there is a cluster of universities which, despite the loss of two of their number, continue to dominate the inspection results in their sector. Could this cluster of excellence be helped by the long collaboration with other English language sectors in their region? In a further exploration of the cluster of excellence idea, on page 26 we look at how it would play out for another university offering: Master's courses for teachers, not a sector we can easily rank ourselves, though there is plenty of evidence from other sources. And here we find a cluster in the Midlands, both East and West, which has surprisingly few language schools though a fair few accredited state colleges.

Finally, talking of clusters of excellence, many of the chain schools show a pattern of consistently high accreditation results. While the top scores still belong to the three UK schools owned and operated by The English Language Centre Brighton, among the larger international players, EC has taken top spot. Turn to page 21 to find out how the others have done.

MELANIE BUTLER,  
EDITOR IN CHIEF



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Who offers what

Every effort has been made to verify the information in the following rankings table. All the information in it has been based on the Summary Statements of the British Council Inspection Reports as of 1/9/21.







Percentile	Score	Institution	Type	Strategic and quality management	Staff management	Student administration	Publicity	Premises and facilities	Learning resources	Academic staff profile	Academic management	Course design	Learner management	Teaching	Care of students	Accommodation	Leisure opportunities	Care of under 18s
PERFECT SCORES	10.00	ELC Bristol	PLS:A															
	10.00	English Language Centre, Brighton	PLS:A															
	10.00	London School of English	PLS:A															
	10.00	LSI Portsmouth	PLS:A															
	10.00	Summer Boarding Courses, Shipley	PLS:Y															
	10.00	Wimbledon School of English	PLS:A															
TOP 2%	9.47	Bell International Cambridge	PLS:A															
	9.47	Bell Young Learners	PLS:A															
	9.47	Broadstairs English Centre	PLS:Y															
	9.47	Discovery Summer, London	PLS:Y															
	9.47	English in Chester	PLS:A															
	9.47	IH London	PLS:A															
	9.44	University of Manchester	Uni															
TOP 5%	8.95	Bishopstrow College, Warminster	BS															
	8.95	East Sussex College, Lewes and Eastbourne	FE															
	8.95	English Language Centre, Eastbourne	PLS:A															
	8.95	ISCA School of English, Exeter	PLS:Y															
	8.95	Millfield English Language Holiday Courses	BS															
	8.95	St. Edmund's College, Ware	BS															
	8.89	Edge Hill University, Ormskirk	Uni															
	8.89	Marcus Evans Linguarama London	Biz															
	8.89	University of Sheffield	Uni															
TOP 8%	8.42	BEET Language Centre	PLS:A															
	8.42	EC Bristol	PLS:A															
	8.42	EF International Oxford	PLS:A															
	8.42	Heathfield Summer School, Ascot	BS															
	8.42	IH Bristol	PLS:A															
	8.42	IH Newcastle	PLS:A															
	8.42	IH Torquay	PLS:A															

## KEY

	area of strength
	needs improvement
	not applicable

## Centre Types:

Biz	Business and professional training centre
BS	Boarding School
FE	Further Education College
HT	Home Tuition
PLS:A	Private Language School primarily accepting adults 16+
PLS:Y	Private Language School primarily catering for young learners under 16
SS	Summer School
TT	Teacher Training Specialist
Uni	University Language Centre

The information in this table is based on the Summary Statements for each centre as of 1 September 2021.

The Summary Statement can be found on page 1 of the full report for every accredited centre.

These can be found at [britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/centres](https://britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/centres).

# UK RANKINGS 2021-22

Percentile	Score	Institution	Type	Strategic and quality management	Staff management	Student administration	Publicity	Premises and facilities	Learning resources	Academic staff profile	Academic management	Course design	Learner management	Teaching	Care of students	Accommodation	Leisure opportunities	Care of under 18s
TOP 8% (contd)	8.42	Kaplan International Manchester	PLS:A															
	8.42	Kings College London	Uni															
	8.42	Loxdale English Centre	PLS:Y															
	8.42	NILE Norwich	TT															
	8.42	St. Giles International, Brighton	PLS:A															
	8.42	St. Giles International, Highgate	PLS:Y															
	8.42	St. Giles International, London	PLS:A															
	8.33	University of Brighton	Uni															
	8.33	University of Leicester	Uni															
TOP 12%	7.89	BOSS	BS															
	7.89	Concord College, Shrewsbury	BS															
	7.89	EC Brighton	PLS:A															
	7.89	EC Cambridge	PLS:A															
	7.89	EC Manchester	PLS:A															
	7.89	EF International Brighton	PLS:A															
	7.89	Eurocentres Bournemouth	PLS:A															
	7.89	Eurocentres Brighton	PLS:A															
	7.89	Exsportise	PLS:Y															
	7.89	Activate Learning Guildford	FE															
	7.89	Harrow Short Courses	BS															
	7.89	Kaplan International Bath	PLS:A															
	7.89	Kaplan International Liverpool	PLS:A															
	7.89	Kings London	PLS:A															
	7.89	Perth College	FE															
	7.89	University of Salford	Uni															
	7.78	University of Dundee	Uni															
TOP 18%	7.37	Aberystwyth University	Uni															
	7.37	Accent International Language Consultancy	PLS:A															
	7.37	Bede's Summer School, Hailsham	BS															
	7.37	Belfast Metropolitan College	FE															
	7.37	Brunei University, London	Uni															
	7.37	Cambridge Academy of English	PLS:A															
	7.37	Chichester College	FE															
	7.37	EC London	PLS:A															
	7.37	ECS Winchcombe	PLS:Y															
	7.37	EF International Bournemouth	PLS:A															
	7.37	EF International Brighton	PLS:A															
	7.37	EF International Eastbourne	PLS:A															
	7.37	EF International Manchester	PLS:A															
	7.37	Eurocentres Cambridge	PLS:A															
	7.37	Hilderstone College, Broadstairs	FE															



Percentile	Score	Institution	Type	Strategic and quality management	Staff management	Student administration	Publicity	Premises and facilities	Learning resources	Academic staff profile	Academic management	Course design	Learner management	Teaching	Care of students	Accommodation	Leisure opportunities	Care of under 18s
TOP 18% (contd)	7.37	INTO Queens Univ, Belfast	pathway															
	7.37	Kaplan International Bournemouth	PLS:A															
	7.37	Kaplan International Cambridge	PLS:A															
	7.37	Kaplan International Oxford	PLS:A															
	7.37	Kaplan International Torquay	PLS:A															
	7.37	Kings Brighton	PLS:A															
	7.37	Kings Oxford	PLS:A															
	7.37	Kings Summer Camps	BS															
	7.37	Manor Courses, Brighton	PLS:Y															
	7.37	New College Durham	FE															
	7.37	Nottingham College	FE															
	7.37	Sherborne International	BS															
	7.37	Sidmouth International School	PLS:Y															
	7.37	St. Clare's, Oxford	BS															
	7.37	Stonyhurst Summer Language School	BS															
	7.37	Studio Cambridge	PLS:A															
	7.37	Wimbledon School of English Jnr Summer	PLS:Y															
TOP 20%	7.22	ECS Edinburgh	PLS:A															
	7.22	Manchester Metropolitan University	Uni															
	7.22	Nottingham Trent	Uni															
	7.22	Sheffield Hallam University	Uni															
	7.22	Teeside University	Uni															
	7.22	University of Chichester	Uni															
TOP 25%	6.84	Bucksmore Education	PLS:Y															
	6.84	Cardiff and Vale College	FE															
	6.84	Christian English Language Centre	FE															
	6.84	Churchill House School of English	PLS:Y															
	6.84	Churchill House Summer Centres	PLS:Y															
	6.84	EF International Cambridge	PLS:A															

## KEY

	area of strength
	needs improvement
	not applicable

## Centre Types:

Biz	Business and professional training centre
BS	Boarding School
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# UK RANKINGS 2021-22

Percentile	Score	Institution	Type	Strategic and quality management	Staff management	Student administration	Publicity	Premises and facilities	Learning resources	Academic staff profile	Academic management	Course design	Learner management	Teaching	Care of students	Accommodation	Leisure opportunities	Care of under 18s
TOP 25% (contd)	6.84	EF International London	PLS:A															
	6.84	English Experience (UK)	PLS:Y															
	6.84	Eurocentres London Central	PLS:A															
	6.84	IH London Young Learner Centres	PLS:Y															
	6.84	International Student Club	PLS:Y															
	6.84	Itchen College	FE															
	6.84	NCG Liverpool	PLS:A															
	6.84	Nottingham Trent University	Uni															
	6.84	Oxford International Oxford	PLS:A															
	6.84	Select English Cambridge Year Round	PLS:A															
	6.84	Sheffield College	FE															
	6.84	South Thames College	FE															
	6.84	UKLC	PLS:Y															
	6.84	University of Leeds	Uni															

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# Has Covid weakened the chain school links?

Melanie Butler examines the results of the chains for strengths and consistency

Calculating the rankings for chain schools has become more difficult during the time of Covid. In fact, 43% of schools which are no longer on the British Council list belonged to chains: two chains are now left with only two year-round schools and no longer qualify for our grid, while one has, as we understand it, had its accreditation suspended pending review.

We also have three chain owners and two school mergers where each remaining school now has two different sets of inspection results. Despite the fact that there have been no new fill inspections since early 2020, our chain rankings have changed.

As you can see from the grid, we have made some changes to who we include under a chain. To avoid confusion, we only include schools with the same brand name, so schools branded OISE not Regent, for example. And we use the inspection report for the school with that brand name in the case of a merger.

With chain rankings, most focus not only on the average score but also on the consistency of their outcomes. The standard deviation across all schools is three net strengths on inspection, so TEG, for example, which aims at the value end of the market, does just as well on consistency as our top chain overall, the not-for-profit The English Language Centre Group. Both operate only in the UK and, in UK hotel terms, TEG is the ever-popular Premier Inn while the three schools in the ELC group are the equivalent of Claridge's, The Connaught and The Berkeley. Previously independent, they are now owned by the Maybourne Group.

Of the international chains, the best performer, in terms of both average score on inspection and consistency, is EC. The Maltese-owned chain stands with five schools scoring an average of 11 net strengths and all within a three point band. Bell hits the same average score, but has a five point gap between its top two schools and the others.

Our other star is EF, with eight schools scoring an average of 10.05, all in a four point range, which puts it ahead of the two other brands,

both of which still have more than six or more branded UK schools. Eurocentres, which has seen two changes of ownership, also scores 10, with all four schools within four points of each other.

Name	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	WD
Bell		**						**									
CES								*		**	*	*					
EC				*	***	*											
EF				*	*	**	**										
ELC	*	*	*														
Eur*					**	*		M									
Kap				**	**	***		**			*						
Kings					*	***			*								
LSI												**		**			
St G				***				*			**						
Staff								**		**	*						
Ox *							*				**	*					
Int																	
OHI								*			*		*				
OISE										M*	*						*
TEG*													**	*			

## Key

\*Under new ownership / \*Year-round centre / \*Junior operation / M merger of two schools / WD Results withdrawn, accreditation under review / ELC The English Language Centre Group / EUR Eurocentres / Kap Kaplan / LSI Language Studies International (does not include LSI Portsmouth) / OHI Oxford House International / Ox Int: Oxford International.

# What is a boarding school?

The British boarding school resides in a unique niche. Melanie Butler shines a light on what it's all about



PHOTO COURTESY OF CONCORD COLLEGE

Language courses owned and run by British boarding schools are still the highest performers in our annual rankings, achieving over eight strengths out of an average 15 on inspection. There's no doubt that some have been hit by Covid: three schools have left the accreditation scheme, but only one, King's College St Michael's, has closed. The other two seem merely to have dropped their EFL summer schools.

Summer courses are the area in which most boarding schools operate EFL, but it is important to remember that not all summer programmes taking place in boarding schools are actually run by the school, despite what language travel agents might imply in their brochures. That's not to say that all English language course providers who rent school premises for the summer are of less good quality. Indeed, two summer school specialists, Summer Boarding Courses and Discovery Summer, score higher in our rankings than their boarding counterparts.

However, if you choose a summer school at random, you're much more likely to hit upon a high-ranking course if it's owned and run by a boarding school, though it's sometimes difficult to tell.

There are boarding schools, like Stonyhurst, which designate its summer school as a private language school to differentiate it from the institution. Then there are boarding schools, like Bath Academy, which call themselves private tutorial colleges, though legally they're boarding schools.

Finally, we have school chains, like the King's Group, which own boarding schools and language schools. If the British Council inspects the English language teaching in the boarding school as well as in the language school, as they do at King's, we count those too.

We even have a boarding school at the top of the academic league table, Concord College, which started life as a language school.

So, what is a boarding school?

To answer this question we need to know what a school is in the eyes of the law.

The legal answer varies a little depending on which of the four nations of the UK we're looking at (education is a devolved issue), but under English law it is any establishment offering full curriculum education (not just language teaching, for example) which has enrolled five or more students under the age of 16. All such schools must be registered.

A boarding school is a legally registered school which offers residential accommodation, though that may include the use of host families who become the child's foster parent in the eyes of the law.

In all the nations of the UK, such schools must be inspected by the relevant authorities to check that they meet National Minimum Standards for Boarding, which are extremely strict regulations covering premises, pastoral care and safeguarding. There are also standards for institutions which educate students aged 16-18, generally called further education, and offer residential accommodation.

National boarding standards do not cover boarding for short courses and vacation courses, which is one reason why some schools choose to be inspected by the British Council. However, long experience of adhering strict safeguarding rules means they tend to excel in this area, with 84% of accredited boarding schools achieving an area of strength in safeguarding in the British Council inspection.

All the boarding schools with accredited language operations are fee paying independent schools. Some state-funded schools do



offer boarding, but none of these, to the best of our knowledge, offer separate English language courses, although accredited further education college Itchen offers host family accommodation for year-round international students aged 16+.

When international students and their parents think of British boarding schools, they tend to think of summer schools at Hogwarts: an old, not for profit educational trust in a historic building surrounded by acres of beautiful grounds. And there are many accredited boarding schools that fit that description. Take St Edmund's College, Ware, the oldest Catholic school in England, which boasts 20 Catholic saints among its former pupils and has been on its current site at Old Hall Green since 1793, where it has run a high-ranking international summer school for many years.

But British boarding schools offer a wide variety of courses in a variety of geographic locations. These might be year-long English and academic courses for children preparing for British education, like those run by Millfield International in London, Sherbourne International and Bishopstrow in the heart of England.

One of the biggest growth areas are the schools – like Brooke House College in rural Leicestershire – that started life as sixth-form colleges, but now take younger students. Or those like Buckswold in Sussex by the sea, which runs the highly ranked BOSS summer school that started for international students but now welcomes local children to its school as well.

Indeed, there is a new sector moving in to the field: the international school specialists who are looking to acquire British boarding schools and summer operations. First we had Globeducate, which acquired International Community School, the only independent day school in the accreditation scheme; then a boarding school, Stonar, near Bath. One long established international school chain, Cognita, acquired Ardmore, while this summer its arch-rival, Nord Anglia, acquired the Bucksmore summer operations.

These kinds of changes are nothing new in the history of British boarding schools, which stretches back to 957AD when a school for boys was started in Canterbury Cathedral. But the educational importance of these institutions remains as, it seems, does their appeal to foreign parents looking to send their children to learn English.

Although other English-speaking countries also have boarding schools, and the Irish have begun using theirs for summer schools, the range of depth of the provision in the UK remains unique. In recent years more boarding schools have been opting to run their own summer courses, rather than just letting out their buildings, and an increasing number of them are opting for EFL accreditation. With the growing importance of CLIL-style provision, the trend for boarding school providers to become accredited is likely to increase.

At least for the foreseeable future, they are likely to remain the top performing sector on inspection and while the private language operators still retain a stranglehold on the top 2% of our rankings, they may have to look to their laurels.

### Top accredited boarding schools

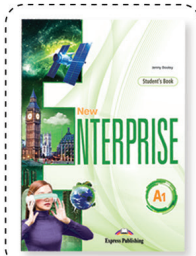
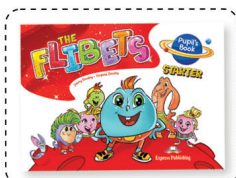
Out of 26 accredited boarding schools, 14, just over half, score within four points of each other:

**13 points:** Bishopstrow College, Millfield Summer School, St Edmund's College

**12 points:** Harrow Short Courses, Heathfield International Summer School

**11 points:** Buckswold Overseas Summer School (BOSS); Concord College; King's, London

**10 points:** Bede's Summer School, King's Brighton, King's Oxford, Sherborne International, St Clares, Stonyhurst



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# The university rankings

How does higher education fit into the scheme of things?  
Melanie Butler takes a look

University language centres have long been one of the top two performing accredited sectors based on their British Council inspection reports, with 50% featuring in our current top 100.

However, during Covid, six universities dropped off the British Council accreditation list, a reduction of 15%, the highest rate for any sector except year-round private language schools. Unlike those, however, not one of these universities has closed, they have simply chosen to leave the scheme.

Among the university centres which have opted out of accreditation are four which have appeared high in the *EL Gazette* rankings: Liverpool, which ranked second in our university charts, UCL London, Northumbria and UAL.

The list highlights not only the famous names that have gone – two Russell Group universities – but also the strength of the university language centre sector across a wide range of university types.

The British tend to rank their universities according to their age. And, as with houses and furniture, the older something is the better.

## History lessons

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, only two universities – Oxford and Cambridge – were allowed to exist before the 19th century and only students belonging to the Church of England were allowed to enrol.

The Scots, by contrast, have four ancient universities, or five if we count Dundee, which was originally the medical school of the ancient university of St Andrews.

In the 19th century, the demand for more universities which admitted students from other churches and classes led to the founding of the University of London in 1832, with King's College London as a founder college. Wales, like London, chose a federal university structure and opened the principality's first college, now Aberystwyth University, in 1872.

During this period there was a rush among England's great towns to create universities out of their old institutions of learning, which had previously catered to local students. Sheffield, Leicester, Manchester (and its neighbour Salford) are all what the English call 'redbrick' universities, named after the Victorian buildings they were housed in.

In the 60s, a new generation of universities appeared, like Brunel, that focused on emerging and exciting subjects like technology and sociology. They're called 'the plate-glass universities' after, inevitably, the style of their buildings.

In 1992 the latest wave of universities began, as the Government began to award university status to the polytechnics which, like Sheffield Hallam and Brighton, had always been popular for their more vocational degrees, covering areas like architecture, accountancy and law.

More recently, university status has been awarded to former colleges like Edge Hill and Chichester, which have long been famed for their teacher training and are often described as 'teaching universities' to show they focus on the educational outcomes of their students rather than just research.

Britain has seen successive waves of universities all with different histories and purposes. You will see, if you check out our top university performers box (right), every type is represented in our university language centre rankings.

But will they still all be there next year?



PHOTO BY GRAHAM HODGSON FROM PIXABAY

## Associations

Probably not, is the answer. Some universities had EFL-specific accreditation even before the 2004 launch of English UK, the association formed by a merger between two associations. One grew out of the language school industry, the other represented state sector colleges. The dream was for the UK ELT industry to form a united front against growing international competition.

But all thought of cross-sector solidarity went out the window when Covid hit. Press coverage has focused entirely on the plight of language schools. In perhaps the most egregious example, a recent article in the *Times Higher Education* trade paper pleaded with the readership to help protect the 415 language schools. It failed to point out, as we do on page 12, that of those 415 language centres, 88 were not language schools and 36 were university centres.

Some academics have long been concerned that the inspection criteria are designed for private language schools and don't fit the university environment, where the most pressing need for international undergraduates is to master reading and writing academic English. Guidance requiring new lexis be written on the board in IPA is not only a low priority for these students, it is also contra to the research from those same universities which shows that to improve students' comprehension, it is suprasegmentals you need to focus on.

None of these things alone are responsible for the Covid-driven exit of university language centres. That probably had more to do with the need to cut unnecessary costs. Because, for universities, accreditation is an optional extra, not a necessity. Unless the cross-sectoral accreditation scheme pays more attention to all the sectors, more universities are likely to opt out.

## Top accredited university language centres

Out of 36 accredited university language centres, 12 score within four points of each other. However, some universities do not admit under 18s and so are inspected on 14 rather than 15 areas of strength, putting their score slightly higher.

- 13/14 Manchester
- 12/15 Edge Hill, Sheffield
- 11/14 Brighton, Leicester
- 11/15 King's College London, Salford
- 10/14 Chichester, Dundee, Sheffield Hallam
- 10/15 Aberystwyth, Brunel, Leeds, Manchester Metropolitan, Teeside



# Northern stars

Co-operation is the secret to the success of universities in the north of England, says Melanie Butler

**T**ake a look at the three top universities in the rankings. What do they have in common? We have Manchester in first spot, then Sheffield and Edge Hill, which was recently declared Modern University of the Year in *The Sunday Times*.

All three of them are located in northern England, or 'the North', as it is more commonly known. Manchester is east of the Pennine Mountains, as is Edge Hill in nearby Ormskirk, while Sheffield is to the west in the historic county of Yorkshire.

In the same city lies Sheffield Hallam University, one of the UK's largest and most diverse universities, as well as a stalwart of the *Gazette* rankings. Meanwhile, in the next-door city to Manchester, is the University of Salford. Both make it into our top university language centres.

In fact, if we add in the universities of Leeds, Teeside and Manchester Metropolitan, all of which appear in our top 100 listing, then an astonishing 73% of all the accredited universities in the region are *EL Gazette* Centres of Excellence, based on their inspection results.

The region, which runs from north of the Humber estuaries to the border of North Wales and up to Scotland, has long been famous for its universities and, in particular, the way they have always co-operated with each other. This is exemplified by the pathway programmes



PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK

and English language tests run by NCUK, set up by a consortium of northern universities and now accepted by other universities around the world.

For over 30 years, many of the region's universities joined an association, then called English in the North, which included local further education colleges and private language schools. This cross-sectoral cooperation, originally designed to attract students from the tourist hotspots in the south, has grown to create an environment offering 'English courses for everybody', where students with a low level of English study in a language school before joining a university pre-session course, while others take a foundation year in a local college before starting their undergraduate degree.

It's perhaps not surprising that co-operation is at the root of the success of the northern universities' language centres and the development of the region into a premier student destination. After all, in 1844 the Co-operative was founded in a little town called Rochdale in the north of England.

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# A cluster of **excellence** in the heart of England

Melanie Butler investigates the story of the UK Midlands and how its strength in applied linguistics has led to a myriad of well-regarded Master's courses

**T**he idea that a single geographic region can, by combining its expertise and resources, become a superpower in a particular field or industry is not new, especially in the digital era. Think of Silicon Valley in California, which inspired Scotland's Silicon Glen and Silicon Fen in Cambridge.

The same things happen with universities, as we see on page 25, where the close co-operation between universities, private language schools and state colleges has helped the area's universities to dominate the league tables.

If we were looking for a cluster of universities which had the same kind of advantage in terms of research and Master's degrees, then one of the top candidates would be the Midlands, the region which stretches from the east above East Anglia to the Humber estuary in the north and the counties that border Wales – Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire – in the west. The region encompasses the ancient Anglo Saxon kingdom of Mercia.

## The regions

For historic and administrative reasons, it's split into the West Midlands, which is clustered around the city of Birmingham, and the East Midlands, which is centred on the three county towns of Nottingham, Leicester and Derby. Together these two regions represent not only the heart of England, but the heart of Corpus Linguistics.

In Birmingham it began with the arrival of Professor John Sinclair and, in the late 1870s, the Cobuild project, with the publisher Collins, which resulted in the world's first corpus-based dictionary in 1987.

But Sinclair was not the only ELT innovator in the city. Across town, at Aston University, Professor John Swales was busy investigating language genres and introducing first the idea of English for specific purposes and then, after he had moved to the University of Michigan in the USA, English for academic purposes.

If the two universities were rivals, it was a friendly rivalry, with lecturers moving between the two or moving out to the neighbouring universities. When task-based pioneers and course-book writers Jane and Dave Willis arrived in the city, one took a job at Birmingham and the other at Aston.

Both universities still excel in the field of linguistics. As well as its TESOL Master's, Aston is also a national leader in the field of forensic linguistics. Birmingham now has two research centres, both offering Master's: one in Sinclair's Department of English Language and Linguistics, renowned for work on discourse analysis, and it also offers one in its high-ranking Department of Education.

Meanwhile, a third university, Birmingham City, also offers a BA in English language and linguistics, as well as a Master's in the related field of international education.

## The cities

The two other major cities in the West Midlands have also caught the applied linguistic bug. In Wolverhampton, along with English and

“Major cities in the West Midlands have also caught the applied linguistic bug”



PHOTO BY: DAVID REED FROM PIXABAY

Nottingham University's grand main building

applied linguistics, they offer Master's in computational linguistics, deaf studies and linguistics, as well as one in practical corpus linguistics for ELT, lexicography and translation. In the West Midlands' third major city, Coventry University offers English language teaching and applied linguistics.

Go into the East Midlands and the story repeats itself. In 1979, a young lecturer named Ron Carter arrived at the University of Nottingham to do research in the area of poetics and linguistics. He kept his interest in literature throughout his career, but in the 1980s he teamed up with Mike McCarthy to work on the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English, which they used as a base to write a new grammar of English. As in Birmingham, the University now also offers ELT-related Master's both in the School of English, the home turf of Mike McCarthy and the late Ron Carter, and in the renowned School of Education.

Down the road at Nottingham Trent University, American linguist Dianne Larsen Freeman helped to build a strong TESOL faculty with a successful Master's, while her husband, Norbert Schmitt, with whom she wrote one of the best-known introductions to applied linguistics, taught at Nottingham University.

In nearby Leicester, a Master's in applied linguistics offered in the School of Education has long been popular with students from around the world and in the same county, De Montfort offers a first degree in English language and TESOL, and a Master's in ELT.

The Midlands has developed an ecosystem for research and teaching not only in English language and corpus linguistics but, over the years, into a variety of areas, from the forensic linguistics used in court cases to poetics. Students come, they exchange ideas, some stay and take a job at a nearby university, they marry, they mingle and create a market for ideas.

If California has Silicon Valley, then the Midlands has the Anglo Saxon kingdom of Applied Linguistics and its strength still appears to be growing.





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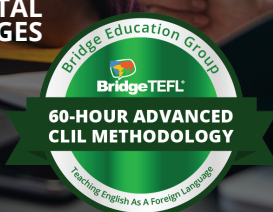
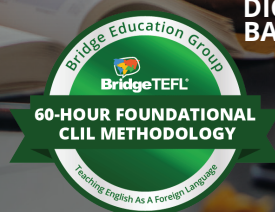


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# A dual approach to learning



The field of bilingual education encompasses many approaches, but the [Content and Language Integrated Learning \(CLIL\) method](#), already widely used in Europe, has been growing in popularity around the world

**T**he term CLIL is relatively new – education experts David Marsh and Do Coyle coined it in the mid-1990s – but the technique is as old as learning itself. The approach became more formalised in the 1960s in language immersion programmes in Canada, and with languages across the curriculum programmes in the UK and the US.

Broadly speaking, CLIL programmes aim to increase students' subject-area proficiency while at the same time improving their knowledge of the target language, often English. In the CLIL method, content teachers (who might teach music or biology, for example) teach in the target language.

What sets the CLIL method apart from similar approaches is that the students' first language is embraced, rather than discouraged. In fact, the hallmark '5 Cs' of this approach are communication, community/culture, competence and cognition.

## How is CLIL methodology used in teaching English?

It's this meaningful interaction with the content for communication and community-building that makes the CLIL method effective for teaching English. Students are able to see immediate, real-world applications of the language, taking English learning out of a vacuum and making it practical, even essential.

Since content teachers are not normally experts in language instruction, they require training in this area and, in most cases, they also depend on the support of the English teacher. In turn, the English teacher supports the content teacher by introducing relevant vocabulary and functional language related to a given subject and by emphasising critical thinking.

## What are the benefits of CLIL for students?

Through CLIL, students are motivated to engage with English in a meaningful, authentic way.

They are able to gain a deeper understanding of the target language as they form links in their minds between their first language and the content, fostering metalinguistic skills.

Students are also able to take their comprehension of content subjects further, as key concepts taught in the subject classroom are reinforced in the language classroom.

## How does having a CLIL certificate benefit teachers?

Until recently, the concept of CLIL was largely limited to the realm of academia, rather than in the hands of everyday teachers. CLIL certification changes this by distilling the complex ideas and jargon from textbooks and journal articles into practical knowledge and hands-on skills teachers can use.

CLIL certification creates opportunities for teachers in Kindergarten to 12th-grade schools and other educational settings where they can support the institute's greater CLIL initiative. Their knowledge of CLIL and their certification can lead to career advancement and the higher salary that comes with it.

## How does using the CLIL approach benefit a school?

CLIL methodology, which is applicable in primary and secondary schools, vocational schools, colleges and universities, can help organisations reach goals such as:

- Meeting local or national bilingual mandates.
- Gaining an understanding of CLIL methodology necessary for institution-wide adoption.
- Setting their school apart with accredited training and certification in CLIL.
- Maximising learning outcomes for students.

## How do you become CLIL certified?

Bridge developed its unique CLIL certification programme to fill a training gap within bilingual education.

As Anna Hearrell, Bridge Product Manager, explains, "After attending many international ELT conferences and discussing trends with schools and educators worldwide, we realised that bilingual programmes like CLIL were being implemented, but with no real training or methodology in place. Practical and accessible CLIL training simply wasn't available to those who needed it."

Bridge developed its innovative, 120-hour, online [Specialized Certificate in Content and Language Integrated Learning](#) programme in 2021. The accredited, two-course training is available for both individual teachers as well as groups of teachers, administrators and other stakeholders.

In the first course, Foundational CLIL Methodology, trainees learn the principles of CLIL and key research behind the method. In the second course, Advanced CLIL Methodology, trainees get a higher-level understanding of CLIL applications, including subject scope, lesson planning and course content design. The programme includes a series of instructional videos produced by CLIL experts Dr Donna Fields and Dr Peeter Mehisto on essential CLIL topics, such as institutional cooperation, scaffolding, student-centred learning and higher-order thinking skills.

The interactive training also includes videos of teachers implementing CLIL methods, practice activities, written assignments with tutor feedback and peer discussion boards.

The CLIL method can seem complex, but with the right training and collaboration between administrators, and both content and language teachers, schools can become part of the global movement in bilingual education.

To learn more about Bridge CLIL certification for teachers or institutions visit <https://bridge.edu/tefl/courses/specialized/content-language-integrated-learning>

I was only about 20 when I moved to Colombia for a year to improve my Spanish and carry out research for my Bachelor thesis. It was an exhilarating, scary and challenging time in my life; I moved there without knowing anyone. But did I mention I was 20? I braced myself for the anticipated challenges and got stuck into making connections with people who eventually became friends.

It was also around this time that I started teaching English. It wasn't part of my plan, but when a friend of a friend offered me the gig, I eagerly took it. My lessons were OK for someone with little to no experience. I relied mostly on my 'skills' as a (British) native English speaker and was able to correct my students' mistakes when they made them, even if I was barely able to explain why it was that their sentences were grammatically wrong. I have a distinct memory of feeling like I was learning *with* my students; having my own "aha!" moments, when we would read through a worksheet or a grammar explanation together.

I began to love working as an English teacher, but I still saw it mostly as the perfect means to make a bit of extra cash. You can imagine how strange it was then, when suddenly I started getting approached by people in my friendship circle who would enthusiastically say things to me like, "Wow, how incredible that you're teaching English to Colombians. You're really opening so many doors for people!"

I found this odd and I struggled to convince myself that I – a now 21-year-old whose main life achievements at this point revolved around being able to handle my *aguardiente* (a Colombian anise-flavoured alcoholic drink) and learning how to dance salsa – had suddenly transformed overnight into some sort of altruistic humanitarian worker. I started to ask myself what was going on here and couldn't shake the feeling that I was in fact being praised simply for having by sheer luck been born a native speaking, white, British person.

“The very fact that it's only through attaining adequate English language skills that people are able to achieve social advancement is extremely troubling”

It was then that I started to reflect on the inequality inherent within the world of TEFL. Yes, those friends of friends were right that learning English could open many doors for Colombians in terms of education and job prospects. But the very fact that it's only through attaining adequate English language skills – a privilege that, due to the high



# Can we disentangle TEFL from its colonial past?

Yes, says Alice Rodgers, but first we must be aware of it

costs of private tutoring and international schooling, is usually only accessible to a small privileged group – that people are able to achieve social advancement is extremely troubling. We find ourselves, as teachers, actually contributing to the global political, social and economic inequalities that torment so many people in this globalised world today.

To understand what's really going on here it's crucial to take a look at the history of TEFL and its inextricable connection to the

colonialist projects of the British (and later American) empires.

Until the 19th century, Britain was a major colonial power, having built a worldwide system of dependencies and stripping indigenous peoples of their lands and diverse cultures. Aside from violence, the spread of disease and causing famine, another technique the British used to assert control over populations was through education and the teaching of white European superiority, part of which included teaching English.





PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK

2010). We see presented a modern, forward-thinking, educated (English-speaking) society, which is contrasted with a society that is static, conservative and uneducated. One acts as an active transmitter of knowledge and the other a submissive receiver of knowledge. There is little room for interculturality and English is presented as the dominant, most economically useful global language.

Within this we see the glorification of the native speaker who, regardless of educational or professional experience, is appraised as the worthier teacher. This is something that Robert Phillipson famously discussed in his book *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992). He looked at how 'native-speaker supremacy', as well as English-only policies within the classroom and the idea that using other languages in the classroom reduces English standards contributes towards the hegemony of English.

Motha crucially points out that these endeavours are not only highly political, but also commercial, and we just need to look at how much money is to be made from ELT (the sector [generates](#) around £1.4bn in income for the UK each year) to be convinced of this. She also points out that despite this, English is portrayed as an entirely neutral enterprise and one that exists purely for the benefit of helping people escape from poverty and attain economic betterment.

A lot has happened since I was 20 and living in Colombia, living my best life. Not only have I grown professionally as an English teacher, but also as an activist, and my knowledge and awareness of global inequalities and unjust

English was seen as a means to 'modernise' and 'civilise' indigenous peoples.

But it was actually during the historical period after colonialism (so-called 'post-colonialism', although the idea that there has ever really been a 'post' period to colonialism has been hotly contested by scholars and writers alike) that the spread of English as a lingua franca really flourished. Post-colonial theory maintains that this was a time during which empires were looking for methods of conserving the subservience of previously colonised countries (see *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* by Robert JC Young, 2016). As Suhanthie Motha explains in her book *Race, Empire, and English Language Teaching* (2014), this is what is stamped on the profession that we, as TEFL teachers, occupy today.

This idea that English is a tool for the enlightenment and civilisation of certain uneducated people still persists. A great deal of research has gone into analysing the prevalence of this sort of neo-colonialist thinking within TEFL materials (see *Linguistic Colonialism in the English Language Textbooks of Multinational Publishing Houses* by Jairo Eduardo Soto-Molina and Pilar Méndez, 2020, for example). It is common to see the reproduction of old colonial notions of Self and Other (a concept developed by Gayatri Spivak in her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*,

“The question remains: considering TEFL’s problematic legacy of colonisation, is it possible to continue to work in this field and not contribute to neo-colonialist practices of Western domination?”

societal power relations has grown massively. But then the question remains: considering TEFL’s problematic legacy of colonisation, is it possible to continue to work in this field and not contribute to neo-colonialist practices of Western domination? Is it possible to continue to work as an English teacher in a way that is anti-racist, ethical and responsible?

This is a big question and I’m not going to claim to have all the answers, but if history has taught us anything, it’s that there has always been resistance to oppression and structures of inequality. As teachers of English, the primary place we can start is with educating ourselves and with having a solid understanding of TEFL’s dark history – a history that is so often hidden by claims of neutrality.

As Motha points out, the solution is not to stop teaching English altogether, since this would only serve to accord more power to those who already speak the language. English is, whether we like it or not, a valuable currency today and TEFL teachers have the ability to empower students to have their voices heard within the global landscape. But

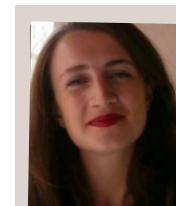
“It’s important that students have access to English lessons that validate rather than erase their cultural identities”

it is imperative that we have an awareness of the ways in which our own privileges play out in the classroom, as well as in the global field of TEFL in general. Our practices with our students need to be conscious and we need to allow the students themselves to guide their teaching. It’s important that students have access to English lessons that validate rather than erase their cultural identities and that the material they are learning from is culturally relevant to them.

Learning English is not going to stop opening doors for people any time soon. But we need to bear in mind, as teachers and as people who are interested in making the world a better place, that it is the acquisition of knowledge, in all its facets and forms that truly opens doors for people. Knowing the history of English teaching and bringing that awareness into the classroom through anti-racist pedagogies is something we should all strive towards.

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Alice Rodgers is a Berlin-based English teacher and activist. She is also the creator of the website [Hot Take English](#), which provides EFL resources for students and teachers who are interested in the news, activism and social justice.

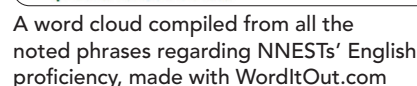
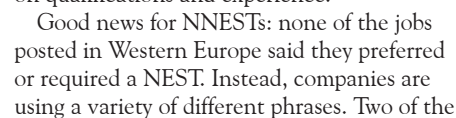
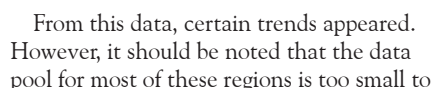
**A**ll you need is a bachelor's degree, TEFL and 5hrs of free time per week' reads a job post from a reputable online ESL teaching company. This attention grabber is indicative of the fast-paced job market which has exploded since 2015.

I gathered data from three major ESL job sites with over 50 online ESL teacher positions. I noted down where the company was located (East Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, Southwest Asia, North America and Latin America), the salary range, if they hired non-native speakers or what phrasing they used to describe a teacher's English proficiency, if they required passports from certain countries or a teaching certificate (CELTA, TEFL, TESOL, etc).

Big companies, like VIPKid and GoGoKid have announced they will follow the law, but smaller groups may try to get round it. After all, NNESTs were already legally excluded from Chinese online jobs and the law required teachers to hold a teaching certificate, such as a TEFL. Yet four of the Chinese jobs surveyed said they hired NNESTs even though this is illegal. The ad which read “All you need is a bachelor’s degree...” was not only misleading, it broke the law.

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In Western Europe, the second-biggest market for online ESL jobs, employers seem to prefer CELTAs, particularly in the United Kingdom. However, many accept TEFL and TESOL certificates too, though TESOL







jobs asked for English level qualifications (C2 level or IELTS band 8/9).

In Russia, companies are split about NNESTs. Interestingly, the companies hiring NNESTs require teaching certificates, while ones hiring NESTs do not. NNEST or NEST, it is unlikely to be bad at over \$13 per hour.

The lack of posts from regions outside of Europe and East Asia showed that, despite the increase in digital learning worldwide because of the pandemic, there were very few online ESL opportunities: four in Southeast Asia, two in the US, two in Latin America, one in Southwest Asia.

Here are possible trends for the future: as over half of online ESL jobs are based in East Asia, the field will continue to explicitly discriminate against NNESTs and teachers with nonstandard accents. The Western Europe market may continue to grow as digital learning becomes a new norm, which could help NNESTs, as it is illegal to discriminate against people based on [native languages in the EU](#). Southwest Asia may expand online as well, because of its large number of face-to-face ESL jobs and the growing economies of [Indonesia](#), [Vietnam](#), and [Malaysia](#). The industry's future is full of possibilities.



**Gerald Smith** is an online ESL teacher and MSc journalism student at the University of Stirling. A native Texan, he lives in a small town in Scotland.

## Two CELTA grads with very different opportunities

The CELTA has been a quick and thorough way for teachers starting out in EFL/ESL to get qualified and gain the necessary skills to teach. A CELTA signals to potential employers that a candidate is knowledgeable and serious about English education and yet, not everyone with a CELTA gets the same opportunities.

"You need to be British with a British passport and a British accent," says Rachel Lewis, who got her CELTA last year from Live Language Glasgow. Rachel, an Indian PhD student at the University of Glasgow and ESL teacher, was speaking about her experience job seeking post-CELTA in the UK and online.

Angela Bagni, who is Scottish-Italian, took the same CELTA course with Rachel. "Before CELTA, I wasn't that good at grammar and I hadn't a clue what was needed. After the CELTA, my [confidence] was a bit higher," she says. Prior to the CELTA, Angela already had a job lined up in Italy teaching with a private education company and says post-CELTA, she wanted "job security".

Before the CELTA course, Rachel thought, "If I get the CELTA, I'll be eligible for loads of jobs."

However, this was not the case. Rachel applied to many places and only had one offer in the Midlands, miles away from Glasgow.

"I apply online, and just from my CV and telephone number, I'm fine. You wouldn't guess I was Indian by my photo. It's only when it comes to a Zoom call or [they] ask for my passport, that I'm blocked. This has happened four times at least. There's a phone or Zoom interview and then they say, we can't take you," says Rachel.

Rachel takes such discrimination without flinching. She speaks about it plainly without anger, and even with a chuckle every now and then. But she is also honest about the racism and xenophobia she's experienced.

"In the UK, if you're offering an English course, you have to be white or at least look white, so I don't think the CELTA makes much of a difference," she says.

Rachel and Angela are similar in many ways. Both have degrees above a Bachelor, speak multiple languages and have a passion for English teaching. They are also different: Rachel speaks four languages and wants to work in the UK or online. Angela is bilingual and wants to work abroad or online.

I assumed Rachel was a non-native speaker of English, as many recruiters and companies might, but she corrected me saying, "Technically, I am a native English speaker. That is my first language and it's the only language we spoke at home. Indian English is about 200 years [old]. It's not so different from Australian, South African or American English."

This point is critical to the discrimination Indian and other South Asian teachers face, and it is one of the reasons scholars have been arguing whether the terms native or non-native should be used. Rachel is also honest about the implications of the discrimination she faces, saying, "For a white country, for a first world country, we [Indians] are not English enough... It's linguistic racism."

While Angela did not face racism in her career path, she noticed many online job opportunities which advertised for native speakers only or British passport needed. In brick-and-mortar Italian schools however, requirements are different from the UK and other parts of the world.

"Italians are more relaxed when it comes to non-native teachers. They look at the qualification more than the person," says Angela.

Looking at the qualification rather than the person can also be problematic, but it can help ease xenophobic or racist discrimination.

Angela also faced a different type of discrimination: sexism. "[A recruiter] asked me to send my teaching video. I didn't hear back from him for ages and then when I messaged him, he said, 'Sorry, it looks like we were looking for a male teacher at this time'."

Angela currently works as an online EFL teacher for Chinese students. She enjoys the freedom the role affords her, but bemoans the fact she gets fined for taking a day off.

Rachel mainly works as maths tutor as well as an admin head for an education company. She teaches two to three English classes per week.

When asked whether she regrets taking the CELTA, Rachel says, "I'm happy I did it. I got more than I was expecting, especially in terms of lesson planning."

In an ideal world, a certification like a CELTA along with a passion for sharing language would be enough for a professional to get a job in this field, whether it's online or in person. Unfortunately for Rachel, Angela and indeed all of us, we do not live in such a world.

# Where the world meets

## ICEF Berlin makes an ideal launch pad to get back in the swing

It's been a long time coming, but at last we're able to meet up, catch up and get going. And where better to do this than at the world's largest B2B networking event for the international education industry?

Organised by ICEF, which has been hosting exhibitions and conferences since 1991, the 27th annual event in Berlin will see over 800 agents and more than 500 providers from 110 countries descend for up to four days at the city's InterContinental for a range of seminars, webinars, presentations and meetings. It's an opportunity to both reconnect and establish new contacts with student recruitment specialists and educational institutions.

### Make a plan

To get the most out of an event of this size, it's best to make a plan. There's time to organise in person and online meetings for three of the four days, and the organisers have allocated

up to 25 minutes per meeting. This means you could have up to 74 meets over the course of the conference, though this would be a fairly gruelling schedule. Better might be to leave yourself a bit of wiggle room for those informal chats that can cement relationships over a coffee break.

The first day on site includes registration from 10 am, a networking lunch, the official event welcome and then an afternoon of seminars, webinars and provider presentations. In the evening you can attend the welcome reception, which ends at 9 pm.

Days two and three have been allocated for meetings, both in person and online. Day four is online meetings only.

The first three days are being run as a hybrid event. This means that on-site participants can meet in person or virtually with those who aren't there physically but are attending. Those off-site can also meet with others online. Meetings will be scheduled for the event through a programme called Marcom eSchedulePRO, which uses integrated Zoom and allows participants at up to four locations to take part in any one meeting. Delegates can start scheduling their meetings up to four weeks before the event.

### Who you'll meet

Educational delegates are expected to be made up of language schools (38%); universities and vocational training institutes (35%); secondary, boarding and high schools (23%); and multi-sector and additional service providers (4%).

While delegates will be there from over 110 countries, most of the education sector will come from just five. In descending order they are the UK, Canada, the USA, Spain and Germany.

Although agents who attend have a wide range of areas of interest, such as work/travel and post-graduate degrees, by far the largest number of them (96%) have language courses as their main area of concern. The largest region they recruit students from is the EU (34%), followed by non-EU countries in Europe (24%), Asia (18%), South and Central America (10%), Africa (8%) and the Middle East (7%).

### What people say

Many previous attendees are enthusiastic about ICEF events. Here are just a few of their comments:

“Leave yourself a bit of wiggle room for those informal chats that can cement relationships over a coffee break”



MAIN PHOTO BY NIKOLAUS BADER FROM PIXABAY

“I enjoyed the meeting because it was well-organised and fruitful. It was very easy to schedule and reschedule the meetings with education providers.”

“This was our first time to join an ICEF virtual event. It was a simple process not much different from setting up the meetings normally via the scheduler. We were surprised at how smooth everything ran during the virtual event. Definitely would join again. Staff were on standby to provide instant assistance, which was fantastic.”

“The experience was truly awesome. Three packed days and the organisation near to flawless. With Covid rampant, we still managed the face-to-face experience without the danger. Well done ICEF!”

### Keeping safe

To ensure the safety of attendees, the following anti-Covid precautions will be implemented:

- To attend in person, delegates must have received two vaccines and will be tested daily.
- Social distancing will be observed, along with one-way systems in high-traffic areas.
- There will be hand-sanitising stations and regular disinfecting of high-touch areas.
- Wearing masks will be encouraged, especially when moving around the event.
- The highest vigilance for food and drink hygiene will be maintained.
- Some seminars will be available online for those who don't want to attend in person.

## ICEF Berlin essentials

**When:** 31 October - 3 November

**Where:** InterContinental, Berlin

**How:** Three days hybrid, one day virtual

**Why:** To establish and strengthen international education industry networks

**Register:** [icef.com](https://icef.com)



## 50 QUESTIONS ABOUT ENGLISH USAGE

David Crystal  
Cambridge Handbooks for Language  
Teachers: Pocket Editions  
Cambridge University Press, 2021  
ISBN: 978-1-108-95918-6

From time to time, language teachers come up against a student with a particularly inquiring mind. You know, the one who continues to ask those tricky questions such as, “How many words are there in the English language?” or “Why can’t we begin a sentence with ‘And’?” These thought-provoking tests of professional knowledge tend to get asked at the end of the lesson, often when on the way to a well-earned cup of tea, so delaying the issue for later reflection is thus possible. Breaktime over though, the student is often to be found at the classroom door expecting an explanation – and woe betide the teacher who fails to deliver. Happily, we now have this superb pocket-size resource to refer to under such duress.

Author David Crystal is, of course, widely known and very highly regarded in the ELT world, so it comes as no surprise that the publishers asked him to respond to 50 popular queries on English usage. The results are, as one would guess, endlessly fascinating. He acknowledges quite rightly in the introduction how learners of English as a foreign language gain interest and confidence from an understanding of why, for example, the varieties of English now available are not discrete, but in fact reflect principles that tend to operate in their own mother tongue, too.

The 50 questions are grouped into five broad areas: words and idioms, grammar, pronunciation, spelling and punctuation,

“As for lunch versus dinner, well, that’s been raging for over a century and is one to discuss with friends and colleagues”

and genres. Inevitably, there are many points of overlap. Where to begin was my first problem, as I constantly dipped in and out of each section, wanting to know the difference in the first group between a cup and a mug, and lunch and dinner. How would you respond to those questions at your next grilling?

Very briefly, cup is an Anglo-Saxon word borrowed from the Latin cuppa, meaning simply a drinking vessel; while mug is probably an adaptation of a Latin word for a larger measuring vessel, a modium. But there’s much, much more. And as for lunch

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PHOTO BY ROBIN HIGGINS FROM PIXABAY

# The answer book

## Where to go when you just don’t know

versus dinner, well, that’s been raging for over a century and is one to discuss with friends and colleagues, or even set for your class’s homework this week.

Following the 14 queries concerning words and idioms, which covers variations in use, such as among and amongst, and the use of pidgin English in statements like ‘long time, no see’, Crystal deals with 15 grammar points. One of these reveals how, although a pet hate of strict prescriptive grammarians, beginning sentences with ‘And’ may often enhance a text stylistically and was in fact a notable feature of Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. Also looked at in this section are whether we can use ‘because’, ‘since’, ‘as’ and ‘for’ interchangeably; why verbs such as ‘burn’ and ‘learn’ have two past forms in burned/burnt and learned/learnt, plus why people these days use ‘Whatever!’ as a stand-alone phrase.

Crystal’s analysis of pronunciation issues I found the most fascinating. After explaining what Received Pronunciation is and where it came from, how English accents have changed in Britain during recent years, and what exactly Estuary English is, he then tries – but in my opinion fails – to put to rest one of my own linguistic pet hates: the increasingly used high rising intonation

on statements, usually at the end of them. Labelled ‘uptalk’ by linguists, it is believed to perform a helpful social role in establishing rapport during interaction. Perhaps, David, only perhaps. Personally, I feel it’s simply affectation.

The final two sections cover issues such as why English spelling is so irregular, variation in the use of the apostrophe and whether or not an exclamation mark can be added to a question mark in order to increase the emphasis, eg, What!/? or What?! Also in focus is how a grammatical analysis can help identify phishing – those attempts to create texts that may lead to online fraud.

For such a small book (only 104 pages), this one packs a mighty punch. It’s certainly one I shall be carrying around with me this summer. And, no, you may not borrow it – I know I’ll never see it again!



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