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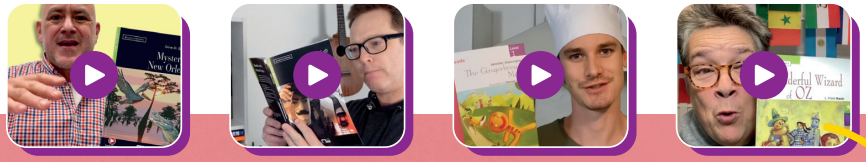

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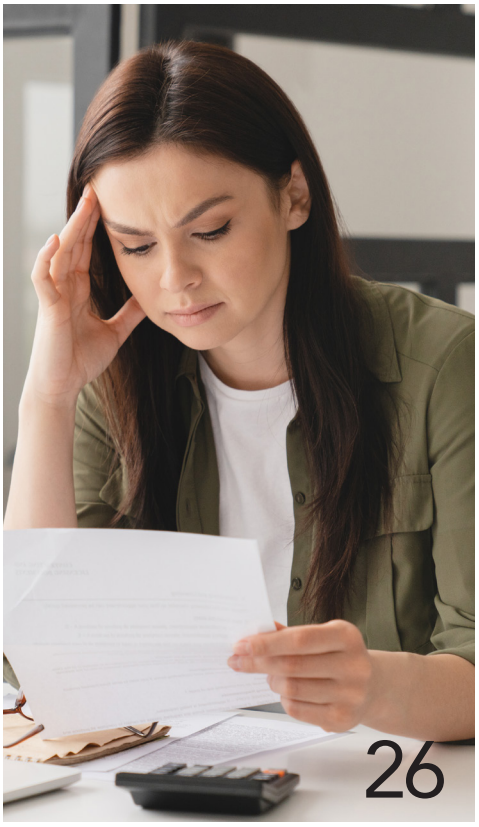

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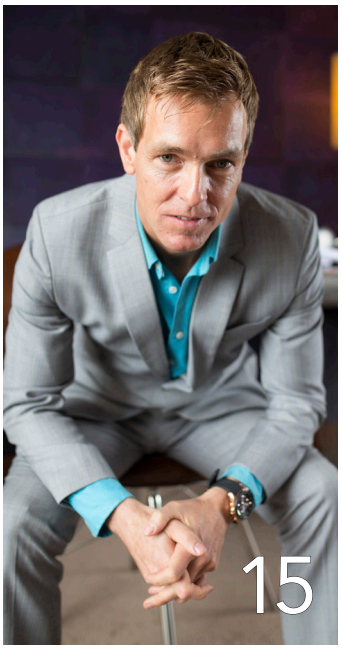

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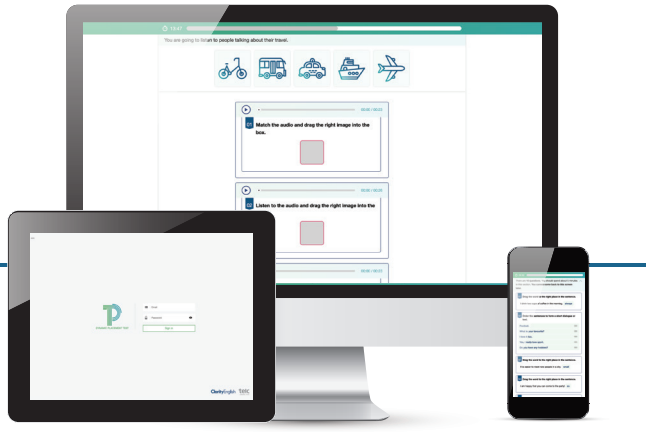

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From rankings to real estate

Where does your university come in the REF and where will Ireland put all those language students banging on its door?

Just what is the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and what benefit is it to those interested in teaching English? If you're confused or want to know how it's relevant to you, Melanie Butler explains all – along with how the UK's universities have fared in its rankings – in our special feature beginning on page 16.

Now that we've entered into what some are calling the 'new normal' and others simply post-Covid (though it hasn't really gone away, has it?) and the dust is settling, it's pretty clear that there's been a seismic shift in where students are going to learn English – and it really hasn't anything to do with the pandemic. No, this time we can point the finger of blame on Brexit and the added complications it's created for those who might previously have chosen the UK as their go-to destination to study English.

Where are these potential students heading instead? Mostly, it seems, to Ireland, which remains in the EU and looks favourably on those who wish to work while they're studying. While this might initially appear to be good news for Irish language schools, the knock-on effect in other areas – most notably accommodation for all those additional students – is proving disastrous. Rents have gone sky high, standards have gone way low and the students are getting fed up. Meanwhile, the government there doesn't seem inclined to provide any solutions for an industry that adds an estimated €130 million to the economy every year and students are being turned away. Turn to page 7 to read more about it.

There's also an interesting look at the working conditions of English teachers in Ireland, focusing on their own perspective of themselves through a recent study. Turn to page 26 to read about this.

For this issue we spoke to a number of people involved in language acquisition, whether they're on the testing side, the teaching side or the learning side, to find out what's new, what we can learn from them and what to expect as we move through the halfway point of the year. Take a look at the interviews and, as ever, let us know what you think. And, if you'd like to contribute to the *Gazette* – perhaps you're doing research, have useful teaching tips or are involved in a project delivering English – please get in touch.

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PHOTO BY WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Liverpool made it into our top 10 of the REF for English – see page 20

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theteam.

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Online scam manipulates English teachers living abroad

Polygraph, a Berlin-based company that investigates cyber-crime gangs, has identified a new scam which is manipulating English teachers living abroad.

This is how it starts: the criminals locate American English teachers using sources such as expat websites, job sites and even classified ads for a flatmate. The fraudsters extend a genuine-sounding job offer which involves fronting US-based companies that generate income through online advertisements.

"The criminals pretend they're ordinary business people who need US citizens to get around trade barriers that are preventing them from operating in North America," says Trey Vanes, chief marketing officer for Polygraph. "But the real explanation is they need Americans to legitimise their scams and be the scapegoats for when their criminal activities are discovered."

What happens next is that the English teacher is told to create a company in the US and to contact US-based advertising networks to open what is known as a 'publisher' account. This kind of account enables the criminals to place adverts on their fraudulent websites, with a small fee earned every time an ad is clicked. The criminals use 'bots' – software which simulates humans online – to repeatedly click on the ads, resulting in massive amounts of money being stolen from US advertisers. At the end of each month, the English teacher receives a payment from the advertising network, which he or she then transfers to the criminals.

According to Vanes, the scam is known as 'click fraud' and is estimated to cost advertisers an incredible US$68 billion each year.

Whether the teachers recognise they're participating in criminal activities is an unanswered question. They may be paid a flat salary from the criminals, but they may also receive a share of the take – up to five figures monthly. "In tracking the machinations of the fraud scheme, Polygraph has interviewed some duped teachers who were collecting US$40,000 every month," says Vanes. "That kind of money must certainly raise red flags with them."

PICTURE BY PIXABAY

> "Polygraph has interviewed some duped teachers who were collecting US$40,000 every month"

The risks to the English teacher are not insignificant. Click fraud is a crime and when the fake clicks are eventually discovered by the advertising network, the teacher may face prosecution. "Even if the teacher believed they were fronting a genuine business, the fact that it's their company doing the fraud and they were paid handsomely for it puts them at risk of criminal prosecution. The criminals disappear while the teacher is left to face the consequences," Vanes explains. "Luckily, prosecutions are rare, but the risk is still there."

To avoid getting caught up in the scam, Vanes advises teachers to beware of job offers from strangers. "If a stranger contacts you out of the blue with a job offer, you need to be on high alert," he says. "Unless the person is from an established recruitment agency, and their identity can be verified, you should assume it's a trick. Additionally, you should steer clear of anyone who asks you to front a business in the US, especially if it involves any online advertising."

According to Polygraph's own research, there are hundreds of English teachers who have been duped by the scam. "The criminals are constantly looking for English teachers to front their scam websites. This is a necessity, as the advertising networks eventually discover the fraud, resulting in the English teacher being blacklisted. To keep the scam going, the criminals recruit new victims and start afresh."

If you believe you've been tricked into operating click fraud websites for a criminal gang, Polygraph can provide advice and assistance, including how to exit the scam. Contact Polygraph at team@polygraph.net or via the contact page at https://polygraph.net.

Ireland's student numbers have outgrown the number of beds available

By Melanie Butler

PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Engineer Amanda Nogueira was one of 30 Brazilians studying English in Ireland who spent two months sleeping in the basement bar of a Dublin nightclub before being moved by her Brazilian landlord to a mouldy two-bedroom flat she shares with 10 other students. With only 1,400 flat shares to rent in the whole of Ireland, according to a report in the *Irish Examiner*, the housing situation is likely to get worse, especially in September when a new cohort of international students is due to arrive.

Amanda, who works as a hotel cleaner to help cover the €450 a month she pays to share a bunk bed in a room holding five other students, told national broadcaster RTÉ News, "I'm from Brazil. It's a third-world county. So I never expected to meet this here. I never expected to be exploited in this way."

ICOS, the Irish council for International students, which co-operated with the broadcaster's investigation, has been helping students like Amanda make official complaints about their landlords, many of whom, like Amanda's, have been operating illegally.

ICOS executive director Laura Harmon has called on the government to update legislation on overcrowding which is no longer fit for purpose. Harmon believes that the country's accommodation crisis "…is also having an impact on Ireland's reputation abroad as a study destination. This could have serious ramifications for the Irish education sector as a whole," she warned.

Although students from the EU, particularly the junior market, still make up the majority of enrolment in Ireland's language schools, the long-haul, long-stay market, mostly from Latin America and East Asia, has been growing steadily. In 2019, the year before the pandemic, Irish language schools enrolled over 15,000 Brazilians, making it the second top destination for this nationality, topped only by Canada.

Links between the tiny EU country and the Latin American giant are strong. One in three of the population of the small town of Gort near Galway are Brazilian. Brazilian nationals do not require a visa to enter the country to study, and are attracted by the growing choice of language schools and work rights for long-stay language students. Young adults from that country make up the biggest contingent of Latin Americans, which also include Mexicans, Chileans and Venezuelans heading to the Republic every year.

The numbers mean that some sectors of the Irish economy have become quite dependent on them. Calling for an extension to student Stamp 2 visas, which allows language students to study and work in the Republic for up to two years, Adrian Cummins, of the Restaurant Association of Ireland, warned that removing thousands of workers just as the peak season began would present severe problems for the sector.

"What we'd like to see is the government extend the visas for another six months," he said in May, the month in which most student visas lapse. "This will affect businesses and people across the country."

Fiachra O'Luain, founder of the English Language Students Union, also made a direct plea for visa extensions to Justice Minister Helen McEntee. "Ireland cannot afford to lose the critical labour capacity during the high season… when these students are allowed to work full time," he said, pointing out that many use the money to fund their future studies in the country.

Teachers also needed

It's not only accommodation which is in short supply in Ireland – it's also teachers. Over half of the 11 employers in Ireland currently advertising on one job site for staff to start immediately are actively looking to recruit from the UK, with their adverts all making clear that "UK nationals do not need a visa or residency permit to live or work in Ireland".

But with shared rented accommodation hard to find (see above) how will teachers coming from the UK, or from EU member states, find a place to stay?

Four employers are running the kind of residential summer schools familiar in Britain, but fairly new in the Republic. Accommodation is, of course, included, though rates of pay seem less generous than non-residential jobs. One employer is advertising the exact same terms and conditions in Ireland as those in its UK centres, which is odd, given that Irish labour laws are very different.

Two of the non-residential Irish schools actively recruiting from the UK are offering help with accommodation. Both are also offering the possibility of permanent full-time jobs after the summer – an prospect rarely seen in the UK.

A word of warning though: the Irish are much stricter than the British Council when it comes to teacher qualifications. A first degree is a must, while Celta, Trinity and Ireland's Celta course are the only certificates they accept.

Watch, listen and read

How English-captioned videos stimulate learning

By Gillian Ragsdale

Learning new vocabulary from videos is improved with full captions (glossed, if possible) combined with pre-viewing activities, as demonstrated in a study by Mark Feng Teng at Hong Kong Baptist University.

Learning new vocabulary is demanding and relentless for language learners, and strategies to make it more interesting and efficient are welcome. Watching videos is a popular method for all ages, but there is some debate over how best to support this and whether reading text at the same time is helpful or just too much extra work, producing cognitive overload that interferes with the learning process.

Teng set up a rigorously designed study to test the use of captioned videos, as well as the use of pre-viewing activities. Two hundred and forty 11 to 12-year-old Chinese EFL students were recruited from six Chinese-medium primary schools. All the students taking part were of a similar intermediate standard.

The 240 students were split into two groups. One was given pre-video tasks involving pictures from the videos to match with captions. Each of these two groups was split into a further four groups. Each of the four groups viewed videos with different kinds of captioning: glossed full captions, glossed keyword captions, full captions and keyword captions. So, there were eight groups in total.

Each group watched four videos of about 4 minutes. Each video showed an animated story and had an English-speaking narrator. Full captions were verbatim transcripts of the narrator speaking, while keyword captions showed only one to four difficult words/phrases, eg, 'extravagant' and 'abide by the rules'.

The glossed captions had links under some difficult words so that when the viewer clicked on the link a pop-up box showed the meaning in Chinese. The video paused while the pop-up was open and continued again when the viewer clicked again.

PHOTO BY VIDMIR RAIC FROM PIXABAY

There were 20 target words in the videos, nouns (eg, twilight), verbs (eg, nibble) and adjectives (eg, extravagant). The students were pre-tested on a larger bank of target words and the final set were selected as being unknown to all the students. Each target word appeared only once in the video.

After viewing, the students were tested on their comprehension of the videos – but none of the students were aware that target vocabulary was the focus of this testing.

It requires a sturdy effect to produce significant differences between so many groups of fairly modest size, but Teng did find significant differences between all groups (properly using a MANOVA with Bonferroni corrections for multiple comparisons).

Overall, the choice of captions accounted for 63% of the variance in post-viewing test scores, while the use of pre-viewing activities accounted for 37%. Clearly the use of both glossed full captions and pre-viewing tasks produced the best scores, although the choice of caption style had the strongest influence on scores.

The pre-viewing activities took up to 50 minutes to complete, however, so a much less efficient use of time compared to four times 4-minute videos. In practice, with limited classroom time to devote to vocabulary activities, these activities would most likely need to be added as extra homework and there may well be other, higher priority tasks. Further research would be useful to find out the minimal, most efficient way to prepare these activities, eg, is it worth preparing just 10 minutes of pre-viewing activities or does the effect become so small it isn't a good use of either the teacher's or the students' time?

Of the captioned videos, the order of effectiveness was glossed full, glossed keywords, full, then just keywords – and scores were significantly different between all groups (with or without pre-viewing tasks). It's clear from these results that reading full captions in the target language while watching the video and also listening to the narration actually improves learning rather than being a burden.

This makes sense given current models of working memory, which have separate 'loops' for visual and auditory information, so that both can run concurrently without interference or cognitive overload. On the contrary, having both streams running simultaneously leads to more efficient storage in memory (as per dual coding theory).

Clearly students were making use of the glossed term links and these significantly improved vocabulary learning. Glossing is attention enhancing in itself – and anything that improves learnes' attention is a winning strategy.

The most straightforward application of these findings is to favour videos fully captioned in the target language. Suitable videos that are not already in English could be used if they have a target language narration inserted: for this study, new audio files of English narration were prepared using Wondershare Filmora and glossing was added using MAGpie2.5. Investment in a bank of such videos has potential as a relatively time-efficient and entertaining way to learn vocabulary.

REFERENCE

■ Teng, M F (2022), 'Vocabulary learning through videos: captions, advance-organizer strategy, and their combination,' Computer Assisted Language Learning, 35:3 518-550, DOI: 10. 1080/09588221. 2020.1720253

Blended learning can improve outcomes, especially for English language learners

By Gillian Ragsdale

Blended learning is better than regular classroom or wholly online learning, especially for English language learners, according to a review by a team from Scotland led by Keith Topping from Dundee University.

The move to online and blended learning during the pandemic increased concern as to the effectiveness of these methods of teaching compared to the usual classroom experience. Post-pandemic, the question is whether these methods are second best or should be embraced for their benefits going forward.

Topping's review covered 1,355 studies on students from 59 countries from 2020-2021. Topping defines 'online learning' as taking place outside of school and 'blended learning' as being a combination of remote online/digital learning and regular classroom learning. Digital learning in school is termed 'computer-assisted instruction'.

The main findings were:

- Although online learning can be as good as or better than being at school, blended learning has better outcomes than either style alone.
- Online and blended learning was especially beneficial for EFL students, lower ability students and girls generally.
- The use of computerised educational games and computer-supported collaborative learning was more effective than online learning, but less than blended learning.
- Computer-assisted instruction, delivered *in school*, was even more effective than online or blended learning.

The authors suggest that digital technology enables greater task flexibility and learner autonomy. Since these attributes are generally known to support student well-being, this may help to explain the finding that 79% of studies assessing psychological well-being when using digital learning found an improvement. However, access to digital technology outside of school remains a major issue.

It seems that there is good reason to keep some of the online strategies schools have implemented as emergency measures, but with more support for teacher training and more equitable student access to digital resources.

Many useful recommendations, ideas and tips were extracted from the reviewed papers and the authors have helpfully organised these into their Appendix S2, which can be downloaded from the online version of their open access paper (see the second link in the box 'Supporting Information' at the end of the online paper).

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■ Topping, K. J., Douglas, W., Robertson, D. and Ferguson, N. (2022) Effectiveness of online and blended learning from schools: A systematic review, Review of Education, 10, e3353. https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3353

Visa aid

A pioneering partnership between Pearson and Talent Beyond Boundaries is helping skilled refugees settle in new countries, as Sasha Hampson explains

PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine and the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan last year have shown that more than ever, refugees need solutions to resume their lives and rebuild their careers in places where they can feel safe and secure.

In May, Pearson announced that it's partnering with Talent Beyond Boundaries to offer the Pearson Test of English – PTE Academic – free to 300 refugees from around the world, and offering a further 300 tests with a 10% discount.

Talent Beyond Boundaries is the first organisation to focus on pioneering talent mobility for refugees as an additional solution to traditional humanitarian resettlement.

It will administer the tests, which can be taken in any PTE Academic test centre globally. The tests will be allocated to those refugees whose skills match with employers and skilled migration programmes. So far, it has launched displaced-talent visa programmes with the governments of Australia, Canada and the UK.

A good example of someone who has benefited is Fadi Chalouhy, who went from being stateless in Lebanon to being a management consultant in Australia with the help of Talent Beyond Boundaries.

Fadi's father, a Syrian soldier, left his Lebanese mother without registering Fadi for citizenship. To this day, women are not allowed to register their children in Lebanon or many other Middle Eastern countries. So, until very recently, Fadi was one of the estimated 10 million 'stateless' people around the world.

Fadi takes up the story: "2016 was a turning point for me. My mother died and her meagre assets went to my uncles. I had no chance of Lebanese citizenship. Grieving, but determined not to die stateless in Lebanon, I went on a letter-writing campaign.

"That's when Talent Beyond Boundaries came to my aid. They saw my skills, not my statelessness. They saw me as an asset, not a liability. It took two years, but I finally became the first stateless person to secure a skills-shortage visa and migrated to Australia to work at Accenture."

Pearson is naturally very pleased with this outcome and hopes to see many others achieve this sort of visa through its partnership with Talent Beyond Boundaries.

Anyone displaced by the crisis in Ukraine, or anywhere around the world, can register on the Talent Catalog to be considered for international employment and skilled visa opportunities. Visit talentbeyondboundaries.org/talentcatalog

***Sasha Hampson** is Vice President of PTE Global Stakeholder Relations at Pearson.*

EU fund supports English language chain in Central Asia

By Melanie Butler

When Mongolian language schools owner Purevdash Jalbuu needed funding to expand his small chain of schools into neighbouring Kazakhstan, he reached out to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which was founded by the EU in 1991.

Having spotted a hole in his local market for high-quality English courses for professionals, Jalbuu opened his first school in the Mongolian capital Ulaanbaatar in 2019, having acquired the national franchise for Wall Street English (WSE), the blended learning specialists.

At first, WSE owners, Barings Private Equity Asia and CITIC Capital, were reluctant to franchise into Mongolia, only agreeing on condition Jalbuu also took on the franchise for Kazakhstan.

When WSE opened in Mongolia, the take up was impressive, with the 'ambitious' first year target of 480 enrolments met within months and 800 students enrolled within the first 12 months. Another 800 students signed up in 2020.

Jalbuu was worried, however, by the prospect of opening in Kazakhstan, a market with which he was not familiar, and reached out to the EBRD Advice for Small Businesses programme, which is funded by the EU. They helped him find the best location, Almaty, and identify student preferences. It turned out that, as in Mongolia, the adult market preferred to learn in a physical classroom, at a time of their choosing and with targeted teacher support. The Almaty school is due to open this October.

The EBRD team also advised Jalbuu to expand his business in Mongolia by opening a second school.

"With our number of students, the first Ulaanbaatar branch ranked first in the world among all the WSE franchises for the past three years. To keep up with the growing demand and develop our business further, we opened a second branch in Ulaanbaatar. This would not have been possible without the support of the EBRD," he told Khazakh website *inform.kz*.

PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK

The adult language course sector tends to flourish best in new markets. As markets mature and language levels improve, the top end of the adult market tends to contract and can collapse completely in a downturn. WSE China, for example, opened in 2000 and had 71 centres employing 3,000 staff at its peak. Sold back to WSE founder, Luigi Pecenini, in 2019 at a deep discount, it struggled to survive during Covid and closed its doors in August 2021 owing US$15 million.

Is English about to boom in Algeria?

By Melanie Butler

PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Algeria is to introduce English lessons in primary schools, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has announced. The former French colony has insisted all schools teach in Arabic since the 1960s, although since 2016 an exception was introduced for Tamazight, the language spoken by the Berber people who make up over a quarter of the population.

Could this be a new growth market?

The short answer is probably, providing you're a language school franchisor looking for an overseas operation or if you're willing to travel and are a native speaker teacher or French-English bilingual. There is also likely to be a good market for English medium degrees, especially at Master's level, because academic study in English is seen as increasing job prospects in a country with a very high rate of graduate unemployment.

In the case of language travel, however, only short-haul destinations like Malta and Ireland with work rights for language students are poised to benefit.

Although the UK press are likely to hail this as a victory for the English language, French, which is taught as a foreign language in schools, but used as the language of instruction in many university departments, is likely to remain the second language.

As Algerian Professor of English Hyat Messekher points out in a recent LSE webinar, this is not the first promise of primary English. An attempt to introduce English in primary schools in 1993 failed, because parents were asked to choose between English and French, and most opted for French.

"Parent's wanted to make sure they could support and follow their kids," Messekher explains. "Also, they knew there was no proper plan, no books and no teacher training."

This time the push towards English is being led by university students, faculty and non-academic staff. Messekher sees this student demand as fuelling the rapid growth of the local language school market and the calls for universities to run intensive English classes.

This may be good news for pathway programmes. Indeed, NCUK, the university consortium which offers foundation-year courses, is already offering its courses through a private sector partner in Algiers. The Algerian school has a franchise agreement with another NCUK partner, British Study Centres, which run the NCUK foundation course in London.

And it is not just Algeria. NCUK's newest partner-run centre is in nearby Morocco, another Francophone North Africa country which recently adopted primary English.

At first glance, the two have a lot in common, and not just because of their colonial past. They are both upper-middle-income countries, according to the OECD, and both have a GDP per capita of around US$11,000 a year, putting them between Romania and Bulgaria in terms of economic strength. Further, they share a focus on education, something that is perhaps less often found in some other Arabic-speaking countries.

There is, however, one big difference between these two North African countries: their attitude to private education.

One in seven of all Moroccan children are enrolled in private primary and secondary schools, most of them teaching bilingually in Arabic and French. The young learners market for English has been mainly catered for by the private school sector, which increasingly offers intensive English language in French Arabic, primary with trilingual programmes introduced at secondary level.

Less than 2% of Algerian children are enrolled in private school and, with the strict laws on Arabic medium education, a boom in English medium or bilingual schools is unlikely to emerge. Even CLIL may be hard to introduce.

And, since there is a shortage of local English teachers, English graduates are too in demand to remain in the classroom for long, so state school provision may be poor.

All this is likely to increase the demand for young learners programmes in language schools, perhaps delivered, as they often are outside Europe, as after-school classes which take place in the classrooms of their regular mainstream schools.

Native speaker teachers are likely to be in demand, as are bilinguals who also speak French or Arabic or both. Currently, levels of pay are attractive – the same or a little more than Spain and Italy, but in countries with much lower costs of living.

In the short term the biggest market is likely to be students aiming for English medium universities and the biggest beneficiaries will be the local private language schools. Remember that for Algeria, the aim is to achieve multilingualism, not to replace one colonial language with another.

As Hyat Messekher puts it: "We have to depoliticise the language aspect. It is not to choose one language at the expense of another, or add English and subtract other languages."

And, she emphasises, it will take time. "The environment for developing English is very favourable, but the ecosystem is not ready yet."

PHOTO BY JACQUELINE MACOU FROM PIXABY

Visa tough times

Delays and backlogs are becoming the post-Covid norm for language students dealing with immigration services around the world, as Melanie Butler reports

Ireland is the latest of the major EFL destinations to experience a post-Covid student visa crisis, with the Irish Embassy in Ankara, Turkey, struggling to keep up with demand for visas. The first four months of 2022 saw double the number of visa applications than were received in 2019, before Covid hit.

At the end of March this year, the Embassy there warned of 'severe delays', with applications taking an average of 14 weeks, according to Ireland's Justice Ministry, up from eight weeks previously.

In New Zealand, the visa surge has not yet started, because the border will not be fully re-opened until the end of July, although controlled numbers of students have already been allowed in. Education Minister Chris Hipkins claims that this gradual reopening of borders will "…spread the demand for visa processing and we will absolutely be able to give [students] a timely decision so that they can make their plans for 2023. Some might just squeeze in for this for the second half of 2022."

In Australia, which opened its borders last December, visas for English language students are now taking up to 78 days to clear, according to information on global visa processing times published on the Ministry of Internal Affairs website. The time lag from visa application to decision rises to a maximum of seven months for undergraduate students, eight months for PhD candidates and up to a full year for those wishing to enrol in vocational colleges.

Meanwhile, Canada, which is busy designing a new way to fast-track its international students into permanent residents, is facing delays in getting such students into the country in the first place. At the beginning of June there was a backlog of 173,000 student visa applications waiting for decisions, with a further 35,500 student visa extensions stacking up.

According to Immigration. Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the average time required to issue a student visa is currently 12 weeks for applications received from overseas. However, students in some regions, particularly those in South Asia and Africa, are reporting much longer waiting times.

One student lobby group in Bangladesh is reporting student waiting times of five months or more, while in India, Canadian broadcaster CBC found examples of students who have started their Canadian degree courses online, but have still not been able to obtain a visa six months after face-to-face teaching resumed.

In neighbouring United States, a recent Senate hearing was told that numbers of international students enrolling in American universities had fallen 7% between 2016 and 2019, while numbers going to Canada had increased 72% during the same period.

While US officials admit that visa backlogs have grown in part as a hangover from Covid, embassy closures and immigration bans from the Trump era, they say two-thirds of visa centres are now back up and running, and the system should be at full capacity by the end of 2023.

The US government has promised to prioritise student visas this summer, pointing out that it issued a record number of student visas last year and expects to break the record again this year. However, observers report that huge backlogs of general visa applications, particularly from Latin America and the Philippines, may slow down the process for students from these countries.

Unsurprisingly, the UK too has seen a slowdown in processing times for student visas, from an average of three weeks to a current estimated five to six weeks. According to the UK Visa Immigration service (UKVI), this is due to the need to prioritise applications from Ukrainian refugees, which has slowed down work in all other areas.

Most fast-track routes using the priority system, which normally allow visas to be issued in days, were temporarily closed in mid-March. However, according to the Live Mint India website, a special exception has been made for Indian travellers who can still access priority and super-priority services. This means that, for an extra cost, visas can be obtained within four days and one day respectively.

Normally none of this would have any impact on English language students, who can enter the UK for up to six months using a standard visitor visa. However, according to *Relocate Magazine*, 'Even straightforward visitor applications are now taking six to eight weeks to process, regardless of the urgency.'

The visitor visa took its toll on attendees at the recent Iatefl conference as well, who were only permitted to apply for their visa 14 days before the conference began. After submitting their online visa applications, they received emails informing them that the average time for issuing a visa was now 28 days.

Putting security first

Janet Garcia, president of PSI, which runs the *Skills for English* test, explains what sets it apart from the pack


President of PSI Services, Janet Garcia

What do you think makes *Skills for English* different?

"We carried out extensive research prior to developing the test and it showed that security, accessibility and fairness were three of the key areas that test sponsors, accepting institutions and test takers care about most. *Skills for English* was therefore developed with those very much in mind and delivers equally on all those fronts, setting up all parties for success.

"Further, we've partnered with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to create *Skills for English: SELT*, and both it and *Skills for English: Global* carry its assurance.

"We are fully committed to quality and validity of the test content, secure procedures and delivery, and flexible, multi-modal options for test takers, including online proctoring, which allows the test takers to take the test where they are. As one of the newer tests in the market, we were able to build in this flexibility from the start.

"In the majority of cases, the test takers know what level of proficiency they have to demonstrate, so being able to take the test at the level they need removes the uncertainty – and the stress – of answering questions across a number of levels.

"We know how much achieving this credential means to our test takers, which is why we've also prioritised our test preparation and practice offering, which has been described as 'generous'. We see this as integral to PSI's mission to help people succeed and improve their lives. The materials we make available to test takers and teachers are an effective tool for getting them ready for exam success."

PSI is famous for, among other things, psychometric testing. How does that influence its language exams?

"PSI knows how to do exams and the science is at our core. PSI, along with its talent management sister company, Talogy, has been delivering assessment solutions for over 75 years. We develop psychometrically defensible assessment for hundreds of organisations globally and deliver on the order of 30-million assessments a year, in 50-plus languages in over 160 countries. We leverage that wealth of expertise and experience in testing best practices for the development of valid, reliable, fair language assessments.

"We have a dedicated team of language assessment experts who ensure alignment to the CEFR, train content developers and oversee an ongoing rigorous process of development and review."

***Skills for English* has been accepted as a secure English language test in the UK. Recently exam security is a hot-button issue in many countries. What is the PSI approach?**

"High-stakes testing is our business and we appreciate the need to protect the integrity of the credentials we deliver. As a result, we've developed an approach to test security that covers a number of angles and work closely with the Home Office to ensure they have full confidence in the secure delivery of *Skills for English*. All our SELT centres are approved by the Home Office, including security clearance of the staff supporting the delivery of the test. There are security protocols at the test centres on the day of the test: ID check, photograph of the test taker, etc, as well as a robust mystery shop, audit and QA programme.

"Additionally, we employ the vast experience we have in monitoring the test performance using data forensics, as cheating usually leaves a 'trace' that we are able to pick up by identifying anomalies from the norm that we then investigate further. This provides a very robust safeguarding measure that is effective across all modalities."

Which markets do you see as ripe for this kind of test?

"The market has been ripe for more diversity and choice for a while. With SELT locations in over 120 countries and an online proctoring option for *Skills for English*: Global, we're opening more doors for more people, improving their access to a secure, reliable and widely accepted way to prove their level of English.

"*Skills for English* has been incredibly successful at driving rapid acceptance as a standard for study, work or settlement purposes by a growing number of government agencies and educational institutions in the UK, Ireland and the US.

"Through PSI's UK office, we work closely with the Home Office and the Department for International Trade (DIT), supporting their missions of developing closer collaboration, and forging new economic and educational ties with strategic partner countries globally."

What do you think the next big thing in testing is likely to be?

"With this we come full circle from the beginning of the interview: security, accessibility and fairness will likely remain the main concerns and our continued investment in innovation on content is focused on these. The experience of the recent pandemic has put remote access to assessments, and therefore their security, into sharp focus and keeping ahead of those wishing to cheat is crucial. The development and application of robust, secure mobile technology is likely to be the next great race in the industry."

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Mixed motives for language learning?

Melanie Butler talks to Hayo Reinders

It was a white paper from Oxford University Press called 'Using Technology to Motivate Learners' that first bought Hayo Reinders to my attention. The paper is an excellent and timely response to the questions thrown up by the rush to online teaching during Covid, with a myriad of good evidence-based ideas on how to use technology effectively.

Yet, I as I read it, I found myself asking the question: Why just look at motivation?

I decided to interview one of the authors and looked up Hayo, a Dutch professor with university chairs in the US and Thailand who lives in New Zealand. Reading up on his background, I realised that, while we were both multiilinguals, our motivations for learning languages are miles apart.

Hayo is intrinsically motivated. He fell in love with languages as a child. At four, his favourite TV programme was *Sesame Street* in German, at 11 he was thrown out of a restaurant for correcting the French on the menu. He's a language nerd who made his hobby a job.

I am extrinsically motivated. The child of a peripatetic family, my father believed in learning the language of the countries we lived in and sent me to local schools where nobody spoke English. I didn't choose to learn languages, I had to – though losing my languages would be like losing a leg.

"There is nothing wrong with instrumental motivation," Hayo consoles me on the phone from his father's home in Holland. People who urgently need to learn a language – immigrants, refugees, people in love with a foreigner – are, given the right support, likely to learn.

The main problem is extrinsically motivated students with no obvious need to learn: three-year-olds in China in English-medium kindergartens forced to speak only in English, for example, or Asian students in classes of 40 made to learn a language which might, in some distant future, help them get jobs.

One quote from the paper stays in my head: 'Achieving fluency in a second language requires learners to stay motivated for years'. But isn't that also true of many school subjects, I ask Hayo. Maths, science, music? You need to stay motivated for years.

"Yes, and you need not only to be motivated, but also engaged," he says. "Sometimes engagement can be more useful."

If, as one definition has it, 'motivation represents initial intention and engagement is the subsequent action', then motivation is a necessary condition of language learning, but not, on its own, a sufficient one.

What about other affective emotions, such as anxiety? Hayo and I are both fans of the work of Jean Marc Dewaele, who investigates using positive psychology in language teaching. He has trialled a variety of teacher behaviours and methodological interventions, and measures their impact on both motivation and foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA). Many interventions – from telling jokes to using more L2 in the classroom – have a positive impact on motivation, but no impact on FLCA. You can be more motivated, but no less anxious.

Classroom anxiety is not just limited to language learning. I confess to physics anxiety. For Hayo it was maths. "I spent the whole of high school figuring out ways to avoid it. I did my first degree in Arabic and Hebrew, then I switched to applied linguistics for my higher degree and my first course was… statistics!"

I can hear his anguish. Technology, I point out, is proven to help with maths anxiety. Why not with FLCA?

Hayo agrees. "I did a project with engineering students in Thailand where we said, 'We're going to let you play as much of your favourite game in English as you like on condition you log onto the international server, play in English and fulfil certain tasks'. It was very successful."

But technology is not the only answer to FCLA. "We ran a recent project which deliberately challenged learners with anxiety problems. With support they got through and their anxiety levels fell." In cognitive behavioural psychology they call this desensitisation.

However, you have to acknowledge the existence of a problem like FLCA, I point out. You have to recognise when students have it. Motivation, engagement, FCLA – using technology can help students with many affective elements of learning – so why the focus on motivation?

"When we first met as a panel, we had a freewheeling discussion," says Hayo, "and we asked the publishers: why motivation? They told us that in surveys of thousands of teachers, motivation was given as the main reason for using technology."

There is nothing wrong with teachers using technology as a motivator and there is nothing wrong with publishers researching it. But in my view, other aspects of positive psychology are also important.

Hayo also argues the case for Positive Computing, a movement which aims – accoring to two of its founders – to create a "digital environment that can make us happier and healthier, not just more productive". As Hayo adds, "It is about designing technology which helps human beings."

So, the message from two differently motivated multilinguals is simple: think positive.

To find out more about Hayo Reinders, visit innovationinteaching.org

PHOTO BY MARIÁN OKÁI FROM PIXABAY

Understanding the REF

A crash course in what it means, why it's important and how to use it, by Melanie Butler

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) for 2021 is out, a year late because of Covid, but causing the traditional pride and anguish to university departments the length and breadth of Britain. The Government-backed exercise assesses the quality of academic research across the country, in the experts' judgements, delivered across 34 academic subjects – or Units of Assessment, as they are called.

The main job of the REF is to provide information which will allow Government research funds to be allocated to the strongest departments in each field. For would-be EFL postgraduate students it also reveals which departments in which universities offer the most cutting-edge research and research-active teaching. It tells them who are the traditional powers and who are the rising stars in the three main Units of Assessments under which English language research falls: English language, education and linguistics. There may also be ELT researchers submitting their papers in other fields (neuroscience, perhaps, or psychology), in which case, can they please let us know.

The *Gazette* uses the REF to produce lists of the university departments which have submitted ELT-related research in the order that their results have been ranked by the Times Higher Education (THE), which also runs rankings of the world's universities.

But for the REF, it is the subject areas covered by university departments that are important. We cannot provide an overall ranking for the three academic areas covered, any more than we could produce a league table combining teams from football, cricket and cycling.

What we can show you is which departments in which universities have ELT research deemed by the specialist experts from the REF to have produced world class or internationally excellent work in education or in English language or in linguistics. It is up to prospective students to work out which field most closely aligns with their academic interests and career ambitions, and which departments in each field most interests them.

We must emphasise that a research-active department is not necessarily the right place for all Master's students to go. Those new to teaching or just looking to improve may prefer a practical course with lots of hands-on practice and will be much happier in a course run by teachers and trainers in a language centre, and there are plenty of good ones.

It is, of course, possible to combine the two, as is done in the Master's courses jointly run by education departments and language centres at Nottingham, Glasgow and Sheffield Hallam, all of which appear in our education ranking starting on the opposite page.

Of course, the scores under, say, English language or linguistics do not just refer to the ELT staff. Indeed, in past REF-style exercises, it was possible for researchers to not even submit their research for assessment. But REF 2021 stopped this, insisting that all staff with significant research responsibility submit some of their work for assessment. Over 76,000 staff submitted their research, 50% more than in 2014 when the last REF took place.

Another major difference is the increase in the emphasis on the social and economic impact of the research rather than just the power. That is, the total amount of researchers submitting and the total amount of research submitted. This has produced a revolution in the kind of university which is recognised as outstanding in an individual field. Although the elite research universities who belong to the Russell Group still did well, the newer universities – be they 'plate glass' universities founded in the 60s or the post-92 institutions, which were awarded university status after 1992 – could also rise to the top in a particular area.

Take the top performers in our three Units of Assessment: Britain's most ancient university, Oxford, tops the ELT-related Master's charts in education, the hugely popular plate glass university, Lancaster, tops our charts in linguistics, while in English language it is the post-92 University of Bedfordshire which, thanks to its world-beating team at Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment that nosed ahead of the traditional corpus giants at Birmingham, Nottingham and Liverpool to take top spot in English language.

Remember, these are rankings of subjects in particular departments, not of universities overall. And if you're looking for a Master's from our list you need to decide first what is your primary interest in English language teaching. Is it English in particular, language in general or teaching, and then you should know if your best bet is a department which does research in English language, linguistics or education.

We have tried as hard as we can to track down all the departments offering an ELT related Master's which submitted to the REF in these three subjects. If we have left your department out, let us know. If you are angry at the weight given in our listings to impact rather than research power, we apologise, but we depend on the boffins at the THE, who are much better at rankings than we are.

And, finally, congratulations to all the universities listed here. Every last one of you has produced research which has been deemed by REF experts as world ranking and/or internationally excellent, and you all offer great Master's. British ELT should be proud of you.

PHOTO BY WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Ref ranking: education

How the universities did when it came to research in education

All the top education departments with ELT-related Master's listed here had research assessed as world-class and/or internationally excellent by the REF. While the Russell Group universities (in black) dominate the top 10, both the 'plate glass' universities founded in the 1960s (in blue) and the post-1992 universities (in red) are on the rise.

1) University of Oxford
2) University of Birmingham
3) University of York
4) King's College London
5) UCL Institute of Education
6) University of Bristol
7) University of Manchester
8) University of Glasgow
9) University of Nottingham
10) Queen's University Belfast
11) University of Warwick
12) University of Roehampton
13) University of Edinburgh
14) University of Bath
15) University of Sterling
16) Ulster University
17) University of Leeds
18) University of Exeter
19) Sheffield Hallam University
20) Open University

Case study: Sheffield Hallam

One reason the newer universities are on the rise is that the REF 2021 paid less attention to 'research power', which counts the sheer amount of research done, and laid more emphasis on the social and economic impact of the work.

To demonstrate their impact, universities were required to submit case studies which showed both the reach of their work and its significance. For newer universities like Sheffield Hallam, which already ran successful education projects around the world, it gave them a chance to have that work recognised.

"We already knew that local, national and international communities, policymakers and practitioners valued our work, but it's always good to have this validated externally," Professor Mark Boylan, of the Sheffield Institute of Education told the Gazette, picking out its work in disability studies, higher education and TESOL as prime examples.

In essence, the REF 2021 emphasised the application of research, as Nick Moore, leader of the MA TESOL, explains: "The strong performance for Sheffield Hallam University in the latest REF exercise shows how our research strengths lie in the application of knowledge. For the Sheffield Institute of Education, our research has had a significant impact on a wide range of educational contexts. Our TESOL team includes researchers who have contributed to these impacts ...developing TESOL-related research in teacher education, reading and writing skills, and the role of language in classrooms."

Choosing the right department

Going for a Master's degree is a big time investment, so do your homework before deciding where to aim for

In essence, ELT-related Masters cover three things: English, language and teaching. But the emphasis they give to each one, and the research areas they focus on depend on the university department they belong to – typically English Language, Linguistics or Education.

The degrees have three main titles. First we have MATESOL, which is almost always more teaching and learning focused, and is often aimed at new or inexperienced English-language teachers, particularly in a department that has two or more ELT-related degrees. Then we have applied linguistics and TESOL/ELT/ESL, etc, which is generally aimed at more experienced English language-teaching professionals. Finally, there are Master's in applied linguistics, which are often also aimed at teachers of other languages, as well as other professionals involved with language and communication.

Almost all Master's include a compulsory module on research methods (aimed partly at helping students do their dissertation) and many have a module on the nitty-gritty elements of language, called something like language awareness, language description or language analysis. A module on learning and teaching is also common, often under the title 'second language acquisition'.

Though almost all courses cover these core areas, the focus of the rest of the course depends at least partially on the department it's in. A Master's run in a department of education is easy to differentiate, as well as having a heavier emphasis on teaching and learning. Focusing on the context of mainstream education, you can normally expect to find modules on educational language policy, national curricula and assessment.

Establishing the difference between an MA in a department of English language and a department of linguistics can be a lot more problematic. As a rule of thumb, the English language departments concentrate on English: analysis of discourse in English, the differences between spoken and written English, teaching reading skills in English (reading in English is much more complicated than reading in a very transparent language like Spanish). Until recently, most departments were focused on sociolinguistics, but there is an increasing focus on psycholinguistics, in particular, cognitive linguistics, which deals with the way language is organised in the mind and it concentrates on semantics.

Typically, linguistics departments concentrate on language, of which English is only one example. They tend to focus in areas like language development in children, bilingualism and multilingualism, and how foreign and second languages (particularly English) are learned. Most cover both sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, which may include not only cognitive, but also the neuroscience of language processing in the brain.

PHOTO BY WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The campus of the University of Bedfordshire

So, before you sign on for a Master's at any of the departments listed in this special feature, there are a number of questions you need to ask, as we show in the case stuy opposite.

English language ranking

The English language has been an academic subject in UK uniiversities since at least 1828. Small wonder then that our ranking features six 19th-century 'redbrick' universities (in black), five of which are in the Russell group (marked*).

The number-one university, though, is one of the new 'post 1992' universities (in red) and three more of these also did well in REF 2021.

1. University of Bedfordshire
2. University of Nottingham* (English language)
3. University of Birmingham*
4. Cardiff University*
5. University of Liverpool *
6. Birmingham City University
7. University of Sheffield *
8. Swansea University (W)
9. Northumbria University
10. Canterbury Christ Church University

Linguistics ranking

The linguistics revolution of the 1960s inspired the recently opened 'plate glass' universities (in blue) to offer the subject and two of them top our list. However, 'red brick' universities (in black), including Russell Group members (marked*) make up the majority, while two 'post 1992' universities (in red) have joined them.

1. Lancaster University
2. University of Essex
3. University of Newcastle*
4. University of Reading
5. University of Edinburgh*
6. University of Southampton*
7. Bangor University
8. Birkbeck, University of London
9. University of Central Lancashire
10. University of Westminster

Our listings are based on the scores assigned by the THE rankings of the REF 2021.

Case study: University of Birmingham

Every university has its specialties, so make sure your choice matches your interests

The very first question you need to ask yourself when you start looking for an ELT- related Master's is: which am I more interested in – English? Language generally? Or teaching and learning? Of course, all good departments will cover all three, but in research-active departments, the area they submit their research is where they have most expertise.

Suppose you choose English language, then you need to look at departments whose research is submitted to the REF in that field. Take, for example, the Department of English Language and Linguistics at the University of Birmingham.

The next question you need to ask yourself is, do they have a Master's for a teacher at my level? The answer at Birmingham is probably yes.

For teachers with less than a year's teaching experience there's an MATESOL, with four core modules: syllabus design; second language learning and teaching; teaching and learning grammar and vocabulary; and classroom research methods. The only thing it doesn't offer is extensive teaching practice. You can get that in Birmingham, but in the department of education.

For teachers with a little more experience, the department offers an MA in Applied Linguistics with TESOL, designed for those wanting to stay in ELT and progress their career, perhaps by getting a job teaching English at a university or moving into teacher training. Again, there are four core modules including syllabus design, language description and research methods.

But the fourth module asks a fundamental question: "Are you interested in the relationship between language and society or in how language is organised in the mind? Sociolinguistics or cognitive psycholinguistics? Choose one."

Finding a specialist area is a feature of the department's third MA, this time in applied linguistics, which adds corpus linguistics and discourse analysis to the list, and offers options in everything from language and gesture to business discourse.

So we come to the third question you must ask: does this course cover what I want to learn? To find out you need to look carefully at the optional modules. One unhappy Master's graduate we met wanted to concentrate on syntax, but it was never mentioned after the first term.

PHOTO BY WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

University of Brimingham, North Gate

If our syntax nerd had looked at the grammar option at Birmingham, he would have found a corpus- based course which "highlights variation and gradience in the English grammatical system" and "how categories and constructions emerge and change". Is this the course for him? It's up to him to decide.

Check out the research

All the rankings in this feature are based on the results of the REF 2021 and all the results are based either on research done in one department or case studies based on projects they have undertaken.

If you're interested in a research-informed MA, you can start by checking the subjects a university covers in the degree, including the names of the options they offer – psycholinguistics, for example.

There are different ways of approaching psycholinguistics: at corpus universities like Liverpool, they concentrate on second language acquisition, which is how a second language is learned and represented in the mind. At linguistics-based universities like Essex, they add in the neuroscience on how the brain processes language. Meanwhile at Birkbeck, they research the impact of positive psychology on language learning. The question is: which approach to psycholinguisics suits you?

The REF results are not only based on published research, but also on the case studies of projects undertaken in the real world and measured for impact.

PHOTO BY WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Quadrangle, University of Liverpool

Case study: University of Liverpool

A great example is the work at Liverpool, where David Oakey focuses on what he calls circular research. The research informs the teaching, the teaching informs the projects and the results feed back into the research.

He gives me a simple example. Forty percent of the students of a local school have English as a second language, which creates problems when it comes to communicating with parents, many of whom barely speak English at all. The schools asked Liverpool for help.

Liverpool is a corpus university and focuses on areas like corpus linguistics discourse analysis, formulaic language and second language acquisition. "It's in our academic DNA," says David.

So, the first thing they asked for was example texts. A collection of school-to-parents communications was inputted and subjected to corpus analysis, which showed that the language used was corporate, formulaic and, when checked against the Cambridge English Profile, at least B1-B2 on the CEFR. Parents were not told their child had failed maths. Instead they were informed they "had not met target performance expectations in the subject".

When they analysed spoken text they found "the teachers had adopted the same corporate language". Unable to change the language of the school, Liverpool hit upon a plan to teach the parents to understand it with a syllabus based on the corpus of texts. The teaching assistants drawn from the novice teachers on the Liverpool MATESOL observed and were supported by the more experienced teachers on the MA in Applied Linguistics for TESOL. That's what I call impact.

Check out the department

The subject area of a university department which is home to a Master's provides clues to the approach the course will focus on: English language departments emphasize English, in linguistics they look at languages plural, in education it's more about pedagogy and policy.

Yet even different departments within the same academic disciplines focus on certain areas. Take education, where the University of Bristol is famous for its work in the Centre for Comparative and International Research, which examines issues of social justice around the world, a theme reflected on it's MscTESOL in its option on globalisation and the politics of English. At Queen's University, Belfast, the module on research which focuses on children, young people and education is taken alongside local students studying on the Master's in education.

PHOTO BY WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The main campus of the University of Bath

Case study: University of Bath

Perhaps the most focused of all the Masters – again in an education department – is at the University of Bath, which is renowned for its work in international education. It runs a unit called the Centre for the Study of Education in International Context, a Master's in International Education and Globalisation (MA IEG) aimed at, amongst others, teachers in international schools, a postgraduate certificate in international education for people who aspire to teach there and established by Trevor Grimshaw, an MA TESOL.

Trevor is a former teacher, teacher trainer and translator whose recent research projects have included a critique of the stereotype of the East Asian learner and an exploration of the "marketising and branding" of English and is a stickler for what he calls the "context appropriate" approach. "It's not enough to just introduce these students to the key features of the latest practice. We need to show them how to make it work in a particular context, to make it fit the customs and traditions of the culture they come from or, in the case of native-speaker teachers, the contexts they hope to work in. What we're aiming for is localised pedagogies."

Bath takes the same approach to the way it comes at language awareness. "We have built a team of specialists in global Englishes and English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)," Trevor says. And the question students are asked to consider is: which English is right for their context? When it comes to policy, they look at how they can adapt national curricula and assessment tools.

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Professional development

It's as easy as ABC, says Abeer Okaz

What is meant by professional development?

Professional development (PD) is any form by which teachers seek to increase understanding of their teaching and students, and to expand and/or deepen their skills and knowledge. PD comes in different forms and teachers have a wide range of options to choose from. The focus of this piece is to highlight the challenges that some managers face when they propose and/or impose PD opportunities on their staff, to list different ways to get staff to believe in PD and include a variety of PD for teachers.

What are some challenges that stop PD from happening?

1. Time: it is on the teacher's wish list, especially during their busy periods.
2. Finance: sometimes PD is above the teacher's budget. Besides, not all institutions reward teachers who work on their PD with an increase in salary.
3. Motivation: an important factor, as many teachers do not see the rationale behind PD opportunities.
4. Relevance: teachers may not find PD sessions relevant to their teaching contexts and the challenges that they face in their classrooms.

How can you convince your team to pursue professional development?

1. Personalise and tailor sessions to the teachers' needs and teaching context, and make them practical with a little background theory.
2. Support the idea that continuous PD improves students' learning.
3. Highlight the skills and updates teachers receive when attending PD sessions.
4. Help teachers see the value behind what they are doing.
5. Provide PD options so teachers can choose whichever of them they feel is the most relevant.
6. Put into consideration time conflicts and outside school commitments.
7. Ensure there is follow-up support so teachers can relate what they have been trained to do to with what they actually face daily.
8. Show appreciation for prior experience and encourage trainees to pair up and share ideas and experiences.
9. Ask staff to start their own profile/portfolio to highlight their credentials.

Why do teachers need to work on their profile/portfolio?

Teachers' profile/portfolio is one way teachers can get all their credentials in one place. When starting that, teachers will:

1. better understand their potential.
2. highlight their experience and skills.
3. be seen for the right reasons.
4. may get new opportunities.
5. connect with people from inside and outside their community.
6. continually develop as a teacher.

What are some ideas to help teachers create their own profile/portfolio?

> "I am strong at communicating with people"

Teachers need to go through three steps in order to create a professional profile/portfolio that best describes them:

1. Know yourself. One way to help teachers know themselves is to use the SWOT analysis, which focuses on the teacher's self-reflection of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It can be as simple as "I am strong at communicating with people, but I need to work on managing time and stress". Try it yourself and see how it works for you. For more ideas visit https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05.htm
2. Expand your network. There are several ways for teachers to grow their networks and community. Personally, I have found the below suggestions helpful in expanding my network for the past 20-plus years:
   - Become a member of an association which you find beneficial to your teaching context. Examples of these are: IATEFL, ELT Ireland (your country TESOL – in my case NileTESOL), Eaquals, Africa ELTA, IATLA, etc.
   - Join groups/pages which are active and engaging so that you learn from other teachers' experiences and get access to material. For example, Teaching House, ELT Footprint and BC teacher community, Electronic Village Online, Pearson/OUP/Macmillan, etc.
   - Engage in discussions, ask questions, broaden your knowledge and exchange strategies. This can be easily done via any of the social media platforms. I personally find Twitter and LinkedIn beneficial for being up to date and engaged with others in the ELT field.
   - Identify groups outside your immediate circle. Sometimes you learn best from those who are outside your comfort zone. I have found relevant ideas for teaching in *The Economist*, Dare to Lead, Digital Leaders, *Harvard Business Review*, etc.
3. Take action. Now it's time to find out how you can put all these ideas into effect. I've come up with five action plans that staff can choose from, which are as follows.

Share. One of the first steps of PD is to share and exchange what you already know with other teachers, including your experiences and material. There are several ways to share your work with others and particularly those who might not be as privileged as you and/or who work in a low-resource context.

The below list is just an example, but I am sure there is a lot more out there.

a. Video-based lessons: choose/collect videos your students are interested in and create your lesson. For an example of this, take a look at: https://ed.ted.com/on/WWHYc6hE
b. Ideas/photos: email a lesson idea or

PHOTO BY PIXABAY

plan, and/or a few photos of your class to info@teachingchannel.org

c. Content and ideas: share ideas at https://sharemylesson.com/about-us
d. Share your stories at https://www.edutopia.org/about/your-turn-write-us
e. ELT forums: start your own forum or take part in one by visiting https://galleryteachers.com/forums/topic/welcome-to-our-new-elt-forum/ https://www.createaforum.com
f. Teachers lounges/ blogs: take part in a blog and reflect on your work. Try the following site to get you started: https://www.pbs.org/education/teacherslounge

Speak. This is another way of getting your ideas and experiences out there. You can start locally, then go for the international events.

For example:

a. Local workshops: be the first to start/ organise/present in a series of workshops for local teachers.
b. Conferences: look for free conferences and go for it. Sign up to find out about them here: https://conferencealerts.com
c. SIGs: choose an organisation like IATEFL or your country's TESOL and become a member in one of its SIGs: https://www.iatefl.org and http://niletesol.org/about/niletesol-special-interest-groups-sigs/

Publish. Similar to the share idea mentioned above, except that publishing has a formal look. Your work is published and gets read by those who get hold of a copy.

a. Lessons and resources: upload a video-based lesson or a self-designed worksheet: https://en.islcollective.com/share and https://www.eslprintables.com/sendprintables/uploadworksheet.asp
b. Articles: write a lesson plan or a short article: https://www.hltmag.co.uk and https://ihworld.com/ih-journal/write-for-us/
c. Practical ideas: share teaching ideas: https://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish/newsletters-other-publications/tesol-connections/submit-features-or-resources-for-tesol-connections

Contribute. This is the final plan that glues together all the above ideas because this is the part which reflects your dedication to the teaching community.

a. A green project: start/replicate/take part in a green project with your students/ colleagues: https://green-action-elt.uk
b. Blog: start/follow a blog: https://sandymillin.wordpress.com/category/blog/ and https://abeerokaz.wordpress.com/blog/
c. ELT communities: an open space for discussions, to share ideas or successes: https://my.tesol.org/communities and https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/become-an-author

Stay in the loop. Make sure to follow up on what's going on in the ELT field on a regular basis by doing the following.

a. Subscribe to newsletters: https://www.teachinghouse.com and https://www.elt-training.com
b. Follow the updates: https://www.onestopenglish.com and https://www.macmillanenglish.com

PD does not have to be a burden. It can be as easy as ABC. You can choose whatever is relevant and beneficial to you, whatever is affordable and convenient for you and what matches your future PD plan.

Your ABC professional development plan

A	Articles (write)
B	Blogs (start/follow)
C	Chat
D	Diversify
E	Expand
F	Follow
G	Get to know yourself
H	Help others
I	Initiate contact (with other ELTs)
J	Join a group/ page/ SIG/ association
K	Keep looking for ideas/ being updated
L	Learn a new language
M	Mentor a colleague
N	Network with others
O	Observe a colleague
P	Podcast (follow or start one)
Q	Quit negativity
R	Research
S	Subscribe
T	Training
U	Update your social media profiles
W	Workshops and webinars
X	Expand your network
Y	You can do it
Z	Zest up your lessons for you and your students

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Five points to keep in mind when teaching English online

Educator Simon Dunton shares the top tips he's gleaned from 15 years of teaching

Since the spring of 2020, more ESOL teachers than ever have experienced online teaching. In some cases, this has been a temporary measure, but in others it has opened new opportunities for both teachers and learners, meaning the communicative language classroom has never been so accessible to so many people.

Working with tutors, trainers and moderators across the globe, the five areas below have been highlighted as key to successful online classes.

1. Set up the right screen view

Get to know your video-conferencing software well, experimenting with the view features so that you and your learners feel part of a class, helping to build rapport and create a comfortable learning atmosphere.

Open-class discussion is best conducted in 'gallery view', as you will be able to see more than one learner at a time, noting who looks like they want to speak or who disagrees with what has been said. Encourage your learners to use the same view, so they can interact with one another, nominating who will answer the next question, etc. This mimics the whole-class view everyone would have in a face-to-face class.

Of course, this means getting learners to keep their cameras on whenever possible. Talk with them about why this is important and how they would feel if you had your camera off during the class.

2. Think about your teacher talking time (TTT)

Many of us will be familiar with the concept of TTT – the time we as teachers spend talking in the class. In the communicative face-to-face language classroom, we usually try to keep it quite low as this is the learners' time to talk, not ours.

However, many teachers have noted that their TTT is higher when teaching online and this isn't necessarily a bad thing if it's the right kind of TTT.

In a face-to-face class, learners would see you giving out handouts, grouping them, writing on the board, etc. In the online classroom, they will see your face, and they may hear some typing and clicking. This is a good time to comment on what you are doing:

- "I'm now putting you in breakout rooms. There will be four rooms, with three learners in each room."
- "I'm putting the link in the chat box. Can you all see it?"
- "I'm about to share my screen. Can you all see the picture?"

If it is structured, clear and well thought through, this 'deliberate commentary' can be valuable as it helps learners understand what is happening in the class when you transition between *and through* activities.

3. Take your time

Everything can take a little longer in the online classroom, so remember this when planning and conducting activities.

In a face-to-face class, grouping learners takes seconds, but organising the breakout rooms can take a little longer, especially when first using them. This is normal and learners should expect this.

If you have asked learners to use a new site, tool or function, give them some extra time to orientate themselves and learn how to use it *before* they start the task you have set them.

When asking questions in open-class discussion, leave some extra thinking time for learners to consider their responses before nominating someone to answer. This allows for any delays in connection, as well as giving weaker learners more time to understand the question and compose their response.

> "When asking questions in open-class discussion, leave some extra thinking time"

4. Avoid breakout-room fatigue

While breakout rooms can be great for group discussions and collaborative work, it's easy to overuse them, which leads to breakout-room fatigue. When you plan your lessons, think carefully about when they are best used and why.

For example, checking several gist questions after a listening task is not a good use of breakout rooms or the learners' time. Instead, consider asking learners to type short answers into the chat box before asking for further ideas in open-class discussion.

5. Keep it simple

There are a huge number of blog posts, webinars and video tutorials on using online resources in the online classroom. So many, in fact, that it can be a little overwhelming for both learners and teachers.

Remember that a good language lesson – whether online or face to face – doesn't need to involve lots of resources. Some of the best learning moments can come from exploring and/or upgrading the emergent language (the language used by the learners), which can be done with an online whiteboard or a shared document.

If you do want to integrate online resources (videos, quizzes, online exercises, etc), remember to check them carefully to make sure they are suitable and easy to use. Also, remember to give your learners time to figure out how to use any new tools and discover how different functions work.

PHOTO BY CHRIS MONTGOMERY ON UNSPLASH

Take your teaching to the next level

Trinity Teach English Online is an online, self-study course that can lead to a Level 4 Ofqual-regulated qualification, the Trinity Certificate in Online Teaching (CertOT). For more information on the above and teaching English online, visit Trinity Teach English Online.

You can also try the Trinity Teach English Online free sample unit and experience first-hand what the course can offer.

***Simon Dunton** is a teacher-educator, researcher and conference speaker based at Trinity College London, with experience teaching a wide range of ages and abilities from around the world, both face-to face and online.*

PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK

There is no up

Self-perceptions of ELT teachers in the Republic of Ireland, by Deborah Tobin

The global expansion of English has led to an increased international demand for qualified, experienced teachers favourably positioning Ireland for learners seeking English-language instruction. Historically, the private Irish ELT sector has been lucrative for schools and school owners, yet precarious work conditions for teachers, including low pay, job insecurity and lack of benefits have received considerable media coverage since 2016. Despite the international education sector's value of €2.1 billion to the Irish economy, Irish-based ELT teachers have not reaped financial rewards on an equitable scale. The government-enforced Covid-19 closure of all ELT schools led to the furloughing of hundreds of teachers, highlighting further the precarity of this industry in Ireland.

This study, conducted between November 2019 and May 2020, aimed to investigate perceptions of ELT teachers within the private ELT-school sector in Ireland. An online survey examined how they expressed their position in relation to other principal stakeholders within the industry, seeking to explore the degree to which variables of age, gender or amount of experience might be a factor in how teachers expressed how empowered or disempowered they felt in their workplace and conditions. Findings reflected a highly skilled, highly qualified and highly motivated Irish-based ELT teacher cohort with a strong sense of their own professionalism, which was not, however, found to be reflected in many cases in their workplace conditions.

Seventy-five closed questions collected quantitative data, while four open-ended questions allowed a qualitative data response. A link was sent to 85 privately run ACELS/QQI-recognised schools across the Irish Republic, with subsequent distribution channels including ELT Ireland, ELT Advocacy and UNITE ELT Branch social media platforms, plus shout-outs for respondents at two ELT Ireland conferences and in the January 2020 edition of the *EL Gazette*.

The study

A cross-section of 81 valid responses represented teachers from eight counties, with a majority from Dublin-based schools. Twice as many females replied than males, while nearly 70% of respondents identified as Irish, with the remainder, interestingly, comprising of 14 different nationalities. In addition, almost half of all respondents were in the 31-40 age bracket, debunking the myth of the young, transient, backpacker and representing a more settled, steady, career ELT teacher. No respondent was inexperienced, the majority having taught for an average of 11-15 years, and almost 70% had worked abroad,

demonstrating a highly skilled, internationally experienced cohort.

Regarding qualifications, the most common undergraduate degree was not a BA in ELT, but a BA in English Language and Literature, with a diverse range of disciplines listing more than half of recorded responses under 'Other' qualifications. The lack of available undergraduate and postgraduate courses specifically catering for the practical needs of ELT has been identified as a potential contributing factor in diminishing the career viability of Irish ELT for its teachers. While over 70% of respondents were qualified to postgraduate level, more than 80% stated either not having or not knowing of the availability of a postgraduate course in ELT/ESOL on completion of their undergraduate course in their institution, or having access to one in some way. These results suggest a talented cohort from rich, varied subject backgrounds, but raise questions as to why so few of these ELT teachers availed of or had access to a specific ELT undergraduate or postgraduate course to enhance their academic repertoire. Also, 81% of respondents had personally funded their own course. Only 13% of respondents were aware that course fees would be fully covered by their employer, while 29% stated partial-funding availability, yet almost 35% were not aware of what kind of funding their employer would provide for courses at all.

Over half had attended one to two workshops or conferences during the previous year, the majority specifying it had been for their professional development. Despite employer requirement to attend reported by the majority, just over 53% had been paid for so doing, while nearly 47% received neither payment nor expenses for attendance at conferences or workshops that were not at their workplace. Nearly a fifth reported not knowing whether they were entitled to be paid or receive expenses for such attendance, certainly an area which needs addressing if schools are to retain highly qualified, cutting-edge teachers.

Basic resources to carry out teaching duties were recorded as adequate, but respondents voiced concerns regarding inadequate technology at a number of schools, suggesting a lag behind in the technological delivery of their pedagogy. Given the overnight pandemic shift to the virtual classroom environment, and subsequent upheaval experienced by many schools and their teacher and student populations, this clearly demonstrates a need for school owners and management to use their teachers' observations as a source of feedback on lesson delivery and updating resources.

> "There was difficulty in ascertaining any kind of consistent pattern between payment and level of seniority"

Concerning types of payment received, the majority were paid an hourly wage. The lowest specified rate was €10 (below the legal minimum wage for an adult worker of €10.50) and the highest €28, with an average €20.30 per hour for face-to face contact teaching.

Only 12 respondents recorded annual salaries, from €15,000 to €40,000, with an average of €26,860 per annum. There was difficulty in ascertaining any kind of consistent pattern between payment and level of seniority, years of teaching experience, qualifications held, duties and days, times of day and number of hours worked, with little evidence of any consistent incremental pay-scale among this cohort, reinforcing the UNITE ELT Branch description of "anarchic pay structures" throughout the industry. Only 7% were paid for lesson preparation or correction, and 5% for exam correction and preparation, despite the regular extra time this requires.

An average holiday time calculated as 20.16 paid days was enjoyed by most respondents, the minimum provided for in Irish work legislation (8% of worked hours in the annual leave year). However, where sick pay and force majeure were concerned, the scenario was different: Irish employees do not enjoy automatic legal entitlement to either. Only 17% were granted paid sick days, almost all recorded between 3-5 days. The lack of provision in many schools for both sick pay and force majeure has been consistently raised by ELT teacher advocacy groups. Until June 2021, Irish employment law stated employees must receive written information about their workplace sick leave policy, but left paid sick leave entirely at the discretion of employers. Lack of statutory sick pay was identified as a disincentivising factor for employees who might be displaying symptoms of Covid-19 from taking sick leave during the pandemic, and roundly criticised by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET). At time of writing, legislation has been introduced, the Sick Leave and Parental Leave (Covid-19) Bill 2020, to bring statutory sick pay into law in Ireland in September 2022.

Force majeure, however, defined as "limited leave from work following a family crisis", was largely denied these respondents, with only 12.5% reporting entitlement. The remainder stated either having no entitlement or no knowledge of such at their school, with only one knowing of three days' force majeure clearly stated in their contract. This is an area that needs attention and it is imperative that standardisation be considered across the entire industry going forward.

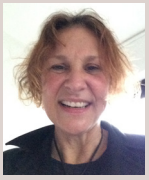
On pension and medical insurance status, 81% of these teachers had no pension plan whatsoever, more than one and a half times the national average of 48% of working adults found to have made no provision for one, and firmly positioned Irish ELT schools among the 75% of national employers who do not provide company pensions. Twenty-three out of 62 respondents stated they had their own private medical insurance, yet only two had the benefit of their school contributing to this, while nearly 60% stated they had no form of medical insurance at all. These are areas that need attention if the sector is to be truly considered a profession for its teachers, given the pandemic and dominant middle-aged demographic who responded.

Accommodation questions raised serious concern. Fewer than 17% of teachers recorded 'yes' to having a mortgage on their own home, with nearly 84% stating they did not, and nearly 60% living in rented accommodation. This is highly consistent with previous survey findings, making Irish-based ELT teachers 2.5 times more likely to be doing so than the general population, and is a major cause for concern in terms of the direct link between precarity and not having a permanent address or access to home ownership.

Finally, when teacher attitudes to ELT were investigated, 78% of teacher respondents viewed ELT as a profession and elaborated giving positive reasons why, while almost 90% of respondents saw themselves as professionals and identified as such within the Irish ELT industry.

> "These teachers identify themselves as professionals within a community of practice"

This is most encouraging. Despite appallingly poor working conditions officially recorded among many Irish ELT teachers elsewhere, combined with the many challenges faced by the cohort in this study, it demonstrates empowerment and high self-esteem among the majority of respondents, and a sense of self-assuredness in terms of their professional identity. These teachers identify themselves as professionals within a community of practice, as they share the same sets of concerns and problems in their day-to-day experiences, are dedicated to their work and take it very seriously. To this end, teachers must be directly included in and represented at all government-level negotiations concerning post-Covid recovery plans for the sector. Continued exclusion of their voices indicates disrespect from both government and other industry stakeholders. In addition, it raises an integral question on stakeholder status, who it includes and what it is to be a stakeholder in the Irish ELT industry, consistent with Unite ELT Branch findings that "first, we need proper regulation and recognition of teachers as stakeholders" in Ireland.



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A new approach from Cambridge

Francesca Woodward, Global Managing Director for English at Cambridge University Press & Assessment, explains why it was the right time to merge two Cambridge brands

Francesca Woodward, Cambridge University Press & Assessment's Global Managing Director for English

In August of 2021, Cambridge Assessment and Cambridge University Press came together to become a single organisation known as Cambridge University Press & Assessment. By merging these teams, we get the best of both and can offer even better solutions for English learners and teachers worldwide.

Although August was a huge milestone for us, it wasn't completely new territory. I was previously Chief Executive of Cambridge Assessment English and we had always worked very closely with our colleagues at Cambridge University Press. In fact, documents from our archives reveal we've been collaborating as far back as 1858. We shared a long history with the same goal: to help people learn and prove their skills to the world. As a department of Cambridge University, we play an important role in helping to deliver its mission of contributing to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international level of excellence. As part of this we want to give even more people the chance to learn English and achieve their goals, and we can do this better as an integrated English learning and assessment organisation.

A single brand

In April of this year, we launched a forward-thinking approach to our brand for English learning and assessment products, as well as a brand promise, which is: 'Where your world grows.' We also introduced a new look and feel for our English products, which is starting to appear in exam centres, schools and institutions across the world. We're making great strides in updating all major customer interfaces, including our websites, social media communities and other support materials, and this will continue over the next year or so.

Why a new approach?

We launched this new approach to our English brand for several reasons. First, following the merger, we felt it was the right time to bring everything about English together under one identity. But the rationale behind this decision goes much deeper. The world has changed so much over the past two years, and it was clear we needed an identity that helped us look to the future and focus on how we can best serve the needs of our learners and teachers worldwide. We wanted an identity that showed off our rich expertise in language learning and assessment, because we pride ourselves on being able to develop learning experiences that could only come from Cambridge.

We regularly hear hundreds of inspiring learning experiences from teachers and students, and each and every one is unique, but one thing that remains consistant is the impact the Cambridge approach has on people's lives. In recent projects, we've chronicled many of these stories from all over the world and they are truly inspiring.

One that struck a chord with me was that of a social scientist and dancer from Brazil called Sabrina. Sabrina said that learning English at age 15 transformed her life and took her to places she never imagined would be possible.

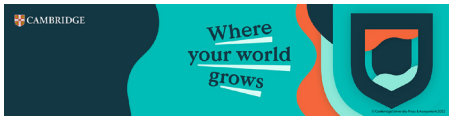
Learning experiences have to meet the real-life needs of learners wherever they are, and we achieve this by developing accessible products and services that are backed up by world-class research. Our dedicated teams that specialise in language learning, assessment and educational research develop insights that make this happen.

We work on numerous projects that showcase the unique capabilities of Cambridge. For example, over the past 20 years we've developed the Cambridge English Corpus, our multi-billion-word evolving collection of spoken and written English. We analyse this unparalleled collection of data, gleaning insights from it to ensure that the language taught in our teaching materials and assessments are guaranteed to be natural, relevant and up to date.

We've also developed the Cambridge English Scale, which was built on years of research, and is used to consistently report results for our qualifications and tests. And, of course, we have many products that make the most of our integrated approach to learning and assessment, such as our preparation material that is used all over the world. One particularly exciting development is our on-the-go preparation tool, Test&Train, which has been developed by our assessment and learning experts to help students get exam ready using their mobiles, tablets and laptops.

A welcome change

Our brand launch has been well received by our customers around the world, which gives me great optimism. As a global language, English unlocks a lifetime of experiences and, because language is at the heart of being human, we help people connect and communicate. This gives us a huge responsibility and we're commited to supporting our learners and teachers around the world. When you consider the opportunity associated with learning a language, it makes our promise of 'Where your world grows' so much more powerful and impactful. This makes me especially proud.



101 EFL ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Hall Houston
İTDİ TESOL, 2022
ISBN: 9798419082793

PHOTO BY PIXABAY

Making it fun

There are plenty of ways to keep interest from flagging in the classroom, as Wayne Trotman discovers

Titles concerning resources for classroom practitioners are always welcomed by readers of this section. Who (apart from me) wants to learn more about those heavy tomes on methodology or teacher research, anyway? Actually, according to the feedback I get, quite a lot of people, which is very encouraging. Under review on this occasion, however, is Hall Houston's latest which, according to one reviewer on the back cover is "a cornucopia of engaging and easy-to-implement activities". On reflection, how can such reviews appear before the book is even published? Anyway, after looking up the meaning of cornucopia, I began to delve into this title. And in case you're still wondering, '*cornu copia*' is the Latin for 'horn of plenty'. Hmm, let's see.

At first glance, this is a slender, attractively laid-out title, one running to a modest but easily portable 135 pages. The three sections therein follow the wave tide of the academic year: Getting Off to a Good Start; Maintaining Motivation and Interest, and Ending the Semester Gracefully. Each of these finishes with a brief section on teaching tips. In fact, considering the author's clearly immense classroom experience, I was surprised at the brevity of some of those tips, but take a look yourself and let me know, maybe. Much more helpful are his comments on recommended books, plus web resources and bibliography which appear at the end. It's always interesting to read an author's honest views on other authors' works.

Hall Houston's introduction is a refreshing and engaging read, in which he outlines who this book is for, along with its three themes that underpin the activities. The context of the university campus is clearly important, but of more importance, of course, are the dynamics of the group along with its stages of development. The third theme is active learning, defined as those tasks that seek to get students much more engaged during classes. Looking back on my 20 years of teaching university preparatory classes, I could have done with this book much earlier, it would seem.

> "I'm not so sure I would adopt the snowball fight icebreaker task"

Part one, Getting off to a Good Start, begins with several motivating tasks to choose from, including learning each others' names, which is always a good idea. It's much better, of course, than constantly calling out, "Hey, you! Yes, you, the one with the glasses." Students at all levels like to know a few interesting facts about their teacher and what better way to do this than via a true-false quiz that is outlined on page 10. I'm not so sure I would adopt the snowball fight icebreaker task that's recommended on page 18, and which involves rolling up pieces of A4 paper with questions on them and then hurling them at their classmates on the other side of the room. But, hey, apart from those who could well suffer eye injuries, I bet the students would enjoy that one. The final section in this part suggests numerous activities that will enable students to better know their campus and the syllabus. Full marks thus far for this title.

The introduction to the second part, Maintaining Motivation and Interest, contains valuable advice from the author to actually talk to the students and ask their opinions on material the teacher might integrate into mid-semester lessons when energy levels tend to be low and absenteeism on the increase. Many of the activities in this part involve music and movement, which are key factors in the lives of late teenagers. One that caught my eye was Video Rant on page 58, in which students are videoed while completing sentences such as, "I am sick and tired of ..." and thus ranting. As suggested, playing the video back at a later stage will prove fun.

The final part, Ending the Semester Gracefully, involves further motivating tasks concerning reviewing, reflection and leaving final messages. I love the idea of a quiz that pits the teacher versus the class. For many teachers, fun is something that takes place after lessons have finished for the day. But using tasks carefully chosen from this cornucopia, because that's what it really is, fun should soon be on the weekly menu throughout the academic year.

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