

BULGARIAN ENGLISH TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

HAPPY

Easter

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CONFERENCE

**27-28 September, 2025, University of National and World Economy,
Sofia, Bulgaria**

We look forward to welcoming you in Sofia!

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A word from the editor

Dear Honourable Reader,

We did it. Fifty issues of wisdom, wittiness, and wonders. Fifty issues of patience, perseverance, and progress. From the first editor of the e-newsletter, Tsvetelina Harakchiyska, currently Associate Professor at Angel Kanchev University of Ruse, her successors Zarina Markova, Associate Professor at Neofit Rilski South-West University and Silvia Velikova, Associate Professor at St. Cyril and Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, to the present day – all of us have made contributions, encouraged creativity, and demonstrated courage.

Admittedly, we have made mistakes and learned lessons. And I am the lucky one in charge of issue 50. I will stop here and continue deriving emotional and intellectual pleasure out of the invaluable contributions. Over to you!

Let's keep on pushing forward!

Georgi Dimitrov

Editor

A new initiative

Dear BETA member,

We are introducing a new rubric/initiative for our members to briefly share an activity done with students.

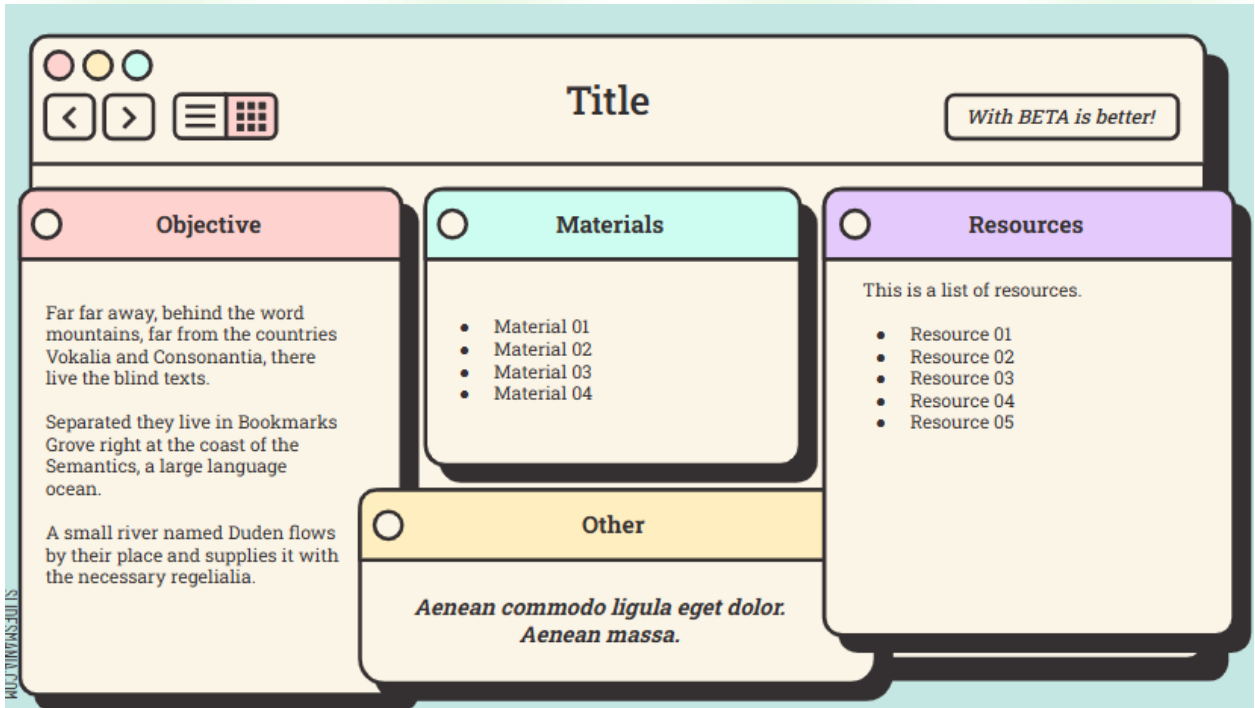
To do it, please download the template from the link and adapt it to your preference.

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1jNvWrM4p0xCBLSP7p_GzNY563nE1-8Wh4GYDQdBGUWw/edit?usp=sharing

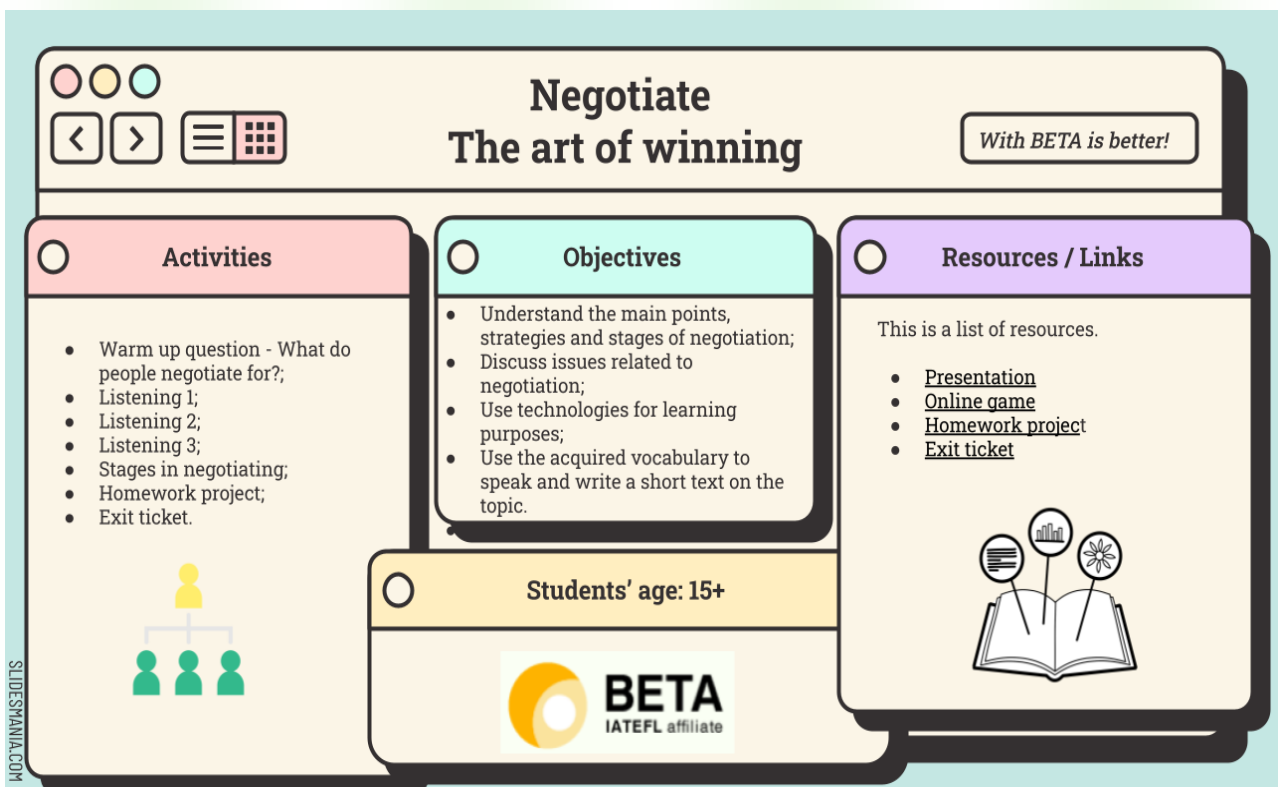
All materials should be posted in the FB groups or submitted via email to beta.iateflbg@gmail.com

The best activities will be chosen every two months and published in the BETA newsletters/bulletin.

Share, develop, feel empowered, inspire!



The first example was set by Tsvetelena Taralova:



The ESP Course for the Doctoral Students of the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy: Enhancing Their Academic and Professional Communication Skills

Dobromira Hitcheva



Dobromira Hitcheva, Senior lecturer, PhD, teaches ESP courses to MA and PhD students at the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Sofia, Bulgaria. She holds a PhD in English Studies with a PhD Thesis: Terminological Verb Collocations: A Contrastive Perspective, and MA in English Philology.

Her teaching experience is over 30 years. Her main interests are in Applied Linguistics, Academic Skills, ESP, Terminology, and Terminography. For over 15 years she has been the editor in English for the Annual of UACEG.

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The English for Specific Purposes (ESP) training in Bulgaria is carried out mainly in non-philological universities and in the last decades it has been given special importance as an integral part of the formation of the profile of future specialists with higher education, for whom the use of English in their professional career has become absolutely necessary. The implementation of the educational

process is carried out by the relevant foreign language departments and the lecturers from these departments take into account the specificities of the narrow domains in each university and often prepare their own teaching materials tailored according to these specificities. The organization of the materials is most often based on the communicative approach to ESP.

Foreign language teaching at the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (UACEG) has long-standing traditions. Throughout its over 70-year history, the department has always relied on and employed the most modern methods and forms of teaching foreign languages. For the fourth year now, since the academic 2021/2022, the Department of Applied Linguistics has organized for the PhD students of UACEG a theoretical and practical *ESP Course in Academic Communication for Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy*, which continues the tradition of the doctoral academic course of Prof. Boyan Aleksiev, conducted from 2009 to 2017, and provides the necessary competence in the preparation of the doctoral students of UACEG.

Course description

The *ESP Course in Academic Communication for Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy* is structured with a new perspective on scientific and technical communication and is intended for 60 academic hours (30 lectures and 30 seminars). The course is conducted in an online format via the MS Teams platform for 15 weeks: twice a week x 2 academic hours and brings 10 credits to the doctoral students. The author of the course syllabus and course leader / lecturer is Dr. Dobromira Hitcheva.

The diverse tasks are based on a new functional terminological approach to specialized foreign language education, which integrates the teaching of

theoretical language and terminological aspects with the development of practical skills for everyday and professional communication. The use of academic discourse in real communicative situations is considered both at the linguistic (lexical-grammatical) and communicative levels as a realization of traditional scientific and research genres. Terminological vocabulary and grammatical focus serve as a compensatory mechanism for increasing the level of foreign language competence, while at the same time developing professional communication skills. The functional terminological approach, developed by a team of 10 lecturers led by Prof. Dr. B. Alexiev in 2011 as part of a research project at the Center for Scientific Research and Design at UACEG for terminology-based ESP course is eclectic in its essence and is a combination of:

- **concept-based approaches**, aiming to introduce students to the main ways in which essential scientific concepts, e.g. properties and shapes, location, structure, measurement and process are expressed in scientific English;
- **function-based approaches**, focusing on the main communicative functions, e.g. describing shapes, component parts, function, purpose, making definitions, etc. of scientific English;
- **genre-based approaches**, concerned with discourse structure of a particular genre in scientific English (e.g. research article, academic textbook, technical manual, etc.).

MAIN COURSE OBJECTIVES

The main goal of the course is for the doctoral students to increase their English language competence in using literature in their specialized domain and communicative skills in professional situations. Modern textual and audio-visual materials containing topics from the main degree courses studied at UACEG are

used. The materials include the terminological vocabulary typical for the respective fields and reflect the functions of the language used in the special discourse. Particular attention is paid to tasks for revealing these functions, terminological and translation tasks, tasks for practicing lexical and grammatical structures typical of the scientific style, communicative situations, summarizing, as well as tasks related to each stage of the composition and oral presentation of academic texts.

Syllabus and assessment

The syllabus is tailor-made to achieve the above-mentioned goals and specially designed to meet the needs of the doctoral students in the fields of architecture, civil engineering and geodesy. The theory and practice are intertwined, while linguistic and academic skills complement each other. Since the method of assessment is continuous control, to successfully complete the course, the doctoral students use the acquired knowledge and skills to compile a glossary, write an abstract of a research paper, read a lecture and deliver a PPT presentation.

The course starts with a focus on the honing of the language competence of the doctoral students in the context of the linguistic features of scientific and technical English, as well as acquainting them with basic concepts such as LSP, term and terminology, terminological collocations, definitions, etc., which all naturally lead to the first assignment – compiling a corpus-based bilingual mini terminological glossary aiming at expanding students' specialized vocabulary of their narrow domain. Although it is a challenging job, it turns out to be quite beneficial for the doctoral students, as can be seen from the end-of-course survey. After delimiting the concept “glossary” among the other terminographic collections, the students are provided with clear instructions including the

components of each entry and the expert validator's role, as well as with an example template. The focus on the terminological component aligns with the latest interpretations of scientific texts as a network of scientific concepts, linguistically expressed through terms, terminological collocations, and specialized scientific discourse. The course book *English in Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy* (Hitcheva et al., 2011/2014/2019), based on the functional terminological approach, is used in the doctoral course as the main corpus resource for the manual extraction of subject-specific term candidates quickly and easily, and, most importantly for the ESP students, for identifying typical collocation patterns, which they can later utilize in the subsequent assignments and in their practice.

The course continues with the traditional genres in scientific and academic discourse paying particular attention to the rhetorical structure of a research paper and the second assignment – writing an abstract of a research paper. Here the seminars practise outlining, summarizing, paraphrasing, and synthesizing, which are also deemed necessary for the last two assignments – delivering a lecture connected with the specialized field of the PhD student and a PPT presentation on the topic of the doctoral thesis. The preparation for these two oral tasks covers strategies for designing and delivering lectures in English, as well as practical guidelines for oral presentations and presentation skills, and of course slides design.

Concluding remarks

To sum up, the impressive performance of the doctoral students in all the assignments, both written and oral, shows that the syllabus meets the set goals, namely:

- to enable doctoral students to increase their language competence,
- to develop their communicative skills in reading comprehension, listening, speaking and writing in the context of specialized English characteristic of their professional field – architecture, civil engineering and geodesy,
- to become familiar with basic strategies for acquiring the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge for English academic discourse,
- to develop habits for further independent upgrading of their specialized English.

The online format also contributes to the success of the course since it is intended for all doctoral students of UACEG – in full-time, part-time and free form of their doctoral studies, and many of them already work in their professional field.

The positive results achieved are confirmed by the end-of-course survey where the doctoral students show feeling of satisfaction in their answers to the following questions:

1. What was your reason for enrolling in this course?
2. Did your expectations match the difficulty of the course?
3. Would you take another course taught by the same instructor?
4. Would you recommend this course to others?
5. Can the course be improved? If so, how?
6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
 - 6.1. The instructor taught effectively.
 - 6.2. The course objectives were clear.
 - 6.3. The instructor answered your questions clearly.
 - 6.4. The amount of material provided in the course was reasonable.
 - 6.5. The material covered in the course was useful.

- 6.6. The course activities were clearly explained.
7. Which activities were the most useful to you? Why?
8. How much practical knowledge did you gain during the course?
9. Which of the activities practiced in the course will you use in your future career?
10. Which activities would you like to receive more information about or practice further?
11. How would you rate the course overall?

One of the main recommendations regarding the feedback of the students is their wish to have had more time for oral practice, which leads to the conclusion that although the planned number of hours seems sufficient, in the future, it can be thought about expanding it.

Research on Learning English Grammar Among Eighth-Grade Students at Primary School Župa Dubrovačka

Nataša Bebić Bačan and Davorka Bronzić



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Introduction

How do eighth-grade students approach learning English grammar? Do they pay sufficient attention to it despite the absence of dedicated grammar tests? How

effective is regular classroom instruction in helping them master grammatical rules? These questions have been central to discussions among the English teachers at OŠ Župa Dubrovačka committed to providing their students with the best possible learning experience. To gain a deeper understanding of these challenges, two of the teachers, Davorka Bronzić and Nataša Bebić Bačan, conducted a study involving 80 out of 133 eighth-grade students.

Since the introduction of the new English Curriculum in 2019, our teachers have observed a shift in student achievement. While students are demonstrating stronger overall language skills and achieving higher grades, their understanding of grammar has notably weakened compared to previous generations. This change may be linked to adjustments in assessment methods within the curriculum - traditional grammar tests, which once encouraged systematic studying, have been replaced by integrated language assessments. As a result, students rely more on intuition rather than fully internalising grammatical rules. This trend has raised concerns among the teachers, who aim to understand how these changes have impacted students' approach to grammar learning.

Motivated by their dedication to enhancing teaching and learning, the teachers explored students' attitudes toward grammar learning, their study habits, and the effectiveness of current instructional methods. Using an anonymous survey created in *Microsoft Forms*, they examined how seriously students approach grammar, how they prepare for assessments, and how effective they find classroom instruction. Parental consent was obtained before conducting the study.

The results of this study will help improve teaching methods and refine approaches to grammar instruction in everyday school practice. Additionally, they will support lesson planning by ensuring more effective grammar acquisition during regular classes and providing additional support for students who need it.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted using an online questionnaire created in *Microsoft Forms* consisting of fifteen questions: thirteen multiple-choice and two open-ended, where students shared their opinions and suggestions for improving English grammar lessons.

In total, 34 boys and 46 girls participated, with an average completion time of approximately five minutes. The anonymity of the survey encouraged honest responses, providing a more objective insight into students' attitudes.

The key advantage of *Microsoft Forms* was its automated data processing, which enabled a quick analysis of multiple-choice responses. Open-ended answers, where students freely expressed their thoughts, required additional processing and were later themed.

Results and Data Analysis

1. General Student Attitudes Toward the Importance of Grammar

More than 70% of students consider English an important or quite important subject, and a similar percentage report achieving excellent or very good grades in English. Students also emphasise the significant role of grammar in learning a language and recognise its importance for their future education and careers.

2. Students' Grammar Learning Habits

Only 30% of students regularly study and practice grammar, while 28% do so only before an announced assessment. A concerning 43% admit that they rarely or never study grammar outside regular classes.

When asked about learning methods, 47% of students rely solely on notebooks, workbooks, and textbooks, while only 30% use online resources and applications. A smaller portion, 17%, believe practising conversations in English is the most effective way to learn grammar.

When asked about the biggest challenges in learning grammar, 75% of students reported struggling the most with irregular verbs and verb tenses.

3. Preparation for Formative Grammar Assessments and Student Attitudes Toward Grammar Testing

Only 11% of students regularly study and review the material when preparing for formative grammar assessments, while 46% begin studying once the assessment is announced. An additional 18% review their notes just before the test, and 25% admit they do not prepare for grammar assessments.

Only 44% of students say they first try understanding a grammar rule before applying it to exercises. This suggests that over half of the students do not focus on understanding the grammar rules before attempting exercises. As a result, they may rely on trial and error, which can lead to repeated mistakes. This lack of deeper understanding could explain why many students struggle with grammar.

Regarding formative assessments, 35% of students find them particularly important for evaluating their understanding, while 41% consider them useful but believe they do not significantly influence their learning. On the other hand, 21% of students view them as unimportant because they are not graded, and only 3% see them as completely irrelevant.

When asked whether separate grammar tests should be introduced, 79% of students feel grammar is already sufficiently covered in existing assessments. Additionally, 58% see no need for grammar tests, arguing that there are already enough different forms of English assessments.

4. Student Perception of Grammar Instruction Quality

As for the quality of grammar instruction, 29% of students believe that regular lessons provide everything they need to learn grammar effectively. However, 58% feel they acquire most grammar concepts in class but still require additional review at home. Meanwhile, 14% say they need even more self-study or extra help to fully master grammar rules.

Students also offered suggestions for making grammar lessons more engaging and effective. Most students proposed incorporating more interactive and fun activities, like games and quizzes. The most frequently mentioned were *Kahoot* quizzes, which are already used for vocabulary and culture-related content, and students find them helpful for reviewing grammar concepts.

Discussion and Interpretation of Results

Comparison of Data with Teacher Expectations and Experience

Teachers have observed that students engage more actively in understanding and practising grammar when assessments include grading. Unlike students, who believe grammar is sufficiently assessed through existing tests, teachers feel that separate grammar tests would lead to better learning outcomes. Teachers believe such tests promote systematic study and foster a deeper understanding of grammatical structures rather than relying on last-minute cramming before exams.

Trends in Independent Grammar Learning and Preferred Methods

The study highlights a range of approaches to grammar learning among students. Despite their prior experience with digital learning tools during online schooling, only 30% of students use online resources for grammar practice, which is surprisingly low from the teachers' perspective. Teachers would like to see a greater adoption of digital tools as they can enhance learning by providing diverse and engaging grammar exercises and encouraging students to take greater ownership of their studying.

Possible Reasons for Lower or Higher Student Engagement in Grammar Learning

Based on our analysis, we assume that students who demonstrate high engagement in grammar learning are often motivated by good grades, an awareness of grammar's importance for future education, and a supportive learning environment. On the other hand, lower engagement may result from a lack of interest, the belief that language can be learned without a strong grammar foundation, and the absence of dedicated grammar tests that encourage systematic learning. Furthermore, students who find grammar particularly challenging may lose motivation if they do not see immediate progress. Teachers believe structured assessments would foster greater engagement by providing clearer expectations and helping students understand the importance of grammar mastery in the broader context of language learning.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Improving Teaching

Summary of Key Research Findings

The study reveals that while most students appreciate English as a subject, their approach to learning grammar varies. Many students study grammar only before assessments or not at all. Despite having prior exposure to online schooling, online resources remain underutilised. While students do not see the need for separate grammar tests, teachers believe that such assessments would improve learning outcomes.

Suggestions for Enhancing English Grammar Instruction

Improving classroom technology by equipping schools with smartboards and tablets would provide better access to digital learning tools. Investing in educational apps which require paid subscriptions would support grammar learning. Currently, many teachers personally cover these costs to ensure students have access.

Teachers should also more frequently check grammar through interactive quizzes, such as *Kahoot* grammar challenges, to encourage consistent learning. Raising student awareness of the role of lexical and grammatical structures in language learning is crucial for improving their overall language proficiency.

Providing Additional Support for Struggling Students

Although remedial English lessons currently support students struggling with grammar, attendance remains low. To enhance support, it would be beneficial to organise grammar workshops at more accessible times, allowing students to ask questions and practice targeted exercises. Additionally, offering concise grammar guides with summarised explanations and examples would help students review grammar at home. Greater emphasis should also be placed on promoting mobile applications like *Duolingo* and *Quizlet*, which offer engaging, and interactive grammar practice to daily support self-study. Making remedial sessions mandatory would provide students with more consistent opportunities to reinforce their understanding of grammar.

Guidelines for Future Research

Future studies could examine the impact of various teaching methods on grammar acquisition, compare traditional and digital approaches, and explore strategies for enhancing student motivation and fostering greater responsibility for independent grammar learning.

MINDFULNESS

Gabrijela Romić and Marija Rukavina



Gabrijela Romić is a teacher of English at Osnovna škola Vladimira Nazora in Vinkovci, Croatia. She graduated in English language and literature and philosophy at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka, Croatia, in 2008. She is 44 years old, married and has four children. She enjoys running and reading in her free time. Her main interest lies in improving students' mental health and emotional well-being.



Marija Rukavina works as an English teacher at Elementary School Vladimira Nazora and foreign language school Helen Doron in Vinkovci. In 2015 she received MA degree in Education and Croatian and English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek. She is primarily focused on enhancing students' social skills and supporting their mental and emotional well-being. She is married and a mother of two. She enjoys spending time outdoors, taking long walks or cycling.

Primary school Vladimira Nazora received Erasmus+ accreditation in 2023, which allows both students and teachers to participate in new experiences such as student group mobilities, professional development for teaching staff, exchange of ideas with European partners, and classroom observations in other European schools. The Erasmus+ accreditation is valid until 2027 and provides participants with easier access to funding and a permanent source of financing based on the institution's multi-annual plan.

The objectives of our Erasmus+ accreditation are:

- Development of digital skills for students and teachers to increase autonomy in learning and teaching.
- Improvement of mental health support for teachers and students, aiming to identify and address the stress and challenges faced by both.
- Strengthening socio-emotional skills in students, particularly communication and self-regulation of behavior, through active learning and active citizenship.

As part of the objective focused on mental health, the topic of our professional development was Mindfulness, and the structured course was held from October 21 to 25, 2024, in Tenerife, organized by iDevelop.

ABOUT MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is a state of active and open focus on the present moment, teaching us how to be fully present and aware of where we are and what we are doing. Our complete attention is directed toward what is happening in our body, our thoughts, and our surroundings, without analysing or changing what is happening. As a form of cognitive psychotherapy, it is scientifically grounded in

meditation, but it can be applied in everyday life and daily activities as a method for maintaining psychological well-being.

We are aware that in the world we live in, we are overwhelmed with responsibilities and daily stressors, which is why it is crucially important to try to reduce anxiety, stress, and feelings of being overwhelmed. Practicing mindfulness can help us cope with negative emotions and distance ourselves from overthinking about the past or the future.

Mindfulness offers numerous benefits for both our mental and physical health. It helps reduce stress and anxiety, stabilizes our emotions, and increases emotional awareness. By practicing mindfulness, we become more conscious of our emotions, which allows us to manage them more effectively, rather than suppressing or reacting impulsively. If we practice it during everyday activities such as walking, drinking a cup of coffee, or even ironing, mindfulness helps us become aware of our emotions in the present moment. These simple activities can improve the quality of our lives, helping us live more calmly and better cope with life's challenges.

During the course, we were introduced to the theoretical foundations of mindfulness, as well as numerous practical examples and activities that help focus attention on the present moment, thereby increasing concentration and maintaining focus on what we are currently doing. Concentration and focus are precisely what our students need.

ABOUT THE COURSE

The Mindfulness course was designed as a combination of theoretical and practical activities through which we practiced how to deal with specific worries, fears, and negative emotions. The first day of the course was dedicated to

meeting the other participants from Germany, Latvia, and Sicily through method of active listening. After that, we tried the technique of mindful walking, during which we focused our attention on the sounds from our surroundings.

Mindfulness is a state of active and open attention to the present moment, teaching us how to be fully present and aware of where we are and what we are doing. Our full attention is directed toward what is happening in our body, our thoughts, and our surroundings, without analysing or changing what is happening. As a type of cognitive psychotherapy, it is scientifically based on meditation, but it can also be applied in everyday life and activities as a method for maintaining psychological well-being.

We are aware that in the world we live in, we are overwhelmed with responsibilities and daily stressors. Therefore, it is extremely important to try to reduce anxiety, stress, and feelings of overload. Practicing mindfulness can help us cope with negative emotions and distance ourselves from overthinking about the past or the future.

Mindfulness has numerous benefits for both our mental and physical health. It helps reduce stress and anxiety, stabilizes our emotions, and increases emotional awareness. By practicing mindfulness, we become more aware of our emotions, and we can manage them more effectively, rather than suppressing or reacting impulsively. If we practice it during everyday activities like walking, drinking a cup of coffee, or even ironing, mindfulness helps us become aware of our emotions in the present moment. These simple activities can improve the quality of our lives, help us live more calmly, and make it easier to cope with life's challenges.

During the course, we were introduced to the theoretical foundations of mindfulness, as well as numerous practical examples and activities that help direct attention to the present moment, thereby increasing concentration and maintaining focus on what we are currently doing. Concentration and focus are key elements that help students, especially through the method of active listening. After that, we practiced the technique of mindful walking, during which we directed our attention to the sounds of our surroundings and what was happening around us.

Each morning began with yoga and meditation exercises designed to relax both body and mind, while focusing concentration for the upcoming activities. We became aware of the reasons we create stress for ourselves and how this behaviour is often caused by our subconsciousness. By creating a daily activity calendar, we realized how much of our time is spent on obligations and how little we dedicate to ourselves and our own needs. This kind of behaviour is the primary cause of "burnout," chronic physical and emotional exhaustion that can lead to depression or physical illness. To reduce feelings of stress and anxiety, we practiced the EFT tapping method, which helps decrease emotional intensity and increase positive emotions.

We also explored various breathing techniques that have proven effective in alleviating anxiety, such as nostril breathing, the 4-7-8 technique, and deep, abdominal breathing. Through Frog Exercises, we practiced how to help children reduce stress in a fun way through focused breathing. During the course, we also used visualization techniques as a relaxation method. With this technique, we learned how to form mental, inner images that we had not seen or experienced before, to alleviate tension or practice focus and concentration. In addition to

this technique, we used meditation as a mental exercise to direct attention to our senses and increase awareness.

One of the methods we studied in more detail was journaling, an intuitive writing technique aimed at releasing negative emotions and thoughts onto paper (steam-out).

One of the most interesting workshops was the one focused on positive thinking, where we wrote positive messages and letters to ourselves. The course ended with sound therapy, which was conducted using Tibetan singing bowls, originating from Tibet and other parts of the Himalayas. These bowls produce sounds that have a calming effect on the body and mind. The purpose of this therapy is to relax, reduce stress, and improve concentration. This activity was an ideal and relaxing conclusion to the Mindfulness course.

CULTURAL TOURISM OF TENERIFE

During the professional development course, the mornings were dedicated to education, while the sunny afternoons were spent enjoying the cultural and tourist attractions of Tenerife. We visited Teide National Park, home to the volcano and the highest peak in Spain, standing at 3,718 meters, which is also the third-largest volcano in the world. We successfully reached an altitude of 3,555 meters and enjoyed the unique landscape and breathtaking views. One afternoon was spent at the Loro Parque zoo, which covers an area of 135,000 m² and is home to the largest number of parrot species in the world, around 4,000. We enjoyed a dolphin show and saw a variety of exotic animals. The goal of Loro Parque is to protect both marine and terrestrial animals, with the funds raised from ticket sales being invested in scientific research. One day was dedicated to visiting the volcanic cliffs of Los Gigantes, after which the town

located there is named. During the boat tour, we had the opportunity to see whales and dolphins in their natural habitat and bravely swam near the cliffs of Los Gigantes, which rise to 800 meters.

CONCLUSION

This professional development represents a unique educational and cultural experience. The theoretical and practical knowledge gained helps us in our professional development, in designing lessons, communicating with students, and conducting workshops for teachers. However, there is also a meaningful change on a personal level, as by practicing the mindfulness method, we bring a calmer pace into our lives, making us calmer and more content individuals.

Art & English -

A Successful Cross-Curricular Story!

Anica Bašić and Ivana Bokavšek



Ivana Bokavšek, English and Italian language teacher, promoted to the highest level in the Croatian educational system-teacher expert, six times in a row awarded by the Croatian Ministry of Education for the most successful educator, sharing her working experience and knowledge at numerous workshops and webinars. Since 2012 has been active in Comenius, Erasmus+ and eTwinning projects and a member of the expert team of English teachers who worked on the implementation of curriculum reform in Croatia. Since 2022 she has been a lead teacher at the county level, assigned to regularly organize and deliver professional training for a group of nearly eighty English language teachers.

Anica Bašić, Art teacher who is recognized for the valuable accomplishments in setting up and running a school cooperative at the elementary school Grohote on the island of Šolta and project activities where she promotes practical skills with students and traditional

values of cultural heritage. Her priority is promoting originality and authenticity in art expression.

Cross-curricular teaching is a complex process with its goals and purpose and it brings knowledge acquisition to a much higher level. It requires a thoroughly written plan of activities which leads to the accomplishment of their outcomes.

It is usually structured like a smaller project, but it can be more developed, depending on its objectives. It is created when different subjects teachers make a mutual plan how to incorporate their activities into a joint project on the issue of their common interest they want their students to deal with, because they want subject content learning to be integrated into the given context, with added value of higher effectiveness that the other subject material enables.

Those are essential “ingredients” that we need to think about, but there is something more delicate to take care of in order to make our plan running successfully. Here, that professional bonding is, beyond all, the most crucial one. To make it more fruitful and smoothly operating, several factors are needed: mutual respect, trust, responsibility, dedication towards the project realization, and finally high-quality performance, which includes making creative variations or if necessary smaller, sudden, but practical improvisations in order to adapt the plan to some unpredictable issues, keeping students’ motivation high.

Monitoring the process, assessing the phases of the project, running the project team and everything that goes with it, i.e., fulfilling activities within a reasonable deadline, that has been already set, make the whole process enough challenging, but extra productive.

English language, we can all agree on that, is an easily cooperative matter. Let us juggle with the name and call it "all-around" subject, because it really is!

There is no subject or matter that cannot be connected with English language, on the contrary, it is desired to "breathe in" English language into the other subject content to get an extra dimension of teaching and learning as well.

That way students apply English language in a certain context and learn how to adjust their language competences to a content that they know or do not know so much about. In fact, actual knowledge of interlacing subjects gets a value that cannot be reached in regular classes.

The example of this valuable co-working dimension is proven in two extracurricular classes joint as integrated classes, teaching method that is not, unfortunately, common in teaching practice.

The point to have Art and English classes together in one classroom (inside and outside) with the same teachers, Anica Bašić, Art teacher and Ivana Bokavšek, English teacher, and same students at the same time is to raise that teaching and learning bar to make new learning environment available to the students who are talented and eager to learn and that way to bring out the best in them: new learning techniques they will need in future, gained conceptual knowledge and different skills that they want to improve.

The plan is simple, but challenging to accomplish.

During a school year, on a highly important matter, ecology, that these two subject teachers want their students to improve themselves about, getting them

more ecologically effective and sustainable as future responsible citizens, a dynamic exchange of activities occurs.

What's more interesting and authentically planned is that these two teachers created, therefore, a well-organized and efficient list of the activities based on colours. All represented colours of recycling bins are covered in this school project: blue, yellow, green and brown.

For the purpose of Art activities, students collected waste (natural, glass, plastic), researched procedures and possibilities to make a picture or sculpture, developed their fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination, their performance needed to be precise while their focus was at higher levels. They expressed the topic of protecting nature through different forms of artwork, by making a sculpture, Christmas cards and picture with natural material i.e., leaves, branches, etc., making pictures in a natural, real environment like park, park forest and beach.

Practising and applying more improved English language included: the use of digital tools like Canva and CapCut to make productive skills speaking and writing and creative expression on the topic of protecting nature more sophisticatedly improved and applied, therefore, it is well possible to see 12-year-old students to be present in the moment and write a haiku poem in English in the classroom and in the city park, recite their haiku poems in the city park and make a trendy, short format video story on the creative process itself, making digital posters with creative and authentic slogans, Christmas cards with their wished and personally viewed future to be, an ecologically centred brochure, pub quiz, and various forms of language puzzles.

This school project "I collect waste, I separate it and I use it to create new things" brings more other values as well.

Voluntary work, for instance. Students were preparing Christmas cards to sell them at the city charity event that was visited by a large number of citizens of Split in Croatia, to contribute to the fund for homeless people.

This project agenda was well-recognized. Sharing the notion of ecologically sustainable tourism in Split, where massive tourism takes its toll little by little, by participating in a project, funded by the Ministry of Tourism and Sport, and run by Andrea Bilandžić mag. oec., educator at tourism and hospitality management high school in Split, that has extensive influences on promoting sustainable tourism, called "Yours digitally - Central Dalmatia". For that purpose, students made a digital postcard for visitors and tourists to download, aimed to make them more aware of the massive ecological and heritage value of nature in Split: the Adriatic Sea.

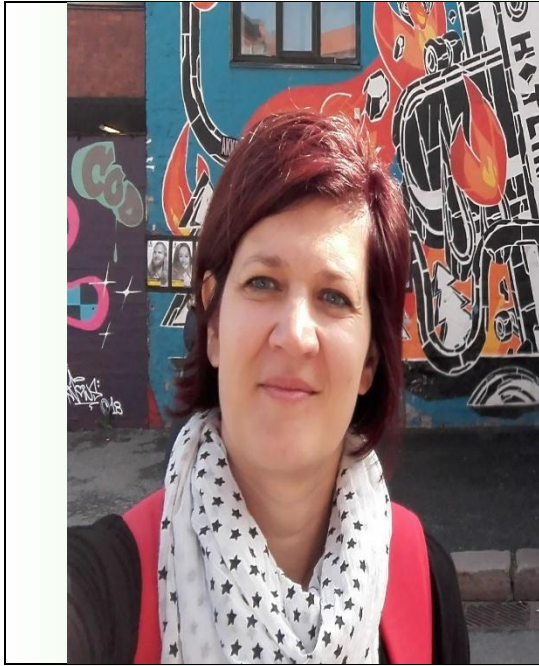
There will be no point in finishing all activities without a proper dissemination.

In accordance with it, both teachers gladly and readily share their experience and knowledge, gained by planning and running this project in order to motivate teachers to involve students in integrated types of classes, always heading towards better.

Bridge the Gap with Poetry

How to teach poetry (and not give up) and celebrate the European Day of Languages

Martina Mavrek



Martina Mavrek has been teaching English since 2001. She teaches secondary school students between the ages of 14 and 19 in a small but developed community. She loves working in a challenging environment with highly motivated students who like to try new things and gain new experiences. She regularly attends teacher conferences and tries to follow new trends in teaching. She loves meeting teachers from other countries and participates in projects involving students and teachers from different parts of Europe.

Asked why teachers continue teaching despite everything that has been happening lately: the expectations put before them, position they hold in society, new challenges the digital era brought about and so on, a group of more than a hundred teachers attending an online conference in Croatia a few years ago, answered something in the lines of: 'Because we love it!' I, too, was one of the teachers, gave the same answer and mostly still think that way even after about 25 years of teaching. I say *mostly* because when I get to having to teach my fourth-year students a well-known poem by Robert Frost, I feel like I missed the mark when I was choosing my career. We usually go through it with me answering most of my questions, the students becoming visibly more and more bored and just staring blankly at me in the end. I usually finish thinking how

grateful I am that I don't teach literature. So, it only makes sense that I'm going to try to convince you to try teaching poetry in your English lessons.

Coming up with new ideas how to celebrate special days can sometimes be difficult, so I'd like to share an idea that worked for me although, or perhaps because, it included teaching poetry. The special day was 26th September, the European Day of Languages and my class were students between the ages of 17 and 18 who shared that they mostly did not like reading in general and especially did not like reading poetry. Only a few shyly mentioned a couple of their favourite poets, some of whom held workshops at my school, so there was hope. Along with teaching poetry, we also needed to relate the idea that learning languages was worthwhile.

After the initial discussion about their reading habits and attitudes to reading poetry, the students split into four groups of about five or six and then they were given four different poems to translate, each group working on a different one. The twist was that the poems were in Turkish, Estonian, Norwegian and Portuguese, languages they do not speak and I insisted they come up with something. After a few minutes during which the students were supposed to 'work' on the translation, they were asked to read their translations to the class. They were bewildered and obviously couldn't report on their work. I asked them how they felt during the process. The answers were: frustrated, confused and even dumb. At this point we made our first great discovery: if you cannot understand what someone is trying to communicate to you because they are speaking a language you don't, you feel negative emotions and one way around it is to learn foreign languages.

Admitting that it was an unfair task, I handed out a second worksheet to each group. The worksheets contained the same poems but I changed some of the

words with a word in English and then asked them to translate the poems. I made sure they understood I wasn't looking for the actual translation but wanted them to have fun, play with the texts and come up with an attempt at translation in written form and see how close they come to the original. The students used a variety of techniques. The ones who got the most difficult poem in which they couldn't decipher the meaning of any other words invented and guessed the meaning. Others used the technique of deduction based on grammar. If they got the subject or the object, they tried to guess the meaning of the verb and simultaneously tried to come up with the global meaning of the poem, not only the verse they were working on. The third technique was finding two kinds of connections. One connection was between the meaning of the words they were given in English and the words whose meaning they thought they understood: Portuguese because it is similar to Spanish, which some of them take at school, and Turkish, which they picked up from watching TV soap operas. The other connection they were looking for was between the look or the sound of the word which reminded them of something they learned in Latin or any other subject and its guessed meaning and the words they were given in English. After they finished, each group read their translation and we compared their text to the approved English version. At the same time we discussed the meaning of each poem and, because it was the European Day of Languages and we wanted to promote learning about different nationalities and cultures, we discussed what we learned about each country from the poems. I must advise here to be careful while you do this because it might be problematic in some cases. You don't want to promote negative stereotypes about nations, so choose your poems wisely. If you decide to use the poems I used, be careful how you steer the conversation in some cases.

While we read the Norwegian poem which contains the verse:

I like that English is seven percent Old Norse.

I like that I hear Middle English

in the pronounced final "e"

and the letter "k" in words like "knee".

I like it so much that soon

I will have had lunch with the pluperfect.

we made the second great discovery of the day. We discussed why someone would feel happy because their language has a connection with English and the students reflected on the importance of learning English in today's world.

This activity was beneficial for several reasons. It allowed students to express themselves creatively albeit within the constraints of a given format. It required the use of different cognitive processes: attention and perception which were needed if they wanted to notice connections between the meanings of different words, comprehension of the task that was given, other people's ideas and the meaning of the poem, production of language when discussing the different possible meanings and writing their version. Students had to use imagination, intelligence and knowledge in order to produce their translation. They also worked collaboratively which meant they had to adapt to the group dynamics, respect other students' opinions, express their own ideas and hopefully connect them to the ideas presented by other students. They also had to assign tasks among themselves because the end product had to be presented in written and spoken form. Finally, the activity was fun and this is also important, if not essential, when you are celebrating special days.

On the other hand, one should be aware of the possible setbacks. Students might become resigned after the first task when they don't see the point of

reading a text that is completely unintelligible to them. Although it is important to get students working to try to decipher the meaning of the poem or they won't feel the emotion of helplessness or frustration which you want to induce, make sure it doesn't last too long or it might hinder their work later on. Another possible problem you might encounter is that students don't come up with ideas for the translation. If there isn't enough incentive from the teacher in the form of English words inserted in the original text and the students are not too creative, they might become stuck and not produce their version of the translation. A problem might also arise if you have very ambitious students who are too focused on 'serious' work that is worthwhile and serves the purpose of achieving a specific goal. This activity might not provide clear objectives at first sight. In case you believe that this is true for your students, before you hand out the worksheets reassure them that there is a purpose to the activity. Finally, when you read the poems and discuss the verses, steer clear of reinforcing stereotypes about the different nationalities, especially if they are not flattering.

The final task of the lesson was to write an original: a poem in the form of a *cinquino*. It is a short form that follows very strict rules. The first verse consists of one noun which is actually the topic, the second verse consists of two adjectives describing the topic, the third verse contains three verbs or gerunds connected to the topic, the fourth verse contains a four-word sentence about the topic which is actually a comment of what they experienced or learned and the final verse is one word which is the essence of what was discussed. By the way, this works great as a form of self-reflection after any lesson. Here are some examples:

poetry

interesting and complex

writing, thinking, feeling

Makes you feel alive

commitment

(Gabriel, 17)

Poems

Diverse, emotional,

Describing, talking, listening,

Sometimes a little boring,

Mind

(Lucija, 17)

Languages

Different, beautiful,

Talking, understanding, reading,

We need to learn.

World

(Mihaela, 18)

Other ideas that could serve as closure for the lesson is to get them to try blackout poetry: give them a photocopied page from a book and they need to

black out most of the text except the words which, when they are read in order, form a poem. It's more challenging than it sounds because students need to connect meaning and achieve grammatical accuracy within the constraints of the words given on a page. You can also use web tools such as *Zumpad* to get the students to collaborate on an acrostic poem. If they work in groups, assign a few initial letters to each group so they need to connect the meaning of their verses to the meaning of the verses of the previous group.

Finally, words of encouragement to try new activities: be brave and occasionally take risks because if the activity works, everyone is rewarded: the teacher, because the lesson worked and the students, because they really appreciate a detour from typical classwork. If this one doesn't work, try something else in the future and remember that in the meantime you can always return to the safety of teaching the perfect participles. Good luck!

Online resources:

[\[POEM\] ***\[And I love you because\] by Doris Kareva : r/Poetry](#) (27 March, 2020)


[LiteraryJoint: Mar Português, by Fernando Pessoa \(Portuguese Sea, English translation\)](#) (30 March, 2012)

[Elinor Nauen: 4 poems in Norwegian with English translations – Rochford Street Review](#) (5 September, 2021)

[Good Weather \(Güzel Havalâr\) by Orhan Veli Kanık](#) (18 August, 2004)

Inspired and Creative to Make the Classroom a Better pPace

Miglena Petrova

	<p>Miglena Petrova has a master's degree in English language and literature. She has worked as an English teacher since 1996 at Saint Kliment Ohridski School in Varna. Her interests are in the field of creative teaching and materials design. "Creativity for a better world " is the ERASMUS + funded mobility project at her school where she participated together with her colleagues Albena Ilieva, Vladimir Paunov, Valentina Petrova, Maria Dineva and Victoria Cvetanova.</p> <p>E-mail: megyp_73@hotmail.com</p>
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Our school Saint Kliment Ohridski Secondary School is the biggest in Varna region and it has been a leading institution for 137 years of tradition and excellence. Last year a group of six motivated teachers took part in four different training courses in the UK and Italy as an ERASMUS+ funded mobility project realization. Our project Creativity and Inspiration for a Better World was designed to correspond to the main aims input in the development strategy of our school and in the context of European dimension of education and training. The common aim of the project is to maximize effectiveness of educational process, to boost the creativity and achieve better flexibility in foreign language teaching. The specific aims of this project are to upgrade the language competence of the teachers and improve our skills for creating materials, adapting and applying innovative pedagogical methods. Enriching our

experience in the field of modern theories and practices in language teaching gives us a great opportunity to share with colleagues what we have found useful in the training.

Effective Classroom Practice in Oxford House College, London is a practical, hands-on experience that gave Albena Ilieva and Vladimir Paunov, the participants from our school, the confidence to re-evaluate what they had learnt while working with students of all ages for many years. Flexibility, creativity, reducing teacher talking time and humour have been identified as key factors to make classroom practice more effective and add to the students' better performance.

They found the following games fascinating and we all have been using them:

1. **The human clock**

The teacher has pieces of paper/card with numbers 1-12 written on them, approximately A4 size and puts them on the floor in the shape of a clock. He /she asks two students to be the hands of the clock and then says the time. They take the right position to show the time. The other students in class confirm if they have moved right. Then another pair takes the turn.

2. **Changing places**

Students sit on chairs in a circle with no spare chairs available. The teacher stands in the middle and says: "Change places if you (are wearing.../have eaten.../went to...). Students change places and the teacher takes one of the places. The student left in the middle continues with instructions. The aim is to make sentences and take the spare place. The activity can be practised with various structures at different levels and age groups.

3. The human map

This is good with intermediate level and up. The teacher points out certain things in the room to represent places on the map. For example, the window can be the North Pole and the opposite object (the door for example). The students stand for different places and countries they have visited or would like to visit. They give information about them and explain why they have chosen the particular one.







Creativity in the Classroom was another excellent training in Bell Teacher Campus, organized by Bell Cambridge. Rich variety of ideas, simple and easy to use, together with entirely practical activities and so much fun were what

Miglena Petrova described as a really inspiring experience. A whole new world of endless possibilities for teachers to use and improve their own creative skills was explored. Being creative and able to think “outside the box” can help any teacher find a solution for any situation. Participants were encouraged to make creativity a habit of their minds, not a frame. Motivation and creativity are interlinked – creative teachers can motivate learners better, so that leads to further growth of their own motivation. Motivating students starts with their psychological well - being. Teachers can do that by starting with group – bonding activities that create a sense of community. Priming them, making them focusing on here and now is another key task of the motivational teacher. That can happen with activities that require concentration more than linguistic challenge. Stimulating and surprising them are next steps towards really successful learning process because they are also ways of catching students’ attention and encouraging them to be more curious to learn.

The following activities have been practiced during the course in Cambridge and in class after it. They brought variety and fun and were really appreciated. They can be easily adapted to different levels with a little or no preparation.

1. Feelings: Express your feelings about being in class today and/or this year

- Look at these adjectives and idioms of feelings: *worried, surprised, tired, excited, proud, nervous, upset, happy, sad, confused, on cloud nine (extremely happy) , brimming with excitement, a bit under the weather (not feeling very well), feeling run-down (very tired)*
- Choose the word(s) that describe how you feel now.
- Write down sentences like:

I'm feeling (upset) because...

- Share what your sentences by showing your notebooks and reading.

2 . Shaped poems

- Write sentences to describe something and put them in a poem that has the shape of it. For example in a shape of a sunflower:

Sunflowers are yellow.

Sunflowers are tall and beautiful.

Sunflowers follow the sun.

Their seeds are delicious.

- Choose your idea of a shaped poem: A tree, an animal (a snake, a cat), fruit (a banana, a strawberry).
- Write six sentences to describe it in your notebooks. Draw a picture of your object and write the sentences in the shape of it.
- Share and read your poems.

3.What is the story?

Try to write the full story from the first letters:

I w__ w_____ i_ t__ f_____ w_____

I s__ a b__ o_ t__ g_____ i_ f_____ o_ m_

I p_____ i_ u_

I s_____ o_____ i_

Aaaah! A b____ f____ o__ a__ h__ m_ i_ t__ f____

I L_____ i_____

Wow! I_ w__ f____ o_ t_____

I f_____ u_ m_ p_____ a_ q_____ a_ l c_____

Oh no! S_____ w__ c_____!

I t_____ a_____ a__ r__!

4. Interview the teacher

Write one or more questions in EACH OF THESE TENSES:

- Present Simple (Do you practice a sport? What music do you like?
Are you a fan of)
- Present Continuous (What are you doing in the afternoon today?
Are you drinking coffee now?)



How to use tablets, educational apps and social media in the classroom is the training in Europass Teacher Academy that Maria Dineva and Victoria Cvetanova described as a really inspiring and innovative. It is focused on giving a variety of ideas and illustrating creative teaching methods at elementary level and primary stages, assisted by informational technology. There is also a special emphasis on the safe use of online resources.

The participants explored and evaluated the most effective educational apps and platforms for young learners that bring better motivation and collaboration in class. Virtual classroom management as a source of additional activities and better communication and feedback was also a part of the course content.

TED-ed is an online platform that provides various solutions for the teacher to stimulate students' learning independence. There are a lot of videos and lectures on different subjects. Teacher can add interactive questions or topics for discussion to videos they have chosen. They can also share lessons with students online and monitor their progress. Quizzes and individual projects can also be assigned. This is a lesson designed by Victoria Cvetanova: "Domestic animals of the farm" - <https://ed.ted.com/on/Lja4Z9w0>.

GOOGLE TOUR <https://tourbuilder.withgoogle.com/> is an application with various pedagogical purposes. Virtual tours around the world or interactive lessons with focus on geography, history or art can be designed with it. Young learners would learn about Bulgaria in a fascinating way. A view from Google Maps can illustrate each point of the tour. Videos or internet links can also be added. GOOGLE TOUR is an efficient tool for students' own research for project work.



Educational Technology Today in Bell Teacher Campus, organized by Bell Cambridge, was a fantastic experience for our colleague Valentina Petrova in a great traditional college atmosphere. It was a practical, hands-on training in the

field of technologically assisted teaching and learning. Some of the topics were: Blended learning: making the most of an online learning platform; Exploiting mobile apps for language learning; the flipped classroom: creating and curating video material ; Online project work and e- portfolios. Valentina has selected these sources for extra inspiration:

<https://classroomscreen.com/>

<http://www.kathleenamorris.com/2019/02/14/classroomscreen/>

Classroomscreen.com is a FREE web tool created by Laurens Koppers, a teacher from the Netherlands. Laurens created this tool to utilize the digiboard in their classroom to help students focus on their work.

Classroomscreen is an online tool that allows you to display the instructions for your lesson in a clear and visual way.

Quizlet (<https://quizlet.com/co/305392783/natural-resources-flash-cards/>; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quizlet>) is an American online study application that allows students to study information via learning tools and games. **Quizlet** is a **free** app for making flash cards and online quizzes, which can be used privately or shared publicly. In **Quizlet**, information is organized into “study **sets**” that users like teachers or students add to their accounts. When using **Quizlet**, students log in and choose the appropriate study **set** for the concepts they need to review. These can be created by a teacher or generated by other users.

Quizlet Search Create Upgrade: free 7-day trial

Natural Resources

5.0 ★★★★★ 3 Reviews [Leave a rating](#)

STUDY

- Flashcards
- Learn
- Write
- Spell
- Test

PLAY

- Match 30 SECS BEST
- Gravity

Solar energy

Natural Resources

5.0 ★★★★★ 3 Reviews [Leave a rating](#)

STUDY

- Flashcards
- Learn
- Write
- Spell
- Test

PLAY

- Match 30 SECS BEST
- Gravity



Energy that uses the power of the sun to produce electricity



9/10



To make flashcards, you will need to choose the subject you are doing them on and the language you use. You can choose whether to print them, share or to create your own class.

As a conclusion, we would like to emphasize that Erasmus + programme opportunities are what teachers can really benefit from. They encourage individual professional development that is essential for providing contemporary education in the most efficient way. All the courses that we attended were perfectly designed and taught, motivating and inspiring for further exploration and creative use of what we have learnt. In short, they were absolutely must-see experience.

Visualising Emotions: Why Does It Matter?

Barbara Hanjilec



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When we walk into the classroom, we often see our students as just that—students. As educators, we focus on teaching grammar, vocabulary, literature, or other topics. We choose engaging topics, discuss world issues, exchange opinions, and often share laughter. However, what truly leaves a lasting impact on our students is not the subject matter itself but how we treat them—how we greet them, show genuine interest in their lives, and acknowledge their emotions. It is this human connection that defines our role as teachers and becomes even more critical when working with newer generations of students.

At the moment, most of us work with GenZ students that challenge us in various ways. As members of Generation X, or as Millennials, we often struggle to understand our Gen Z students.

What are Gen Z students like?

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is often referred to as "digital natives." While they are highly connected online, they face unique challenges, including being labeled as the loneliest and most stressed generation. Mental health issues have taken center stage in their lives, and addressing these challenges has become an essential part of our role as educators.

Why Should We Focus on Mental Health?

Gen Z students are often perceived as lazy, privileged, or emotionally immature individuals who avoid responsibility and stress. These perceptions are reinforced by troubling statistics, such as the high levels of school absenteeism among Croatian students in both primary and secondary schools. Students and parents alike openly admit that school-induced stress is a significant reason for avoiding attendance.

This issue cannot be overlooked. As teachers, we must help students build emotional resilience bearing in mind that while they openly share their struggles and seek guidance, we are not psychologists or counselors. Yet, there are steps we can take to support their emotional growth, helping them become stronger individuals capable of navigating life's challenges.

What is the Role of Emotional Intelligence

Daniel Goleman, a renowned psychologist, defines emotional intelligence as encompassing five key pillars: self-regulation, motivation, social skills, empathy, and self-awareness. These components are essential for developing emotional resilience. Although schools put a lot of focus on social skills and empathy, more

attention should be given to self-awareness, self-regulation, and intrinsic motivation.

Simple activities can encourage students to reflect on their inner selves and take steps toward personal growth, ultimately contributing to their future success in both personal and professional spheres.

Paint and Talk: A Case Study

Having learnt all that through various activities and courses, especially after having conducted an Erasmus+ project Innovative approaches to Gen Z, we at Škola za umjetnost, dizajn, grafiku i odjeću Zabok introduced an extracurricular initiative called *Paint and Talk*. This monthly workshop, lasting 90 to 120 minutes, is a collaborative effort involving English, Art, and Psychology teachers. It provides a safe space for students to explore their emotions creatively while learning vital self-awareness and self-regulation skills.

The objectives of Paint and Talk are to encourage emotional expression through art, use visual tools to externalize thoughts and experiences, and build self-awareness and self-regulation, and are met through various activities, such as Self-Portrait: Exploring Identity, I as a Superhero: My Strengths and Aspirations, Fractal Drawing: Representing Inner Emotional Processes, and Nightmares: Processing Fears and Anxieties.

Last year, we invited 11th-grade students to participate, and the turnout exceeded our expectations. Therefore, this year, we expanded the program to include students from various grades. While the Art teacher coordinates the activity, English is the primary language used, offering students multiple benefits beyond emotional expression.

How to Integrate Emotional Intelligence into the Classroom

Recognizing the need for emotional intelligence workshops, some of us at ŠUDIGO Zabok, myself included, have started incorporating similar activities into regular classroom settings. These activities blend art and emotional intelligence concepts to help students connect with their inner selves. I am providing several hands-on activities that can easily be done with little preparation.

1. Mandala Creation

Drawing mandalas, symbols of wholeness, encourages students to reflect on their sense of balance and completeness.

2. Fractal Drawing

This technique helps students explore the emotional impact of colors and patterns, translating inner states into abstract designs.

3. The Cup Analogy

This activity uses the metaphor of a "cup" to help students understand their emotional capacity and the importance of self-care.

- **My Emotional Cup:** Represents energy, patience, and emotional capacity. A full cup signifies readiness to help oneself and others, while an empty cup can lead to burnout and stress.
- **The Capacity Cup:** Teaches students to categorize stressors by intensity and role-play solutions, emphasizing stress management before emotional breakdowns occur.

Conclusion

As educators, our role extends far beyond teaching academic content. By addressing students' emotional needs and fostering emotional intelligence, we prepare them to face life's challenges with resilience and confidence. Initiatives like Paint and Talk and classroom activities that integrate emotional awareness offer practical tools to achieve this goal, ensuring that we not only educate but also empower the next generation.

Sources:

BOOK: Goleman D., 1996., Emocionalna inteligencija, Znanje

ONLINE RESOURCE: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Z

- Materials given at the course on Mental health awareness for teachers and students (Dublin, Ireland, 2024)

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English Learning Through Student Lenses

Ivana Borozni



Ivana Borozni is an English and German language teacher at Primary School Dragutin Tadijanović in Slavonski Brod, Croatia. With 19 years of teaching experience, she is passionate about helping students develop their language skills. She continuously seeks new ways to improve her teaching methods and create engaging learning experiences.

Introduction

With 18 years of experience as an English as a foreign language teacher, I have realized that while I possess expertise in teaching, gaining deeper insight into my students' experiences with learning English is equally important: Understanding what they enjoy, what they struggle with, and which teaching and learning methods help them most helps me support them better, build their confidence, and make learning more enjoyable and effective.

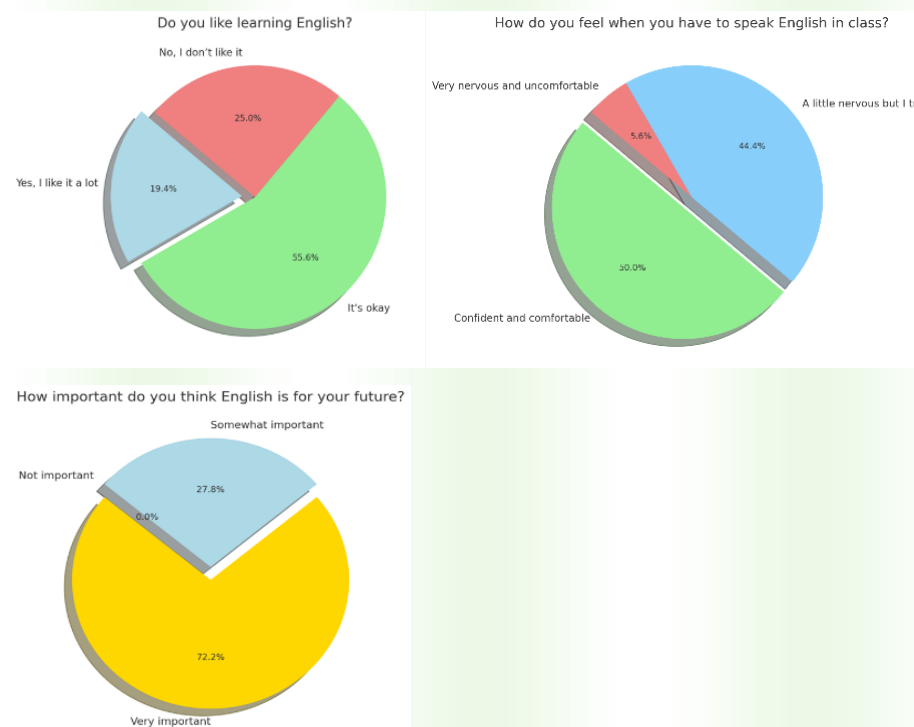
My goal in conducting this research was to gather honest insights that could give clues on making English classes more enjoyable and more effective. To achieve this, I conducted an anonymous survey which consists of 15 questions, among 36 middle school students with different grades and language skills. The survey aims at exploring their learning preferences, difficulties, study habits, and classroom experiences. By analyzing their responses, I can make decisions on how to enhance their learning experience in the future.

General Attitudes Toward Learning English

Interest in English: Most students (20) think English is “okay,” while 7 enjoy it a lot, and 9 do not like it.

Speaking English in Class: 18 students feel confident, 16 feel a little nervous but try, while only 2 feel very uncomfortable.

Importance of English: A vast majority (26) believe English is very important for their future, with only 10 considering it somewhat important. No students think English is unimportant.



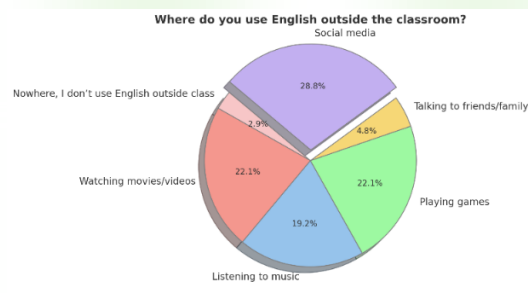
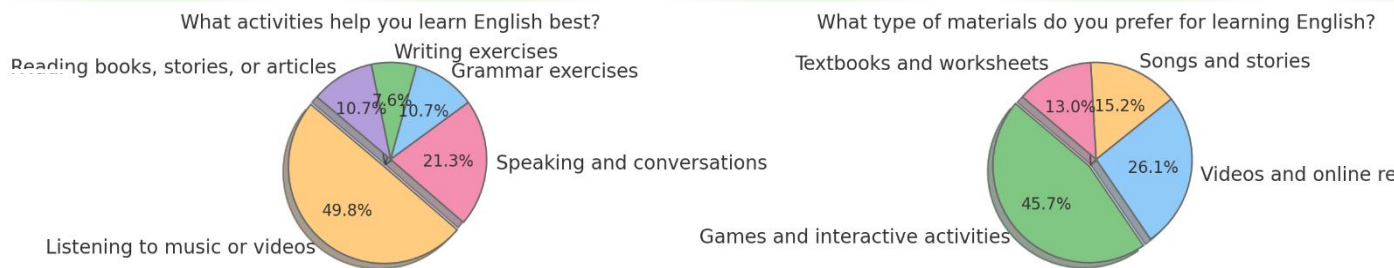
👉 **Conclusion:** Most students acknowledge the importance of English, but their enthusiasm for learning varies. Many feel somewhat comfortable speaking in class, although some still experience nervousness.

English Usage and Learning Methods

Preferred Learning Activities: Listening to music or videos (28 students) is the most effective activity, followed by speaking (12 students). Traditional grammar exercises and writing are the least preferred.

Preferred Learning Materials: Games and interactive activities (21 students) are the top choice, followed by videos and online resources (12 students).

Where Students Use English: social media (30 students), watching videos (23), and playing games (23) are the most common places English is used. Only 3 students do not use English outside of class.



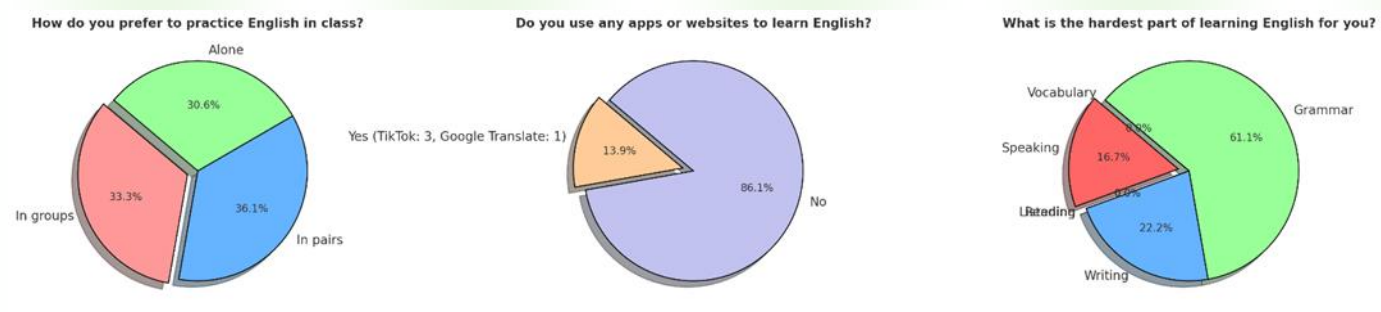
👉 **Conclusion:** Students engage with English mostly through entertainment and social media rather than academic activities. Interactive, media-based learning methods are preferred over textbooks and grammar exercises.

Classroom Preferences and Challenges

Preferred Practice Methods in Class: Students prefer working in pairs (13) or groups (12), while 11 prefer working alone.

Use of English Learning Apps/Websites: Only 5 students use apps (such as TikTok and Google Translate), while 31 do not use any apps.

Biggest Challenges in Learning English: Grammar is the most challenging aspect (22 students), followed by writing (8) and speaking (6).



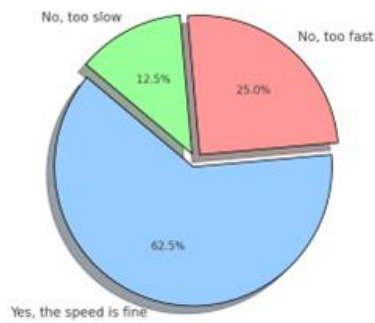
👉 Conclusion: Working together with other students is considered a bit more preferable than working alone. Few students use digital learning tools, and grammar remains a major difficulty.

Learning Speed and Nervousness

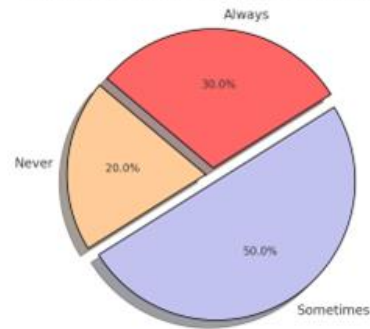
Class Speed Perception: Most students (31) think the pace of the class is fine, while 2 find it too fast and 3 find it too slow.

Nervousness When Speaking: 25 students sometimes feel nervous, 9 never feel nervous, and 2 always feel nervous.

Do you think English classes move at the right speed?



Do you feel nervous when speaking English?



Conclusion:

Most students feel the class

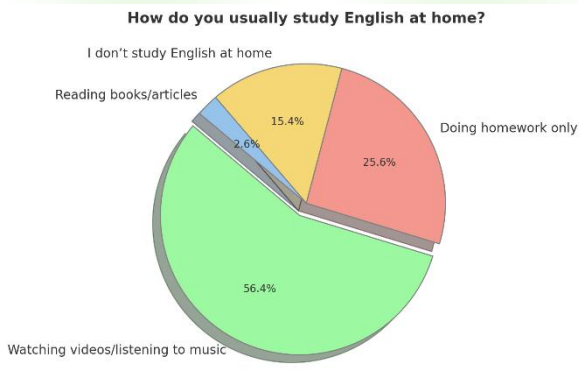
speed is appropriate, but nervousness is unfortunately still a factor when speaking English.

Study Habits and Technology in Learning

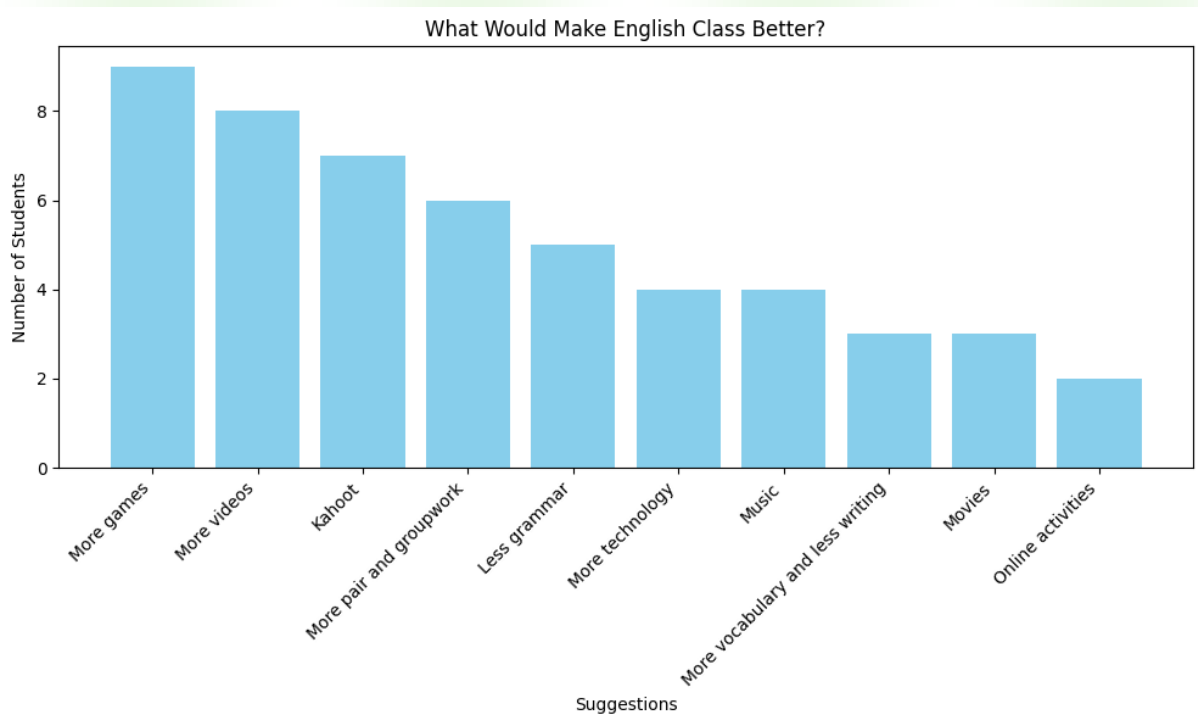
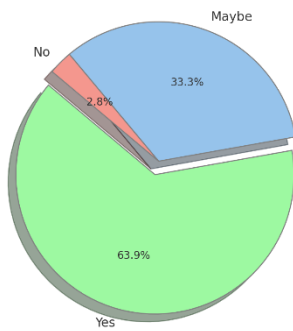
Study Habits at Home: Most students (22) engage with English through videos and music, while 10 rely only on doing homework, and 6 do not study English at home.

Regarding the use of More Technology in Class: 23 students think technology would help, 12 are unsure, and only 1 disagrees.

Suggestions for Improving English Class: The most common suggestions include more games (8 students), Kahoot (6), more videos (6), and more group work (4). Some students also requested less grammar, more music, and online activities.



Do you think using more technology in class would help you learn better?



👉 Conclusion: Many students do not study English beyond passive engagement with entertainment. There is a strong preference for incorporating technology, games, and interactive methods into the classroom.

Final Conclusion

The survey shows that while students understand the importance of English, they mainly engage with it through digital media instead of in classroom environments. Grammar is the greatest challenge, and many students experience nervousness when speaking English. They prefer interactive, technology-based learning methods over traditional textbook methods.

To improve English learning, adding more games, videos, and interactive activities could increase both engagement and confidence. Furthermore, dealing with grammar issues through fun, practical methods instead of standard exercises might help students overcome their biggest challenge. Therefore, by incorporating more student-friendly methods, we could help students feel more comfortable, confident, and motivated to improve their English skills.

The question is: how can teachers integrate innovative techniques with traditional methods to create a balanced and effective language learning environment?

Social-Emotional Learning

Tea Horvatić



Tea Horvatić has been an English teacher and advisor from Strahoninec Primary School for 15 years now. She gained experience through eTwinning and Erasmus+ projects as a coordinator. Tea works in a small suburban school near Čakovec and teaches ages 6 - 15. She enjoys using ICT and exploring new ways of teaching. She gladly shares examples of good practice via workshops, talks and social media.

Social-Emotional Learning course was a professional development course in Budapest held by Europass Teacher Academy from 15-20 July 2024 that was attended as part of Erasmus+ school project. The structure of the course was over six days, and we got to learn basic principles of SEL, emotional intelligence and communication, social intelligence and cooperation, self-regulation, resilience and managing conflicts as well as lovely field work with trips around Budapest.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is defined by [CASEL](#) “an integral part of education and human development” and “the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.”¹ On their website, there are plenty of resources where you can explore details of SEL and a good starting point is [CASEL SEL Framework](#) which educators can use to foster

¹ <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/>

knowledge, skills, and attitudes across five areas of social and emotional competence, and establish equitable learning environments.

Research has shown that when students have supportive relationships and opportunities to develop and practice social, emotional, and cognitive skills across many different contexts, academic learning accelerates². It does not replace the need for mental health interventions for students who need it, however it can cultivate important protective factors such as caring relationships, safe and supportive environments, social and emotional skills that buffer against mental health risks. That is why students participating in SEL programs have decreased emotional distress, more positive attitudes about self and others, and fewer externalizing behaviours and discipline problems. SEL enhances young people's coping skills, resiliency, and emotion identification, which can help reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety in the short term. Students participating in SEL report an increased sense of safety and support, better relationships with teachers, and stronger feelings of belonging and inclusiveness in schools. SEL contributes to reductions in bullying and aggression.³

Recently, international SEL day was on March 3rd and here are some ideas and activities you can do in the classroom.

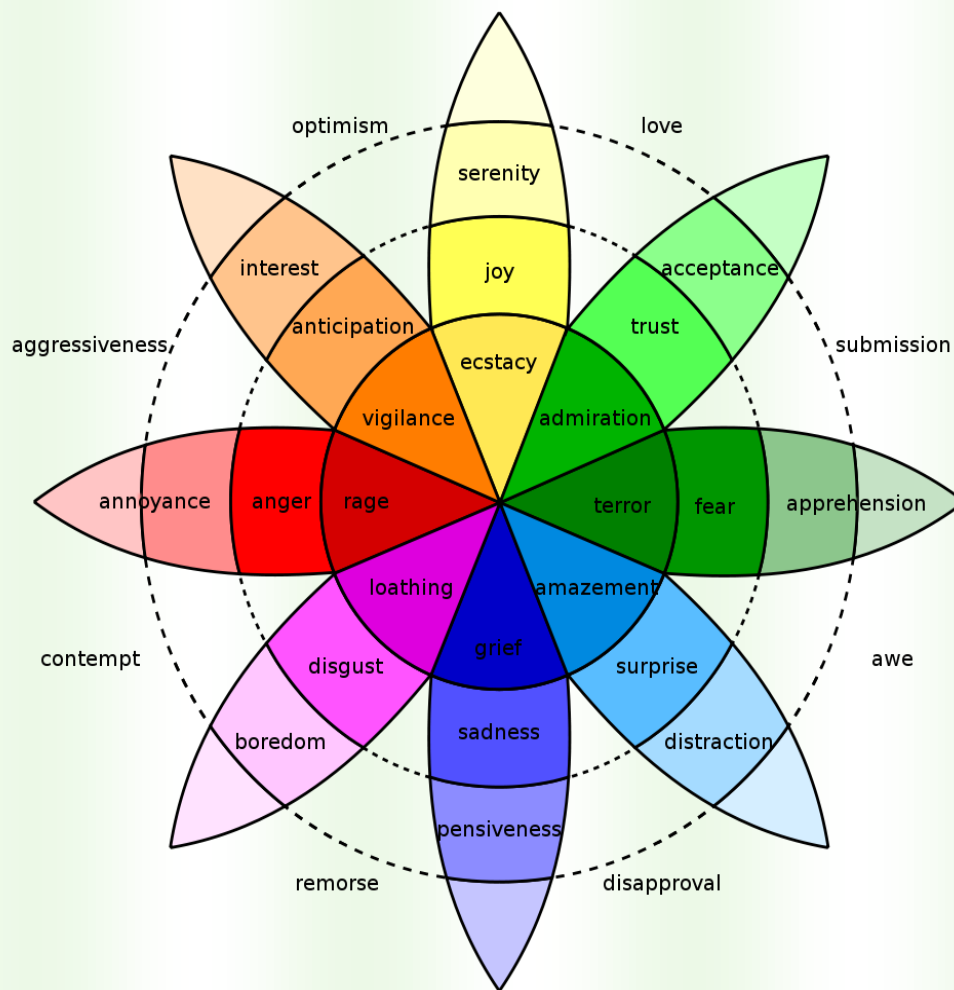
1. DIXIT cards – teacher shuffles the cards and leaves them facing upwards on the table or on the floor. Students are encouraged to choose any card that speaks to them and present it later in class. This can be a comment on the feeling it sparks, visual appearance or anything else worth mentioning. Teacher should encourage positive feelings and thank the

² <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-does-the-research-say/>

³ <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/blog/2025/02/social-emotional-learning-for-student-success/?msocid=3728987a72e163d339828d297350621e>

student for sharing their thoughts. Dixit cards can be bought as an original game, but there are many online shops that sell similar storytelling cards.

2. Drawing TREE – students draw a big tree in their notebooks. The leaves part symbolizes their goals – what do they want to achieve? The trunk symbolizes where the students are right now – what do they have now that helps them? The roots symbolize what they get their drives and energy from? Listening to students' answers is very interesting. It can be used for aims of the course or lessons, too. The template for goal-setting tree can be found [here](#).
3. Rose, Thorn, Bud – students receive an image or draw a similar drawing. Rose represents something positive, the bud represents something they are looking forward to, and the thorn represents something they feel they need support with. This is a similar activity to the tree, but works on expressing strengths through art. An example template is available [here](#).
4. Wheel of Emotions – each lesson the room temperature can be measured, and the teacher can see which emotions prevail. Students get to learn new vocabulary and also learn to recognize their emotions. There are different wheels for young learners as well as for teens. The image below shows one version:



5. Take one step forward – this [activity](#) is for older learners, and they choose their role cards first. They must answer the questions while in the role to get to as many details as possible about their character’s life. The teacher then poses questions and students are lined at the back of the classroom. Each question is stated to take a step if they have ever done a thing that teacher is reading. In the end, couple of students are on the front and some are still at the back. This is a chance to talk about empathy and tolerance.
6. All about me – a wheel to fill in information about themselves, practice adjectives, favourites and other details. Students swap the wheels with a

friend and ask questions. Finding similarities and differences is fun! The template image is available below:

The image shows a circular template for a personal identity wheel. The wheel is divided into several segments, each with a label around the perimeter. Starting from the top and moving clockwise, the segments are: Favorite Music, One Skill you are Proud of, Favorite Movie, Favorite Book, Favorite Food, Favorite Hobby, Favorite Color, Personal Motto, Number of Siblings, and Birth Order. In the center of the wheel, there is a section titled "Three Adjectives to Describe Yourself" with three numbered lines (1., 2., 3.) for writing. Below this, there is a line for "Name".

Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/personal-identity-wheel-inclusive-teaching--220746819226459302/>

7. Strength-based actions – are a [list](#) of simple actions everyone can do and are part of positive psychology acts that were suggested to connect people during Covid and have a positive impact in the classroom as well.
8. Positive affirmations – teachers can display [positive affirmations](#) in the classroom to promote positive self-talk and boost self-esteem in students.

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<https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/> (31 March 2025)

<https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-does-the-research-say/> (31 March 2025)

https://tayyabrashid.com/101-strengths-based-actions-to-connect-from-a-distance/?utm_source=canva&utm_medium=iframe (31 March 2025)

<https://practice-school.eu/activity1-take-a-step-forward/> (31 March 2025)

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(31 March 2025)

Participating in an E-twinning project “Peace at home peace in the world”

Ivana Kozić



Ivana Kozić is a teacher of English language and literature and history. Also, she is a university specialist translator of the English language. She has been teaching English for twenty years in primary school, she participates in a number of conferences (national and international), writes articles and join different projects and contests with her students. I has won “The most successful educational workers in Croatia” award in the last two years.

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E-twinning is part of a European school education platform on which schools from all over Europe create projects, work together on them and share their experiences.

According to <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/about> (17 of February 2025.) E-twinning is the online community for schools in Europe.

The project “Peace at home peace in the world” was done with project partner school from Turkey, Romania, Ukraine, Italy and Croatia. The project lasted from November 2024. till February 2025. The students that participated in the project were between ages of 9 to 14. The theme of the project was exchanging information about our countries festivals. In the beginning of the project we made logos, slogans and posters.

After that, we worked on our festivals and made bulletin boards about our project.

We made presentations about four festivals that are important in our country - Vinkovačke jeseni (celebrated in September), Remembrance of the fall of Vukovar 18th of November, Christmas and Easter. We learned interesting things about festivals in their countries, for example we learned that in Turkey they celebrate National Sovereignty and Children's day on 24th of April, on 29th of October they celebrate Republic Day, and that is their most important holiday because it changed their destiny. That in Ukraine they celebrate St Andrew's evenings, it is celebrated on 30th of November, and it is an important part of their culture and heritage. We also learned about their Unity day which is on January 21st. They hold hands and "make a chain of unity". It shows that they are strong together.

We also made common products of our project- stories about bringing peace and videos with messages starting with "Stop the war...". Our message was "Stop the war that we can live freely!"

In this project, students learned a lot about the festivals of other countries, about their cultures, and they practiced English and all four skills. Through the project, we also tried to bring support to our partner school from Ukraine, who are dealing with war and console them even it is just a little bit.

In conclusion, why should we join e-twinning projects- because it gives us an opportunity to exchange information and cultural diversity with other European schools, practice English language in a natural environment and acquire new skills.

Online sources:

<https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/about> (17 of February 2025.)

Sustainable ICT Tools - Padlet

Barbara Bošnjak



Barbara Bošnjak has for the past 18 years been working as an English and German language teacher with secondary school students while at the same time actively participating in numerous Erasmus+ projects. She at the same time coordinates vocational Erasmus+ projects along with the European Parliament Ambassador School programme in her school. Since she always strives to improve her teaching and develop professionally, high quality education is something she considers quite valuable in classroom. She is mostly proud of her professional development path so far and of course her students who always motivate her to do her best.

What is Padlet?

Padlet is an ICT tool which operates on the principles of a notice board one difference to the real thing being its digital environment. Thanks to its features, users are able to place different documents, videos, images, links and similar content on it to be used by everyone who has access to it. The uploaded content can be kept private, made public or even shared with a particular group depending on the settings one chooses. The created space can be accessed from nearly any device including laptops and mobile phones making it convenient to use whenever and wherever.

Creative ways of using Padlet in the classroom

When it comes to its use, Padlet offers numerous possibilities in accordance with what one strives to achieve during the lessons. One way of using it is in a form of a *live question bank* for which the teacher opens a new wall and shares the

link to it with the students. During the lesson, students are invited to post comments, questions or suggestions regarding the subject matter which are then read towards the end of the lesson. *Live question bank* is beneficial in multiple ways – not only does it allow the teacher to provide further explanations or examples where ones are necessary, it also guarantees student participation since they are invited to post. Another useful way to use it is when doing *book reports* – it can be used to discuss quotes, to analyse characters, to provide personal opinions on particular topics tackled by the author in question or simply to provide *writing assignments* such as changing the end of the story by offering alternative endings. The ideas are limitless. Next, Padlet can be used as an *icebreaker* at the beginning of the school year, especially when students still are not familiar with one another. Students can be invited to shortly introduce themselves by posting a selfie along with five sentences describing their preferences. Another idea is to use it at the end of the school year by *reflecting on the achievements and successes* as well as by complimenting or encouraging other students to continue with their efforts. Also, this tool can be used as a *way of communicating* between students and their teachers or even for the purposes of parent teacher conferences. The way one decides to use Padlet, simply depends on the outcome one wishes to achieve. Possibilities are, as one can conclude, countless.

Examples of good practice

The idea to present Padlet as an ICT tool is a result of mutual collaboration between teachers and students created during the teaching processes in and outside the classroom. The first project me and my students worked together on was in December 2020. During that time of preparation for holidays and celebrations, classes were held online, and students were not able to socialize as they used to during previous years. With the intention of making the holiday

season a bit more enjoyable, the authors decided to start a project *Regardless the distance, we celebrate together* where they invited all the students to voluntarily participate in forming a joint Christmas card by posting anything from Christmas carols, Christmas wishes, videos, songs to Advent calendars or whatever content they found appropriate. The rate of participation was even higher than expected, and the feedback received from the students was so encouraging that the project continued in 2021 when it was renamed *Holidays together, feel better* which was also a huge success.

Another quite impressive example of how the authors used Padlet in their classrooms is the one created for the purposes of celebrating *the European Day of Languages*. This Padlet was created as a virtual tour through European capitals accompanied by music typical for each country presented. Students were again encouraged to be creative and contribute to making the Padlet by using other ICT tools of their own choice.

In addition, there is an example of Padlet being used as a means of revising and practising particular language structures, in this case, the *conditional sentences*. Students contributed to forming the Padlet by making educational materials and sharing it with other students. The materials were made for the purposes of revising before an exam using a variety of different ICT tools.

Also, one more useful Padlet for analysing the structure of essays written by students should be presented. This Padlet is quite valuable since the students have the opportunity to not only analyse their own essays, but to also revise and learn from the essays written by their peers. It is considered rather useful not only as revision, but also as preparation for the state matura exams.

Conclusively, as can be seen from the provided examples, Padlet really does have a wide variety of use in classrooms as long as its purpose is clearly determined beforehand.

Benefits of using Padlet

Based on the provided examples of its creative use in the classroom and the examples of good practice one can easily conclude that using Padlet is quite beneficial both for the students and the teachers. Here are some of the benefits of its use for the students:

- it encourages creativity and entices imagination
- it is user-friendly and easy to use from almost every device
- it enables students to freely research and investigate various subjects and topics
- it encourages students to explore and use other ICT tools
- it allows students to reuse the materials
- it stimulates students to work in teams while at the same time allowing individual approach

The teachers can also benefit from its use:

- it offers insight into students` participation and involvement
- it functions as a storage for different teaching materials and assignments
- it encourages better communication with students
- it can be applied in various context and for a variety of purposes
- it can be used both in regular and online classes

Regardless the level of learners, Padlet can be modified for specific purposes and used in a variety of activities and assignments. There are no limits to its use provided one has clearly set outcomes to fulfil. The ideas are endless. Therefore, do not hesitate, be resourceful and start creating your own Padlets!

Online sources:

<https://www.techlearning.com/how-to/what-is-padlet-and-how-does-it-work-for-teachers-and-students>

<https://www.edtechreview.in/trends-insights/insights/why-padlet-is-an-important-tool-for-your-classroom/>

<https://www.bookwidgets.com/blog/2017/08/30-creative-ways-to-use-padlet-for-teachers-and-students>

Our Equal Voices in ELT Journey

Ljerka Vukić and Antonela Pamić



Ljerka Vukić graduated from the University of Zagreb and she holds a degree in English language and literature and Philosophy. She has been working as primary English teacher for over 20 years. She also works as a teacher trainer for teachers from fifteen schools in her County. She is interested in special needs as well as gifted students' needs, and her current professional development field of interest is action research of mixed ability classroom.

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Antonela Pamić is a professor of English language at the High School of Mate Blažine Labin, in Croatia. She holds an M.A. in English and Spanish language and literature from the University of Trieste, Italy and is currently a PhD candidate in Literature at the University of Zagreb, Croatia. Her research interests include young adult literature and its impact and possibilities, postcolonial literature, Victorian and neo-Victorian fiction, postmodernism, the historical novel, feminism, and literature in translation.

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EVE stands for Equal Voices in ELT. It is an initiative that was originally created to recognise both gender and highly proficient speaker parity in keynote and plenary line-ups for ELT conferences and events worldwide. The idea was conceived by Fiona Mauchline and Sue Leather in 2017, and EVE was born in

early 2018. EVE partners with Teachers' Associations to run Mentoring Programmes for teachers (particularly women teachers), in underrepresented contexts wishing to become conference speakers.

What follows here are two participants' accounts of their experience as EVE mentees.

Modelling Research for Today's Practitioners

When HUPE (Croatian Association of Teachers of English) first offered this opportunity to get involved with EVE and work on presentation skills, I got interested in what the course had to offer. The fact that I have already been teaching for 20 years does not mean that I still do not need support and encouragement to get more involved in giving talks and presentations in conferences and the part where the course offered ideas on how to engage colleagues in professional development was even more interesting for me.

I was blessed with a mentor who understood my needs and after our first Zoom meeting we had already agreed on my topic. I was going to conduct action research in my classroom and then share the results and experience with my colleagues. Since I have been struggling with mixed ability students for a while, this was the issue that I was going to research. So, in the first rehearsal with EVE in my 10-minute presentation I explained to other mentors and mentees all about my intended action research. After that I had about a month to set the research up, carry it out and analyse the results. As you can imagine, my mentor was my rock, and I would not have made it without her guidance. We communicated via WhatsApp and Zoom. The research was carried out in grade five (primary school) and my teacher assistant helped me and was one of my data sources, along with the students and myself. In our Final Presentation with

EVE, I shared the research context, objectives, methodology, findings, and reflections.

And after I have finished with EVE programme, I feel my new journey has only just begun. I am currently still collaborating with my mentor Grazzia Mendoza from Honduras, and we have decided to co-author an article about the research.

I am so grateful to EVE and I recommend it to all my colleagues.

Teaching Young Adult Literature in English as a Second Language Classroom

My experience with the EVE-HUPE mentoring programme was transformative and enriching. Lasting for three months, it provided me with invaluable guidance, support, and insights into my personal and professional growth.

At the beginning of the programme I was assigned a mentor, in my case this was Kathleen Brown (EdD) from the Kurume University, in Japan. Throughout the program, my mentor and I engaged in regular weekly meetings where we discussed what I perceive as my weaker sides and what I wanted to improve and gain from this experience, the challenges, and my aspirations. As a PhD candidate I wanted to prepare a presentation closely related to my probable PhD thesis and for that I have been assigned to the perfect mentor. From the beginning, my mentor recognized the significance of my presentation topic in relation to my academic pursuits, and she even encouraged me to elaborate it more widely and share it at the different conferences. The topic of my presentation was “Teaching Young Adult Literature in English as a Second Language Classroom” and the experience of working with my mentor proved to be enriching and collaborative. Over the course of our weekly meetings, we engaged in in-depth discussions, brainstorming sessions, and practical exercises to refine my approach and delivery of the topic. At the same time, we worked

on various skills such as confidence while presenting, communication skills, and time management. Initially, I explored various themes and strategies for integrating young adult literature into English as a Second Language classroom and how to bring the subject closer to my audience. I was lucky that my mentor shared her insights from her own experiences and offered valuable feedback on my ideas and proposed presentation. Throughout the preparation process, my mentor provided ongoing support and encouragement, helping me to overcome challenges and refine my presentation content.

The feedback I received was overwhelmingly positive, validating the value of my mentorship experience and the importance of incorporating diverse literary resources into ESL instruction. Likewise, it inspired me for my research and the positive feedback made me even more certain that the topic I have chosen for my PhD thesis was relevant and interesting to fellow teachers and researchers.

Overall, my experience with the EVE-HUPE mentoring programme showed me that the aims of the program were multi-faceted. Firstly, it aimed to provide female teachers of English language with the tools, resources, and support needed to excel in conference presentation roles. Secondly, it sought to foster a sense of community and solidarity among women in the program, encouraging collaboration and mutual support.

“The Stolen Colours”

Mariya Ivanova



Once upon a time there was a little village in the middle of an enchanted forest. The forest and the village were under the spell of a witch. Her name was Lilly. Yes, a sweet name for a witch. But the oldest people in the village remembered that long time ago Lilly wasn't bad at all. Actually she loved all the people in the village and always helped them with her magic. But one day, many years ago, she stole the colours from their life and left the village and her friends. Nobody knows what happened but she was angry and sad while she was leaving the village. She made a strong spell and then the colours just disappeared. Everything became black, grey and white.

The sun and the sky were in different shades of grey, the grass and trees became black and grey. The flowers weren't so beautiful anymore, because they lost their colours, the birds were grey, the animals in the forest became black, white

and grey. Even the people were in black, white and grey. And they were sad because they remembered what their life was when it was full of colours. Some villagers had been trying to find Lilly since she had left the village. But she had disappeared. She had left them in their colourless world.

Sometimes the oldest people sat around the fire with the children and told them stories. These stories were full of colours. But the children couldn't imagine how beautiful everything was. They didn't know the colours, they knew only black, grey and white. They weren't unhappy in this world, because they didn't know another.

But there was a little girl who listened very carefully those stories. It was Polly. Polly had a secret. She was dreaming in colours. Only her mother knew her secret. But she was scared.

"Polly, listen to me. It's better not to tell anybody about what you are dreaming every night," told Mommy to Polly every day.

"Why?," asked Polly every day.

"Because people would think that you are witch like Lilly!"

"Am I a witch, Mommy?" asked Polly.

"No, you are not a witch. You just have a special gift or imaginativeness," said Mommy.

One day, Polly saw a butterfly and ran after her. It was the same butterfly that she had dreamed every night. But in Polly`s dream the butterfly was full of colours. She couldn`t resist and followed her. They entered in the deep forest and soon Polly realized that she had got lost. But the butterfly was flying around her and Polly wasn`t scared. Soon they reached a meadow with a little house in the middle. Polly looked around and she noticed that the butterfly had gone. She felt alone.

“I wonder who lives here.” thought Polly.

She stepped to the front door and knocked. And then she heard scared scream.

“How could you see my home? It`s invisible for the people`s eyes!” said a beautiful girl standing in front of her.

“Is that you, Lilly?,” asked Polly

“Who is asking?,” answered Lilly.

“My name is Polly. A beautiful butterfly brought me here and I got lost.” said Polly and smiled to Lilly.

“Yes, I`m Lilly but aren`t you afraid of me?” asked Lilly.

“Lilly, nice to meet you. No, I`m not afraid of you. You don`t look evil at all!” said Polly.

“I`m not evil! I miss my friends from the village but I`m scared to come back there...They probably hate me! That`s why I made a spell to protect my home.” cried Lilly.

“But why do I see it?” asked Polly.

“Because you have a pure good heart and you don’t hate me. But you don’t hate me, because you don’t remember what our world was when it was full of colours.” said Lilly.

“That’s not true. I have a secret. My dreams are full of colours,” said Polly.

“Really? Oh, you are so special, Polly!”

The days passed. Lilly and Polly became really good friends. Polly was a regular guest in Lilly`s home. One day Polly couldn’t resist and asked:

“Why did you steal the colours, Lilly?”

“Because a boy was rude to me and laughed at me. “

“Why did he do that?” asked Polly.

“Because I told that the sun is blue. I don’t know the colours. That`s my secret, Polly. Do you know the colours?” asked Lilly sadly.

“Yes, from the stories that my grandfather tells me every night. I have an idea. I will help you to learn the colours!” said Polly excited.

“Yes, yes! I agree! And I will promise you something. I`m going to return every colour I learn!” promised Lilly.

The next days were full of miracles for the people from the village. Every day a new colour appeared in their life. They didn`t realize that it was thanks to Polly but they became happy again.

One day Lilly came back to the village and apologized to the people. Next to her was her best friend Polly, the special girl with pure heart.

Our Experiences in EVE Mentoring Programme

Ljiljana Soldo



Liljana Soldo graduated from the foreign languages department at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Croatia in 2005. She earned her MA degree from English language and literature and Spanish language and literature.

She has worked as a translator and an English teacher in foreign language schools and elementary schools in Zagreb. Today she works as an English teacher in Elementary school Ljudevit Gaj in Zaprešić, where she also lives. Recently she has become a teacher mentor. She is a passionate debater and the school coordinator for Erasmus+ projects. She is a mother and a wife. She loves teaching and learning and believe creativity in any way is the key to a successful and happy life.

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Debate in the ESL classroom

“I raise up my voice – not so that I can shout, but so that those without the voice can be heard...we cannot all succeed when half of us are held back.” - Malala Yousafzai.

These are the words that stand out on EVE’s Facebook page. EVE stands for Equal voices in ELT which has a mission to promote gender parity and provide support for female speakers in the ELT world. But it’s not its only aim. It also strives to

inspire inclusion by mentoring future women speakers at the ELT conferences and events worldwide.

EVE was founded at the beginning of 2018 and it comprises of ELT professionals interested in equality and local representation at conferences and other ELT events.

But it seems that EVE is more than just a mere initiative, it really gives women a chance to amplify their voices showing them that they are confident enough to pass on their own knowledge, or so it was with me and my experience in their mentoring programme this year.

It was only after I had been presented with the idea of their mentoring programme, and when I finally entered it as a mentee, that I realized that women are still not as much recognized as plenary speakers at the conferences and other similar events. This has given me further motivation to finish the program and even think about giving a speech at the future teacher association conference.

How was the whole mentoring programme designed? It connects teachers who have less presenting experience with those teachers who are more experienced in this field and who are willing to share their knowledge.

My mentor was Chris Roland, a teacher and trainer based in Seville. We met online periodically and talked about teaching, interests and motivation in both teaching and learning. His expertise and positive attitude towards teaching has given me a great boost in my presenting skills as well as my teaching and designing my presentation. We worked on my short 10-minutes presentation about the ***Debate in the ESL classroom***, which is topic I chose to present about. He gave me a lot of practical knowledge as well as gentle encouragement to what I was doing. He not only answered all my anxious questions about public

presenting to my ELT colleagues, but he also gave me a lot of pats on the back concerning my viewpoints and confidence. We had two rounds of presentations where we were able to get feedback and brush up on our presentations.

All in all, a truly positive and motivating experience that has left me with more than a few rewarding acquaintances and a boost in self-confidence as to my presenting skills.

The role of motivation as a significant part of students' learning experience

Considering a great privilege to participate as one of the mentees in this great project organized by HUPE and EVE-ELT teacher mentoring programme specifically aimed at female teachers and with the goal of equipping us with skills necessary for presenting at international conferences, I will describe my experience in this project and all the gains I acquired through its attendance. So, it started in January 2024, and we were assigned different topics based on our preferences, thus choosing something that we were good at and knew inside out.

My mentor was Mr. George Kokolas who was knowledgeable and passionate about learning and teaching and directed me towards improvement in my presentation skills.

My topic was about motivation and its impact on students' long-term learning and performing. Therefore, I covered few most important aspects when it comes to acquiring knowledge and our drive for success. In a nutshell, lessons that remain with us for a longer period is to make them presentable, so it is appealing and relatable to students.

By sharing my experience in classroom was helpful to my colleagues to apply similar methods in their teaching process and vice versa, since my colleagues had different topics and we learnt from mutual experience. We had been working hard and then on Saturday, 16 March, we gave short talks on various topics we had chosen previously in accordance with our preferences and guidance by our mentors. It was challenging from the beginning since it was something new and I really wanted to make an impactful contribution in this process.

Our HUPE association along with our mentors had been very supportive, and I really appreciated their feedback and opportunities for us teachers to further develop in our professional area and become like those professionals we look up to.

To sum up, whenever we accept the challenge and allow ourselves to think outside the box by stepping out of our comfort zone, great things happen and then we see it was worthwhile.

“Mental Health is your Greatest Wealth” - Classroom project

Maja Labaš Horvat¹ and Martina Grgac²

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2 Gimnazija Fran Galović, Koprivnica

Teaching English involves using the language as both the means and the content of each lesson. Among the interdisciplinary topics we use to improve the learners' proficiency, there are seldom the ones including the issue of mental health. However sensitive this topic might be, we have decided to introduce it into English class through a short collaboration in the form of a project called „Mental Health is your Greatest Health“. As the new English curriculum includes the option of teaching about health in each school subject, mental health seemed a necessary topic considering the fact that we have been witnessing a decline in students' mental health in the past few years, especially now in the post-covid time.

The mental health of teenagers is a critical aspect of their overall well-being, influencing their ability to navigate the challenges of adolescence and prepare for a fulfilling adulthood. In Croatia, like in many other parts of the world, teenagers face a range of pressures, including academic demands, social expectations, and the inevitable journey of self-discovery. We believe that, along with educational needs, understanding and addressing the mental health needs of teenagers in English class is important for fostering an academically competent but also a healthy younger generation.

We designed the project activities to focus on the students' productive skills in English and critical thinking so that along with the enhanced language

performance the outcomes would involve the students reaching a higher level of empathy towards people around them, especially their peers.

One of the initial project activities was a survey conducted among 82 seventeen-year-old students of both schools at the beginning of the school year. The results showed that only about fifteen per cent of them feel that school benefits their mental health whereas more than fifty per cent believe that school has had a negative effect on the mental health aspect of their life. Also, 48 per cent of them stated that they had actually had difficulties with their mental health up to that point and only about 30 per cent reported having consulted an expert.

This led us to the idea about an activity where students held a class debate titled „Does going to school influence our mental health in a positive or negative way?" Both the negation and the affirmation team offered very resourceful arguments.

The next activity was a language mediation task during which the class watched two videos on mental health literacy and summarized what they had seen in a form of an essay, stating their opinion in the end. Some other tasks for students included one-minute speech aimed at raising awareness about a topic of each student's choice concerning mental health and designing posters about the things that boost their mood. On World Mental Health Day, 10th October, a psychology teacher held a workshop called „Food, Emotions, Hormones, Dogs“ for the students taking part in the project.

However, mental health issues in the classroom do not only concern students – they also concern teachers. That is why the second part of our project involved informing ourselves about the strategies of burnout prevention in order to be able to share our findings with our colleagues.

According to the Multidimensional Burnout Theory by Christina Maslach there are five steps each individual can take in order to prevent burnout or reduce its effects: 1) Take care of oneself (sleep, food, water, exercise, socializing) and define clear goals, 2) Be clear about professional boundaries, 3) Be aware of the people who can help, 4) Recognize that others are not better and that it doesn't only happen to you, 5) Change the way you look at the problem.

While looking for further ways to avoid burnout we came across and decided to try some of the AI tools for teachers so we shared our good practice examples with colleague English teachers. Being aware of the drawbacks of some of the AI apps, we looked for the most appropriate ones for our teaching demands. Finally, the tools we found the most useful and promising when it comes to lesson planning and designing new classroom material were Twee, Gamma, MagicSchool and RocketAI.

In conclusion it can be said that, even though we as English teachers are not trained psychology experts, there are activities we can do with our students to help reduce the stigma attached to mental health issues of teenagers and adults. English classroom can be a setting where students feel comfortable and work on tasks aimed at breaking down stereotypes, offering assistance or understanding and on keeping an open mind. By addressing the challenges they face and providing a support system within our subject we can contribute to nurturing a generation of educated, resilient and emotionally intelligent individuals.

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SEVEN THINGS THAT BOOST MY MOOD

MUSIC

I like music. It affects my mood and often motivates me...



HANDBALL

I play handball. Handball is my favorite sport, I enjoy playing it with the team..

GYM

I also like to train a lot. I often go to the gym and spend time there working on myself and my abilities...

GET ENOUGH SLEEP

I like to sleep. Every time I get a good night's sleep, I am full of energy and good will for a new day...



GOOD GRADES

I love and am overjoyed when I get a good grade for my hard work at school. That motivates me to keep going...

SWEETS

I really like to eat sweets. They give me extra energy for activities...



FRIENDS

I like to spend my free time with friends, talk, socialize and have fun...

Seven things that boost my mood



7 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO BOOST YOUR MOOD

GO OUTSIDE
FOR A DAILY
WALK.



EAT COMFY
FOOD.



LISTEN TO MUSIC.



SPEND TIME WITH FRIENDS.



DANCE.



TAKE YOURSELF
ON A DATE.



READ A BOOK.

Third Graders in Animal Mode: Exploring Animals Across Borders with eTwinning

Tina Parać



Tina Parać is an English and Italian primary school teacher and teacher advisor at Primary school Knez Trpimir in Croatia, with more than 25 years of teaching experience. She is a HUPE member and an experienced eTwinner. Most of her projects are awarded with National and European Quality Labels. She is the author and founder of eTwinning project “Animal Mode”. She is happy to share her knowledge through talks, lectures and workshops. Her interests are Special Educational Needs (SEN), ecology, mindfulness and photography.



Project`s logo

eTwinning is a community for educational institutions, which provides a secure online platform where teachers and students can work together to develop both national and international projects. Besides eTwinning projects, this online space provides participants professional development activities such as online trainings, webinars and conferences.

In 2017, I joined the eTwinning community and it was a turning point in my teaching career.

Becoming an eTwinner completely transformed my way of teaching.

eTwinning projects are an excellent way for teachers to enhance their professional, ICT, and language skills while making lessons more engaging.

Working on eTwinning project is a great opportunity for both students and educators for international cooperation, exchange of experiences, and intercultural learning, offering participants new knowledge, friendships, and valuable experiences.

The ESEP platform is user-friendly and offers local and national support, for all eTwinners in Europe.

Additionally, an eTwinning projects can be awarded with National and European Quality Labels.

This time, I am proud to present my **eTwinning project, *Animal Mode***, as an example of best practice.

This project was developed as a result of several years of collaboration among a dedicated and hardworking group of teachers, who have been recognized multiple times within the eTwinning community.

The main objectives of the project are to develop English language skills, to explore animal species in local environment, as well as specific species from around the world. The project is being implemented in a total of 10 third-grade classes in schools across Croatia, France, Portugal, Poland, Spain and Turkey, engaging students aged 9-10.

All project activities are integrated into the English language, Science and Art Curriculum, and as well as into cross-curricula themes for third graders in all participating schools.

It is carried throughout the entire school year and it is divided into several thematic units. All project participants, both students and teachers, are equally engaged in decision-making process concerning tasks and project activities.

For the best overview of all project activities completed so far, please visit our [project website](#), which is regularly updated.

Feel free to meet our project members, learn more about our schools, browse our Animal Riddles eBook, enjoy walking through Animal Mode virtual gallery or listen to our Christmas virtual concert.

<https://sites.google.com/view/animal-mode-etwinning-project/p%C3%A1gina-inicial>



QR – project`s website

To conclude, Animal Mode is an excellent example of collaboration between schools, students, teachers and parents, who, although miles apart, work together to push the boundaries from traditional to modern teaching practice.

And with great sense of pride, they open the doors of their classrooms sharing examples of innovative approaches and active learning.

Forthcoming events in the world of ELT

- **6th TESOL Türkiye International ELT Conference**, 18-19 April, 2025, Kayseri, Türkiye

<https://tesolturkey.net/event-tesol/46/6th-tesol-turkiye-international-elt-conference>

- **ELTAM Days 2025 “Education as the Passport to the Future” (Modules 1 and 2)**, 9-10 May, 2025, Nikšić, Montenegro

<https://www.eltam.me/call-for-papers-for-eltam-days-2025/>

- **23rd ELTA Serbia Conference**, 16-17 May, 2025, Belgrade, Serbia

<https://elta.org.rs/2024/09/18/call-for-proposals/>

- **ELTA Albania International Conference “Moving Forward, A New Education Landscape”**, 30-31 May, 2025, Tirana, Albania

- **SCFLT Forum**, 14-15 June, Stara Lesna, Slovakia

<https://www.scflt.sk/scflt-forum-2025>

- **34th IATEFL Poland International Conference**, 19-21 September, 2025, Łódź, Poland

<https://iatefl.org.pl/the-34th-iatefl-poland-international-conference-save-the-date/>

- **32nd BETA Annual International Conference**, 27-28 September, Sofia, Bulgaria.

- **LAKMA International Conference**, 17-18 October, Vilnius, Lithuania. More information will be available soon.

<https://lakmaonline.lt/>

You can also visit the following links to keep yourself posted. Events organised by our partners take precedence.

<https://www.beta-iatefl.org/conferences/>

<https://mauricioarango.wordpress.com/upcoming-events/comment-page-1/>

32nd BETA Annual International Conference
“ELT Horizons: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities”

27th-28th September 2025, Sofia, Bulgaria

The Bulgarian English Teachers' Association (BETA) and the University of National and World Economy are pleased to invite you to the 32nd BETA Annual International Conference, which will take place from 27th to 28th September 2025 in Sofia, the beautiful capital city of Bulgaria.

The conference aims to inspire and motivate teachers to make the most of the teaching and learning contexts they work in, and to exploit the potential of various innovative and collaborative practices in all areas of ELT and ESP in particular. We would like to offer you the opportunity to share your experience, expertise and insights into the fascinating world of language teaching and research. Areas of interest include, but are not limited to *Teaching Young Learners and Teenagers; Teaching ESP; Teacher Education and Development; Bilingual Education; Literature, Media & Cultural Studies in ELT; Global Issues; Content and Language Integrated Learning; Blended Learning; Applied linguistics; Research; Testing, Evaluation and Assessment.*

As usual, internationally prominent professionals in the field of ELT are invited as keynote speakers and workshop leaders. A book exhibition of major ELT publishers and service providers will accompany the conference.

SPEAKER PROPOSAL DEADLINE: 30th June 2025.

For speaker proposal forms, fees and accommodation visit

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/17lHNqkeKJ2knWf7JKBfi94xE1D0wnCBElfdlu-78BII/edit?pli=1>

and check <http://www.beta-iatefl.org>.

For further queries contact beta.iateflbg@gmail.com

We very much look forward to seeing you in Sofia.

Kind regards,

The Conference Organising Team

Author guidelines

If you feel you have something you would like to share:

- Send us your paper in MS Word format together with a photo of you (in jpeg format) and a short bio note (of about 50 words).
- Your paper must not have been previously published and must not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- The length of your paper may vary: short contributions of 300 – 800 words are as good as long ones.
- Consult the Call for Contributions to keep yourself posted regarding deadlines and additional information.
- Pay attention to the fact that the formatting requirements have been changed so as to facilitate the preparation of your contributions.

Please format your materials including references, if applicable, by following the instructions below:

TEXT

Page margins: normal (2.54 cm on all sides)

Headline and headings: Calibri 24, bold, centred, with only the first word and proper nouns capitalised

Main text: Calibri 14, justified, line spacing 1.5

New paragraph: no indentation, leave one blank line between paragraphs and activate the option do not add space between paragraphs of the same style

In text citations: According to Chomsky & Hale (1968: 23) '.....'

Tables, figures, and diagrams: should be numbered accordingly and included in the relevant part of the text; each should have an explanatory caption.

Page numbers: Do not number pages.


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Established 1991 in Sofia, BETA seeks to build a network of ELT professionals on a national and regional (Southeast Europe) level and establish the association as a recognized mediator between educators and state bodies, public and other organizations.

BETA members are English teaching professionals from all educational sectors in Bulgaria – primary, secondary and tertiary, both state and private. BETA activities include organizing annual conferences, regional seminars and workshops; information dissemination; networking with other teachers' associations and NGOs in Bulgaria and abroad; exchange of representatives with teachers' associations from abroad.

We are on the web:

<http://www.beta-iatefl.org/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/beta-bulgaria-2603b1b3/?originalSubdomain=bg>

Thank you for your support!

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