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## Message from the chair

*“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”*

I don’t know whether the present situation can be described in exactly the terms Dickens used for the French Revolution in *A Tale of Two Cities*. But it’s impossible to watch the events unfolding around us day by day with the coronavirus pandemic and not feel that we, too, are living through a time of crisis whose outcome we cannot predict. Under these circumstances, it seems **the best we can do is help one another**. And that’s just what the members of Melta have been doing these last few weeks.

First, we’ve been compiling and distributing information about the **new government measures to provide financial assistance for freelancers**. These measures have changed in some cases, and the related regulations are sometimes difficult to understand. With input from around the Melta community, however, we’ve managed to keep ourselves up to date.

Second, we’ve been holding **webinars on the various**

**aspects of online teaching**. Now that schools are closed, and virtually all companies have stopped their in-person training programs, the ability to offer students and customers online instruction is particularly vital. Here, again, the emphasis has been on members helping members — not only by organizing and conducting webinars but also by setting up smaller groups to practice using web-based tools together.

Third, we’ve produced another issue of *Melta News*, the one you’re reading right now. Like everything else we’ve been doing in this time of uncertainty, it, too, is the result of a group effort — one involving not only the editor and the designer but also a large number of volunteer contributors, photographers, proofreaders and back-office administrators.

I’d like to thank everyone for their help — both now and in the future. I don’t know if we’ll be back to “normal” or not in a few months. All I can say for sure is that we’re going to keep helping each other as best we can. Stay healthy and please don’t hesitate to contact me at [info@melta.de](mailto:info@melta.de) if you have any questions or suggestions.

All the best,  
Randy



Randy Perry

## Message from the editor

*Melta News* is now in colour! This development is very exciting for us, and we hope our pages will inspire you.

Thank you to the many people who work hard to make *Melta News* materialize three times a year. We have recently added a few new volunteer proofreaders to our team of one (Breda Howe-Helmecke): Leonora Fröhlich-Ward, Susan Merz and Elaine Friedrich. We are grateful for your help.

And thank you to our many contributors — who are, by the way, a keen and reliable bunch! Finally, thank you to Joan Walsh, who has a knack for beating writers out of the bushes. Without her, the magazine would be about two pages long.

Please stay safe at home, everyone. I hope it offers you a bit of time to enjoy our first full-colour edition of *Melta News*.

Warm regards,  
Tenley van den Berg



## We’d like to welcome our new members!

### Regular members:

Tanja Steiert  
Mariel (Maria Eliza) Geiger  
Jackie Watson  
Cindy Kornek  
Jessica Waller  
Natalia Roll  
Juliana Oosten  
Irina Murg  
Jennifer Kammermeier  
Beverly Pinheiro  
Louise Ashworth  
Joseph Genlloud  
Teresa Schiller

### Guest members:

Ashwini Junginger  
Ho Yuen Raymond Cheung  
Alisa Kavetska  
Mirabela Nagy  
Cara Nelson  
Kristina Schmieding  
Andreas Seiler  
Yuky Webster  
Elizabeth Ito  
Ajrina Mann  
Sugandha Verma

### Student member:

Tabitha Tamberlin

## CONTENTS

- 3 Message from the chair
- 3 Message from the editor

### Activities for the Classroom

- 6 Melta Five-a-Day: newsy.com
- 8 Activities using HONY
- 9 Tech Talk

### Interviews

- 10 A career in education
- 12 How was it for you, Dagmar?

### Articles

- 14 Teaching English through food
- 16 Inclusion and diversity in ELT: the whys and hows

### Event Reports

- 18 Brain-friendly learning
- 20 20-20 visions: 20 years of research; 20 takeaways
- 22 SMART practice: cognitive science and coaching working together to improve learning
- 24 The “nuts and bolts” of grammar in language learning
- 26 Melta Christmas party
- 28 AGM meeting

### Book Reviews

- 29 Dreyer’s English:  
An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style
- 30 Brain Wash: Detox Your Mind for Clearer Thinking,  
Deeper Relationships and Lasting Happiness
- 31 English Tenses: Zeitenmodell für den Englischunterricht  
nach Montessori-Prinzipien
- 32 Aunt Agony
- 33 Upcoming Events
- 34 Membership Info
- 26 Imprint



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### 2020 Melta Committee

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Article submissions can be short (~250 words), long (~650 words) or anywhere in between. You are also encouraged to submit book reviews, infographics, tips, brief reports on interesting articles or events, interviews, philosophical musings, quotes — whatever you think might interest at least some of a diverse group of English teachers. Be creative! If you would like to contribute to *Melta News* but are unsure what to write about, just contact us, and we'll find something together.

- Please submit your article in Microsoft Word or compatible format.
- Please do send pictures! Please submit pictures, illustrations, and tables as separate files and with a resolution of 300 dpi or above.
- Don't forget to add your biographical data (a picture and ~30 words about you).

A cartoon illustration of a man with a black cap, grey shirt, and black suspenders, shouting into a black megaphone. A large red speech bubble extends from the megaphone, containing the text 'Call for Contributions'.

# Call for Contributions

*Melta News* is published three times a year: spring, summer and winter. Submissions are due on 28 February, 30 June and 31 October.

Have you found some mistakes in this newsletter? Put your eagle eye to use and join our editing team!

**We'd love to hear from you!**

## Melta Five-a-Day: newsy.com

**Bethan Stokes** shares fun activities you can do with *newsy.com*, “your source for concise, unbiased video news and analysis covering the top stories from around the world.”

Newsy is a great website that offers a mix of short news videos, as well as longer investigations and documentaries, on a range of current topics. Each video comes with a transcript, making it a great resource for us teachers! There are several different ways you could use this website in class; here are just five. These five activities can work as warmers for discussing other issues in class, as topical vocabulary practice, or as fillers (especially number 2).

### 1. Transcript gap fill

- Copy the transcript for the video and remove words to leave gaps for students to fill.
- Students read the transcript before they listen to/watch the video and predict which words might fill the gaps. Tell students to compare their predictions before listening.
- While listening, students check whether their predictions were correct and fill in any other gaps they have. This can be done in two stages. In stage 1, students just listen to the video and check whether their predictions were correct. In stage 2, students watch the video and fill in any gaps.
- If students predicted words that weren't in the video, see whether those words could fit the gaps. You could also see whether the class can think of any other words/phrases which could also fill those gaps.

### 2. Understanding the gist

- Choose two or three videos you would like to discuss with students.
- Tell students the topic of the first video and explain that you are going to listen to the audio several times.
- First listen: students listen and take notes on what they hear. Stop the audio every so often to give students time to write.

- Students compare what they have heard with their partner.
- Second listen: students listen again, this time without stopping the audio. They check their notes and add any new information they hear.
- Students compare what they heard with their partner.
- Third listen: students watch the video (or listen to the audio if no projector is available) and read the transcript at the same time to confirm what they heard and fill in any information gaps.
- Write two or three discussion questions on this topic for students to discuss in pairs. For example, what is your reaction to this story? How could/does this story affect you/your job/your country, etc.? (It is quite easy to come up with discussion questions based on the transcript.)

### 3. Fake news

- Give students the transcripts for one (or more) video(s). Tell them there are several factual errors in the video.
- Before watching, students have to highlight which points they think are factually incorrect. Tell students to compare their predictions with a partner.
- While watching, they see whether their predictions are correct and try to find out which misinformation the transcript contains.
- Discuss their reactions to this activity and general issues surrounding fake news (in groups or as a class).
- Alternatively, you could give students the transcripts with factual mistakes in them but not tell them there are mistakes. Hopefully (!), when they watch the video, they will recognise there are some mistakes in the transcript. Ask students to try and correct these mistakes when they listen again. This could then lead to discussions on fake news, etc.

### 4. Word replacement

- Give students the transcripts from videos you would like to discuss in class.
- In pairs, ask them to see whether they can find any idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, synonyms, collocations, etc., for words used in the transcript.
- Compare what each group comes up with and see whether you can write a whole new transcript as a class.
- This activity would be good revision for specific vocabulary such as climate change, health issues, etc.



# WAKE NEWS

## 5. Investigations:

[www.news.com/collections/investigations](http://www.news.com/collections/investigations)

(Ask students to bring headphones to the lesson.)

- Assign each pair one investigation video.
- In pairs, students watch the video (while reading the transcript if necessary) and note down what they think the most important points are. Together, they then come up with 5–6 comprehension questions for other students to answer. After this, they have to write 3–4 discussion questions based on their video/topic.
- Collect students' work and check it at home for grammar and factual errors. You then have some listening comprehension and discussion activities for future classes.
- When students' videos and activities are being done in class, rather than answering the comprehension questions they wrote, they could try and transcribe (parts of) the video.

- Once you have completed all the activities on the short investigation documentaries, you could discuss which aspect of German society students would like to investigate. This could then lead to a very interesting video project...



**Bethan Stokes** is originally from the UK and has lived in Munich since September 2015. She started teaching EFL in Madrid in 2013, completed an MA TESOL at UCL Institute of Education in 2015 and currently works at the University of the German Armed Forces in Neubiberg. She enjoys developing teaching materials and trying out new activities in the classroom.

## Warm-up or cool-down vocabulary activity

This is a very simple and effective vocabulary retrieval/review activity that Sue Morris demonstrated in one of her many workshops.

What you need: One circular card and one dice per group (and some players!)

### Procedure:

1. On a circular card, make six slots numbered from 1–6.
2. Prepare a batch of cards with vocabulary highlights from previous lessons and distribute them evenly on the numbers on the card. Adding pictures or diagrams to the items adds additional humour and support for the players!
3. One participant rolls the dice and then takes a card from the corresponding number on the circle.
4. The player describes, defines, paraphrases or mimes the vocabulary item on the card for the other players.
5. The player who guesses the item correctly gets the card.
6. The winner of that card or the next person in line continues until all the cards have been played.
7. The person with the most cards at the end is declared the winner.

Submitted by Joan Walsh



## Activities using HONY

Ever wonder about the stories of the people you pass in the city? **Marcela Harrisberger** shares a conversation activity for B2 students using the blog Humans of New York (HONY), which features photographs and short interviews of people on the street. HONY began in New York and has since expanded to more than 20 different countries.

### Lead-in:

- 1) Do you agree or disagree with the following sentence? Explain your ideas.  
*Everybody has skeletons in their closet.*
- 2) In your opinion, what is the worst thing someone could ever find out about their partner's past?
- 3) How do you think someone should react if they find out their partner has been keeping a big secret from them for over 30 years?
- 4) Do you think people should support their spouses no matter what they have done in the past?

### Task 1:

Read the post on the Humans of New York (HONY) fanpage, and talk to your partner about the following questions:

- 1) What happened?
- 2) How would you feel if you were the woman?

### Task 2:

How would you have reacted at the moment the police arrived?

- 1) If I were the man, I would have \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2) If I were the woman, I would have \_\_\_\_\_.

### Task 3:

What do you think the man has done? Think about 3 possible things that may have happened:

- 1) I think he must have \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2) Or maybe he has \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3) He may also have \_\_\_\_\_.

### Task 4:

1) Read this article written by Desire Thompson, posted on 8 February 2016 at [www.newsone.com](http://www.newsone.com), and find out what really happened:

Bobby Love, born Walter Miller, was released from prison on 5 January after his true identity was revealed to his wife of 30 years and their four children. In 1977, Love escaped from prison in North Carolina, where he was serving a 10-year sentence for a bank robbery.

After his escape, he took on the name Bobby Love and began living a law-abiding life in New York City. A few years later, while working at the Baptist Medical Center in Brooklyn, he met his future wife, Cheryl Love.

Love said there was something about her husband that kept them slightly distant, but she could never figure it out until police showed up at their door on 22 January 2015. Neither Cheryl nor her children were aware of his crime or the life he lived before becoming Bobby Love. After his arrest, Love was extradited back to North Carolina, where his escape offense was handled through a disciplinary process, leaving him to complete under a year in jail.

His wife said she was shocked by the revelation, but never thought about leaving his side.



## Tech Talk

**Michael Saunders** gives you some technical tips, tricks and suggestions for the classroom.

2) Now that you know what happened to Bobby Love, answer the following questions:

- What could have happened if, before getting married, he had told his wife what he had done?
- Do you think she would have left him if she had known his big secret?
- What would you have done if you were him?
- What would you have done if you were her?

### Task 5:

Choose one of the roles and write a letter as if you were this person:

- You are Bobby Love. Write a letter to your wife explaining what happened.
- You are Bobby Love's wife. Write a letter to your husband talking about what happened.

In your letter, mention what happened, how you wish things had happened, how you feel about it and what you will do now.



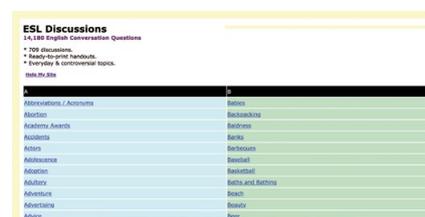
**Marcela Harrisberger** is an online English teacher, a teacher trainer and a certified professional coach. She is Brazilian, but she is based in Germany. She holds a CELTA, a degree in Educational Psychology and another one in People Management. She writes a blog at [www.coachingforelt.com](http://www.coachingforelt.com).

### 1. Anki: powerful and intelligent flashcards

Students often ask me how they can use their mobile devices to practise English when they're on the move. I recommend flashcard software for training vocabulary, and one especially powerful app is Anki: <https://apps.ankiweb.net>. This app uses spaced repetition that focuses on long-term memorisation of words, and the website has accompanying apps for Android (AnkiDroid) and iPhone/iPad (Anki-Mobile). Students can create their own flashcards and sync them across multiple devices or download existing "decks" of cards from <https://ankiweb.net/shared/decks/english>.

### 2. ESL Discussions: a treasure trove of conversation questions

If you're teaching conversation classes or just looking for some warmer activities to get a class talking, check out <https://esldiscussions.com> (from the people who maintain Breaking News English). This site boasts that it has over 14,000 questions across 700 topics — from accidents and adolescents to zombies and zoos. Along with the topics, there are extra conversation starters relating to grammar points and idioms. Each topic is helpfully split into two parts: a set of questions for student A to read out and a different set for student B, so you can print them all on a single sheet and then cut it in half.



### Please send us your tips and questions!



We'd like to keep this regular section in *Melta News*, but for that to happen, we have to hear from you! Whether you need some advice on using technology in the classroom, or you've got some tips to share (such as online resources for lesson plans), drop us a line: [tech@melta.de](mailto:tech@melta.de). We'll do our best to answer as many questions as possible in the next newsletter, or a future in-person workshop.

### 3. Slow down YouTube videos to make them easier to understand

Finally, here's a trick for YouTube that you may not know about. If you want to play a video in the classroom, but the audio is a bit too fast for the students' level, you can slow it down. Click the cog button in the bottom-right of the video, then Playback Speed, and choose a number lower than zero. In my experience, 0.75 is a good option: it gives students more time to understand a dialogue, without making it sound artificially slow. (Of course, you can also have some fun by going in the other direction — take a clip and speed it up by 1.5 or 1.75 times and see what the students can still understand!)



### Michael Saunders

teaches various courses at the MVHS and VHS SüdOst — from A1 beginners to C1 conversation. He earned a CELTA in 2016 and is gradually shaking off his northern English accent.

## A career in education

Joan Walsh speaks with Elaine Friedrich about teaching sex education in Scotland, and English to adults and children in Munich.

**Joan: Having overheard you say at the Christmas Party that you taught Nicola Sturgeon in kindergarten, I thought you might have some interesting insights to offer *Melta News*! Tell us about your experience teaching the current first minister of Scotland. Was she a star pupil?**

**Elaine:** I'm delighted to say I'm not old enough to have taught Nicola Sturgeon when she was a preschooler. As part of my remit as a member of the Department of Education, however, I had the challenging task of teaching all secondary school children in the area a module entitled "Sex education, personal health and relationships". Nicola attended one of the local secondary schools and had to attend the module. Was she a star pupil? Well, I like to think she got something out of it: her government provides free contraception and free sanitary protection for all women in Scotland, so she must have listened to something I said.

**Joan: What teaching did you do in Scotland?**

**Elaine:** From the day I began primary school as a pupil — there were only five of us in the class — until the January before I left to start my



**Elaine Friedrich** is a Scot who has lived in Munich for 30 years. She is currently employed as a group leader in a kindergarten and works at the VHS teaching adults and children. She has a great interest in behaviour management in early childhood education and creating a positive learning environment for both her preschoolers and adult students.

further education, I had only one career goal: to be a teacher. However, my best friend decided to study community education, so I decided to do that, too. I regretted it but stuck with it because it offered a wide range of career possibilities. Community education is community-based learning and development, often in educational institutions. It is also known as informal learning. I worked in the children-and-youth team and trained youth leaders and play-group workers, taught personal health and relationships, organized children's and youth activities and organized youth exchanges.

**Joan: How did you make the change from community worker to nursery teacher?**

**Elaine:** Unlike my colleagues, I was always more interested in working with small children than I was in working with teenagers and took every opportunity to do so. When I worked for community education, there was no formal nursery education, and I helped a group of local women get funding for the first parent-initiative nursery school in Scotland. When I came to Germany, I worked with teenagers for a few years before I had my own children and then got involved with organizing groups for small children. I then said I was willing to teach English to the under-five group; word got around, and I ended up teaching English at my current kindergarten. I did a few sessions there, and as I was qualified to work in a kindergarten, they offered me a permanent job.

**Joan: Has your experience in community education proved to be an advantage in kindergarten?**

**Elaine:** Definitely. Working in a kindergarten is not just teaching children to colour in and cut out. Small children need to gain self-confidence and develop the social skills that will help them get on in life. They have to

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Parents should always be careful about what they say in front of their little ones because it usually gets back to us.

---

learn how to behave in a group, deal with conflict and participate in democratic processes. The skills I learned whilst working in community education enable me to help them do that.

**Joan: What are the things that you enjoy most and that give you the most pleasure and satisfaction in your daily work?**

**Elaine:** Helping children and parents who are struggling, coming up with new ideas for my group and of course hearing all their little stories! Parents should always be careful about what they say in front of their little ones because it usually gets back to us.



**Joan:** What are the issues — if there are any — that are less enjoyable in your work?

**Elaine:** The noise level! We have a postcard on our wall that says, “If it’s too loud, you’re too old”.

**Joan:** Does Melta offer sufficient workshops to support you in your work with children? Should Melta offer more specialized seminars for this field of teaching or does one size fit all?

**Elaine:** Actually, I get a lot of inspiration from the workshops designed for adults. There is always something you can adapt and use with the children. Interestingly, many of the ideas and techniques presented at workshops to improve learning are things that people who work with small children do instinctively.

**Joan:** As far as I know, you also teach adults here, right?

**Elaine:** Yes. I also offer adult and children’s courses at the VHS in Haar. Doing the CELTA course was one of the best things I have ever done.

**Joan:** Is it difficult to switch or does one type of learning support the other?

**Elaine:** Regardless of whether I am teaching adults or children, I try to create a positive learning environment where students feel comfortable and enjoy the experience of learning another language. I might use different skills and approaches to achieve that, but the goal remains the same, whatever the age and ability of my students.

**Joan:** Thank you very much, Elaine.



**Joan Walsh** is from Ireland and works as an English trainer in companies. She enjoys attending workshops and seminars to stay abreast of the most up-to-date trends in language teaching and technology. On holidays, she likes to travel and learn about everything connected with people, culture and language.



21 March 2020

## Corona times

Dear friends and colleagues,

A beautiful reminder for these difficult times. Does this herald the paradigm shift that has been waiting to happen?

Wishing you health and mindsight.

Warmly,

Susan Merz

*“And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and grew gardens full of fresh food, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently.*

*And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.*

*And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.”*

**Written in 2020 by retired US schoolteacher Kitty O’Meara**

## How was it for you, Dagmar?

**Tim Howe** talks to **Dagmar Taylor** and learns how she sealed a book deal simply by putting her foot in the proverbial *Fettnäpfchen*.

Linguistic and cultural misunderstandings between English and German are an endless source of amusement, offering an open invitation to “step in the *Fettnäpfchen*”. Few expats are probably as well positioned to comment on such faux pas as Dagmar Taylor. Half Scot, half German, Dagmar has lived in Germany for twenty years or more. After writing for *Spotlight* magazine for around 11 years, she was invited to pen a regular column on her own collection of cultural mishaps. Last year, ten of her best faux pas features were collated into a 148-page half-German, half-English book called *...and then I stepped into the Fettnäpfchen: Oder: Wie eine Schottin Deutschland entdeckt*.

Every day when I leave the house, I know I'm going to have an interesting conversation with someone.

The last time I wrote about Dagmar in *Melita News* was just after her “Death by Powerpoint” presentation in 2007 (see “Strength in Numbers”, issue 61). Eager to hear what she's been up to since and more about the book deal, I gave her a call late February 2020.

I began by saying how *herzhaft* I'd laughed at some of her anecdotes and asking which was her personal favourite.

**Dagmar:** In the doctor's waiting room, when I mixed up *Stuhl* with “stool”. I really thought the nurse was asking me to give up the chair I was sitting on.

**Tim:** You also write that *doch* is your favourite German word. Why so?

**Dagmar:** The word often pops into my mind when I'm speaking English;

it's a word that's really missing in English. It's great for when you want to emphasise a particular point or just argue with someone.

**Tim:** Right! And, judging by the number of times you use it in your book, I'm guessing *das ist gut so* is your favourite phrase. Why this one?

**Dagmar:** It's something I hear Germans say all the time; I enjoy parrotting them in relevant situations... (laughs).

**Tim:** One of the funniest features in your book are the mini dialogues. Are you still writing them?

**Dagmar:** You mean “How was it for you, *Schatz?*” Yeah, I've probably already exhausted my best anecdotes (laughs again). But yes, I still have a long list of these. Maybe I should write a dialogue a day and post it on Instagram.

**Tim:** You should! Now, last summer you upped sticks and moved with your kids from Utting to Edinburgh. Can you tell us what you're doing there?

**Dagmar:** Well, as those who have read my book already know, we weren't too thrilled with the German school system (see Dagmar's bitter-



Originally from Aberdeenshire in Scotland, **Dagmar Taylor** moved to Germany in 1992, where she began teaching English as a foreign language. Today she's a freelance author, trainer and teacher trainer, and a regular contributor to *Spotlight* magazine.

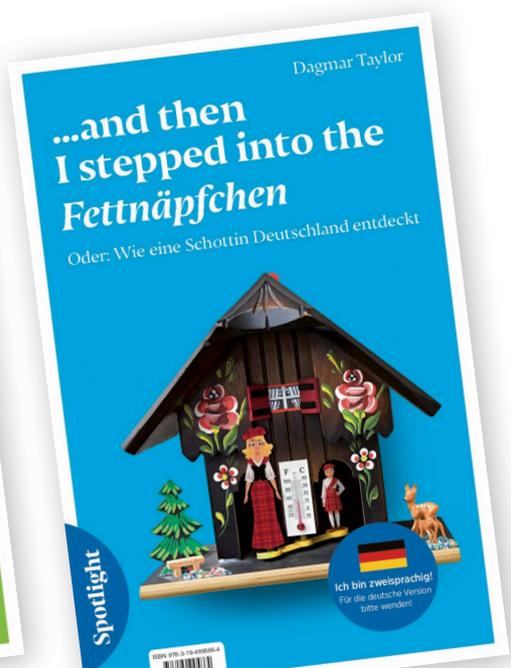
sweet chapter “Secondary education is complicated”). Our son and daughter are completing their final two school years here, and my husband commutes over at the weekend. Workwise, I'm still doing much the same here as in Utting: writing for *Spotlight*, proofreading, giving webinars for Klett.

**Tim:** You sound busy. Is there anything you miss about Germany?

**Dagmar:** Friends, yeah. Otherwise, I'm just enjoying soaking up city life in Edinburgh. I love the Scot's down-to-earthliness. Is that a word?

**Tim:** Maybe. Give us an example.

**Dagmar:** Just today, I was at the doctor's office, and the assistant called me “petal”. Every day when I leave the house, I know I'm going to have an interesting conversation with someone. I revel in the way strangers speak to each other. But it's also the way that teachers engage with kids.



They speak to and with them rather than down at them. Our kids just weren't used to that.

**Tim:** My daughter's in grade five; I think I can connect. Anyway, can we expect a sequel to *Fettnäpfchen*? And what about long-term plans?

**Dagmar:** Long-term, I'll probably move back to Germany next year, but we're seeing first how things pan out here with the children's education. Book? There's been talk of a sequel, but it's not been commissioned yet, so I can't quite start writing. Wait and see!

**Tim:** It was lovely speaking to you, Dagmar, and hearing your merry Scottish accent. *Melta News* wishes you the very best with your time-out back-to-roots with the down-to-earth Edinburgers!

### Fact File

...and then I stepped into the *Fettnäpfchen* (marketed by Huber as Level B1), 12.95 €, Spotlight Verlag.

To follow Dagmar's SUP adventures in Scotland: [www.instagram.com/supscotland2019](http://www.instagram.com/supscotland2019)

To watch Dagmar's two-minute Klett Classroom Clips: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrpyXmo40z0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrpyXmo40z0)



**Tim Howe** provides training, translating and interpreting to business and higher education. He blogs about the brighter side of expat life at <https://knowhoweforenglish.blogspot.com>

## Call for volunteers for the Campus di Monaco International Montessori School

We have some refugee students preparing for the Mittlerer Schulabschluss who had very little or no English teaching back in their home countries. They need extra tuition or coaching, some on a very basic level, but do not have the financial means to pay for private tutoring. So, we are looking for volunteers who would like to work with these highly motivated 17- to 20-year-old students.

If you are interested, please contact Brigitta Berger (see bio p.31) at [b.berger@campus-di-monaco.de](mailto:b.berger@campus-di-monaco.de) for more information.



## Teaching English through food

**Betsy Hollweck** shares her insights into how English learning can be transformed through the topic of food. And there's a treat at the end!

This year I am going to plant a garden.

Shall I really plant one? A garden? Yes, I think so. I will. I have decided.

Last year I didn't plant one. I had wanted to, but in August I went on vacation for three weeks, and as everyone else in my neighborhood was also on vacation then, there would have been no one to take care of my garden for me while I was away. Gardens need care; without care, gardens die.

Gardens need sunshine and water. They need someone to check to see whether there are any bugs or diseases. I never plant parsley, for example, in my garden, because slugs like parsley. Chipmunks like strawberries, so I don't plant them in my garden either. Parsley and strawberries grow on my balcony, away from things that will eat them — other than me.

Where shall I plant my garden? I watch the sun. Which part of my garden gets the most light? The south side should be the sunniest, but there is a large tree in the yard next to my garden, and its leaves always shade that part of the ground. I know! That's where I'll put my garden chair — a chaise lounge, really — so that I'll be able to read while I keep my plants company. Plants like to be talked to, I understand, so maybe I'll read to them, aloud.

What should I plant? What do I like to eat that I can't find at the supermarket or the farmers' markets?

I like spicy food. Last summer, when I was on vacation, I bought eight different kinds of hot pepper

seeds, which I brought back with me. I'll plant a few of those and start some extra seedlings to give to some friends who also like spicy food.

I also brought back some vegetable seeds: chayote squash, pink banana squash, tomatillos, and sweet corn. When I was a child, my father would grow corn. My family always laughs when we tell the story of when my brother Jack got lost in the cornfield one day. The cornfield was only as big as my living room is now (which is not very big), but he was very small, and when one is five, most everything is big.

I was thinking of planting the corn seeds as the American Indians did, with a small fish as fertilizer, but then I thought better of it. There are cats in my neighborhood, and they might dig up my corn seeds to get at the fish. Cats do that. They like to dig in freshly-turned earth.

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### Gardening screams modals.

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It's only March, so I have plenty of time to decide about my garden. The sun was shining this morning, which is always a tease for gardeners like me. Then this afternoon, the clouds rolled in, and it started to snow. It's snowing as I write, and it's grown dark, so I think that I'll stop dreaming about my garden and go into the kitchen to make a cup of hot chocolate.



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I didn't cover all possible tenses, but there are quite a few in the piece above. There are quite a few different sentence constructions as well, pronouns and possessives, "proper" language and everyday/colloquial phrases. Such texts can be simplified for early learners or be used to spark more involved conversations with advanced learners (e.g. Why is it advisable to use Latin when dealing with plants, rather than a common name?).

Most of our learners have had some contact with growing things, either firsthand or through friends or relatives. We all eat. We all live or have lived somewhere where we are unable to find familiar ingredients. Texts such as the above are good introductions into conversations. Did you ever have a garden? What grew in it? Which direction did it face? What was the weather like that year? Would you plant another garden? Gardening screams modals.

At the beginning of an A2+ course in September 2019, I gave each of my learners a plant cutting. A "spider plant" (*Chlorophytum comosum*) is one of the easiest plants to grow (even my mother can grow



Lucy, Lilly, Patricia and Susie: the students' thriving plant babies



### Frankfurter Grüne Soße (herb sauce, Frankfurt-style)

Serves 4 hungry people  
200g mixed herbs (parsley, sorrel, borage, chervil, cress, chives, salad burnet)  
500g low-fat (mager) quark  
250g yogurt  
125g sour cream  
4 hard-boiled eggs, diced  
Lemon juice, salt, pepper

New potatoes cooked in their skins (as many as you want to eat, usually 250g+ per person)

Wash and towel-dry the herbs, mince with a sharp knife, and place in a mixing bowl. Add the quark, yogurt and sour cream, and mix well. Add the eggs, season to taste with lemon juice, salt and pepper. Chill for at least 20 minutes (will hold for a few days in the fridge, if you don't eat it all in one go!).

Serve with the potatoes. The sauce also goes well with roast beef (hot or cold), grilled fish, or steamed vegetables.

This is the basic sauce — one can add additional ingredients (such as minced salt pickles, spicy peppers, additional herbs, etc.) to taste.

Enjoy, and a happy spring!

them, and as my father says, she can't even grow mold). I told the class the name, a bit about the growing habits, and how to care for the plant. Their task was to take a picture of the plant before each class, each week changing its place in their household, and describe the surroundings. They gave their plants names such as Lily and Susie, and each took on its own personality. Some grew well; some didn't. The class soon became accustomed to describing their plants using contractions (can't, didn't, doesn't, isn't), which is something that they'd had a hard time with.

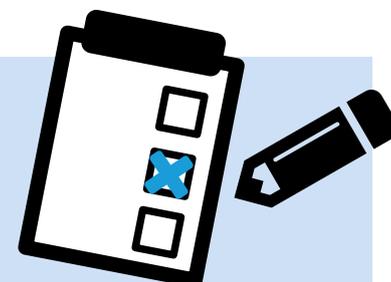
This group met for the last time this past Monday at someone's home, and there, sitting proudly on the sideboard, was "Lilly", growing well and happy. The class, too, was happy with their expanded vocabulary and knowledge of houseplants. Along with all that other grammar...

The first spring herbs appear at the markets just before Easter, and here in Munich, many people still hold to the tradition of eating greens on the Thursday before Easter (Holy/Maundy Thursday, auf Deutsch *Gründonnerstag*). One of the dishes people enjoy is the *Frankfurter*

*Grüne Soße*, creation credit going to Goethe's mother. I now leave you with the recipe. A very happy Easter to all, and I wish you *viele bunte Eier!*



**Betsy Hollweck** graduated from Fordham University (NYC) with a B.A. in Linguistics. She completed her CELTA certification in Munich in August 2017 and lives in Baldham where she translates menus, recipes and other things needing gastronomic edification: she also teaches privately and at the VHS in Vaterstetten.



## Call for survey participants

**Reading research: English language teachers' practices and priorities** is a survey undertaken by Northumbria University and the British Council for all English language teachers, teacher trainers and other ELT professionals.

To what extent do you read research about English language teaching and learning? What kind of publications do you read, how often do you read them, and to what extent does this influence what you do in the classroom?

Alternatively, perhaps you don't read research or about research findings. If not, why not, and what, if anything, would make published research more accessible to you?

We are interested in the opinions and activities of ALL English language teachers, whether you read published research or not, whether you are particularly interested in research findings or not, and wherever in the world you teach English.

This is a great chance to make your voice heard. The survey takes around 20 minutes to complete, and all answers are anonymous. Findings will be published in a freely available report later in the year.

The survey can be found online at: <https://northumbria.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/reading-research-english-language-teachers-practices-priorities>

## Inclusion and diversity in ELT: the whys and hows

**Ilá Coimbra** explains how inclusion and diversity in course materials motivate students, build a safe environment and encourage empathy.

We live in a world with a plurality of identities, genders, ethnicities, body shapes, etc., and our learners most certainly reflect that. What about our teaching and materials? Do they reflect that diversity? Scott Thornbury(1) says that the “cheery, sanitized, even anodyne, world of the coursebook” does not account for the diverse world we are in.

### Why does representation matter?

So why should teachers bring a more accurate representation of our society to our classrooms and teaching materials?

First of all, the identities, social classes, sexualities, ethnicities and ages that we find outside the classroom are also inside it. If the materials we use do not bring this variety, however, the students from these groups might get the message

comfortable to be who they are and knowing that they are in a bullying-free environment is essential for learners of all backgrounds. But for those who are part of any social minority, having a sense of belonging in the learning space is key(3).

Finally, while some teachers might agree that inclusion and diversity are necessary for social minorities, they may argue that their teaching context consists of white, upper-class, heterosexual and heteronormative students, so there is no need to worry about inclusion and diversity. However, even in such contexts, having an inclusive and diverse classroom means teaching to live with and respect differences; it builds empathy and respect. And, as Paulo Freire(4) said, teaching is “much more than a question of

training a student to be dexterous or competent”; it builds critical thinking skills and makes learners potential agents of social change.

### How can we make our lessons more inclusive?

It is not the intention of this article to bring a one-size-fits-all solution for the lack of representation in ELT. There are, however, some things we can bear in mind when planning lessons and adapting coursebooks, which can be used with different learners. Here are some ideas:

- **Think about the images you use in your lessons.** Do they show different ages, ethnicities, body types, social classes and genders? Or do they reinforce social minorities or gender stereotypes?

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When our classrooms are more inclusive, we are also making them a safe space.

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that they do not belong to the English-speaking world, as they cannot see themselves there. Bonny Norton(2) mentions that the lack of representation affects learners’ ownership of language. According to her, language learners are motivated when they feel they are legitimate speakers of the target language — when they feel they own the language. If they do not see themselves represented in the English-speaking world, that ownership will not take place, and it may affect motivation.

Secondly, when our classrooms are more inclusive, we are also making them a safe space. Feeling



- **Ask critical questions.** Let students bring up the excluded groups. If the students are learning using family trees, for example, ask them what other family models they can think of. Ask them whether they can identify groups/cultures that are missing in a text or a picture and why these groups are not there.
- **Adapt the coursebook** to bring activities, texts, facts, etc., that include groups that are typically marginalized.

### **Raise Up!: a project on inclusive ELT materials**

We are very proud to be part of a project focused on developing diverse and inclusive ELT materials. As a result, we have published the first of a series of e-books called *Raise Up!* with a straightforward aim: to

offer a mainstream English language coursebook that includes a more accurate representation of the world.

All the money made from this book is donated to Casa 1, a shelter in São Paulo, Brazil, for young members of the LGBTQI+ community who have been kicked out of their homes because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We are always looking for contributors to *Raise Up!*. So, if you are interested in getting involved or if you want to know more about the project, visit [www.raiseupforelt.com](http://www.raiseupforelt.com).

#### **References:**

- (1) <https://scotthornbury.wordpress.com/2013/04/14/r-is-for-representation/>
- (2) Norton, B. "Language, identity, and the ownership of English". *TESOL Quarterly*, 1997.
- (3) <https://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/classroom-resources/creating-safe-spaces/>
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**Ilá Coimbra** is an EFL teacher, teacher trainer and materials writer. Since 2016, she has been researching inclusion and diversity in ELT. She holds DELTA Module 1 and 2, CELTA and CPE certificates and has been attending and presenting at local, national and international conferences since 2014. Ilá is also one of the founding members of the BRAZ-TESOL Voices SIG, a special interest group focusing on equality in ELT.

**James Taylor** is a DELTA-qualified EFL teacher and materials writer, based in Brasília. He has taught English to adults and teenagers since 2007. In 2018, he self-published his first e-book and in April published *Raise Up!*, an inclusive coursebook with Ilá Coimbra. James is now writing coursebooks for FTD Education. He also produces the ELTON-nominated TEFL Commute podcast and is a committee member of IATEFL TDSIG and BRAZ-TESOL Brasília.



Image by Gordon Johnson on Pexels

## Brain-friendly learning

From pedagogy to heutagogy: tools to create an environment where learners take responsibility for their own learning. **Kate Gottwald** reports on the Melta workshop led by Emily Bell on 1 February 2020.

Emily Bell presented Melta members with an inspiring talk about the benefits of creating an environment where learners take active, personal responsibility for their learning, and she gave us some tools to achieve this. Bell feels that by using techniques from coaching and yoga, we can assist learners in becoming aware of their learning needs. This is an essential step in the process of creating the most effective environment for learning: one that is learner centred.

Bell presented learning strategies — tools or tactics learners use in the process of acquiring a language. These strategies change according to the situations learners are in, unlike learning style, which is considered an unchanging part of one's character. We compared tactics which “enable learners to understand and produce language” (cognitive strategies) with tactics which “learners use to control their own learning through organising, planning and evaluating” (metacognitive strategies).

She introduced a word new to many participants — “heutagogy” /hyoo'-tuh-goh-jee/. The term was created in the 1990s by Stewart Hase and Chris Kenyon. It is defined as the study of self-determined learning, where the learner decides what is to be learned. Bell encourag-



es a learning environment which is process-oriented and based on the metacognitive learning strategies typically associated with adult education. But she goes beyond that by making use of aspects of heutagogy. This means “moving from a traditional teaching model to more of a coaching approach to language learning”.

Bell introduced the GROW model, a tool used in the coaching profession that can help learners take responsibility for their learning. It stands for Goal, Reality, Options and Will (or Way forward). Bell had us write down a goal we would like to work towards, followed by listing what our current reality is, then the options (opportunities and obstacles) related to achieving that goal, and then had us list ways to make the goal a reality.

After the break, seminar participants got a short introduction to mindfulness — “paying attention to the here and now with kindness and curiosity” and meditation — “relaxed awareness”. They are good ways to calm oneself and focus attention, skills that are very helpful in the learning process. Bell also noted that incorporating mindfulness and meditation in lessons builds empathy in students and increases thoughtful practices in daily living. This discus-

sion led into yoga-based Pranayama breathing. With our eyes closed, we breathed deeply into our lower belly and allowed our upper ribcage to expand. She then led us through the following activities:

### Five senses meditation: what do you see, smell, touch, taste, hear, at this moment?

Tell learners:

Close your eyes. Sit comfortably. Take three deep Pranayama breaths. What can you smell right now? What can you hear right now? What can you feel on your skin right now? What can you taste in your mouth right now? Open your eyes, and look at your surroundings.

What can you see right now?

At this point, one could ask learners to note down sensations they experienced, and then discuss the list with a partner.

We then talked about how we felt while doing the activity and discussed the benefits of using the activity in a learning situation. Some benefits noted: it focused attention, sharpened our senses, brought the group together and created a common spirit in the room. It can also be done anywhere without any extra set-up.



Now a freelance ELT consultant based in York, UK, **Emily Bell** has worked on six continents. Emily's professional interests include creating materials that encourage critical thinking, and nowadays, she also likes to include yoga techniques in her teaching and training. Namaste!



### Sound meditation

Tell learners:

Close your eyes. Sit comfortably.

Take three deep Pranayama breaths.

Take a few minutes to continue breathing deeply and slowly, noticing the sounds around you.

Open your eyes.

Write on a paper/sticky note what you can hear around you. Write down words, phrases, or sentences.

(Have students put their notes on the board or wall.)

Take a note that isn't yours.

Are any of the words on the paper new or unfamiliar to you?

(Learners then use their own research skills to answer questions generated by the activity.)

In the follow-up discussion, we noted that the activity helps learners to build vocabulary, identify what they don't know and can inspire them to use their own research skills to solve a problem. The activity could also be expanded into a poetry exercise using the vocabulary generated by the students.

### Five senses memory activity

Draw a big star on the whiteboard.

Label it with: see, hear, taste, touch, smell.

Have learners draw and label a similar star on their papers.

Tell learners:

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Incorporating mindfulness and meditation in lessons builds empathy in students and increases thoughtful practices in daily living

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For each sense, think of a memory that is special or especially clear to you.

Next to each sense, write down the memory that comes to mind. It can be a word, phrase or sentence.

Have learners talk with a partner about the memories they wrote down.

Partner repeats back what they heard to the speaker.

Speaker then checks the accuracy of the listener, corrects if needed.

Reverse roles, repeat speaking and listening task.

Follow up questions could be asked for more speaking practice.

The use of memories makes this a personally relevant activity for learners and thus makes it easier for them to remember the language used.

### Five senses visualization task

Tell learners:

Close your eyes. Sit comfortably.

Take three deep Pranayama breaths.

Take a few minutes to continue breathing deeply and slowly, and listen to the music. (Bell played instrumental music)

Where are you?

Who is with you?

What is the landscape like?

What can you see, smell, hear?

How do you feel?

Open your eyes.

Write down what you visualized on a piece of paper.

Collect the papers and put them on a wall/board.

Have learners stand next to the visualization they would like to visit.

Have learners explain reasons for their choice.

In a discussion after the activity, we noted that this task recycles language and involves speaking, writing, lis-

tening and reading skills. Music also makes new connections in the brain and helps in the process of remembering what was learned in the activity. It could be interesting to vary the music and see what kinds of visualisations emerge.

The seminar was thought-provoking and inspiring. Bell has much enthusiasm for her subjects and transmits this enthusiasm to listeners. It is exciting to think how much learning could have taken place if we had had more time to ask questions, discuss the practical application of activities we did in greater detail, or even create a lesson based on the coaching concepts Bell introduced, incorporating learning strategies and learner types.

I attended the seminar hoping to hear about new activities that can be used in the learning environment. I left with some new techniques to use in my lessons, but more importantly for me, I left with a name for the type of learning environment I want to continue to create in my lessons and with the desire to learn more about the topic of heutagogy.

For a fun video on how to pronounce the word heutagogy check out this link: [www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=how+to+pronounce+heutagogy](http://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=how+to+pronounce+heutagogy)




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**Kate Gottwald** is from Hawaii, USA, and has lived in Europe since 1998. She completed her CELTA training in 2015 and now teaches at the VHS in communities near Munich. She enjoys being outdoors, especially paddling in a canoe with her family.

## 20-20 visions: 20 years of research; 20 takeaways

At the IATEFL-BESIG Conference, which took place from 11–13 October in Berlin, **Ian McMaster** teamed up with Bob Dignen, director of York Associates. They looked at some of the research into the needs of users of English in the workplace carried out over the past 20 years by *Spotlight* and *Business Spotlight* magazines. They discussed the implications of this research and the business skills articles Bob Dignen has written in *Business Spotlight*.

### 10 contradictions/paradoxes

We grouped the 20 takeaways into 10 pairs of statements that, at least superficially, form contradictions or paradoxes. The 10 pairs of statements, and some of the resulting conclusions from the workshop discussion, were as follows:

- 1a) Native speakers cause communication problems.
- 1b) Non-native speakers cause communication problems.

Everyone is a walking, talking communication problem. Simplifications such as “native speakers are the worst communicators” or “native speakers are the cause of all/most communication problems” are unhelpful generalizations. We should forget about labelling whole groups (as we do in intercultural training) and focus instead on specific communication problems (caused by whoever) and on strategies for solving them.

- 2a) Native-speaker models are outdated and unnecessary.
- 2b) Native-speaker models are incredibly useful for learners.

Appropriate and clear native-speaker models — stripped, as necessary of their idiosyncratic idiomatic language — can help create aspirations among learners. This does not mean that either the teacher or the learner sets the goal of “speaking like a native speaker”. And, in practice, each learner will anyway end up speaking their own idiosyncratic version of English — what Professor Kurt Kohn calls “My English”.

- 3a) Vocabulary is incredibly important for effective communication.
- 3b) Words are often meaningless, as people understand different things by them (e.g. “team”, “decision”).

We need to be careful about how we treat words and the illusion of certainty that they provide. Much of the EFL and business English world is based on the premise that if you understand vocabulary, you understand meaning and intention. This is clearly not the case. We need to teach learners effective strategies for clarification and other forms of questioning so that they can negotiate meaning with their business partners.

- 4a) Idiomatic language is a barrier to international communication.
- 4b) Idiomatic language is the key to effective international communication.

We need a dual approach to idiomatic language. We clearly need to teach it in an appropriate way (and amount) in order to help our learners to understand what is being said by their international interlocutors. At the same time, we need to warn against the inappropriate (over)use of idiomatic language.

- 5a) Cooperative relationships are the key to business success.
- 5b) Relationships within organizations are often dysfunctional.

We need to prepare learners for the reality of organizational business life. The EFL industry often seems to be based on the premise that everyone is working cooperatively. Business life is very different, however, with competition for resources, position, recognition, etc. We can prepare learners for this by helping them with the language they need to deal with conflict, gossip, etc.

- 6a) Authentic language is terribly important for learners.
- 6b) Authentic language is often simply terrible.

It is important to expose learners to “authentic” language if what we

mean by that is language relevant to their situation and community of practice. But much of the so-called authentic communication in the real world is very poor communication (see, for example, studies on the language of meetings). As trainers, our job is not to copy this poor communication, but to improve on it through the teaching of carefully selected (“intelligently artificial”) and communicatively effective language.

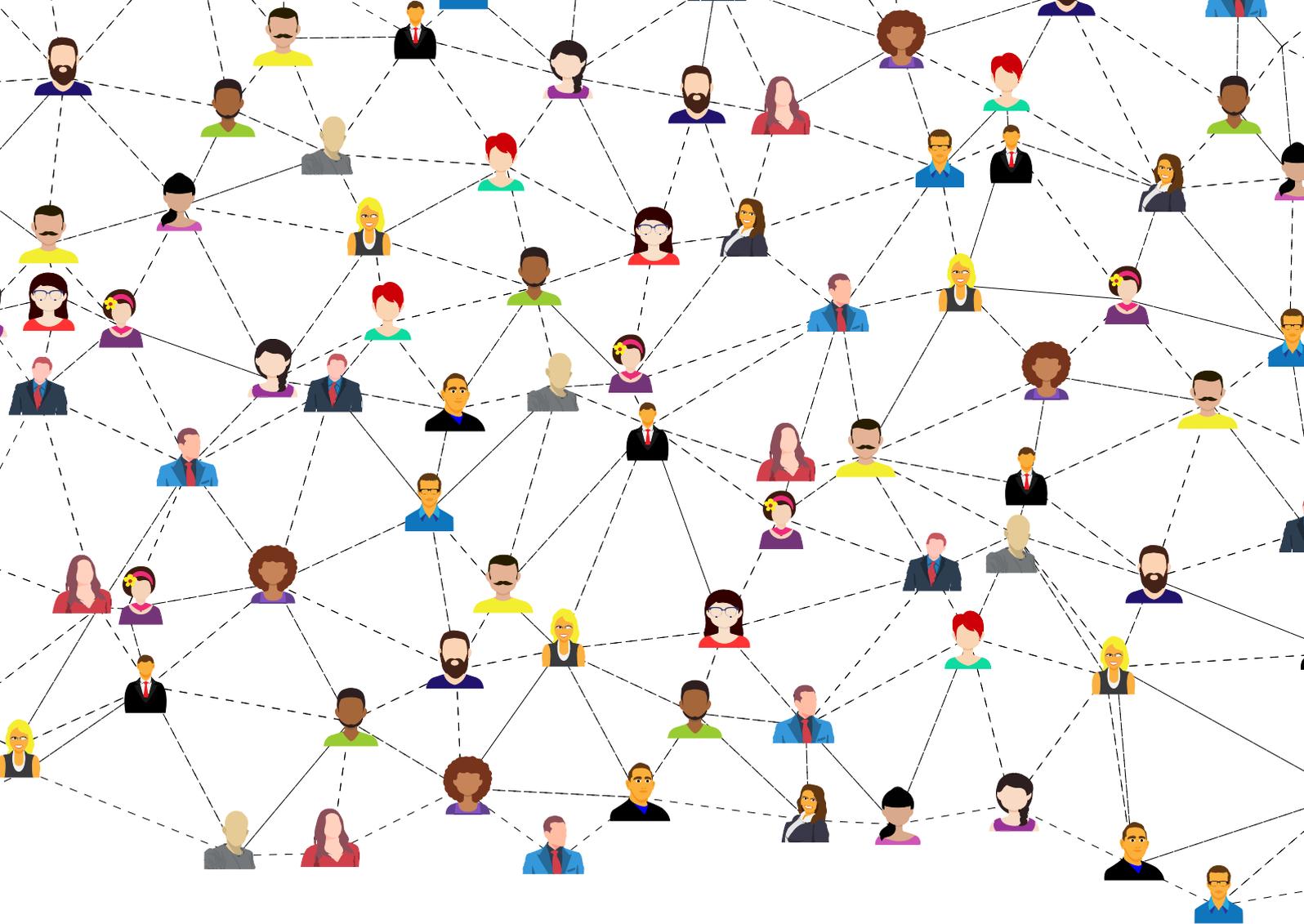
- 7a) Language levels don't matter for effective communication.
- 7b) Language levels can have a significant impact on effective communication.

We need to focus on concrete communication issues and not be obsessed with the language levels of individual learners. The emphasis on (more) consistent levels given by the CEFR has had many advantages for the language teaching industry. But the danger is that we believe that such assessment levels are the key to effective communication.

- 8a) We need to focus on teaching specific communication skills: meetings, negotiations, presentations, etc.
- 8b) We need to teach generic communication skills: building trust, taking decisions, giving and receiving feedback, etc.

We need to prepare learners to communicate in a wide range of both generic and specific situations. Traditionally, business English has focussed on the language of individual situations — such as meetings or presentations. But it can be more effective to focus on (the language of) generic skills. For example, building trust is a key skill across a range of situations. How much time do you spend helping your learners to do that?





- 9a) Learners need to practise doing the same things lots of times in order to do them well.
- 9b) Learners need to practise being able to do different things so that they can react flexibly according to context.

We need to help learners to create a learning cycle of constant adaptation and improvement. In the classroom, this can mean providing the opportunity for role plays and simulations to be repeated several times to improve performance. In the workplace, this may mean encouraging learners to observe the impact of their behaviour, consider the need for adaptation and then try out a modified strategy, observe again and so on.

- 10a) Good listening is the key to effective communication.
- 10b) Good listening involves doing a lot more than just listening.

We need to emphasize the importance of curiosity and asking questions for effective communication. “Active listening” involves a lot

more than giving feedback such as “really?”, “right”, etc. It means engaging at a deep level with our interlocutors in an attempt to discover what is important to them.

As a bonus, an 11th contradiction was discussed:

- 11a) Truth helps to build credibility, trust and relationships at work.
- 11b) Lying is both good and unavoidable in the workplace.

We need to get the right balance between truth and lies. It is neither possible nor desirable to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in all work situations. This does not mean that we should spread “fake news” but rather that we need to select what information is communicated and when.

Many of these points led to lively discussion — not least the idea that lying could be appropriate in work contexts, something that seems counterintuitive in an EFL industry that is based on cooperative behav-

iour and transparency. The relevance — and definition — of native-speaker models was also questioned in a world where English as a Language Franca (ELF) is often seen as superior and more desirable (though it is increasingly seen as an approach, rather than a model of English). There was also considerable discussion about how we can know which phrases are communicatively most effective and therefore should be given priority. As usual, the answer will come down to context.



**Ian McMaster** is editor-in-chief of *Business Spotlight*.

# SMART practice: cognitive science and coaching working together to improve learning

**Robert Plant** reports on the Melta workshop led by Marcela Harrisberger (see bio p.9) on 9 March 2020.

Thirty-three eager and receptive teachers of English participated in the charismatic Marcela Harrisberger's workshop. According to Hermann Ebbinghaus's "forgetting curve", we will have forgotten 75% of the workshop by the time I write this report. However, after the workshop, in which we explored and practised many tools from the field of cognitive science, we are now much better placed to help our students retain information and turn it into knowledge.

Marcela's workshop can be summed up with the word "retention". We learned how to help our students improve their retention of information, not by drilling information into them but by actively turning their learnt information into knowledge by shifting active memory into long-term memory. We looked at how practising retention needs to be SMART: Strategic, Meaningful, Attentive, Relevant and Targeted. And we explored some techniques to achieve this.

One of the highlights of the workshop was looking at the "Seinfeld Strategy", which is based on the practice of the US comic Jerry Seinfeld. He made sure that he wrote one joke — good or bad — every day.

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This is great news for some of us teachers who consider ourselves comedians.

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The habit led him to produce good, usable jokes at least sometimes. In our context, turning practice into a regular daily habit, regardless of the outcome, helps students to make progress, i.e. the daily practice itself ensures that success will come.

This is great news for some of us teachers who consider ourselves comedians. It is even greater news for the students who practise daily, whether or not their practice is the best each day.

Looking at marginal gains was another highlight of the workshop. Marcela showed us a case study about UK cycling. The study showed that incremental success in practice



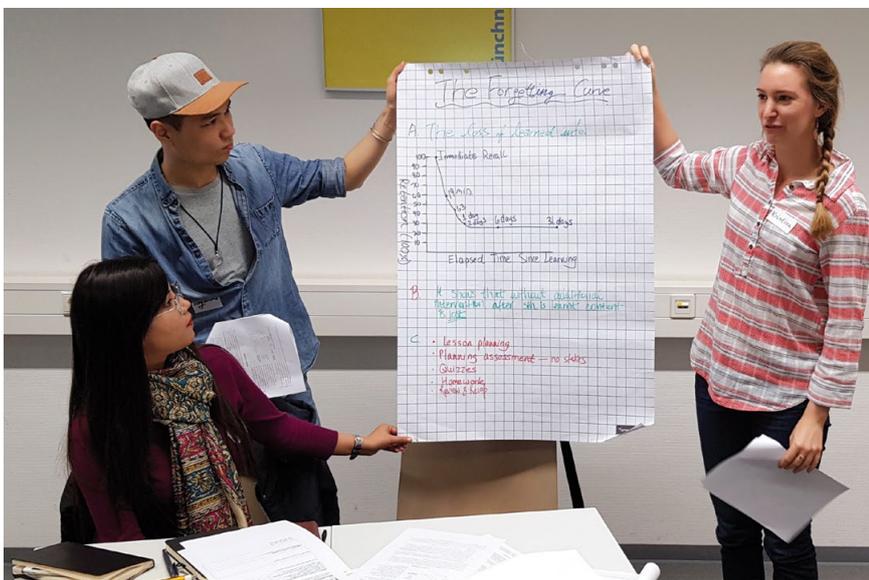
has a compound effect much larger than the sum of the smaller successes. This insight can help us to manage our students' expectations and motivation.

The Feynman technique reminded us that the best way to learn and understand something is to break it down to the basics and repackage it in our own design. One participant said examples of this can be found in Randall Munroe's book *Thing Explainer*.

Marcela's workshop on smart practice was entertaining and practical. If there was just one thing Marcela might have wished for from the workshop, it is that at least one of the participants would take her German teacher under their wing so that she, too, could benefit from the teaching methods we had just learnt and practised.

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**Robert Plant** is not a singer. He has tried. Many times. It is not part of his skill set. What he is, is a teacher and a teacher trainer. He attends workshops, sometimes gives workshops and occasionally writes up a description of workshops for Melta.



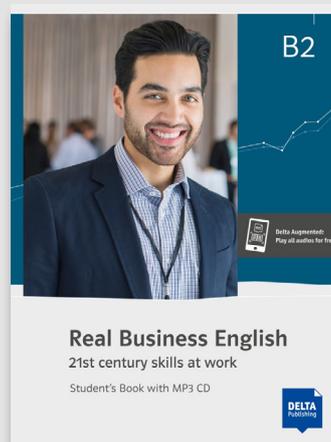
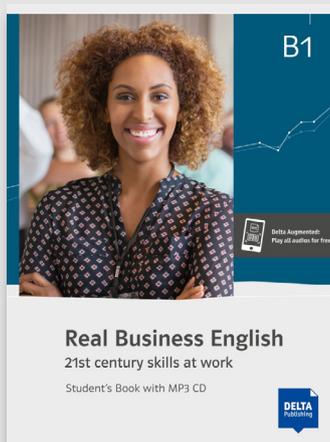


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## The “nuts and bolts” of grammar in language learning

**Michael Saunders** (see bio p. 9) reports on Michelle Jagger’s Melta workshop, which took place on 16 November 2019.

Many students tend to groan or roll their eyes when the word “grammar” comes up in the classroom, but sometimes there’s no escape for teachers — we have to roll up our sleeves and get the job done. Michelle’s workshop examined the “nuts and bolts” of grammar teaching: “the tools to bring grammar to life and embed it in real-life situations”.

She started by presenting two approaches: deductive and inductive. In the former, students are exposed to grammar rules from the start and are provided with language examples and practice activities. This set-up works well for motivated learners, she explained, and is especially useful in exam preparation courses. The inductive approach, meanwhile, starts with language samples; students try to work out the rules by

themselves and are then given the opportunity to practise.

Michelle’s preferred approach is a mixture of the two: “guided discovery”, as used in OUP materials. The teacher provides language samples (including audio recordings with various accents) and works together with the students to find the rules. Afterwards, the rules are clarified, and students tackle practice activities.

Michelle also discussed using videos — with transcripts — in the classroom, before turning to methods for checking understanding, including timelines and CCQs (concept-checking questions). One topic many workshop participants wanted to discuss was using L1 in grammar teaching. Does it help or hinder students when their native language is used to explain grammar points?

In Michelle’s opinion, teachers have to judge the situation. Using L1 is appropriate for levels B1 or lower, providing it clearly helps students more than using English. Also, it’s important to have a method or system to get the students back to using English after the explanations.

Another classroom strategy we looked at was “pose, pause, pounce and bounce” — which can bring some energy to an otherwise quiet group. The teacher poses a question or scenario, then pauses to allow stu-

dents time to think. Then, the teacher “pounces” by choosing a student at random — but then “bounces” that student’s answer to another student, building up feedback from the whole group.

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Does it help or hinder students when their native language is used to explain grammar points?

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Finally, the workshop concluded by looking at various grammar activities, based around multiple-choice tests, creative writing tasks and interactive e-books. The biggest takeaway from the event? Keep the students motivated by using authentic materials and personalised topics with which they can identify. “Whatever approach you use, always remember to embed the target language in a realistic context.”



With a background in marketing and sales, **Michelle Jagger** moved to Germany from the UK in 1992 after her BA in German and Information Technology. In 1999, she changed to a career in language training after completing a TEFL course in the UK. She worked for over 20 years as a freelance trainer.

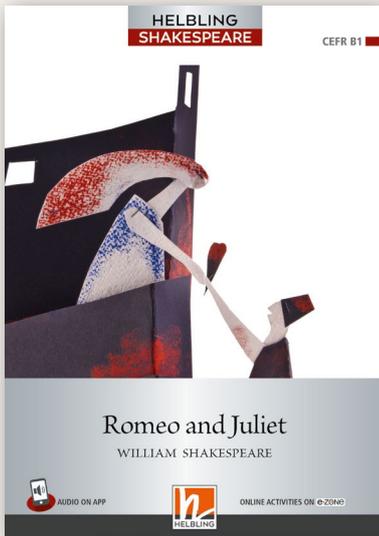
Michelle joined Oxford University Press in April 2019, where she is the ELT Consultant for Southern Germany and Austria.



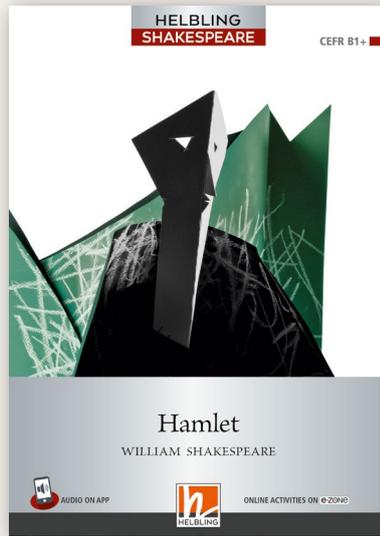
Thirty participants joined the workshop, looking at ways to handle grammar more effectively in the classroom.

# HELBLING SHAKESPEARE

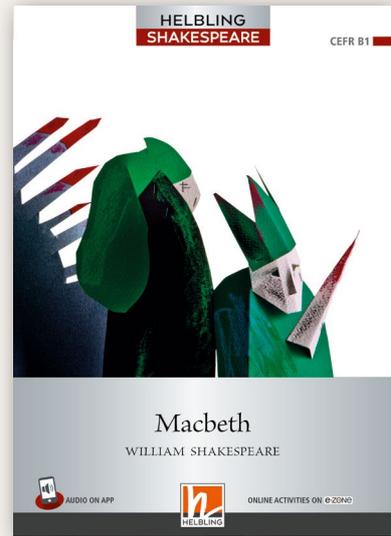
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# Melta Christmas Party

Jingle bells! **Tim Howe** reports on the fun had at the annual Melta Christmas party on 7 December 2019.



If you manage to get to only one Melta event a year, my tip would be the Christmas Party.

Why? Because it must be by far the best opportunity Melta offers for networking. Apart from the one bitterly cold winter when I fled Germany to New Zealand, I've gone along every single yule since the millennium.

Although the ambiance feels different every year, some things never change (apart from getting better and better, of course):

- The exciting variety of savoury and sweet goodies on the bring-and-share buffet
- Phyllis accompanying the tirelessly enthusiastic carollers on piano
- The generosity of Melta members donating used books and giving to the very worthwhile Ukraine Project

A special highlight this year was entertainment from Robert. Appropriately attired in short-sleeved, multi-flowered Bondi Beach shirt, Melta's one and only Aussie treated us to a fun antipodean quiz and taught us how to sing Jingle Bells with an Aussie swagger.

Please contact Joan if you have any ideas for next year's entertainment activities like Robert's or other suggestions for spicing up Melta members' fave networking event.



**Tim Howe** provides training, translating and interpreting to business and higher education. He blogs about the brighter side of expat life at <https://knowhowforenglish.blogspot.com>

## Impressum

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**The views expressed in *Melta News* are not necessarily those of MELTA e.V.**

## Publishing date of this issue

9 April 2020

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## Melta mission statement

Melta is a regional professional association for all teachers of English working in the Munich area: freelance teachers at companies, private schools and the *Volkshochschule* as well as state school teachers. Established in 1989, Melta is part of a wider network of English teachers' organisations throughout Europe and has especially close ties to other English Language Teachers Associations (ELTAs) in Germany. Melta is also affiliated to the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL).

Melta provides a forum for information and experience exchange, training and teacher development and social contact and support. Melta's activities include presentations by leading EFL/ESL guest speakers and practical workshops and demonstrations.

## For further information about Melta, contact

Randy Perry, Chair  
[chair@melta.de](mailto:chair@melta.de)

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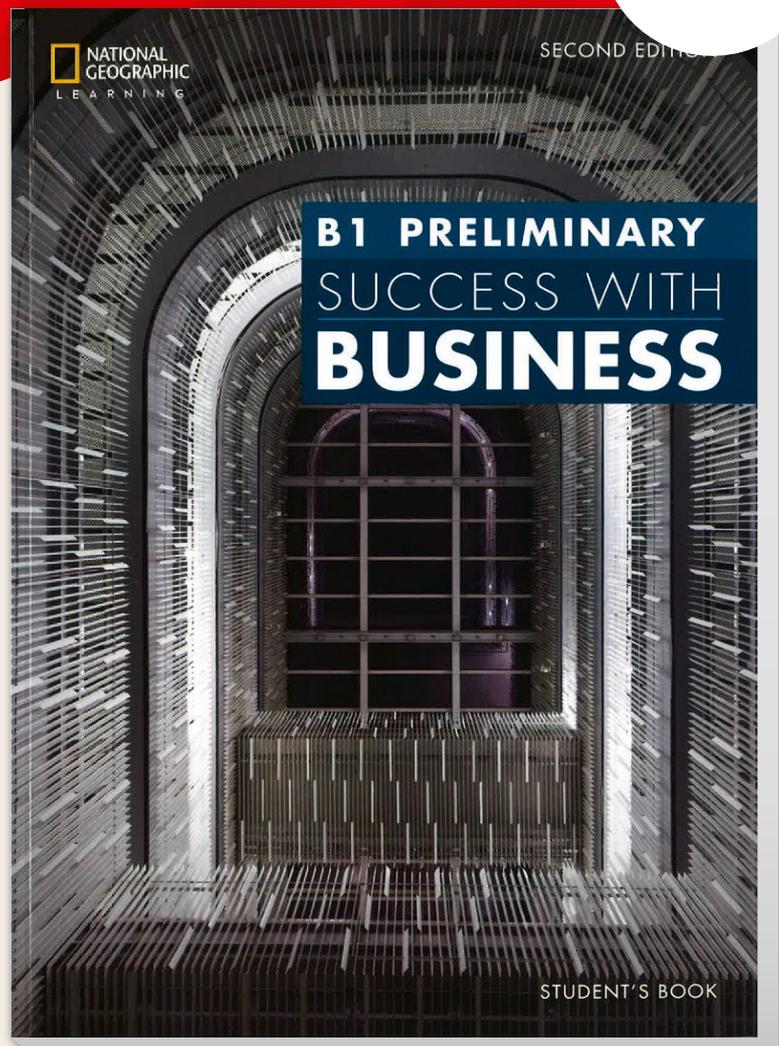
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Potenziale entfalten

## AGM meeting

**Jo Westcombe** gives us a run-down of Melta's AGM (annual general meeting), which took place on 7 March 2020.

I am writing this report two weeks after the AGM, and Bavaria has since closed down to deal with the coronavirus. I hope by the time you read this, things will have changed for the better. As I sit at home today, however, I can look back wistfully to a Saturday afternoon sharing a classroom table and excellent cake and coffee at the Gasteig with the good people of Melta.

After Randy's opening remarks, Secretary Lucy Pereira gave us a quick update of the numbers. Melta has 256 members, including only a handful of non-paying members such as honorary and guest members. Zoe Kostarev then took over to talk about her passion for Melta and her mission to bring its benefits to a wider audience. A poster has been designed, and Melta is looking into other ways of reaching out to potential new members.

There were appeals to the audience and wider membership to spread the word about Melta, as well as to get in touch with any ideas for alternative venues, as the Gasteig will soon close its doors.

Tenley van den Berg, the new editor of *Melta News*, was not able to be at the AGM in person. She sent

a presentation slide, however, mentioning the newsletter's new layout, which has more images and will be printed in colour. Tenley is always looking for more contributors as well as help editing a magazine I think we can all be really proud of.

Then Members-at-Large Breda Howe-Helmecke and Joan Walsh ran through with us the wonderful, inspiring events and workshops Melta has put on over the past year. Then they introduced a fabulous, varied line-up of events and speakers for the rest of this year.

Randy took us through the changes to the Melta website, including more flexibility at the back end and allowing more attractive, engaging and informative content at the front end. This should include the option to highlight useful information such as room changes at short notice.

Treasurer Michael Hoffmann took us through his financial report and budget, both of which were passed unanimously, as were a couple of amendments to the bylaws, which involve the payment of *Melta News* editors and a time limit for submitting invoices.

Frank Steele took over, as he has done for so many years, to admin-

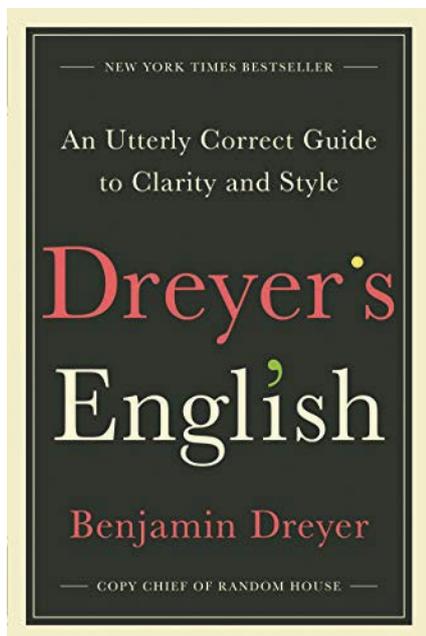
ister the election of the 2020 Melta committee, whose task will be to lead Melta professionally and competently through what promises to be a challenging, probably pivotal year in all our teaching lives. The new committee, which was elected by a show of hands, comprises Randy Perry (Chair), Nik Granchev (Vice Chair), Michael Hoffmann (Treasurer), Zoe Kostarev (Secretary), Breda Howe-Helmecke (Member at Large), Lucy Pereira (Member at Large) and Joan Walsh (Member at Large). Many thanks to all the committee members who give their time and dedication to an organization that has — in good times and in bad — supported its members for so long.



**Jo Westcombe** first got involved with Melta last century and has worked in several different EFL contexts. She currently teaches at a university and in-company.



## Dreyer's English: An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style



Can a book about editing make you laugh out loud? It can. The footnotes alone in *Dreyer's English: An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style*, published in January 2019, will have you giggling between the sheets — if you read in bed, that is. Benjamin Dreyer is a US author and chief copy editor at Random House, a publishing company. His book reflects how shifts in US culture have influenced the “rules” of written English. It is amusing, insightful and a little bit naughty. Here are a few morsels for you:

“Only godless savages eschew the series comma. No sentence has ever been harmed by a series comma, and many a sentence has been improved by one.”

“BAWL/BALL To bawl one's eyes out is to weep profusely. To ball one's eyes out would be some sort of sporting or teabagging mishap.”

“You're attempting to burrow into the brains of your writers and do for, to, and with their prose what they themselves might have done for, to, and with it had they not already looked at each damn sentence 657 times.”



**Tenley van den Berg**  
is the editor of *Melta News*.

### Call for student testers

We are two English teachers in Munich. We have developed a card game for English learners called JABS to help learners practise English vocabulary, spelling, speaking, grammar, and listening skills in a fun and interactive way.

We are currently looking for learners with an A1 level of English to try out the game and give us feedback. Each test session would take place during the learners' regular English class and would last about 45 minutes (learners read game instructions, play the card game, fill out feedback form, and then give informal verbal feedback to us).

If you and your class are interested in participating in one of our test groups, please contact us!

Jackie Adams: [jackie.adams@web.de](mailto:jackie.adams@web.de) or Bethan Stokes (see bio p. 7): [bethantefl@gmail.com](mailto:bethantefl@gmail.com)

Thank you! We really appreciate your help!



## Brain Wash: Detox Your Mind for Clearer Thinking, Deeper Relationships and Lasting Happiness

As a follow up to Emily Bell's Melta workshop on 1 February on the topic of brain-friendly learning, I'd like to present a book I've recently read called *Brain Wash: Detox Your Mind for Clearer Thinking, Deeper Relationships and Lasting Happiness*. In their newest book, the father-son team — the father a neurologist, the son an internist — work together to explore how our modern culture, which has become bombarded with fast foods, social media and over-participation in the digital world, threatens to re-wire our brains and damage our health. Luckily, they offer a practical plan for its healing!

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We humans run the risk of losing the ability to remain compassionate and empathetic entities.

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Quoting from the book's cover, "Contemporary life provides us with infinite opportunities, along with endless temptations. We can eat whatever we want, whenever we want. We can immerse ourselves in the vast, enticing world of digital media. We can buy goods online with the touch of a button or the swipe of a finger. But living in this 24/7 hyper-reality poses serious risks to our physical and mental states, our connections to others and even to the world at large."

The central premise is that our brains are being gravely manipulated, resulting in behaviors that leave us more lonely, anxious, depressed, distrustful, illness-prone and overweight than ever before.

Our dietary choices, use of social media and time spent in the

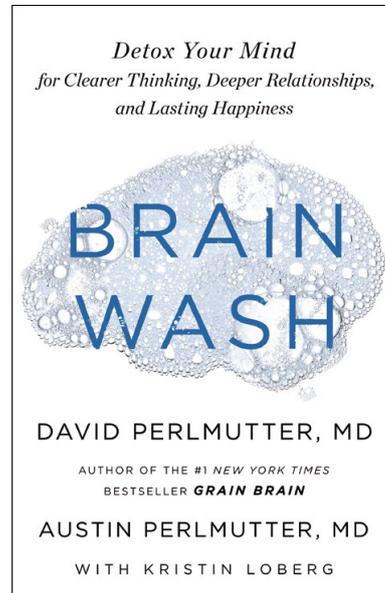
digital world all affect our mental health. They physically affect parts of the brain and reduce its capacity to make good decisions.

The authors explain the relationship between two parts of the brain, the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala. The former is responsible for making factually informed decisions based on an assessment of incoming information. The latter reacts impulsively and emotionally to momentary circumstances.

They point out that, should the communication between these two parts be undermined by such things as poor nutrition and over-dependency on digital media, we humans run the risk of losing the ability to remain compassionate and empathetic entities. As the prefrontal cortex is bypassed, and the amygdala takes the upper hand, we become emotionally dependent on the instant gratification afforded us by social media and fast food. This leads to our becoming disconnected, lonely and egoistic.

Through the authors' understanding of neuroscience, they reveal how the brain can be functionally reconfigured to distance ourselves from negativity and welcome empathy and compassion back into our lives. This, in turn, works towards creating a better world.

It's well worth a read.




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Originally from Toronto, Canada, **Susan Merz** currently teaches and coaches business English students at companies near Munich and does some translating on the side. Her passions are mountain hiking, skiing and travelling, especially to Italy where she completed her CELTA certificate. She has been in Germany for longer than she can remember, is the mother of three adult children, and enjoys living in Starnberg with her handsome golden retriever, Pino.

# English Tenses: Zeitenmodell für den Englischunterricht nach Montessori-Prinzipien

Kirsten Braun gives *Melta News* a review of **Birgitta Berger's** new book on English tenses.

The cover was the first thing that caught my eye: big, bold, red and blue, with a spiral binding. Why a spiral binding, I wondered?

This book makes English grammar visible using diagrams and pictures. It may be easier to understand for those familiar with the Montessori method of learning; however, the models for explaining verb tenses are clarified step by step so that even newbies like me can follow the process.

In this version of the book, the introduction and explanation of the Montessori method are in German. The actual grammar explanations are in both German and English. (A version of the book with an English introduction is currently being produced.) The first part gives explicit instructions on how to use this book as a teacher giving lessons or as a learner using it for self-instruction. Part two examines the tenses and is in landscape format with German and English explanations side by side.

The book explores the many aspects of the tenses. For example, there are various aspects of the present tense, or “now”: now generally, now at the moment, before now and before now at the moment. Because this topic is illustrated with diagrams and pictures, it takes on real meaning for the learner. The past, “yesterday”, and the future are also explored in this manner. Modal verbs, reported speech and if-clauses are covered as well.

The third part is about how to use the tenses model in lessons — what materials are needed and how to go about it. Berger states that this is NOT a method for presenting grammar for the first time; it is for functional lan-

guage observations and explanations by interacting with the tenses using diagrams, pictures and objects.

In part four, verb forms and sentence structure are explained using Montessori symbols for the parts of speech. Part five includes materials such as templates with which you can create your own materials. You can also order a package with all the photos, aspects of the tenses, as well as the printed example sentences used in the book for a modest price. A storage box is also available from an external source. Part six is an appendix offering an extensive list of sources.

The spiral binding makes it possible to open the book flat without a struggle. It also makes for easier reading having it in a DIN A4 size versus DIN A3.

Thanks to Birgitta's use of pictures, there is a lasting “memory” of the various aspects of the tenses. I am looking forward to trying this visual method of showing the tenses to my students and letting them go hands-on with the materials, particularly those who struggle to grasp this part of grammar.

As Birgitta Berger is a member of *Melta*, we have “the source” of this book amongst us. We should take advantage of this and have a hands-on workshop to try out this method for ourselves!

How to find Birgitta's book:

How to find Birgitta's book:

*English Tenses: Zeitenmodell für den Englischunterricht nach Montessori-Prinzipien*

Birgitta Berger

ISBN 978-3-00-063872-5

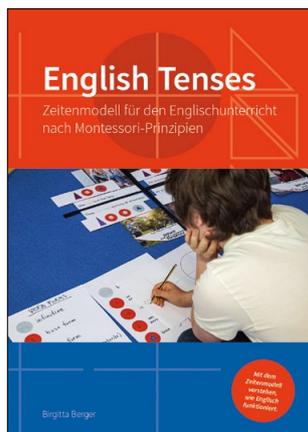
Published 2019

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**Birgitta Berger** has been teaching at Montessori schools in the Munich area since 2000, working with all age groups from kindergarten to exam preparation in Years 9 and 10. She provides in-service training for Montessori language teachers through the Montessori Bildungssakademie/MoBiL and the Akademie Biberkor.



Originally from Michigan, **Kirsten Braun** has lived in England and now lives just outside of Munich. Besides teaching at the VHS-Haar, she tutors high school students and organizes a huge semi-annual Munich English Book Sale. Other hobbies include reading and beekeeping.

## Aunt Agony

Your Aunt Agony advises you on those tricky teaching situations. Should you have a question or feedback for Aunt Agony, please sent it to [melta.news@melta.de](mailto:melta.news@melta.de).

*Dear Aunt Agony,  
We all know how meeting new students and starting a course is a challenge, no matter how long one has been teaching. First impressions are very important and set the tone for the course. I had a situation recently that left me wondering what to do.*

*It was the very first lesson with a group of six participants. After introducing ourselves, and about 20 minutes into the 90-minute session, one of the six says something to the others.*

*He then gets up and leaves the room — without excusing himself or saying anything to me. He comes back with six bottles of orange juice and hands them out to the other participants. The participants open the bottles of juice, and one of them spills juice on the table. The participant who got the bottles of juice turns to me and asks me “Do you have a tissue?”.*

*What would have been the best way to handle this situation?*

*Signed,  
Perplexed in Perlach*

Dear Perplexed,  
I asked a couple of other teachers how they would have handled this situation. Interestingly, one of the teachers thought the student was extremely rude; the other didn't think he was rude at all.

Here's how the first teacher responded:

“The idea the student would leave the classroom to get refreshments for everyone else without excusing himself or including the teacher in the round of beverages seems to me almost like some kind of deliberate provocation.

Furthermore, I would tell the student that he probably needs more than a tissue to clean up the mess, and that he should head to the restroom and try to rustle up some paper towels.

Did I miss something here because I don't remember any sort of apology or “excuse me” from the sloppy student?

The learner's behavior irritates me, and one of the things that I think is very important for a teacher is to try to handle challenging classroom situations with a “light touch”. Stuff like this happening on the first night would really test my patience.”

Here's how the second teacher responded:

“I don't feel what the student did was rude. In that scenario, I'd probably suggest he and a couple of others go to the loo and get paper towels. After the spill had been cleaned up, I'd say the next time you opt to treat the class to drinks, please include the teacher.”

My advice is this: should you feel as if you — or any other person in the room — are not being treated well, talk about it with the class right away. In some cases, it may well be a cultural misunderstanding. Talking about it clears the air and demonstrates that you are concerned with promoting a positive class culture.

You may also want to consider laying down some ground rules at the beginning of each new course related to eating, drinking and breaks. All these “rules” can be discussed and agreed upon together.

Are there other Melta teachers out there who would like to comment on this topic? If so, please send an email to the address at the top of the page.

Warm regards,  
Aunt Agony



## Melta Events

All the events listed below are subject to change due to the situation with COVID-19. Please check the <https://melta.de> for updates closer to the events.

23 May 2020

14:00–15:30

Gasteig, room number TBD

### Show 'n' Tell

This is an annual event where Melta members & friends get together, flex their creative muscles and share some of their favourite activities. It's also a wonderful opportunity to experiment and try out new activities you may have felt unsure about using in the classroom.

20 June 2020

### Rachel Appleby: A focus on business English

11 July 2020

### Pearson event with speaker and book exhibition, followed by our annual beer garden social

24 September 2020

### Melta Day: Workshops run by Melta members

10 October 2020

### Klett / Melta ELT Day

Featuring Patricia de Griese and Robert Kirstein

November 2020

### Daniel Martin doing songs for the classroom

Sponsored by Helbling

5 December 2020

### Melta Christmas party

## External Events

9–10 May 2020

Volos, Greece

### 1st International Conference on English for Specific Purposes (E.S.P.) English for Academic Purposes (E.A.P.) & Applied Linguistics (A.L.)

<https://eapthessaly.wixsite.com/eapthessaly>

## MVHS Events

K581522 / Full-time /

July–August 2020

Emma Jones · Gasteig · Rosenheimer Str. 5

· M–F 9:00–18:00 · Breaks on agreement ·

20.07.2020 – 14.08.2020 · €1,745 · 12 places

### Certificate in English Language Teaching to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA)

CELTA full-time courses are intensive and rewarding. For further information please visit [www.mvhs.de/celta](http://www.mvhs.de/celta).



K581526 / Full-time /

August–September 2020

Emma Jones · Gasteig · Rosenheimer Str. 5

· M–F 9:00–18:00 · Breaks on agreement ·

24.08.2020 – 18.09.2020 · €1,745 · 12 places

### Certificate in English Language Teaching to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA)

CELTA full-time courses are intensive and rewarding. For further information please visit [www.mvhs.de/celta](http://www.mvhs.de/celta).

### Non-ELT Events

## \*We are born to sing\*

Looking for enthusiastic singers for our informal singing group.

Plans are to meet once a week or once a fortnight.

We already have a venue in Munich.

Organization is in the early stages.

Keep the sixties, seventies and eighties rockin'.

Awakened your curiosity?

Then get in touch.

Breda Howe (Melta committee member):

[bredahowehelmecke@t-online.de](mailto:bredahowehelmecke@t-online.de)



# melta

Munich English Language Teachers Association e.V.  
c/o Randy Perry, Montgelasstr. 6, 81679 München

JOIN ONLINE  
<http://www.melta.de/join-us>

The Munich English Language Teachers Association (Melta) is a regional professional association for all teachers of English working in the Munich area: teachers at companies, private schools and the Volkshochschule (VHS), as well as state school teachers. Established in 1989, Melta is part of a wider network of English teachers' organisations throughout Europe and has especially close ties to the other English Language Teachers Associations (ELTAs) in Germany. Melta is also affiliated with the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL).

## Guest speakers and practical workshops

By attending and taking part in Melta events you can pick up new ideas and re-evaluate your own teaching. There are regular presentations and lectures in which you can meet leading people from the EFL/ESL field. The workshops also give you a chance to meet other teachers as well as to contribute your own ideas about English language teaching and discuss them. You can question your own and others' ideas about language training topics, helping you to become a better-informed and more effective trainer in the process. You will also receive a copy of our newsletter, *Melta News*, written by members for members, three times a year. *Melta News* includes topical articles on a range of ELT topics, interviews, and reviews of seminars, books and videos. There is also a calendar of local and international events in every issue.

## Social events

The Melta calendar also lists social events, including our summer and Christmas get-togethers.

## Become a Melta member

### Melta provides a forum for:

- Information and experience exchange
- Training and teaching development
- Social contact and support

### Melta membership benefits include:

- Presentations by leading EFL/ESL guest speakers
- Practical workshops and demonstrations
- Our newsletter, *Melta News*, twice a year
- Social events

### Melta online – [www.melta.de](http://www.melta.de)

On the Melta website you'll find:

- A programme of upcoming Melta events
- Job offers
- Links to interesting topics
- A list of teachers. All Melta members are invited to add their name.
- Teaching resources

Whether you've just arrived in Munich or have been here some time, Melta provides a local opportunity for you to keep your teaching ideas and skills up to date and finely tuned and to contribute and exchange your own ideas if you wish. In addition, you have the chance to meet other people on both a professional and a social level. Come along to our next meeting and find out more. Our events are listed on [www.melta.de](http://www.melta.de).

The annual subscription is only €35 (€15 for full-time students, €100 for institutional membership) which includes our newsletter and free entrance to most Melta events. You can read Melta's articles of association at [www.melta.de/Articles-of-Association](http://www.melta.de/Articles-of-Association).

For more information, visit our website at [www.melta.de](http://www.melta.de) or contact: Randy Perry, Chair [chair@melta.de](mailto:chair@melta.de)

### Have you moved?

If so, please let the membership secretary have your new address.

## Please let us know!

**No direct debit?** Allow Melta to set up a direct debit (*Einzugsermächtigung*) for you and you won't have to remember to transfer the fee yourself at the beginning of each year. Just contact [treasurer@melta.de](mailto:treasurer@melta.de) and the form will be emailed to you.

**Do you have a direct debit and have changed banks?** If so, please let the treasurer know! Melta incurs a penalty of €8 for each refused direct debit. Please help us to avoid the hassle of claiming this penalty fee back from you!

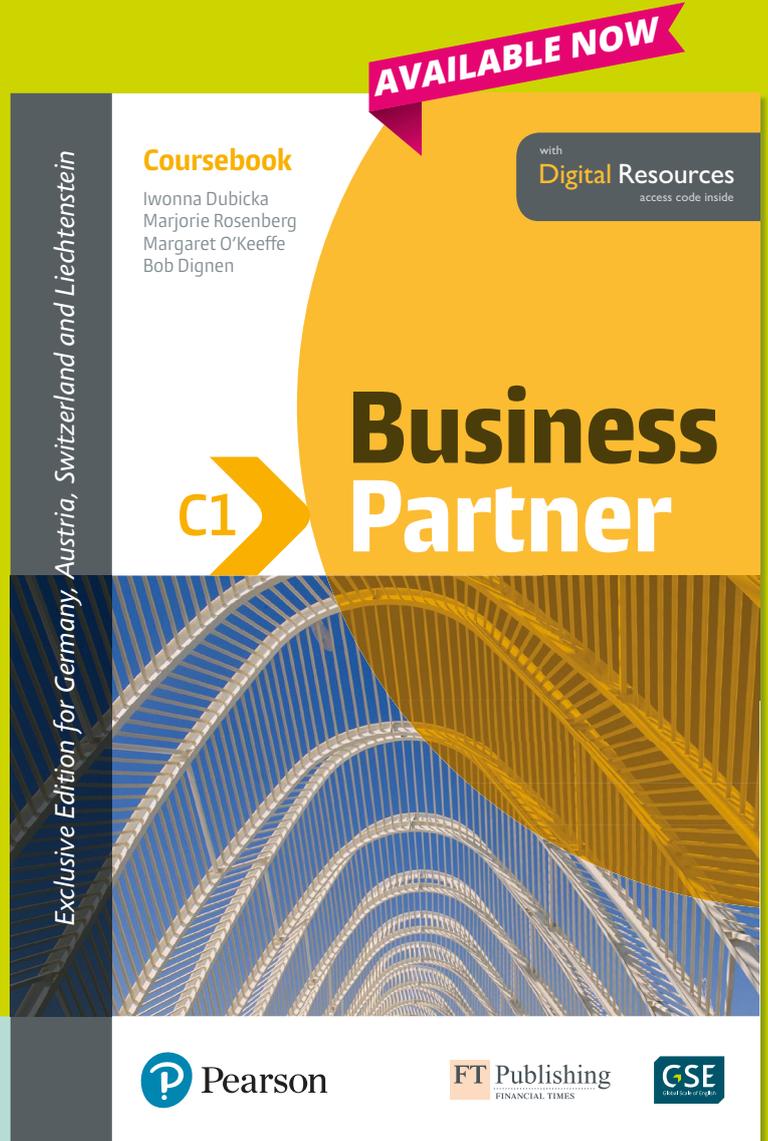
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