



Should I lie?

On Air

How to create podcasts with your class
in four easy steps

Lying

Should you tell your employer
the truth?

Pick 'n Mix

Melta members share their best tips
for remote teaching



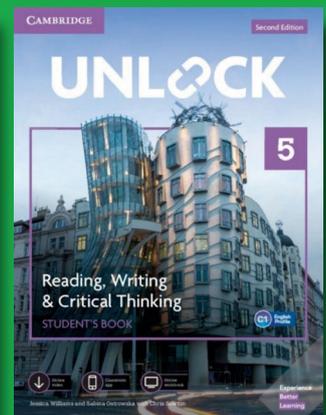
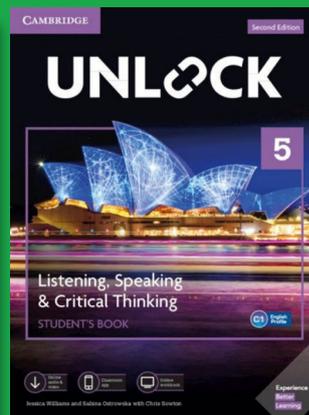
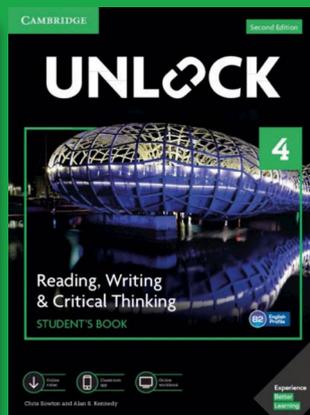
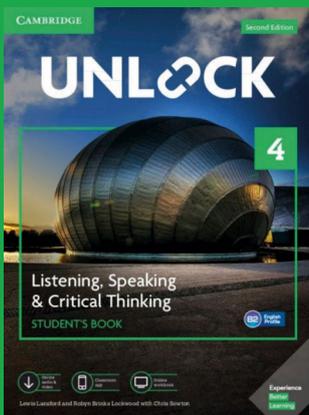
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chair@melta.de

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Nik Grantchev
Vice Chair
vicechair@melta.de

Breda Howe-Helmecke
Member-at-large
breda.howehelmecke@melta.de

Lucy Pereira
Member-at-large
membership-secretary@melta.de

Joan Walsh
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advertising@melta.de

Message from the Chair

At the AGM on 7 March, we announced a program of in-person events extending into the autumn. But like many plans of mice and men, it came to nothing. Instead, we had to shift everything online quickly and — with lots of help — managed to set up 12 Zoom-based webinars by the end of July. Along the way, we noticed four things:

1. The webinar format generally expanded event participation, partly because it made it easier for members based outside Munich to attend.
2. Most people adjusted to the format quite quickly.
3. It was ideal for hosting speakers from other parts of Germany and abroad.
4. Our old tried-and-true program of Gasteig-based workshops and social events is too limited to meet members' informational and networking needs completely.

Perhaps we should have noticed some of these things before. But thanks to the pandemic, we've noticed them now, and we're going to improve our organization accordingly.

Fortunately, we won't have to start from scratch. The new, much-heralded and long-awaited Melta website is now up and running. It's still — and perhaps always will be — a work in progress. But the platform already includes several features you can use to share news and ideas Melta-wide instantly and without waiting for an in-person event.

In addition, we're going to keep organizing webinars since, as we've now discovered, they're both popular and practical. But we also want to start scheduling in-person workshops again as soon as we can. And not just for sentimental reasons: in the business we're in, electronic media — regardless of how sophisticated or convenient — can never fully replace face-to-face communication. That, briefly, is where we've been lately and where we're going. I'd like to thank all of you for supporting Melta over the last few difficult months. I hope to see you again in the autumn — in person or online. Until then, stay healthy.

All the best,
Randy



Randy Perry

Message from the Editor

While wasting time on Facebook recently, I came across a picture posted by Tamara Lutz. The image was of the article she wrote for last year's *Melta News*, framed and hung on the wall of Westend English, her English school and the subject of her article.

That touched me. I rarely, if ever, see or speak to the many people who contribute to this newsletter, nor do I experience the expressions of the Melta members when they open the latest edition. I found it edifying to see photographic evidence of a contributor's pride in how their article turned out.

Not only was I proud of how they looked on the page, the few articles I wrote for *Melta News* changed the course of my career and connected me to some of the major players in Munich's English language teaching scene.

If you have even the slightest interest in writing for our community, please give it a try. You may be surprised what comes of it.

Warm wishes,
Tenley



We'd like to welcome our new members!

Regular members:

Phillip Lloyd
Tessa Marzotto Caotorta
Susan Lai

Student member:

Ceren Kokaman

Upcoming Events

Due to the pandemic, we're currently unable to fix a programme of events for the coming season.

For as long as it's not feasible to run face-to-face events, we will continue to run some more Zoom webinars.

Our webinars from March to July were highly successful and well attended. There were thirteen in all. Thanks to all the people who came forward to donate their time, energy, skills and ideas. You gave us courage and inspiration to get us through this difficult period. We also had a lot of fun.

We will continue to keep you in the loop with email blasts and on <https://melta.de> when something is afoot.

Enjoy the summer, and until we meet again in the autumn, stay healthy and happy!

Your Melta events team

External Events

6 September 2020
15:00
Free Webinar

BESIG: Managing a TBL or PBL Online Business English Learning Cycle by Ron Morrain
www.iatefl.org/events/114

MVHS Events

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.



First Inter-ELTA Members' Day 28 November 2020

Each English Language Teachers Association (ELTA) will "contribute" one speaker to the event. Each speaker will have about 30 minutes to talk/present. There are seven ELTAS, so it will be an all-day event.

If YOU are interested in being the one to represent Melta, please let us know! Who knows? You may even become rich and famous!

Melta five-a-day: why reinvent the wheel?

Suddenly teaching online? **Bethan Stokes** shares some familiar activities you can adapt to online teaching.

I don't know about you, but when we were told that we had to start teaching 100% online, my initial reaction was: HUH?! How? While this situation has given us teachers the opportunity to learn new teaching methods and get up to date with teaching technologies, it's often very easy to feel overwhelmed by just how many websites, tools, gadgets, apps, etc. there are. So, here are five well-known activities and tips on how to do them hassle-free online!

1. Taboo(ish)

Prep:

Create a word cloud of vocabulary you want to review with students. Word cloud website suggestions: www.wordclouds.com or <https://worditout.com/word-cloud/create>

Activity:

Share your screen with students so that everyone can see the word cloud.

One student chooses a word from the cloud to try to explain to the class. To help them if needed, tell them to type the word to you in the chat (make sure the students can only write to you and not other class members — check the settings). Alternatively, you choose the word and type the word to the student whose turn it is. Give a countdown so that the student explaining the word and the rest of the class are all ready. When students think they know what word is being described, they either shout it out/raise their hand (physically or virtually)/type the answer to you in the chat. If they are correct, they get a point. If not, the game continues until someone guesses the word correctly.

Continue playing until each student has had at least one turn.

Follow on ideas:

If you are having a discussion on this topic, keep the word cloud on the

shared screen. See whether students can use as many words from it as possible during the discussion.

Give students 2–3 minutes to choose one word and write a sentence using that word. Get them to send you their sentences in the chat. Copy the sentences into a Word document or whiteboard and review them together.

2. Scattegories

Prep:

Create an appropriate scattegories set for your class on [swellgarfo](https://swellgarfo.com/scattegories): <https://swellgarfo.com/scattegories>

Input the categories you would like (or use the pre-existing categories) and how long you would like each round to be.

Activity:

Tell students to get a pen and paper ready. Explain that students have to think of a word for different categories beginning with the same letter. For each original answer, i.e. no one else has that answer written down, they get two points. If someone else has the same answer, they get one point. If they don't write anything down, they get no points. Have the website ready in your web browser and share your screen with students. Before you click "play", students don't see the categories (image left). The letter is shown in the top left-hand corner (you can re-roll if you would like a different letter). The time counts down in seconds (you can adjust this before playing). Check everyone is ready before you click "play".

When you click "play", the categories are revealed (image right). I use this time to put myself on mute and just have a breather/quick bathroom break! Once the time is up, students read out their words per category and take score. The player with the most points at the end is the winner (you just have to trust stu-



dents not to cheat...). This activity can be done to review a topic, as a filler, or as a warmer. I find it works well at the very start of a class while you're waiting for some (late!) students to join.

3. Scavenger Hunt

Prep:

None! Or make a list of usual (or unusual) household items.

Activity:

Tell students they are going to be getting up and moving for this activity.

Give students one minute to find an item in their house that you have specified, e.g. something red, something beginning with the letter "s", something you use to clean the house... the more obscure, the better! The first student to find that item, bring it back to their computer and show it on the screen is the winner. Alternatively, students do this one at a time. While one student is off looking for an item, the others are writing down potential items that student could bring back.



Image by Mike Bird from Pexels

If they guess the item correctly, they get a point. Once the student(s) have found their item, they then have to talk about it for one minute, e.g. where/why they bought it, how often they use it, what it does, etc. If they can't think of anything, they have to get creative and make it up!

This activity works well with all levels and as a way to energise students in a longer online lesson. If students don't want to/aren't able to run around their house scavenging for items, have them describe what they can see in front of them, and the other students draw it. Top points for the person whose drawing is closest to reality!

4. Wheel of Fortune

Prep:

Write discussion questions or students' names into a wheel. My go-to wheel spinner: www.classtools.net/random-name-picker

Activity:

Have the wheel website open in your browser, ready to share with students.

If you're having a discussion, rather than simply asking students questions, write the questions into the wheel and let the spinner decide which question will be discussed next. This just makes a simple question and answer discussion session a bit more exciting! Alternatively, have the questions prepared and put the students' names in the wheel. Spin the wheel and that student has to answer the question (I find it works best if you ask the question before you spin the wheel.) If a student's name comes up twice in a row, they get to nominate another student to answer the question.

5. Error correction

Prep:

Write students' errors from a previous class in a table in a Word document. If possible/wanted, send this to students BEFORE the lesson.

Activity:

Tell students they are going to have five to ten minutes to discuss and correct some mistakes from their

last lesson. If using Zoom, split students into breakout rooms. Students discuss how they would correct the mistakes and why the mistakes are wrong. Depending on class size/number of mistakes, you could get one group to correct mistakes 1–3, another 4–6, etc. Briefly check in on each group. When the class is back together again, share your screen with the students and get them to tell you 1) why the mistake was incorrect and 2) how they would correct it. If they don't know, see whether any of the other groups were/are able to correct that mistake. If you're not using Zoom and don't have a "breakout room" feature, do this as a class but give your students five minutes to do this alone (if they haven't been set it for homework before the class.) Then go through the answers. If you do this activity every few weeks (or lessons), you will have a good overview of mistakes (and their corrections) by the end of a course.

Follow on ideas:

Put the mistakes/corrections onto a flashcard tool, e.g. Quizlet. During other lessons, you could use this as a warmer/filler/cooler by sharing your screen with students and revising the mistakes/corrections with the flashcards.



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.

Tech talk: Jitsi video call service

Michael Saunders gives you an overview of Jitsi, a quick and simple video call service for online classrooms.

In recent months, many of us have switched to online teaching and were initially confronted by a bamboozling array of videoconferencing tools. Zoom was all the rage for a while — and has plenty of great features for an online classroom — but then people started to notice security and privacy issues. You’ve probably also used (or heard of) Microsoft Teams, Google Duo, BigBlueButton and many others.

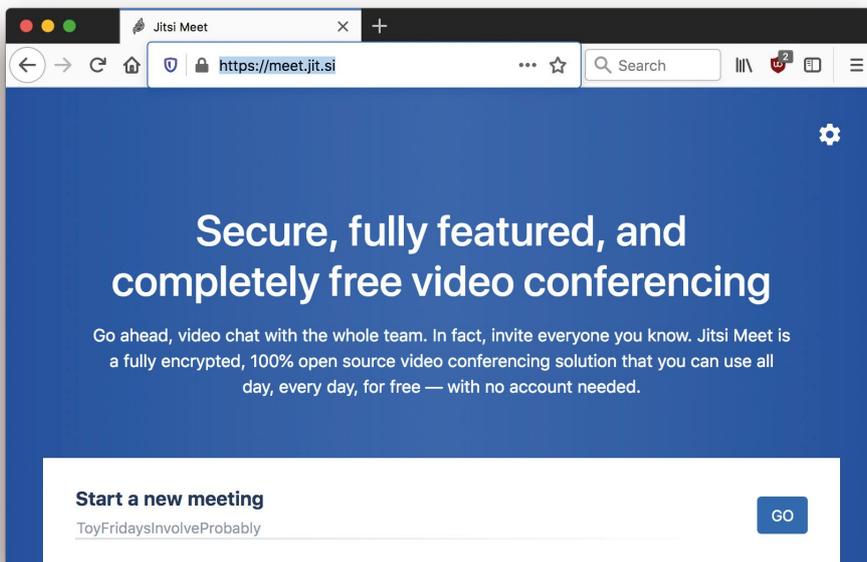
Then there’s Jitsi, which I’ve been using to teach my courses. Why did I choose it? Well, there are two main reasons: privacy and simplicity. Regarding the former, Jitsi is “peer-to-peer” software; this means that video and audio data is shared directly between participants, rather than being routed over a central server somewhere. Yes, there is a website for starting Jitsi calls, but this merely does the job of coordinating them — it doesn’t have access to the audio or video. So, there’s a big plus-point for data protection.

But the other thing I like about Jitsi is its simplicity. It runs completely in a web browser (although an app for mobile devices is available), so you just go to <https://meet.jit.si>, enter a meeting name, and then share the link by email or instant messenger. Anyone with a webcam and microphone can click the link and join the call. No need to download anything, no complicated setup or sign-in-procedure, no fuss.



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.



You can set up a Jitsi call in seconds, in your web browser, without installing anything. Then just share the link to invite participants.

Jitsi is somewhat limited feature-wise compared to Zoom or BigBlueButton, but for short courses with a small number of participants, it does a good job. There’s a feature to share your screen — or one window on your desktop — for instance, which I use to show presentations and a text-editor window (which acts as my virtual whiteboard). There are no breakout rooms, but you can create separate “rooms” on the fly by telling students to edit the website address. For instance, if your class is in <https://meet.jit.si/C1conversation>, and you want some students to go into a separate room, you can ask them to go to <https://meet.jit.si/C1conversation-2>. It’s not the most elegant solution, but it has worked well in my experience.

Some other useful features to note: students can click a raised-hand symbol to say they want to speak, which really helps to coordinate discussion in conversation classes. There’s also a button to show all participants side by side, rather than only the person who’s speaking, which makes the display look a little more classroom-like (as if each student is at his/her own little table).

Because Jitsi is free and open source software, anyone can “host” it — that is, be a provider of it. One example is <https://meet.jit.si>, but Freifunk München (a non-commercial provider of network services in Munich) also has a Jitsi server at <https://ffmuc.net/wiki/doku.php?id=kn-b:meet>. For the MVHS, my courses have been running on this server.

Give it a try, let us know what you think, and send any questions to tech@melta.de!

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. We’ll do our best to answer as many questions as possible in the next newsletter or at a future workshop.

Teaching English through food: Bake. Run. Write.

Betsy Hollweck shares her insights into how English learning can be transformed through the topic of food.

I started writing this article in blueberry season. I had 500 grams of berries and was looking for something to do with them when I remembered a recipe for Bakewell Tarts by Urvashi Roe.

The recipe is good, but what I love most is the preceding text. In a clear and concise manner, she seamlessly combines two seemingly unrelated interests (baking and running) to complete a task (making the tarts). How? She uses a timeline. But this is not just a sequential exercise, rather a combination of two separate but sequential activities. Pastry. Run. Pastry. Exercise (reason). Pastry. Exercise (reason). Pastry. Run. Pastry. Exercise. Finish pastry. Finish sport (shower).

This makes for an excellent writing activity. The students write about doing two unrelated activities that can be interspersed with each other and finished at approximately the same time. Yes, it is a form of multi-tasking but a bit more regimented, as there are separate but distinct goals to be reached, each task having its own sequential order; this is not just a ping-ponging of two activities that finish at the same time.

“Bakewell Tarts” by Urvashi Roe

I have started running again, and that means I have started to make pastry again. They are the perfect match.

Making pastry is not for those in a rush. There are stages and steps, and yes, that can be a bit of a fuff sometimes, but if you tie these into a running routine, then it all works out nicely. Let me explain.

First you make the dough — easy and quick when you use a food processor. Then you need to let the dough rest. It doesn't matter how

long. So, you spend this time that the dough is resting, running. I usually do my long run for around two hours, but it's entirely up to you. This part fits in with any running routine, but I would suggest around 30 minutes minimum.

Then when you come back, your dough is ready to roll out and line your pastry cases with. After that, it goes in the freezer for 15 minutes.

This is when you do your squats or use your foam roller to make your legs stronger.

Then you pop the tarts in to blind bake. Fifteen minutes. That's your high-intensity skipping time to build up your lung capacity.

Then you whip up your frangipane mixture, prep your tarts for the oven and bake. That's your second run. The timed run because you need to be back in 30 minutes to get your tarts out of the oven or they will burn. There's a good incentive, right?

—

This is not just a ping-ponging of two activities that finish at the same time.

—

And finally, you take the tarts out of the oven, and while they are cooling in their tins, you do your warm down. And when they are cooling on the wire rack, you have a shower.

See! It works, right?!

You can find Urvashi's recipe at www.greatbritishchefs.com/recipes/blueberry-bakewell-tart-recipe. You can follow her on Twitter at: @urvashiroe www.instagram.com/urvashiroe?hl=en

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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.



Creating an environment for learner autonomy

Christina Allegra Winter explains how Autonomous Language Learning (ALL) and the Montessori method can be used together to create an attractive and effective learning environment.

What sort of environment encourages a learner to work with a foreign language? Focusing on this question, I would like to give some insight into my work as a class teacher with a mixed-age group of nine- to twelve-year-olds at the Montessori school where I teach.

The prepared environment is one of Maria Montessori's basic ideas. It includes "the concepts of freedom, structure and order, reality and nature, beauty and atmosphere, the Montessori materials, and the development of community life."¹

The teacher's role before the lesson is to prepare the environment for the pupils: the topic and materials should be displayed attractively, colours should be used,

and it should all be well structured. It should create a warm learning atmosphere that encourages learning for that class's specific age group.² This is very important, since Montessori pupils learn by interacting with the environment.³ Activities that encourage independent learning, the freedom to choose materials, the

freedom to choose the place where to learn as well as the time they spend on these activities give the learners in-

Effective learning only takes place when learners feel at home.



Picture 1: Working with ALL in the logbook

dependence.⁴ Montessori once said that "...in our experience ... facts are of less interest to the ... child than the way those facts are discovered."⁵

The prepared environment in the Montessori method also supports the teaching and learning style called Autonomous Language Learning (ALL). After taking part in a course on ALL, led by Leni Dam and Birgitta Berger (see bio p. 15), I decided to adapt my Montessori environment to this teaching style. Now, I mix both and feel they match perfectly.

ALL, the "readiness to take charge of one's own learning [... which] entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others",⁶ needs a suitable setting — as does the Montessori method. The teacher prepares this environment, but I believe effective learning only takes place when learners feel at home and are attracted to the material that surrounds them every day. In that regard, making my classroom beautiful is an important part of my job: I use colour and shape, organize the classroom into different top-



Picture 2: Making the structure of activities and learning visible



Picture 3: Materials displayed in a lesson

ics or subject areas and make use of all available space, focusing on aesthetics and visibility.

Making the structure of activities and learning visible is another important focus in my classroom: I have a board with a daily plan, shelves and materials with labels (see picture 2) and wall posters serving as guidelines. We have routines such as playing English games, using log-books — including daily documentation and evaluation — and meeting in a circle. The element of choice is a strong motivator for learning — the prepared environment in the Montessori classroom makes the range of topics, materials and activities visible and attractive to learners. Picture 1 shows an example of how I display materials in a lesson, Picture 3 an example of working with ALL in the logbook.

Making use of these learning methods, I try to achieve what is most important to me as a teacher: the pupils learn by doing — they are active and creative learners, responsible for their own choices and personal aims; pupils get the chance to learn in teams and thus learn with and from each other. And most im-

portant, I hope they have fun learning!

- 1 Paula Polk Lillard: *Montessori: A Modern Approach*, New York: Schocken Books, 1972, p. 51.
- 2 P.P. Lillard, 1972, p. 59.
- 3 Paula Polk Lillard: *Montessori Today: A Comprehensive Approach to Education from Birth to Adulthood*, New York: Schocken Books, 1996, p.77.
- 4 P.P. Lillard, 1972, p. 52-54.
- 5 P.P. Lillard, 1996, p.81.
- 6 Leni Dam: *Learner Autonomy – From Theory to Classroom Practice*, Dublin: Authentik Language Learning Resources Ltd., 1995, p.1.



Christina Allegra Winter has always loved languages and travelling. She spent a few years abroad in Ireland, Italy and England, studied to become a teacher for foreign languages at Würzburg University and has been living in Munich since 2014. For the past four years, she has been teaching as a class teacher at the Inklusive Montessori Schule on Balanstraße. She enjoys creating a space for learning with fun — no matter the age.

Impressum

Melta News is the newsletter of Munich English Language Teachers Association e.V. c/o R. Perry, Montgelastr. 6, 81679 München, Germany

Graphic design

Polarstern Media
www.polarsternmedia.de

Layout

Saskia Kölliker Grafik
www.koelliker-grafik.de

Managing Editor

Tenley van den Berg melta.news@melta.de

Publishing dates and editorial deadlines

Melta News is published three times a year, in spring, summer and autumn. The editorial deadlines are February 28, June 30 and October 31 respectively.

Circulation

300

Advertising

For rates, see box on this page. For more information on advertising, please contact Joan Walsh, Melta Advertising Coordinator, (0 89) 98 51 02, advertising@melta.de

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Publishing date of this issue

14 August 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

Visit Melta at www.melta.de

Campus di Monaco International Montessori School: a small school with great vision

Birgitta Berger tells the inspiring story of a unique school.



Students doing woodwork.

Photo credit: B. Reichl

The Campus di Monaco International School would like to thank the Melta members who answered the call for volunteers in the spring issue of *Melta News*. These volunteers are coaching students who are preparing for exams this and next year in English. Their dedication and support are much needed and highly appreciated!

The corner of Sonnen- and Schwanthalerstraße in Munich is not quite the address you would expect for an international Montessori school. However, the school's location tells part of its story: situated three stories above an Arabian grill restaurant, a barbershop and a nail studio, the Campus di Monaco International Montessori school has set itself the goal of combatting the disparities in educational opportunities that migrants so frequently encounter in the local school system. At the same time, this new school wants to contribute to mutual understanding and acceptance between natives and new arrivals in the Bavarian capital, thereby working towards Maria Montessori's ideal of educating for peace. The Campus defines itself as a school for pupils with and without a migrant or refugee background.

In some respects, this school is a typical *Mittelschule* with an afternoon programme, yet many features are unique: German is taught both at native speaker level and as a second language. As you would expect, there are English lessons from Year 5 to Year 10, but content from other subject areas like Geography and Biology is also taught in English in the British framework Content and Language Integrated Learning

(CLIL) projects and classes. In the September 2019, the school first opened its doors to 60 children and teenagers from 15 different nations who together speak 20 different languages. The youngest pupils are in Year 5, the oldest are preparing for their *Quali* and *Mittlerer Schulabschluss*.

In the afternoons, pupils can participate in workshops in visual and performing arts, as well as practical activities ranging from drawing and painting to music, drama, hip hop, rap, sewing and woodwork.

Besides the school subjects laid down by the curriculum, there is a weekly lesson called "Engagement" in which the children discuss and find practical ways to engage with and support their community, for example by regularly taking food donations to the nearby *Bahnhofsmision*. Community work like this, as well as results from other projects and school affairs in general, are presented and discussed by the pupils at their weekly assembly.

This school sees the many languages the pupils bring with them from their families and home countries as an asset rather than an obstacle. In the Year 7/8 classroom, for example, wall posters give the French, Ukrainian and Lugandan equivalents of mathematical and political terminology currently being used in the class. Everyone has



Students having fun with paint.

Photo credit: M. Graf

a chance to find out the similarities and differences in their languages and learn from each other.

Some of the pupils at the Campus di Monaco were born in Munich and have been speaking German all their lives; some have come from near and distant lands, accompanying their parents who have come to work and live in the bustling Bavarian capital. Others have recently arrived with or without their parents from war-torn or otherwise troubled regions such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Eritrea. The school provides several ways to meet the needs a multitude of biographies and social contexts bring: a multilingual social worker counsels and assists children and adolescents with personal and bureaucratic issues, additional teachers support special academic needs, art therapy can help alleviate some effects of traumatised. Intense vocational guidance and coaching supports adolescents in finding out more about their strengths and skills, especially those not familiar with the many different jobs and training options available in Germany.

Whatever their background, all children need an atmosphere of respect and mutual recognition. Montessori provides the pedagogic basis of child-focused learning at the Campus di Monaco. The goal is to help each individual to grow and flourish according to the guiding principle "Help me to do it myself". This attitude enables learners to take over responsibility for their learning, accompanied and supported by responsible adults wishing to see every child find their place in our society.

How can pupils from a less well-situated background afford to attend the private Campus di Monaco International Montessori School? Several large and small foundations as well as private and institutional sponsors and donors make this possible, funding this unique project, while other organisations are coop-

erating in youth and vocational projects. Volunteers and many dedicated parents are also involved in supporting the school's academic and cultural work, as well as daily chores such as supervising school lunches.

The Campus di Monaco International Montessori School is still growing, planning to double its number of pupils by September. In a year, the school hopes to have moved into a new building under construction at Quiddestraße in Ramersdorf/Perlach where there will also be enough space for primary classes.

At this time, there are still a few places in each of the classes; applications from all backgrounds are very welcome!

For any inquiries about the school in general, places for the coming school year and voluntary work please contact info@campus-di-monaco.de.



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 Bildungsakademie/MoBil and the Akademie Biberkor.



Image by OpenClipart-Vectors on Pixabay

Food quotes

Famous people have said some strange things about food. Here are a few quotes that you can use for conversation courses:

"There is no sincerer love than the love of food."

George Bernard Shaw

"Shame is a soul eating emotion."

Carl Gustav Jung

"Everything you see, I owe to spaghetti."

Sophia Loren

"To eat well in England, you should have breakfast three times a day."

W. Somerset Maugham

"A human being is primarily a bag for putting food into."

George Orwell

"I have measured out my life with coffee spoons."

T.S. Eliot

"Humor keeps us alive. Humor and food. Don't forget food. You can go a week without laughing."

Joss Whedon

By Betsy Hollweck

Should I lie? The plight of the *Lehrbeauftragter*

A Melta member discusses a predicament faced by *Lehrbeauftragte* (guest Lecturers) in Bavaria. He wishes to remain anonymous but hopes this report might increase awareness of the plight of guest lecturers in general. If you'd like to offer your support, please send an email to melta.news@melta.de. This article was first published by the *Times Higher Education*.

The email from University A came totally out of the blue. I'd been teaching there as a *Lehrbeauftragte*, or guest lecturer, since 2005, yet it was from a person whose job description (central coordinator of assistant lecturers) I never knew existed. If he'd been coordinating my colleagues and me for the last 15 years, I was blissfully unaware.

Apparently, they'd been tipped off by University B that I was teaching there six hours a week. Given that I was already operating six hours a week at University A, I was exceeding the maximum nine hours that assistant lecturers are legally permitted to teach at state-run universities in Bavaria in any one semester. Could I therefore please inform him at which university I wished to work three hours fewer?

It turns out I'd fallen foul of the Bavaria's drive against *Scheinselbstständige*, or pseudo-employees: those of us who are self-employed on paper but who, in practice, largely depend on the hourly fees that universities pay in twice-yearly lump sums. Before the limit was introduced, there were cases of pseudo self-employed teachers suing the state and, on occasions, forcing it into either paying fines or signing salaried employment contracts.

Over the years, I'd signed up at a string of universities around Bavaria, all desperate for assistant lecturers of English to plug gaps left by their lack of permanent staff. Asked each time to declare how many hours I worked at other state universities, I'd deliberately understated the true number and assumed that no one would have any reason to check.

After all, I wasn't short-changing anyone. On the contrary, quite a few of the courses were almost identical, so I was giving the same class several times over. Everyone seemed happy and the students generally confirmed this in their feedback. And, mean-

while, I was able to earn a decent living.

Nonetheless I'd been fact-checked. But what universities A and B didn't know though was that I was working at universities C and D as well. Factor in holiday courses and I was overshooting my authorised number of hours almost fourfold.

Before I had chance to answer University A, HR at University B hit me with the same question. This mail was accompanied by a demand that I submit a list of all other places where I worked, plus a copy of my last tax statement from the Office of Finance.

Clearly, I had to reduce my number of hours at all universities answerable to the Ministry of Culture. Yet as a freelance teacher, it was none of University B's business how much I earned elsewhere. I was about to write and politely point this out when another mail from University B pinged into my box. It was a notice of dismissal — with immediate effect.

By now it was mid-March and schools and colleges throughout Bavaria were going into lockdown. A two-week holiday course I was giving at University A was cancelled halfway through day three. But while a pandemic may be a once-in-a-lifetime event, there was nothing unusual about a Bavarian university course being axed at the drop of a hat — with absolutely no compensation offered to the instructor (after some lengthy email discussions, I was eventually paid for 2.5 days' teaching!).

But a far greater problem now loomed. Should I also come clean about universities C and D? Too late. C, where I delivered 10 hours a week, had also been tipped off. "You're breaking the law!" screamed the head of English in an angry email that she had copied to HR. She had conveniently forgotten it was she who approved my surplus hours in the first place.

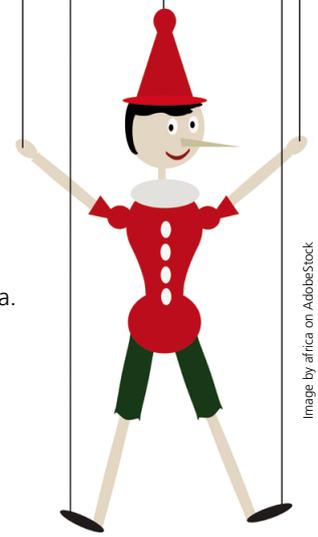


Image by africa on AdobeStock

"You're breaking the law"
screamed the Head of English.

The above scenario may be unprecedented in Bavarian history; I doubt that many assistant lecturers have managed to notch up quite as many excess hours as I did. But it poignantly illustrates the precarious situation of assistant lecturers in the state. Contracts are issued on a semester-by-semester basis, making it easy for universities to get rid of teachers whenever student numbers drop off. Conversely, whenever numbers rise, classes simply grow larger.

The rate of pay, designed also to cover exam marking regardless of student numbers, stays the same, of course. It varies from €28 to €45 per hour, and in some cases has remained unchanged for over the 15 years I have been here.

Since losing work at B and C, I've been fortunate to boost my number of hours at a private Munich university, which offers better rates than most state-run establishments. Another state-run university I work at also recently improved its rate and offers generally good conditions. And since I am currently delivering all my classes online, I am also saving on commuting time and cost.

All told, I'm in a better place now. But if I notch up too many hours at the private university, I still run the risk of becoming "pseudo-employee" there too, which it will want to guard against. So my future remains precarious.

Ultimately, the situation of rank-and-file guest lecturers won't improve unless the law is changed. Until then, we'll be forced to go on lying about the number of hours we teach.

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On air: how to develop language skills using class-created podcasts

Silke Riegler has developed a framework for creating podcasts with nearly any type of class. She shares her insights with *Melta News* below.

This is a talk I gave at the IATEFL BESIG (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language Business English Special Interest Group) 2019 conference in Berlin. During my preparation, I realized that most teachers are already familiar with the idea of using podcasts in the classroom and are already equipped with the skills needed for designing extended, authentic listening practice. So, what could I offer that would be different?

Instead of just thinking of podcasts as raw material for extra listening practice, what would happen if students started creating the podcasts themselves? I was convinced that creating podcasts in the classroom could help in developing students' language skills. Now that I had an idea, part of the challenge included designing a practical framework teachers could use in the classroom right away. This framework had to be simple yet effective and require minimal preparation time.

At the conference, I presented my idea and the framework I had come up with. During my talk, I outlined

the benefits of using a task-based approach for creating student-generated podcasts in the classroom. I provided teachers with an easy-to-use and adaptable framework that can be used in various teaching contexts and at various language levels, and I shared some practical advice based upon my own experience in using this framework in the classroom.

Any topic that interests my students is a good topic.

What are the main benefits of using a task-based approach for class-created podcasts?

First of all, the task itself is a multi-skill activity. Its successful completion requires students to access their full range of known language and language learning skills in a fair-

ly natural setting. It also involves learners in a learning process that can be perceived as authentic, which often leads to increased motivation and involvement. In addition, each stage provides opportunities for a meaningful focus on form and other aspects of language. These are also valuable opportunities for teachers to gain deeper insight into their learners' language competence and needs. A further benefit is flexibility. This task can be accomplished within a 90-minute session or extended to cover a period of weeks with very little preparation time.

Steps to guiding the class podcast

Step 1: Introduce

The main part of my talk was the introduction of a framework. Creating student-generated podcasts is a three-stage process: the preparation stage, the recording stage and, lastly, the podcasting stage.

Although podcasts come in different formats, interviews are familiar to most students, so it is relatively easy to get set up quickly. I divide my classroom into small groups of no more than four students each.

Step 2: Prepare

The preparation stage serves to introduce the topic of the interview and to provide the basis for discussion and brainstorming sessions. For this, I use short texts or audio/video as input. At the end of the preparation stage, students will have produced a script for the interview, which, depending on the students' language level, will also include answers to the questions posed by the interviewer. Lower-level students might find it helpful to discuss potential answers with the group. The students practise all four skills and activate their vocabulary and knowledge of grammar through an authentic experience.

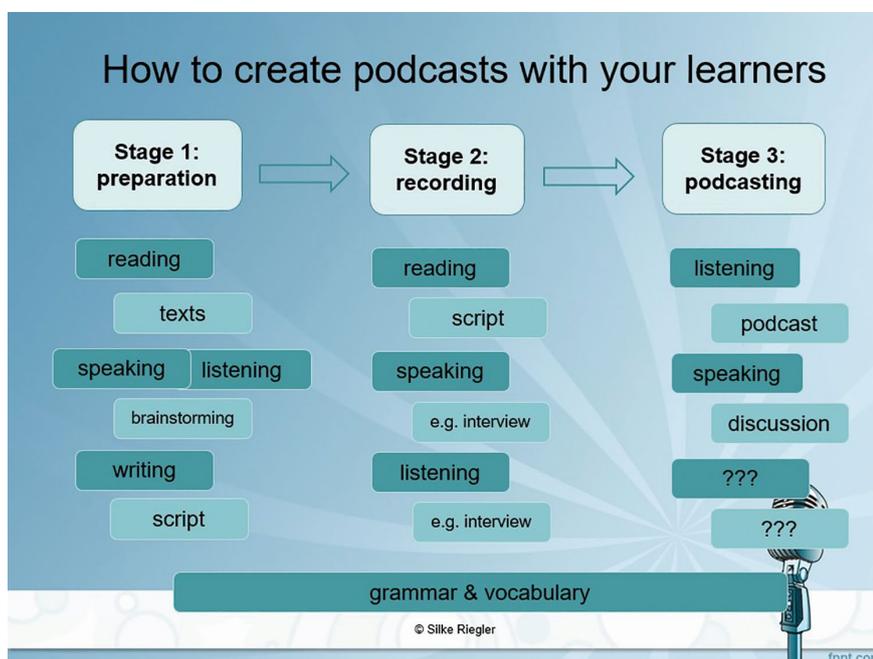




Image by Alernon on Pxabay

Step 3: Record

This stage focuses primarily on speaking and listening skills. Some students like to take notes of the answers given during this stage, so there is also some writing practice involved. It is advisable to ask students to download a voice memo app onto their smartphone and make a test recording at home before coming to class. Just to be safe, I also ask them to do another short test recording in class, usually right before they begin recording their in-class interview. I find a recording that does not exceed more than three minutes per group works best. Make sure there is enough class time left for repeat recordings, should your students not be happy with their first results.

Step 4: Share

This listening task can be set up either as a class activity or a group task. As a group task, one group

listens to the recording of another group, discusses its content and then gives feedback to the creator of the podcast. Before this task, I give specific listening instructions to the group, which are then used for class feedback. Again, this is a multi-skill activity involving mainly listening and speaking skills in addition to knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary and grammar.

Which learners benefit most from this model?

I find this task works with students at any level. Even low-level students can benefit if set up in small, comprehensible steps. Since students work in small groups, shy students often receive more speaking practice. It also allows room for anonymous group language use feedback sessions, which some learners prefer over direct feedback on their linguistic performance.

Which topics work best?

In my experience, any topic that interests my students is a good topic. Here are some ideas and topics that have worked well in the past:

- The unit topic of the coursebook you are using in class as an extension and/or repetition of what has already been practiced in the unit
- Hobbies
- Job
- Travel
- Food and restaurants

Why do I like this model so much?

First, it is extremely flexible. Second, it engages my students, encourages their creativity and boosts their self-confidence in using the language. And finally, it is simply a lot of fun!

In closing

While there is a case to be made for listening exercises found in coursebooks, I find that the topics do not always appeal to students' immedi-

ate interests or concerns. That is why I find podcasts to be a great addition to any classroom. They are readily available, address a large variety of topics, and are enjoyable for speakers with varying degrees of language proficiency. This makes personalization, and perhaps even also the desire to engage with an audio text more intensely, easier. As I hope to have shown you, once introduced into the classroom, it is only a small step to begin creating them together with your learners.

I hope I could spark your interest in podcasting with your students and would love to hear your thoughts and learn from your experience!

Follow this link to access the handout of my talk: http://bit.ly/Silke_BESIG. In this handout, you can also find an example of how I implement this model at university level with part-time students.

This article first appeared in the summer 2020 newsletter published by IATEFL BESIG. It has been modified and reprinted with permission.



Based in Munich, **Silke Riegler** works as a university lecturer and in-company trainer. An eclectic mix of students gives her the possibility to draw on her business experience and training, as well as on her passion for the English language and technology.

Grammar dilemma

Does it really make a difference whether or not you use perfect grammar? **Bela Nagar** reflects on her experiences.



“...But, Bela, you can still understand me very good — I mean well!” Statements like this are nothing new to business English teachers. They often come from advanced learners, who are more interested in getting their message across rather than worrying about the intricacies of the language. As a business English teacher, I’ve often wondered whether correcting grammar is crucial, or does it hinder the learner’s momentum? Without sparking off any debate here, I would like to point out some of my life experiences.

We English-speaking Indians love to put ourselves in the same category as native English speakers. While many are indubitably conversant, a great number struggle with English. I admit that I belong to the second group. When I was studying, being a science student made it even worse. Language proficiency was secondary — or thirdary — (I wish this were a word!). Considering the size of India, we can’t generalize anything about India or Indians; I speak only from the point of view of my background. Unlike today, speaking English used to be categorized as being snobbish or pompous in my part of India, so striking up a conversation in proper English was impossible. Outside of

We found a haven in the public libraries, and we dived together into the ocean of English.

my school and college classroom, I don’t remember speaking a sentence solely in English or Hindi. We spoke a kind of “Hinglish”, for example, “*Aree yaar it’s so hot na!*” (Oh, buddy! it’s so hot.)

My first exposure to 100% English happened when we moved to the States for my husband’s job. I assumed the role of stay-at-home mom. My first English teaching experience started with a three-year-old student, my daughter. We found a haven in the public libraries, and we dived together into the ocean of English. She learned to swim — and is a strong swimmer — and now has ventured to dive into a different ocean, whereas I still sometimes end up swimming into the unknown, discovering the arcane complexity of English grammar. It seems like I’m in love with these waters.

My indulgence with grammar is now mainly due to my line of work and a bit because of my curiosity, but could I express myself better or communicate more effectively if it were perfect? Thanks to our intellectual, learned and successful circle of friends, I regularly get the chance to discuss worldly matters with the engineers, IT specialists, team leaders, project managers and executives of multinational companies where English is the working language. Trust me, I hear mistakes; I hear incorrect sentence constructions all the time. I hear non-native grammar! Most of the time, the speakers aren’t even aware of their mistakes, but they are still successful negotiators. Is this unawareness of their mistakes the reason for their confidence? To tell the truth, I didn’t even know about a few grammatical pitfalls until I did my CELTA certification. Until then, I didn’t even recognize slightly flawed English. Now I know the pitfalls. I hear the mistakes. I myself make a few mistakes since they are ingrained, but does that change the effectiveness of my communication with my peers or friends?

At the end of the day, it boils down to “...but you can understand me, right?”



Bela Nagar is originally from India. Before moving to Starnberg in 2007, she lived in the US for seven years. Since she got her CELTA certification in 2015, Bela has been teaching business English at various companies and English conversation at the VHS Starnberg and Planegg. Bela is also a member of ScienceLab e.V. and enjoys doing science experiments with little kids.

What exactly do we teach?

Many years of experience in teaching in Germany and China have taught **Helen Stoemmer** a thing or two about how knowledge of our own culture is crucial to effective language teaching.

We Melta members all teach our mainly German clients how to use and improve some foreign language either at a VHS, or other adult training institute or even in-house at companies. And most of us have been in this “business” for several years and have experienced the one-or-other odd situation and maybe not known how to help the client or even understand why certain things just didn’t seem to sink in.

I started working at the Moosburg VHS in fall of 1991. At that time, they did not expect or require any kind of pedagogical training, and so, being the resident native speaker, I got the job, no further questions asked. Since then, we all have gone through a EUOLTA training program to comply with Germans’ love of and need for provable qualification, and I was one of the first to take part in the program to become certified here in Moosburg.

Do not misunderstand me; I loved the program for several reasons. It got me out of the house for the training weekends, and the workshops were lots of fun. They gave me insights into the whys and hows of teaching and working with adults. And, just as importantly, it gave me a sense of having achieved something when I was awarded the EUOLTA Certificate.

But coming back to the question in the title — what exactly do we teach? We have to be aware of something that we were not taught in this or any other additional training program: language transports culture. This always plays a role in all attempts to assist and train our clients to communicate in a foreign language. We’ve all probably dealt with similar difficulties concerning differences of English and German grammar — how to heave your client from A2 to B1 level, trying to make them understand that memorizing grammar rules + memorizing oodles of vocabulary + rules on sen-

tence structure, etc. does not make for correct use of English, right? Of course, it might also be helpful if you knew another foreign language, to make visible comparisons of grammar and structural differences.

Once learnt, not easily forgotten is the premise here. Add to that the amazingly resilient stubbornness of Bavarians, and you just cannot get rid of the incorrect use of, for instance, the present perfect in English. We’ve all heard it: “Ich bin gestern nach Landshut gefahren”. Your stomach cramps, your face goes blank, you bite your lower lip, and then you start to dig deep into your mental collection of exercises that might help...yet even after everyone remembers that, as soon as you use a time expression, you cannot use the present perfect in the English language, the very next time someone should be using simple past, they give you another version of the above and you begin to question your sanity.

Your stomach cramps, your face goes blank, you bite your lower lip, and then you start to dig deep into your mental collection of exercises that might help.

It only took a short time for me to realize that there is a great language divide in Germany (hence my example from Bavaria) which I have placed at about the Main river. It seems to be the case that those north of this “border”, can use the present perfect correctly. And another bit of grammar nightmare, the use of the present progressive, is more easily and correctly used in those states where they say things like: “Ich bin am arbeiten”.



These are episodic examples of grammar issues, but what does this have to do with “What exactly we teach”? I must add a bit of personal history here. I had a revelation in attempting to answer that question after I had been to China where I taught English, as well as German to Chinese adults. By that time, I had collected 25+ years of EFL experience in Germany and was now confronted with other problematic language situations. I had to delve deep into Chinese culture, the history and development of the Chinese language — and how this extremely complex language is taught — to start to see through the fog of my own ignorance. I realized that one of the main aspects of language learning of Chinese was through the memorization of thousands of characters. That alone shows how quickly the parts of language can be learned and how much discipline it takes from an early age on to achieve that. Another huge difference between Chinese and any Latin-based language can be seen in the structure — Chinese needs context to be understood and is therefore ambiguous. In contrast, western languages are explicit: a chair is a chair is a chair. The manner of communication is also extremely indirect, which is a nightmare for westerners – for example, Germans – who need things to be clear, concise and logical. There’s nothing wrong with that, but most of the Asian world does not communicate that way. >

Further adventures in lexical teaching

Cathy Pilgram reports on Hugh Dellar's online workshops "More than just the answers" and "Colligation — following patterns" on 6 June 2020.

Putting together insights I have gained from reading up on how our own culture influences how we interact with people from other cultures (as defined by Dutch trainer, Geerd Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory), using my knowledge of an ongoing study on using the nine dimensions of culture developed by GLOBE, a global leadership project, and describing how these nine aspects of culture effect global business, I felt I had an answer.

We've probably all heard of the different ways to depict "culture" before – such as the iceberg model, the onion or layer model and the tree model. So, what does that mean for us as trainers of English? What does it mean for teachers of German to immigrants, refugees and people hoping to become German citizens? If you do not know about your own culture and about yourself as an individual from that culture, you will not communicate the new foreign culture or, consequently, the new language culture to your clients – you must be aware of what it is you are teaching.



Helen Stoemmer is an American born in Benghaazi, Libya. From birth to age 18, she moved to and visited many incredible places all over the world. After meeting her husband and having two children in Germany, her family moved to Beijing, China, in 2006. She began teaching English in Moosburg in 1991, and so, after returning to Germany in 2016, she went back to teaching English at the VHS Moosburg.



What do you do when you check answers? Are you a human answer key, or do you try to give students something more? Knowing a word involves knowing its contextual meaning, spelling and pronunciation, synonyms, antonyms, co-hyponyms, connotations, register, word forms, word family and usage. Teaching meaning is easily covered by translating, telling a short story, using visuals, acting, drawing or pointing. Usage is harder. Synonyms are not interchangeable, and words may have several antonyms. The opposite

of "dry" is either "wet" or "sweet", depending on the context.

Hugh told us to beware of coursebooks that "teach themselves". Many vocabulary exercises focus on single words, requiring students to match words with pictures, meanings or synonyms, or to spot the "odd one out". Students who already know the words are not learning much. Exercises involving collocations are better, but knowing the right collocations does not enable students to speak in whole sentences or tell stories. Teachers should give students extra collocations and whole-sentence examples instead. Exercises featuring whole sentences are often gap-fill exercises. Longer examples allow you to point out features such as collocations, chunks or common patterns.

During the workshop, we selected questions in vocabulary exercises to supplement with extra collocations and whole sentence examples. Because presenting extra examples for each question slows down the lesson, teachers need to choose examples to highlight during lesson planning.

While concept-checking questions (CCQs) are helpful to check grammar, they do not help with vocabulary that has already been taught, for example through pictures. Hugh showed us CCQs for the word "helmet" and asked us to find better questions using the word "helmet".



Hugh Dellar has over twenty-five years' experience in the field and is the co-founder of Lexical Lab. He has co-authored two five-level General English series, *Outcomes and Innovations*, both published by National Geographic Learning, as well as one level of the high school series *Perspectives*. His first methodology book, *Teaching Lexically*, came out via Delta Publishing in 2016 (see review p. 34). Most recently, he has worked on two levels of the new Pearson General English series, *Roadmap*.



Hugh's examples were:

- In what jobs or activities do people usually wear a helmet?
- Why do people wear them?
- What do you do with a helmet — what verbs go with it?
- What else might you wear along with a helmet?
- When might you say, “Luckily he was wearing a helmet”?

These questions generate a lot of language input from students.

When presenting vocabulary, focus on colligations as well as collocations. Colligations are the grammar structures that follow words. Words colligate differently in different languages. In English, the verb “want” is followed by an infinitive, for example: “My father wants me to study”. Other languages colligate want with a clause e.g. “my father wants that I study”. In English, “happen” colligates with the active voice. In other languages, you can use the passive with “happen”. Students need to see these differences.

Students' errors often lie outside the ELT canon. Consider the example “Drive carefully. It's a really thick fog outside”. One problem is “a fog”, as “fog” is uncountable. In addition, “foggy” is more common in English than “fog”. It is more natural to say: “It's really foggy outside”. Hugh invited us to share authentic whole sentence examples with “fog” (e.g. “All flights out of Heathrow have been cancelled because of the

fog.”) and to discuss the grammar in the examples with students.

Many students speak English using L1 structures. To progress, they need to learn to use English structures. Translation can be used to make students aware of this. It is easier for students to translate into their L1 than into English. Ask students to translate an English sentence into their native language. Collect the L1

Hugh's vision of language teaching is not like putting layers of bricks and cement on top of each other, but rather of mixing cement.

translations and show them to the students in the next lesson. Get them to translate the L1 sentences back into English. Then compare students' translations with the original sentence.

Children take time to learn correct grammatical forms in their native language, and students assimilate English colligations gradually. The switch from using L1 forms to using English structures is usually unconscious. Before they can make the change, they need lots of authentic input.

When teaching words, we should pay more attention to colligation,

collocation and co-text. Examples are as important as definitions. They are prime students for normal usage. Students need sufficient exposure to become proficient. Teachers can shortcut the process by providing high-reward input.

Hugh's vision of language teaching is not like putting layers of bricks and cement on top of each other, but rather of mixing cement. We need to keep throwing in and mixing language and expect that some things will stick with learners.

I found the workshops intensive and informative. We went into breakout rooms frequently. I often felt like a student who had not quite understood what the task was and had to learn to make a screen shot of the task before joining the breakout room. The workshops confirmed my observation that checking answers can encourage interesting student discussions.



Cathy Pilgram is originally from England but has lived in Munich for over 30 years. She teaches at two VHS locations and translates for an online magazine.

The elephant in the Zoom

Arthur Barton reports on the workshop led by Daniel Payne on 12 May 2020.

Daniel's talk was full of useful tips about how to use Zoom, and because we started the evening before the workshop was due to begin, it was a good opportunity to ask questions.

Tip 1

If your students find it difficult to get into a session by clicking on the link in an invitation email, they should copy the link and paste it to their browser. This often solves the problem.

Tip 2

If you, as host, are recording a Zoom meeting, then use the integrated webcam on your laptop or use a webcam attachment on the top of your screen. If you use a background picture, don't wear light colours; otherwise, your light colours will become the screen for your background picture, and your head will stand out from the picture like a disembodied spirit. Avoid having a bright window behind you for the same reason.

When you are using Zoom, it is a good idea to mute your mic to stop feedback loops in the audio. You can



Daniel Payne has been ELTAF Treasurer for many years and a freelance English teacher since 2007. He teaches in company and works for various universities of applied sciences. He teaches soft skills, academic writing, presentations, business ethics, organisation and negotiations. Daniel is interested in information technology and enjoys bringing IT into the classroom.

simply unmute your microphone by holding down the space bar while you talk.

Sharing

You can share your screen or a particular element of your desktop but ONLY one thing at a time. To get around this handicap, you have to provide material to your students so that they can look at it directly on

Your head will stand out from the picture like a disembodied spirit.

their computers. This way, your laptop is not slowed down by excessive use of the bandwidth on your internet connection.

To avoid this dilemma, establish a cloud account, for example on Dropbox. This is free for up to 2GB, which is a lot of space for documents and even photos.

Here's an example: you want to use a short clip from a TED Talk as part of your lesson. Say you have ten participants. If you share your screen of the TED Talk, then you are using bandwidth twice — once to see the video yourself and again for your students to see the video on your connection. If you copy the link to the talk in your Dropbox, you can paste the link into the Zoom chat function, and the participants can just click on the link to go to the film. They then use their bandwidth to access the film, not your bandwidth. This should make your internet communication a lot more stable.

You should share PDF files, not Word documents, again to save bandwidth. A PDF is typically smaller than its original Word document.

Breakout sessions

You have to be the host to start a breakout session. If you want to show a PowerPoint presentation, you can do it best using two screens. One screen shows the presentation, and the second shows your notes to the presentation. Daniel showed us how this works, and it looked like a very effective way to do it. In my notes, I remarked: "Great Feature!" So, I must have been impressed at the time.

If you want to share something with a group in a breakout session, you have to join the breakout group as host first; then if you share the link to a Dropbox document or other file by copying and pasting the link into

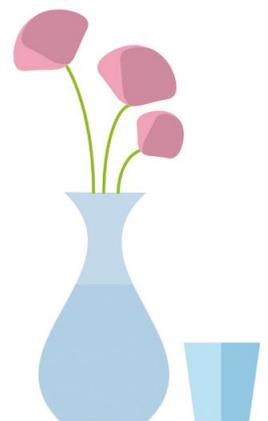
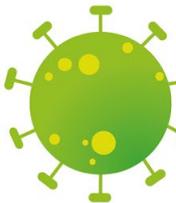


Image by Alexandra_Koch on Pixabay

the chat box, you give access to the file or document ONLY to the participants in the breakout room.

If you want to share a file or document with the whole class, you have to leave the breakout room first. (I'm not sure if you can share with everyone while the breakout sessions are still in session, or if you have to end the breakout session completely before you can share with everyone.)

Surveys

Using the paid version of Zoom, there is the facility to use surveys. The surveys can, of course, be prepared prior to a lesson. Daniel emphasised: the better the preparation,

the better the lesson. The survey adds a new dimension to the online lesson and is a facility that is not available in its anonymity in face-to-face classes. Using the technology, you get instant feedback from the class, and the participants see the feedback but not how others voted.

Whiteboard

The whiteboard function allows you to draw on the screen, but if you have to do it with the mouse, it is not very easy. If you have a tablet with touch screen facility, it is much easier to draw on it as you would in the classroom. This would work with a touch screen monitor.

Feedback

Audio feedback during online teaching can be very frustrating. If one of your participants is using a tablet, the recommendation is to mute the audio of that participant at least. Apparently, the microphone of the ipad is so sensitive that the microphone picks up sounds from its loudspeakers.

Daniel gave us some interesting links to TED Talks and other documents: www.dropbox.com/sh/nbsx-4ay28e4aon3/AADN8-luKyx3Lx-IoZJHL4NTya?dl=0

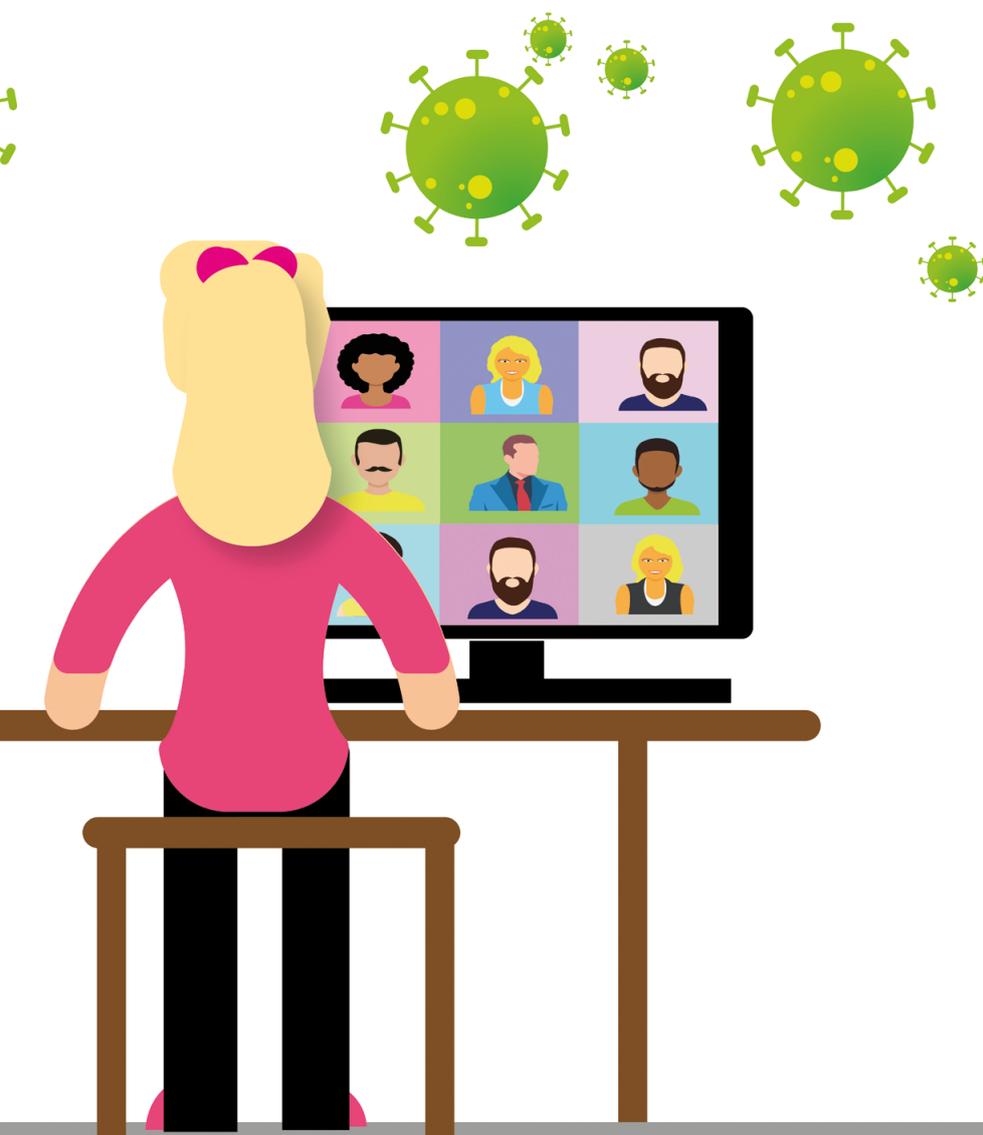


Arthur Barton is a retired accountant who has discovered the love of teaching at the wrong end of the career path.

He is interested in gardening, so all his participants become his cuttings to be nurtured, cared for and encouraged. Following best traditions, he talks to them.

They read a lot and discuss the books they read. They suffer with coursebooks, but as little as possible, and his plants grow and get stronger each year. He sees no danger of them turning into

Triffids ... yet.



Activities for online teaching

Nicki Denise was virtually present at Pete Sharma's workshop on 23 May 2020. Here, she reports on the webinar.

Pete Sharma was my first ever ELT trainer. Back in 1990, he came into my class to observe a lesson. I was using *Headway Intermediate*. The students had their books open in front of them, and I had my tape recorder ready to play the listening comprehension track, rewinding to the start by referring to a little counter button next to the tape reel. How things have changed since then. I threw away my last audio tapes recently, along with the floppy disks from my first computer-based lessons.

Pete has years of experience teaching and training teachers, and in recent years, he has co-written several books connected to his interest in blended learning. So who better to invite to give a helping hand to us poor Melta souls suddenly flailing around in a world filled with zoom-bombing, screen sharing, virtual waiting rooms and breakout rooms? Although Pete is already a familiar face in the Munich Gasteig conference rooms, this time he joined us



Pete Sharma is a Temporary Teaching Fellow at Warwick University where he works in a team moving a face-to-face Pre-Sessional EAP (English for Academic Purposes) course online. He has worked as a language teacher in Spain, Finland and the UK, teaching both general English and business English. As a teacher trainer, he has worked in a pedagogical team with responsibility for centres in the UK and Germany. He is specialised in using educational technology and has delivered webinars on many aspects of language learning. His latest book is *Best Practices for Blended Learning*.

from the comfort of his own kitchen somewhere in Middle England.

With all our students encouraged to work from home during the Covid-19 crisis, we had already been avidly beavering away, getting to grips with the new technology which could facilitate some sort of continuity to our teaching schedule. Thanks to Melta, we had already had several chances to practise with and on each other, sending colleagues off into breakout rooms (sometimes banished into the ether, never to be seen again), or desperately trying to share messages on virtual whiteboards. We'd been doing a pretty good job of it, but now was our chance to have a real pro in our midsts.

Pete started out by forgetting to turn his microphone on, just to show us that even the pros can make mistakes. I think this is an important point to remember. As Pete explained, our students do not expect us to be IT whizzkids and are usually pretty tolerant of us not quite getting things right when teaching them online.

The main aims of the webinar were "to identify key differences between teaching in a classroom and online, to provide ideas by engaging participants in online activities for language teaching, and to allow Melta members to gain more experience in using Zoom". Looking into how face-to-face and online teaching overlap, we thought about how we should take the best elements from this grey zone, as well as find solutions for the worst elements. For example, communication includes facial expression and gesture, signalling and turn-taking, and these things are more difficult via video than in the classroom. To show possible solutions, Pete conducted the webinar in the way teachers like best: learning by doing. He demonstrated the importance of giving clear instructions to aid communication. ("Please type 'Y' in the chat if

you can hear the audio recording." We couldn't.) He also used some of us as guinea pigs, trying out interactive grammar activities online on a small group of volunteers. Not always easy to drag and drop under pressure, but we had a go!

With all our students encouraged to work from home during the Covid-19 crisis, we had already been avidly beavering away.



Pete also pointed out the advantages of a video-based lesson: while it is perhaps more difficult to give spontaneous feedback on a student's language, you have the opportunity to go over the recording of the session afterwards to be able to really study what the student says, leading to very rich feedback.

He also underlined the fact that there is a lot out there to help us adapt. There are many books that share tips and ideas for online teaching, as well as platforms, and digital books available from all the usual ELT publishers. We should also learn to time our lessons differently: taking into account the lost minutes dealing with technical instructions and moving between the different functions, such as breakout rooms and screen shares. The final message is clear: there are pitfalls and things will and do go wrong. But we can manage it!



Nicki Denise has been teaching English in Munich for over twenty years and in all sorts of domains, from teaching children to teaching seniors, as well as in companies and in universities. Beforehand, she taught in the UK and worked as a director of studies in France. Passionate about learning as well as teaching, in recent years, she successfully completed the DELTA at Munich VHS and an English MA at the LMU. Current interests: playing scrabble online, binge-watching Netflix and Zooming.

Business writing: does it still exist?

Dana Jelinkova reports on the first of two workshops in an event called "Business topics — a closer look", led by Rachel Appleby (see bio p. 28 on 20 June 2020).



Rachel began her workshop by asking an intriguing question about business writing. She then offered a tip on how to make writing for work come alive: keep it fast, concise and compelling.

She focused on emails and writing for social media and went through a variety of activities we can use to keep students motivated and help them to improve their writing. For emails, students can add subject lines, order sentences, fill the gaps, pair off formal and informal phrases, or replace words with more appropriate or interesting expressions ("nice" has a lot of synonyms). Rachel also made me think about unhelpful, redundant words we sometimes read or write (e.g. why say "free gift" when giving should never be selling, right?). And I would like to thank her for including a mnemonic poem summarising the four steps necessary for most emails:

Something old, something new,
what to do, we love you!

Another area that increasingly needs our attention is social media writing. There are millions of posts written every day; students of English should be encouraged to read, evaluate and write these as well. This type of public writing has its conven-

"Nice" has a lot of synonyms.

tions and formats, which are worth looking into. Rachel urged us to use examples, analyse the genre, identify key features, keep the language simple (even plain, having mentioned Plain English Campaign) and, importantly, consider the target reader.

So, dear readers of this Melta News magazine, I can confirm that Rachel kept her workshop fast, concise and compelling, and I hope you enjoy dealing with business writing in the future. And, dear Rachel, thank you for your inspiring workshop — we love you! 😊



Dana Jelinkova has taught numerous general and business English courses in Prague and Munich and, as a CELTA tutor, enjoys the challenge of training future teachers.

Essentials of teaching legal English

On 1 August, HELTA's Vincent Wongaiham-Petersen hosted a workshop by Kirk Beahm on the essentials of teaching legal English to HELTA members and members of other ELTA groups across Germany — including Melta. **Sarah Herrmann-Hopwood** was online, dipping her toe into the world of legal English teaching expertise — not for the faint-hearted!

Kirk kicked off with great speed and covered function words, inserted phrases, pronouns, content words and punctuation using some great authentic examples. He talked about the challenges of working with more than 250 possible function words within legal documents — many are used solely in legal documents.

Then Kirk advised us to pay special attention to inserted phrases. These are the parts of legal sentences that are not the core subject, verb or object — such as “pursuant to...”. These phrases can be varied, long and complex and need to be broken down with your students, who often struggle with this. That the subject and object themselves can be phrases or long lists adds more to the complexity.

There may also be many pronouns and determiners in a contract. It can get confusing for the students as to who or what is being written about, so it may help them to practise these.

Content words are important, but any sane person can get overwhelmed by the jargon uncommon in everyday English and very dependent on the industry, area of law and type of document. If you are faced



Helta events coordinator (and space adventurer) Vincent Wongaiham-Petersen welcomes the enthusiastic participants on Zoom.

with an English legal document full of jargon, then ask your students to put it into plain English. To help with this, you can ask your students to create thematic vocabulary lists based on contract or agreement source documents from their company. Here we also need to take care, as some meanings in lawyer-speak mean something different in plain

ered three areas, all of which can be lessons in their own right. He included some great examples to help us novice legal eagles.

Parsing is an essential skill. Practise with your students how to identify the subject (noun phrase), main verb and object.

Top tip: having a student find the main verb (likely amongst the many verbs in one sentence!) is a good way of checking their level.

Essentializing — a Kirk word — is the process of reducing a long, complicated legal sentence to its core subject, verb and object component, i.e. its essential parts (SVO in shorthand). This is a very good skill for the student to practise. As English teachers, we need to make our students aware that information can get lost amongst the complicated sentences, and we should help them find and understand the core meaning. “Reducing” is the art of reducing a lot of phrasing to the core context and meaning and is mostly for advanced students.

We ended the session with virtual breakouts to discuss our experiences with legal English teaching, which was very interesting.



Kirk Beahm is an educational consultant and second-language acquisition specialist. His works include the founding of the BridgeRise approach. Since 2018, he has worked with Alexandra Mareschi to form *The Legal Professional*, a publication dedicated to learning materials and professional development for English for the legal industry.

An apostrophe or a comma
in the wrong place
can spell trouble.

English: furnish, for example.

Punctuation comes into its own within legal documents. For any of us who have worked with contracts, service-level agreements, and non-disclosure agreements (the famous NDAs), we know that an apostrophe or a comma in the wrong place can spell trouble.

The second half of the session was the most useful to me. Kirk cov-

The plain English movement is good and important in the legal context:

- avoid ambiguity, i.e. the use of too much jargon
- context is everything
- consider the different bodies of law
- cultural awareness is essential
- teaching legal English is not translation
- use authentic material wherever possible.

Like every specialized teaching English topic, preparation is everything. Legal English requires extra time to get to know your subject, but the work will bring rewards, as you share your love of English with students who love working with language and all its complexities.

Related links and information:

Alternative sources for content are TED Talks and the magazine *Business Spotlight*. *Legal Writing in Plain English* by Bryan A Garner is a recommended read.

BridgeRise (www.bridgerise.de)

Legal English consulting

(www.legalenglish-koeln.eu)



Sarah Herrmann-Hopwood was born in the UK. She studied chemistry at Sheffield University and then taught chemistry and science. Sarah then moved to London and started her marketing and advertising career. For 25 years, Sarah worked for advertising agencies around the world. Sarah recently completed the CELTA course at the MVHS and works teaching general and business English in Erding, Munich and online.

On Fridays at two
 It's nice to be with you
 Let's welcome Lady Zoom
 Bid farewell to online gloom
 For now with links and clicks we earn
 So much to see and do and learn
 Whiteboard, chats and break-out rooms
 No fear of sharing screens doth loom
 Step by step we tread our path
 We're even Zooming in the bath!

By Juliana Oosten

Personalised input: minimum prep and maximum impact

Pauline Webb reports on the first of two workshops in an event called “Business topics — a closer look”, led by Rachel Appleby on 20 June 2020.



Anyone looking for a distraction from the Saturday afternoon pouring rain found one at Rachel Appleby's webinar event. We certainly had no time to ponder, as we were immersed in one interactive task after the other: chat rooms, breakout rooms, polls, annotations, smartphones at the ready for Mentimeter and Padlet contributions — you name it, we did it. Variety and involvement were the order of the day. Rachel demonstrated how, when preparing and delivering our lessons, “personalised input” and “minimum preparation” can have “maximum impact”.

For effective teaching, we need to establish what it is that matters to our students. Only then can we foster greater involvement and heightened engagement. In the first part of her presentation, Rachel concentrated on five areas to help us find out what matters to our students.

Relate to your students' line of work

Rachel began by illustrating how we can relate to our students' line of work — whether it be jargon-filled insurance or plastic pipes. Specialist

knowledge is not needed — just the creativity to transfer our own life experiences into our students' world. She demonstrated how the misfortune of a stolen briefcase became a teaching opportunity by working through her complicated claim form

Variety and involvement were the order of the day.

with a group of insurance students. Similarly, her brother's quest to unblock the drainage system for Sheikh Mohammed in Dubai provided the perfect connection (pardon the pun — I couldn't resist) to the plastic

pipework company she was working with at that time. Therefore, by incorporating what we, a relative or friend have done or experienced into our students' work brings many benefits:

- It bridges the gap between our (lack of) knowledge and their expertise.
- It helps demonstrate our interest in their work.
- It exploits follow-up language work.

Corporate materials

We then moved on to the topic of using corporate materials in our classrooms. Rival websites were compared to highlight how it is far

easier to criticise other people's work than our own. The transportation websites of Budapest, London and Munich were contrasted, providing insights into differing company design and ideology.

Finding out about the students and their needs

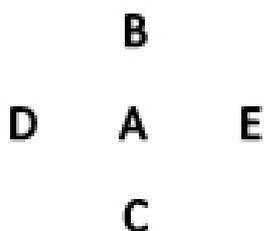
Rachel then stressed the importance of a technique we all use so often: “How was your weekend?”. This familiar question generates a lot of information, input useful for a later point and even a needs analysis. It tells us a lot about potential issues and barriers to learning.

Frameworks are a perfect medium to find out about our students, as they help structure talk about common issues at work. However, being nothing more than “empty boxes”, they neither prescribe a level, nor suggest language, but instead give



Rachel Appleby is a CELTA and LCCI CertTEB trainer working as a British Council trainer for EMI (English Medium of Instruction) for university staff and Teaching for Success courses and training for TheConsultants-e. She teaches on university BA and MA programmes (Corvinus, ELTE Universities Budapest) but likes to focus on business English and one-to-one teaching. She also prepares final-year school students who are applying to study at English-speaking universities. Rachel is co-author of Macmillan's *The Business* (Advanced), OUP's *Business one:one* series and *International Express* 3rd edition, and various teachers' books for OUP (*Business Result*, *Navigate*, etc.)

that language a context and organise thinking:



You are “A” in the middle. Think of whom you communicate with (B, C, D, E), how you do it and what you communicate about.

Your last meeting in English:

- Who was it with?
- When was it?
- Where was it?
- Why did it take place?

Through these “communicative events”, we gain an insight into the topics, needs, interests and language for our lesson-shaping.

Industry-related podcasts

Industry-related podcasts, such as the *TEFL Commute*, *IH* and *The Tefology* help both students and teachers to stay engaged, interested and forward-looking. However, as with all materials, care needs to be taken to ensure content, language and level are appropriate. When assigning such tasks, the KWL chart can help:

What did you know already?

What did you want to find out?

What have you learnt?

Coursebook use and personalisation

Finally, Rachel briefly pointed out how the beginning and end of each section of a coursebook can bring a text to life. Used creatively, they

become perfect springboards for personalisation and insightful discussion.

With the first part over, it was time for coffee and a breather before part two on business writing. And ah... It had stopped raining. I hadn't noticed.

Something new you'd like to learn

This is a simple activity I think would work well in both online and face-to-face classes.

Procedure:

Divide the class into small groups of three to five participants.

The participants describe something they'd like to learn and explain how and why they'd like to learn it.

They discuss whether the subject can be learned online, only face to face or in both environments.

They report the results of their discussions to the open group.

We did this activity in the breakout rooms at Pete Sharma's recent workshop. One participant in my group wanted to learn to make stained glass windows. Another wanted to raise her German to a more sophisticated level. A third wanted to learn swing dancing. The resulting discussion was very lively and interesting. Thanks, Pete, for the idea.

By Joan Walsh



Pauline Webb has been working in Munich forever. Her modern languages and HR background still come in very useful in her role as business and general English trainer and speaking examiner.



Show and tell: online pick n' mix

On 18 July, **Zoe Kostarev** was able to “escape” from the kids for a couple of hours and participate in another entertaining and informative Melta webinar, this time hosted by our very own Jo Westcombe. Melta members shared with the group some of their favourite tools and activities they have been using to teach online.



We kicked off with Jo demonstrating *Mentimeter.com* by getting us all to type in what we would order from a Biergarten if we had been able to do our usual summer meet up (sigh). Mentimeter is a great tool for generating ideas, getting feedback and starting conversations. Stefan Fodor then demonstrated Quizizz to us — an online platform for designing and running your own quiz. This can also be used to set homework, as the participants can do the quiz when they choose, and you, as the host, can check the results and see who got what right or wrong. I then jumped in with a Kahoot demo based on a short video. Kahoot is another online quiz-setting platform, which is great for generating student engagement and interaction.

After a short break, Jo showed us *WheelDecide.com*, another excellent tool, which allows students to “participate” by clicking on the wheel and generating the topics. We also explored Flinga, a collaborative tool where you can set projects, homework tasks and develop ideas and activities. It’s a bit like Padlet, but you get more for free 😊. Joan opened our eyes to Simple English Videos, a series of videos produced by Vicki Hollett, the author of numerous business-English textbooks. Some of the videos are

only ninety seconds long, and they focus on different aspects of English that are problematic for learners. The clip Joan presented was about the use of the verb “mind” as used in making requests and asking for permission. Not only did I find these videos informative but also entertaining — which is always a bonus!

Tim Howe then showed us one of his favourite BBC Radio 4 programmes called *The Bottom Line*, presented by the wonderful Evan Davies (a role-model speaker for learners who like to hear English spoken slowly and VERY clearly). With special guests speaking on a topical issue each week, it’s a treasure trove of interview material. And, unlike coursebook listening material, with its invariably short shelf life, you’re always guaranteed the latest news and views. In the episode “How we work now — lessons from lockdown”, Evan Davis invites three experts to give their take on working from home. Will behaviours that have been picked up during lockdown stick, he asks. In the clip, learners have to decide whether three statements are true or false. It makes a good springboard for a discussion on the pros and cons of “remoting”. You can download the podcast as an mp3 or simply play it directly online.



Jo Westcombe first got involved with Melta last century and has worked in several different EFL contexts. She is currently teaching in Zoomland.

As the end of our time was approaching, we played around with the Kanban on Cryptpad, a collaborative document you can add text to and move around (useful for collecting vocabulary or other content from different sources. You can also use it to separate text, which you can then paste into different elements (grammatical, lexical, etc.). At the end of the session, Jo put us into breakout rooms to discuss and try out the various platforms we had looked at. After a very enjoyable couple of hours, I was pleased to take away lots of excellent new ideas and tools to use in my online classroom.

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Zoe Kostarev was born in the UK and lived in Paris before moving to Munich in 2009. She worked for over ten years in sales, recruitment and management, completing an MBA whilst on maternity leave. She has been teaching English for nearly two years since completing her CELTA course at MVHS, and she is loving every minute of it.

Joan Walsh and Randy Perry under interrogation

Juliana Oosten speaks with Melta committee members **Joan Walsh** and **Randy Perry** about their experiences teaching English in Munich and how it has changed since they arrived in the 1980s.

I've known Joan and Randy since the summer of 1989. It was language which brought us together, and we've stayed in touch ever since.

Recently, the three of us got together on Zoom, and I found out a bit more about these very active and dedicated Melta members from Ireland and the USA.

Juliana: Let's start at the very beginning. Where are you from exactly?

Joan: I'm from the picturesque Nire Valley in County Waterford. I grew up on a mixed farm with a little bit of this, that and the other, as was common in those days.

Randy: I was raised in Midland, an oil town in West Texas, so my childhood was characterized to a large extent by sandstorms, mesquite trees, rattlesnakes and tumbleweeds. I'm not particularly sorry I left.

Juliana: And the Irish/US combo, how does that work?

Joan: Well I've definitely expanded my knowledge of the different types of American English, and Randy has learned all about potato varieties beyond those of Idaho and Maine!

Juliana: What made you come to Munich? Were you on the run?

Joan: Not exactly, but I wanted to travel, experience the world beyond the island and learn languages. On my way to the warmer climes of

Spain, I ended up in Marseilles for 15 months. I made a lot of German friends there, and decided to experiment with learning German in Germany for a while before moving on to my next stop.

Randy: I was working for a financial company in New York, paying back my student debts basically. Feeling stuck in a bit of a rut and tired of the stress, noise and sleepless nights of downtown Manhattan, I thought Munich might be a change. And it was.

Juliana: What changes have you seen in Munich since arriving here in the 80s?

Joan: For me, one huge change has been the expansion of the underground and the public transport system in general. Since I don't drive, that's a high priority. And of course, the greater variety of food. Back in the early days, it was mainly Schweinebraten und Knödel (roast pork and dumplings) on offer in most restaurants.

Randy: Munich has become much more international and far more people speak English now. When I arrived here nearly 40 years ago, you had to speak German if you wanted to be understood at the bank, in the post office and in shops and offices. That was a major incentive to learn the local language — not necessarily a bad thing.

Juliana: How did you start teaching English? Did you already have a lot of experience and training, or did you jump in at the deep end?

Joan: When I came to Munich, the VHS was screaming out for native English speakers, but I didn't really want to get involved in teaching. My mother was a teacher, so I wanted to do something different. It was friends who indirectly persuaded me to try it out! But as a native speaker, I was highly respected and even spoilt, and this made it a very positive experience



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.



Born and raised in West Texas, **Randy Perry** has spent most of his life outside the Lone Star State: in Massachusetts, New York and, since 1981, Munich. Having taught business English for many years, he now translates, teaches English short stories and poems at the Munich VHS and helps organize teacher exchange programs with schools and universities in Ukraine. In his spare time, he also works with refugee support groups. A long-time Melta member, he's very interested in discovering new ways to learn and teach foreign languages more effectively.

even if some students weren't happy with my not using any German at all around them.

Randy: My first year in Munich, I supported myself by selling the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in restaurants and cafés. But there didn't seem to be a big future in that. So, one day I put an ad in the *SZ* and landed a job teaching English at Motorola four mornings a week. I had no training and no professional experience. This gave me many opportunities to make a complete fool of myself before large numbers of people — opportunities I was not slow to seize.



Joan singing (?) at a workshop in Kyiv in 2006

Juliana: What environments have you taught in?

Joan: VHS, in-company, 20 years at Siemens Training Centre, as well as courses at the Munich Job Centre, and at all levels.

Randy: In-company, directly or via agencies, VHS evening classes, business and general English. I've also offered teacher training courses, "learning to learn" programs for students enrolling at the VHS and teacher-training workshops at schools in Ukraine.

Juliana: What do you find most rewarding about teaching?

Randy: The feeling you've actually taught somebody something — big or small — or maybe that you've communicated enthusiasm for the language or for learning in general. One particularly rewarding experience comes to mind. I conducted a teacher training workshop in Ukraine in the 1990s, and about three or four years ago, I ran into one of the participants again on the street in Kyiv. She told me my workshop had been so inspiring that it still continued to impact her teaching. And teaching is a "people business" but without the hierarchy that comes when you work at a company.

Joan: You get on a high when you have people who are happy and satisfied, enjoying themselves and making jokes, when the atmosphere is relaxed, when course participants appreciate what you're doing. I like the spontaneity, the proximity — first names and no formal "you". I very much enjoyed my time at Siemens. I got a lot of teaching experience in general, and in doing intensive courses in particular. There was a wide variety of people and professions, and the learners appreciated what I was there for.



Randy at a workshop in Kyiv in 2006

Juliana: Any embarrassing teaching experiences?

Randy: Yeah, lots. Going into the classroom with no experience, no training, desperately trying to entertain a group for 90 minutes. I still sometimes wake up in the night thinking, oh my God, did I really do that? Awkward things still happen in my lessons. I make teaching errors or have difficult students. But I hope I'm a bit better able to deal with those situations now.

Joan: I said to a beginner once: "*Du bist ein bisschen zurückgeblieben*". I didn't mean that she was mentally challenged but simply at a disadvantage as a pure beginner in a more advanced group. The lady herself didn't appear upset, but her friend was shocked. Neither came back the next week.

I had no training and no professional experience. This gave me many opportunities to make a complete fool of myself.

Juliana: How has English teaching changed since you started?

Randy: Due to more and better English instruction in schools, the level is generally higher when people join classes. German doesn't interfere as much these days. There are also infinitely more online resources: videos, podcasts, etc.

Joan: People are more gung-ho. They're not as fixated on having every word translated and are more open to innovative methods. And luckily, you still come across real beginners who need to start from scratch. That's when the job is really interesting and rewarding!

J&R: There's more focus now on lexis and communicative skills rather than just verb grammar. But some things never seem to change. Having mixed levels in one group still remains a challenge. And classroom dynamics, the personal issues or human factors are still extremely important despite all the technology and online courses on offer.

Juliana: How do you think Melta can benefit Munich's English-teaching community?

Joan: Melta was founded in 1989 to provide moral support and a platform for freelancers by regularly publishing a newsletter and offering workshops and social events. And those are still our goals today.

Randy: There's lots of room for improvement, of course. The people involved in the association are all volunteers working in their free time. They have jobs, families and other responsibilities. And we have to take that into consideration. Still, we'll keep soldiering on.

Juliana: What's the next step for Melta? What's its future?

Randy: The coronavirus pandemic has taught us that we can do a great deal more online. We can expand our online presence through webinars, which can, in turn, empower our members to get together in smaller self-help groups. We've already seen this happening as a result of our Zoom webinars.

We also want to expand into other channels. For example, we have a Twitter account which is currently not being used. The new, more interactive Melta website will hopefully be up and running by the time this issue appears. Generation change is another topic. For a while, membership was declining due to natural attrition — people retiring, leaving Munich or even dying. Now, we're growing again. Membership is up. So, we're getting fresh blood.

Juliana: Thank you very much for this extremely enlightening interview.



Juliana Oosten is originally from New Zealand and has been living in Munich since 1986. After doing a TEFL course in London, she began teaching English in a small language school and later focussed on in-company courses teaching general, business and technical English. She became a member of Melta at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, so Covid-19 has had some positive effects!

Teaching Lexically: Principles and Practice

Two teachers, **Betsy Hollweck** (see bio p. 9) and **Andreas Seiler**, give *Melta News* their perspectives on the book Hugh Dellar (see bio p. 22) has written with Andrew Walkley.

In the real estate world, the mantra is “location, location, location”. In the business world, it’s “plan your work, then work your plan”. When teaching lexically, it’s “principle, practicing the principle, then applying the principle”.

Dellar and Walkley have written a new book that introduces the lexical approach to teaching language. The lexical approach is based on the idea that words are more important than grammar. They explain that they do not care for the “traditional” approach to teaching a foreign language: “grammar + words (+ skills) = productive language”, opting for “from words with words to grammar”; indeed, their introduction page explains how and why they have come to their beliefs. They believe that communication depends more on vocabulary than on grammar, and it is more important to understand what or why something is said, not how.

The book is divided into three sections: A, B and C.

Section A talks about how and why people learn a language and states the six stages of learning a language:

- Understanding meaning
- Hearing/seeing examples of the language in context
- Approximating the sounds of the language
- Paying attention to the language itself and noticing its features
- Using the language
- Repeating these steps over time (including encountering and using the language again in other contexts)

The chapter also has observations and suggestions on lexically teaching vocabulary, grammar and skills. Something I really like here is that the main text is on the right side of the page, while on the left side are suggestions and references that would typically be footnoted (at the bottom or the end of the chapter), clarifying

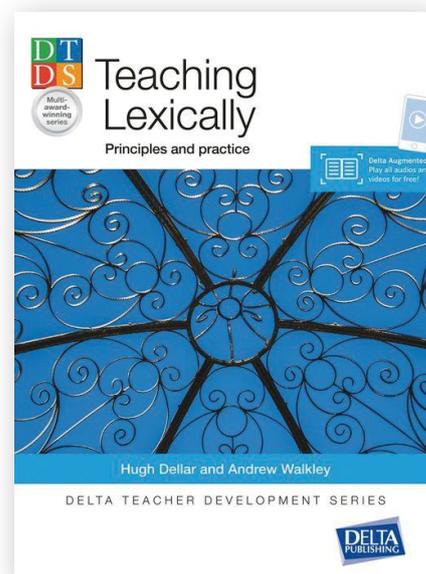
what is being discussed in that part of the text. Example: “For more on some of the problems caused by focusing on synonyms — and how to tackle them — see page 54”.

Section B contains training tasks and techniques for teaching lexically, which can be applied to course materials already in use. It introduces the methods principle, practising the principle, and applying the principle. There are six chapters here, which focus on vocabulary, grammar, speaking, reading, listening and writing (using said methods) and a 7th on “recycling and revising” (which really means repeating/repairing).

“If I say ‘leveraged-buyout’
when they want to hear
‘leveraged-buyout’, who cares
how I say it.”

Section C focuses on teachers. It discusses choosing materials, writing one’s own materials, working with what one does/doesn’t have available, in the lexical style. It discusses teaching in various settings: one-to-one, low-level learners, exam classes, teachers-in-training, and ends with a few words about introducing lexical teaching into traditionally structured environments.

It took me a long while to warm up to this book. The writing style is a bit wordy and often hard to follow, as it ping-pongs between the formal and informal. But there are many helpful suggestions, and I learned a new word: co-hyponym, a word in the same category as other like words. For example: cars, trucks and busses are all vehicles, so they are co-hyponyms.



All in all, I think that the book has more merits than drawbacks. I would find it useful, for instance, in teaching English as a Lingua Franca — where the emphasis is definitely on getting the message across, not on the style in which it is delivered. As my brother once said, “If I say ‘leveraged-buyout’ when they want to hear ‘leveraged-buyout’, who cares how I say it.” The Grammar Gods would not have been happy with him. But Lord Lexis may have been.

By Betsy Hollweck

The most recent webinar organized by Melta was a pleasant pastime. Hugh Dellar presented his topic of “further adventures in lexical teaching”. While he spoke about meaning, context (in use), collocations, and a bottom-up approach to teaching grammar, time just flew by. Reviewing Hugh Dellar and Andrew Walkley’s book called *Teaching Lexically* was a good opportunity to gain more in-depth knowledge. The book is divided into three main parts.

Part A introduces the main idea of teaching lexically. In contrast to language learning summarized as

“grammar + words + skills = productive language”, this book promotes an alternative concept, called teaching lexically. The authors use examples to demonstrate that there is rarely a clear line between vocabulary and grammar. For example, we don’t say “It is six less twenty” when someone asks us for the time. Everyone agrees we have to say “It is twenty to six”. Dellar and Walkley borrow from books such as *The Lexical Approach* (1993), by Michael Lewis, to develop their basic concept. We may understand teaching lexically as “teaching using syllabuses, materials, centred around collocation and chunks alongside large amounts of input from texts”. Basically, grammar rules and correct usage are expected to emerge naturally. Thus, in contrast to the grammar usually taught in coursebooks, this book favours “lexico-grammatical” patterns.

But do students struggle because they have too little vocabulary or too little experience of how words are used? And how can we implement the book’s concept? Part A gives us helpful advice. Sometimes, teachers may need to remember to ask students for whole sentences (or even texts) instead of single words. Also, we may want to encourage conversations that not only allow us to develop emergent language but also provide students with a “rehearsal space” for previously learned items. As teachers, we have to think quickly in order to react and then teach, especially when it comes to unexpected situations. Therefore, it is good advice to think about a possible “bias in decision making”, as we constantly make judgements of what is missing in the students’ language and how we want to work on that. The authors show how lexical teaching may be implemented gradually to any coursebook.

Part B addresses all the different variables of the equation usually expected to make productive

language. In terms of vocabulary, groups of words often go together. To some extent, so-called collocates determine the meaning of a partner word. Concerning idioms, we have several words but only one meaning. As teachers, we have to establish the meaning, but when teaching lexically, we also want to:

- 1) give other words likely to occur in the context of the given item
- 2) talk about the genre (the kind of text in which the item will be used)
- 3) provide antonyms
- 4) provide different word forms.

Furthermore, the lexical view of language explains that skills such as reading or listening cannot be treated separately from language. Poor skills are the result of language problems. For example, reading problems are usually the result of not knowing enough words (or combinations of words). Listening, a skill which requires the ability to hear different sounds and to recognize words in connected speech, presents further problems simply because conversations are organized differently from written texts. To address such issues, *Teaching Lexically* shows that vocabulary learned in combination with other words and grammar will inevitably improve skills. Dellar and Walkley’s book does not advocate a 180-degree turn. Instead, the book provides assistance in using existing coursebook activities but adds a greater focus on language at the same time. This is also true for writing. Usually, we organize writing as a process of several stages: brainstorming ideas, planning, drafting, getting feedback and redrafting. Writing lexically is not about abandoning this process but ensuring a proper amount of language teaching at every stage.

The authors encourage teachers to prioritize teaching words with other words above correctness. In

the end, we have to think about why students learn and how we, as teachers, can support them in everyday situations.

In this context, Part C of the book helps us to choose lexical material for different focus groups (e.g. one-to-one, low-level learners, EAP, and exam classes). Ending with a quote from Rainer Maria Rilke who states: “The only journey is the one within”, the book has the potential to broaden one’s view when it comes to teaching and the various nuances of language learning.

By Andreas Seiler

Dellar, Hugh, and Andrew Walkley. *Teaching Lexically: Principles and Practice*. Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Sprachen, 2018. Print.



Andreas Seiler is German and found his passion for the English language during his studies. He did a CPE and found the format to be very useful. As a CELTA graduate, he now wants to give something back and continue his journey into ELT.

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.

*Dear Aunt Agony,
I have an in-company group that has been going for a while. The participants are pretty fluent, hovering around C1 level. To keep the group going, they have invited some new blood to join. One young man is extremely fluent and fits in well. The other has a much lower level of English and should not really be in the group. As the company is only paying for one group at the moment, this could become problematic. So far, the other members have been very patient, waiting for him to find his words, but a solution needs to be found. Can you help?
Frantic in Freising*

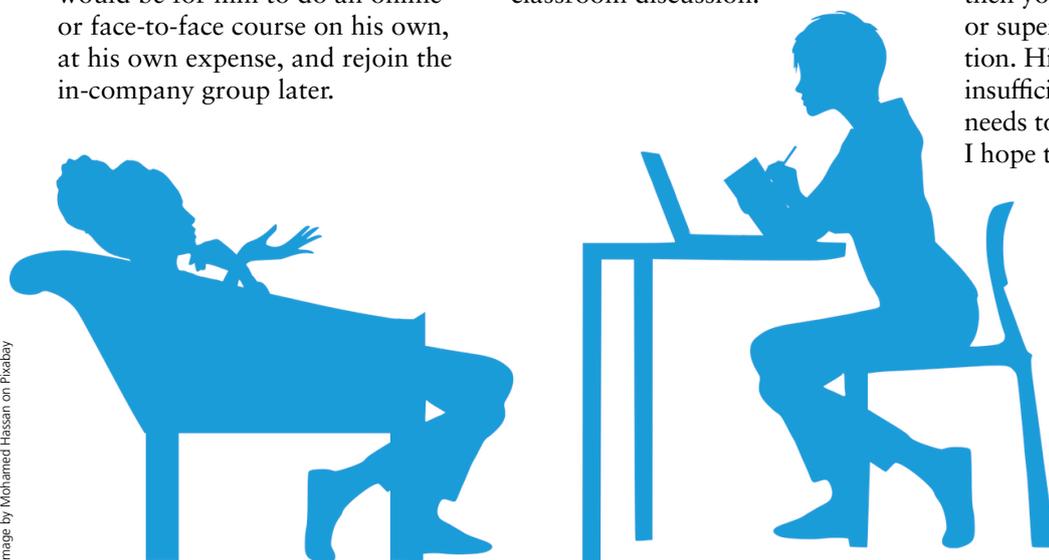
Dear Frantic,
Again, this is not an unusual situation, but a big challenge for the trainer. Perhaps you could talk to the participant on his own to see how he feels. If he's happy just to be in a course and doesn't feel intimidated by the others, you could make it clear to him that you have to maintain the original course level for the sake of the others. If, however, he feels out of his depth, he may want to talk to the powers that be and try to persuade them to create a new group. Yet another possibility would be for him to do an online or face-to-face course on his own, at his own expense, and rejoin the in-company group later.

*Dear Aunt Agony,
I have a small group of company executives whose levels are between B2 and C1. They basically do whatever I offer them, but they don't do homework and don't really remember new vocabulary. Should I just let them talk about their work and other topics and not worry about the progress they're making?
Nonplussed in Neuhausen*

Dear Nonplussed,
It's always a positive sign when our students are willing to talk about their work — after all, they are happily practising their fluency. To make progress, learning new lexis is part and parcel of this process. If they're not prepared to do the homework at home, then maybe you could incorporate some of it, at least, into the next lesson by making it interactive and monitor their progress there. Regardless of what topic they're talking about, they are going to need new words and phrases. You could maybe do a session with them on the board by giving them example sentences using the new language, put them into pairs and get them to come up with new example sentences themselves. Then use the students' examples for classroom discussion.

*Dear Aunt Agony,
Topic: A pleasant participant in a pre-intermediate company course. Level of understanding English: very high. Level of quality of output: very low. Issue: "Felix" likes to talk and talk in a combination of both English and German. He's oblivious to any kind of grammar rules or structures. We, the participants and I, continuously say: "All in English, Felix", but he just ignores us and rambles on. He doesn't see any point in changing his style in any way. What can we do?
Perplexed in Pullach*

Dear Perplexed,
Sadly, this is a problem in many courses. This is my advice: I think you, the trainer, have to take Felix aside and have a serious talk with him. If this is a regular occurrence, then the other participants are not benefiting very much from the lesson. Felix obviously likes to dominate and be heard and seems to be oblivious to everything going on around him. He needs to be told that if he wants to continue attending the course, he has to adhere to certain classroom rules and regulations. Praise him for his good points. If this doesn't work, then you may have to talk to his boss or superior about the ongoing situation. His level of output may also be insufficient for the group. Maybe he needs to attend a lower-level course. I hope this helps.



melta

Munich English Language Teachers Association e.V.
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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).

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

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- 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.

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.

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Basic membership costs £21 (less than half the price of a standard membership) and entitles you to receive newsletters and discounts to IATEFL events at a lower cost than if you became a full member. If you would like to take advantage of this offer, please send an email to the membership secretary, and ask for a copy of IATEFL's basic membership form. The completed form and payment should be sent directly to IATEFL.

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 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).

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 mistakes in this newsletter? We are looking for proofreaders, so please put your eagle eye to use and join our editing team! Please contact us at melta.news@melta.de.

We'd love to hear from you!

In memoriam

Melta members share fond memories of Vera Rossner, who died on 4 June 2020.

Vera Rossner née Neugebauer was born in Aussig, Czechoslovakia, in 1939 and came to Bavaria at the age of six as a refugee with her mother. She was Head of the English Department at the Munich VHS from 1971 to 1999.

For so many of us who knew Vera, her passing is a great loss, as she had been our long-time true companion for so many years, as a friend, host, soulmate, colleague, confidant and loved one. For years she was part of the MVHS staff. She always had an open ear for anyone of us entering her office or home, be it colleague, teacher, participant, friend, young and old — red sofa, frogs galore, flowers and always a smile and a tender word for everyone. Rarely have I met someone with such a soft and empathic voice to embrace her guests with understanding, humbleness and — most of all — time to listen. Vera, herself a refugee, was always there for people in need, to give back what life might have given her. If anyone, she would know what it means to be a refugee. Generations of teachers, colleagues and friends carry you in our hearts, Vera. You are missed dearly, and your humbleness and kindness will always be remembered well by so many of us. I am thankful and blessed to have known you for so many years.

Annette Born was Head of the English Department at the Munich VHS from 1999 to 2002. After her family phase and many years abroad, she re-joined the MVHS and now works as a career counsellor in the German Department.

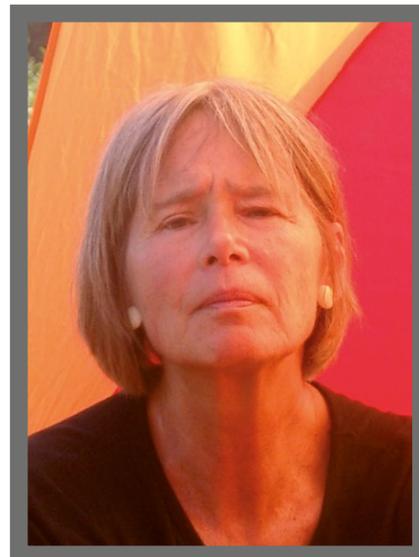


Vera Rossner was the first person to head the English department at the Munich VHS. She put her heart and soul into her work. She was both creative and innovative, always thinking up interesting and unusual programmes. One of these, in which I was personally involved, was The Irish Weekend, a series of events on Irish culture, music, dancing, history, literature and language. Vera always tried to provide teachers at the VHS with opportunities to excel and kept them up to date on workshops in and around Bavaria with inspiring speakers such as Mario Rinvolucris and Adrian Underhill. She was also the founder of the Ukraine teacher exchange project which is still alive today. In a nutshell, Vera tirelessly helped and supported people in their teaching careers and was a strong mother figure for many ex-patriots. We all regret the passing of a wonderful lady.

Our last email from Vera on 12 April 2020::

Hallo Ihr Lieben, thank you so much for your Easter greetings. Hope you are well — apart from problems around the virus here and further west. Does the MVHS take care of their teachers? Some of them used to depend on the MVHS Honorare — what are they going to do? Or has the situation changed since I retired 20(!) years ago? Best wishes and lots of love, Vera

Joan Walsh



Long before Tina stepped into our lives, we had another wonderful woman who kept us under her wing(s) and cared for our individual needs. Vera was always glad to see us teachers when popping up at her door. She almost always found time to have a little talk to us about work or our lives. I was fond of her for her openness and dedication to her work. Furthermore, I will never forget her understanding for us single mothers.

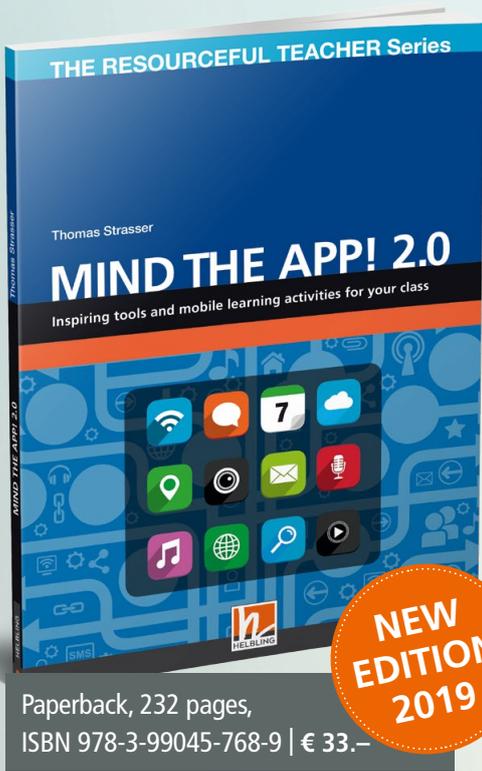
Sharon Slager

Those who knew Vera appreciated her character and her work and will never forget that she and the English Department of the MVHS were inseparably linked. Together with Gareth, she ran the department efficiently and did her utmost to make sure that both learners and teachers were happy. Dear Vera, we will always remember you and your humour.

Wolfgang Zillner



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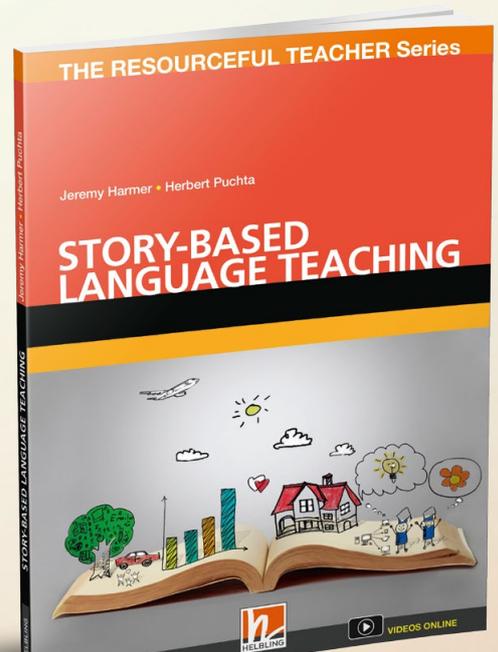
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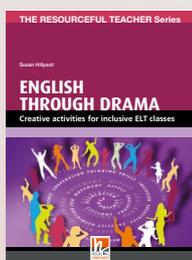
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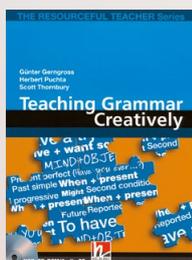
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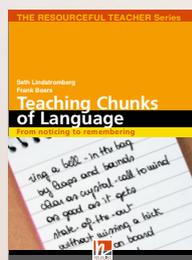
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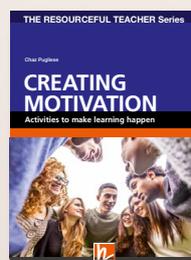
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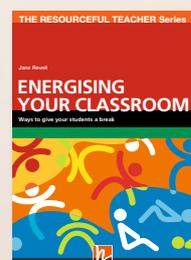
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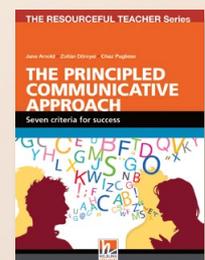
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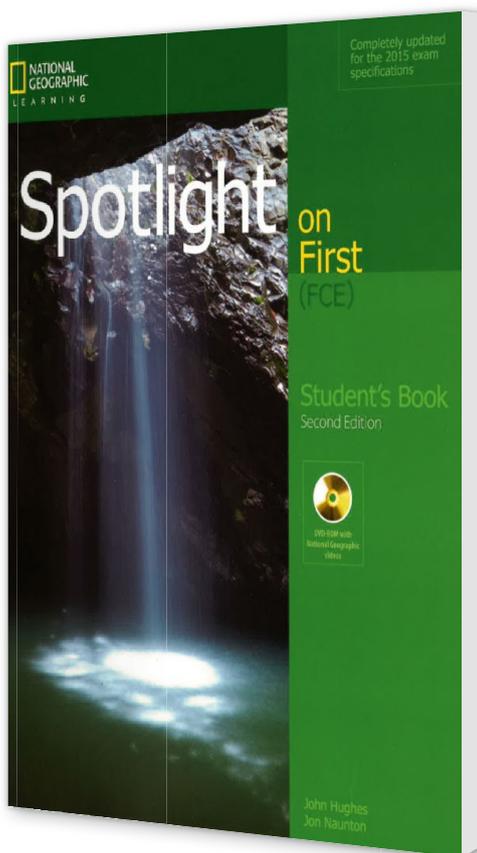


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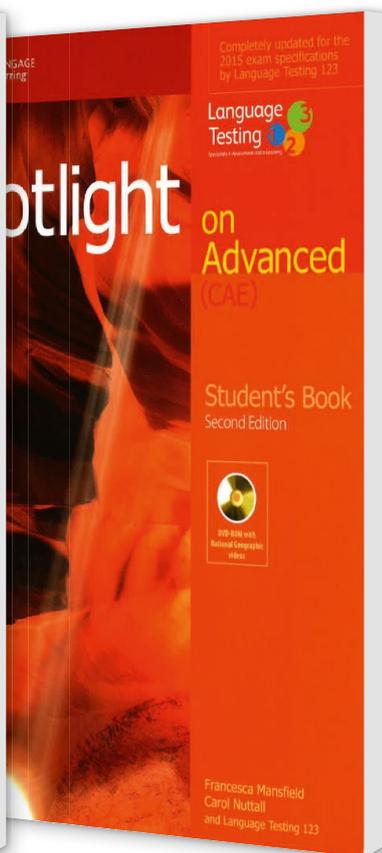
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