

Bulgarian English Teachers' Association

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SPRING, SUNSHINE, SHARING



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Editor's note

Dear Reader,

Roughly a year ago, I was busy preparing the 50th issue of the e-newsletter. I was lucky, excited, and inspired – and still am. I have good reasons, a lot of good reasons, actually. This issue presents diverse international contributions as well as ones by committed Bulgarian teachers.

The first four articles are the result of an English lesson competition organised by BETA. The second part of the issue comprises an enviable diversity of articles discussing language teaching from different angles – classroom activities, extracurricular activities, interviews, and participation in international events.

The breadth and wealth of the contributions capture the rapid and never ending development of foreign language teaching and inspire the FLT community to always push forward no matter what and to do what they believe is best for the future development of the field.

Read and enjoy!

Georgi Dimitrov

Editor-in-Chief

Successful Classroom Activities Initiative

BETA Committee is delighted to report a successful start of a new initiative encouraging Bulgarian teachers of English to share invaluable experience, good practices, and successful classroom activities. Participants were asked to adhere to the following criteria when submitting their materials: **a)** a detailed explanation of the activity (up to one page), **b)** creativity, and **c)** practical application.

We have to admit that BETA Committee was given a tough challenge in the good sense of the word regarding the final decision. We are pleased to announce the winners and hope to inspire other teachers to take part and share their practices and ideas by using BETA as a platform for professional development and exchange.

1st place - Diana Velcheva. Prize: 1-year BETA membership and the opportunity to represent BETA at a partner's conference;

2nd place - Slavka Borislavova and Nikolay Todorov. Prize: 1-year BETA membership and the opportunity to participate at this year's BETA Conference and FIPLV CEER Congress at UNWE, Sofia (11-13 September 2026) for free;

3rd place - Albena Dencheva-Nikolova. Prize: 1-year BETA membership.

Myth, Melody and Mastery: A Multisensory Journey into the Past Simple

Diana Velcheva



Diana Velcheva is an English educator at “Mechtateli” Private Secondary School Varna and a four-time national laureate in the BETA competition for best lesson. Recognized as a leading educational innovator, she specializes in drama methods, music-based instruction, and cross-curricular learning. Her pioneering work was featured in a BNT documentary and was notably praised by the legendary physicist **Teodosiy Teodosiev**, who described her as a “white swallow” of Bulgarian excellence in education.

In the realm of ELT, the transition from linguistic theory to communicative fluency often requires more than just a textbook. To bridge the gap between grammatical structures and emotional resonance, a recent innovative lesson transformed the classroom into the mythical Underworld, inviting students to master the Past Simple and new vocabulary through the lens of Ancient Greek tragedy.

The Methodology: Beyond the Worksheet

The session began with a structured linguistic foundation, utilizing a bespoke worksheet designed to introduce thematic vocabulary and the mechanics of the Past Simple. However, the core innovation lay in the transition from cognition to embodiment. Rather than merely reciting irregular verbs, students stepped into the roles of Orpheus and the mythical entities of the River Styx.

Drama and Song as Pedagogy

The centerpiece of the lesson was an original interactive musical performance. Dressed in theatrical costumes, students became active participants in the narrative. While some took on the roles of the tragic protagonists, others choreographed the rhythmic flow of the waves, the steady pulse of Charon's oars, and the ethereal presence of sea nymphs. This dramatic immersion served a dual purpose:

1. **Contextual Encoding:** By singing and acting out the journey into the Shadow Realm, students used the Past Simple and Future Simple to describe completed actions within a high-stakes story, making the grammar “stick” through emotional association. Incorporating a melodic narrative was a deliberate pedagogical choice. According to Petel (2004), the cognitive overlap between music and language processing enhances grammatical memory. Furthermore, as Lems (2005) suggests, utilizing music in ELT classroom provides a rhythmic scaffold that helps students internalize complex structures like the Past Simple without the fatigue of traditional drills.
2. **Total Physical Response (TPR):** The movement of the “waves” and “nymphs” synchronized linguistic input with physical action, lowering the

affective filter and boosting confidence. The lesson's structure was heavily informed by the principles of Total Physical Response. According to Asher (2023), language acquisition is significantly accelerated when students respond with whole-body movements before ever producing of River Styx, echoing Hanna's (2026) findings that cognitive power of movement is essential for deep-seated learning.

The Outcome: What Was Achieved?

The results exceeded traditional classroom expectations. By "living" the story, students demonstrated:

- **Spontaneous Production:** A significant increase in the correct use of Past Simple and Future Simple forms in follow-up discussions.
- **Phonological Awareness:** Improved intonation and rhythm gained through the melodic structure of the song.
- **Cultural Literacy:** A deeper empathic connection to classical mythology. Ultimately, this lesson proved that when students stop "studying" a language and start "performing" it, the boundaries of the classroom disappear, leaving behind a lasting imprint of both knowledge and experience.

Perhaps the most rewarding validation came from a student who simply stated: "I didn't feel like I was in an English class; I felt like I was crossing the Styx." It is in these moments that true learning occurs.





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From Story to Screen: Using AI and Digital Theatre in the English Classroom

Slavka Borislavova

	<p>Slavka Borislavova is an English teacher at “Maxim Gorki” Primary School in Levski, Bulgaria. She teaches 5th–7th grade students and designs creative, learner-centred English lessons integrating storytelling, digital tools, and AI to boost motivation and confidence.</p>
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Agreeing with John Dewey’s well-known statement, *“If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow,”* and after participating in several training seminars on the use of artificial intelligence in education, I began to explore practical ways of integrating AI into my English lessons.

My first steps focused on simple, creative tasks. I started asking students to generate images using AI based on prompts written in English. These activities proved highly motivating and have remained a regular practice in my lessons with 5th grade students.

The first classroom practice I would like to share was implemented during additional English classes. After working with the video *Jack and the Beanstalk* and several related comprehension and vocabulary activities from the British Council LearnEnglishKids platform, students were asked to complete the final creative task from the worksheet. They had to imagine and describe other magical objects the giant might have had in his castle. To support their ideas, students created AI-generated images using their own English prompts, which helped them connect imagination with meaningful language production.

Encouraged by the positive results, I decided to design a larger project with my 7th grade students. The project focused on Bulgarian legends related to interesting natural landmarks. Students researched legends in both Bulgarian and English and, with the support of an AI Chatbot, divided each legend into five key parts. They then created prompts in English and designed five visual slides for each story.

Using Canva, each team prepared a presentation framed to resemble a traditional Kamishibai theatre. Finally, students presented their digital Kamishibai legends to the class in English. The project combined reading, writing, speaking, digital creativity, teamwork, and cultural awareness, while AI served as a supportive tool throughout the creative process.

Throughout all activities, I guided students in using AI responsibly, emphasising that technology supports creativity and language learning but does not replace thinking, imagination, or human interaction.

These classroom experiences have shown that when artificial intelligence is thoughtfully integrated into meaningful tasks, it can enrich English language teaching and help students see learning as relevant, creative, and connected to the world they live in.





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Creative Writing and Filmmaking Using Artificial Intelligence: A Classroom Experience

Nikolay Todorov



Nikolay Todorov holds a Master’s degree in Foreign Language Teaching. He currently serves as an English language teacher at Secondary School *Episkop Konstantin Preslavski* in Burgas—the largest school in the city—with over seven years of experience in both public and private education. He teaches General English as well as English for Specific Purposes, integrating language learning with real-world professional contexts. He is a certified IELTS trainer with a strong focus on exam preparation and academic English. His main interests include developing and implementing innovative, student-centered methodologies, such as project-based learning, community-based learning, and the responsible use of AI in the classroom. He is passionate about empowering students to become confident, critical thinkers and effective communicators in a global environment.

Abstract

This article describes an award-winning lesson entitled Creative Writing and Filmmaking Using Artificial Intelligence, designed for 8th-grade English language learners at the B1 level. The lesson integrates narrative writing, grammar revision, discourse marker instruction, and digital literacy within a four-period sequence. Students collaboratively produce genre-specific short stories from a

shared opening, revise them using generative AI tools, and transform the final texts into short AI-generated videos. The article outlines the theoretical rationale for integrating AI in the language classroom, describes the lesson structure in detail, reflects on student outcomes, and discusses the pedagogical implications of responsible AI use in secondary education.

Keywords: creative writing, artificial intelligence, narrative tenses, discourse markers, digital literacy, EFL, secondary education

1. Introduction

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has opened new possibilities for language education, raising fundamental questions about the role of technology in fostering creativity, critical thinking, and communicative competence. At the same time, educators face the challenge of preparing students not merely to consume digital tools, but to use them thoughtfully and ethically. This article presents a lesson designed to address these challenges through a carefully sequenced, four-period activity that combines creative writing with AI-supported editing and video production.

The lesson was developed for a class of 8th-grade learners at the B1 level of English, studying at Secondary School Episkop Konstantin Preslavski in Burgas, Bulgaria. It was submitted to the Beta Competition, where it received recognition as an award-winning lesson design. The central idea behind the lesson is that AI should function as a supportive assistant rather than a replacement for human creativity, a principle that underpins every stage of the activity.

2. Theoretical Background

The integration of technology into language teaching is not a new phenomenon, but the emergence of large language models and generative AI has fundamentally changed the landscape. Researchers have highlighted both the opportunities and the risks of AI in educational settings. On the one hand, tools such as ChatGPT can support language learners by providing immediate feedback, generating scaffolded writing prompts, and modelling high-quality language use. On the other hand, uncritical reliance on AI can undermine the development of independent thinking and writing skills.

The lesson draws on several key pedagogical frameworks. First, it aligns with a process approach to writing, in which drafting, revising, and editing are understood as distinct and equally valuable stages (Hyland, 2003). Rather than treating the written product as the sole outcome, the lesson encourages students to reflect on their choices and to use AI as a revision tool once an original draft has been produced. This sequence is critical: students write first, and AI assists second.

Second, the lesson incorporates principles of genre-based teaching, recognising that different communicative purposes require different textual structures and conventions (Martin & Rose, 2008). By assigning each group a specific genre — fantasy, horror, science fiction, comedy, detective, or action — the lesson exposes students to genre variation while encouraging them to experiment with literary language within structured parameters.

Third, the lesson reflects a commitment to digital literacy education. According to Dudeney, Hockly, and Pegrum (2013), digital literacy encompasses not only

the ability to use technology, but also the capacity to evaluate, create, and communicate through digital media critically. The final video production stage of the lesson directly engages students in multimodal communication, requiring them to translate textual meaning into visual and auditory form.

3. Lesson Structure

The lesson is organised as a four-period integrated sequence. Each period builds on the previous one, moving from linguistic input to creative production, and finally to reflection and assessment. The following subsections describe each phase in turn.

3.1 Introduction and Motivation

The lesson opens with a short motivational stage in which the teacher presents an AI-generated visual collage related to storytelling and filmmaking. Students are invited to consider whether the same story idea can unfold in different ways depending on genre and authorial choices. This stage activates prior knowledge, stimulates curiosity, and prepares learners for the creative thinking required later in the lesson.

3.2 Linguistic Input: Narrative Tenses and Discourse Markers

The second phase focuses on two interconnected language objectives: the revision of narrative tenses and the study of discourse markers. Students revisit the past simple, past continuous, past perfect, and past perfect continuous through an AI-supported multimedia presentation, with tense use contextualised within narrative structure rather than treated as isolated

grammar points. They then complete AI-generated worksheets to check comprehension and apply the forms in short contextualised tasks.

The discourse markers component introduces students to the role of linking expressions in creating coherent and logically structured texts. Students explore how markers of sequence (e.g. first, then, afterwards), contrast (e.g. however, although), and cause and consequence (e.g. therefore, as a result) contribute to narrative flow. Short writing tasks allow them to practise these forms before the main creative activity begins.

3.3 Collaborative Genre Writing

The core activity of the lesson is collaborative story writing. Students are divided into six groups and each group receives the same story opening: a group of friends discover a secret entrance to an old building, find a mysterious portal device, and must figure out how to return before they are trapped forever. Each group is assigned a different genre and must develop the story according to the conventions of that genre.

At this stage, AI is not permitted. Students are required to produce their own original text, drawing on the linguistic input from the previous phase. The teacher monitors group work, supports weaker learners by assigning clear roles, and ensures that all students contribute meaningfully to the writing process.

3.4 AI-Supported Editing

Once all groups have completed their drafts, the lesson transitions to an AI-assisted editing phase. The teacher demonstrates how generative AI can function as a writing assistant rather than an author. Students are introduced to basic principles of prompt engineering and work with AI using clearly defined

prompts for grammar checking, tense consistency, structural coherence, and stylistic improvement. Each revision task is completed through a separate prompt, reinforcing purposeful and purposeful use of the tool.

To illustrate the value of this stage, a comparison was produced between a student-written draft and an AI-revised version of the same story. The original student text, written at an early B1 level, presents the core narrative in simple, direct language. The AI-revised version, targeting a B1+–B2 range, enhances atmospheric detail, vocabulary range, and sentence variety while preserving the student’s original plot and characters. Importantly, students are encouraged to evaluate these changes critically, accepting some suggestions and rejecting others according to their own authorial intentions.

3.5 Video Production

In the final creative phase, students use AI-based video-generation platforms — such as Sora, Lumen5, or InVideo — to transform their revised stories into short films or video clips. The teacher models how to formulate detailed prompts describing scenes, visual style, narration, music, emotional tone, and duration. Students experience, often for the first time, how the precision of their language directly influences the visual output, deepening their understanding of multimodal communication.

3.6 Reflection and Assessment

The lesson concludes with a structured reflection stage. After watching the completed videos, students fill in AI-generated reflection cards in which they evaluate their collaboration, creativity, language use, and engagement with AI tools. They identify strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement. This

metacognitive dimension of the lesson reinforces the understanding that learning is an iterative process and that AI is most effective when used with conscious, critical intent.

Assessment is conducted using a six-criterion rubric covering story plot and development, grammatical accuracy, use of discourse markers, use of AI for editing, video visualisation, and teamwork. Each criterion is scored on a four-point scale, and the final grade is calculated on a six-point scale standard in Bulgarian secondary education.

4. Discussion

Several observations from the implementation of the lesson are worth highlighting. First, the sequencing of the activity — with human writing preceding AI assistance — proved pedagogically essential. Students who had invested creative effort in their own drafts were more motivated and more critical when engaging with AI revisions, approaching the tool as a collaborator rather than a shortcut. This confirms the importance of establishing clear boundaries between human and machine contribution in AI-integrated lessons.

Second, the genre framework provided productive constraints for student creativity. Groups working in the horror and science fiction genres, in particular, produced narratives that demonstrated sophisticated use of atmospheric language and narrative tension. The shared story opening served as an effective equaliser, ensuring that all groups were working with comparable starting material while allowing for substantial creative divergence.

Third, the video production stage generated high levels of student engagement and motivated careful attention to language. Students quickly recognised that vague or imprecise prompts produced unsatisfactory visual results, which created an authentic communicative purpose for precise language use. This experience aligns with broader arguments for task-based language teaching, in which real-world outcomes motivate linguistic accuracy (Ellis, 2003).

Finally, the lesson raised important questions about authorship, creativity, and the ethics of AI use in education. Class discussions during the reflection stage revealed that students held nuanced views on these issues, with many expressing a desire to use AI responsibly and to retain ownership of their creative work. These conversations represent a valuable dimension of the lesson that extends beyond language learning into broader educational citizenship.

5. Conclusion

This lesson demonstrates that artificial intelligence can be meaningfully and responsibly integrated into the secondary language classroom to support creativity, linguistic accuracy, and digital competence. By placing human imagination at the centre of the learning process and positioning AI as a revision and visualisation tool, the lesson offers a model for how educators can navigate the opportunities and challenges of the current technological moment. The award received at the Beta Competition reflects not only the originality of the design but also its potential for replication and adaptation across different educational contexts.

Teachers wishing to implement a similar lesson are encouraged to begin with the genre writing activity and to introduce AI tools gradually, ensuring that

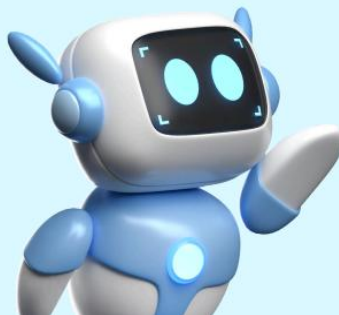
students develop a clear understanding of the distinction between their own voice and the output of a generative model. With careful scaffolding and structured reflection, AI-integrated creative writing lessons can become powerful spaces for language development, critical thinking, and genuine creative expression.





Example – Poor vs. Improved Story Opening

I woke up. I got dressed. I went to school. I met my friend. We went to class.



First, I woke up to the sound of my alarm. Then, I quickly got dressed and rushed downstairs. After that, I met my friend outside, and together we walked to class. Meanwhile, the sun was rising behind us.

Spot the Markers!

Suddenly, the lights went out. **Then**, we heard a loud noise coming from the basement. **Although** we were scared, we decided to check it out. **Meanwhile**, our dog barked non-stop.

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Why Are Parasocial Relationships More Common Today?

Albena Dencheva-Nikolova



Albena Dencheva-Nikolova is a founder of Alissa Language School in Pleven, which is an Exam Preparation Center for Cambridge Qualifications. She has been teaching English to young learners and teenagers for about 30 years and her main interest is related to the process of Individualization and Differentiation. As a member of Cambridge Assessment Network she is focused on testing and assessment in TEFL.

Human's social relationships have become more complicated recently and many people, showing constant distance, have started facing difficulties with real face-to-face communication. Teenagers, as representatives of Generation Z, being true digital natives, having grown with smartphones, streaming and social media, struggle mostly with problems such as socializing, empathy and emotional intelligence. That's why the idea of implementing significant issues like these into the teaching process has challenged my curiosity as an English teacher. Having found out that according to Cambridge Dictionary the word of the year 2025 was parasocial, I immediately decided to provoke my students' critical thinking skills asking them the question: Why are parasocial relationships more common today?

In this lesson, divided into two 45-minute sessions, 16-17-year-old teenagers studying in B2 level classes have to explore the topic of parasocial relationships through class discussion and then express their own thoughts writing an opinion essay. For that purpose they use Cambridge Advanced Dictionary as a source to look up the new vocabulary, e.g. the word *parasocial* and phrases like *parasocial relation*, *parasocial interaction*, *parasocial connection*, *parasocial grief* and *parasocial breakup*.

One of the aims is to help students become more competent at the subject matter of social distance and its influence on the young minds. Also, at the end of the lesson they will become more fluent at speaking and writing about the topic and develop their ability to tell the difference between parasocial relationships and real friendship as well.

There are three stages of action to reach the goals. At the first stage students work individually studying the definitions in Cambridge Dictionary. At stage two they have a discussion over the positive and negative sides of parasocial bonds with the use of Graphic Organizer Worksheets, which includes a pair and small group work. These two stages cover the session of about 40-45 minutes, if the group/class is up to 10-12 people, there is enough time for everyone to express their own thoughts taking part in a discussion. But if there is a large group/class, it is better to have small groups of 4-5 students discussing the matter and later to elicit a speaker representing the group opinion. During the second session of 40-45 minutes students take their time to produce an opinion essay over the question: Why are parasocial relationships more common today? Can they be positive? When might they be negative? Can AI replace friendships?

On the one hand, having such lessons help students not only develop their productive skills as speaking and writing, but they also obtain knowledge about virtual and real relationships, and emotional intelligence as well. On the other hand, writing papers serve as raw material for the teacher to research and study the young people’s opinion over the major topic of human relationships. As a whole, most of the students think that parasocial relationships are something dangerous and unhealthy and a very small part of them consider both sides of the problem, benefits and drawbacks, and believe in the reasonable balance. The good news is that all the young people realize the negative effect of “constant access to public videos, live streams and personal posts”, as they value the real face-to-face relationships. As almost everyone believes that AI will hardly replace the true friendship, there is some hope that the Generation Z will manage to survive in a world of robots and keep their emotional intelligence and unique personalities for the future.

Below are some of the materials related to this classroom activity.

The worksheet is titled "Are parasocial bonds positive or negative?". It is divided into two columns. The left column is headed "Can they be positive?" and contains three empty light green rectangular boxes. The right column is headed "When might they be negative?" and also contains three empty light green rectangular boxes. At the top of each column is a yellow rectangular box, likely for a student's name or a date.

Ana

WHY ARE PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS MORE COMMON TODAY?

WORKSHEET 1

Use Cambridge Advanced Dictionary, paperback or online version, to look up the meaning of the word **parasocial** -

involving or relating to a connection that someone feels between themselves and a famous person they do not know a character in a book, film, TV series, etc. or an artificial intelligence

Then copy the sample sentences with the following phrases:

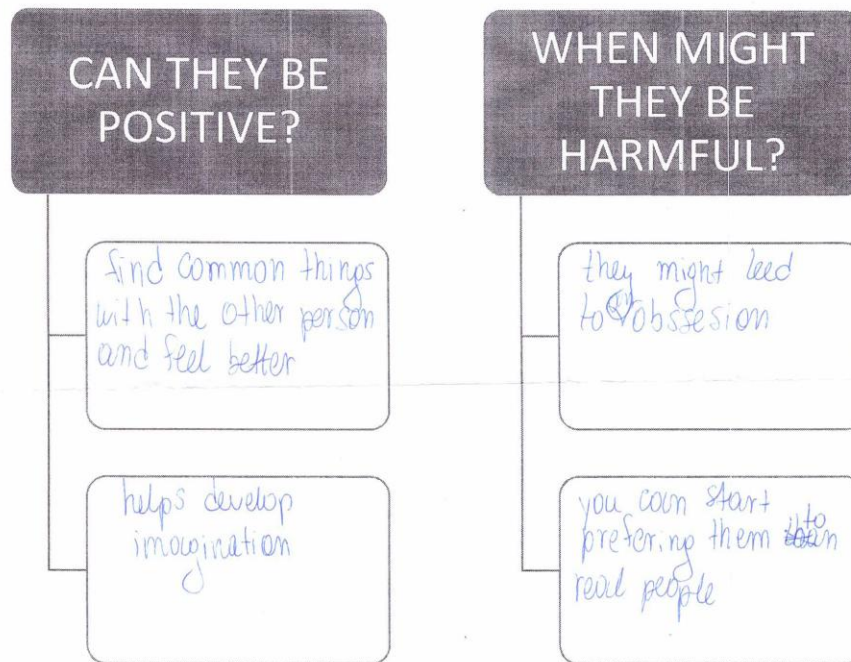
- parasocial relationships: Psychologists have long known that people can engage in parasocial relationships with fictional characters.
- parasocial relations: Parasocial relations could bring the same benefits to young people as social relationships.
- parasocial interactions: People who experience parasocial interactions come to consider media personalities such as movie stars and influencers, as friends despite having no interactions with them.
- parasocial connections: Listeners have a tendency to form parasocial connections with characters they encounter in TV shows.
- parasocial grief: Grieving someone you've never met is called parasocial grief, and a lot of us are feeling it over the death of the young star.
- parasocial breakup: Just like you go through the termination of a parasocial relationship - a parasocial breakup - can experience feelings of grief and loss.

WHY ARE PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS MORE COMMON TODAY?

WORKSHEET 2

Discuss the questions with your partner and complete the chart with your own ideas

: Are parasocial bonds positive or negative? Can AI replace friendships?



Write an essay: Why are parasocial relationships more common today? Can they be positive? When might they be harmful?

Ana

Why are parasocial relationships more common today?

Parasocial relationship is the connection a person feels with someone they do not know personally like a celebrity, influencer or a character in a book. They have become more common nowadays because they are simply more accessible. But what are the advantages and disadvantages to it?

On the one hand, parasocial relationships can help people who feel lonely or misunderstood. They can find a lot of things in common with the person they see on TV. For example, a kid who is bullied or doesn't have a lot of friends find out that their favourite actor has had similar experience, which can help the child to feel better. Little kids develop their imagination through those bonds and that is why it is more common for them to experience this.

On the other hand, this feeling of security can soon lead to an unhealthy obsession with the said person. They also might start mixing up reality with their imagination. At first it won't seem like a problem but later it can cause a negative impact. Chatting with artificial intelligence is something a lot of people do but it can never replace face-to-face interaction and human bonds.

In conclusion, parasocial relationships have both its pros and cons. However, I think that they cause more harm than good and may have a long-life damage on a person's health.

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Developing Young Learners' Speaking Skills through eTwinning Project: Creating *Our Holiday Sweet Cookbook*

Tina Parać



Tina Parać is a primary school English and Italian teacher and eTwinning teacher-advisor at Primary School Knez Trpimir-Kaštel Gomilica, Croatia. She has been actively involved in eTwinning since 2017 and is the creator and author of the international eTwinning project *Hop on Our Hometowns Tour*. Through her work, she enjoys helping pupils learn English through creativity, collaboration and international projects.



Introduction

Helping young pupils feel confident speaking English in class is not always easy—even experienced teachers know how challenging it can be. In the early years of primary school, children are still building their language skills and can feel shy when using a foreign language. That is why we need to provide learning experiences that make speaking English feel easy, engaging, and fun.

International projects, like eTwinning, offer exactly these opportunities. When pupils collaborate with peers from other countries, English becomes more than just a subject—it becomes a real way to communicate, share ideas and connect with others.

A great example is the eTwinning project ***Hop on Our Hometowns Tour***. Pupils and teachers from Spain, Portugal, France, Greece, Poland, Turkey, Romania, and Croatia explored their hometowns and shared elements of their culture.

As part of the project, pupils worked together to create a collaborative digital cookbook titled Our ***Holiday Sweet Cookbook***, showcasing traditional desserts from each region.

This hands-on project gave pupils the chance to practise English in meaningful, enjoyable ways, while also developing a range of essential life skills—exactly the kind of skills highlighted in this year’s eTwinning theme.

Developing Speaking Skills and eTwinning



This year, eTwinning focuses on the annual theme ‘Skills for Life,’ encouraging teachers to help pupils develop the essential skills they need for everyday learning and for the future. These include literacy, numeracy, digital skills, creativity, and teamwork.

Through eTwinning projects, these skills can be practised in real, meaningful ways. Pupils can read, write, speak, calculate and solve problems while working on project`s activities which are relevant and engaging to them.

The platform also provides teachers with a wide range of resources, project ideas and professional development opportunities. At the same time, pupils are encouraged to take an active role in their learning, helping them see why these skills matter and how they can use them in real life.

Creating *Our Sweet Cookbook*

Through the eTwinning project *Hop on Our Hometowns Tour*, pupils worked together with classmates from other countries to put together a digital cookbook filled with traditional desserts from each of their regions. This activity was not only fun but also a valuable learning journey for our pupils, as they worked together through each step.

First, pupils choose a traditional dessert from their region. This was a great opportunity for them to talk with their families and learn more about local traditions.

Next, they worked on writing the recipe in English, learning new vocabulary related to ingredients, measurements and cooking.

Next, pupils recorded audio descriptions of their recipes and explained how each dessert was prepared. With the support of their teachers, these recordings were added to the collaborative digital cookbook, giving pupils a chance to practise speaking English, improve their pronunciation, and build confidence.

The most exciting part for many pupils was preparing the dessert. Many of them made the dessert at home with their families and then brought it to school to share with their classmates. Together we tasted the desserts in class, which created a wonderful atmosphere and gave pupils the chance to talk about what they had made.



Finally, pupils used their maths skills to calculate the cost of the ingredients and work out the total price of the recipe.

All these contributions were brought together into the shared digital cookbook *Our Sweet Cookbook*, which includes traditional desserts from all participating countries.

Take a look at the pupils' wonderful work in the interactive cookbook, *Our Sweet Cookbook*, complete with their recipes, audio recordings, and videos from the project.

<https://www.storyjumper.com/book/read/187174591/69625433b1512>

Supporting Speaking Skills

Recording the audio recipes was especially valuable for developing pupils' speaking skills.

Because the recordings were short and related to something they had prepared themselves, pupils felt more relaxed and confident when speaking. They enjoyed

practising the sentences, listening to their own recordings and improving their pronunciation.

It was also very motivating for them to hear recordings made by pupils from other countries. This helped them realise that English is a language people use to communicate with others around the world.

Learning Through Real-Life Experiences

This activity clearly showed how several important skills can be developed through one meaningful task.

While working on the cookbook, pupils developed:

- language skills by writing and presenting recipes in English
- mathematical skills by calculating the cost of ingredients
- digital skills by recording and sharing audio content
- cultural awareness by learning about traditional desserts from different countries

When learning is connected to real-life experiences, pupils are more engaged and motivated.

Encouraging Students

Another valuable aspect of this activity was that pupils had the opportunity to take an active role in the learning process.

They chose the dessert they wanted to present, helped prepare it, recorded their own explanations and contributed to a shared international project product.

Knowing that their work would be included in a cookbook created together with pupils from across Europe made them very proud of their contribution.

Conclusion

The experience from the eTwinning project *Hop on Our Hometowns Tour* shows how eTwinning projects can support the development of speaking skills while also helping pupils build important life skills.

By creating the collaborative digital cookbook *Our Holiday Sweet Cookbook*, pupils used English in a meaningful and authentic context while also developing mathematical, digital and cultural competences.

Activities that connect language learning with real-life situations make lessons more engaging and help pupils become more confident speakers of English.

Projects like this show how eTwinning can inspire teachers to create motivating learning experiences that support pupils in developing the skills they will need in the future.

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How to Approach Teaching General English

Natalie Kritskaya



Natalie Kritskaya is a freelance educator from Moscow, based in Bulgaria for the past 9 years. She teaches English online, one-to-one, specialising in highly frustrated learners. With CELTA, Delta, and continuous training in the lexical approach, she brings both expertise and empathy to every lesson. Her lessons are calm, personalised, and built around what actually works.

This article will be relevant for teachers of General English who have been faced with teaching highly frustrated students and have struggled to help them.

Have you ever come across students who say something similar to following:

- “I won’t speak until I get C2 level of English. I can be seen as a fool who speaks English with a lot of mistakes.”
- “I think I have a trauma from my school times. Every time I answered in front of the class, there were comments on my pronunciation. Now I don’t want to speak at all. I’ve tried to start learning English a couple of times

but feelings are taken up and I stop. But I need English as I plan to work with foreign suppliers.”

- “I hate English. I don’t know why. I have changed 4 teachers, no-one could help me. I just can’t speak. I’m just stupid. But I can’t give up. I’m moving to another country. I have to learn English!”

Sounds familiar to you? If so, the information below might help you cater to the needs of such students.

It happened so that I mostly specialize on highly frustrated students with the level of English (General English) ranging from A1 to B2. What I mean by that is students who struggle to acquire a language, having particular difficulties with listening and speaking and often do not even register the fact that they can and, actually, do comprehend and speak a foreign language, which, in my opinion, is vital for learning the language further.

Largely, such frustrations stem from the limiting beliefs students carry regarding language learning in general and their own capabilities in particular. We, as teachers, should realize that such beliefs are formed under different circumstances:

- Students’ previous bad experience,
- Comments of their friends and relatives, related to their language level,
- Comparison with other students,
- Influencers’ opinion on social media,
- Beliefs regarding the speed of language learning dictated by marketing campaigns,
- Their own perception of how to study,

- Lack of knowledge of the strategies of language learning and correct application,
- Lack of knowledge of cognitive and metacognitive strategies and their application.

The key to helping such students overcome their frustration is to coach them on top of providing language instruction. According to Betham (2020: 31), ‘a teacher’s roles include coaching’, while Cohen & White (2008, cited in Cohen 2021: 2), ‘Language learners could benefit from coaching as to how to be informed consumers of TLs’. Basically, our goal is to lower the affective filter, reshape our students’ beliefs and help them become informed consumers of English - and to illustrate that, I will describe a coaching session with one of my current students. It is noteworthy that all coaching sessions are conducted in L1 and are translated into English for this article.

Student’s Profile: 43 y.o., female, strong B1, 1.5 years of learning English, it’s her third foreign language

What the student shared with me at a discovery session:

- “I’m desperate. I’ve been learning English for almost 2 years intensively. I’ve spent 3-4 hours a day doing different English tasks. I have 3 different teachers, for grammar, speaking and reading. I invest so much effort into my studies but I don’t feel that it pays off. I’m depressed that I don’t feel any progress. I’ve learned two other languages but I failed to learn English. I need English to do my Master’s degree and find a job in another country.”

When students share such frustrations with me, I find it necessary to conduct a coaching session before we move on.

A typical coaching session includes 3 key steps:

- 1. Current state**
- 2. Future me**
- 3. Previous experience in numbers**

Step 1 - Current state

At this stage, it is important to build rapport with your student and let your student know that it is a safe territory and you are here not to judge, but just to listen to them and navigate, facilitating the process.

The tricky point is that at this stage students tend to express a whole range of emotions, from frustration to despair and even hatred. There could even be curse words. Your main job is to filter all the emotions and to find useful insights from all the emotional mess by asking questions, helping their vague ideas take shape.

So the questions might be:

- What is your current situation with English?
- What about your emotions? What do you feel when you are going to have a class?
- What are the sensations in your body?

- How do you feel when you study English?

You should listen carefully and ask follow-up questions, aimed at helping your students clarify their vague answers.

Examples of follow-up questions:

Why? What does _____ mean to you? How do you understand it? What do you mean by saying _____?

T: What is your current situation with English?

S: This is despair, it's genuine despair.

T: What do you think it's caused by?

S: I've put so much effort into my studies - both time and money - and I'm not getting any return on my investment. There are some, but it's completely inadequate, not even close.

T: What do you mean by "return on your investment"? What does "return" mean to you?*

*by these questions you make your student think deeper and clearly define what they mean when they use vague statements like "a return on my investment". That is a very important step in coaching.

Replying to the question, the student digressed, comparing her efforts in English and the return she got from her previous language learning experience of Lavian

and Bulgarian. She mentioned that whenever she tried to speak Bulgarian with natives, they would immediately switch into Russian, which made her believe that her level of Bulgarian was low and her pronunciation was terrible.

The most important question to ask here is ‘Did they tell you that or was it entirely your conclusion?’

She answered that nobody told her that. What is more, she did not expect this question as according to her, she has always been “looking at things from a negative perspective and just assumed the worst”. This is a small first step in shifting her perception.

Step 2 - Future me

At this stage, your students should shape their future themselves, specifying what they want from their language learning and what goals they want to set.

The questions might be:

- What is your desired emotional state?
- What do you want to get instead of your current situation?

T: What do you want to get instead of your current situation?

S: I want to speak and to know the language perfectly.

T: What do you mean by saying “know the language perfectly”? What is ‘perfectly’ for you?

More follow-up questions might be: “How will you know when you've gotten there? By when? What's your deadline?”

Typically, at this stage, you will hear a lot of wishful thinking and it is important to help the students to make the goal tangible and realistic, and find a way to measure it.

Step 3 Previous experience in numbers

Often, the students swing from one extreme to the other from being depressed about their studies to being overly excited and back again. In order to move forward to the realistic action plan, we need to ground the students by focusing on the facts and figures and raise their awareness of how much time is needed to move from level to level.

The questions might be:

- How much time have you spent learning this language?
- How many years / months / weeks / hours?
- How many hours with a tutor? How many hours of self-studying?

T: How much have you been studying English?

S: Yeah, the time I've spent is incomparable to what I'm getting in return.

T: When you say "the time I've spent" - how much time did you spend, in numbers? Roughly, how many hours, weeks?

S: At least 430 hours with the tutor - about 3 hours a week, the rest on my own. I'm not even including watching TV series, this will be an extra 430 hours a year.

T: Have you ever seen a chart showing how many hours it takes to move from one level to another?

Here is the part where I show my student the CEFR chart

CEFR Level	Cambridge English Exam	Number of Hours (approximate)
C2	C2 Proficiency - previously known as Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE)	1,000—1,200
C1	C1 Advanced - previously known as Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE)	700—800
B2	B2 First - previously known as Cambridge English: First (FCE)	500—600
B1	B1 Preliminary - previously known as Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET)	350—400
A2	A2 Key - previously known as Cambridge English: Key (KET)	180—200
A1	A1 Starters/Movers - previously known as Cambridge English Starters/Movers (YLE)	90—100

[Guided learning hours](#)

T: According to the table, the number of hours you spent is necessary to get B1.

S: No, I don't have B1, it's A0, I can barely speak!

T: In your opinion, what a person with B1 is able to do in English?

S: Well, B1 means, for example, you ask me 'tell me something about space'. And I'd say, in simple, everyday language, how I feel about space, what I like and don't like about it. And then, for example, you'd ask: "Tell me how to take care of cats." And I'd explain it in simple terms. So for me, B1 is when you can talk about an unprepared topic - at least actually elaborate a bit. Not just say "Oh, I like it" or "I don't like it," but actually expand a little. Like: "I love taking care of cats because they help relieve stress, because they purr..." and other details, none of which I can do.

T: Let's take a look at the CEFR chart with the description of the levels and see what is officially required of a B1 level student

— Spoken Production B1

I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.

[Common European Framework of Reference for Language skills | Europass](#)

S: [after reading the B1 description] Yeah, I'm perfectly capable of expressing my opinion on these topics. Nothing fancy, but enough to get my point across.

T: So, that's what B1 level production is according to the official CEFR chart.

As a result of this discussion, the student came to the realisation that she had the wrong perception of different levels of English and her own real level in particular. Seeing a clear description from an official source helped her realise the root cause of her frustrations regarding her slow progress in English and

finally focus her energy on moving forward with the learning process instead of dwelling on her perceived failures.

I would like to point out that I do not offer such sessions to all of my students as not everyone is ready to dig deeper into their language learning frustrations. Yet, when a student is desperate for help, repeatedly sharing their previous negative experience, focusing on their weaknesses, lost time and wasted effort instead of doing any learning, I see it necessary to offer them a separate coaching session to work through their feelings and emotions in order to help them get unstuck.

You might wonder whether you should bother combining teaching and coaching instead of just relying on your expertise as a teacher. Well, when a student you work with is so frustrated that they cannot study, isn't it easier to have one coaching session, talk things through and move ahead instead of dealing with constant class disruptions?

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A Year of Authentic English Learning

Mirta Lovreković and Gabrijela Radoš



Mirta Balog Lovreković has been working as an English teacher for 20 years in Zagreb, Croatia. In 2022 she became a Teacher advisor. Along with teaching she participates in different eTwinning projects with her students. In 2024 she got an award for being one of the most successful educators in Croatia.



Gabrijela Radoš completed her studies in English and German Language and Literature at the University of Zagreb, Croatia. She has been working as a language teacher for over 12 years. She is interested in integrating literature, culture, and digital tools into language learning. In addition to teaching, she regularly collaborates on educational projects and enjoys sharing innovative teaching ideas with colleagues.

Introduction

As English teachers, we often ask ourselves a simple but important question: How can we make language learning meaningful? Last school year, we found one very practical answer—by creating an extracurricular English class focused on journalistic writing.

Once a week, a group of enthusiastic students stayed after their regular lessons to take part in an additional English classes. The aim was clear: to learn how to write articles for school newspaper. What began as a small project soon became one of the most rewarding teaching experiences of the year.

Learning the craft of writing

During our weekly meetings, we explored what makes a good article. Students learned how to:

- Write engaging headlines
- Create strong introductions (the “lead”)
- Organize information clearly
- Edit and revise their work

We worked step by step, moving from short practice tasks to short articles that can be published in school newspaper. Students quickly realized that writing for a real audience requires clarity, structure, and responsibility.

From a theoretical perspective, this approach reflects the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, which emphasize meaningful, authentic tasks as central to language acquisition (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Writing for the school newspaper was not an artificial classroom exercise—it had a genuine purpose and readership.

Learning beyond the classroom: visit to the town library

A particularly memorable part of our project was our visit to the town library. Together, we attended several lectures delivered entirely in English.



For many students, this was their first experience listening to extended academic talks in English outside the school environment. The topics were diverse and engaging, and students were encouraged to take notes and ask questions.

This experience aligns with Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), which highlights the importance of exposure to comprehensible input slightly above students' current level. The authentic setting provided both linguistic and cultural enrichment. English became not just a subject, but a tool for learning.

From notes to newspaper articles

After returning from the library, students began transforming their notes into structured articles. This stage required them to:

- Summarize key information
- Paraphrase ideas
- Express personal reflections

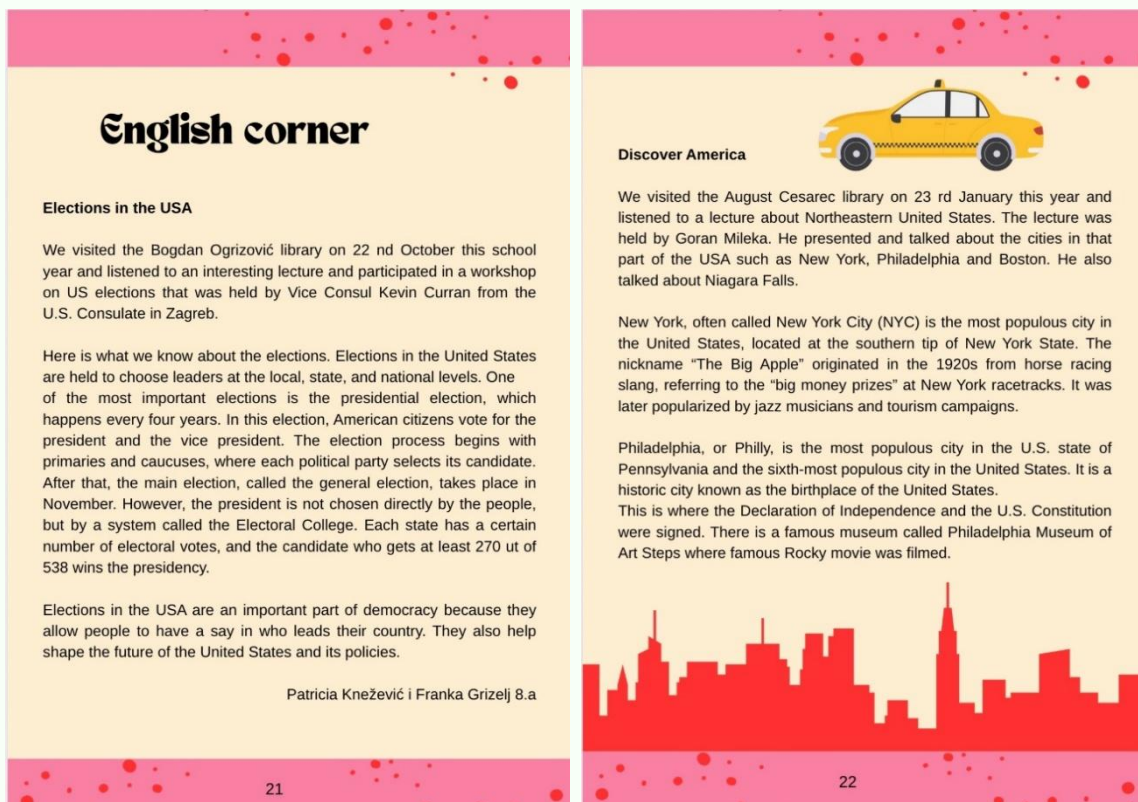
- Develop coherent paragraphs

We followed a process-writing approach, including drafting, peer feedback, and revision. According to Flower and Hayes (1981), writing is a recursive process that develops through planning, reviewing, and rewriting. Our students experienced this firsthand as they refined their texts step by step.

Peer collaboration also played an essential role. As Vygotsky (1978) suggests, learning is socially constructed. Students supported one another through discussion, suggestions, and shared problem-solving.

The joy of publication

At the end of the school year, the students' articles were proudly published in the school newspaper.



Boston is the capital and the most populous city in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the USA.

The city serves as the cultural and financial center of New England, a region of the Northeastern United States. Boston is home to the first subway system in the United States. The Tremont Street Subway opened in 1897.

Niagara Falls is one of the most famous natural wonders in the world on the border of the United States and Canada. It isn't just one waterfall, it's actually made up of three falls. They were formed around 12,000 years ago during the last Ice Age. The enormous power of Niagara Falls has been harnessed for over a century to generate hydroelectricity.

The power plants on both the U.S. and Canadian sides generate enough electricity to supply a significant portion of power for New York State and Ontario.

Marin Čičak i Ivano Knežević 6.b



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Jazz History Month

We were invited to Bogdan Ogrizović library on 29 th April to listen to a lecture on Harlem Renaissance (Jazz History Month) given by Erica King, APAO U.S. Embassy in Croatia. After the lecture we had a chance to ask questions and talk with Erica King.

Jazz Month is a special time each year when people celebrate jazz music. Jazz music developed in New Orleans, as a mix of the sounds ragtime, marching bands, folk music and traditional African American music. New Orleans is also the birthplace of Louis Armstrong (1901-1971), one of the most famous jazz musicians of all time. Jazz is exciting because musicians make up new music as they play.

In Jazz Month, people listen to jazz, go to concerts, and learn about famous jazz musicians. Jazz Month is a great chance to enjoy music and learn about a fun part of culture.

Patricia Knežević i Franka Grizelj 8.a



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Seeing their names in print was a powerful moment. For many students, this was the first time their English writing had been shared publicly. The sense of achievement was visible and heartfelt.

Project-based learning research confirms that producing a tangible final product increases student motivation and engagement (Thomas, 2000). This project demonstrated exactly that. Students were not simply completing assignments—they were creating something real.

Why extracurricular activities matter

This extracurricular class reminded us that even one additional hour per week can make a meaningful difference. When students are given authentic tasks, responsibility, and creative freedom, their confidence grows significantly.

Beyond improving writing skills, students developed:

- Greater independence
- Improved listening and note-taking skills
- Stronger collaboration habits
- Increased self-confidence

Most importantly, they began to see themselves as capable English users—not just learners.

Final reflection

As teachers, we often look for innovative methods, yet sometimes the most effective ideas are simple: give students a purpose, guide them through the process, and celebrate their achievements.

Last year's extracurricular journalism project did exactly that. It strengthened language skills, fostered motivation, and built a bridge between classroom learning and the real world.

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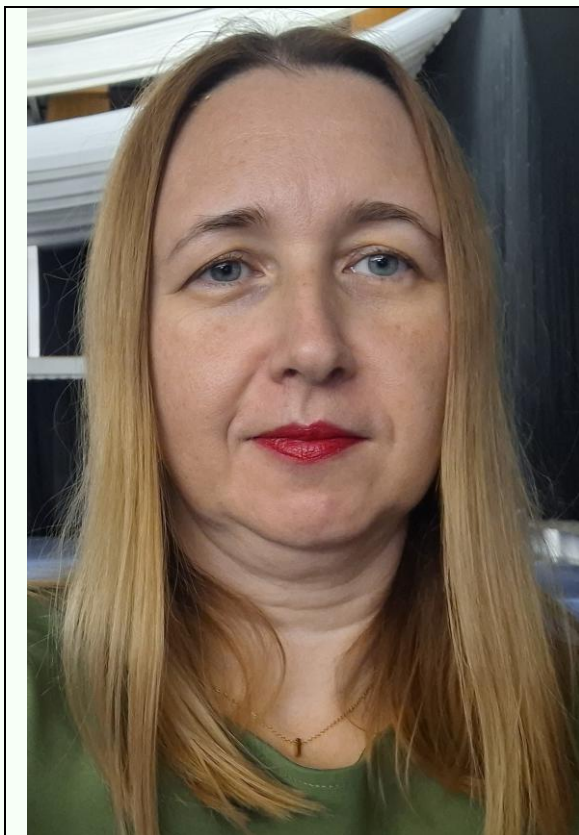
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Creative activities in English classroom

Ivana Kozić



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

When we use creativity and personalisation, students are more eager to learn new vocabulary and structures, and they practice their four skills more easily and readily.

When coming up with ideas for new, creative activities I rely on a few things: I use readily made materials in the coursebook, I just adapt them to my needs, I search for ideas online or in books I have at home, and I use my imagination, of course. I still have not dove myself in the wonderful world of ChatGPT and similar AI helpers.

In this articles, I will describe some of my ideas. Of course, there are many more.

Listening comprehension and revising vocabulary

After they have learned words for weather and natural disaster, students drew pictures for weather and natural disasters on small pieces of paper. They brought it to class and then they played a few games with the pictures, practising listening comprehension and vocabulary in that way. Some of the activities were- one student says the words, other has to point to the correct picture, then one student points the picture, the other has to say the word, and in the end they could pick three to four pictures and make up a dialogue using the vocabulary from these pictures. Students really liked this activity.

Reading comprehension

Students read about famous women in the past and present on Europeana site, and they had to compare them and make presentations about them. I showed them pictures of famous women, they tried to identify them and then I divided them into groups of three to four students, gave them one woman they had to make a poster about and present about her. Before that, they had a few reading comprehension tasks about each woman.

Speaking

One interesting speaking activity is “At the doctor’s”. After we have covered the vocabulary connected to illnesses and injuries, I gave my students homework-

they had to bring plasters, bandages, medical tape to the next class. They were really creative with it and brought a lot of things. I prepared a handout for the doctor's with a list of questions for their patients. At the class they asked questions, wrote down answers, prescribed medicine and even signed in illegible doctor's signature (which was the best part). They enjoyed the activities so much they did the role plays several times, both in the roles of doctor and patient.

Other interesting speaking activity I did with my students was for them to photograph all the road signs from their way from home to school, and make a presentation about them, they had to describe the signs, where are they, talk about some things that happened to them on their way. They could get really creative with this one.

Writing

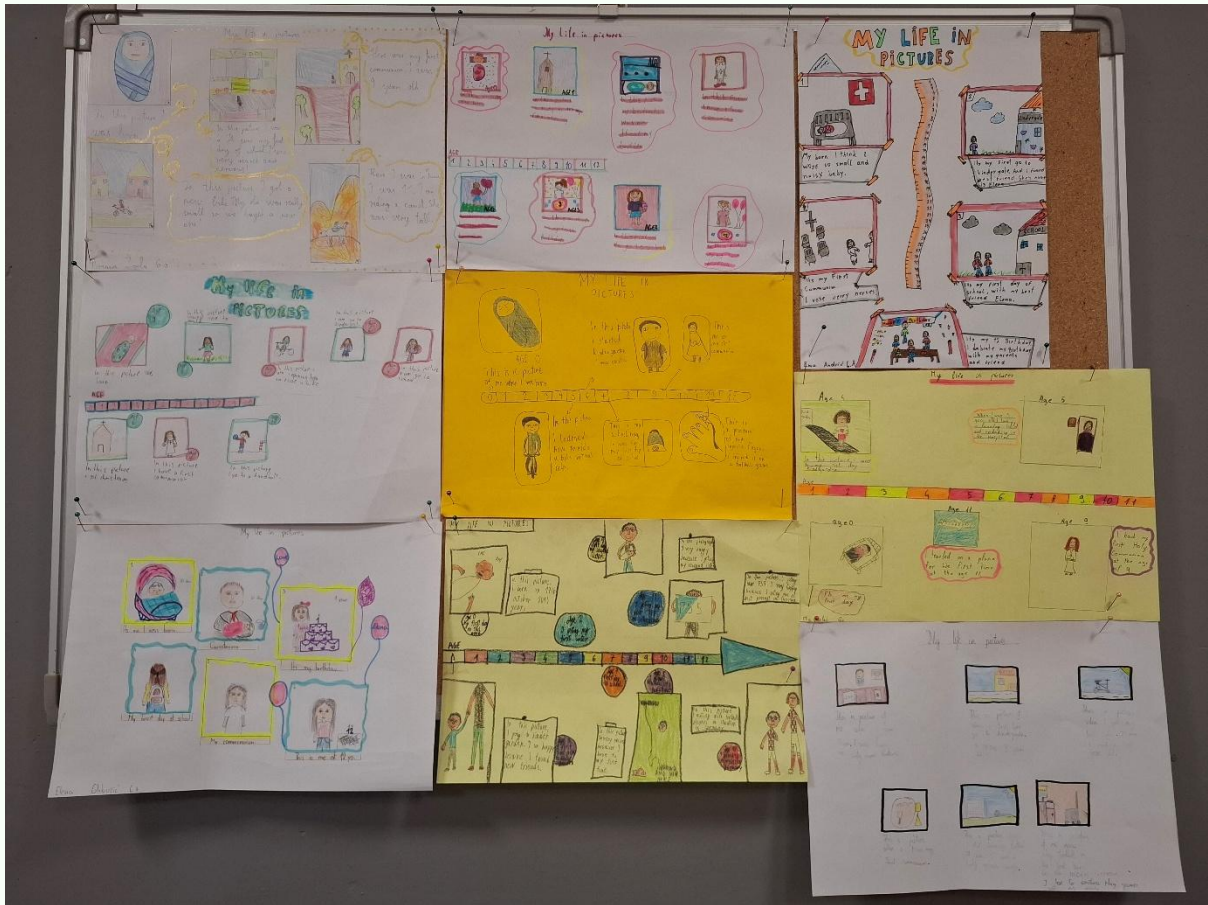
There are so many creative activities that you can do with writing, there is almost no limit to it. One of the most popular ones for my students was writing about their life in a form of life line (like in history), you start with 0, when you were born, and then move on to today, you describe a few most important events in your life, and draw pictures.

Then they had an activity where they had to make a tourist brochure for the city or region of their choice, with all the interesting sights, museums, restaurants, and to try to convince the readers of the brochure to go and visit that place.

These types of activities are all very motivating for students, they like doing creative things, and they learn a lot in the process without even realizing they were learning something which is always a bonus.









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The Pivotal Role of Pair Work and Group Work in Student Engagement

Jayne Bowra



Jayne Bowra has been a teacher of English for over 12 years and holds a full DipTESOL qualification. She is Director of Studies at Languages United in Bath, UK. She aspires to follow Nick Thorner's advice: "There is nothing more likely to increase student motivation than a teacher who shows passion for what they do in the classroom."

When people think of teaching and learning, they often imagine students sitting in rows, listening to a teacher who stands in front of them. However, the modern EFL classroom has a long relationship with student-centred methodologies and in our own multilingual classrooms in Languages United, where learners range widely in age, nationality and educational background, these approaches are not simply methodological preferences but daily necessities. This article explores the significance of pair work and group work in enhancing student engagement within the EFL classroom.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory underscores the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, learning occurs through collaboration and dialogue with others. Pair work and group work align with this

theory by promoting the idea of ‘activating students as instructional resources for one another’, the phrase coined by William (2009). This activates collaborative and cooperative learning, reciprocal teaching and peer assessment by providing opportunities for students to engage in meaningful interactions, negotiate meaning and co-construct knowledge.

Black et al (2003) observed that “peers explaining things to each other revealed important insights about why this is such a powerful process. Students often communicated complex ideas in a language that was different from what the teacher would have used, but appeared more easily assimilated by other students.”

It is absolutely normal that some students will be shy, less confident, weaker at English or less willing to speak - for any number of reasons. But it is part of our job to encourage them and part of this is ensuring they have the space to participate. In pair work and group work, students can practise language together, study a text or take part in information-gap activities. The amount of speaking time that any one student gets in class time is dramatically increased and it promotes autonomous work and interaction.

Think-Pair-Share is a powerful tool that should probably be a core component of every teacher’s repertoire. It is a visible thinking routine that gives every student the opportunity to rehearse their ideas, practise explaining and to engage in productive talk. “Language learning is a process that involves lots of attempts and errors along the way, and so it is very important to give learners opportunities to try out the language, to feel it on their tongue, to experiment with putting words together, to make attempts that turn out to be unsuccessful

or only partially successful and not to aim all the time, unrealistically, only for supposedly perfect sentences.” (Scrivener 2012). Try this: before asking for open answers in class, say: “You have two minutes to rehearse what you will say. Decide who will speak first and your first sentence.”

If factors such as over-crowding or fixed furniture can be overcome, organising pair work and group work is relatively quick and easy to organise. However, a reluctance to employ this approach is often linked to behaviour issues. We all know that when students work together, they can become distracted or distract others. “Control is a big issue in the classroom and teachers, quite rightly, worry about this.” (Black et. al 2003).

Pair work and group work can sometimes be resisted by the students themselves. Reasons include a belief that teacher-fronted presentation is ‘better’, there is no value in working with another student who is either much stronger or weaker or even that they don’t get on with their allocated partner.

So why should we be promoting students as learning resources for one another? The simplest argument for pair and group work is that it allows more learner talk and this, in turn, is likely to lead to significantly higher involvement and engagement. Wiliam and Leahy (2015) explain various reasons why peer collaboration and cooperation in the classroom is so important: “It is worth noting that there are two rather distinct purposes that people express for cooperative and collaborative learning. The first is that because adults are required to work together in their jobs and communities, schools should prepare young people to work in this way. The second is that having students work

together can produce greater learning of subject matter than would be possible by having students work individually or in competition with their peers.”

At Languages United, Bath, UK, we have a multilingual classroom teaching context in which pair work and group work promotes cultural awareness and intercultural competence, as students interact with classmates from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Learners rarely share the same first language, which means English naturally becomes the lingua franca of collaboration. When students negotiate meaning across cultures, clarify misunderstandings and explain ideas to peers from different educational traditions, the communicative purpose of English becomes immediate and authentic.

While pair work and group work undoubtedly offers substantial benefits to the learner, their effectiveness hinges on careful planning and implementation. To maximise student engagement, teachers can employ various strategies:

1. Clear Instructions: Provide clear, concise instructions for tasks and activities, ensuring that students understand their roles and responsibilities within the pair or group. Don't just say “Discuss”. Give one simple outcome:
 - “Agree on one best idea.”
 - “Choose two tips and one reason.”
 - “Decide ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and be ready to explain why.”
2. Balanced Grouping: Consider students' language proficiency levels, learning styles and personalities when forming pairs or groups to ensure balanced and effective collaboration.
3. Scaffolded Support: Offer scaffolding and support as needed, providing students with the necessary tools and resources to successfully complete tasks and achieve learning objectives.

4. Monitor and Feedback: Monitor pair and group interactions, offering feedback and guidance to redirect discussions, clarify misunderstandings, and reinforce learning outcomes.

5. Reflective Practice: Encourage students to reflect on their collaborative experiences, identifying strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement in their communication and teamwork skills.

Here are three tips to try in your classroom tomorrow.

- (a) A/B roles to balance speaking. Give each student a role. A speaks first (30-45 seconds). B listens and asks one follow-up question. Then swap roles.
- (b) Information gap: “You’ve got what I need.” Give student A and B slightly different information and their task is to complete missing details by asking questions (not showing).
- (c) “Ask, don’t tell.” Teach one simple rule for helping a partner - ask questions instead of giving answers. Put prompts on the board such as
 - “Where did you see that?”
 - “What does that word mean in this sentence?”
 - “Can you explain this in a simpler way?”

By fostering the 21st century skills of collaboration, communication and critical thinking through pair work and group work, these cooperative learning strategies empower students to take an active role in their language learning journey. Ultimately, pair work and group work contribute to the holistic development of language learners, preparing them for success in an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world.



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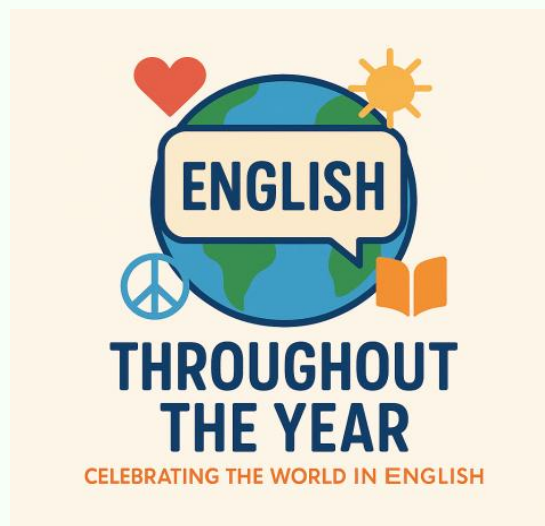
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English Throughout the Year: Celebrating the World in English

Lea Pintarić



Lea Pintarić graduated in English and German Language and Literature from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb, Croatia. She has been working as an English teacher at Pavao Belas Elementary School in Brdovec, Croatia, for the past five years. In addition to her teaching work, she actively participates in numerous international eTwinning projects, collaborating with teachers and students across Europe.



Project overview

English Throughout the Year: Celebrating the World in English is an international eTwinning project aimed at students aged 6–15. The project was founded by Lea Pintarić and co-founded by Fatma Önder Şal and involves students and teachers from 29 schools across Europe, including Turkey, Spain, Croatia, Greece, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, and Italy. The project integrates English language learning with global and European values, offering students the opportunity to develop their English language skills through creative, collaborative, and meaningful activities related to important international awareness days.

Monthly themes and activities

Throughout the school year 2025/2026, students take part in monthly activities inspired by important international and European days such as the European Day of Languages, World Mental Health Day, World Children’s Day, Earth Day, World Book Day, and Europe Day. Students create posters, e-cards, poems, videos, and digital stories. They also collaborate with partner schools through the TwinSpace platform and through regular online meetings. By using digital tools such as Padlet, Canva, Genially and StoryJumper, they strengthen both their language and digital competences while working in a safe online environment.

Student and Teacher Perspectives

From the students’ perspective, celebrating these special days through various activities provides meaningful contexts for learning English while encouraging them to reflect on topics such as kindness, human rights, environmental protection, online safety, and intercultural understanding. From the teacher’s

perspective, the project has been a great opportunity to connect language learning with relevant topics that matter to students and make English classes more interesting. The project has increased the students' motivation to use English, encourage their creativity, and help them understand the importance of cooperation and cultural diversity.

Final project results

The final results of the project will be combined in a collaborative digital publication, the *Yearbook of Celebrations*, showcasing students' work and highlights from all participating schools.

LinguaWalk: Zagreb Unlocked – The City as a Classroom, Language as a Key

Ida Cvetković and Dijana Štruklec

Ida Cvetković is a language teacher at Prirodoslovna škola Vladimira Preloga in Zagreb, where she teaches German and English and serves as an Erasmus+ coordinator. She holds Master's degrees in English and German Language and Literature and actively mentors students in language projects, competitions, and international cooperation. Her professional interests include project-based learning, intercultural education, and integrating authentic language use with cultural and real-world contexts.

Dijana Štruklec is an English language teacher at the Vladimir Prelog Science School in Zagreb, Croatia where she also coordinates the Foreign and Classical Languages Department. Her professional interests include project-based learning, outdoor language learning, and interdisciplinary ELT approaches. She actively participates in national and international teacher development projects and enjoys designing learning experiences that connect language with real life.

Project-based and experiential learning approaches have long been recognised as powerful tools in English Language Teaching, particularly when they connect language learning with authentic, real-world contexts. The project **LinguaWalk: Zagreb Unlocked – the city as a classroom, language as a key** was implemented during the 2025./2026. school year at the Vladimir Prelog Science School in Zagreb with the aim of rethinking the traditional boundaries of the classroom. The core idea of the project was to transform the city into a learning space and use language as a tool for understanding, interpreting, and connecting with the cultural and historical heritage of Zagreb. Instead of treating language as an abstract system, students experienced English and German as living means of communication embedded in the urban environment. Through guided linguistic walks, Zagreb itself became a “text” to be read, explored, and discussed.

Students actively participated in the project by walking through different parts of the city, such as the Upper Town and the area around the Stone Gate, discovering lesser-known stories and urban details. At each location, they engaged in carefully designed language tasks in English and German. These tasks focused on vocabulary development, functional language, speaking interaction, and collaborative problem-solving. In addition, students created digital materials, tested their knowledge through quizzes and games, and reflected on their learning process.

One of the key objectives of **LinguaWalk: Zagreb Unlocked** was interdisciplinarity. Language learning was combined with elements of history, culture, digital literacy, and civic education, enabling meaningful cross-curricular learning. Students were not passive recipients of knowledge but active explorers, researchers, and creators and this project provided an authentic environment for such use.

Digital skills development played a central role in the project. During the linguistic walks, students used QR codes that linked to tasks and challenges in English and German. They created short video guides, mini glossaries of Germanisms, and digital resources connecting language with cultural heritage. Outdoor escape games and interactive quizzes further enhanced motivation, teamwork, and engagement, demonstrating how gamification can support language learning beyond the classroom.

The results of the project were multifaceted. Students developed linguistic competences in English and German, while simultaneously strengthening their cultural and historical awareness of Zagreb. Their digital competences improved through the use of QR codes, video production, and online platforms. Creativity

and teamwork were particularly visible, as most activities required collaboration, negotiation, and shared decision-making. Moreover, students reported a deeper personal connection to the city, experiencing Zagreb not only as a place of everyday routine but as a meaningful cultural space.

An important aspect of the project was visibility. Students' work was presented to a wider audience at the **Festival of Languages**, held on 26 September 2025 at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. This public presentation added value to the learning process, increased motivation, and gave students a sense of ownership and achievement.

Like any experiential project, **LinguaWalk: Zagreb Unlocked** also involved challenges. Organising outdoor activities required careful logistical planning, including route selection, time management, safety considerations, and adaptation to weather conditions. Technical challenges related to internet access and digital tools highlighted the importance of preparation and institutional support. Maintaining student motivation was addressed through gamified elements such as escape games and quizzes, while learning outcomes were monitored through student reflections, presentations, and evaluation rubrics. Flexibility proved essential, as alternative locations or tasks were sometimes needed due to crowds or unforeseen circumstances.

In conclusion, **LinguaWalk: Zagreb Unlocked** presents a practical model of how language, culture, city space, and digital skills can be integrated into a coherent and motivating learning experience. The project demonstrates that the city can function as a classroom, and language as a key for exploration, connection, and reflection. Learning outside the classroom can significantly increase student

motivation, foster cultural awareness, and develop transferable skills relevant to real life.

For teachers and schools, the project offers valuable insights into breaking traditional subject boundaries and empowering students through meaningful tasks. For students, it provides an opportunity to step outside the classroom, become active participants, and experience language learning as purposeful and engaging.

Future development of the project could include expanding the routes to other parts of Zagreb and its surroundings, incorporating additional languages, and introducing long-term evaluation through follow-up surveys or interviews. Sharing student work through school websites and local media could further enhance visibility, while collaboration with external mentors such as tour guides, historians, or digital experts could enrich the learning experience. Developing a transferable materials package would also allow the project to be adapted and implemented in other schools, ensuring sustainability and wider impact.

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Unlocking Global Opportunities: A Conversation with Our Cambridge and KGL Stars

Diana Velcheva



An interview with students on the Cambridge exam and the KGL competition

Diana Velcheva: Why do you need a C1 Advanced Cambridge English certificate?

Lady Carlotta Sulc, 11th -grade student: My goal is to achieve an excellent grade on my C1 certificate, so I can be a top candidate for the Erasmus+ programme at the Medical university where I plan to study.

D.V.: Why is the C1 Certificate so important to you?

Denis Ismail, 11th-grade student: The C1 Certificate is a key that opens many doors such as international trade and global connections. It is a tangible proof of your English proficiency, and it is essential for both educational and professional growth. In my opinion it is one of the most important assets a person should have in their portfolio.

D.V.: Which part of the Cambridge exam do you find most “tricky”- Reading and Writing, Listening or Speaking? Why?

Melani Mincheva, 10th-grade student: I found Reading and Use of English to be the trickiest, because you must remain highly focused to perform perfectly.

D.V.: Do you think the KGL contest showed your real English, or are you even better than what the test showed?

Kristian Kostov, 9th-grade student: Yes, I think the KGL Olympiad showed my real level of English, but I also believe I can do even better. Sometimes stress or limited time can affect the results, so I`m sure I`m capable of showing more of my true abilities.

D.V.: Why have you participated in Cambridge exams for five consecutive years?

Nikol Vutsova, 7th-grade student: I take the Cambridge certificate exams because I want to see how much my English is improving. Each exam motivates me to learn more and gives me confidence in my abilities.

D.V.: If you had to give one piece of advice to someone taking the Key for Schools exam next year, what would it be?

Veneta Markovska, 6th-grade student: As scary as it may seem, stay calm and believe in yourself! Confidence is the key!

D.V.: How would you feel if you were the one to represent our school in the next KGL round?

David Dyakov, 6th-grade student: I would be delighted, I love challenges so even though it would be difficult, I would be very pleased to participate.

D.V.: Would you participate in KGL again next year?

Petra Rose Teodorova, 6th-grade student: Yes, I definitely would!

D.V.: If you win a prize from KGL, who is the first person you are going to call to share the news?

Danislav Georgiev, 5th-grade student: My father, because he always encourages me to study hard. I know he would be very proud to hear that I won.

D.V.: Which English-speaking country would you like to visit first and why?

Fatih Eren Al, 4th-grade student: I would like to visit America because I love the USA and its culture.

D.V.: Do you think English will still be the most important language in 20 years?

Vasilena Plamenova, 4th-grade student: I think it will be the most important language. Even more people from different countries will speak it.

D.V.: If you could meet the person who wrote the KGL questions, what is the one thing you would ask them?

Kirill Dmytriyev, 4th-grade student: I would tell them that the test was easy and exciting!

D.V.: Why is getting an international certificate important for your future?

Kalina Malcheva, 3rd-grade student: Because I want to study abroad. My dream is to study English at Cambridge University.

D.V.: Describe the whole KGL experience in just 3 adjectives.

Rayan Yanakiev, 3rd-grade student: Exciting, interesting, significant!

D.V.: Do you prefer learning English with textbooks or through movies, music?

Kateryna and Anastasiya Nevzorovi, 3rd-grade students: We prefer both, but we remember vocabulary better through music.

D.V.: If you were a teacher for one day, how would you make the English lesson more exciting?

David Gradechliev, 2nd -grade student: I would give my students more tests so they can become even smarter!

D.V.: How do you feel when you see a word you don't know? Do you panic or do you try to guess from the context?

Eva Terzi, 2nd-grade student: I don't panic. I try to guess the meaning or ask my teacher.

D.V.: Do you enjoy preparing students for Cambridge English certificates? Also, what are your thoughts on your first experience with KGL as a teacher?

Kalya Koleva- English Teacher: Cambridge English exams are the most interesting part of my job. The children like the format of the tests and prepare with great enthusiasm. And when they get a high score, that is a source of satisfaction, pleasure and a reward for me. KGL is a highly motivating competition. I like it a lot!





My English Learning Journey – An Interview with Lara

Anita Živković



Anita Živković is an English teacher at Tehnička škola Šibenik in Croatia, where she has been teaching for nearly 25 years. In her work, she enjoys developing classroom materials and encouraging students to explore language through creative projects. Over the years, she has had the opportunity to share her experience with colleagues through talks and workshops at county, intercounty, and national level. During the past decade, her professional interests have also led her to publish several articles and take part in a number of collaborative educational projects.

Interviewer's note

A few months ago, I asked my students to write an essay on a given topic. Many submitted thoughtful and well-written pieces, but one essay truly stood out. I was genuinely impressed by the ease with which Lara handled English, her ability to express complex ideas clearly, and her rich vocabulary and grammatical precision. When I saw the opportunity to feature a student in BETA E-Newsletter, the choice was immediately clear. Lara's insights and experiences deserve to be shared with a wider audience. In this interview, she reflects on her

journey with English, how she learned it, what motivates her, and what advice she has for both students and teachers.

For starters, could you briefly introduce yourself to our readers? Tell us your name, the school you attend, your grade, and anything else you think people should know about you. In other words, who is Lara?

There's a lot I could expand on here. My name is Lara Protrka, and I'm a junior in the architectural technician course at Tehnička škola here in Šibenik, Croatia. I like to say I'm a Jack of all trades – not because I am good at everything, but because I love and participate in so many different activities that adjectives like sporty or nerdy don't ever seem like enough.

Lara, as someone from a generation that has grown up exposed to English from an early age, do you remember the first time you realized there was a language other than your own? What was that moment like?

I don't think I ever gave it much thought until my first-ever English class. I remember, as a child, I'd always try to imagine how people in the other parts of the world talked to their parents, but at the time, my brain could only comprehend the idea that they translated it into Croatian in their heads. 7-year-old me was shocked to find out my maternal language wasn't the main language in the world.

What kinds of English content did you encounter at that time? What did you enjoy most when engaging with the language?

Growing up, I was part of that first generation that was truly exposed to the wonders of the Internet. My father used to enjoy gaming; hence we had a PC and a laptop in the house. I spent a lot of time watching videos on YouTube or

playing video games myself, which meant I interacted a lot with the language, and my parents were always the *try to figure it out yourself first* type, so I was forced to truly engage my brain and use contextual clues. I've always loved things that stimulated my brain, and English naturally became one of them.

When did you first realize you had a hunger to learn English?

I always was, and still am, a very competitive person. It's still a vivid memory to me – 1st grade, we had a lesson about going to the market where we learned the names of fruits and vegetables, plums and such. All of a sudden, one of my classmates mentioned *meat*. Not only did he mention a word I didn't know, but he also proceeded to converse about it with our teacher. I couldn't understand what they were talking about until the teacher translated it later, and that bothered me so much that, in turn, I decided to become fluent in the language.

Growing up, what role did your parents play in your exposure to English? Were there any routines or rules about cartoons, YouTube, or other English content?

Honestly, they were always very supportive of whatever I wanted to learn as a kid. Obviously, I had some restrictions about how much time I could spend online when I was little, but they rarely restricted the content I was exposed to unless it was inappropriate for a kid. Additionally, both my parents spoke pretty much fluent English, and to this day, we still mix a lot of languages in my household in everyday life.

Lara, I assume you were ahead of your peers when it came to English. Did you ever feel bored in your early English classes at elementary school? Can you remember how those lessons felt for you?

After my decision to become fluent in English, I progressed very quickly, but I was still just a kid, and so it was all entertaining to me nonetheless. I remember, as I assume every Croatian student does, learning with Ronnie the Rabbit, Jessica, Elliot, and Ms Lemon. Their stories were always fun to follow, and our teacher made sure we all participated in lots of projects and fun tasks, so I was never bored, despite knowing the actual content we were learning.

I know you've mentioned before that you had a wonderful English teacher in the upper grades of primary school. Can you tell us what you liked most about him and what made him such a great teacher?

As I've already mentioned, he made sure everybody participated. It's not only his ability to teach and include everyone while making them feel comfortable that made him my favourite teacher; during Covid-19, we had online classes, and I was really struggling to stay motivated. Most of the other teachers had no issue writing Cs and marking me for not doing my homework, but he'd always text me on the day of the deadline with any assignments I left uncompleted and remind me to do them, and sometimes even left positive comments to encourage me. I guess that impacted me long-term more than I realized at the time. I find it important for teachers to see their students as people, not only a part of their job. He did a wonderful job at that.

Even though you picked up English outside the classroom, do you think your school English classes still offered benefits?

While I could easily learn English in my daily life, it wasn't as easy to find someone to communicate with in the language. Not to mention, some of the topics we learned about that I found interesting are something I never would've found or picked up on my own. The most beneficial thing was having somebody

force me into learning grammar rules, because I've never had the discipline to practice things I could tell by ear.

You also took part in county English competitions. How did you do in those competitions, and what were your results?

I'd like to say I did pretty well. Sadly, English competitions only happen every other grade, so I only participated twice – in 8th grade and last year. My first one, I did super well and was 3rd in the county. Last year, I placed higher, but had fewer points. 45, I think.

Not advancing to the state level—did that feel discouraging at the time, or did it become an added motivation for you?

By now, you've got the gist that I'm very competitive. In 8th grade, I didn't really care because I still did better than everybody in my school. In sophomore year, though, I missed only 2 points to advance further, and that bothered me a lot. I'm still cultivating that feeling to use as motivation next year when I can participate again.

In your opinion, how important is it for students to participate in competitions, and why do you think that is?

Personally, I'll always advocate for it. It's easy to delude yourself into thinking you're good at something in a controlled environment. You might be the best in a room full of average people, but that doesn't make you the best overall. Engaging with people and content at a larger scale force you to expand your horizons and learn things you otherwise might've never encountered. It also teaches the all-star kids to manage their ego and learn that not being the best isn't the end of the world.

What are your favourite activities with English outside the classroom? What kind of content do you usually engage with?

This has varied a lot throughout the years. I learned a lot of my English from gaming and interacting with people online over platforms like Discord. Nowadays, I mainly read, because I am too impatient to wait for books to be translated into Croatian. I do some of my own writing when I have time, as well. Other social media platforms, like TikTok or Instagram, are dominated by English content, but I've become so used to it that I don't really see it as exposure to the language anymore.

What kind of books do you read? How often? Who's your favourite author?

I try to read daily. I'm the type of person to always carry a book around, just in case I have time to read it during the outing. I enjoy books with psychological aspects, especially if they're set in an academic or fantasy setting. My current read is *The Goldfinch* by Donna Tart. If I can get my hands on a Croatian edition, I'll read it in my own language, so I mainly read romance books in English now, since I read those as e-books. As for authors, I've collected almost all of Stephanie Garber's books, so she's up there, but my all-time favourite is V. E. Schwab – there isn't a single book written by her that I haven't thoroughly enjoyed.

I'm particularly interested in the content you follow. What kind of vlogs, blogs, podcasts, or websites do you enjoy? Do you have any favourites—like I enjoy watching shows by Jimmy Kimmel?

Lately, I've been trying to lower my consumption of short-format content, so I enjoy following influencers like Bella Dane, who give advice on living life offline and improving yourself. When it comes to blogs, I love the app *Substack*. I tried

really hard to get into podcasts for a while, but they're just not for me – the lack of things to do with myself while listening to somebody talk drives me insane, and I always find myself zoning out. I'm not big on things like shows or movies either. The only shows I ever really indulged in are *Devil's plan* and *University War*, which are both South Korean. They're easier to watch, since their culture is formed around being subtle, so there aren't as many curse words or provocative gestures as you'd find in American or British reality TV.

When you read or watch something, do you take notes? Do you write down new words or interesting grammar, or do you just let it sink in as you go?

Normally, when I come across something I don't know, I reach for a dictionary and check what it means without stressing whether it'll stick long-term. Every now and then, I'll pick a harder read, or I'll reread something, and then I'll take notes. I'll give myself a longer period of time to truly annotate and analyse the book. I have a separate notebook in which I write down any quotes I like from books, and a folder in my notes app where I write any words or grammatical structures that I want to remember for further use.

You mentioned a friend you speak English with in your free time. How does it feel to have these conversations? Was it her idea, or did you take the initiative? And do you enjoy practicing English this way?

It all started in the 2nd grade of primary school, when we both got hooked on the game *Animal Jam*. We had to talk to each other in English on there if we wanted other players to understand us, and some other games, like *Roblox*, censored words in languages that aren't English to lower the risk of inappropriate content. Naturally, we started texting in English as well, and it has remained that way to this day. It's not a chore, and it's simply talking to a friend,

so it's enjoyable, yet serves as a great way to practice because it lets you figure out how to use the language organically in everyday conversations.

Do you think that speaking English with your friend has helped improve your fluency?

Definitely, we looked back on some screenshots of our old chats and some vlogs we recorded together in English recently, and you can really see the progress in our grammar and vocabulary over time. When learning a language, having somebody to speak it with is one of the most helpful tools.

Would you be honest with us—when you speak English, do you think in Croatian, in English, or a bit of both?

I've never given that much thought. I believe I think in the language I'm speaking at the moment. To me, it doesn't really make a difference because I know a lot of English vocabulary and the grammar comes naturally, whereas when I'm speaking, for example, Italian, it takes conscious effort and thought to form a grammatically correct sentence.

Which activities do you enjoy most during your English classes?

I love both talking and listening to people state their opinions, so I really enjoy discussions. This means I also enjoy oral exams, because our teacher makes it feel like a conversation. Other than that, I love group work and brainstorming tasks like writing.

Do you have a special method for memorizing English vocabulary?

The most important thing is to try and figure it out yourself. Our brains are wired to remember what we went through, so a word sticks easier if you had to figure

it out from the context, rather than just opening up a translator app. If you must use a translator app, write the word down afterwards. Associations are really important, too. To this day, I remember the book from which I learned the word *myriad*.

Do you think grammar should still be taught in the traditional way, or do you think our approach to teaching it needs to change? What methods do you think would work best for students today?

I think the best way to learn anything regarding a language is by correcting someone as they speak. Solving sheets upon sheets of grammar practice can feel monotone and doesn't necessarily help someone develop the ability to form a sentence correctly on the spot. I believe we should work toward making the grammar feel natural. Letting someone speak, then correcting them and explaining the *why* behind it works much better than correcting their sheet work. Though I might be biased, because I still haven't learned the majority of the rules for the tenses to this day and I struggle with explaining my sheet work.

Spelling seems to be a challenge for many students today. Why do you think that is, and what has helped you avoid such problems?

I am 100% positive that it is because of the current trend. We are living in a time period where people try to simplify everything. Abbreviations like *wbu* (what about you), *iykyk* (if you know, you know), memes and the trend of writing genuine nonsense are really impacting kids' and teens' ability to spell. In Croatia, we also have a trend of spelling things the way you'd pronounce them, so it's not necessary for students to know how to spell to talk to their peers in English. The only reason I don't find myself stuck in this pattern is that I write a lot, and

do things like searching for synonyms and looking up things in dictionaries, then spelling them letter by letter into my own work.

When learning a foreign language, what aspects do you find most difficult, and which ones do you enjoy the most?

It's the hardest to start, knowing zero vocab and not understanding why the grammar is the way it is. Since I learned English without being aware that I was taking it in like a sponge, it's frustrating having to face all kinds of different obstacles with other languages. I enjoy reading and learning vocab and expressions, but I usually struggle with grammar since I don't have people to correct me when practicing by myself.

So, when we talk about learning English, do you think of it as "learning," or does it feel more like just being exposed to the language? Does it feel like studying, or more like something you do naturally every day?

English is natural for me at this point. Sometimes, I'll look back on some content I consumed and won't even be able to remember whether it was in Croatian or English. As I've said previously, grammar rules are still something I have to study. Knowing how to say something discourages me from learning why exactly I'm saying it that way.

What would you like to say to teachers in general about making their lessons as effective as possible? In your opinion, what is the most important thing a teacher should bring to the classroom?

Language teachers definitely need to make their classrooms a place of interaction, more than other subject teachers. Languages aren't really something you can cram, so students have to feel comfortable enough to

express themselves despite being unsure of their knowledge level, which in turn lets others provide them with feedback. If students don't feel like they can interact freely with you or their classmates in your class, they won't feel free enough to actually bother learning.

Finally, what advice or encouragement would you like to give to students of all ages who have the opportunity to learn English?

If you are not quite good at English, today, there are so many ways to learn it that bad experiences with peers or teachers shouldn't discourage you from doing so. I'm generally against the use of AI, but if you're afraid to speak to others or just shy, there are tons of AI-powered apps that let you speak to your phone and provide feedback with lots of fun ways to learn. We can't stop the development of digital resources or AI, so I believe we should make the best of it. Good luck!

Is there anything else you would like to add, or any final thoughts you'd like to share to conclude this article?

First of all, I am honoured to be included in the article. I have to extend a great lot of thanks to my amazing teacher who asked me to participate. Since starting high school, especially a course that's regarded as one of the most challenging, her amazing feedback and positive encouragement, as well as always trying her best to satiate our need for excitement by constantly thinking of fun projects both at school level and beyond served as a constant motivation. My conclusion, as someone who's had great teachers during their entire career: Teachers are what impacts one's learning journey the most.

How Extracurricular Activities Shape Eco-Conscious Youth

Barbara Bošnjak



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

Environment protection is a reoccurring, cross-curricular topic, oftentimes dealt with through various activities incorporated in the subject curricula. However, lately, it seems as if its importance transcends the proscribed school curricula resulting in a variety of (inter)national or school projects, extra-curricular activities, local public events or student and teacher workshops or lectures devoted to raising awareness of environmental issues not only locally or nationally, but also on a global scale. Therefore, I would like to present several “green” activities that I have participated in with my colleagues or my students, which, however, have been implemented outside my English classroom.

To start with, I would like to mention the KA210-SCH, a small-scale partnership in school education Erasmus+ project “Time to Make Peace with Nature”. The project was active from November 2022 till May 2024 with France being the leading partner. Secondary School Isidor Kršnjavi Našice, where I work as an English and German language teacher and project team member, was one of the four partners in this project devoted to raising awareness about environmental issues while forming new behavioural patterns oriented toward environment preservation and protection. During the Croatian mobility, my colleague and I prepared two workshops for our partners called “In Full Flood” and “Where There`s Smoke...”. Both workshops focused on ever more frequent occurrence of extreme weather conditions worldwide. Apart from analysing the reasons of climate change, the participants also learned tips and tricks on what to do and how to behave in case of such weather conditions. The content of both workshops was prepared using digital tools and summarised the cross-curricular cooperation in several subjects – Biology, Geography and English language.

The second example of promoting environment issues outside classroom, that I would like to mention, is The Earth Day Megaconference organised as one of the activities of the international Time Project. The Megaconference was held online in April 2024 and it was organised allowing active participation of a variety of countries such as Canada, Brazil, UK, Croatia, Turkey, Taiwan and many more. The main idea was, beyond any doubt, to remind people to take action in order to protect plant`s natural resources. Since it was an all-day event, several different groups of students participated in the conference according to a prior arranged schedule. They summarised their conclusion by using digital tools and presented them later in their classes. The participation was definitely an eye-opener for the majority of the participating students.

And lastly, I would like to mention one more activity in which students actively participated with the idea of developing a full-scale project proposal based on the concept of “greening” our environment. The participating students formed a project team which I was mentoring during a four-month period between February and May 2025 in the contest called “Digital Incubator for Students”. Their task was to develop a project idea and describe all its stages from the initial concept to its realisation. Their proposal was focused on “greening” our city by building roof terraces, planting trees and herbs in roundabouts and forming communal areas where residents might spend time outdoors. Their idea was accepted in the final round of the contest which simply means that our students, regardless their obligations and everyday activities, still have the motivation to actively participate in extra-curricular activities when it comes to spreading the word about the importance of our environment for us and for the future generations to come.

Sherlock Holmes in the World of Chemistry

Ivana Kozić and Dijana Penava



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



Dijana Penava works in primary school “August Cesarec” in Ivankovo, where she teaches Chemistry and Science, in 2024 she became teacher advisor. She participates in international projects, including eTwinning, she is the author of Izzy digital tools for Chemistry and Science posters. She regularly publishes articles with examples of practical activities in the classroom, she runs the School cooperative “Zrno” and connects students with the local community and numerous associations, encouraging empathy and solidarity. With her students she won third place and a bronze medal in the International Young Naturalists’ Tournament in Georgia, Europe. She regularly does lectures on a number of conferences (national and international). She has won “The most successful educational workers in Croatia” award in the last three years.

How can we make English and Chemistry classes interesting and appealing to our students? How can we motivate them to learn and study? We have found an inspiration in the works of Arthur Conan Doyle and his character, the unique Sherlock Holmes.

As two teachers of two different subjects we decided to make a cross-curricular collaboration and accomplish the outcomes in an unconventional and out of the box thinking.

In English class, the students watched a video about Sherlock Holmes, they acquainted themselves with this imaginary character. The students watched the video two times, the first listening they listened for gist and they had to say who is Sherlock Holmes and what was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's first novel about Sherlock.

In the second listening they had to listen for specific information.

After watching, the teacher introduced new vocabulary such as: scientist, chemistry, data, fingerprints, footprints, research, DNA, crime, evidence...

Then the students were brainstorming about Sherlock Holmes and they said words that they associated with Sherlock. The teacher guided them to come to the terms scientist and chemistry. She informs the students that Sherlock was a scientist and he spent a lot of time in the laboratory and with the help of chemistry and experiments tracked down criminals.

At home, students did their research about Sherlock Holmes and methods of investigating crimes, and then prepared a design for their project in pairs or individually (making a poster or presentation). Beside the posters, they also had

a task to think of a crime, make clues, and make a game where other students from the class try to find out who is guilty. At their next English class they presented their work. They were very creative and imaginative because the topic was interesting for them, and they created interesting works.

In Chemistry classes, students first introduced themselves with equipment that is used by real, live forensics experts use such as tools for fingerprinting, DNA collection, and chemical analysis. Also, evidence bags for collecting evidence, markers for marking, and, in some cases, UV booths for using UV light to better see something that is maybe blurred. The teacher showed them pictures of the pieces of equipment.

Then the Chemistry teacher demonstrated some experiments that Sherlock most likely also did while doing his research and investigation. Students really enjoyed this bit.

One of the experiments was Indicating “White Powder” by using indicators like chalk, starch or baking soda and iodine to identify the substance find at the crime scene. The teacher put iodine into each of the substances, and they turned blue and black because of the presence of starch and flour.

The second was using turmeric and baking soda to find a secret message on pieces of paper. The teacher wrote a secret message on a piece of paper using baking soda diluted in warm water and cotton swab. They the paper was dried completely. Then she mixed turmeric with rubbing alcohol and brushed over the paper with a brush. Baking soda reacts with turmeric turning the message red. The secret message was revealed.

The third one was using samples of fibers of different textiles and putting them under microscope, trying to connect them to “clothes” found on the crime scene.

Then the teacher divided the students into groups, and each group got a task to do one of the experiments shown by the teacher. Students really enjoyed this part, they had to be careful to use the equipment correctly and to follow the safety rules. They imagined themselves to be real scientists and forensic experts by doing these simple experiments.

By doing these types of collaborations between subjects, students are motivated to think outside the regular classes, and accomplish learning outcomes and develop skills in a kind of unconventional method, such as Sherlock himself, who was a very unconventional character.

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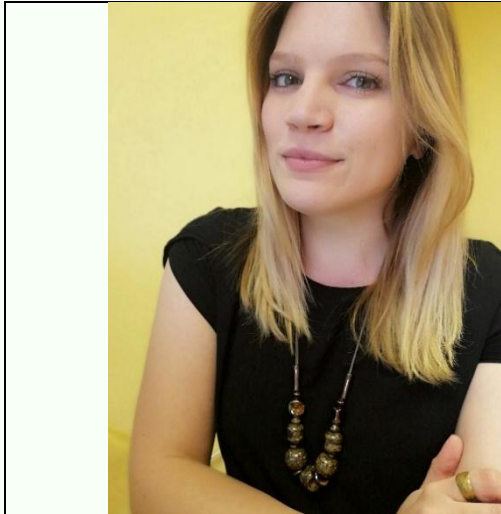
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The classroom quiz: Learning beyond the textbook

Ajrin Floričić



Ajrin Floričić is an elementary school English teacher who graduated from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Rijeka in 2017 with a degree in English Language and Literature and Pedagogy. With eight years of ESL classroom experience, she is passionate about bringing creative activities into her teaching practice and regularly mentors students in various competitions.

Why?

After a couple of years of teaching strictly by the book — fearing I would not cover everything intended by the curriculum and afraid of skipping lessons — I have finally decided to do something different: to immerse myself fully in my teaching and introduce an activity I personally enjoy in my free time. After all, when you do something from the heart, it has the greatest influence. In my free time, I enjoy attending pub quizzes — learning something new and having fun while doing it. And so, I decided to bring that same spirit into my own lessons.

What does it look like in the classroom?

First, it should be noted that this activity is more suitable for upper classes. Currently, I am doing it with classes 6 to 8, covering ages 12 to 14. The primary reason is that older students have a stronger command of the English language,

which is necessary to understand the questions. Secondly, they also bring a wider range of knowledge drawn from different school subjects.

The first step is to divide the students into smaller groups of 3 or 4. This depends on the class — the number of boys and girls, their knowledge, and their behaviour. If there is a risk that all the best students or all the mischievous ones end up in the same group, I use the *e-dnevnik*¹ to randomly assign them into groups. Then, students take a piece of paper on which they will write their answers, and the quiz begins.

I started conducting these quizzes two years ago, at the end of the school year. In the beginning, I did general quizzes containing different categories — history, geography, languages, sports, movies, music, anagrams, and recognising brands, for example. Lately, I have been doing themed quizzes, such as a Christmas quiz, a Valentine's Day quiz, or the most recent one, a Women's Day quiz.

I always start by choosing an appropriate template to make it visually appealing. I tend to include categories that are part of general culture, such as history, geography, movies, and music. For example, the Women's Day quiz featured these categories: history, literature, movies, cartoons, music, language, and guessing the person based on emojis. I always try to include something the students will respond to and adapt the content to modern times.

The quizzes usually last about 30 to 35 minutes, leaving the remaining class time to check the answers. This is done by having each group swap papers with the

¹ E-dnevnik is a digital classroom management platform widely used in Croatian schools, which includes a student list and grading tools.

neighbouring group. I then reveal the correct answers, they check and count the points and return the paper to the original group.

Christmas Quiz

Complete the lyrics.



Snow is fallin'
All around me
Children playin'

It's the season
Love and understanding
Merry Christmas everyone



Task: Complete the lyrics of a song.



CASUAL ANTS
MISS CHATTERER
LEG BINS JELL
IN THE GLINTS

The slide features four Christmas-themed illustrations: a candy cane on an ice cream cone, a snowman, a Christmas angel, and a collection of stars and snowflakes.

Task: Unscramble the anagrams to reveal Christmas words.

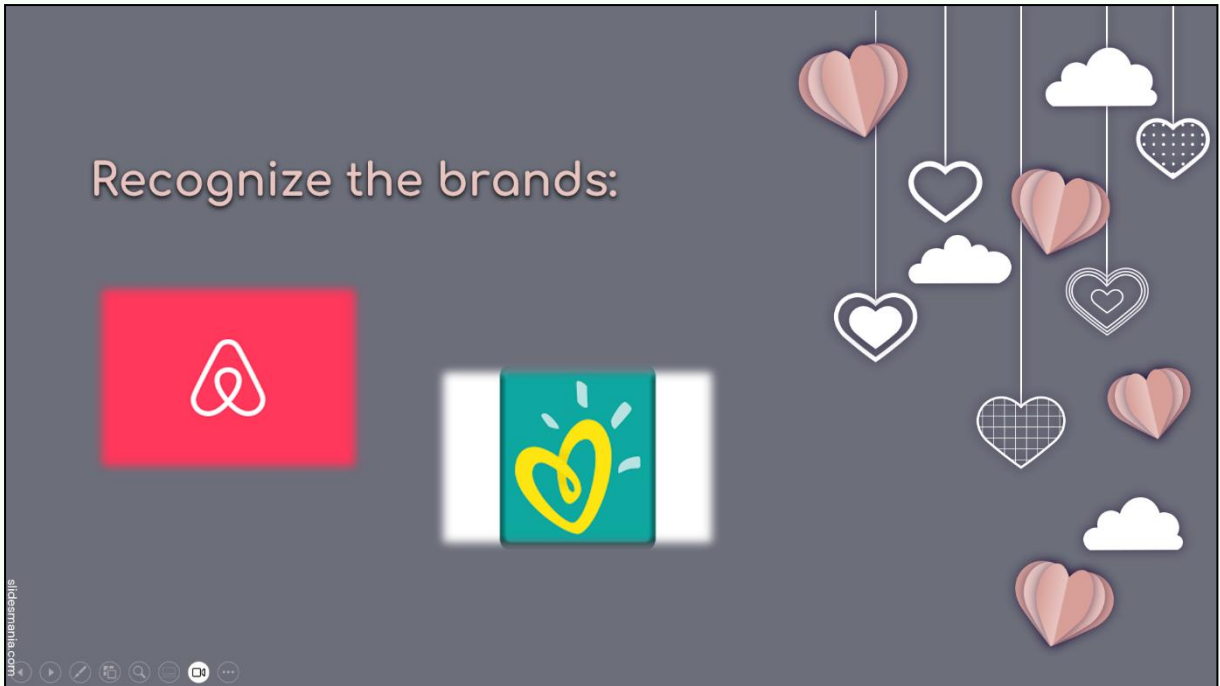
Valentine's Day Quiz

Name the other half:



The image shows Marge Simpson on the left, pointing towards the right. On the right, there are several Valentine's Day decorations including hearts, clouds, and a grid pattern, all hanging from strings.

Task: Name the partner of the person shown in the picture.



Task: Recognise famous brands with a heart in their logo.

Women's Day Quiz

Write the female form of the word:

- ACTOR –
- FIREFIGHTER –
- GROOM –
- KING –
- GENTLEMAN –
- LION –
- NEPHEW –

Navigation icons are visible at the bottom left of the slide.

Task: Write the female form of the word.

Guess the person based on the given emojis:

- 🦋 👑 🎤 (a singer)
- 🧑‍🎤 ❄️ 🎵 (a movie character)
- 🏊 🏆 🏆 🏆 🏆 HR (a sports star)



Task: Guess the famous person based on the given emojis.

Why does it work?

Firstly, students are happy to move away from classic classroom activities — writing, copying from the board, and doing exercises in the workbook. It simply feels like something different. Secondly, they get to work in teams, which allows for a little relaxed conversation with their classmates. Moreover, they get to display knowledge that is not necessarily tied to English. Students who may not excel in English get to shine in other areas — recognising songs or movie characters, for example. Each student can contribute something, and in doing so, they develop their teamwork and social skills. They learn to negotiate, discuss possible answers, agree on one, and accept when that answer turns out to be wrong. In short, they learn how to handle a loss gracefully.

It is always a pleasure to witness those little 'a-ha!' moments — when a student thinks and thinks and finally arrives at an answer.

When will we do it again?

Nothing gives me more satisfaction than hearing this question. It tells me that students are genuinely engaged and looking forward to the next one. As mentioned, although the quiz is conducted in English, students get to shine in other areas, too — all while having fun and, hopefully, learning something new. This kind of reaction is the best feedback a teacher can receive, and it motivates me to keep going.

It does take a couple of hours of preparation — finding a suitable design, thinking of the questions, and making sure they are age-appropriate — but it is worth it. If you enjoy something yourself, chances are your students will too. Every time I hear 'When will we do it again?', I am reminded that this is exactly why I started — not just because I enjoy it, but because enjoyment, it turns out, is contagious.

How to Safe-Proof Safer Internet Day

Barbara Bošnjak



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

Safer Internet Day is a global campaign celebrated on the second Tuesday of February each year, with the aim of promoting safer, more responsible and more positive use of technology and the internet, especially among children and young people. Since young generations tend to spend more and more time in an online environment, I would like to present Safer Internet Day activities implemented this year in Isidor Kršnjavi Secondary School Našice.

This year, Safer Internet Day was celebrated on 10th February 2026, and the Safer Internet Centre Croatia, as part of the Insafe network, was celebrating it by organizing numerous activities under the slogan *“Together for a Better Internet.”* The involved activities focused on educating and raising awareness among children, young people, and professionals about safe and responsible behaviour in the digital world.

Since Secondary School Isidor Kršnjavi has for the past 5 years been involved in the European Ambassador School Programme, our students, junior ambassadors of the EPAS elective course *Become the Voice of Europe!* took part in an hour-long online workshop held on 12th February 2026. The workshop was organized and facilitated by another EPAS school, Economics and Tourism School from Daruvar, with participation from junior and senior ambassadors from Matija Mesić Gymnasium Slavonski Brod, Matija Antun Reljković Gymnasium Vinkovci, and the Jesuit Classical Gymnasium with Public Rights in Osijek. During this activity, the junior ambassadors had the opportunity to share their opinions and experiences related to time spent online, with special emphasis on online safety. Together they explored topics such as boundaries of privacy, fake profiles, sharing photos, financial and similar scams. The workshop was very successful, and the juniors marked this day in collaboration with ambassadors from various EPAS schools, giving them the chance to broaden their connections while encouraging acceptance and appreciation of diverse opinions and viewpoints.

Additionally, on the same day, the juniors participated in an online quiz organized for Safer Internet Day, which was active only during that day. All students who achieved more than 80% on the quiz are entered into a prize draw in which the ten luckiest participants are rewarded through random selection. Furthermore, on 9th February, I also held a lecture accompanied by activities for students on the topic of online safety in other classes I teach. Second- and third-year students of the Electronics and Computer Engineering programme had the opportunity to learn about innovative ways of applying artificial intelligence in everyday life, as the theme of this year's Safer Internet Day was

precisely that, artificial intelligence (AI). Students independently researched the negative aspects of using artificial intelligence and discussed the ethical issues associated with its use.

The listed activities had one common purpose – to make younger generations think of the consequences their behaviour in an online environment might have if they do not engage in their interactions responsibly, positively and in accordance with a standard netiquette. Hopefully, such actions may guide them in their activities and serve as positive examples from which to learn.

My Erasmus Experience in Seville

Ana Katruša



Ana Katruša has been working as an English teacher in Primary school of king Tomislav in Našice, Croatia for 18 years now. She graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy in Osijek with a degree in English language and literature and History. In 2021 she advanced in her career and became a teacher advisor. Being an enthusiast in learning something new she is open to new ideas which can help her motivate and inspire her students. In the past few years she has focused her interests on working with gifted learners and has attended and held workshops regarding the related topics on both international and regional levels.

In this text I will reflect on my recent Erasmus+ experience in Seville, Spain in November 2025. I attended a 6-day professional development course *Boosting creative thinking and problem solving* organized by Europass Teacher Academy. This teacher mobility was organized within my school's Erasmus+ project "Rastimo zajedno!" Since one of the aims of the project is improving teacher competencies for recognizing, supporting and developing the potential of gifted students, this course was a chance for me to learn and apply innovative work methods with my gifted students as well as in everyday classroom situations.

About the course

As the title suggests, the topics of the course mainly included methodology regarding creativity, critical thinking and innovation.

The benefits of encouraging creativity in the classroom are multiple; students learn through trial and error, think critically to solve problems, find new ways to learn and collaborate thus developing an important life skill. On the other hand, teachers stimulate the creative process, ensure a safe environment for learning, teach persistence and provide help and feedback.

One of the examples of introducing creativity in the classroom is design thinking. Design thinking is a non-linear process for generating innovative ideas that focuses its effectiveness on understanding and providing solutions for real users' needs. It is a process of multiple steps which starts by gaining empathy and ends in designing a solution to a problem. It is also an iterative process, which means it involves continuous testing and improvement. Our exercise in the course was "The wallet project", where we were paired up with the task of designing an ideal wallet for each other. The design process started with an interview with the aim to get to know each other. Next, we captured our findings in order to recognize our partner's needs and made a sketch of ways to meet those needs. Then we shared our solutions with our partners and captured their feedback. The stage of reflection followed, and we were ready to build our solutions. The last step of the design thinking process was sharing our solutions with our partners and the whole group, and getting feedback. Although this process seemed complicated at first, we agreed that it is useful and could be applicable

in our classrooms. However, necessary changes would have to be applied depending on the age of our students.

One day of the course was dedicated to visiting two Seville's museums – The Museum of Popular Arts and Customs and The Museum of Illusions. The Museum of Popular Arts and Customs is located in the Maria Luisa Park and there you can find one of the most complete collections of Andalusian Popular Ceramics in Europe. In the museum we played a scavenger hunt, and in that way learnt about the exhibitions.



The Museum of Popular Arts and Customs

The Museum of Illusions was also very interesting, since our task was to explore the exhibits, study the instructions and take photos. In this Museum you can find stunning illusions that play with your mind, and also have fun!

During the rest of the course, we studied the topics of storytelling, mind mapping and gamification. In all these creative activities motivation is the first step. In order to start the learning process we need to motivate our student and engage them. We need to focus on things that are important to them and start from there. Empathy is also an important factor in the process, especially the teacher-student relationship. When we build a supportive learning environment, we are one step closer to positive learning outcomes.

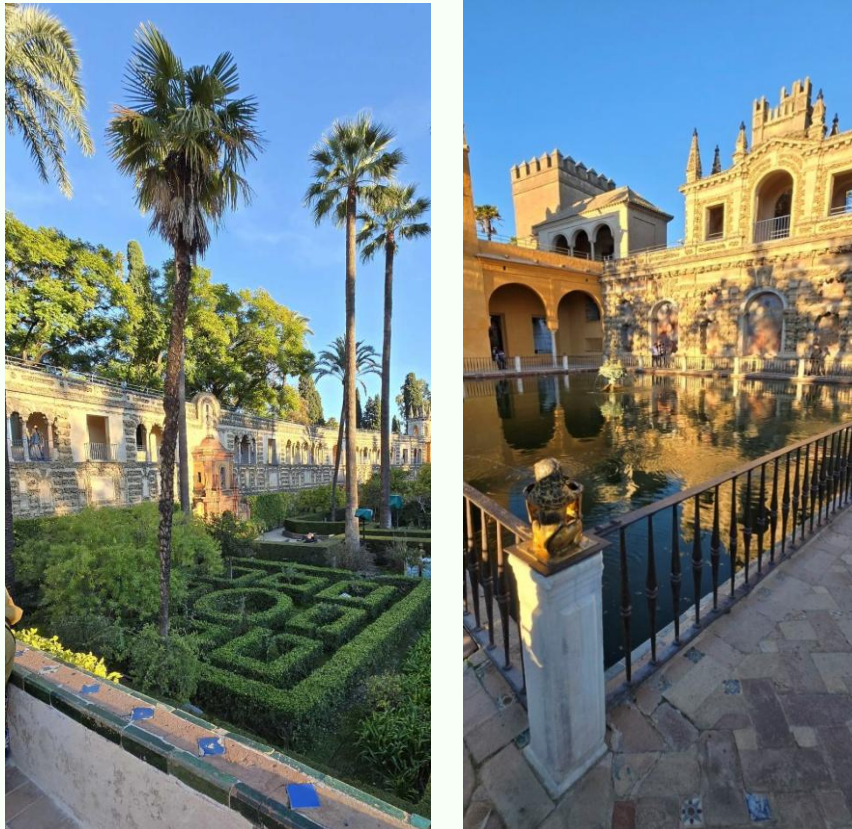
Seville's sights

During this professional development course we had an opportunity to discover Seville's sights. Seville is a wonderful city with plenty of things to see and do. I was astonished by some of the places and sights. I visited The Plaza de Espana, which was built for the Ibero-American exposition in 1929. It covers a 50,000 square meter area and it is spectacular.



The Plaza de Espana

Another must-see in Seville is The Seville Cathedral, which is one of the largest churches in the world and the largest Gothic Cathedral. Right next to it is The Royal Alcazar of Seville, a large palace complex, one of the official residences of the Spanish royal family. Its numerous palaces, courtyards and stunning gardens make it a unique example of Mudejar architecture.



The Royal Alcazar of Seville

Conclusion

This professional development course was a unique opportunity to learn something new as well as collaborate and share ideas with fellow teachers from other countries around Europe. The insights and knowledge gained will surely help me in my future work. This course was also a chance to explore the history and culture of wonderful Seville. All in all, it was a very satisfying and positive experience.

SCELT & The Bridge Forum 2026: Promoting Teacher Well-Being and Resilience

Albena Stefanova



Albena Stefanova teaches English at the University of National and World Economy in Sofia, Bulgaria. She holds a PhD in Methodology of Teaching Modern Languages, a master's degree in English Philology. She has been teaching English to students of philosophy, policing, law, economics and political studies for over twenty-five years. Her main interests are ESP – functional communicative competence and translation specialised in economics and political studies. She was BETA Membership Secretary for the period 2014-2018, IATEFL ESP SIG Public Relations and Scholarship Manager (2018-2023). Currently, she is BETA President and Chair of the Interim Committee of FIPLV for the region of Central and Eastern Europe.

Our partners from SCELT – Slovakia held their annual conference in February at Comenius University, Bratislava. They had embarked on a daring mission – to hold another conference in less than a year and to attract more English language teachers and lecturers, organisations and publishers. As a result, they managed to host a number of publishers for the materials exhibition, receive the support of RELO and have almost three hundred participants. Most of the conference participants were teachers from all corners of Slovakia who had felt that spending a weekend to learn, update and exchange is worth it.

The conference programme was promising with presenters and plenary speakers of various national and professional backgrounds – teacher trainers, materials writers, teachers, freelancers, university lecturers, researchers from Greece, Germany, the UK, Poland, the Czech Republic, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, etc. Teacher resilience and well-being were considered through the lens of personality, experience and institutional culture.



SCELT president Jana Ftáčnik Pastorková welcomed the conference participants and thanked SCELT team and volunteers (the young people in blue T-shirts in the photo above) for contributing to the event and encouraged everyone to keep developing and improving in order to be strong and perseverant in their mission to educate and prepare the new generations of learners for an active citizenry and personal success.

As usual, taking part in professional events means making difficult decisions about the presentations and workshops to attend. So, I could not join the delegates for all talks, but tried to catch glimpses of my colleagues' work as much as possible. Additionally, the coffee and lunch breaks together with the reception and international evening on Friday provided for friendly discussions

and professional networking. It is always exciting to catch up with colleagues and find out about their current searches and achievements. Thus Mark Andrews' talk was very different from the one I attended during a BETA conference, but it was useful to see how the Mark Andrews of a decade ago had evolved into the Mark Andrews of 2026. What is more, it was nice to hear that he had spent some time in Slovakia when he was young and could make a parallel between teacher resilience and Slovak people's resilience.



At Mark Andrews' talk

It was a pleasure to attend the talks given by Claudia Molnar, Christina Gkonou, Piotr Steinbrich, Viola Bielecka and Zuzana Labašova (see photos below).





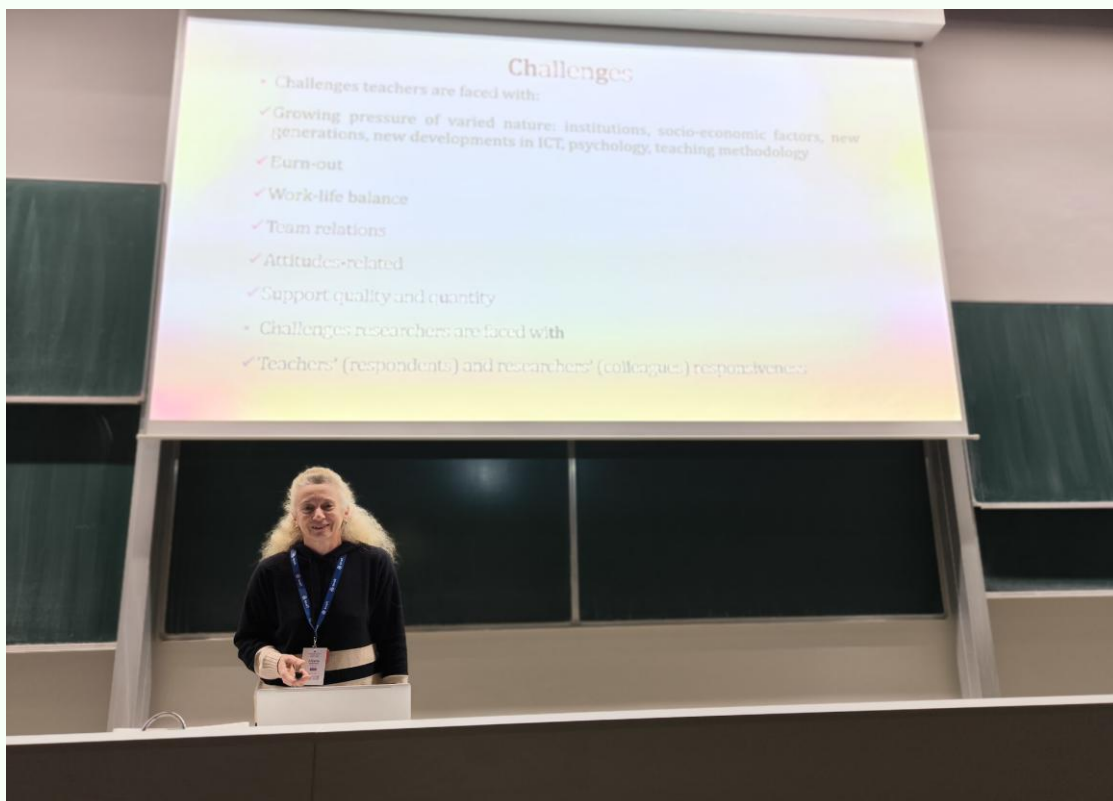
Radiant Christina (the picture below) gave an impressive plenary talk along with setting a good example of teacher resilience as she had given birth to her first child a couple of weeks before the conference.



The wonderful ELT team of The Bear Educational Theatre taught us how to vary our lessons by making and having fun, involving and engaging, facilitating and accommodating. Learning from peers was a thrilling experience for a special audience like teachers. We could interview Shakespeare asking modern learners' questions to a person from the past simulating a real classroom situation and see how such approaches help enhance performance and overcome fears.



The SCLT team let us sample Slovak cuisine and at the same time taste dishes typical of the participants' countries (the picture below).



In line with the conference theme, I gave a talk on the study of teacher resilience in Bulgaria and had the chance to share my observations and experience with the audience. My colleagues were interested to know more about the attitudes

to the teaching profession in Bulgaria, as well as about the key issues the Bulgarian college is faced with and the approach to the preparation of student teachers and novice teacher retention.



Even though our SCLT partners were very busy as there are challenging situations at conferences all the time, we found a couple of minutes for a photo and a short conversation. Now BETA is looking forward to welcoming Jana, Natalie, Ivana and the rest of the wonderful conference organising team at the 2026 BETA conference in Sofia.

Forthcoming events in the world of ELT

- **16th AzETA International Conference**, 24-25 August, Baku, Azerbaijan

<https://www.ada.edu.az/en>

- **33rd BETA Annual International Conference and 3rd Regional Central and Eastern Europe Congress**, 11-13 September, 2026, Sofia, Bulgaria

<https://www.beta-iatefl.org/63288/calls-for-proposals/33rd-beta-annual-international-conference-and-3rd-regional-central-and-eastern-europe-fiplv-congress-11th-13th-september-2026-sofia-bulgaria/>

- **35th IATEFL Poland International Conference**, 18-20 September, 2026, Warsaw, Poland

<https://iatefl.org.pl/35th-iatefl-poland-international-conference-warsaw-18-20-september-2026/>

- **14th ELTAM MK International Conference “Teach, Transform, Thrive”**, 16-17 October, 2026, Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia

<https://www.eltam.org.mk/eltam/conferences>

- **10th International Scientific Conference on Linguistic, Educational, and Intercultural Research**, 12-13 November, Vilnius, Lithuania

<https://www.leicresearch.flf.vu.lt>

- **34th Annual National HUPE Conference**, 20-21 November, 2026, Zagreb, Croatia

<https://www.hupe.hr/index.php/conference/conference-news/2026/34th-annual-national-hupe-conference-call-for-papers>

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

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

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



33rd BETA Annual International
Conference and
3rd Regional Central and Eastern Europe FIPLV Congress
„Language Education: Expanding Perspectives, Enriching
Practices“

11th-13th September 2026, Sofia, Bulgaria

FIRST CALL



DEAR COLLEAGUES,

We are delighted to extend our warm invitation to you for the 33rd BETA Annual International Conference and 3rd Regional Central and Eastern Europe FIPLV Congress. Hosted by the Bulgarian English Teachers' Association (BETA), in collaboration with FIPLV (Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes), and the University of National and World Economy, this joint event will be held in Sofia, the beautiful capital city of Bulgaria, from 11th to 13th September 2026.

The prestigious event will bring together educators representing diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, fostering meaningful dialogue and collaboration towards advancing language education worldwide. It aims to inspire and motivate language teachers to make the most of the teaching and learning contexts they work in, and to exploit the potential of various innovative and collaborative practices in all areas of ELT, ESP, modern languages education and research. The official languages of the event will include Bulgarian, English and German **with presentations and workshops in the working languages, but contributions related to modern languages are more than**

welcome.

We would like to provide you with the opportunity to share your experience, expertise and insights into the fascinating world of language teaching and research. Areas of interest include, but are not limited to Teaching Young Learners and Teenagers; Teaching ESP/LSP; Teacher Education and Development; Bilingual Education; Literature, Media & Cultural Studies in ELT/Language Teaching; Global Issues; Content and Language Integrated Learning; Blended Learning; Applied linguistics; Research; Testing, Evaluation and Assessment.

Internationally prominent professionals in the field of ELT and modern languages education are invited as keynote speakers and workshop leaders. A book exhibition of major publishers and service providers will accompany the conference.

KEY DETAILS

SPEAKER PROPOSAL DEADLINE: 30th June 2026. For speaker proposal forms, accommodation and other details visit <https://forms.gle/83Gv3MSchdTceUrw7>

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

Official languages: The official languages of the event will include Bulgarian, English and German **with presentations and workshops in the working languages, but related to modern languages are more than welcome.**

Important dates

Notification of acceptance: 30th July

Submission of papers: 31st October

Publication of conference proceedings in a special issue of BETA E-Newsletter: 31st

December Submission requirements:

<https://www.beta-iatefl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/BETA-E-Newsletter-issue-42.pdf>.

Participants registration	Early bird (until 31st July)	Regular fee
BETA members and Bulgarian teachers	60 €	80 €
FIPLV members	80 €	100 €
Non-BETA & FIPLV	100 €	120 €

***Fees of foreign participants: payment will be made on-site to avoid heavy bank fees. The early bird rate will be applicable for those who have registered by 31st July and the regular rate – for those who register after 31st July. Only participants who need an invoice will have to pay by bank transfer with the transfer expenses covered by them.**

***Presenters must pay their fees by 31st July.**

Organising Committee

Assoc. Prof. Albena Stefanova, University of National and World Economy, Bulgaria and
Dr Georgi Dimitrov, University of National and World Economy, Bulgaria, Chief Conference Organisers & BETA Committee Members

Assoc. Prof. Sylvia Velikova, St Cyril and St Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria and FIPLV & FIPLV CEER representative
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Scientific Committee

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Dr Geraldo de Carvalho, Werther Institut Juiz de Fora, Brazil, Secretary-General of FIPLV
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Assoc. Prof. Albena Stefanova, University of National and World Economy, Bulgaria
Assoc. Prof. Veselin Chantov, University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Bulgaria
Assoc. Prof. Katalin Fogarasi, Semmelweis University, Hungary and HAALT representative
Dr Mirna Varga, University of Osijek, Croatia and UNJSVU representative
Dr Nataša Gaišt, University of Maribor, Slovenia and SDUTSJ representative
Dr Georgi Dimitrov, University of National and World Economy, Bulgaria

Venue: The University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria

For further queries, contact beta.iateflbg@gmail.com

We very much look forward to seeing you in Sofia.

Kind regards,
The Conference and Congress Organising
Committee

BETA 2026 Plenary Speakers



Judit Hidasi (PhD in Applied Linguistics) has been active in foreign language teaching (English, Russian, Japanese) and in intercultural communication education and training for five decades. She spent longer periods of study, research and work in China, in Finland, in Great Britain, in Italy, in Japan, in the Soviet Union and on Taiwan.

Her academic practice was interrupted by three years of civil service at the Hungarian Ministry of Education (1998-2001) and a five-year guest professorship at Kanda University of International Studies (Japan: 2001-2006). She is professor emerita of BUEB (Budapest University of Economics and Business) and of Sapientia EMTE University (Cluj, Romania). She is vice-president of HAALLT (Hungarian Association of Applied Linguists and Language Teachers).

For her merits in 2005 she was decorated by the Order of the Rising Sun (Japan) and in 2022 by the International Award of FIPLV.

Plenary Talk: Language as Soft Power

Soft power denotes the ability to influence through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or force. Among the many tools of soft power—such as culture, values, and diplomacy—language stands out as one of the most subtle yet powerful instruments. Language becomes a long-term investment in building international networks and goodwill. Moreover, language can shape global narratives.

There are different ways to rank languages globally—by native speakers, by total speakers, use in business, and soft power influence. Each tells a very different story about global power.

Although English dominates across three of the dimensions, Mandarin Chinese is rising fast. European languages (French, Spanish, German) remain influential due to history and institutions, whereas Asian languages (Hindi, Korean, Japanese) are gaining power with shifting global dynamics.

The dominance of global languages however can sometimes lead to the marginalization of local languages and cultures. This raises concerns about cultural homogenization and the loss of linguistic diversity. At this point the responsibility of foreign language educators gains momentum.



Dragana Božić Lenard is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Information Technology (FERIT), Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia, where she teaches English for Specific Purposes to computer science students.

She holds a PhD in Linguistics from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Osijek. Her current research interests span ESP pedagogy, sociolinguistics, computational linguistics, and the integration of digital and AI-based tools in language learning and teaching. Her most

recent work investigates how ESP students perceive and use AI tools (from digital dictionaries to large language model chatbots) and what these practices mean for the future of ESP course design and teacher roles.

She is the author of one scientific monograph, university coursebook and accompanying teachers' book and over twenty research papers published in international peer-reviewed journals. She has presented her research at numerous national and international conferences. She has participated in several national and international research projects.

Plenary Talk: Between the Algorithm and the Classroom: AI Tools, ESP Learners, and the Teacher in the Middle

AI tools have quietly become a fixture in the ESP classroom — not through institutional policy, but through students' smartphones. Chatbots, instant translators, and AI writing assistants are now part of how technical students engage with English, with or without their teachers' knowledge. But are these tools expanding learners' language competence, or simply making it easier to bypass the learning process altogether?

Drawing on empirical research with ESP students at a Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Information Technology in Croatia, this plenary examines how students use AI-based language tools, what they believe these tools offer them, and where that belief diverges from their actual needs as developing professional communicators. The findings point to a telling pattern: high convenience, low criticality.

The talk proposes a framework for intentional AI integration in ESP — one that repositions the teacher not as a technology gatekeeper, but as a critical mediator who cultivates AI literacy alongside disciplinary language competence. The central argument is simple: the question is no longer whether AI belongs in our classrooms. It is whether we, as educators, are ready to make it work for learning rather than instead of it.



Dubravka Celinšek is Assistant Professor of English and Head of the Department of Foreign Languages for Business at the University of Primorska, Faculty of Management, and is also a member of the Slovenian Academy of Management and the Slovenian Association of LSP Teachers. She is actively involved in the university tutoring system and was also involved in designing the university's language policy. Her research interests encompass translating terminology, problem-based learning, teaching LSP with regard to socio-economic contexts as well as teaching LSP, especially terminology, through novels and plays. She has authored and co-authored teaching materials and textbooks, alongside professional and scientific publications.

Plenary Talk: Bridging Language and Disciplinary Knowledge in LSP through Literary Texts and Problem-Based Learning

Contemporary approaches to teaching languages at the tertiary level increasingly rely on digital tools. This presentation argues that literary texts and problem-based learning (PBL) remain valuable and underused resources for supporting students' acquisition of terminology and developing their critical thinking skills and conceptual understanding in languages for specific purposes (LSP). In this presentation I will therefore focus on two complementary dimensions of LSP teaching: reading for conceptual understanding and the development of critical thinking. First, the talk examines the integration of literary texts into business and financial

English as a bridge between disciplinary context and knowledge on the one hand, and language use on the other. Students engage with literary works that depict financial contexts, analysing how key concepts and instruments are experienced by fictional protagonists. This approach provides students with a condensed yet “close-to-real-life” context that supports deeper conceptual understanding. The presentation then introduces an adapted problem-based learning (PBL) model for LSP that fosters collaborative learning, autonomy, conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills. This could be used with literary works as well as with professional texts. The approaches discussed demonstrate the potential to enhance terminology acquisition and understanding of disciplinary contexts. They increase student engagement and reinforce the link between language learning and disciplinary thinking.

Author guidelines

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

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

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

TEXT

Page margins: normal (2.54 cm on all sides)

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

Main text: Calibri 14, justified, line spacing 1.5

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

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

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

Page numbers: Do not number pages.


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