

IATEFL Slovenia Magazine
Winter issue 2017, no. 72



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TWin odlični izleti!

Turistična agencija TWIN se s kulturno-izobraževalnimi potovanji ukvarja že 20. leto. Ker v Veliko Britanijo potujemo pogosteje kot večina ostalih slovenskih organizatorjev potovanj, ponujamo odlično in preverjeno izvedbo. Naše cene tudi že vključujejo javni prevoz in obvezne vstopnine. Cene so odvisne predvsem od termina odhoda in vaše fleksibilnosti pri odhodu.



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Zakaj s Twin-om v London:

- 1 Pogosti in redni, zagotovljeni odhodi v London.** Twin organizira šolska potovanja v London že 20 let, v povprečju imamo na mesec vsaj 3 zagotovljene odhode v London.
- 2 Odlično vodstvo.** Pri Twinu se zavedamo, da je odlično poznavanje običajev in turističnih znamenitosti Londončanov le prvi korak k odlični izvedbi. Naši vodniki imajo dolgoletne izkušnje pri vodenju šolske mladine, zato odlično poznajo vse sestavine programa, saj jih sami pripravljajo. Tudi zato je vodenje/izvedba toliko bolj fleksibilna glede na želje skupine. Naj še omenimo, da boste v Sloveniji težko našli vodnike, ki v London vodijo tako pogosto kot Twinovi vodniki.
- 3 Nastanitev, ki presega običajno turistično kategorijo.** Pri Twinu se zavedamo, da je dober spanec pomembna sestavina izleta. Vsi naši hoteli so hoteli s 3* in pri večini udeležencev presežejo njihova pričakovanja. Kot specialist za London lahko zagotovimo vsaj en bogat angleški zajtrk (običajnih zajtrki v Londonu so skromni kontinentalni).
- 4 Nikoli naknadno ne spreminjamo pogojev.** Naša cena je vedno znana že ob prijavi in se nikoli ne spremeni zaradi spremembe cen dobaviteljev, goriva oz letalskega prevoznika.
- 5 Vedno ponudimo kakšno dodatno storitev – brezplačno.** S program zagotavljamo minimalni obseg storitev oz. ogledov, vendar nikoli ne izvedemo samo minimalnega obsega – vedno, pri vsaki skupini dodamo nekaj posebnega, kar ni zapisano v programu. Prav tako v naših programih nikoli ne zapišemo "če bo čas dopuščal", kajti vse naše programe vedno v celoti izvedemo. In ker si London zelo pogosto ogledujemo, poznamo tudi optimalno zaporedje ogledov brez nepotrebnega hitenja.

- 6** Vsaj 183 osnovnih in srednjih šol je že potovalo z nami. **Z nami zelo malo šol potuje samo enkrat.** Če želite neobvezujoče vzpostaviti stik z organizatorjem na eni od šol, ki je že potovala z nami, vam bomo z veseljem posredovali kontakt.

- 7** Ponujamo 3-dnevni program, kjer za izvedbo ni potrebno delovnika.

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Osmisliti učenje je osnovna naloga vsakega učitelja in ni boljšega načina, kako priljubiti angleščino, od tega, da učence popelješ po svetu. V današnjih časih to ni enostavno. Šole in učitelji se bojijo odgovornosti, mnogi starši pa ne zmorejo ali znajo otrok odpeljati sami. Ni bilo lahko pred 15 leti prvič sestiti na avtobus in se podati z agencijo, o kateri nismo vedeli ničesar, na večdnevno potovanje v Veliko Britanijo. Bilo nas je strah pred odhodom, a takoj ko smo se podali na pot, smo vedeli, da je bila odločitev prava.

Po tistem, ko smo prvič potovali s Twinom, smo vedeli, da nas ne bo več strah. Lani smo že deseti odkrivali Evropo in vsakič smo se vrnili ne samo zadovoljni, ampak tudi hvaležni za Twinovo strokovnost, prijaznost, ustrežljivost ... Hvaležni smo celotni ekipi in nikoli ne bi izbrala druge agencije, saj sem prepričana, da niti cenovno niti strokovno potovanja ne bi mogla biti ugodnejše in bolje izpeljana.

Ta ekskurzija je postala stalna praksa naše šole in učenci komaj čakajo, da bodo dovolj stari, da se je bodo lahko udeležili. Nam, spremljevalcem, pa je v neizmerno veselje, ko jih opazujemo, kako polni vtisov in lepih doživetij še dolgo pripovedujejo o potovanju.

Ksenija Tripkovič, OŠ Selnica ob Dravi

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Life is full of surprises – True stories from the past to the present

by Danny Singh



Danny Singh, born and raised in London, but now based in Rome, gives creative English language lessons and teacher training courses all over Italy and abroad. He also offers stimulating monthly presentations on language related issues at Rome's biggest international bookshop and is visible on web TV www.inmagicartwebtv.eu with a series of interactive English video lessons. He is author of two books, "I was a happy man...then one day I came across Laughter Yoga" and "Learning English through the mind and the body" and is currently working on his third book, "Life is full of surprises". He regularly attends Pilgrims TT summer courses as a Guest Speaker.

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A short history of my origins

A person who has a good education is highly respected, as is a doctor, irrespective of the medicine that he might prescribe, as is a lawyer, irrespective of the laws he might break, as is an accountant, irrespective of how many books he has fiddled!

As was the case in those days, Mum being a good wife, didn't argue about going to the UK, much as she would miss her family. She

just did what was best for her husband and that meant, setting off for a new life in London. Let us not forget that Dad was also going to miss his family! In those days, families were seriously big! To count all the brothers and sisters you had, one hand was not enough. Then there were cousins, uncles, aunts, parents, grandparents, nephews and nieces. People had this strange habit of getting married young and would then set about reproducing as early and as often as possible.

Just to give you an idea, my Dad had seven brothers and two sisters in total, my Mum had three sisters and one brother. But that was nothing compared to my Dad's grandfather who created no less than twenty-two children! That is a hell of a lot! His poor wife was certainly active during her lifetime and amazingly didn't die due to exhaustion from all the childbearing as you might think, but from an infection caused by a banal accident!

A short history of Indian partition

However, this procedure was not so simple. In India, there were predominantly three religions; Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. They had lived together side by side, kids played with each other, they worked together, looked after each other and even got married to each other.



The Hindu and Sikh leaders were happy to have a United Independent India, as were many of the Muslim people. However, the official Muslim leader insisted on the idea of a separate country for Muslims called Pakistan. This idea was initially started by some crackpot in Cambridge, but was not hugely supported among the Muslims.

Britain however, had a policy of "divide and rule" which they had also used in Ireland and Palestine, with equally alarming results; the divi-

sion of people into one sector and government-created borders which only brought discomfort and misery to many people.

Churchill was, if not a fan, certainly sympathetic to the Muslim idea of independence and it was he as much as anyone, who instigated the idea and encouraged the Muslim leader to pursue his dream of a separate state for Muslims.

The "divide and rule" policy meant that separate schools, jobs and even elections were set up to accommodate each religion and this helped to breed tension which previously hadn't existed.

A similar system was used, not by the British, but to dismantle another great country, Yugoslavia, where once again, different ethnic groups had lived side by side for many years, then one day, stirred up by outside forces, they embarked on a campaign of ethnic cleansing and war, leading to the elimination of Yugoslavia and the creation of numerous countries; Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Kosovo. This story and its effects are well illustrated in an excellent documentary by the Slovenian film director, Petra Seliskar, called "Mama Europa". In this exceptional film, Petra uses her five-year old daughter as the starting point, as she asks her mother questions to try to comprehend how the creation of borders has changed the lives of people. This approach makes the film far more audience friendly than it otherwise would be, considering the subject.

Listening with your eyes

I believe that almost every student has taught me something. Everybody has some interests and passions, it is my aim to get them to talk about it. Someone who loves gardening will give me all the infinite details necessary to pursue this activity, if I so desire. Another who works with washing machines will explain how each part of the



machine operates individually and together to ensure the correct operation of the machine. The only students that taught me almost nothing were Italian politicians whom I worked with for almost twenty years. The majority were self-obsessed and only talked about themselves, emphasizing how great they were and how much they did for people.

At the other end of the scale, I had been working at the hospital for about ten years teaching doctors, nurses and other medical staff, when one of my students asked me if I'd be interested in teaching a group of deaf students. I accepted due to my curiosity, before realising that I had no experience with deaf people. I was assured that there would be therapists available to assist the students. I was told to face the students when I spoke and indeed to speak slowly and clearly, as if I needed reminding.

This would be another challenge, but I thrived on challenges, so I was looking forward to it. The students could be classified as young adults and they all had some kind of contraption in their ears, which assisted them with the different sounds. They were smiling and seemed cheerful. I began speaking and they appeared to be following me. I gave them some words which students normally find difficult to pronounce and was shocked to notice how close to perfection their responses were.

I took a glance at the therapists, as if to say, are you guys making fun of me? Are you really deaf? And so, it continued, I talked, they replied with an almost perfect pronunciation. These people couldn't hear me, they could only hear sounds. I observed them carefully to see exactly what they did, when I spoke. They looked at me attentively, then proceeded to imitate me. It was this that made their pronunciation so good. They couldn't hear the sound, but by following the exact movements of my lips and noticing the subtle differences when I moved my jaw, cheeks, tongue, chin, nose, even eyes, they could reproduce a sound that was as close to anything that any student had ever produced in any of my lessons.

Thanks to these great students, I had learned how to teach good pronunciation, not by writing words on a board, not by overspending time on the phonetic charts where regional accents made a mockery of the sounds anyway, but by facing my students, getting them to watch me, observe every movement that I made, then to imitate me, to make every identical move!

Everything happens for a reason

I went along at some unearthly hour of the morning, only because I was curious to see who Mr. Bertolucci had selected in front of me. On arrival, I and a small group of

others were told that some of us would dance, while the others would pretend to be drunk and overfed after the wedding meal. I said, yes, I can be drunk and overfed, I'm good at that! No, you're going to dance, was the reply. What? I can't dance! You're making a big mistake! Just go and dance, was the reply.

I found myself paired up with a tall, slim, attractive and elegant Indian lady wearing a sari. I started by apologizing for what was to come. There were five couples like us who had to dance. We began and at regular intervals, Mr. Bertolucci's voice would bellow out, "cut", as he expressed his dissatisfaction with the result. Our scene was supposed to last for about five seconds of the film, but it took about six hours of filming. After about four hours, I began to get the hang of it and felt far more comfortable. At the end, I was even paid. I thought to myself, this is amazing. I can't dance, or so I believe. Yet, Bernardo Bertolucci has just paid me in cash to dance in one of his films, so I can't be that bad.

I hadn't realised at the time, but this was to have a major effect on my life. Firstly, I never refused to dance after that, while previously I would avoid it at all costs. As I continued to ponder on what the purpose of all this was, as I believed that everything happens for a reason, it wasn't until about 2007 that I began to comprehend fully what had happened. Dancing had been my biggest fear back in 2001, but by 2007, not only was I quite happy to dance, but I was even using dance as a tool in my English lessons; and this had all been caused indirectly by Bernardo Bertolucci's decision to select me, not to act the main role in his film, but to put me outside my comfort zone and force me to face my biggest fear, head on!

The language of communication

My mother on the other hand, would try to speak slowly, use different words, change her intonation, use gestures, try anything that she could to help my girlfriend understand. I was present and so acted as a kind of interpreter while my mother spoke in English and my girlfriend responded in Italian. This worked well until I had a desperate need to go to the toilet. I made my excuses to leave and told them that I'd be back as soon as I could.

When I returned, I could see from a distance, that the two of them were communicating without any problem and without any need for an interpreter, so I stood back and watched them for about ten minutes, before I returned to them. They hadn't missed me! There was a strong empathy between them, a desire to communicate, to understand and be understood!

Despite the fact that neither spoke each other's language, they were communicating easily. Think of how many peo-

ple have difficulty communicating with others in their own language! Couples are a classic example, as one of the pair uses signals to try to communicate his or her dissatisfaction in a particular situation, but the partner just doesn't seem to be able to get it. Communication is not only about speaking a language, it's about the desire and willingness to do everything you can to be understood.

Many Italians who work for large multinational companies often recount horrendous stories of English speakers who talk to groups of them, without the minimum amount of consideration for the fact that English is not their first language. An English teacher generally wouldn't do this, for two reasons. One is that they are trained to adapt their language according to who is in front of them and the other is empathy. If you don't have that, you won't succeed in getting your message across.

The research makes it clear. 55% of face-to-face communication is based on body language, 38% on tone of voice and only 7% of communication is words. There is often no need to speak. The body movements and facial gestures tell us everything. Correct grammar doesn't even come into the equation, yet most traditional language learning courses use grammar as the basis. This perhaps explains why most people find languages so difficult and perplexing.

I often find myself in situations where I am surrounded by people who do not speak any of the languages that I do and vice-versa, yet we somehow manage to communicate, if we really want to.

Luckily I had a serious accident

There was however, one big problem. I tend to work better, when I have deadlines. Neither the editor, nor my personal assistant who was proof-reading my book gave me any time limits on my work, so it was up to me to create my own! Sadly, I didn't, which meant that between November 2013 and May 2014, I had written just four chapters.

Then, in late May, destiny, as it often does, came in to play! I was returning home late from a yoga session and just stepping onto a bus, when my phone began ringing. Normally, I waited until I was completely seated or at least balanced on the bus, before answering the phone. However, for some mysterious reason, I tried to answer the phone, while being totally unbalanced and as the bus sped off into the night, I managed to hit my back on a metal bar, normally used to hold onto, while standing. The pain was immense! It knocked the wind out of me! Nonetheless, I tried to carry on living a relatively normal life for a couple of days, assuming that the pain would eventually disappear, when I realized that it wouldn't and that I'd need to visit the doctor.

The doctor touched me a few times, as I squealed in agony, then he exclaimed, "It's OK, you've fractured your ribs, nothing to worry about". Are you sure nothing is broken, I asked? "Absolutely, otherwise you would really be suffering pain, he retorted". He told me that I was to do absolutely nothing for about thirty days. Nothing? Yes, no physical exercise, no sex, no laughing, sneezing, coughing or anything similar. I went home, sat down on the sofa and momentarily, became depressed! The summer had arrived, I had lots of free time, but I couldn't do any exercise. What was I supposed to do? It was then, that I remembered about the famous book I had been writing. I could continue with that I suppose, as it involves sitting still for long periods of time and writing.

In the space of four weeks, I had gone from chapter four to chapter twenty-three. In short, most of the book had been written in that month. Over the summer of 2014, I completed the last two chapters, had it reviewed by the proof-reader, made a few minor changes, then sent it to the editor for examination.

After lots of time discussing and altering the text, as well as deciding on an attractive and appropriate cover, it was finally published on 2 April 2015, my first ever book, written in Italian, not English! A moment to be proud of, but if I hadn't had that terrible accident, would it have happened at all?

You are what you eat

Professional sportsmen have trainers who help them follow strict diets with the aim of maximizing performance. Novak Djokovic the Serbian tennis player, has been following a gluten free diet for years and he believes that this is one of the main reasons why he was able to remain at the top, winning the big grand slam tournaments one after the other, while several of his rivals couldn't keep up with him.

My dear friend Harish Chavda who sadly passed away on 23 May 2017, wrote an excellent book called, "How to lose weight and be healthy – A guide to the art of eating". In it, he said that we could eat anything we wanted. It was not important what you ate, but how you ate! If you ate slowly, thoughtfully, focusing on what you were eating, observing it, smelling it and tasting it, you would not only appreciate the food far more, but also digest far more easily and not put on weight.

Extracts taken from the forthcoming book, "Life is full of surprises – True stories from the past to the present" (available on Amazon).

And Then There Were Books: Using Literature in the Classroom

by Irena Tertinek

Think about your favourite book. Did it bring a :) upon your face? Or did it perhaps made you :/? Now, think about your family. Does each member have a favourite book? And by book, I mean any book, not just the dull thick books without pictures. You see, my family doesn't read a lot of literature, yet still they have favourite books, books that somehow grabbed their attention and held it until it was too late to stop reading. It was that (besides my greatest wish: to have a fort entirely made out of books), that made me want to prepare activities to include literature in the upper primary school as a part of my MA thesis.

What held my spirits up was the belief that in a world where everyone who has read some books has a favourite book, the problem is not that children do not want to read. It is that what we give them is, frankly, dull. Reading should be fun, and it can be, so I found some fun texts and built activities around those; enjoyable activities. Literature should be interesting and exciting; hilarious or gruesome; heart-breaking or heart-warming. Literature provides fertile ground for discussion and every work can be a source of debate; shorter works, such as haikus and fables, are especially appropriate for early classroom use. Works should never be too difficult, but our learners are willing to cope with some extra unknown vocabulary if what they are reading is interesting. Learners need to enjoy reading, because it is then that their affective filter is letting all the new knowledge gather faster and more effectively. Think about it- what is your favourite hobby? Did you learn it faster than something else that you hated doing? Over and over again, teachers should look back to their own experience- would they have enjoyed the lessons their learners are now facing? Would they have enjoyed reading page after page of a coursebook, interesting content not-found?

It is true that to find that spark to read in your learners, you need to have it too, and perhaps it is time to bring out that copy of the novel you read some ten or twenty years ago and let it pull you into its world. Revisit it and let it tell you stories you haven't heard for a (too) long time. When you have found that literature = pleasure,

go ahead and use some of the materials I prepared. Some useful tips on what is crucial in using literature in ESL classroom, gathered from my research, are:

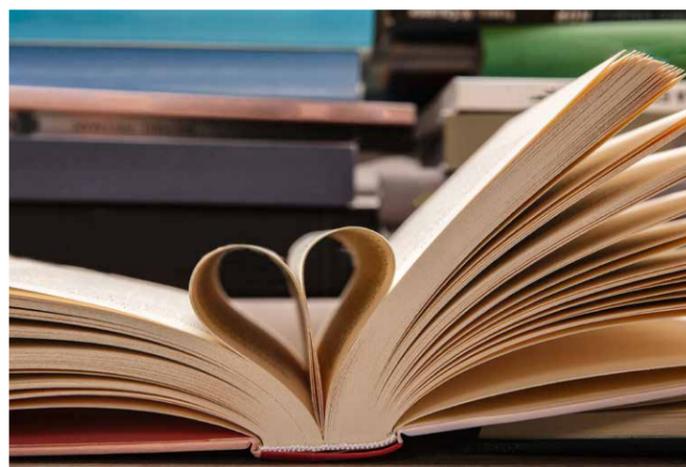
Literary works:

- learners need to have a choice, there should be as much material to choose from as possible,
- interesting works,
- online material,
- full, whole works,
- works that are easy enough.

The teacher's role:

- to show how reading literature improves language,
- to show how reading literature can be interesting,
- to encourage comparison of cultures,
- to encourage parental participation,
- to make the learners feel able, praise them for reading, reward reading.

In my thesis, you can find 13 lesson plans which use various literary works, easily obtainable online or in your local library. Many of the works are my personal preferences and above all I cherish humour with a pinch of tension and if you are anything like me, you will enjoy them. All the lesson plans are free to be used in your classroom, as is the following lesson plan. I hope you and your learners will have lots of fun with it!



Lesson Plan for Kenn Nesbit's Brody the Emoticon

Date	School	Class	Time
Lesson aims	By the end of the lesson, the Ls will have through what their beliefs on what makes a poem good. They will have listened to and read the poem. They will have learnt some lines from the poem and will have found the missing words. They will have acquired new vocabulary and related the textual lexical items to schematic knowledge. They will have recognized the stylistic features of a poem.		
Materials and aids	Blackboard and copies of poem.		

Stage/activity & time	PROCEDURE	Stage aim(s)
Warm up-pre-reading 5 min.	T asks the learners what makes a poem good. They are given some time to talk about it in pairs or groups and then they talk about it. Each pair or group writes one or two suggestions on the BB.	To motivate learners and think about the poetic genre
Reading/listening task 10 min.	Four volunteers should come up to the blackboard and read the poem out loud (one stanza each- make sure they get a minute to read it in silent before reading it out loud!). T tells the other learners to listen carefully and guess the missing words. The learners reading the poem should mimic the missing words- the emoticons.	To practice reading and listening skills, to engage learners in the activity.
Reading and post reading 15 min.	<p>The learners read the poem in silent and add the missing words. Then, they write whether it is a good poem next to it. Talk about their opinions and compare with the criteria you set at the beginning.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="flex: 1;"> </div> <div style="flex: 1; padding-left: 10px;"> <p>Brody the Emoticon by Kenn Nesbit</p> <p>Brody the emoticon is famous for his style, and if you ever meet him, you will likely see his :-)</p> <p>But if you come across him on a day he's feeling down, instead of giving you a :-), he'll look at you and :-(-</p> <p>On other days he'll :-) at you. He'll sometimes blow a :-* and if he's feeling playful he'll stick out his :-P like this.</p> <p>But, oftentimes, he's simply bored and can't resist a :-O because there's nothing else to do for an emoticon.</p> <p>I think this is a good poem because: ☹</p> <p>I don't think this is a good poem because: ☹</p> </div> </div>	To continue thinking about what makes a poem good.
Post-reading activity 15 min.	<p>Each learner picks a number from one to seventeen (1= title, 17= last line) and has to learn a line by heart. They have three minutes to do so. Then, they all come up to the blackboard and need to arrange themselves to recite the song in correct order. If the T wants to make the task more difficult, he/she can set a time limit, prohibit the speaking to English only or even to poem only. If there are more than 17 learners, write one or more than one number twice and two learners need to say a line simultaneously. If there are less, combine two lines and some learners have to learn two. Write the numbers by hand before copying the poems, when you know how many learners there will be during that lesson.</p> <p>The learners can also learn the song by heart for homework, or perform it at a school event (then they can also prepare emoticon prompts, some learners can play the emoticons while others recite).</p>	To let the learners have fun with the poem and through learning bits by heart they also learn useful chunks of language.

Tap - Swipe - Pinch into English

by Janja Androić

1. osnovna šola Rogaska Slatina

In February 2016 my school applied for the Erasmus + KA1 School Staff Mobility funding. And already that May, our National Agency Cmepius was able to inform us that our application had been successful, so I and four colleagues started to prepare for our journeys to various different countries to attend various different courses. The course I applied for was titled "Tap - Swipe - Pinch into English", organised by Euneos, and was to take place in Liverpool in May 2017.

The journey started on 28 May with a flight to Manchester and a coach to Liverpool. Liverpool, the birthplace of the Fab Four, is a city in North West England located on the east bank of the Mersey Estuary and has about 480,000 inhabitants. The Beatles Story, The Cavern, the Merseyside Ferry, the Tate Museum, Anfield Stadium and many more attractions were all great, but not the main reason I'd come here.

No, the main reason I'd travelled to Liverpool was to attend the course, which was about the use of tablets in ELT. The course took place at the Toxteth Annexe Conference Centre, which is just outside the city centre. It started on 28 May with a welcome dinner, where we met out two teacher trainers, Vilijenka Šavli and Peter Rafferty, and the other participants. The real work then began with the workshops on Monday. We had classes from Monday to Friday from 9am to about 4pm and a farewell class on Saturday. During the week different approaches were presented and various apps were introduced.



day 1

"The paperless classroom" was the topic of Monday's lessons. To start with, we talked about new approaches in education, reasons for changing approaches, and how, when and why to use mobile devices in ELT. We continued with facts about and examples and challenges of the paperless classroom. We then tried to create a tablet classroom of our own and shared ideas for tablet use with other participants. We ended the day (as in fact we ended each day) with a reflection on the day's work in the form of a learning diary.

day 2

On Tuesday we mainly focused on how to teach and improve listening and speaking skills using tablets. After the trainers' presentation, we planned and created listening and speaking activities and evaluated our work. Formative and summative assessment were addressed and exchange of good practices took place in the afternoon part of the session.

day 3

Wednesday was the most active and creative day. We were given two tasks which had to be completed by the end of the day. The title of the first task was "A picture is worth a thousand words". We visited the Tate Museum and made a photo-story using pictures, photos, videos and voice-overs. The second task was to carry out a short video inquiry on the streets of Liverpool. Inquiry-based learning is a form of active learning which starts with posing questions or problems and then seeking knowledge and information through questioning. We finished off the day with the River Explorer Cruise on the River Mersey.

day 4

On Thursday game-based learning was examined and we looked at how to include games in our teaching. "Treasure hunt", QR codes, Learningapps.org and Quizlet.live are just some of the useful tools to help create a game-based learning activity. Participants were actively involved in the creation of games as opportunities for learning and assessing. The afternoon session then focused on how to create follow-up reading and writing activities and strategies with tablets.

day 5

The "flipped classroom" was presented on Friday. Flipped learning combines online learning with face-to-face instruction. The teacher prepares an online tutorial and learners watch this online and prepare for the lesson at home. The teacher can then spend valuable class time assisting, coaching and guiding their learners in class. Flipped learning changes the roles of learners, who become actively responsible for their learning, and teacher, who goes from being "the sage on the stage" to being more mentor and consultant. Our teacher trainers tried to answer our questions on how to flip our lessons and suggested tools and apps to make the work easier. Teachers who had tried this model before also presented their work.

We rounded off the course on Saturday. The teacher trainers presented some tips on how to choose from among the tons of apps mobile devices now offer and how to develop tablet habits in the classroom. Certificates were distributed and an online evaluation was filled in. We all agreed that the course had been

excellent and offered us a lot. We also agreed that there was a lot more each individual participant had to do afterwards if they were serious about using tablets in their classes. Certainly there can be a lot of advantages to using tablets in the classroom, but it's also important to be sure to use them wisely!

Teaching a Classic American Short Story for Christmas: O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi"¹

by Bill Templer (Shumen, Bulgaria)

A classic Christmas story in American English fiction, and one of my favorites for learners aged 10 or older (including adults), is O. Henry's famous short story, "The Gift of the Magi" (1905). Here it is in **simplified VOA Special English**, with an MP3 reading, 1,565 words. Even for more advanced students, it is a very pleasurable, comprehensible tale in this simplified, downshifted version. Here the **original story**. It is 2,089 words, and much more difficult. As Current -Garcia (1993: 79) notes: "O. Henry wrote few stories of average family life that approach in tenderness and popular appeal the action and upbeat tone of 'The Gift of the Magi.'" It is a 'love story' as well. Learn about William Sidney Porter (1862-1910), alias **O. Henry**. He was one of the most prolific major U.S. short story writers in the 20th cent.



O. Henry, immersed in New York life 110 years ago, is a challenging writer. The easier version is at Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 4.4, Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease 84 (on a scale from 1 [extremely difficult] to 100 [very easy]). The original tale is Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 5.9, Reading Ease 75.9. Students at (A2) and B1 level can readily read the story in its simpler version. You can test Flesch-Kincaid readability **here**. You can test for vocabulary levels: the VOA Special English version is much easier, the original version has over 11% vocabulary above the 2000-basic word level (K-2), 113 lexemes K-4 level and above [!]. By contrast, the simpler VOA version has only 16 words K-3 level and above. The first 150 words in the original story have difficult lexis: imputation, parsimony, instigate, flop, bulldoze, subside, beggar (vb.), mendicancy. O. Henry also had great fondness for figurative language and humorous 'literary' phrasing, which renders his original tales, often brilliant in style, harder for learners. Ask students to test the two versions in **vocabprofile** and compare. There are several online tools at **www.lextutor.ca** to explore the difficulty of English lexis. It is an excellent site for students (and teachers) to learn to use with a great variety of texts. Utilize these great tools regularly!

Lesson plans / activities

Here (1) a **lesson plan** from ESL Voices, (2) a **rich range of teaching ideas** and resources, and (3) a **focus on vocabulary activities**. Here the **Wikipedia entry** on the story. The tale's lexis in the simplified version is useful, a good review of basic vocabulary. Here a summary and analysis of the story as an **animated video** and a **plot analysis**. Learners can also compare parts of the simplified story and the original: what has been changed? An excellent exercise for both students *and* teachers, sharpening their sense for style and more complex lexis. Teachers can also experiment with **'flipped learning'** approaches to dealing with the story, its theme and associated social issues, assigning a range of preliminary readings, viewings and activities.

Discussion points about

What is Della thinking as the barber cuts her long hair? Do you know anyone who sells her hair nowadays? What is the surprising 'twist-ending' of the tale, its 'irony'? What does 'irony' mean? Consider also the element of the 'unpredictable' here (discussion below), as Jim never expects Della to sell her beautiful long hair, and Della thinks Jim's watch is his most cherished object. In the original, their poor apartment is described: "It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad." What does 'beggar' mean here? A mendicant is someone who begs; what is a police 'mendicancy squad,' then common in New York? The simpler version avoids all mention of this. O. Henry wishes to stress how very poor the couple is. Students can explore in groups how their poverty is emphasized in the story. What do students think about today's *commercialization* of Christmas? What problems have your students themselves struggled over money (and its lack)? As Peter McLaren (2016: 252) notes: "We need to remember that our students are complex historical agents, and they need to be able to read the multiple texts of their own lives. That is, they need to read the languages and discourses in which they find themselves in order to reinvent themselves." Their lives matter, and should be brought sensitively into the classroom.

Can students identify with Jim or Della? How long have they been married? How was the new year, perhaps 1906, for them? Maybe it brought unexpected surprises: a baby, a better job for Jim or even for Della (why is she unemployed?). Activity: write a letter by Jim or Della to a friend, or a **persona poem**, assuming Della or Jim's identity. In another personal variation: "Pull the main character out, and insert yourself. Use your personality, your history, and everything about you to decide how the story might change with you in it instead" (IN 2017: 11).

Magi and the Nativity

Who were the 'magi,' coming to the *poor* Jewish family and infant Yeshu ben Yosef (ישוּ בן יוֹסֵף – Jesus) in Bethlehem on Twelfth Night? This legend is the core basis of giving presents at Christmas. There is no Santa Claus in this story, but students can learn more about this **traditional figure** historically. Discuss Xmas in local terms. Here in Bulgaria he is known as **Дядо Коледа** (Grandfather Christmas) or **Дядо Мраз** (Grandfather Frost), *Dedek Mraz* in Slovenia. Introduce students to Christmas festivities Dec. 25th in **Bulgaria** and the tradition of **koledari Christmas carolers**. Here something on **Christmas in Slovenia**, where caroling is also practiced. Here a classic painting 'Adoration of the Magi.' Ask students to describe the scene. Students can break into small groups and discuss what kind of gifts they

want or give at Christmas, and how they celebrate the last week of the year in their family. The simplified story ends: "Being wise, their gifts were wise ones. And here I have told you the story of two young people who most unwisely gave for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days, let it be said that of all who give gifts, these two were the wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi." Ask students: how can that be interpreted?

New Year's Eve, in socialist times the major year-end festival, remains today in Bulgaria a big **family holiday**, with traditional *survakane* January 1st. Everyone, whatever their religion, can celebrate the end of the Western civil calendar year, a festive time soon after **winter solstice** in the northern hemisphere. The Jewish Festival of Lights **Hanukkah** generally falls in December, a special holiday for children, traditionally with gift-giving — also perhaps a 'winter solstice holiday' (8 days of **candles**). What do students know about **Jewish history in their country or own city?** There was a key medieval Jewish community in **Maribor**, watch this beautiful film.

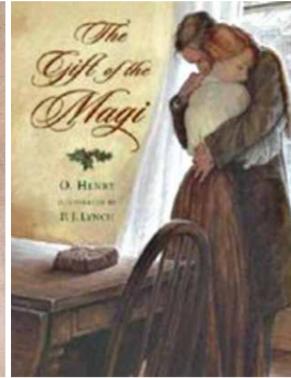


Carolers in Slovenia (<http://goo.gl/ND4Pup>)



Koledari in Bulgaria (<http://goo.gl/Nyvbzt>)

¹ This is a revised and substantially expanded version of an article published originally in *BETA E-Newsletter*, #14, Nov.-Dec 2014, 106-110. <http://goo.gl/me5P8B>



(images from: <http://goo.gl/jvzbUr>)

Images, drama and song

Students can compare and discuss the multitude of **images** relating to the story online. They can hone visual literacy skills, inspire students to draw, for example the inside of their very poor apartment. They can act out the simple tale, there are several characters and scenes, build **skits**. Teaching multi-modally, teacher can introduce popular **Christmas songs** and carols that students can learn, enjoy and sing in class.

Video

There are numerous video adaptations of the O. Henry story on youtube, all based on the original, such as **this**. Here an **illustrated reading**, and a **reading with video acting**. A famous Hollywood movie, *O. Henry's Full House* (1952), included a 23-minute **dramatization** of the story. This video can also be watched after the learners have tried to dramatize the tale in their own way. There are many additions in the 1952 film version of the tale, try to spot them, a good exercise with intermediate-level students. The film version stars Jeanne Crain as Della, Farley Granger as Jim, both popular Hollywood stars in the 1950s. Students will follow the story easily.

Spotlighting O. Henry

A number of **O. Henry's stories** are available in VOA Special English. He is still a popular writer, and his stories are read in many school syllabi in the U.S. Most have a 'twist-ending,' a surprise. Another popular tale by O. Henry (also about money) is "One Thousand Dollars," here in a **VOA simpler version**. The book *The Four Million* is on the Gutenberg site. Students can download it easily for further exploration. The **Complete Works of O. Henry** are online, start browsing. Here is another site with **100s of the author's stories**. A standard study is Current-Garcia (1993). Two other O. Henry stories you can explore and teach are discussed in Templer (2017a; 2017b). Templer (2016) discusses "Kin," a Christmas mini-tale about New York's poor ca. 1890 by the writer and social activist Jacob Riis, a touching street scene story with song.

Free voluntary reading

Encourage your students to read freely in English (and their L1 and maybe L3), esp. simpler texts, including **picture books**. More generally, here are many **classic very short stories** for American high school students. They can whet students' appetites for fictional brevity. Many authors' works are available **here**. Jeff Mc-

Quillan (2017) stresses that what's needed for most ordinary learners, especially from low-income strata, is lots of free voluntary reading and hands-on school library access to books, plus books at home. In that context, **Bookbag Ireland** is a great idea of sharing, a suggestive paradigm for initiatives in BG, Slovenia and elsewhere.

Christmas and the abyss of poverty

Many families across Europe face the same economic problem as Della & Jim throughout the year. Here in Bulgaria, this is especially stark, a dismaying **picture of poverty** for a multitude. Among EU countries, **children in Bulgaria** are most at risk of indigence and social exclusion. In the U.S., many citizens still live in **relative poverty**, even employed full-time, the working poor (like Jim) and those in job insecurity. Some analysts call this a '**Gilded Age 2.0**,' a good topic for class discussion. **Millions** of refugee children across the world are celebrating the Christmas season **in dire hardship** in 2017. How do students view migrants in their own country or town? What are the roots of such mass **exodus** in our chaotic times? "Some **65 million people** have been displaced from their homes, 21.3 million of them refugees for whom flight is virtually compulsory – involuntary victims of politics, war or natural catastrophe." Roma in Bulgaria often struggle in **extreme poverty**, here a striking extended report from **Plovdiv's Roma махала** Stolipinovo, the largest Roma ghetto in the Balkans.

Social Justice Pedagogy

If you teach Roma kids in Bulgaria, Slovenia or elsewhere, refugees, learners from low-income families, from marginalized ethnic minorities, Christmas is an excellent festive time to think about ways to better integrate and respect these children, strengthen their self-esteem, their autonomy and agency. McLaren (2015: 53ff.) also sees Jesus (and his birth) as a proto-typical revolutionary figure for a world of radical equality and equity. Here a good paradigm of Roma **educational integration** in Pušča near Murska Sobota in Slovenia. Encourage students to dis-

cuss and develop a project 'Getting to Better Know Our Neighbors, Their Life Worlds' where you teach. This new VOA article on **Roma education across Europe** is well worth discussing with students at B1 level. What are the problems Roma kids face in the Balkans and elsewhere? Peter McLaren (2016: 211) stresses: "People don't discriminate against groups because they are different; rather, the act of discrimination constructs categories of difference that hierarchically locate people as 'superior' or 'inferior' and then universalizes and naturalizes such differences." A focus on honing student social empathy for diversity, tolerance, multicultural 'Otherness' – galvanizing awareness of the real situation of people like Della and Jim, ekeing out an existence, their life worlds of class struggle (McLaren 2015: 237-38) – is central to IATEFL **GISIG**.

GISIG is summed up nicely in Alan Maley's *prolog poem* 'Teacher' (Maley & Peachey 2017: i). Read GISIG's spirited discussion in Oct. 2017, an 'Issues Month' on '**Neighbours & Borders**' initiated by Dragana Stegić (SI), teachers are invited to explore the 40+ suggestive comments, including ideas for teaching about migrants, diversity, otherness. Show B1-level students the extraordinary animate video on *empathy* "The Power of Outrospection" (Krznicaric 2012). The Chicago site **Teachers for Social Justice** is also very relevant, as is CSP "culturally sustaining pedagogy" (Paris & Alim 2017). One can use *short stories* as components of a 'critical pedagogy' (McLaren 2015; 2016) in EFL, bringing the world and its crisis-ridden realities into class (Ruas 2017a; 2017b), integrating critical, creative & compassionate thinking as an aim in our teaching (Pohl & Szesztay 2015). How can we begin to 'walk the talk' (Templer 2012) in TEFL hands-on, countervailing our cultures of 'eyes wide shut'? GISIG is organizing a PCE at the 25th IATEFL Slovenia 2018 conference to explore some of these critical issues (g)locally.

Unpredictability in our own lives

O. Henry was very interested in 'unpredictability' in everyday life, what seems 'random,' highly improbable,' how it occurs, 100s of his stories hinge on an *unexpected/fortuitous turn of events*, a surprise 'twist-ending,' as in the case of Jim and Della. Templer (2017b: 9-11) explores that commenting on O. Henry's tale "The Last Leaf." It is also a fascinating factor in our own daily lives, and in human history. As N. N. Taleb (2010: xxiii) stresses: "Look into your own personal life, to your choice of profession, say, or meeting your mate [...] How often did these things occur according to plan?" On a larger scale, daily news is full of what Taleb terms 'Black Swan Events': from hurricanes, destructive wildfires, terrible floods, wars, terrorist attacks, to political events galore, on & on in our times of the exponential digital 'society of the spectacle' (Debord 1990) unhinged. Debord's ideas are well worth rediscovering.

Encourage students to ponder, discuss & write about how the unexpected, unpredictable (and 'serendipity') have played a key even existential role for them. Indeed, the day + hour of our birth and death remain eternally incalculable. As Taleb (ibid.) contends: "Black Swan logic makes *what you don't know* far more relevant than what you do know." An observation O. Henry might well have agreed with.

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IMAGINE...

25th International IATEFL Slovenia Conference

Dear IATEFL Slovenia Members and future members of our IATEFL Slovenia Family,

We are proud to announce the **25th International IATEFL Slovenia Conference 2018** which will be held at Terme Topolšica from 8th to 11th March 2018.

Next year's title is **Imagine...** which will undoubtedly inspire us to evolve, to share, to engage in becoming even better teachers as well as offer a great variety of workshops and plenaries.

The jubilee conference of Slovenian Association of English language teachers IATEFL Slovenia will bring the following esteemed speakers:

- David Crystal**
- Penny Ur**
- Peter Dyer**
- Hugh Dellar**
- Maureen McGarvey**
- Thom Jones**
- Fiona Mauchline**

and others to be confirmed

The speakers proposal form will be available in September and will close on 2nd November 2017.

Earliest of bird registrations will be open soon and valid for registrations until September 15th.

- Viri:**
- https://www.google.si/search?q=David+Crystal&source=lnms&rlbm=ich&sa-X&ved=0ahUKEnjL2a7bodeUAhXCWwQKHQ9P4VUQ_AUICqB&bih=853&bih=639&id=pr=1.5&imgre=QzD3Z71g5P6M
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The conference will offer

- native and non-native speakers
- networking opportunities
- inspirational activities
- something for your soul
- a new exclusive educational present
- flower power 70s style party
- 25 years of IATEFL Slovenia walkway
- old-school chat room with a paraffin bath for your hands
- lip-synching competition
- Global issues pre-conference event
- raffle with great prizes
- poetry competition



