

# FELT Newsletter

The Forum for English Language Teachers in Ireland  
An Associate of IATEFL

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### "A Grammar Course for TEFL Certificate" by Tony Penston.

A Review by Scott Thornbury

There are a lot of reasons to commend this book - not least because it is independently published, and has therefore a refreshingly homespun feel to it (and I mean that in a positive way). What's more, it is clearly based on a great deal of solid training experience: the author, I have no doubt, is a committed and even an inspirational trainer - I bet his trainees love his language analysis sessions. This is not, however, the book that is going to topple the grammar edifice - the overly complex and utterly misleading architecture of verb phrase grammar that has bedevilled ELT for the last 100 years. If anything, it adds one more strut to the whole creaking structure.

This is not to say that Penston is a dyed-in-the-wool grammarian. On the contrary, he is adamant that, as much as knowing when to teach grammar, *"the teacher should know when not to teach grammar, that is, not to present grammar for grammar's sake"*. (P. vi). Again and again he urges the trainee teacher to back off: *"If they [the students] know it, don't teach it"* (p. 10). *"The material in this book is written for teachers, not for language learners,"* he constantly reminds the user.

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## FELT - An Associate of IATEFL

FELT will be an associate member of IATEFL in the year 2000. Do you know what IATEFL is? And what does this link up mean for you? Read on...

IATEFL is the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language. It has more than 4000 members world-wide and 75 associated teachers' organisations. (Soon to be 76!) It is essentially a huge network linking individuals, schools and associations at local, national and international level. Members of IATEFL include classroom teachers, trainers, academic directors, university teachers and authors, who join to keep in touch with current developments in all of the interest areas and feeder fields of ELT, and to have contact with people with similar interests in other places.

Membership opens pathways to continuing professional development across a wide range of ELT specialisation, and through all sorts of avenues.

### IATEFL 2000 in Dublin

Well, given the year that's in it, FELT's association with IATEFL has distinct advantages for all members, among which will be a special members' rate for the IATEFL conference. If you are not a member of IATEFL, you will have to pay STG£130, in order to attend the forthcoming IATEFL conference in the Burlington Hotel, Dublin from March 27th - 31st. However, the FELT membership fee of IR£25, for 2000, will include basic IATEFL membership for all members. This means that you will be able to register at the early-bird conference rate for just STG£98 - a reduction of almost IR£40 if you register for the conference before January 10th.

### Early Registration

FELT Membership fees for 2000 are now due and if you wish to avail of the early registration rate for the conference, you will have to pay your FELT Membership by January 5th to allow us time to pass on your details to IATEFL. If you miss the early registration, the members' price rises to STG£113, but the non-members registration will rise to STG£145. So if you intend to go to IATEFL it makes sense to join FELT - do the maths!!!

### Newsletters, Journals and Publications

But that's not all - basic membership of IATEFL also includes 6 copies yearly of *IATEFL Issues*, the IATEFL newsletter, and a whole host of IATEFL deals such as membership of IATEFL SIGs at reduced rates (see our articles on SIGs in this issue of FELT), reductions, via the IATEFL book club, on journals such as *ELT Journal*, *World Englishes* and *Teacher Trainer*, magazines and papers such as *MET*, *English Teaching professional* and the *EL Gazette*, as well as pedagogical publications, such as titles in the OUP Resource Books for Teachers series or even the classic 1000+ *Pictures for Teachers to Copy*.

### Spread the Word

This is the most marvellous opportunity for *all* EFL teachers, trainers, materials designers and others in Irish EFL. The application form for next year's membership is enclosed with this newsletter, so why not photocopy it and give copies to your colleague - and hurry if you want to register for the IATEFL conference at the FELT members' early-bird rate.

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“A Grammar Course for TEFL Certificate” by Tony Penston.

### A Review by Scot Thornbury

What kind of teachers, though? The blurb is explicit (and, to my knowledge, accurate): *“This is the only grammar course written specially for native speakers of English on a teacher training course in TEFL”*. It is the native-speaker focus that is important here: native speakers are famously ignorant as to the grammar of the language they speak - and teach. This relatively narrow focus (excluding non-native speakers, not to mention the exclusively “certificate” label) may have meant that the author had trouble selling the idea to the big publishers and therefore decided to go it alone. (I am just guessing). Whatever, Penston deserves to be congratulated for having bitten the bullet: the book is clearly focused and instantly usable. Unmediated as it is by the superior wisdom of market researchers, it does exactly what it sets out to do.

Well, almost. The bulk of the first half of the book is devoted to constructing the familiar verb tense architecture. Succeeding chapters deal with other verby topics such as passives, irregular verbs, phrasal verbs, modal auxiliaries, -ing forms, and conditionals. There are a handful of chapters that relate to the noun phrase, fewer that deal with syntax in any head-on way, and one on cohesion. In this sense, the book accurately reflects the concerns of your average global coursebook. Excellent preparation for novice teachers. Utterly indifferent to those clamouring for change.

It deals with the familiar verb architecture in familiar terms, although Penston introduces some quirks of his own, including the notion of “concurrency” to account for some (but not all) uses of the continuous. Thus *She will be drawing the pension* is a “prediction of a concurrent event”. I’m not sure how (or whether) the idea of concurrency vs. non-concurrency distinguishes sentences like:

*When I was living in Egypt I was teaching English.*

*When I lived in Egypt I taught English.*

Or, for that matter,

*When I was living in Egypt I taught English.*

*When I lived in Egypt I was teaching English.*

The problem is, by using decontextualised and invented examples, it is possible to prove (and disprove) almost any pet theory about a grammar. Thus, by selecting examples such as:

*I have been knocking for ten minutes and no one has answered.*

I am able to prove that the present perfect continuous refers to an unfinished series of repeated actions. On the other hand, if my example is:

*I have been sleeping all morning.*

I can show conclusively that the same “tense” is used for one completed and continuous state. (These are my examples, not Penston's, I should add).

Wouldn't it be more useful to start from the premise that the meaning of the present perfect continuous is simply the basic meanings of the present, the perfect and the continuous in combination? Ditto with the past continuous, the past perfect continuous, the future continuous and so on. This means there are only three things to teach students instead of twelve (or four vs. 24, if we throw in the passive). (Penston resurrects the subjunctive too, for good measure).

Or better still, wouldn't it be more useful to start with language in its contexts of use? *“The confusions that occupy us arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work”*, Wittgenstein is reputed to have said. There is a lot of idle language in EFL and this book is no exception. For example, the lack of context means that passivisation, reported speech, articles and even discourse markers are treated at the sentence level, a level which does not adequately explain their use. A context is provided for the introduction for tenses, but it is an invented, and somewhat quirky one. Even the errors for errors analysis have a slightly unreal ring to them.

Does this mean that this book is no good? Not at all. It means only that pedagogical grammar is not good. This book simply reflects the state of things, and for many trainers and trainees it will be the best thing since sliced bread. For a start, it is the book that signals instant death to filing cabinets full of mouldering handouts: just give them this book, and your language analysis sessions will take on a new lustre. What's more, the author generously allows OHP use of the materials (but rightly insists that trainees should have their own copies). Since there is a key it would also serve very well as (part of) the pre-course task.

It's a pity, nevertheless, that it's not a more functional book still. While it includes tasks, some of these are rather unwieldy: the lack of editorial Tippex is noticeable. Daunting, too, is the whole first chapter, which attempts to cover word classes and sentence structure all at once: the tree diagrams will unnerve even trainers. Coursebook materials are included, but no reference is made to them in the text, nor are activities - such as identifying, evaluating, and exploiting tasks - set for them. Of course, trainers could devise their own, without too much trouble. Nevertheless, future editions might be improved by some re-thinking of the task design.

I expect there will be future editions, because this is an enterprising attempt to fill a much-needed gap. But however good this book is or will be, it is not *Grammar: The Untold Story*. That book, I am afraid (and ashamed) to say, has yet to be written.

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#### © Scott Thornbury

Scott Thornbury, originally from New Zealand, has lived in Barcelona for the last 13 years, where he works as a teacher trainer for International House and as a materials writer for IH Netlanguages. He is the author of *About Language: Tasks for Teachers of English* (CUP) and *How to Teach Grammar* (Longman). He is speaking on the subject of grammar at this year's IATEFL Conference in Dublin. This is the second half of Scot's paper “What's the matter with grammar? A review” which was first published in IATEFL Teacher Training SIG No. 23, February 1999.

# IATEFL SIGs – What Are They?

In our Autumn FELT Newsletter, Vol.1: No.3, Adrian Underhill, IATEFL's President, gave us an introduction to that organisation - he characterised it as a way to keep in touch with current developments in all of the interest areas and feeder fields of ELT, and to have contact with people with similar interests in other places. Fundamental to this vision is the role of the 14 Special Interest Groups, or SIGs.

## Teacher Development Special Interest Group

The Teacher Development Special Interest Group was formed by Adrian Underhill in 1985, and was the first SIG to be created under the auspices of IATEFL. The aim of the group is to provide a forum for teachers for whom an important priority is to develop their own unique potential as teachers, to develop their skill and awareness in meeting the inevitable problems of being a teacher, and to keep alive a sense of challenge and satisfaction in the job - just like FELT!

### AIMS

1. To enable and encourage all categories of teacher to take more responsibility for professional and personal evolution throughout their careers.
2. To promote individual and institutional awareness of the importance of Teacher Development.
3. To encourage the provision of facilities for Teacher Development which do not already exist

Typical priorities include:

- What does development mean to me in my context?
- How can I become the best teacher that I can be? What hinders and what helps me in doing that?
- How can I help myself by working with others who are also interested?

The Teacher Development SIG aims to provide a forum in which anyone interested in such developmental issues can share their own experience and learn from the experiences of others. Through this network the group seeks to encourage individuals and groups of teachers to undertake activities that focus on personal and professional development

## Teacher Training Special Interest Group

The TT-SIG, created in 1987, aims to meet the needs of Teacher Trainers and Educators in both public and private sectors of teacher education. Their current membership stands at 650 members, with over 100 Institutional members.

### AIMS

- To serve and represent the interests of the international teacher training and education community.
- To enhance the professional development of the members in all areas of teacher training and education.
- To provide a forum for debating issues of importance to the profession.
- To offer opportunities for communication and networking among members of the profession

## E S P Special Interest Group

The ESP Special Interest Group was created in 1991 at the request of many professionals who work in the field of Teaching English for Specific Purposes. This includes those who teach English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), English for Professional Purposes (EPP) and English for Vocational Purposes (EVP), as well as those who teach English for other specific purposes. There are more than 330 individual members and 80 institutional members world-wide.

**AIMS:** To encourage professional development and the exchange of ideas among ESP Practitioners of all kinds throughout the ELT world.

What benefits do they offer?

- The ESP SIG Newsletter is published 3 times a year
- The ESP SIG organises its own track of presentations, workshops and discussions at the major annual IATEFL conference (Dublin 2000).
- Every two years all IATEFL SIGs combine to host a SIG Symposium and the ESP SIG has its own track of activities

## Business English Special Interest Group

BESIG is an organisation focused on Business English teaching. BESIG's members are mainly teachers of Business English and include both native and non-native speakers. The largest proportion of its membership comes from Europe but it also has members in over 50 countries including South America, Africa and Asia. BESIG offers you ways to improve your expertise in teaching Business English and a link with other people in the profession. They do this through their annual international BESIG conferences, regional workshops, regular newsletters and reports describing conference papers/workshops in detail.

## Pronunciation Special Interest Group

This long established group is for people who think that pronunciation should be dealt with in a systematic way in the classroom. Its primary aim is to take the mystery out of pronunciation teaching and make it interesting and accessible for all teachers of English.

The PronSig co-ordinates presentations at conferences and arranges workshops and symposia. But even if you cannot attend their events it is worth joining the group in order to receive *Speak Out!* its regular newsletter/journal, a publication of international standing devoted to the teaching of English pronunciation. Contributors have included an impressive array of published authors, including many who are at the forefront of research into new principles and methods. So much so, that back issues of *Speak Out!* are increasingly being used for training purposes, whether with new or more experienced teachers.

This publication appears twice a year, a general issue in winter, and a single-topic summer issue. The winter issues include: ideas for immediate use in the classroom; think pieces; book reviews, together with reading lists for teachers and teacher trainers. Two of the summer issues have come complete with a cassette tape: Rhymes and Rhythm (a 40 page collection of poems, raps and chants); and Changes in Pronunciation, where a number of distinguished speakers, including David Crystal and Peter Roach, described changes in the way people

pronounce English, both as native and non native speakers, in the way pronunciation is described and in the increasing importance it has both in text-books and in classroom methodology.

Other topics covered in summer issues have included: Testing Pronunciation; The Technology of Pronunciation Teaching; Coping with the Pronunciation Problems of specific L1 speakers; and Teaching Tips.

### **Literature and Cultural Studies SIG**

The Literature and Cultural Studies SIG exists to promote and encourage intercultural understanding through the medium of literature and cultural studies. It explores all aspects of literature and cultural studies, and their application to ELT. It does so through organising a specialised track at the annual IATEFL conference, planning a series of talks at the SIG Symposium every two years, organising workshops and conferences of its own and producing newsletters.

### **Testing, Evaluation and Assessment SIG**

TEA-SIG aims to promote feedback on a variety of activities relating to the teaching of English as a foreign or second language.

TEA-SIG is a forum for teachers of English from all over the world who want to share knowledge and experiences. Members want to learn from colleagues about how to give feedback on language learning to learners of all ages and levels, whether for formative or certification purposes.

At the IATEFL Conference in Brighton in 1997 it was agreed that the SIG should broaden its areas of interest to include alternative approaches to assessment. In line with current trends in educational assessment, TEA-SIG would like to discuss the assessment of process and product, performance assessment and authentic assessment as well as psychometric measurement and other traditional means of testing.

Teacher Appraisal has not received a great deal of attention from TEA-SIG and they would like to learn more about feedback on teaching, the appraisal of student teachers and fully trained teachers, whether for formative or summative purposes. Finally, but no less importantly, TEA-SIG wants to explore the evaluation of institutions, language schools and language programmes. We all need to maintain the quality of teaching and learning in our institutions in order to produce better learners and improved language learners.

TEA-SIG works by bringing together colleagues who work in a wide variety of institutions. Their newsletter, published three times a year, is their main channel of communication.

### **Research Special Interest Group**

Research SIG has two broad aims. Firstly, it promotes the concept of classroom research, particularly research undertaken by practising teachers. It assists practitioners to see that research ('discovery' is perhaps a better term) can make an important contribution to their development by enabling them to find out more about themselves as teachers and more about their students as learners. It also provides a forum for those already engaged in classroom research to exchange ideas and compare outcomes. The SIG's Newsletter contains reports on

research projects in progress, discussion of important issues in language learning, requests for co-operation and advice and details of academic research which is of interest to members.

To heighten interest in classroom research, the SIG organises workshops which explore the kinds of method that are available to teacher-researchers and the findings that can be achieved. It offers an occasional bursary to enable a teacher or group of teachers to develop a small-scale project which otherwise would not be possible

Research SIG's second aim is to build bridges between researchers and practitioners. With this in mind, it is organising a series of major conferences on the teaching and learning of language skills. Plenary papers are given by leading figures in each of the fields who are not necessarily mainstream EFL specialists; and contributions from participants draw both on research and on experience.

### **Young Learners Special Interest Group**

The aim of the Young Learners Special Interest Group (SIG) is to provide information on recent developments in the education of Young Learners (up to 17 yrs old) in EFL. This SIG seems particularly pertinent in the Irish situation where there is a terrible lack of specialised training for teachers who will be teaching juniors.

The Young Learners SIG was first initiated in 1986 and has now evolved into a network of over 400 teachers world-wide. There is a bi-annual newsletter, CATS, which includes practical ideas on teaching young learners, articles on the methodology and theory involved in teaching both primary and secondary level EFL, with details on events such as conferences and seminars for those involved in teaching children and teenagers.

As the interest in teaching English to young learners is steadily growing there is a greater demand for communication and exchange of ideas in this field. The Young Learners SIG aims to help teachers and teacher trainers circulate these ideas and theories through their ever increasing global network of members.

### **Global Issues Special Interest Group**

The Global Issues SIG was formed in 1995 to provide a forum amongst ELT practitioners to stimulate awareness and understanding of global issues, and to encourage the development of global education within language teaching.

#### **AIMS**

- To increase members' awareness and understanding of issues such as peace, justice and equality, human rights and social responsibility, racism and sexism, the environment, world development and international understanding.
- To exchange ideas on integrating peace education, human rights education, development education and environmental education into language teaching.
- To equip learners with the knowledge, skills and values which can help them confront both local and global problems.
- To promote a less Eurocentric perspective within ELT.



## Learner Independence SIG

"Is there anything more important than ELT?" ask the LI-SIG "Yes, teaching for life!" they answer most rhetorically.

They aim to question teacher-centred learning models and explore the validity of putting the learner at the centre. They believe that independent learning is a more effective learning, in that the issues it deals with are about education for life - life skills. These are: learning to learn; learning to take responsibility; being able to take initiative and risks and to be prepared for change.

Learner independence is an attitude of mind - it is not necessarily in working alone.

They publish a newsletter regularly - interests include areas such as:

- Learning styles and learning strategies
- ways of encouraging independent learning
- motivating learners for self-study and independent work
- developing teachers and learners for learner independence
- different cultural approaches to learner independence
- self-assessment and self-placement
- self-access materials writing

## Media Special Interest Group

The Media SIG offers a world-wide network with information about the dynamic contribution which the moving image can make to language learning, teacher training, teacher development and research. Its principal focus is on the screen images - video, film, DVD, moving images in CD, computer programs and the Internet, video-conferencing and, of course, television, whether, cable, satellite or terrestrial.

The advent of satellite TV around the globe led to a rapid refinement of the techniques available to capitalise on the massive potential of that medium to cover much more than the traditional topic range of a textbook course.

The more recent surge in the use of computer-generated images, on the Internet and elsewhere, has brought a new dimension to the work of the Media SIG and provides yet another context in which to apply the insights gained through more established channels.

Members of the SIG have expertise ranging from teaching in classrooms for children, university students or adults, to designing TV programmes, producing and directing them, writing textbooks and training manuals, and teaching camera skills.

They hold a reference archive of all UK-published EFL materials and have just completed the production of a 40-minute compilation of samples of recent commercial videos for ELT. The SIG aims to reflect the international accessibility of the mass media in its range of activities and its breadth of membership. Their newsletter, *Small Screen*, for example is edited from Taiwan.

## Computer Special Interest Group

The Computer SIG is one of the largest of the IATEFL SIGs, with over 600 members. This reflects the growing interest in how computers can be useful to language learning. The SIG has a high quality newsletter called *CALL Review* with three issues per year. They run special interest days at least 3 times a year to provide members with access to the latest developments in the constantly changing field of computers and language learning. They try to ensure that at least one of these events is outside of UK, which is nice. They also have our own very active on-line discussion list.

The Computer SIG tries to do a number of things for its members: it attempts to keep them up-to-date with the latest developments in a very rapidly changing field; it also tries to introduce people new to the area of computers in the language classroom to what the field has to offer for them. Trying to teach about and present good examples of classroom practice, it provides information and also training both through the conference and through special SIG events; it also tries to keep in contact and exchange ideas and information with other organisations around the world with similar areas of interest.

## ELT Management Special Interest Group

The ELT Management Special Interest Group was created in 1990 to meet the needs of academic and administrative managers in both the state and private sectors of the ELT industry. Its current membership stands at over 500. Half their members are based in the UK. Its aims are:

- To raise awareness among the ELT profession of management issues.
- To contribute to the development of good management practices within ELT
- To provide a forum for the discussion of management issues that affect our profession.
- To provide opportunities for, and information about, relevant management training.
- To help improve quality standards in ELT

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## Hard Words

### Homonym

n. Word of same form as another but with different sense (from Greek homos 'same' and onuma 'name'. e.g. Pole (long metal thing) and Pole ( someone from Poland) or Peace and Piece.

### Antonym

n. Word of contrary meaning to another (from Greek anti- 'and onuma 'name'. e.g. Good and Bad

### Synonym

n. Word of exactly, or almost exactly, the same meaning as another (from Greek sun-- 'and onuma 'name'. e.g. house, home, abode etc.

# FELT Editorial

## A Year Already

FELT was officially founded on a cold Saturday afternoon in early December last year. Membership at that point was just 5 - it stands at something like eight times that number now. In the coming year we hope to increase that number beyond a hundred - but the only way this can be done is through an active membership and a willing committee.

Things have not been easy in the first year, but the FELT Committee of Gronia, Ciarán, Sam, Róisín, Ciara and Fiona (who is now in teaching in Senegal) has attempted to bring you what it can - namely 4 FELT Newsletters, and a number of professional development sessions in conjunction with ACELS and TIE - to whom we are most sincerely grateful.

Granted, the jump in the subscription fee from IR£10 to IR£25 is high, but the Committee feels that members will get far greater value for this sum, given that it includes basic membership of IATEFL, and all that this entails. Members should note a change of address for FELT - from now on postal correspondence, including membership forms, should be addressed to:

FELT, c/o 102 Meadow Park, Churchtown, Dublin 14.

## Hopes of Funding for TIE

It is a widely held view, both within Ireland and overseas, that until Ireland has gained a reputation as a provider of EFL services with its own infrastructure of course, testing and evaluation materials, we will simply be viewed as an adjunct of the UK EFL industry.

The fact that British examination boards and publishers are so dominant within Irish EFL means not only that millions of pounds are leaving the country for EFL services that cannot as yet be provided here, but also that our image is tarnished in the eyes of overseas students, sponsors, agents and government departments.

It is estimated that well over 5,000 students per year sit examinations from examinations boards based mainly in the UK, The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) and Trinity College London being the main providers. Dissatisfaction with certain examinations offered by the British Boards is high among teachers, students and schools and naturally there is the wish to see the introduction of the Irish-based exams which would better meet the needs of students attending EFL courses here.

Following its 1995 reconstitution, ACELS was given the additional functions of "ensuring the establishment of appropriate tests for EFL students" and "promoting an Irish cultural dimension in EFL courses, particularly in the textbooks used in the schools". These functions are of fundamental importance if Ireland is to develop an image and identity of Ireland as a quality provider of EFL courses and services as distinct from British EFL.

In 1996 ACELS set up a group to develop a Testing Project and a great deal of preliminary work has been carried out to date by professionals working on a voluntary basis - the TIE group.

Members of ACELS' Advisory Panel who have international reputations in the area of language testing and evaluation, as well as external consultants from the University of Manchester and Norwich Institute for Language Education, have stated that the examination, the Test of Interactive English, or TIE, has great potential. Further design and development as well as training of examiners, marketing and promotion are necessary before the examination can be effectively introduced countrywide.

Papers and presentations at national and international conferences have aroused a great deal of interest in the TIE and ACELS has urgently sought funding from the Dept. of Education especially in light of the fact that British and American examination boards have increased their activity in Ireland in expectation of the official launch of TIE at the forthcoming IATEFL conference. Let's hope they get the necessary funding.

## The ACELS Resource Library

At the same time as the ACELS Testing Project was set up, a parallel group was formed to work on the development of course and supplementary teaching materials. At present, over 90% of materials used in Irish EFL classrooms are published in the UK and it was to correct this imbalance that the Materials Development Group was formed. A small bank of materials with an Irish cultural dimension is now available to teachers at the ACELS Resource Library.

## New Chair for MEI/RELSA

On Thursday September 23rd last, the newly merged MEI/RELSA organisation held elections for its new committee. Mrs. Hilary McElwain of CELT was elected as the Chair of the new organisation. Hilary has long been supportive of those working as teachers and trainers in EFL. FELT would like to congratulate Hilary on her prestigious appointment and we look forward to continuing to work constructively with her towards the betterment of the whole EFL industry.

## Millennium Bug Reminder

We've all heard of Y2K and the impending millennium bug and most of us probably feel it won't really effect us in any great way. But would you take a flight on the evening of December 31st? I didn't think so.

There are a few simple precautions you should take as an EFL teacher - any materials you keep on a PC, whether at home or at work, should be backed up on to a floppy or Zip disk. Apple Mac users, happily, are immune to the bug. Also, you should probably check to see if your central heating clock and house alarm is Y2K compliant and maybe ask your school if theirs are too! Finally, for the Armageddon minded among you who won't be flying that evening, it might be no harm to buy a little extra food and some bottled water, just in case... see you next year... hopefully!

**The Editor**

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# What is a Basic Spoken Vocabulary?<sup>1</sup>

By Michael McCarthy  
Professor of Applied Linguistics  
University of Nottingham

The search for a basic or 'core' vocabulary of English is not new. For example, West's (1953) *General Service List* is still considered by many to be unsurpassed as a condensation of all that was (at that time) useful for day-to-day communication, and abridged or 'essential' versions of larger dictionaries for language learners have kept the quest alive ever since. For many decades, pedagogical linguists have attempted to grade vocabulary for the purposes of syllabus design, creating word-lists for different levels of proficiency or for testing, and presenting beginners' or elementary vocabulary in teaching materials, often based on a powerful admixture of intuition and experience.

In the last fifteen years or so, computerised frequency counts of lexical items in databases of texts have taken over. These include the CANCODE corpus, which I and my colleague Ronald Carter co-direct (see McCarthy 1998). We now have frequency lists based on spoken language which bring within our grasp some of the answers to the question: what vocabulary is used most frequently in day-to-day spoken interaction?

CANCODE stands for "Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English". The corpus was established at the Department of English Studies, University of Nottingham, UK, and is funded by Cambridge University Press, with whom the sole copyright resides. CANCODE, in its turn, forms part of the 100-million-word written and spoken Cambridge International Corpus, also copyright Cambridge University Press. The CANCODE corpus consists of five million words of transcribed conversations. The corpus tape-recordings were made in a variety of settings across the islands of Britain and Ireland, with a wide demographic spread. For further details of the corpus, see McCarthy (1998).

In computer frequency counts, there is usually a point where frequency drops off rather sharply, from hard-working words which are of extremely high frequency to words that occur relatively infrequently, in other words, the frequencies do not decline at a regular rate, but usually have a point where there is a sudden drop to low frequency. The point at where such a drop is discernible could be seen as a boundary between the core and the rest, though the picture may not always be clear cut, and might be expected to vary a little from corpus to corpus. In a 3-million word sample of CANCODE, what is apparent is that, round about 2000 words down in the frequency ratings, the graph begins to drop more steeply, with a marked decrease in the number of words that occur more than 100 times. We can therefore conclude that words occurring approximately 100 times or more in this sample belong to some sort of

heavy-duty core vocabulary, amounting to about 1500 words. The first 2000 words, where the graph seems to start upon its steeper descent, are those which occur around 75 or more times in the corpus. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that a round-figure pedagogical target of the first 2000 words in order of frequency will safely cover the everyday core with some margin for error.

The top 40 most frequent words occur well in excess of 10,000 times in the sample, and thus perform heavy duty in terms of their frequent use. However, questions arise as to their place in a 'vocabulary' list. Very many of the words clearly belong to the traditional province of grammar/function words, in that they are devoid of lexical content. These include articles, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, demonstratives, basic conjunctions, etc. Most language teachers would consider these to be part of the grammar syllabus. The types of meaning they convey (e.g. the deictic meanings of pronouns such as *I* and *you* and the demonstratives, or the additive and adversative meanings, respectively, of conjunctions such as *and* and *but*) are considered to be grammatical rather than lexical (vocabulary) ones.

Another problem with the top 40 list takes us to the question of fixed phrases, or lexicalised 'chunks' extending over more than one word. Word #14 (*know*) and word # 37 (*think*) prove to be so frequent mainly because of their regular collocation with *you* and *I*, respectively, in the formulaic utterances *you know*, and *I think*. The top 40 list shows that arriving at the basic vocabulary is not just a matter of instructing the computer to list the most frequent individual forms (or 'tokens'), and considerable analytical work is necessary to refine the raw data. Nonetheless, the computer-generated first 2000 word list is an invaluable starting point, for a good many reasons, not least because fairly clear categories emerge from it which offer the potential for an organised pedagogy (inasmuch as few language teachers would ever propose simply working one's way down the list as a viable methodology for vocabulary building). Those categories are what I now want to go on to illustrate. If, on the basis of general professional consensus, we exclude as a category the closed-system grammar/function words, the remainder of the 2000 word list seems to fall into approximately nine types of item, all equally important, and not prioritised here.

## 1. Modal vocabulary

Modal items are those which refer to degree of certainty or necessity. Clearly these include the closed class of modal verbs usually taught as grammar (*can*, *could*, *may*, *must*, *will*, *should*, etc.), but the list contains other very high frequency modal items too, for example the verbs *look*, *seem* and *sound*, the adjectives *possible* and *certain* and the adverbs *maybe*, *definitely*, *probably* and *apparently*. Some of these may strike teachers as more 'intermediate' level words, and yet their frequency is so high in everyday talk that excluding them from the elementary level would need some other justification (e.g. such as avoiding duplication of close synonyms and economising on cognitive load).

## 2. Delexical verbs

This category includes extremely high-frequency verbs such as *do*, *make*, *take* and *get* in their collocations with nouns, prepositional phrases and particles. They are termed delexical because of their low lexical content and the fact that statements of their meaning are normally derived from the words they co-occur with (e.g. compare *to make it [to a place]* with *to make a mistake* or *to make dinner*). However, one problem associated with the massive frequency of the delexical verbs is the fact that their low lexical content has to be complemented by the lexical content of the words they combine with, and those collocating words may often be of relatively low frequency (e.g. *get a degree*, *get involved*, *make an appointment*), or may be combinations with high-frequency particles generating semantically opaque phrasal verbs (e.g. *get round to doing something*, *take over from someone*). In the language class, the delexical verbs cannot be taught in isolation, without reference to their collocations, so the task becomes one of ascertaining the most frequent and useful collocating items from lower down in the frequency list, such as *get a job*, *take something back*, *make coffee*, etc., which might occasionally involve words from outside of the top 2000, but which are necessary to provide authentic contexts for the learning of the delexical verbs.

## 3. Interactive words

The core 2000 word list contains a number of items whose function is to present speakers' attitudes and stance. These are absolutely central to communicative well-being, to creating and maintaining appropriate social relations. They are therefore not a luxury, and it is hard to conceive of anything but the most sterile and banal survival-level communication occurring without their frequent use. The speaker who cannot use them is an impoverished speaker, from an interpersonal viewpoint. The words include *just*, *whatever*, *thing(s)*, *a bit*, *slightly*, *actually*, *basically*, *really*, *pretty*, *quite*, *literally*. Their high frequency in speech underlines their vital role in face-to-face communication. For example, *just* occurs more than 4000 times per million words in the spoken corpus, compared with only 1400 times per million words in a 5-million word segment of the written component of the Cambridge International Corpus.

The interactive words may variously soften or make indirect potentially face-threatening utterances, purposively render vague or fuzzy acts of lexical categorisation in the conversation, or intensify and emphasise affective stance towards the content of utterances.

## 4. Discourse markers

The core spoken vocabulary contains high-frequency discourse markers that function to organise the talk and monitor its progress. The most common ones occurring in the top 2000 include *I mean*, *right*, *well*, *so*, *good*, *you know*, *anyway*. Their functions include marking openings and closings, returns to diverted or interrupted talk, topic boundaries and exchange completions. There is evidence to suggest that native speakers are poor judges of the all-pervasiveness of such markers in their own talk (Watts 1989), and indeed their frequent use may be perceived by language purists to be a sign of bad or sloppy usage, and yet all the evidence in the spoken corpus is that the markers are ubiquitous in the

conversation of educated native speakers. The high-frequency discourse markers also have little lexical content in the conventional sense of the word, and present a problem to language pedagogy, which has traditionally divided teaching into grammar teaching and vocabulary teaching, with items such as discourse markers not fitting happily into either. In short, there is no ready-made pedagogy for this category of items, a point we shall return to in the concluding section.

## 5. Basic nominal concepts

Into this category fit a wide range of nouns of very general, non-concrete and concrete meanings, such as *person*, *problem*, *life*, *noise*, *situation*, *sort*, *trouble*, *family*, *kids*, *room*, *car*, *school*, *door*, *water*, *house*, *TV*, *ticket*, along with the names of days, months, colours, body-parts, kinship terms, other general time and place nouns such as the names of the four seasons, the points of the compass, and nouns denoting basic activities and events such as *trip* and *breakfast*. Additionally, one may include here semi-grammatical items such as *both*, *something*, *everything*, *sometimes*.

However, interesting problems arise in terms of the closed-set nature of some of these nouns. In any corpus, items apparently belonging to closed sets will not necessarily occur with equal frequency. There is a wide discrepancy, for example, in how the seven days of the week occur, with the weekend days, Friday and Saturday, achieving almost double the frequency of 'low' days such as Tuesday and Wednesday. There may well be cultural reasons for such unequal distribution (in Westernised, Christian societies, Monday is considered the start of the working week; Friday and Saturday are associated with the week's end and leisure, etc.), and the corpus can indeed be used as a cultural 'window' for language teaching purposes, but for the goal of imparting a basic vocabulary of communication, only the most purist of corpus-adherents would propose a pedagogy wherein the elementary level would only teach five of the seven weekday names, leaving the low frequency Tuesday and Wednesday till the intermediate level. Thus corpus statistics need to be combined with a notion of psycholinguistic usefulness and the availability (*disponibilité*) of items in the native speaker lexicon. Pedagogical decisions may override these awkward but fascinating statistics, and most teachers will agree that it makes good sense to teach basic closed sets as completely as is practically possible. However, some closed sets are very large (e.g. all the possible body parts, or the names of all countries in the world), and in such cases, the frequency list is very helpful for establishing priorities.

## 6. General deictics

Deictic items relate the speaker to the world in relative terms of time and space. The most obvious examples of deixis are words such as the demonstratives, where this box for the speaker may be that box for a remotely placed listener, or the speaker's here might be here or there for the listener, depending on where each participant is relative to each other. The corpus, in addition to the demonstratives and here and there,



contains key items with relative meanings such as now, then, ago, away, front, side and the extremely frequent back (in the sense of opposite of front, but mostly in the sense of returned from another place). Back occurs 3722 times, most frequently in the clusters go/come/get back, the back of (something), at/in/on the back, put/take (something) back, and is clearly a core word in spoken English. Similarly being away and being out are of very high frequency and distinguish two different everyday deictic concepts.

## 7. Basic adjectives

In this class there appear a number of adjectives for communicating everyday positive and negative evaluations of people, situations, events and things. These include *lovely, nice, different, good, bad, horrible, terrible, different*. Questions of usefulness and near synonymy are raised, and close observation of actual occurrences in the corpus, and ascertaining how the different adjectives enter into lexico-grammatical patterns is vital for resolving the issue of what to include, what may be delayed till later stages in the vocabulary teaching and learning operation, etc. *Horrible* and *terrible*, for example, although close in meaning, and although almost identical in frequency, seem to have a preference for patterning with nouns denoting people, things or situations (in the case of *horrible*) and situations but not people (in the case of *terrible*) respectively. These are broad preferences, and can only be stated in probabilistic rather than absolute terms, but they can prove significant in the decision to include both words in a vocabulary syllabus, even though their meanings may seem to overlap (see McCarthy and O'Dell 1999:48).

## 8. Basic adverbs

Many adverbs are of extremely high frequency, especially those referring to time, such as *today, yesterday, tomorrow, eventually, finally*, frequency and habituality, such as *usually, normally, generally*, and manner and degree such as *quickly* (but not *slowly*), *suddenly, fast, totally, especially*. Also extremely frequent are sentence adverbs such as *basically, hopefully, personally* and *literally*, which function to evaluate utterances and which reflect speaker stance. This class of word is fairly straightforward, but it should be borne in mind that some prepositional phrase adverbials are also extremely frequent, such as *in the end*, and *at the moment*, which occur 205 and 626 times, respectively. The raw frequency list hides the frequency of phrasal combinations, and extra research is needed to ensure that the most frequent phrasal items are not lost from the basic vocabulary.

## 9. Basic verbs for actions and events

Beyond the group of delexical verbs, there are, of course, a number of verbs denoting everyday activity, such as *sit, give, say, leave, stop, help, feel, put, listen, explain, love, eat, enjoy*. It is worth noting that the distribution of particular tense/aspect forms may be relevant

in considering priorities in the basic vocabulary. Of the 14,682 occurrences of the forms of the verb *say* (i.e. *say, says, saying, said*), 5,416 of these (36.8%) are the past form *said*, owing to the high frequency of speech reports in the spoken corpus. With *tell*, this is also true: almost 30% of all examples are past tense *told*. With *give*, the picture is much more even: the simple past form, *gave*, accounts for only 15% of all occurrences of the verb. Such differences may be important in elementary level pedagogy, where vocabulary growth might outstrip grammatical knowledge, and a past form such as *said* might be introduced to frame speech reports even though familiarity with the past tense in general may be low or absent on the part of the learner.

## Conclusion

The ability to generate word lists based on frequency is one of the most useful tasks a computer can perform in relation to a corpus, and especially with spoken data, where a clear core vocabulary based around the 1500-2000 most frequent words seems to emerge, a vocabulary that does very hard work in day-to-day communication. However, we have seen that raw lists of items need careful evaluation and further observations of the corpus itself before a vocabulary syllabus can be established for the elementary level. Armed with the complex information a computerised list can give, the teacher, syllabus designer or materials writer can elaborate a more use-centred vocabulary pedagogy at the elementary level and provide useful and usable language items even to very low level learners. Until recently, word lists were derived from intuition or from written text sources; our ability nowadays to produce lists based on spoken data considerably enhances our potential for teaching the spoken language more effectively and authentically.

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## “Hey! Everybody, Open your Dictionaries on Page 239.”

By Ciarán McCarthy

This short paper suggest some ways in which the teacher and student may use a pedagogical dictionary, such as the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, COBUILD or the Cambridge International Dictionary of English, as a resource for language learning complimenting its traditional role as a reference book.

### Is the Problem with Dictionaries?

Dictionaries are boring. They are just pages and pages of words - few people sit down to actually read a dictionary. We use them on a daily basis as a reference tool - doing that crossword, writing a letter, looking up a big word we don't understand (E.g. Sesquipedalaphobia - the fear of long words). We use the dictionary as a metacognitive tool - it is part of a strategy for problem solving. Therein lies the problem - as a problem-solving tool, we tend to ignore the wealth of other uses it can be put to. The dictionary only jumps to mind when there is a problem.

EFL students will often say “it takes too long to look up a particular word” in a pedagogical dictionary, or “I don't understand what the codes mean”, or even “it gives me too much information, it's a bit confusing”. These are, of course, the basic problems encountered by students when using the pedagogical dictionary. Much more linguistic information is contained in the learners' dictionary than in the normal monolingual dictionary, or even the pocket bilingual dictionary. Even levels of pragmatic information are substantially higher. It is no wonder that students become confused.

### Breaking the Code

The first step to be taken to resolve these problems is a simple course in dictionary training. This does not entail a marathon session in dictionary code breaking - indeed, I would argue that this would be counter productive. The old maxim of “little and often” seems appropriate. Regular sessions of five or ten minutes seem to work best in the classroom situation. The benefits are greatest when students learn to explore and befriend the dictionary, rather than simply consult it. The codes used from one dictionary to another vary quite substantially, so as part of our class preparation we too could learn something, not only about spelling and alternative spellings, but about phonetic symbols, frequency of words in the English language and their collocations.

### No Rights or Wrongs

We may find a certain contradiction arising for students. Current communicative teaching methods encourage guess-work and controlled risk taking strategies in order to preserve the communicative imperative; making mistakes is a natural, and potentially useful, part of language learning and is indicative of the processes in interlanguage. Isolated lexical mistakes rarely affect true communication, and in the classroom situation, we teachers now tend not to over-indulge in instant error

correction, as significant mistakes can be investigated and corrected afterwards.

On the other hand, traditional dictionary consultation has been widely regarded as a right or wrong issue, where the student is expected to, and moreover, feels obliged to, always find the “right” answer. Part of the trick in breaking the perception of the dictionary simply as a reference tool, lies in demonstrating its use as a resource where productive language can be fostered through getting things wrong, in the traditional sense, as well as getting it right.

### Three Activities to Try in the Classroom

#### 1. Charades - Group Work

Divide the class into 3 or 4 groups and give a dictionary to each group. Ask a volunteer to select a number between 1 and 1000. Whatever number they choose, ask the class to open their dictionaries on that page - and yes, dictionaries do have page numbers! Give the class about 10 minutes and ask them to think up mimes or charades to illustrate the headword on that page of the dictionary. The groups then take turns miming the words they have selected from the page in the dictionary. No doubt the groups will tend to choose the easier words to mime, but allow them to continue as each mime will be different and each word re-mimed will reinforce their learning.

#### 2. Letters for Life - Pair Work

Divide the class in to pairs. Ask each pair to pick a number between 1 and 26, praying they won't pick 24 or 26! Then ask the pairs to open the corresponding letter of the alphabet - and I'm sure you can take advantage of this little exercise too. Then ask them to negotiate what the 5 most useful words under that letter are. Each pair will then describe, define, mime or act out the words they have chosen and each of the other pairs will have two chances to guess what the letter the word being described begins with and then what the word is.

#### 3. The Teacher's Always Right?

First, ask the students to skim their dictionaries looking for words that they think you won't know. Give them 2 to 4 minutes for this activity and then get them to test your spelling and ability to define the meaning of words. For each of your mistakes or inability to define, the student gets a point. In a perfect world the score should be nil!

Revenge time! Now ask your students to chose a letter of the alphabet. Explain to them that they have 10 minutes before you test them on the first 5 pages of that letter in the dictionary. When the time is up, find the most useful words and the words most relevant to what you have been covering with your class and, of course, the words that they should already know. Then pose questions to them along the lines of “Can you find a word that means...?” After 30 seconds ask for suggestions, allowing them time to look through their dictionaries. Then write the suggested word(s) on the board - allow the students to negotiate the “best-fit” if more than one word is suggested.

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Ciarán McCarthy is the beleaguered editor of the FELT Newsletter. He had to write this paper as none of the members of FELT have submitted anything to this Newsletter for quite some time. Please return his sanity to him by submitting articles, jokes, squibs, letters and opinions to [feltireland@hotmail.com](mailto:feltireland@hotmail.com)

# NOTES FROM AN UNIMPORTANT PLACE

by Jeremy Castle

Venice is sinking, Sydney opera house is the fourth duck on the wall, New York survived King Kong. In a year or two we're going to have to pay to take a photo of Florence or sniff in Naples. Not to mention Dublin, San Francisco, London or Paris. Even the Hermitage in St Petersburg is under siege again. As my Great Aunt and countless other great aunts used to say: "Well, who would've thought it?"

The answer, of course, is that the whole world would've thought it. Because the Eiffel Tower, the Golden Gate, Buckingham Palace and the Berlin Wall (small packets still available at DM 50) are all part of Twentieth-Century-Tourist-TV-T-shirt racial consciousness. The Empire State Building is as familiar as a mug. Tower Bridge is on your knickers (not mine, please note). The pyramids are waving around in 3-D on your screen. Gorbachev's birthmark has become a trade mark and Lewinsky is the name of a cocktail.

The whole world is becoming a terrain signposted by logos and pictograms. A world tour could be described without using words and language as we know it is on the way out. We can book a holiday just by mousing logos. Click, click, click. Click, click! And suddenly you've booked a Virgin Atlantic flight to the Big Apple and three nights at the Sheraton on Fifth.

Did I say the whole world? Well, that's it. In fact, there's a lot of it that no-one knows anything about, except the people who live there. And sometimes they don't know too much, either. And it's not that important, because what do you need to know about the place you live in? The way to school, to the shops, the hospital, the cinema (if there is one), the sport's field. The café. And home. But if you know the way, you don't even have to know the name of the street. It's enough that it goes off that other street, you know, the one with the church in it; then you follow it down to the big tree and my brother lives in the house with the yellow windows; you can't miss it.

The multi-nationals, the multi-media, the multi-marketeers would have us believe that the whole world turns left at the Left Bank, crosses over the Halfpenny Bridge and ends up in Times Square. But it doesn't work like that. There are real people out there who have never been to Paris, Dublin or New York.

I was struck by all this one warm, early spring afternoon as I walked along the sandy suburban roads of a small town in the south of Belarus. My companions were a young local journalist and a college student but they had never seen a map of the town; and, indeed, none existed, I gathered, outside of the city engineer's office and the police station. We were looking for a house on a small road at the edge of town, where the town just kind of fades off into the fields and you get the impression that people haven't quite succeeded in taking over the land. We spent some time that afternoon locating the house but the time wasn't wasted. You see a lot when you can't find something. That afternoon we felt the soft, sandy soil underfoot; we passed some apricot trees just coming into blossom; we saw Muscovy ducks disporting themselves in a rubbishy

ditch; we watched two cranes circling overhead as if resting in the pale blue sky after riding the south east-winds from Iran or Kazakhstan. It was the same South-easterly that had brought the radiation from Chernobyl thirteen years earlier, almost to the day.

Just around the corner, where the surfaced roads start, was a two-storey building, the only one in that part of town. It was surrounded by tall, slender birch trees, the *Betula Pendula Dalecarlica* that is native to all Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and Russia. These white trunks with black notches cover millions of square miles from Sweden to Mongolia, from Murmansk to the Black Sea, and their delicate green leaves open, depending on weather and longitude from the end of March to the middle of May. Here in southern Belarus, the warm wind had sprung the leaves in a matter of days.

School Number 3, like Numbers 1, 2 and 4, is open six days a week, for twelve hours a day, catering for seven to eighteen-year-olds in two shifts. The teachers complain, of course, as they do everywhere – about too long hours, not enough pay, overwork, but they have one day off every week (probably two), lots of holidays and perhaps if everything were better managed then the schools could close on Saturdays and probably the double shift could go, too, because in reality many classrooms are half-empty. But the six-day week is a fixture for everyone and the regime of overwork and underpay is a part of life.

English language teaching is based on the traditional bilingual-grammar-translation method. The teachers haven't heard of role play or task-based learning but they manage to be quite communicative all the same. Textbooks are old and cheaply printed but in a way they do their job.

Teaching in such a school, you learn to dodge drips from a leaking ceiling; you learn to make up games that don't require the desks to be moved because they're nailed to the floor; you learn to use the blackboard sparingly because the surface and the chalk are not too good. But you also get familiar with bright, cheerful classrooms, full of well-tended plants and pictures. You see the eagerness of children for the English language and for some news from outside their small world. You know the pleasure of teaching kids who are mannerly and well-behaved, while not being shy or reticent or cowed or suspicious or wary. You see the delight (from both teachers and children) in knowing that someone from Ireland should consider this unimportant school in this unimportant place important enough to spend some time there, to bring some books, tapes, a tape-recorder, posters, pens. To answer their questions, listen to their English, sit in on their classes, discuss, give demonstrations, answer them when they call out 'Good Morning' on the street.

The town has no maps, no postcards and it isn't mentioned anywhere on the WWW. It is quite unimportant. It is wonderfully unimportant. It isn't targeted by any travel agent anywhere. It is so little mentioned that it is almost unmentionable. In fact, I can't bring myself to write the name of the town. I'll whisper it. If you listen very carefully and your hearing is very acute, you'll get it. It's (no dots, no dashes, no full stop)

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## Telephone Circuitry - A True Story

It is common practice in Ireland to ring a telephone by signalling extra voltage cross one side of the two wire circuit and ground. When the subscriber answers the phone, it switches to the two wire circuit for the conversation. This method allows two parties on the same line to be signalled without disturbing each other.

An elderly lady with several pets called to say that her telephone failed to ring when her friends called, and that on the few occasions when it did ring her dog always barked first.

The telephone repairman proceeded to the scene, curious to see this psychic dog. He climbed a nearby telephone pole, hooked in his test set, and dialled the subscriber's house. The phone didn't ring. He tried again. The dog barked loudly, followed by a ringing telephone.

Climbing down from the pole, the telephone repairman found: The dog was tied to the telephone system's ground post via an iron chain and collar. The dog was receiving 90 volts of signalling voltage. After several such jolts, the dog would start barking and urinating on the ground. The wet ground now completed the circuit and the phone would ring.

## Bad One Liners to try on Your Students

1. Apparently, 1 in 5 people in the world are Chinese. And there are 5 people in my family, so it must be one of them. It's either my mum or my dad. Or my older brother Colin. Or my younger brother Ho-Cha-Chu. But I think it's Colin.
2. So I got up this morning, and the phone was ringing. I picked it up, and said 'Who's speaking please?' And a voice said 'You are.'
3. So I rang up a local building firm, I said 'I want a skip outside my house.' He said 'I'm not stopping you.'
4. So I went down my local ice-cream shop, and said 'I want to buy an ice-cream.' He said 'Hundreds & thousands?' I said 'We'll start with one.'
5. So I was getting into my car, and this bloke says to me "Can you give me a lift?" I said "Sure, you look great, the world's your oyster, you should go for it."
6. So I was in my car, and I was driving along, and my boss rang up, and he said 'You've been promoted.' And I swerved. And then he rang up a second time and said 'You've been promoted again.' And I swerved again. He rang up a third time and said 'You're managing director.' And I went into a tree. And a policeman came up and said 'What happened to you?' And I said 'I careered off the road.'
7. You know, somebody actually complimented me on my driving today. They left a little note on the windscreen, it said 'Parking Fine.'
8. So I went to the dentist. He said "Say Aaah." I said "Why?" He said "My dog's died."
9. He said 'I'm going to chop off the bottom of one of your trouser legs and put it in a library.' I thought 'That's a turn-up for the books.'

## A Thought for the Day

Strange, isn't it. You stand in the middle of a library and go 'Aaaaaaagghhhh!' and everyone just stares at you. But you do the same thing on an aeroplane, and everyone joins in.

## Universal Theory

There is a theory which states that if ever anyone discovers exactly what the Universe is for and why it is here, it will instantly disappear and be replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable.

There is another which states that this has already happened.

(Douglas Adams)

## A Rude Coincidence or what?

1. Abraham Lincoln was elected to Congress in 1846.
  2. John F. Kennedy was elected to Congress in 1946.
  3. Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860.
  4. John F. Kennedy was elected President in 1960.
  5. Both wives lost their children while living in the White House.
  6. Both Presidents were shot on a Friday.
  7. Both were shot in the head.
  8. The names Lincoln and Kennedy each contain seven letters.
  9. Both were particularly concerned with civil rights.
  10. Lincoln's secretary was named Kennedy.
  11. Kennedy's secretary was named Lincoln.
  12. Both were assassinated by Southerners.
  13. Both were succeeded by Southerners.
  14. Both successors were named Johnson.
  15. Andrew Johnson, who succeeded Lincoln, was born in 1808.
  16. Lyndon Johnson, who succeeded Kennedy, was born in 1908.
  17. John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated Lincoln was born in 1839.
  18. Lee Harvey Oswald, who assassinated Kennedy was born in 1939.
  19. Both assassins were known by their three names.
  20. Oswald ran from a warehouse and was caught in a theatre.
  21. Booth ran from a theatre and was caught in a warehouse.
  22. Booth and Oswald were assassinated before their trials.
- And last but not least,
23. A week before Lincoln was shot he was in Monroe, Maryland.
  24. A week before Kennedy was shot he was in Marilyn Monroe!

Q: What do you say to a Zen hot-dog vendor?

A: Make me one with everything!

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