

FELT Newsletter

The Forum for English Language Teachers in Ireland

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An Associate of



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An IATEFL 2000 Overview

by Ellie Boyadzhieva

This year's Annual IATEFL conference was held in Dublin from 27th – 31st March. The venue chosen was the Burlington Hotel near the city centre. The Annual conference has always been the most important event on the schedule of IATEFL and this year was no exception. More than 1200 teachers and professionals from all over the world attended the conference and, thus, it turned out to be the greatest meeting site for people from every corner of the world united by their belonging to one common idea.

The Patron of the organisation, Prof. David Crystal opened the conference. With his well-known sense of humour, he addressed the audience and managed to turn the formal opening ceremony into a warm welcoming event. The conference participants were also addressed by the Minister for Education & Science, Dr. Michael Woods TD. The Deputy-Mayor of the city was also present at the ceremony and everybody applauded his effort to make his way to the venue despite the bus-drivers' strike that lasted for three out of the five days of the conference.

The week was hectic and abundant with talks, workshops and presentations as usual. It was not possible to choose among the varieties of topics and presenters. The countries that had more than one representative, such as Russia, Greece, Hungary, Romania etc., divided their responsibilities among their members and managed to 'attend' about 20% of the presentations.

Donald Freeman, a professor of Second Language Education and Director of the Centre for Teacher Education, Training and Research at the graduate School for International Training, gave the first plenary. He focused on the 'borders' of the ELT professionals' work, dividing them into two types: external, those that are regulated by policy, time-tabling etc., and internal – those referring to the teachers' beliefs, prior knowledge and so on, pointing out that they are equally potent in affecting our work.

His plenary incited a lot of thoughts and was widely quoted by other speakers throughout the whole conference. Among the keynote speakers the names of Shakti Gattegno, Scott Thornbury, Anthony Humphreys, John Ayto and Mary Ruane need to be mentioned.

It is not possible to choose the best presentations among the 'regular presenters' as there were 16 concurrent sessions a day totalling more than 260 altogether and most of them seemed to be quite interesting. I would like to mention here the names of Andy Hopkins and Simon Fenn, whose presentations I was able to attend and which were very provoking and provided quite a lot food for thought.

Andy Hopkins, who is editor of the Penguin Reader Series published by Longman, showed how the Series can be practically used in ELT on different levels of students' language competence. Simon Fenn, the ex-treasurer of IATEFL, focused in his brainstorming discussion-like presentation on the problems of teachers of English in the UK.

The most striking of all for the international participants was the fact that along with the globalisation of the problems of ELT worldwide

there is a tendency towards globalisation of the problems for ELT professionals no matter which country they teach in. Of course, the names of Guy Cook, Adrian Doff, Jeremy Harmer, Barry Tomalin and many more should also be mentioned. Unfortunately, it is not possible in a short review to list all of the well-known authors of books, methodologists and theoreticians who attended the Dublin conference.

This year for the first time the programme of the SIGs (Special Interest Groups) was scheduled parallel with the other sessions. There were 14 SIG Open Forums where the participants could meet the co-coordinators of the groups and the members of the SIG boards.

There were a lot of parallel activities such as poster presentations and panel discussions that attracted large audiences

The Annual General Meeting of IATEFL took place on Wednesday. It was attended by numerous representatives of all partner organisations as it was open to all participants. Several questions concerning the new membership scheme were raised and discussed together with the President's, the Secretary's and the Treasurer's Reports.

The new scheme involves closer cooperation between networks of people and includes a scheme of Regional coordinators to secure the united efforts of ELT professionals from all parts of the world and the national IATEFL organisations.

Finally, the members of the next IATEFL Committee were presented and the ascending President, Susan Barduhn, addressed the auditorium. A touching moment was the thank-you speech of

the President Adrian Underhill to Jill Stajduhar, the Executive Officer who is leaving after 6 years in office. She received an enormous bouquet of fresh spring Irish flowers and was so deeply moved that could barely speak.

The ELT Resources Exhibition area was the most crowded place during the whole conference. There were 50 exhibitors, the biggest of which: Cambridge University Press, Longman, Macmillan Heinemann ELT and some others, had two stands. Most of the textbooks, reference books and other publishing materials were offered to the participants at reduced prices as the tradition is.

The British Council reception took place in a typical Irish Bar and, surprisingly, the way to the bar appeared to be more difficult to find through the narrow winding Dublin streets than the way back.

CUP, OUP and the British Council gave their traditional receptions. More than 200 copies of The Oxford Advanced Dictionary were given out to those who attended the OUP reception. The British Council reception took place in a typical Irish Bar and, surprisingly, the way to the bar appeared to be more difficult to find through the narrow winding Dublin streets than the way back. There was a lot of singing and dancing (and Guinness, of course) at the party in the kind and friendly Irish atmosphere.

The social programme was rich and tailored to the liking of everyone. On Monday there was an informal opening to the conference in Buck Mulligan's bar in the Burlington hotel. All present were honoured to be addressed by the Deputy-Lord Mayor of Dublin, representatives from FELT (Ciarán McCarthy) and MEI/RELSA (Hilary McElwain), Adrian Underhill

and David Crystal. On the next day all delegates were invited to the Wider Membership Scheme lunch party where everybody could take the chance to try Irish dancing carefully attended by three Irish girl dancers. During the party quite a few people managed to win signed copies of books by illustrious past presidents which were donated by the publishers.

On the last day of the conference President Adrian Underhill congratulated all 'conference long survivors' on making it up to the end. He closed the conference with the words: "Keep yourselves learning and make the students do the same" which seems to be the best summary of the

academic contents and aims of this, the largest ELT forum.

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Ellie Boyadzhieva is treasurer of IATEFL Bulgaria and has a Ph.D. in linguistics, lecturing at the Dept. of Foreign Languages at the South-Western University of Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria. Her basic interests are in the field of syntax, philosophy of language and related theories of second language acquisition.

Recent publications include "*Case in English in comparison to some Slavic languages*" Tip-Top Press, Sofia 1998 and "*Phrase structure in Bulgarian - specifics and universalities*", Contrastive Linguistics, Vol. 3-4, Sofia university Press 1988, p.44-68.

IATEFL First-Time Speaker Scholarship



IATEFL awards a scholarship each year, from donations from members, to allow newcomers of 3-10 years experience in ELT to attend as a first time speaker at its annual conference. In 2000, one scholarship of STG£300 will be awarded to cover the conference fee and offset accommodation and travel costs for the next annual conference in Brighton in April 2001.

In addition to the advantage of encouraging members of FELT to attend an international conference, the scholarship serves as a mark of recognition for teachers, perhaps at the beginning of their career in ELT, and enables them to establish lasting links with colleagues throughout the world.

To qualify you must be a newcomer with between 3 and 10 years experience in the ELT profession, you must be a first-time speaker at an IATEFL conference and you must be a fully paid up member of IATEFL. To be considered you will be required to:

1. complete a speaker proposal form
2. send a brief curriculum vitae
3. send a passport size photo
4. send a brief explanation of why you are applying for the scholarship
5. send a 250 word report for IATEFL Issues on your impression of the conference

The deadline is September 30th, 2000 and further details can be obtained from IATEFL at iatefl@compuserve.com or in the traditional way at +44-1227-276528.

The 1st IATEFL Plenary Lecture

by Maurice Claypole

In his plenary address, Professor Donald Freeman delivered a thought-provoking lecture entitled "*Practical Epistemologies: mapping the borders of our work.*"

Despite this daunting title, Professor Freeman went on to outline in very clear and understandable terms how our work as teachers is largely defined by what we do and how we do it.



Taking an image from Robert Frost's poem, "*Mending Wall*" as his framework, he went on to discuss how boundaries and walls define our role as teachers and how, in Frost's words, "*good fences make good neighbours*". Language teaching is often perceived as a passive role regulated by the decisions and actions of others - curriculum designers, regulatory bodies and so on, but in addition to these '*external walls*', there are also internal walls - borders of belief and prior knowledge - which we should also examine from time to time. Like the two farmers in Frost's poem, who '*walk the line*' every spring, we occasionally need to examine these borders in order to redefine them and our work. And in doing so, we should look not only at what we are walling in, but at what we are walling out.

Indeed, some borders suit us: It is

Like the farmers in Frost's poem, we teachers also need to 'walk the walls' from time to time, examining the boundaries of our work

often convenient, for example, to use course-books designed by others or to work towards a predefined syllabus, but there are dangers too in this view of

teaching as an activity or a behaviour that can be and often is guided by others. Administrators, schools and publishers set the scene for language learning but do not themselves create or sustain teaching.

In a reference to the Faust legend, Professor Freeman compared the implicit deal struck between the teacher and others involved as a Faustian bargain, since if teaching is action, then the teacher can escape his responsibilities because he did not design the course materials nor set the parameters for his work, but whereas we gain from these borders we also lose from them. One indirect result of this line of thinking is that teachers have many masters. Indeed it is often the case that teaching programs are defined by men but carried out by women.

This state of affairs is partly due to the boundary that defines the teaching profession as a caring profession and this imbalance is not only evident in the sexual inequalities evident in some aspects of teaching, but also in the fact that in many countries a teaching qualification is required for elementary (primary) schools but not for secondary schools and universities.

Indeed, it is the caring role associated with elementary school teaching that

results in this imbalance. There is, however currently a trend towards professionalisation and structuralism in universities and increasingly attempts are being made to define the skills required for language teaching. The formation of the British Institute of English Language Teaching is an example of this. But in defining the skills required we are setting vital parameters of our work. Regarding teaching as a behaviour or activity can quickly lead to the definition of teaching as telling, which in turn can be used by schools and universities to justify large classes, since talking to 35 students is not fundamentally different from talking to 25 or 30. This paradigm sees the teacher as a doer/implementer who operates without background knowledge or understanding and supports many administrative programs which consequently favour larger classes.

The danger here is that this is a simplistic view of teaching which walls out the individual dimension of the teacher as a person who pos-



IATEFL Patron, Prof. David Crystal regards proceedings with interest

sesses a world of reasoning and knowledge beyond public understanding. As teachers we have private knowledge but it is our duty to claim it otherwise we enter into a Faustian bargain which provides us with a comfortable definition of our role but sacrifices a wider and truer definition of our role.

In a further definition, Prof. Freeman went on to describe the teacher's work as crafting raw material - a local activity whilst administrators and schools have a more public task to perform. However, the practical side of the teacher's work in which he exerts influence within the social fabric and in which change is instigated by transformation is often overlooked in favour of the view of the teacher as a technician in which the teacher is merely the personal agent who brings about cause and effect through his/her behaviour whilst changes are effected by substitution, *i.e.* if one component of a course does not work it is replaced by something that might work better.

Professor Freeman's ideas are more relevant to those working in schools and universities than to free lancers and teachers in adult education institutes, but this was nevertheless an eloquent and informed address expressing in strong images a number of key ideas crucial to how we see our role as language teachers, and in his summary, the speaker made the point that 'teaching does not cause learning', but that teacher and student can work together to achieve learning. To do this we must, in the words of Frost's poem, be prepared to '*walk the line*'.

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Project for the Millennium

The Wider Membership Scheme



In its mission to "link, develop and support ELT professionals world-wide", IATEFL has always aimed to

make the benefits of membership available as widely as possible. IATEFL has just launched its ambitious project for the Millennium - the Wider Membership Scheme, an initiative that will reach out to the EL profession around the world offering membership of IATEFL to teachers who would not otherwise be able to afford it.

The Wider Membership Scheme (WMS) was launched at the recent IATEFL conference in Dublin and in its first year will enable about 500 teachers in developing countries to join the international community of ELT through IATEFL membership.

Like other members they will be expected to pay their way, but at prices matched to the cost of living in their countries. The difference will be made up from the interest on a special capital fund which IATEFL has launched with over STG£200,000, much of it transferred from the old Differential Subscription Scheme. The fund will be augmented in the future from the association's annual operating surpluses so that the scheme can grow with IATEFL's prosperity and a major fundraising campaign to double or treble the fund in future years is planned.

To administer the scheme IATEFL will work with its many associates around the world - local, national and regional

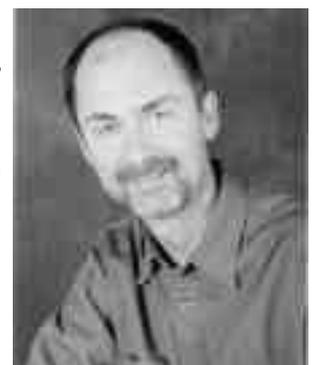
teachers' associations who share IATEFL's aims and objectives - this includes FELT.

The aim is to make it possible for associates in certain developing countries to offer IATEFL Associate membership to their own members at prices matched to the local cost of living. These members will enjoy normal associate membership; they will receive newsletters, be able to join Special Interest Groups, attend IATEFL events as members and contribute, as they wish, to the work of the association. As IATEFL members they will also be able to strengthen links between the partner organisations and through their participation bring new insights and perspectives to the membership of IATEFL.

An independent Advisory Board of prominent figures in the profession will oversee the scheme and ensure its efficient and fair administration. This Board will impartially determine the number of membership opportunities, the prices, and the qualifying partner associations.

The WMS Advisory Committee met in April 2000 and has recommended to the IATEFL Trustees that a total of 574 subsidised memberships be offered to teachers in 14 countries. The committee considered 'bids' received, and, using the funds available, was able to propose that this offer be made to this many teachers who belong to associations in countries where IATEFL membership is not affordable.

Further details can be obtained from the IATEFL office at:
3 Kingsdown Chambers,
Whitstable, CT5 2FL,
UK, or by e-mail to
iatefl@compuserve.com



**Adrian Underhill,
IATEFL President**

The Hunger Site

The Hunger Site

<http://www.thehungersite.com>

is the world's first 'click-to-donate' site where more than 65 million visitors have donated more than 7,700 metric tons of free food to help feed the hungry. They have done this by visiting The Hunger Site daily and simply clicking a button. The donations of staple food, paid for by The Hunger Site's sponsors, are distributed to the world's hunger hot-spots by the United Nations World Food Programme.

The Hunger Site has been recognised as an international favourite, winning The People's Voice Award in the Activism category at the fourth annual Webby Awards, the 'Oscars of the Internet'. The Hunger Site was selected from the 130,000 votes cast online in The Webby Awards' People's Voice Campaign.

The United Nations World Food Programme

<http://www.wfp.org>

The World Food Programme (WFP) is the frontline United Nations organisation fighting to eradicate world hunger - whether it is the hunger that suddenly afflicts people fleeing ethnic conflict in Rwanda or Bosnia or the chronic hunger that affects the hungry poor in countries such as Bangladesh or India.

WFP became operational in 1963 and is now the world's largest international food aid organisation. Last year WFP helped feed 86 million people including more than half of the world's refugees and internally displaced people. WFP has emergency

and development projects in 82 countries worldwide and a staff of more than 5,000.

Hunger Facts

About 24,000 people die every day from hunger or hunger-related causes. This is down from 35,000 ten years ago, and 41,000 twenty years ago. Three-quarters of the deaths are children under the age of five.

Today 10% of children in developing countries die before the age of five. This is down from 28% fifty years ago.

Famine and wars cause just 10% of hunger deaths, although these tend to be the ones you hear about most often. The majority of hunger deaths are caused by chronic malnutrition. Families simply cannot get enough to eat. This in turn is caused by extreme poverty.

Besides death, chronic malnutrition also causes impaired vision, listlessness, stunted growth, and greatly increased susceptibility to disease. Severely malnourished people are unable to function at even a basic level.

It is estimated that some 800 million people in the world suffer from hunger and malnutrition, about 100 times as many as those who actually die from it each year.



Often it takes just a few simple resources for impoverished people to be able to grow enough food to become self-sufficient. These resources include quality seeds, appropriate tools, and access to water. Small improvements in farming techniques and food storage methods are also helpful.

Just do it!

You can make a real difference and save lives simply by logging on to the hunger - site each time you go on the internet.

It will only take a few seconds and you will be surprised by just how easy it is.

Try it today - develop the hungersite habit.



Many hunger experts believe that ultimately the best way to reduce hunger is through education. Educated people are best able to break out of the cycle of poverty that causes hunger.

About GreaterGood.com

Based in Seattle, USA, GreaterGood.com is the premier hub for doing good on the Internet, providing consumers the ability to make a difference in the world through their everyday Web-based activities – at no extra cost.

Visitors to GreaterGood.com's award-winning Web site can benefit their favourite cause by shopping at more than 100 brand-name retailers, ‘clicking to donate’ to help feed the hungry, and making direct online donations to their favourite charities. Every time users start their shopping at GreaterGood.com, up to 15 percent of each purchase automatically benefits the cause of their choice.

So accept the challenge - go to www.thehungersite.com today and see for yourself. And next time the internet creeps up as a topic for discussion in your classroom, mention this site to your students and spread the word.

If everybody who knows about this site introduces even one more person to thehungersite habit, it would take a room full of mathematicians to calculate how many lives would be saved.

www.thehungersite.com



ELT: A Profession or Just a Rag-Bag Name ?

by Martin Eayrs

A woman was in my office recently enquiring on behalf of her daughter about courses for teachers of English. I asked her, in Spanish, if she was a teacher herself. No, señor, she replied, drawing herself up to her full if diminutive height, *yo soy profesional*.

Rightly or wrongly, I felt a little put out and the incident stuck in my memory. But her implied questions: "is teaching a profession ?" and "should teachers be considered professionals ?" are worth pursuing.

Bypassing the greater part of the teaching profession I shall limit my comments below to 'teachers of English', a catchall phrase and perhaps one of the reasons why the question of professionalism among EFL and ESL teachers is so hard to deal with adequately.

I shall leave Ireland out of my observations. In the United Kingdom, to provide an external parallel, teachers of English in accepted language schools (those which have British Council recognition) are rated as:

- a) TEFL-qualified, this meaning a holder of a relevant MA, a Cambridge RSA Diploma in TEFLA, a Diploma (Lic) from Trinity College London, or a PGCE in TESOL or TEFL;

- b) TEFL-initiated, that is having a Cambridge RSA Certificate in TEFLA or a Certificate in TESOL from Trinity College London; and

- c) Qualified, which means having qualified teacher status (QTS) through any

training scheme recognised by the Department of Education for teaching academic subjects other than EFL. I give this scheme merely as for comparison; there are of course language schools in Britain which do not have all or indeed any teachers certified at any of these levels.

The ELT situation in Argentina, a country with which I am familiar and which I shall use as an example, is clearly very different to in England. First of all there are more divisions of 'teachers of English': private or state; primary, secondary or tertiary; full time or part time; large school class or small institute class; native-speaker of English or second language speaker; graduate of teacher-training college or untrained; experienced or novice; employed or free-lance; the list is endless.

...is teaching a profession and should teachers be considered professionals ?

And it is because the list is endless that the term 'teacher of English' has, when separated from a specified context, little real meaning. A 'teacher of English' may be a full-time teacher in a top bilingual school, a secretary who teaches an hour or so after before and after work three times a week or a housewife who helps a neighbour's child with his homework. Clearly the word 'profession' can not be applied willy nilly to all these kinds of 'teacher'.

And it's equally hard to pin down the meaning of the word 'professional'. In the sporting sense of 'professional' vs. 'amateur' it clearly means one who makes his or her living from some field of activity, sometimes with the connotation, to quote a handy reference book, of "a term disparagingly applied to one

who makes a trade of anything that is properly pursued from higher motives".

But there is another meaning of 'professional', somebody who is skilled at something, good enough to make a living from it rather than just dabble. This shade of meaning of the word lacks the pejorative tone of the former, representing efficiency rather than a worshipper at the altar of mammon.

And again, when people talk of the professions, they often think of lawyers, architects, accountants, etc. This is what my female visitor had in mind when she unwittingly insulted me in my opening paragraph. She for one didn't see teachers in that group, presumably because teacher-training colleges are generally accorded separate, non-university, tertiary status.

And it is true that public perception of trades and professions changes. We no longer have an active guild system and long apprenticeships are as often as not a thing of the past. In the 60s professions began to be seen by many radicals as self-interested, often hermetic, organisations, devoted to monopolistic practices, the acquisition of power and the promulgation of their own special ideology. Their clients often had little to say in the matter.

there are people and places that are a disgrace to the profession.

What is undeniable is that improved public access to information and knowledge has stripped away much of the mystique of many professions. Do-it-yourself books cover everything from litigation to filing IRS returns. Technological developments have led to revaluations of the relationship between the client and the professional and the

expertise, behaviour and indispensability of the professional has become increasingly challenged.

A parallel in teaching is the rise of learner autonomy and self access. The client (read student) has in many cases the option of assuming a new role, that of informed participant in the decision making process, and this is in fact one of the healthiest new developments in the whole of current ELT methodology. Even when this is not applied, students often get what they want out of a course regardless of what they are given. To turn around the old teacher's adage "Why don't they learn what we teach them?" it might be more suitable to say "Why don't we teach them what they learn?"

There has also been a shift in the last few decades between what have been termed 'protestant ethic' and 'hedonist' approaches. In the first of these personal well-being (and, in extreme cases, salvation) depend on a wish to succeed, deferred gratification, unquestioning loyalty to the just commands of one's superiors, an acknowledged relationship between effort and reward and a moral obligation to work well no matter how insignificant or demeaning the task.

The hedonist approach is more concerned with 'entitledism' (what is 'fair') than any moral obligation, 'antiproduktivism' (where a shortfall in productivity is preferable to an 'inhuman' system), 'anti-authoritarianism' (a systematic suspicion of anyone claiming authority or establishing control) and 'self-actualisation' (where the development of one's own potential is the main reason for all actions).

Teachers have long had a history of militantism, and seen in the context of the

often impossible conditions they are expected to work in this is hardly surprising. Nevertheless, if they want to be seen as 'professionals', they are going to have to meet public criteria for professionalism. When it comes to their own children I have the feeling that the majority of the public would opt for the protestant ethic approach as a more suitable role model.

Returning to the subject of accreditation of teachers in this country, there is a relatively small number of trained native-speaker teachers in Argentina, mostly in the private sector. It is obligatory for teachers in the state system to have a national teacher-training diploma and very few native speakers of English go through the local 'profesorado' system. Non graduate native-speakers of English and other untrained teachers end up in the private sector, in private bilingual schools, institutes, teaching in companies or as private teachers. This market is absolutely unpoliced.

*keeping up a foreign language is
not like riding a bicycle...*

Native speakers, just because they are native-speakers, can as often as not get a teaching position in any language school or pick up private classes with no experience or qualification whatsoever. This may be satisfactory if the client merely wants conversation practice but is not always useful where knowledge of classroom dynamics is required. Furthermore, because of their 'prestige' value, native speakers can distort the market by asking for and getting highly disproportionate fees and this in turn can cause a great deal of resentment, especially where the 'native' is demonstrably unskilled.

Not all untrained native-speakers fall into this category. Some have a natural flair (these tend not to stay in the profession long) and in the long run experience will always score over formal training. There are many excellent teachers in private schools in Argentina who have 'picked it up along the way'. Some of these are 'imports' who have stayed, some are from bilingual families and some have become proficient in the language through circumstance.

The level of state teacher-training colleges for teachers of English in Argentina is high by comparison with any country in the world and they demand a great deal of their students. As a result certification from a prestigious institution will generally indicate a good command of the language and a sound knowledge of teaching methodology, although it is not always possible for provincial teacher-training colleges to demand the same high levels as in the Federal Capital.

Nevertheless, keeping up a foreign language is not like riding a bicycle which, no matter how long you leave it, you can always get back on again and be riding in five minutes. A better parallel would be with leaving the bicycle in the garden - the longer you leave it the rustier it gets and if left too long it is no longer much good at all.

If you are in a stimulating teaching situation, using the language both for teaching purposes and for self development - reading journals, attending inservice training, reading books or watching films, *etc.* to keep in touch - then you will maintain your level and in many cases go on to improve it. Many teachers are able to do this, and see their teaching diploma as the start of their professional development.

Others, through circumstance, idleness or indifference, abandon their studies of the language and slip into the routine of teaching, very often doing the same thing year after year, only waking up to a change of course book every five years or so. TD is not in their dictionary.

Some students from the Profesorados are snapped up by businesses who want bilingual secretaries, capable of writing and editing texts, handling translations, meeting visitors, etc. In salary terms education can't compete with industry or commerce and often these people never teach again. Nor can they be blamed for this, when motivation is so universally low in the state teaching profession. Others stay in education but are seduced by the better conditions on offer in the private sector which is of course equally delighted to get highly-trained teachers.

the untrained native speaker is a mixed bag where experience is paramount, ranging from 'doesn't know a participle from a present perfect' to 'highly professional in all respects'

Few would quibble about the professional status of this last group - the rigor of the courses and duration of the course weed out all but the fittest - although obviously a few years teaching experience is going to round them out as teachers. Those native speakers in Argentina who the British Council recognises as 'TEFL-qualified' in the first group would presumably qualify as professionals too (and any other US, Canadian, Australian, etc. equivalent); the system precludes anyone having

such qualifications without a fair number of years EFL teaching experience. But the middle group, the untrained native speakers, is a mixed bag where experience is paramount, ranging from 'doesn't know a participle from a present perfect' to 'highly professional in all respects'.

The remaining group is the untrained, non-native teacher. In the private sector of a free market economy anyone can put up his sign and tout his wares and teaching is no exception. However, the difference between selling "English Classes" and corsets is that the teacher's product or service is intangible. This means that the results are unpredictable, not easily measurable, and should the service be unsatisfactory the customer has no tangible evidence to that effect, and is frequently prepared to shoulder personal responsibility for his lack of progress.

That is to say he is in the hands of the teacher, and as often as not unable to evaluate a) whether the teacher is competent and b) whether the teacher can even provide an acceptable model of English. Within this market, where the only criterion that seems important to the client tends to be the bottom line, dishonest marketing and misrepresentation are rife.

There are a great many untrained non-native teachers of English who are out there every day doing excellent work in schools, institutes and various business environments. Many students at teacher-training colleges teach while they study, doing the best they can to apply what they are learning and getting valuable experience.

However, as in any business, there is also a number of teachers in the same places who have a very shaky hold on

the language themselves and very little idea indeed about how to design courses, adapt materials, carry out evaluations and needs analyses, etc. The same can be said for certain teaching institutions. In a word, there are people and places that are a disgrace to the profession.

This should hardly surprise us, as the same happens in a great many other unregulated areas of human activity. There are good teachers and schools and there are not so good ones. What is sad is the fact that the client so often has no way of knowing which is which. Regulation is unlikely to provide an answer.

Perhaps the real solution lies in the hands of 'professionals' in the profes-

sion who might eventually join forces in a bit of consciousness raising among the public at large, making Joe Public a little more aware of his options.

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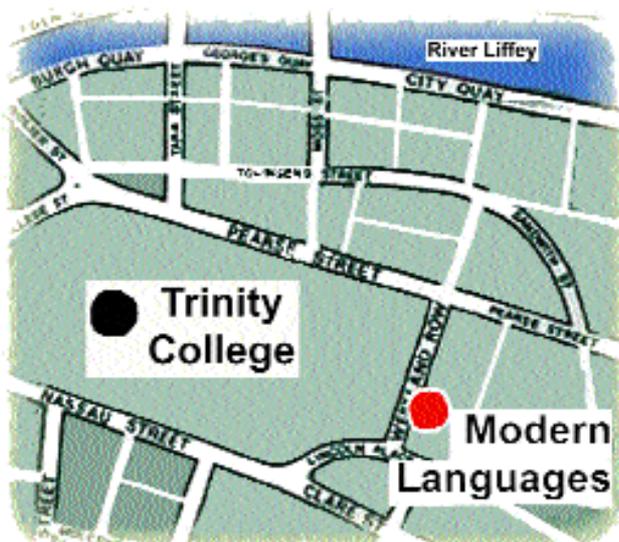
Martin Eayrs, a regular contributor to the FELT Newsletter, is a freelance consultant working in computer and Internet related aspects of English language teaching. He also provides marketing services relating to Latin American ELT.



The former Editor of South-American journal *ELT News & Views*, he has recently been appointed Editor of our sister publication *IATEFL Issues*. He can be contacted by e-mail at martin@eayrs.com

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The FELT Editorial

Apologies for the delay in producing this latest Newsletter - material was short and the summer was long...

Martin Eayrs provides us with a thought provoking and interesting comparison between TEFL Accreditation in Britain and Argentina in response to Gronia deVerdon-Cooney's ascerbic article in the last Newsletter. Many of the issues raised are being discussed presently at ACELS, as plans are being made for the Irish TEFL Accreditation Scheme. If you have any views on TEFL accreditation let us know - FELT is your voice at the ACELS table.

Well, IATEFL is over, and we've managed to squeeze a few reviews out of people and in to this edition. (Special thanks to Maurice & Ann Claypole in Germany and Ellie Boyadzhieva in Bulgaria). It would have been nice to have a review from somebody in Ireland, wouldn't it? (Not really a very subtle comment, I admit).

Much of the feedback concerning the FELT Newsletter concerns the fact that there is little, if any, teacher centred practical material included. A simple response to this - send some in and it will be included. Thanks go to Tom Bekers in Belgium for his Shakespeare crossword.

Melody Noll (in America) has kindly given us an extract from her Hong-King diary - this is a screamingly funny account of a frenetic few weeks spent teaching in the orient - the second extract will appear in the next Newsletter, which will appear shortly.

FELT hopes to organise some sessions this autumn in association with UCLES, specifically with regard to teaching for the Cambridge suite of examinations. More details in the next Newsletter.

Finally, a question - do you want IATEFL membership included in your FELT membership for 2001, or would you prefer it as an optional extra? Answers, with your submissions to FELT to...

Submission Guidelines & How to Contact FELT

Submissions for the Newsletter are always welcome and badly needed. So, if you're ready, willing and able..

* By E-mail to: feltireland@hotmail.com

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Dublin 14, Ireland.

We accept the following, among numerous other things, for our newsletter: theoretical articles, practical reports, jokes, brain-teasers, news, opinions, letters to the Editor, class-plans, cartoons, advertisements, questions, answers, book-reviews, reports on life teaching abroad, amusing stories about your students or trainees and so on... pretty much anything, really.

Please do not send e-mail submissions as Microsoft Word Documents (.doc) as they may carry macro-viruses; the Text-Only (.txt) format is the safest. If you

are using Word, press F12 and select 'Text-Only' as the file type. All Macintosh formats are fine too! Nonetheless, use your virus checker...

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Send us something today- you'll feel better!

Mel Does Hong Kong

by Melody Noll

This is the first installment of an incredible account of a hellish few weeks teaching in Hong Kong by Melody Noll, an American teacher who knows lays it on the line for us. Originally meant only as a 'lazy letter to family and friends', this frank and witty account of life teaching in a completely alien environment is absolutely enthralling and will certainly make you think twice about taking such a bold step, or will make you smile wryly if you've already been there. DO NOT skip over this piece - it may be long, but every syllable is worth it. It will be continued in the next edition of the FELT Newsletter in the autumn.

WEEKS 1-3

I hope this e-mail finds you well and wonderful. Sorry it's taken me so long to write, but the workload has been crazy. My colleagues and I have no life... We work and work and work. But the kids are great, and we all get along nicely.

The only thing is, I haven't met such squeaky-clean people since the late 50s. They're not bad or anything. I suppose they're actually quite refreshing... But Jeez! They don't swear ("Dang!" is just dying to explode from my lips), they say grace before meals (once I looked over and saw my co-teacher praying while I was in mid-sentence), and our conversation is usually pretty banal. (God do I have to hold myself back!)

But I must say, I like my new buddies just the same. Good training, I suppose. When I got into this thing, I thought I was just teaching at another ordinary old private language school. But I've discovered I'm here because of how things have changed in the "Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong". As a gesture of

good faith, the government decided to adopt Mandarin (the official language of The Mainland) as the language of instruction—essentially throwing the English mainstay right out the window.

So now only about 100 of the 500 or so public schools are teaching in English. Though perhaps a good political move, the decision has resulted in ambitious parents sending their kids to extracurricular English lessons after school and on Saturdays. Soon the centre here will be farming us out to the public sector, since native speakers are in great demand. So I guess I've turned into a schoolteacher of sorts.

Who knew?!

The company seems to be pretty well organised, though I think their direction changes quite often. I was originally supposed to be here until mid-December, but now they're talking about a year commitment. (I don't think so!) There's also talk of keeping us over XMAS to finish out a new secondary school contract that begins in the next few weeks. I guess I'll have to admit that I'm a baby and want to be home for the holidays.

Hong Kong is a trip, I'm tellin' ya. How they squeeze so many bodies into such a small space is amazing! The smell of the city is rather unappetising, and the people are so puny! (Even the cats are shrimps.) Everything moves at a ridiculously fast pace, and no Hong Konger is without a pager or a cell phone. The beds are like boards (I thought Mexican beds were bad!), and the rooms aren't big enough to swing a rat. (If you drop your soap in the shower, tough turkey.) At three o'clock in the morning I got an anonymous call from a strange Cantonese gentleman who inquired whether or not I needed "boy for sex service". (And I thought the call was from some ignorant American who couldn't add 15 to California time.) The next day, I asked the folks at the school whether this was standard practice for a decent hotel, and the Chinese co-ordi-

nator said, “Absolutely.” (!) During this economic crisis, people are trying to eke out a living any way they can. Hotels apparently encourage such creative, in-house entrepreneurial efforts because it’s proven good for business.

What I didn’t know is that Hong Kong is the centre of the sex tourism industry. (I’d always thought it was Thailand or The Philippines.) In fact, Koreans have an expression for having an orgasm. It’s called “going to Hong Kong”. So when my colleague told his Korean friends shortly before he left Seoul that he was going to Hong Kong, they found his announcement quite amusing.

Dining is certainly a unique experience. We constantly look for bilingual menus, but have been known to wimp out and do the McDonald’s thing. I had chicken feet yesterday during a lunch time session of dim sum. Like most other bizarre culinary delights (frog legs, rattlesnake, eel, etc.), they tasted like... well, like chicken. And delivery service is faster than Superman - as soon as you hang up, some guy’s at the door with your food.

The shops are manned by the nicest and perhaps the rudest people on the planet. One bent-over crone informed my Chinese-American colleague that she was altogether too tired of crouching down and digging out better samples of a Chinese seal. If Jane wanted it, she’d bloody well just buy the damn thing (mouldy or not). One creepy hawker looked like he’d rather die than sell me a Diet Coke. He snarled “Sick dollah!” and turned his grubby back.

The weather sucks. Hot and humid. One lives with the air conditioner on. If you turn it off, everything - towels, sheets, clothes - gets musty and gross. (Piling on the blankets seems a rather odd thing to do when you go to bed.) We found a salamander in our shower the other day, and last night the

sweet smell of the sewer came wafting through the drain on the floor. The pollution is horrendous and quite a few people walk around holding hankies to their faces. My throat is in a permanent state of rawness.

Television is interesting, too. “The Simpsons”, “Ally McBeal”, “Chicago Hope”, and “Home Improvement” are quite popular (albeit with Cantonese subtitles). The Chinese stations have a lot of weird game shows and queer Australian ads. We live for “Serial Tuesday” - a full evening of “X-Files”, “ER”, and “Millennium”. (Frank Black looks just as depressed here in Asia.)

I’ve been having all kinds of bizarre dreams. Lots of end-of-the-world stuff; creative problem solving (like rescuing my colleague from being trapped by the Department of Education in Mainland China); marriage to a crippled Jim Carrey; finding the freak from “Fargo” naked and catatonic in my bathtub; swatting a fly-converted Fox Mulder into a bloody mess on my living room window... You name it, I’ve dreamt it. (My roommate thinks I’m weird.) But at least I’m no longer chopping up strange men in the attic and stuffing their body parts into a box marked “The Man”. (That episode was a doosie.)

Some old friends of mine were out from Switzerland... It was great! I hadn’t seen them since I left nearly nine years ago. We spent a few days together wandering the streets and consuming mass quantities of Chinese food. How weird to be speaking German with a bunch of Swiss in Kowloon! (Go figure.)

WEEKS 5-6

I’ve finally figured out what this place smells like:

- dried fish
- pig innards
- raw sewage
- auto exhaust
- the odd chicken foot

Mix all that together and pump it into a dank closet and you should have a pretty good impression of the local aroma. (I asked one of my kids to draw a picture of the Hong Kong Harbo(u)r for me. While admiring his creation, I pointed to some stuff floating in the water that I couldn't quite figure. "What's that?" I asked. "Rubbish," he replied.

How to Survive in Hong Kong

- Have a packet of Kleenex with you at all times. Restaurants do not supply napkins, and restrooms do not provide toilet paper. This of course gives new meaning to the concept of "on hand".
- Plan trips to the bathroom wisely. Public restrooms are - as my 24 year-old colleague would say - nasty.
- Have a hankie with you while walking down the street. Hold it to your nose and mouth so that you don't die of second-hand exhaust by the tender age of twenty.
- Cast a quick glance over your right shoulder before crossing the road. I almost became another greasy spot on the street while naively following a fellow tourist to the other side. (They drive on the "wrong" side in this town.)
- Don't expect a yellow light when calculating mad dashes across the street. There is no yellow light! When the little green man starts blinking, you've got nine disappearing acts to hightail it out of there. The ninth flash cues motorists that The Indy 500 has begun. (Incidentally: The din of traffic lights must be a joy for the blind. Green lights "sound" like the slow, deliberate clank of the cable that pulls roller coasters up that first steep incline.)
- Kiss your claustrophobia goodbye. A rush-hour subway jaunt will find your body being borne by the masses. (Your feet may never hit the ground.) Heaven help

those who stumble or have the misfortune to fall.

- Brush up on your British English. My kids have laughed mercilessly when I talk of going to the bathroom (they howl in Chinese and make showering gestures), and you may never find the Hong Kong version of BART if you follow the signs marked "subway" (= underground passageway).

- Learn to be pushy (literally and figuratively). You'll never get on a bus, out of a train or into an elevator if you don't. Little old ladies are usually the first to knock you down.

- Learn to dodge lugies. The British were sadly unable to break the Chinese habit of spitting on the street. The moment you hear someone rack one up, get the hell out of there. (Determine the direction of the wind before leaving the house.)

Incidentally: Kleenex is apparently not in the vocabulary of those who blow their noses. I've seen several pedestrians stop, cock their head to one side, plug the opposite nostril and simply blow. (A wonder to behold.)

- Don't think for a minute that you will enter or exit an elevator easily. While you're trying to get out, everyone and their cousin will be trying to get in. And once you've boarded, expect the impatient (most everyone in town) to punch the "Close Door" button a minimum of 250 times. (Index fingers become one long, ever-tapping blur.) You will also notice that no building has a 4th, 14th, or 24th floor.

These are apparently numbers to be avoided. The number 4 means "death", the number 14 "certain death" and the number 24 "absolutely-undeniably-and-for-sure-you're-gonna-die death". (The hotel was quite happy, however, to give me a room on the 13th floor.)

- Don't look at what you eat. You may never eat again.

- Point with intuition. Most restaurant menus are in Chinese (Greek to me). Even the prices are queer little characters. Getting fed can be an adventure.

- Know your food culture.

When someone offers you something to eat, refuse at least 400 times before humbly accepting. And when the hostess tells you just how awful the meal is, send a never-ending shower of culinary compliments her way. Later, when someone graciously refills your tea cup, quietly knock on the table to express your thanks. And whatever you do, don't slurp the noodles.

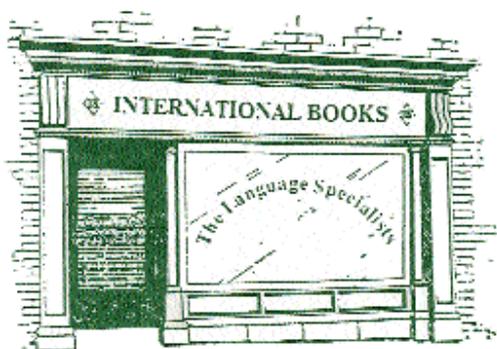
To be continued... the best is yet to come!

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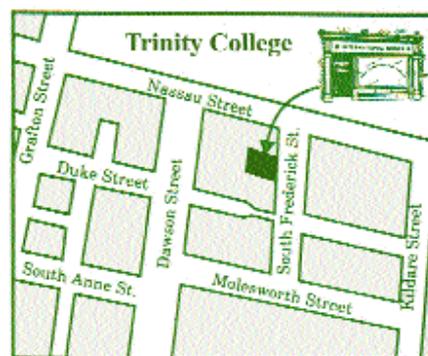
This article first appeared at <http://teflfarm.com>

Melody Noll is certified by the Royal Society of Arts/Cambridge and the state of California and has nearly 20 years' experience in the field of EFL/ESL. A specialist in the field of pronunciation, she has designed corporate training courses (ACER Computers, National Semiconductor, The Federal Reserve Bank) and has contributed to Basics in Speaking/Strategies in Speaking (pearson) and The Wright Skills (The Wright Group).

Ms. Noll is a teacher trainer, a lecturer and a founder of Ameritalk, a consultancy specialising in accent and pronunciation. She is the author of American Accent Skills, a comprehensive guide to spoken north American English. Her website is available online at <http://www.ameri-talk.com>



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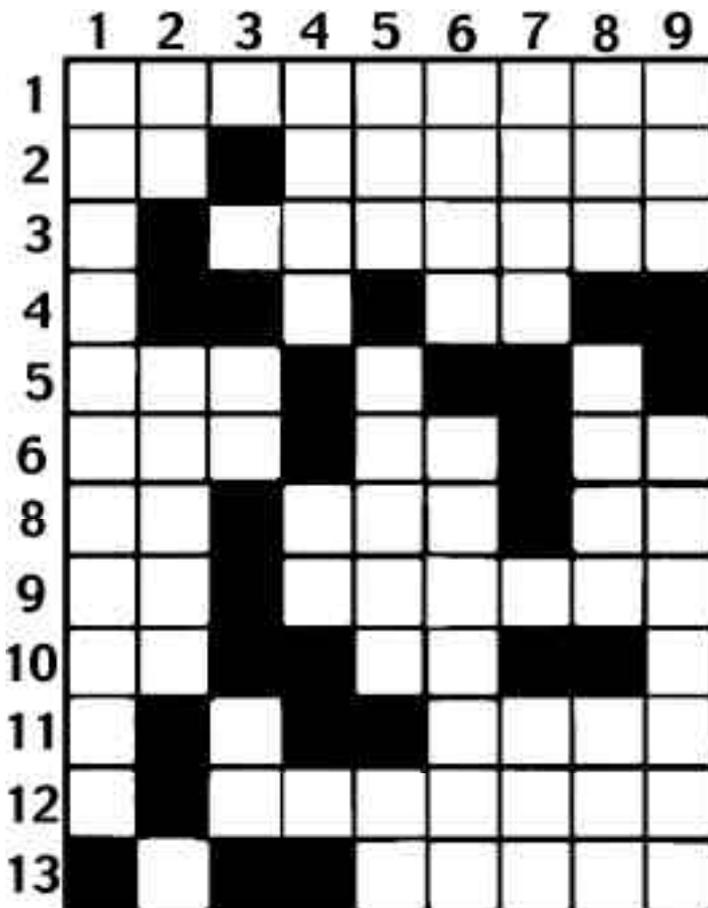
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Shakespeare Crossword

by Tom Bekers

Across

1. Where he was born in 1564 and died in 1616
2. Says Santa Claus - Place in Italy a lot of his plays take place here
3. Not talking about one's abilities - stem OD
4. abbrev. Early English
5. What people say when they don't know what to say or doubt
6. - He was born as a ____ of a Stratford tradesman who had eight children altogether
- Latin for 'and'
- One of his plays is The Taming _ the Shrew
7. In the afternoon - number of apothecaries in Romeo and Juliet - British Telecom (abbrev.)
8. European Economy (abbrev.) - heroine in his most romantic tragedy
9. and others (abbrev) - form of masochism
10. his wife's first name. Hathaway, who bore him a daughter and twins
11. "A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life; whose misadventured piteous ov_r_h_ _ws. (Fill in the missing letters and copy the bold ones)
12. Romeo's last words "Thus with a kiss _____ die. A tragedy ends with the ____ of people."

Down

1. The person this is all about
2. In 1589 he moved ____ London - "O, _____, _____ wherefore art thou _____ (says Juliet)
3. abbrev. Royal Navy
- 'When shall _____ three meet again?' (witches' opening line in Macbeth)
4. The river that flows through Stratford.
- __Simpson
5. a surname - Goddess of love, also his first published work " _____ and Adonis". - Thé Dansant
6. Hamlet tries to _____ himself of guilt - E.Hamlet spelt backward.
7. Tybalt, Romeo's enemy, has a l_____ tongue.
- National Royal Army
8. Royal National Theatre (abbrev.)
- Shakespeare's Theatre in London is called The G_____ (also another word for 'the world' (drop "g")
- "To be or ___ to be. That's the question."
- 9 . His most famous Sonnet 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's _____"
- One of his plays is " _____ Night" (You must fill in an anagram of the ordinal number which is the sum of days from Christmas to this day).

Solution:
 Across: 1. Stratford; 2. Ho - Verona; 3. A - Modesty; 4. EE; 5. Err; 6. Son - et - of; 7. PM - one - BT; 8. EE - Juliet; 9. AO - SM; 10. Anne; 11. E - - erthrow; 12. T - death.
 Down: 1. Shakespeare; 2. To - Romeo; 3. RN - we; 4. Avon - OJ; 5. TED - Venus - TD; 6. Free - telmaHE; 7. loose - NRA; 8. RNT - Globe - not; 9. day - FTTLEWH (twelfth).