

Report on 52nd IATEFL Conference

This year's IATEFL Conference was held between **9th and 13th April 2018 in Brighton**. Over 3 000 participants could take part in more than 500 presentations from various areas of English teaching from methodology and language issues to culture and literature in ELT classroom and many more.

The conference itself was preceded by the **IATEFL Associates Day** in which I was chosen to represent the AMATE. The theme of the day was *Engagement with and between Associates*. And indeed, networking and sharing were the principle areas that were discussed. The most relevant for me was Linda Stein's report on the SKA, the Slovak Chamber of English Teachers, a small but growing and definitely forward going team of dedicated English teachers in Slovakia. David Crystal, the IATEFL patron, stayed for the whole length of the Conference, which was an honour to the IATEFL and its work.

Each day of the Conference was opened by **plenary**. From my view, the most intriguing talk was that by **Dorothy Zemach** who offered an uncompromising and critical insight into the relationship of the publisher and the textbook author.

Then the plenary was followed by seminars, talks, workshops and open forums, each presentation lasting 30 minutes only until the early evening.

Which of these have stayed with me?

Certainly **Alan Maley**'s witty and a deeply personal retrospect view with an apt title *The Way We Were*. Alan spoke about places, people and publications as well as some critical incidents that have shaped his professional life. As ever, a great pleasure to listen to him.

Throughout the Conference, Alan and many other speakers stressed the idea that we should not only be teachers of the language but educators and think how to bring global issues into ELT. Alan also said that we should not succumb to the uncritical adoption of technology and the hegemony of testing. How true!

Another presentation that stood out was **Jim Scrivener**'s. Its title sums it all up: *Forget the Methodology. Learners Just Need More (and better) Practice*. And what's more – Teaching hardly matters. Learning does. I could agree with most that Jim said. The applause that followed was thunderous.

The National Geographic is not only an outstanding magazine but it also has a teaching section and produce textbooks. **John Hughes** is the co-author of *Life*, a great teaching material. In his workshop, he generously offered a number of activities on *critical thinking* as a part of our teacher toolkit.

Jonathan Marks had an inspiring session on *articles*, a constant challenge for Slavonic speakers. Jonathan also delved into the history of articles. Would you be surprised to learn that articles have high frequency? That one in ten words is an article?

Writing is probably the least popular skill among students. **Edmund Dudley** shared a few of his ideas how to make *writing standard tasks* with a creative twists for secondary students. E.g. to provide options and alternatives, set a time limit instead of the word count, set unusual constraints or even to ask for sending a selfie with homework to prove it had been written at home.

And last but not least **Alex Warren**. His concern included collocations, prepositional phrases, fixed expressions, shortly chunks of the language. He used the term *word partnership* for all of these. In fact, collocations make up 70% of all we say, hear, read and write. Therefore, we should not learn separate words, they are useless.

For the evenings, we could choose from a few options. I thought **Pecha Kucha** was the one worth going to. Do you know what it is? A fast way to present one's idea. You have 20 slides of your choice to illustrate your topic and can speak for 20 seconds about each. Witty, clever, hilarious.

Thank you AMATE for sending me to the Conference!

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