

Harrogate 2006

40th International Annual IATEFL Conference and Exhibition

Světlana Hanušová and Nad'a Vojtková (both Faculty of Education, Masaryk University Brno) took part at the annual IATEFL conference in Harrogate, UK, from 8th to 12th April 2006. Together they presented a workshop "Task-based teacher training activities" and, of course, they actively enjoyed the sessions throughout the conference.

As always on the day of the official opening which was held on 8th April in the evening, the SIGs (Special Interest Groups) offered their pre-conference programme. The range was really extensive and it was difficult to choose, but eventually we decided to attend the Teacher Educators' SIG and the Research SIG.

The Teacher Educators' SIG programme dealt with the International perspectives on teacher training. The presenters compared well-known EFL teacher training programmes and certificates to those that are offered as ESOL certificates and focussed on what they can learn from each other. They also looked at some innovations on the courses and the impact of new developments in EFL/ESOL teaching and teacher education.

The Research SIG explored what "high quality" means in the context of ELT research. The assessment of the quality of both quantitative and qualitative research was examined through a combination of input from experienced researchers and interactive tasks which allowed the participants to draw on their own experience and discuss what they can do to enhance the quality of their own research.

On Sunday the conference was opened by the IATEFL President, Tessa Woodward and after the opening we could follow the plenary session given by a prominent ELT author, Michael Swan. He talked about three basic kinds of input:

- extensive input – „the flood of language in the environment“
- concentrated input - repeated language utterances, e.g. stories, rhymes, formulaic language etc.

These two are specific for children, but adults benefit from them as well. Adults, but not children, need one more type of input and that is:

- analysed input – grammar explanations, translations of vocabulary, ear-training, etc.

Michael Swan argued that all three should appear in coursebooks and on courses in a balanced way to ensure the development of the language and he criticises various approaches that stress one kind of the input over the other.

In Monday plenary sessions Jennifer Coates, Professor of English language and Linguistics at Roehampton University, explored the way gender is constructed in humorous interaction, drawing on a database of spontaneous talk involving all-female all-male and mixed groups.

Ruyoko Kubota, A Japanese expert on culture and politics in second language education gave a plenary talk on Tuesday. She discussed the role of culture components in ELT.

The final plenary speaker on Wednesday, Bena Gul Peker of Gazi University in Turkey is a certified trainer of Neuro Linguistic programming. In her talk entitled "The spirit of dance" she emphasized the need to establish rapport with students. through different types of verbal

and non-verbal strategies. The speaker herself was very successful at establishing rapport with the participants, whom she even made belly-dance during the session.

Every day the participants could choose from 19 concurrent sessions which were organised into the areas of interest, eg. business English, ELT management, ESP, ES(O)L, Global issues, learner autonomy, learning technologies, literature, media and cultural studies, pronunciation, research, teacher development, teacher education, testing, evaluation and assessment, and young learners. Most of the time the decision which session to join with the view of missing another 18 was quite a challenging one.

On Wednesday organizers offered four symposiums, each treating one subject in depth (English as Lingua Franca, Materials, Teaching Chinese Learners and Translation respectively).

A few interesting debates took place. We attended one entitled “Sorry, but you’ve got to have a grammar syllabus“ where Michael Swan and Scott Thornbury put forward opposing views and the audience subsequently voted for or against the necessity of having grammar syllabi.

Another memorable event was the launch of the new (supposedly epoch-making) Cambridge Grammar of English, whose authors Michael McCarthy and Ron Carter also excelled in their talk entitled “Things you’ve always wanted to know about English“.

ELT resources exhibition which was held throughout the conference attracted the visitors with lots of new materials as well as technology equipment, software for interactive whiteboards etc. The exhibition also introduced an interesting innovation called Bookcrossing space ([www. bookcrossing.com](http://www.bookcrossing.com) if you are interested in more info about this way of sharing books you like with others).

Interesting programmes were offered in the evenings. Those who wanted to learn more about the place – Harrogate and the whole Yorkshire country could attend an evening talk about the literary history of the place or enjoy (and join) Morris dancing with a local team of Betty Lupton’s Ladle Laikers.

The only thing the organizers did not manage properly was the weather which was very cold for this time of the year and the only thing that reminded us of spring were omnipresent daffodils.

Finally, we would like to thank the British Council Czech Republic and the Faculty of Education for their financial support.

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