

FELT Newsletter

The Magazine of the Forum for English Language Teachers in Ireland

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An Associate of



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On Being an ELT Professional

by Mary Shepherd

Language & Leisure International
Dún Laoghaire

In reply to Anne O’Keeffe’s “*TEFL in Ireland - Reflecting a Profession*”, (FELT Newsletter, Vol.3, No2 pp.14-17) in the last FELT Newsletter, I would like to add some thoughts. She describes teaching as a pastoral vocation. True. So, to the begrudgers, if you feel there is neither prestige nor reward in this work, then you can leave for more lucrative careers.

Anne mentioned other ‘*professions*’ and I couldn’t let this pass without noting how many years of training the poorly paid, overworked medical interns must endure, not to mention all those exams the poorly paid overworked lawyers and accountants have. If teachers (all types) want to keep the label ‘*professional*’, we must (all) accept the necessity to continue training development, qualification and inspection.

How do we know that TEFL teachers are professional? There are two indicators – observed activity, first inside and then outside the classroom.

First, observation and feedback is part of today’s ELT world. No arguments. You wouldn’t stay in a hotel that didn’t pass inspections or fly in a plane whose pilots weren’t monitored regularly. Your DoS and representatives from external quality assurance bodies will observe you in action at regular intervals. There is nothing to fear in this process if you are doing your job as described and expected.

Second, the other indicator of professionalism is shown in your behaviour and actions outside the classroom, notably in the staff room. Here is part of a range of what is

expected of professional teachers acting professionally in my school –

- Arrive in plenty of time with lessons prepared
- Be well-groomed and well-presented
- Do photocopying in plenty of time and don’t hog or over-use this facility
- Collect and develop new materials – and share them
- Experiment, do action research, do projects in class
- Supplement prescribed texts frequently
- Ask for help and advice
- Check out and request new resources
- Regularly alter methods and materials to suit different students
- Observe and be observed – request peer observation sessions
- Attend workshops and feedback to the staff room
- Communicate – be pro-active, and take issues, however small, directly to your DoS
- Be positive, open and honest at staff meetings
- Respect your colleagues and your working environment.

We do need to continue to learn the art of teaching long after that first summer. Noam Chomsky recently said that language teach-

...the first thing to do is to make sure you have a good recognised pre-service qualification and are on the professional register currently being drawn up by ACELS.

ers know about language, but that teaching language is a craft that has to be learned and developed. The one does not lead naturally on from the other - we must persevere. I will be neither the first nor the last to say that the day I stop learning is the day I stop teaching.

Professionalism is a label to be earned. How? Be proud of what you do and where you do it. In Britain, TEFL teachers are not recognised by their

Department for Education. In Ireland, we are. That is a great confidence. I suggest that the first thing to do is to make sure you have a good recognised pre-service qualification and are on the professional register currently being drawn up by ACELS. Secondly, develop your craft. Go for further training, attend workshops, join e-groups, write articles and do action research. Thirdly, and above all, respect yourself, your colleagues, your institute and your chosen profession. By acting along these lines, you are clearly on your way to earning the label: *'Professional'*. In the words of Heather Small, *'What have you done today to make yourself feel proud?'*

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Mary Shepherd is Director of Studies and senior teacher trainer at Language & Leisure International in Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. She is a member of the TIE Group, a member of the ACELS Academic

Committee representing MEI-RELSA and also a regular contributor to the FELT Newsletter.

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Using Audio Journals

by *Sally-Ann Attale*
University College Cork

"I really like this tape thing - it changes and you have to think about how you're speaking and everything, because normally when you're talking to other people you're just there, you know, talking talking but you really don't have to think of what you're saying or how you're saying it. Well, now (when you're doing the tape) you shouldn't think too much about it either because then you're not speaking naturally but at least afterwards and before you get more conscious about it and I think that's great".

Audio-journals are a simple, practical way of helping learners improve their English (or indeed any other language) outside the classroom. I have used it for many different levels and teaching situations, and in this article I shall explain how the system works, its benefits and practical drawbacks. Much of this article has really been written by the learners themselves through the transcripts of their opinions of these audio-journals, as it is, after all, largely their observations and attitudes which matter. Their comments appear in italics, unedited.

Each week the students record approximately five minutes of themselves talking alone about any subject of their choosing and hand the tape to me. I then listen to it, do a written feedback sheet, give them back the tape and the feedback sheet and they then continue where they left off. I give them free choice in the topic as I think that they will take more interest in talking about issues which concern them and their everyday lives. Furthermore, they will be more motivated

to discover, recycle and remember new vocabulary when it is in their relevant and immediate field of interest. Learners come up with a huge range of topics, amongst which have been the following:

Moving to Ireland and marrying; why I love/hate living in Ireland; why I feel so alone; sadness on St. Valentine's Day; bereavement; genocide and reconciliation; families, good and bad; last weekend; films recently seen; past events; what the future holds for me.

As can be seen from this list, a lot of these issues are extremely personal. Assurance needs to be given at the outset that the tapes are totally confidential and no-one else will hear them apart from the person to whom they are given, in this case the teacher.

"I'm very shy, and if I knew somebody else listened to it I could die. I do it because I know there is a teacher there who is listening to it and only her and me can listen to the tape".

In face-to-face conversation learners can get around their lack of language in many ways, for example by gesture, re-negotiation, or rephrasing. This in turn can lead to a slightly idealised perception of their actual ability in the language.

This confidentiality often creates a useful personal dialogue which may be difficult or inappropriate to establish in a classroom. Sometimes issues are raised by the learner which may need to be addressed - personal problems, difficulties adapting to a new life and culture, and so on. Very often the teacher is the first and only available source of help to a newly arrived student in a strange country, but the cry for help may not be heard in a busy classroom.

"The other benefit (of the tapes) and it's not really concerning English, and the

English course, is probably that most of the people coming to the course are foreigners and they might not know that many people as yet, and I think it can be beneficial to say something which helps to unwind some of the problems one can face when coming over to a country where they don't know anybody."

Doing an audio-journal has many other positive aspects:-

- a) It improves self-confidence as learners can practise "difficult bits" of the language in privacy, without worrying about looking foolish in front of their classmates. Getting one's tongue around "th" can be an amusing experience, but it can also be acutely embarrassing.
- b) It improves pronunciation and fluency. When learners hear themselves they become more aware of their mistakes or general lack of clarity...

*... "really I think it's handy, it's really useful, because when you speak every day the perception of what you are speaking is only the ideas you have. You don't have any kind of feedback about your pronunciation. You only know what you try to speak and nothing else. But the situation change when you can record your voice, wait, play it and in that moment is when you understand how bad you speak English. It's **unbelievable!** I was really surprising - I thought my English was better, but no. Now I have the point of view as somebody else who is listening me and now I understand sometimes it's really difficult to understand me. That is a very good point to try to improve the pronunciation and to speak slowly because it's terrible, it's **terrible** when you try to speak a lot! You have **tons** of ideas and then to recognise probably the people only catch 10-20-30% and a lot of information is missed".*

In face-to-face conversation, learners can get around their lack of language in many ways, for example, by gesture, re-negotiation, or rephrasing. This in turn can lead to a slightly idealised perception of

their actual ability in the language.

- c) It helps with hesitation and space-filling language.
- d) It provides an objective progress record - learners can actually HEAR their progress when very often they cannot FEEL it. At other times they can SEE it (from the feedback sheets) when they cannot HEAR it.
- e) As many students have a very limited class time each week, and often have little or no other contact with native speakers and limited opportunity to express themselves, the use of a tape and a tape recorder provides valuable practice and time to become more familiar with the language.
- f) It is something new and fresh, something that breaks the moulded format of grammar, reading and writing homework ...

"It's also good to have some new elements in the teaching because we always do the same thing, you know, reading, writing, learning grammar and just some new elements, I think that's motivating. When you introduced this tape thing I thought "Oh, that's great, that's a new idea - she's really conscious of us and wants to do something new".

- g) It helps students prepare for examinations such as the Cambridge First Certificate ...

It provides an objective progress record - learners can actually hear their progress when very often they cannot feel it.

"I think it's good because it's a way of facing the oral exam in June (FCE). I think in the exam we have to speak by ourself, well I mean not to ourself - we have to speak to someone who is there listening to you but it's like if you were alone because it's not a conversation so I think it's a good practice".

h) It takes the mystery out of machines ...

“Where I see some benefit (of the tapes) is to talk to a machine, if I can say so, and to learn to forget the fear one can have to talk to a machine and not to a person or to somebody real”.

In fact, many people are required to use machines frequently in everyday life - tape recorders, dictaphones, telephones, microphones, and the ever-present threat of the answering machine ...

“The first time when Sally-Ann gave me the tape I thought no, I don't want to do it, because I belong to those persons who doesn't want to speak into the tapes or even leave a message on an answering machine so I wasn't very enthusiastic about that homework at first. But then I decided to do it and now I think it isn't a bad idea of Sally-Ann, so I can hear if I improved myself and what kind of mistakes I did when I am speaking and everything. It's really helpful and I think I will go on speaking into tapes”.

The disadvantages that I have come across and that have been mentioned by students are as follows:-

a) At first, students may take up to an hour to produce five minutes of recording, so it can be very time-consuming, frustrating, and plain difficult. However, it is encouraging for them to point out that in this hour they are thinking, talking and planning all the time in English so it is all of value in the learning process.

Furthermore, this preparation time becomes shorter as they get accustomed to the equipment and the procedure. So far, I have not had any students who have given up because of these initial difficulties. Once they start, they continue.

b) There is often the practical disadvantage that there is no tape recorder or quiet room available. This can sometimes be overcome by lending a student a tape recorder and providing a suitable place, or

occasionally students may have access to a dictaphone.

Recording of these audio-journals is voluntary, and some students choose not to do it for various reasons, such as time constraints, but very often people who are not initially very keen will take up the idea as they see their colleagues obviously benefiting from and enjoying a purely voluntary project.

“Another thing that is very good is that you have never forced to us to record the tape.... Last year at university we had to write down a diary ... it was compulsory and it was awful it makes you very lazy to do these kind of things”....

Feedback may cover such areas as pronunciation, structure, word order, choice of lexis, stress, and appropriacy. The areas I select depends on the level of the learner concerned and their particular areas of difficulty. I usually limit the feedback sheet to one or two A4 hand-written pages. Once you get into the swing of it (like the students do), a feedback sheet on a five-minute tape recording should take as little as ten minutes. These feedback sheets provide a useful reference for students, help them to track their progress and pinpoint areas for further improvement.

It has been very much a co-operative process, a partnership in learning, which is so much more rewarding than a one-directional process

I always include some personal response to what the students have said. If people are going to bare their souls, or indeed even take the time and trouble to commit themselves to tape, it seems to me to be natural and appropriate to do this. This in turn often continues the learner teacher dialogue. And why not, from time to time, do the very exercise that you are asking your own students to do? I was

gently reprimanded once by a student on her cassette, saying it was not entirely fair that she was always doing all the talking and revelations, and why should I not do something similar? I thought she had a very valid point, so I did so, and this was her response:-

“What I think is also helpful is Sally-Ann gave me once a tape and she told me about her life and everything, and I think it was also helpful for me so I can see the difference between my tape and her tape and how I should express some things. I think for me it was very helpful. Maybe she could do it more often. I would be very pleased if I could get more tapes off her”.

As well as putting in a lot of hard work, both the learners and I have had a lot of fun doing these tapes. We have discovered things about one another and about a different way of learning and teaching English. It has been very much a co-operative process, a partnership in learning, which is so much more rewarding than a one-directional process, and one which at least some of the students will take with them into their own teaching career

“Actually, if I teach in Spain, some day, I don't know, that's a new idea that I have for practising with my pupils”.

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Sally-Ann Attale has taught EFL for the last five years at University College Cork, where she also teaches Italian in the Department of Applied Social Studies. She lived and worked abroad for eleven years - in Antibes on the Côte d'Azur, in Italy and Mexico. Shorter EFL assignments have included teaching air-traffic controllers in Czechoslovakia, Italian rail personnel in Padova, and casino croupiers in Nice.

Sally-Ann has a B.A.(Hons.) in Spanish with Italian from the University of Bristol and has always been interested in languages, which she keeps fresh by reading, speaking and teaching them - and by frequent travel. She is also involved in translation and interpreting, mainly from Italian to English. She is interested to hear from people who have used audio-journals, and would be happy to enter into any correspondence on the subject by e-mail at: saattale@eircom.net

Submission Guidelines & How to Contact FELT

Submissions for the Newsletter are always welcome and badly needed. Please send anything at all...

* By E-mail to: felt@ireland.com

* By Post to: FELT Ireland,
c/o 102 Meadow Park, Churchtown,
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-virus-

es; the Text-Only (.txt) format is the safest. If you are using Word, press F12 and select 'Text-Only' as the file type. Macintosh formats are fine too! Nonetheless, please use your virus checker anyway.

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News from ACELS



As predicted it was a very busy and productive summer for ACELS with the ELTAC conference taking place in UCD as well as our participation at the ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe). Along with this, we were involved in all our normal activities for the ELT organisations' inspection scheme, the operation of TIE and the EL Teacher Registration & Qualifications Recognition Project.

As ever, if you would like to know more about ACELS and our projects, the best place to look is our website at <http://www.iol.ie/~acels> Alternatively, we always enjoy hearing from people involved in Irish ELT - our contact details are available at the end of this column.

For more detailed information on the current position and future objectives of our projects please read the information given below - each project has a mailing list so do let us know if you would like to be included on any of them.

The EL Teacher Registration & Qualifications Recognition Project

This is a very exciting project which will have a major impact on further promoting Ireland as a centre of excellence in ELT. In the most recent IATEFL Issues magazine (Issue 162, August/September 2001), Ciarán McCarthy (FELT Newsletter Editor) responds to a questionnaire about the most significant changes in ELT foreseeable over the next 5 years and calls this project '*the major change coming in Ireland*' over the next five years. He goes on to say that in developing and operating a system for conferring professional status on EL teachers, through the Dept. of Education and Science, '*ACELS will keep a professional register of*

*teachers for the first time, as well as introducing a scheme for the recognition of ELT qualifications and experience relevant to teaching. Now that **is** good, isn't it?'*

It's great to know that the project has support out there! Now our mission is to make sure that everyone in ELT is well informed about the project and is able to contribute to the development of the project. This will then ensure that the project is able to support and further enhance ELT in Ireland.

Since the 3rd national meeting in May, we have been working on the first draft of the criteria to be used as a basis for the design of pre-career ELT certificates. We have also been looking at your feedback from the February meeting on the proposal for an ELT professional dossier and how this could operate efficiently and effectively.

In order to enable as many of you as possible to comment and give us feedback on the project, Jim Ferguson (ACELS Chief Executive) and myself (Sue Hackett, Project Director) are intending to have meetings around the country in Recognised Schools in the new year to give as many of you as possible an opportunity to learn more about the project, ask questions and give your feedback.

Finally, the 4th National Meeting took place on October 19th last. It was well-attended with a range of participants from recognised organisations nationwide.

The agenda of the meeting was as follows:

- to report on progress to date;
- to present & discuss the feedback on the draft key standards and guidelines;
- to generate feedback on the 1st draft document of the key standards for a TEFL certificate in order to inform the production of a 2nd draft.

Everyone involved in ELT in Ireland was invited to the meeting and we very much look forward to your advice, comments and feedback on proposals put forward. If you

would like a copy of the ELTRQRP *Draft Key Standards and Guidelines Consultation Document*, please contact us and we'll be happy to let you have a copy.

The next stage of Phase 2 of the project is for meetings to be set up with each of the project's 5 constituency groups (teachers, school owners, course providers, university trainers, directors of studies) for December at which the 2nd draft of the key standards will be discussed as well as other issues of relevance, concern to the groups. If you would like to know more about these meetings or take part please contact us for more information.

TIE - The Test of Interactive English

TIE has been in full operation throughout the summer. It has been very rewarding to work with the recognised schools offering TIE and also to receive their feedback on the test. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and we have really enjoyed working with the TIE schools.

As ever, if you would like to learn more about the test or receive any information related to it, please get in touch – we look forward to hearing from you. Our e-mail address is tie.acels@iol.ie

Over the summer, two papers were presented on TIE – one at the ELTAC conference in UCD and one at the ALTE conference in Barcelona. At ALTE, the participants were language-teaching professionals involved in testing from all over Europe. Our presentation was very well attended and generated a lot of interest from the audience, many of whom then approached us with requests for

more information about both TIE and the ELT sector in Ireland generally.

The ELT School Inspection Scheme

The summer is the busy period for school inspections and this summer has been no exception. Over June, July and August, schools have been inspected across the country and reports submitted. The inspections have included both schools having their regular inspections and new schools that are in the throes of applying for recognition. School certificates are currently being produced for 2002 and the list of recognised organisations for 2002 will be available both on our website and by application from us as of mid-November.

This year as a result of a new regulation, schools were also required to submit a Documented Curriculum Framework, outlining the various programmes, policies and operations in operation in their school. Schools' feedback on the benefits of this process has been very positive with comments reflecting an understanding of how important it is to have a curriculum framework in place.

If you would like to learn more about ACELS and the projects or schemes we run, please do contact us ...

ACELS – The Advisory Council for English Language Schools

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FOR FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT:

The TIE Coordinator
ACELS, 44 Leeson Place, Dublin 2.

Tel: 676 7374

e-mail: tie.acels@iol.ie

Or visit our website: www.iol.ie/~acels



UNIVERSITY *of* CAMBRIDGE

Local Examinations Syndicate

Speaker: Annie Broadhead

Theatre O, University College Dublin

24th November 2001

10.00-10.30 Registration and coffee

10.30-12.00 Cambridge exams: What's new?

A presentation for Teachers, Directors of Studies & School Owners covering:

- * Recent developments in the exam portfolio
- * UCLES' work with the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)
- * Recognition of the certificates in key countries for the Irish EFL market
- * The Business English Certificates (BEC) available in Dublin from March 2002

12.00-13.30 Lunch (sponsored by UCLES)

13.30-16.30 An Introduction to the Revised Certificate of Proficiency

The revised examination is to be introduced in December 2002. This seminar provides an introduction to the revised examination for teachers, and includes:

- * The format, content & aims of the revised examination
- * A review of how candidates are assessed, particularly in Writing and Use of English, using samples of candidates' written answers
- * Illustration of the Speaking Test using video extracts

Certificates of attendance will be issued

To book your place contact UCD

Stephen Bowie Tel: (01) 716 1689

Miriam Fitzgerald Tel: (01) 716 2097

Fax: (01) 7161189

E-mail: fiona.falvey@ucd.ie

Please register to confirm which session(s) you will be attending and whether you will go to the lunch (Please state if you have any specific dietary requirements).

A limited number of subsidised travel grants are available for teachers outside Dublin.

FELT Editorial



Well, it's autumn again and the summer is thankfully just a memory once again. The relative peace and calm is of course welcome, but that's not to say that it's a quiet time in Irish ELT. This is traditionally the time that many professional development sessions take place. On the opposite page, you will no doubt have noticed that UCLES will be providing an update session for teachers on the Proficiency exam as well as other interesting developments and additions to the UCLES suite of examinations.

MEI-RELSA News

MEI-RELSA, too, under the auspices of their Skillnets program, run by Education & Training Officer Gill Nother, is offering a selection of professional development sessions for Teachers and Directors of Studies. Teachers in MEI-RELSA schools should ask their DoS for details of up and coming sessions, just like the ones covered on the following pages of this Newsletter.

In other news from MEI-RELSA, Jaci Joyce, the association's long standing manager has announced her retirement from the post. Jaci has played a very important and influential part in our whole industry's development over the last number of years and all of us at FELT would like to wish her well. We will miss her!

ACELS Teacher Registration Project

The ACELS EL Teacher Registration & Qualifications Accreditation Scheme is moving on swiftly - Phase II is well underway, with another national meeting having taken place in Dublin on October 19th last.

The draft Key Standards & Guidelines Consultation Document produced after Phase I of the project has been circulated to all recognised schools in the country, and

all teachers really should read through it. If you have problems laying hand on a copy at school, simply contact ACELS and they will be very happy to provide you with a copy of this *very important* document.

There is still widespread ignorance of this critical project among EL teachers and it seems to be because many schools are not passing on the information. This scheme is going to have an enormous effect on all of us, so we as EL teachers need to play an active part in shaping our own future as professionals. This is our project, so why don't we run with it?

FELT will be attending 'constituency meetings' in December to represent your views on the project, so let us know what you think of it so far? If you feel you have nothing to say, well, I'm afraid you are just sitting on the fence. So get up and read the Key Standards & Guidelines Consultation Document (available from ACELS or your school) and let us know what to say. This is too important for us to go in and represent the views of half a dozen people - we need a broad consensus - we need at least fifty sets of opinions, if not a hundred.

September 11th, 2001

We are all still trying to make sense of the tragic and shocking events that took place on September 11th. As war now rains down in far away Afghanistan, I think it is fitting to echo the words of Martin Eayrs, the Editor of our sister magazine, IATEFL Issues.

"I am glad, proud even, to belong to an association like IATEFL whose international membership brings together so many cultures, so many people brought up in so many traditions.

So, in our own small way, let us do what we can to promote human understanding, to respect our neighbours' 'otherness' and to show through our tolerance and comprehension that respect for and acceptance of all that is 'different' is the only way to make sense of our lives."

Ciarán McCarthy
The Editor



Skillnets Update

by **Gill Nother**

MEI-RELSA Education & Training Officer

Isn't this supposed to be the quiet time of the year? Well here at the Education and Training office of MEI-RELSA, it certainly is not. We have a full programme of training and teacher development events and activities planned to bring us up to Christmas.

Conference

On Friday 19th we had our Second Teacher Development Conference at which teachers gave talks and workshops on a variety of teaching and related areas, from exploiting authentic listening materials to using the internet as a teachers' resource. These events (the previous one was last June) provide EL teachers with an opportunity to meet up with others from all around the country to talk 'shop' and generally feel part of an ELT community. The events are free of charge and travel is subsidised for teachers who have to travel from other cities makes them all the more accessible. The previous event on June 6th was held at Limerick University Language Centre, and teachers from 19 schools country-wide

attended. The feedback was excellent. The most recent conference was held at Aspect International in Dublin – there will be reports on this in the next FELT Newsletter.

Workshops

Monthly workshops for less experienced EL teachers (less than 2 years experience) are commencing on November 2nd; the first to be held at Academy of English Studies on Dawson St., in Dublin. We are hiring trainers to provide these sessions which will facilitate teachers in consolidating and extending their methodology and teaching techniques. If you would like to attend these sessions, or if you would like some workshops provided in your area, please contact me, at the MEI-RELSA office or ask your Director of Studies.

Training Days

For Directors of Studies, we are organising a training day in mid-December to deal with areas relevant to the job. Either the day before or the day after, there will be a training day for teacher trainers. Simon Marshall will be travelling from the UK to join with locals(!) to provide the training. There is a charge for each of these days and a limited number of places, so please let us know asap, if you would like to participate.

Mentor Training Programme

Development of this programme is underway and piloting is soon to commence. Mentors will be trained in observation and discussion techniques to facilitate novice teachers in reflective teacher development.



Participants await the beginning of the June conference in Limerick

Action Research Competition

The winner of our Action Research Competition was Christine Bromwich from the Centre of English Studies. She has recently returned from her prize trip to Pilgrims in Canterbury where she took a Creative Pilgrims Teacher course for 2

weeks. The prize of flights, accommodation and the course was provided by Pilgrims, International Books and Skillnets. Christine was at the conference on the 19th where she shared more about her winning entry and what she learned at Pilgrims.

Needs Analysis

The needs analysis data from our survey has been processed and analysed. A summary of the report will soon be available from your Director of Studies.

Next year

Next year we hope to have conferences in February, June and October. We always need speakers, and would particularly like to encourage those who have never given a talk at a conference before. If you feel you'd like to try it out and have some area you enjoy teaching, materials you have developed or anything you'd like to share with others, why not give a talk next year. Please get in touch with me any time to propose a talk for any of the conferences. I'd be delighted to help in any way I can to make it easy for you.



Gill Nother

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MEI-RELSA

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E-mail info@mei.ie

Website www.mei.ie

*Right:
Winner of the
MEI-RELSA
Action Research
Competition
Christine
Bromwich
from CES.*



Above: Mary Shepherd (LLI) does it with authenticity!



Left: Limerick Conference delegates relax and enjoy a glass of wine at the end of the day.

Right: Tim Smyrk (DSE) pauses for thought as he brain washes participants using his NLP skills!



Some Ice Breakers

Brought to you by
The Staff of ACELS

Have you ever had to think quickly on a Monday morning of some new activities you can use to get the learners to get to know each other? Here are some tried and tested ones – nothing new – but ones that we have found useful to have up our sleeves through the years!

1. Think of 6 numbers that are something to do with you (*i.e.* age, house number, shoe size *etc.*). Put them on the board at random. Students guess how each number relates to you. Students can then do this themselves in pairs. Students learn about each other and it's fun.
2. Students think of a famous person & write the name on a card, or you prepare cards with a famous person's name on it. Attach a card to the back of each student. Students circulate, asking questions to try and find out their name.
3. Find out some details about your students beforehand, *e.g.* nationality, age, city they live in *etc.* Ask for a volunteer to sit in a chair in front of the whiteboard facing the other students. Write up a piece of information on the board. By asking the others Yes/ No questions, the students in the '*hot seat*' has to find out what piece of information is written up about him.
4. Similar to the previous activity – but done as a "*Find Someone Who*" Activity. This can also be a good way of checking learners' understanding of the language points covered in the previous level.

5. Give out one piece of paper to each learner. Ask them to write on it 4 things – *e.g.* one thing they love, one thing they hate, one thing they have learned recently and one thing they would like to do in the future – they should just write one word for each one. Learners pin these one and walk around asking about the things their peers have written. As a follow-up you can ask them to report back on the most interesting piece of information they found out.
6. If you have a lively class with a lot of energy what about a distance dictation? Cut up a short text about something to do with the class. Cut it up into 3 or 4 chunks. Stick the chunks on a wall (maybe just outside the classroom). Put learners in pairs – one is the messenger the other is the scribe.

The messenger's role is to read the text, go back to the scribe and dictate as much as s/he can remember. The scribe must write it all down. The messenger goes back and forth until it is finished. The pair who finishes first is the winner!

Instant Activities on the Net for Use in the Classroom

The following websites have some useful activities for younger learners:

<http://members.tripod.com/~esl4kids/games.html>
This site simply has a list of games.

<http://www1.oup.co.uk/elt/springboard/courses/index1.htm>
Intended to accompany O.U.P.'s *Springboard* series, the supplementary materials which are organised in topics can be used with most any coursebook.

<http://www.reggie.net>
Again, more supplementaries for *Let's Go*, but can be used in as many ways as you can think of!

Five Ideas for Using Authentic Television Clips

Anne O'Keeffe

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Television offers many opportunities for materials development. Below are five prototype lessons based around different genres of television material: soap opera; film; comedy; advertising and news broadcast. Before you press the record button, keep in mind that you need very little material to make a good lesson. The lessons below are designed for intensive viewing, where three minutes or less can offer plenty of language and content.

Lesson 1: Soap Opera

Level: Depends on level of difficulty of the language in the clip.

Aim: To focus on English conversation strategies

Material needed: A short soap opera scene with a self-contained conversation - keep it to one minute if possible, one which involves a good level of interaction, for example where a problem is being discussed or where interactants are gossiping.

Preparation: Transcribe the dialogue and cut it up so that each utterance is on a separate strip. Back the strips onto card. Make enough sets of cards so that there will be one per group.

In class:

1) Explain the background to the scene: provide any necessary information about the clip and the soap opera. For example, it may be worthwhile playing the clip with the sound turned off so as to introduce the characters and their relationships.

- 2) Set the task: in groups, students must sort out the conversation into the right order. Help start the process by providing the first line.
- 3) As students are sorting out the dialogue, play the clip without the sound so to offer non-verbal clues.
- 4) Get each group to perform their version of the dialogue.
- 5) Play the clip with the sound turned on this time while students check their predictions.

Modification: To modify the task for lower levels or if the 'text' is long, three or four utterances could be placed on each strip.

Lesson 2: Film

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Aim: To practise reading and speaking.

To focus on the relationship between written and spoken language.

Material needed: Find a novel that has been made into a film, preferably one that the students are not likely to have seen. Then select an extract from the book that has been included in the film (even if it differs slightly).

Preparation: Prepare the extract from the book for a reading lesson.

In class:

- 1) Having focused on the extract from the book as a reading lesson, organise students into groups.
- 2) Set the task: students are asked to work in groups to decide how they would adapt this scene for film. Ask them to focus on as many considerations as they can think of, for example, a description of the actors who should play each part; what the soundtrack should be, what kind of setting and background and so on. Some students may even want to do a 'storyboard' with camera angles.
- 3) Ask each group to present feedback on their considerations.
- 4) Play the extract and ask students to prepare to review it.
- 5) Each group discusses what they thought of the extract and whether their version would have been better.

Lesson 3: A Comedy Programme

Level: Any level

Aim: To enhance vocabulary in a particular lexical area.

To practise speaking and writing.

Material needed: A scene from a comedy programme that can be understood even without the soundtrack. *Mr Bean* is particularly suitable for this.

Preparation: You will need to have some monolingual dictionaries.

In class:

- 1) Set the task: organise the class into pairs and ask each pair to watch the scene and try to come up with the best description of what happened. They can make notes and use the dictionaries, but they will have to give an oral presentation to the class on their version of events.
- 2) Play the scene as many times as is necessary.
- 3) Eventually, each pair presents an account.
- 4) The class then synthesises the descriptions into one written account, which a student writes on the board in collaboration with the whole class using the best phrases from different groups.

Lesson 4: Advertisement

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Aim: To focus on the use of language in advertising. To practise speaking, listening and writing

Material needed: Two advertisements where a product or service is advertised using a voice-over. A script rich in adjectives is particularly suitable, for example '...for *unbeatable* value...' '...with an *excellent* range of...' and so on.

You will also need a number of pictures of products, these could be spoof items, for example a cream that cures baldness.

In class:

- 1) Set task 1: watch the advertisements and list the images associated with each product, for example, *happy families; healthy children; warm cosy house; glam-*

orous lifestyle; beautiful fun people and so on.

- 2) Seek whole class feedback and collate ideas on the blackboard.
- 3) Set task 2: Ask students to watch the advertisements again and this time working in pairs try to make a list of the adjectives used.
- 4) Play the advertisements as many times as is necessary.
- 5) Get pairs to team up so as to compare. Eventually collate these on the blackboard.
- 6) Set task 3 - writing an advertising script: distribute the pictures of products to the students in groups and set the task of writing an advertisement script. Also ask each group to consider what images they would use for the advertisement.
- 7) Each group presents their advertisement.

Modification: If you give all groups the same product, you could ask them to vote on the best proposed advertisement.

Lesson 5: News Reports

Level: Upper-Intermediate to Advanced

Aim: To practise listening; To raise genre-awareness; To focus on lexical patterns in specific genres

Material needed: A newspaper article about an accident and the corresponding television news story.

Preparation: Prepare the newspaper article as a gapfilling exercise, taking out key phrases, for example: *a _____ is helping Gardaí with their inquiries*. [youth]; *the _____ happened* [incident]; *a _____ is being sent to the DPP* [file]. Provide the key words either at the top of the handout or on the blackboard.

In class:

- 1) Set task 1: ask students to predict phrases they expect to find in a newspaper article about the incident you have selected. Write these on the blackboard. Then distribute the gapfilling tasksheet and ask students to check if any of the predicted words are there. Then ask them to try to fill in the blanks.

- 2) Students cross check in pairs before doing whole-class feedback.
- 3) Set task 2: explain that you will now be showing the television news report of this incident and ask students to predict what will be said. Allow about five minutes for students to prepare the news script in pairs.
- 4) Students 'perform' their predictions.
- 5) Play the television report and ask them to (a) make a list any new or synonymous phrases used to talk about the same incident. (b) identify any phrases which are specific to either newspaper or spoken broadcast (for example, if talking about a fire, the word *blaze* may be used in the newspaper but not in the television report).
- 6) As a follow up, students could take the same incident reported in a different newspaper and check if there are any lexical differences. This comparative task would be made more interesting if a tabloid version were used.

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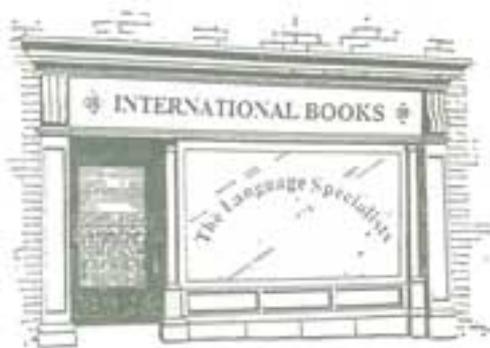


Anne O’Keeffe is a lecturer in TEFL/EFL, at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. Her research centres around language corpora and how they can be used to explore socio-cultural nuance encoded in the language we speak. In 1998, she was awarded the RTÉ

Doctoral Scholarship for her ongoing Ph.D. research into the discourse of radio phone in.

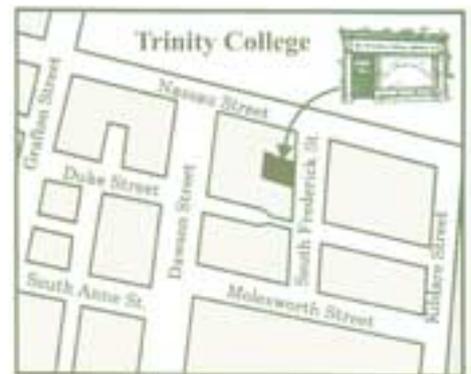
Along with colleagues in the University of Limerick, she is building a corpus of Irish English (L-CIE), which links in with inter-varietal research between MIC, UL and the University of Nottingham.

She is also a regular contributor to the FELT Newsletter.



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Dilbert Quotes

A magazine recently ran a “*Dilbert Quotes*” contest. They were looking for people to submit quotes from their real life Dilbert-type managers. Here are the finalists:

1. “As of tomorrow, employees will only be able to access the building using individual security cards. Pictures will be taken next Wednesday and employees will receive their cards in two weeks.” (This was the winning quote from Fred Dales at Microsoft Corp. in Redmond, WA.)
2. “What I need is a list of specific unknown problems we will encounter.” (Lykes Lines Shipping)
3. “E-mail is not to be used to pass on information or data. It should be used only for company business.” (Accounting manager, Electric Boat Company)
4. “This project is so important, we can’t let things that are more important interfere with it.” (Advertising/Marketing manager, United Parcel Service)
5. “Doing it right is no excuse for not meeting the schedule.”
6. No one will believe you solved this problem in one day! We’ve been working on it for months. Now, go act busy for a few weeks and I’ll let you know when it’s time to tell them.” (R&D supervisor, 3M Corp.)
7. “My boss spent the entire weekend retyping a 25-page proposal that only needed corrections. She claims the disk I gave her was damaged and she couldn’t edit it. The disk I gave her was write-protected.” (CIO of Dell Computers)
8. Quote from the Boss: “Teamwork is a lot of people doing what I say.” (Marketing executive, Citrix Corporation)
9. My sister passed away and her funeral was scheduled for Monday. When I told my Boss, he said she died on purpose so that I would have to miss work on the busiest day of the year. He then asked if we could change her burial to Friday. He said, “That would be better for me.” (Shipping executive, FTD Florists)
10. “We know that communication is a problem, but the company is not going to discuss it with the employees.” (Switching supervisor, AT&T Long Lines Division)
11. We recently received a memo from senior management saying: “This is to inform you that a memo will be issued today regarding the memo mentioned above.” (Microsoft, Legal Affairs Division)
12. One day my Boss asked me to submit a status report to him concerning a project I was working on. I asked him if tomorrow would be soon enough. He said, “If I wanted it tomorrow, I would have waited until tomorrow to ask for it!” (New business manager, Hallmark Greeting Cards.)
13. As director of communications, I was asked to prepare a memo reviewing our company’s training programs and materials. In the body of the memo, in one of the sentences I mentioned the “pedagogical approach” used by one of the training manuals. The day after I routed the memo to the executive committee, I was called into the HR director’s office, and told that the executive vice president wanted me out of the building by lunch. When I asked why, I was told that she wouldn’t stand for perverts (paedophiles?) working in her company. Finally, he showed me her copy of the memo, with her demand that I be fired and the word “pedagogical” circled in red. The HR manager was fairly reasonable, and once he looked the word up in his dictionary and made a copy of the definition to send back to her, he told me not to worry. He would take care of it. Two days later, a memo to the entire staff came out directing that no words that could not be found in the local Sunday newspaper could be used in company memos. A month later, I resigned. In accordance with company policy, I created my resignation memo by pasting words together from the Sunday paper. (Taco Bell Corporation)

Fizzy Philosophy

A professor stood before his 1st Arts philosophy class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly he picked up a large empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks, rocks about 2" in diameter. He then asked the students if the jar was full? They agreed that it was. So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was. The students laughed.

The professor picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. "Now," said the professor, "I want you to recognise that this is your life. The rocks are the important things - your children, your family, your health, your friends - things that if everything else was lost and only they remained,

your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter to you like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else, the small stuff. If you put the sand into the jar first, there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical check-ups. Take your partner out dancing. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house, give a dinner party and fix the dishwasher. Take care of the rocks first - the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."

But then... A student then took the jar, which the other students and the professor agreed was full, and proceeded to pour in a can of beer. Of course the beer filled the remaining spaces within the jar making the jar truly full. The moral of this tale is: - no matter how full your life is, there is always room for beer.

The FELT Newsletter Needs Submissions!

Have you thought about writing something for the FELT Newsletter? Is there something you feel strongly about? Something you would like to say or share?

Felt is particularly interested in receiving material from people who are new to our profession. Perhaps you have an idea but it's not enough for an article? Well, brief can be just as good and often better. We are particularly interested in articles as short as 400-800 words - and shorter articles allow more people to be heard, regardless of who, where or how well qualified they are.



W@nt to keep in Cont@ct?

Just send a blank e-mail to
ForumELTIreland-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
to join the FELT e-group.

What is an e-group?

An e-group is simple e-mailing system for people with similar interests. What it means is that you can send an e-mail to one e-mail address and everybody on the list gets the message.

Eh, so what?

Well, it makes things easier to communicate for a start. It means that we can let each other know what is happening in Irish ELT. For example, if there is an interesting session taking place, then you can let everybody know about it. Or, if there is a burning issue in ELT you can share, discuss and debate it. Anything relevant to ELT really...

So what does it cost?

Nothing! Not a penny. You just need access to a computer and an e-mail address to send and receive messages.

And the rules?

Nothing you wouldn't expect. No bad language, no slagging people off, no commercial activities. Shouldn't be too hard! Just remember, the messages you send to *ForumELTIreland@yahoogroups.com* will be read by *everyone* on the list, so beware when replying to messages.

So how do I try it?

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