



## From the Committee

### From the Chair...



*Dear members,*

Welcome to the last edition of the ELTA-Rhine Newsletter in its current PDF format. 2011 has been an eventful year so far, and there's more still to come. The new website and HTML Newsletter will be launched in the coming months, along with a new corporate design. I will be contacting you all later in the year with details of the change-over.

We have a very lively and proactive committee this year, with a further collection of willing helpers who support us regularly. Thanks to Cait, our Web Co-ordinator, and Mike, our Treasurer and Members Secretary, for the time they have invested in up-dating all our membership details in preparation for changing over to the new system. The website subcommittee has been meeting regularly and liaising with the designer, Barbara Sailer. Meanwhile, the newsletter has gone from strength to strength, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Newsletter team and all of the writers who have contributed to it this year.

We've also had some great events this year, with interesting speakers presenting on language-based, methodological as well as administrative themes. A highlight was certainly last month's Members' Day, where the vitality of our own membership - presenting, sharing ideas, giving advice and having a natter over a coffee and a pastry - was there for all to enjoy.

I hope you all had a well-earned rest over the summer break and you've all had a good start to the new school/academic year. I look forward to seeing you at our remaining events for 2011.

Happy teaching.

*Vasi*

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## Committee Information and News

### Comings and goings

We farewell a few members this year, some of whom have been with ELTA-Rhine for many years. We're sorry to see you go, and wish you all the best with your future endeavours. Meanwhile, we welcome newcomers from all over the globe. Great to have you join us!

*Those going...*

Patrick O'Sullivan

Hazel Somerville

Sibylle Schreiber

*Those coming...*

Pat Schmitz

Marc Abernathy

Philippa Walker of Target Training

William Fern

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## Features

### Standing Behind the Short Wall

*How Kay von Randow keeps her cool and rises above the challenges of the classroom*

This 'teaching process' which we're involved in can be looked at from two distinct sides: what we the teachers, offer; and what our students assimilate and use.

It's often a good idea to take a step backwards and scrutinize our approach to teaching as if we're standing behind a short wall: near enough to see what's going on *and* far enough back to stay objective. I can personally say that I've found this extremely helpful when faced with the following situation: an in-company group lesson with course participants from various departments who

- arrive at different times
- bring varying degrees of personal and job-related stress/tiredness
- often miss sessions due to internal and external appointments
- have - despite the initial pre-teaching assessment - different levels of capability simply because the company has decided to save costs and make one group out of what was originally designated to be two.

Standing behind the short wall, one can ask: how can I help myself teach effectively and establish continuity?



The most useful tool I have found is to make sure that I am centered, balanced and grounded before beginning the lesson, by taking some deep, conscious breaths before I begin my journey to the company, and again once I'm in the classroom. In this way, whatever methodology I follow, and whatever course contents are planned, I establish the best possible basis for actually being able to teach effectively! I also 'check back to base' and repeat the procedure several times during a session.

When I peruse publishers' catalogues for teachers/trainers, and when I read online blogs or forums, I see a lack of general awareness of such a simple yet effective tool. I see great interest in new text books for teaching the acquisition of vocabulary in ever-increasing numbers of areas in English; great interest in blended media teaching, and a perplexing number of potential certificates for students, as well as qualifications for teachers. All well and good, BUT: the human element, as outlined in my bullet points above, can make it very difficult to fully use all these wonderful props.

I imagine we've all seen toddlers who positively refuse to open their mouths when it's time to eat. As a mother, I know how frustrating this can be, preparing nourishing food which my kids then wouldn't eat. The fact that they survived and we all lived to tell the tale just shows how resilient human beings are...

Switching to the teaching sphere now: we want to 'feed' information to our students, because this is the 'nourishing food' which will enable them to 'grow' in English and be 'stronger' in their working life. The difference being, that our students are usually extremely willing to absorb what we offer, but are often not fully able to, due to the circumstances outlined in my bullet points above.

Agitation is infectious, and can quickly spread to other members of the group who feel sympathetic to an over-stressed colleague and understand why another person often misses sessions; because they may very well have the same problems. They get drawn back into the world of 'problems' instead of being fully present in the English lesson! In such an atmosphere, although I acknowledge the difficulties (also providing an ideal opportunity to teach ways of apologizing and accepting an apology) I remain absolutely grounded in my own inner safe space, standing behind the short wall. And I take several deep, conscious breaths with my attention firmly grounded in myself before recommencing with whatever was interrupted.

It's amazing how something as simple as breathing and being centered can establish and restore a fertile ground for teaching. This is my main tool for ensuring that what I teach comes from a position of calmness and clarity, and that this calm ripples into the room in a similar way the ripples on a pond form and spread out after a stone is thrown into the water.



Of course, this all takes place on a sub-conscious level, and I don't mention it to the students, but I've noticed that curiosity is awakened in them ... they're not quite sure what happens in English lessons but *something* feels different from their normal experiences. Two examples demonstrate the effect:

*A very quiet secretary who I'd been teaching for some years, who'd remained very private about her personal life and who'd made very little progress in English burst into tears one day and cried for most of the 60 minutes we were together.*

*All sorts of responses went through my head but I felt she wanted to keep her privacy so I didn't ask questions but simply stayed behind the short wall grounded and centered in myself, breathing deeply and consciously, and letting her grief flow without interruption.*

*I wondered how she would be next time we met and whether it would be awkward with her but she came in smiling! And chatting in English! Not grammatically correct but with few problems communicating what she wanted to say. From that moment on, she's made steady progress in English and just laps it up.*

*Another student of mine interjected in the middle of a lesson 'I feel so happy in English. I look forward to it all week'. And the others in the group then set about talking about their former experiences of mainly disliking the subject at school, but how they enjoyed their sessions with me. Since we'd been working very intensely on grammar and the content was really rather dry, I felt particularly pleased by their comments.*

At the end of the day, we can all look back and see what works best for us, to help us teach effectively. I am just so glad that I've found this simple tool. Anyone who feels they'd like to know more about this is welcome to email me at: [Kay.von.Randow@web.de](mailto:Kay.von.Randow@web.de)

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## Getting Teenagers Talking

*Lesson ideas for a teenage conversation class*

*While some teachers struggle to get their students to be quiet, Pat Schmitz is hoping to loosen their tongues*

For one term I was asked to do a conversation course in our local grammar school, a double lesson in the afternoon, with pupils attending on a voluntary basis. The lessons were for pupils in the 7th-8th class and 7-10 boys and girls took part.

So what can you offer teenagers that keeps their attention, doesn't become too academic and at the same time gets them talking? Similar to adult teaching, I did the classical getting to know warm-up round - Name, Where do you live, Hobbies, and one of the following extra questions:

- Which famous person would you like to be and why?
- If you had to leave Germany, which country would you like to go to and why?
- What do you like to eat most?

I also made use of some role cards from Cutting Edge Elementary "Resource Bank", published by Pearson Longman. My teenagers loved this one as they slipped into unusual roles such as Hans who is a doctor and has got 10,000 books, Gita who lives in Calcutta and has an elephant, Sally who is a teacher in England and has 20 cats. Other sets of role cards include being an inventor who invented a machine that does English homework, an Australian gold medal winner, a lottery-winner who moved to Hawaii...

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Interpreting song texts and explanations of some grammar problems were also popular activities. The song text interpretations were usually spontaneous questioning depending on the group's reaction and understanding of the song. I might concentrate on grammar structures or idioms - song texts are full of interesting examples of both [see, for example, Christine Schrempp's article 'Making Something from Nothing' in the Summer edition - ed.]. I create worksheets by using parts of exercises from grammar books and tests to suit the needs of the pupils involved.

The lessons needed to have a conversational structure with discussion rounds as a priority. I chose many themes and worked through them throughout the term. Here are the skeletons of two of my lessons (timings are given as suggestions only).

### **Theme: *moving away***

A warm-up round of I am going on holiday and packing...in my suitcase.

Play the Beatles song "She's leaving home". Discuss the girl's situation in the song. (song-texts can be found on many websites, including [www.songlyrics.com](http://www.songlyrics.com))

#### **15 mins**

Ask why children and young adults run away from home.

#### **15 mins**



Brainstorm continents. Ask each student to describe each continent - living conditions, etc.

Read and translate an article about the 19th century immigrants in New York, why the people moved from Europe, their expectations of America, etc.

(The USA is a common theme in school English books, so possible sources for articles are: Green Line 4, unit 1 (from Klett Publishers), English 2000 B4, unit 4 and English G21 A4, unit 1 (Cornelsen).)

**15 mins**

Each pupil decides what country they would or would not like to move to and why

**15 mins**

Discuss what the ideal country would have - e.g. political structure, social services etc.

In groups invent a country and present the results to the class

**30 mins**



**Theme: *participle constructions, media***

Explain participle constructions and hand out grammar exercise to complete (see worksheet in **Teaching Materials**)

**20 mins**

A visit to the cinema with a copy of four film summaries. In pairs the pupils discuss which film they would like to see and why. (Create your own set of summaries depending on the interests of the pupils or genres that you wish to cover. Try <http://www.moviefanatic.com/>, where you can also see trailers)

Brainstorm types of films and TV programmes - thrillers, comedy, etc. Each pupil thinks of a film/TV programme they like and tells the class about it.

**30 mins**

Brainstorm media words - cameraman, presenter, costumes, etc. (Ready for FCE, Unit 4 (Macmillan) has a lot of vocabulary and language for reviewing films - too difficult for the elementary classes, but you can easily simplify some of it.)

Divide the class into groups. Each group has to design and act out a TV show - reality, quiz or talent show **40 mins**

This group work was very popular and I discovered a few budding actors in the groups with brilliant ideas. Other themes I used included

- **food**

the group designed their own restaurant

- **travelling**

a discussion between plane crash survivors about what ten things out of a list of twenty they would take with them on their trek to find help

- **shops**

shop ads to choose from and describe

talking about favourite shops

interpretation of song text "Money for Nothing" from Dire Straits

group work designing the layout of a shop.

These lesson plans also work well in a modified version for adults level A2 onwards.

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## Opportunities and threats

*Kate Cowe looks at the some of the pitfalls of the EFL teaching business*

When I left the UK one late November evening many years ago to come to Germany to experience "a year working abroad", I received a card from a friend of mine saying "Happy Christmas – you're very brave to go!" On the first day at the language school where I was to teach, I found my new colleagues about to go on strike, and I was invited to go to the pub with them at lunchtime to hear all about it! Brave indeed, I thought, but in the event, I found it all so farcical, so unlike what I had expected (and the new town I found myself in so attractive) that I stayed around to see what would happen. Had I been risk-averse, I would doubtless have hot-footed it back to the UK at least in time for Christmas, and my career as an English secondary teacher in the UK, with nice long paid holidays and a big fat public pension at the end, would have resumed with only a minor hiccup!

As it was, the language school teachers did not, in the end, go on strike, but presented a petition outlining their grievances, subsequently accepted by the management. The only potential striker not to sign this was a teacher from North America who did not want to be blacklisted (his word), as EFL teaching in this particular language chain was his ticket to working his way comfortably round the world.



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I was reminded of all this recently, and the strange world of EFL in Germany, when I attended the ELTA-Rhine workshop which dealt with, among others, the theme of *Starting your own training business*. Is this indeed a good time to start up on one's own behalf? Or might it be a better time to seek the sheltered shores of pensioned and holiday-entitled employment, rather than heading out to sea where there may be any number of sharks, storms and sandbanks, rather than the rich fishing one would hope for?!

There is no clear answer to this, of course: swings and roundabouts seem to be the safest position to take. However, I have been running my own business here for a long time now, and looking back, I wonder whether the famous opportunity/threat balance has now been tipped in the wrong direction.

The advantages of being self-employed are well known – freedom to choose how, when and where one works is a potent attraction. These have not changed over the years. However, the risks seem to have increased.

For one thing, there is much more competition in our field nowadays: you just have to look at the current ELTA professional register and see how many trainers are on it, all offering variations on the same theme, to see that it is simply more difficult to be noticed. On the internet in general, the training offers are endless, and potential clients are often not in a position to sort the sheep from the goats, and so may well pick a famous chain name or just take the cheapest offer and not care about anything else. Yet the number of potential learners is hardly increasing,

especially as companies now recruit from a pool of applicants whose English competence is much higher than would have been the case years ago.

Another potential threat comes from the global nature of the economy nowadays. Disaster strikes in a bank or company far from us in Germany, but the knock-on effect is felt even in our business. For example, during the world financial crisis of 2008/9, my turnover was halved overnight when my company lost 2 big important international clients, due to the financial situation of their US branches. Similarly, another major client was lost when their newly acquired Italian masters decided to suspend English training in the German subsidiary. The fact that their employees desperately needed their training in order to do their jobs was obviously neither here nor there!

Such a client loss – a good client relationship with courses built up over years of hard work – is difficult to replace. Of course, such a “threat” can also be seen as an opportunity to get more, interesting clients, but perhaps with much more effort than formerly. My father (a self-employed pharmacist) used to say that “good wine needs no bush” – hardly true today.

There are other ELTA trainers who, in this period, have gone from being self-employed to employed, often in higher education establishments. Does this indicate a trend, based on a real market change, or is it just coincidence? It would be interesting to know.



Had the ELTA-Rhine workshop on 10th September taken on a more exchange of experience/swap shop identity, such questions might have had more chance of being answered. As it was, the workshop, though interesting, missed some opportunities for discussion.

The presenters were, of course, enthusiastic about setting up a business – “come on, you can do it”, was the message to the audience. The problem was that many of us have indeed already “done it”, and it might have been more productive if there had been much more input from the floor in the second half of the workshop, so that we could have heard many trainers’ experience at first hand. A few trainers said they were acquiring new clients, especially using new social networking sites or online advertising. Yet I have heard other trainers, albeit not at the meeting, saying the opposite. This is why it is difficult to see a clear pattern, as everything is anecdotal, depending on luck, individual circumstances, and so on. The more real research there is (and not just the number of trainers who, for example, use social networking, but the real results of this use) into the opportunities and threats of being self-employed, the better trainers can be prepared. Hope for the best, but be prepared for the worst, as they say.

Some friends of mine in the UK have taken early retirement and are now sitting back on their public pension cushions and are contemplating how they can amuse themselves. One of them, a lawyer, has already done her CELTA certificate (yes indeed!) and now has a few local clients in leafy Surrey. She told me recently when we met in London, how she admired me for running my own business abroad (again, I am “very brave”!), whereas she had taken the safe but unexciting path of working in the public sector.

Of course, no such thing as an informed decision exists in this respect. We can’t know the outcomes of our early career choices, especially as they are often arbitrary. Twenty odd years ago, the last thing on my mind was pensions in the future! But now, when the global markets are jumpy and the value of a self-employed private pension is fluctuating.....

Clearly, the threats for everyone working nowadays are higher than they were before. My early-retirement friends are extremely lucky to have such a high degree of financial protection. We’ve now had a workshop on the possible opportunities of self-employment. Perhaps ELTA-Rhine should have a future workshop on the financial aspects of being self-employed (what to do about pension provision, health insurance, etc., etc.) so that far from being risk averse, we can at least be risk aware.

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## **The How-to Exam Section**

### **Getting to Know the IELTS Exams**

### **Background**

IELTS stands for the International English Language Testing System and is an internationally recognised language certificate. It was devised by the British Council, and the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations and the IDP (IELTS Australia). The exam tests all four language skills and the speaking test is a face-to-face recorded interview with an IELTS Examiner.

IELTS can be taken in two test formats: Academic or General Training. All candidates take the same Listening and Speaking modules but different Reading and Writing modules. The IELTS Academic Reading and Writing parts of the test are, as the name suggests, more academic topics e.g. reading scientific reports, writing about graphs.

The Academic format is mainly taken by those who wish to study in an English-speaking university or nowadays also at some German universities where the IELTS test is an admission requirement. Either the Academic or the General IELTS examination can be taken as part of the immigration procedure for such countries as Australia, New Zealand or Canada.

The IELTS nine-band score system ranges from 9 (expert user) to 1 (non-user). An approximate comparison of IELTS and the Common European Framework can be found at [http://ielts.org/researchers/common\\_european\\_framework.aspx](http://ielts.org/researchers/common_european_framework.aspx).

Here it can be seen that:

CEF B1 level is rated as an IELTS band 4 - 5

CEF B2 level is rated as an IELTS band 5.5 - 6.5

CEF C1 level is rated as an IELTS band 7 - 8

CEF C2 level is rated as an IELTS band 9

For more in-depth knowledge about the IELTS exam, have a look at the website: [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org). Here your student can also enrol directly online for the test.

The IELTS exam can be taken three times a month (normally on Saturdays) at IELTS-approved centres worldwide, the nearest being at the Carl Duisberg Centre in Cologne ([www.cdc.de](http://www.cdc.de)). The CDC also runs regular intensive IELTS preparatory courses. At the moment, the fee for the IELTS exam is €190.



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## Teaching IELTS

It has been seen that a candidate can usually improve their band score by at least one grade if they are thoroughly prepared for the exam, and as the fees may be considerable for some, it is well worth your student achieving the required band score on the first sitting.

## Practical Tips

First check which exam your student has to take. It has occurred that a student did not know there were two

different kinds of exam and registered/trained for the wrong exam module.

Additionally, find out what band score your student is expected to achieve in order to study at a chosen university, or as part of their immigration application, etc.

It is useful to find out what time scale your student has before he/she will sit the exam. The usual scenario is that the student wants as few lessons as possible in the shortest time scale imaginable....

## **Teaching Material**

In my experience, the more familiar the learner is with the format, the faster and more confidently he/she can work through the exam. This obviously means the more test papers a candidate can work through, the better!!

On the IELTS website there are details of each part of the exam that can be downloaded, and the descriptors for the writing and speaking part, so you as a teacher can see how they are marked. Thankfully, on the same website there is also a multitude of sample papers and audio files that can be downloaded free of charge plus example lesson plans for each part of the exam.

Additionally, IELTS publications can be ordered online from the Cambridge ESOL publications e-shop and support materials and sample exam material from the Cambridge ESOL online preparation e-Shop [www.shop.cambridgeesol.org](http://www.shop.cambridgeesol.org)

By using specially prepared practice material or sample exams, you can build up a lot of strategies to combat the exam modules. This I find is a key element to a student's success, i.e. understanding what is expected of them in each part of the exam.

## **The Exam**

The exam usually takes place on a Saturday and the three papers - listening, reading and writing - are taken one after the other in that order with no break between papers. The candidate is allotted a time for the speaking test in the afternoon.

## **Listening Test**

The listening test takes 30 minutes and is divided into four sections, each with increasing difficulty and with a total of 40 questions to answer. Each section can be a monologue or a dialogue. As the IELTS is a test of international English a range of accents may be used for each part. Before the candidate starts each section, he/she has time to read through the questions, which is extremely valuable time as the recording is only played once.

A candidate needs to train every variation of numbers that you can think of, from dates to prices, to credit card numbers to percentages to mobile phone numbers, and again every variation of letters from insurance details, to addresses, to names of unusual cities to booking references, etc. to gain points on the easier questions at the beginning.

You should also train patience with your candidate, as often information will be corrected during the conversation i.e. the incorrect spelling etc. will be given first and then it will be repeated in the correct version.

## **Reading Test**

This part of the test lasts 60 minutes and the candidate has to register for either the Academic Reading or the General Reading Test, the former being the more taxing. Both tests consist of three sections and have 40 questions. Each section uses different question types with increasing difficulty in each section to assess the students' comprehension.

Strategies here are paramount to tackle the reading as there is a great danger of running out of time. The first and foremost strategy is that the candidate has to accept it is not necessary to understand every word of the text. He/she may not finish if they read through the text first and then look at the questions. The student needs to read the questions first and work through the text by looking for the part of the text that contains information relevant to

the question.

## Writing Test

Again the candidate has to have chosen to do the Academic Writing or the General Writing prior to sitting the test. Each test lasts 60 minutes and the candidate has to answer two questions which require different writing styles. The General Writing usually asks candidates to write a letter for question one and give an opinion or agree /disagree with a statement for question two. The Academic Writing asks candidates to describe a type of graph or work process and give an opinion or agree/disagree with a statement for question two. There is no choice of topic. The candidate is graded according to different criteria.

*Task Achievement* – how well he/she answers the question

*Coherence and Cohesion* – how well the essay 'hangs' together

*Lexical Resource* – how expansive and correct is the choice of vocabulary

*Grammatical Range and Accuracy* – again how expansive and correct is the use of grammar

The teacher has to practise the appropriate forms of letter writing, describing graphs, giving opinions and agreeing /disagreeing, etc., depending on which module the candidate has chosen to take.

## Speaking Test

This consists of a one-to-one recorded interview with a specially trained IELTS examiner and lasts between 11 and 14 minutes. The test consists of three parts: an introduction and short questions about general topics (sports, weather, food, etc.), an individual long turn where the candidate has to talk about a pre-selected topic for 1 to 2 minutes, and a two-way discussion thematically linked to the individual long turn.

For the individual long turn it is paramount that the candidate does not dry up and needs to practise the format, especially speaking on a particular topic for almost 2 minutes. The content of this presentation is not the important issue; the candidate has to show his/her capacity to use the language. Therefore, you should stress that your student does not have to be an expert on the topic that has been selected for him/her. Here it is extremely useful to practise this with your students, even recording them if it is possible.

There is a wealth of material to help you prepare students for the IELTS exam so you are not on your own! It is well worth trying the sample papers yourself so you can appreciate how taxing the exam actually is. However, with careful planning, practising and familiarising yourself with the IELTS exam you can help your student gain the marks he/she would like to achieve.

Jackie Sykes, M.A. TESOL

*Jackie is an experienced IELTS, Cambridge and London Chamber of Commerce Examiner and is a TESOL Language Trainer and Teacher Trainer based in Cologne. jackiesykes@netcologne.de*

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## Weird and Wonderful News from Science

*Judith Ellis looks at unexpected research results*

## Big-headed Managers

Researchers in Australia have demonstrated that managing people not only makes your head swell in a figurative sense, but also literally. In a study of the brains of people aged 75 - 92, findings showed a clear link between the

size of the hippocampus (the part of the brain responsible for, among other things, the formation, organisation and storage of memories) and a management career, with increased size directly correlating to increased numbers of subordinates. Demands such as problem-solving and the need for emotional intelligence, skills required to manage people effectively, are thought to be responsible for the changes in the brain.

The findings are interesting on several levels - they demonstrate that the brain is capable of changing, and support the idea that mental agility is important in tackling degenerative conditions such as dementia. It may also suggest that your boss really is as smart as s/he thinks.

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But what of the gender balance, you ask? Certainly most former managers now aged in their 80s would be male. The research team, however, found the same results among elderly women from leadership roles in the more traditionally female career paths of nursing and teaching.

It's good to know teaching provides us with some kind of old-age insurance...

[http://www.unsw.edu.au/news/pad/articles/2011/sep/BrainSciences\\_Valenzuela.html](http://www.unsw.edu.au/news/pad/articles/2011/sep/BrainSciences_Valenzuela.html)

### Cn U rd ths? Yr kids cn.

And apparently, its not the end of literacy. A ten-year study into childhood text messaging and the development of literacy by the British Academy has found that the scaremongers are wrong - texting is not detrimental to a child's literacy, it supports it. The amount of texting 8-12 year-olds were engaged in at the beginning of an academic year was found to be a predictor for the child's literacy development by the end of the year.

Researcher Dr. Clare Wood believes that 'phonological awareness' is responsible for the leap in literacy. Creating abbreviations, using rhymes and deleting vowels are all ways of manipulating text in an efficient way to convey the sound of a word. In this way children learn that letters are symbolic and interpretable, and that several different clusters of letters can create the same sound - a basic concept for reading - and it seems that children who are proficient in using these unconventional spellings have no problems when faced with conventional spelling.



Another study, carried out by Dr Nenagh Kemp at the University of Tasmania, found that undergraduate students could compose messages using 'textisms' about 20% faster than using standard spelling, but that messages containing 'textisms' took almost twice as long to decipher.

So, maybe we are not facing an illiterate future, but I pity the parents of the children in the British Academy study - who estimated that they send anywhere from 100 to 300 text messages each day.

Mum, cn I hv sm mr pkt mny???? :-)

<http://www.britac.ac.uk/news/news.cfm/newsid/14> <http://www.smh.com.au/digital-life/mobiles/textese-gr8-training-4-poets-of-2moro-20110911-1k3yc.html>

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### Hot Potato

*Where ideas get passed on (hopefully) before you burn your fingers*

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## The Gender Divide

*Judith Ellis, on not wanting to be a 'female' writer*

Imagine... in fact, try it... Black out the name of the author, then read the first page of a text. Can you tell the gender of the writer?

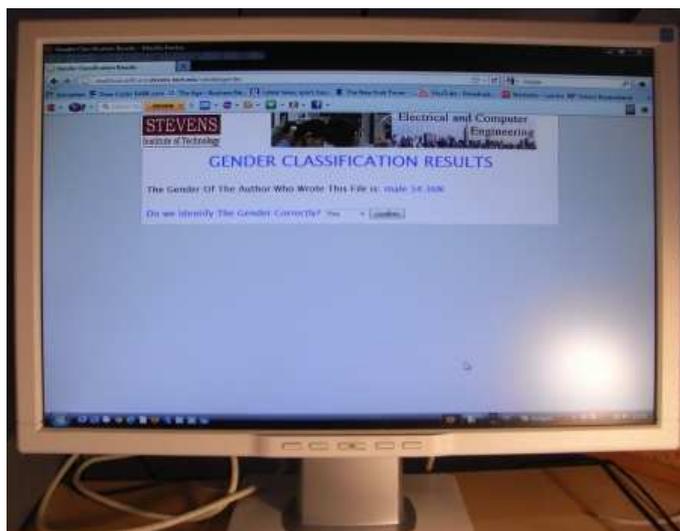
I don't think I could. I don't think I want to.

But some readers are convinced they can. I've heard it said more than once that fiction written by women is 'weaker' somehow than that of their male colleagues. But I keep wondering: are they reacting to the style of the writing, or is there a subconscious prejudice caused by the name on the cover?

It seems that female writers through the ages have felt or feared the effects of this prejudice, taking pen names to assume an identity as a male: like George Elliot, Currer Bell (Charlotte Brontë) and Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen, of Out of Africa fame); or simply avoiding gender by the use of initials - J.K. Rowling, P.D. James - perhaps to land that first contract, break into a male-dominated area of writing, to sell more copies.

So, it's the old adage - you can't judge a book by the author's name. Or can you?

I came across an interesting website recently (<http://stealthserver01.ece.stevens-tech.edu/index>), where the programmers from the Stevens Institute of Technology, NJ, claim to have created an algorithm which predicts the gender of a writer based on a small sample of their prose, and impressively, they claim to be 80% accurate in their predictions.



So far I've fed in the work of 5 different writers published in the ELTA-Rhine Newsletter, and the program hasn't let me down yet. It provides a percentage probability of the writer's gender, and although a couple have been close to neutral (50%), none have crossed the line into the territory of their sexual counterparts. My own writing, I was pleased to note, was given a 59% probability of being female.

Pleased I was, because I wouldn't want a higher score - I don't want to be told I have an extremely 'female' voice. For me, I somehow resent the idea that my language could 'rumble' my gender. My gender is nobody's business but mine (if we ignore for a moment the husband, who probably considers it his business too, and the girlfriends who would probably be less frank in their admissions to me if I weren't of the same basic design), and it's certainly not any of my language's business going and announcing to the world what kind of anatomy I possess. That's a job for the pheromones.

That being the case, I've always been rather wary of gender studies, and I'm definitely not a fan of the sociolinguistic research which takes a linguistic habit (e.g. hedges, or using tag-questions rather than statements) and turns it into a political tool (women use language to avoid confrontation; women express inclusive behaviour and men exert dominance through use of certain linguistic features...).



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But this project has been quietly chugging away for nearly a decade, taking the wind out of my sails with its ability to lay bare that which in polite society should remain well covered. And now to the science: the algorithm is based on findings of a gender-matched corpus of more than 600 documents (25 million words) taken from the computer-tagged British National Corpus. The styles include fiction and non-fiction, and a range of themes, an avoidance of anything pertaining to social function/role of the text (e.g., no letters and personal writing) and for every genre the researchers ensured an equally matched number of texts from male and female authors.

The corpus was then analysed for any significant differences between the male and female use of language and a list of 50 seemingly innocuous differences were noted. In a nutshell, women tend to use more personal pronouns and more use of possessive -'s; men use more determiners (a, the, this, that, etc.), more quantifiers (one, two, some, many) and more use of phrases with of to express the genitive. The authors argue that there is a basic functional shift from the 'involved' style of female writing, in which she 'involves' herself as a writer and you as a reader, and the 'informational' style of the male author.

Whether we can really make assumptions about the subconscious intention of the writer based on the frequency of pronouns or quantifiers could be a good subject for an English 101 essay question, and anything to do with the difference between men and women goes down well in a conversation class here in Germany.

But coming from good feminist stock, where I was raised to perceive equality rather than difference between the genders, this research sits uncomfortably in my gullet, and is giving me indigestion. But a man probably wouldn't get so graphic in his description of bodily discomfort.

(Much to my disgust, this Hot Potato was given a probability rating of 95.48% female)

*"Gender, Genre, and Writing Style in Formal Written Texts", Shlomo Argamon, Moshe Koppel, Jonathan Fine & Anat Rachel Shimoni, in Text - Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse. 23(3), 2003, pages 321–346*

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## Keeping Something Sacred



Corinn Lutz writes in response to Francis Martyn [Summer Edition]

Teachers are born not made. A natural tendency to want to help, the proclivity to perceive learners' problems, the competency to determine the methods necessary for achievement are some of the inborn traits. Being a non-native speaker is not critical to being a good foreign language teacher.

Now, however, I am going to throw out another hot potato. If you venture to teach what for you is a foreign language, shouldn't you know it as expertly as possible? The way we use verbs is the distinguishing feature of the English Language. The manipulations we go through forming negatives and questions do not occur in any other language. When those who teach it have not mastered verb tense and aspect, the mistakes are proliferated.

Yes, I know that languages change, that because English is a global language it is undergoing many changes, that current teaching focuses on training people to speak and perform, that perfect grammar is not the goal and finally, that my German grammar will never be perfect either.

Nevertheless, don't Germans who teach English know the importance of verbs? Francis Martyn was fortunate that her German was always corrected. It was made clear to her that she had to abide by the rules. The English native speaker is every bit as sensitive to the use of verbs as Germans are to the manipulations of die, der, das. I cringe. Sometimes I feel....what.?....all shook up? ... after having spent an afternoon pelleted by the progressive form and the present perfect tense. I try harder with my German, knowing how the Germans must also cringe when I neglect to change case and ending. Maybe we should become active in correcting our non-native English teacher colleagues.

Do you have a book to sell? Advertising space: € 100

It will be many generations before English changes permanently. It was not a tectonic shift when Latin became the vernacular Italian. The French have the Academie Francaise to fight for the purity of their language. The Germans have also begun to protest the invasion of English words in their language. I know of no official group standing up for English. Yes, I know that differences exist in British, American, Australian English, that insights gained from corpus research tell us that there are variations of standard English. But something has to remain sacred in our native tongue. Let it be the traditional, precise use of tenses and verb aspect!

It is clear to me that it will take at least a generation to set things right. The beginner books for school children have to be reorganized. After the verb to be, the simple present should be learned and not the present progressive, which learners latch on to for the rest of their lives. It has a nice cozy sound for Germans. It is rather the same cadence as Wir gehen. Sie sehen. What we learn first becomes ingrained. The introduction of the present perfect should also be delayed. Studies have shown that present simple and simple past are the most used tenses. I am pleased to see that a few books for adults have reorganized the order of presentation of tenses. Our organization should lobby the publishers to effect these changes in all learner books.

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## The Native/Non-Native Debate



*Kay von Randow writes in response to Francis Martyn [Summer Edition]*

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the Hot Potato last edition, and could identify with several of the various ideas presented. My own experiences as a native English speaker living in Germany for almost half my life, are:

Students from all different areas of the corporate world have often told me that they understand non-native speakers of English better than native speakers at the international meetings and conferences they attend.

I've also noticed that my way of speaking my native language has become much more 'polite' and slightly more formal than friends still living in the Home Country, so in a way it's no longer 100% authentic. Because of this awareness, I often ask myself 'What am I actually communicating?' I see this as a direct result of the necessity to impart a correct version of the language to students, coupled with a reduction in my use of idioms since my German friends/students wouldn't understand them, and as well, not being in daily contact with new buzz-words. This then levels out differences with well-educated non-native teachers.

However, on the other side of the coin, about 5 times a year I go to workshops/conferences in Europe, run by American organisations. The language is English, with participants from all over the world. It often happens that people gravitate to me, knowing I'm a native speaker, and proudly reveal that they teach Business English in their country. To be honest, I'm often appalled at the standard of their English, and wonder how and what they teach!

Do you have a book to sell? Advertising space: € 100

Francis' reflections on 'feeling' a language, are very interesting. My own feeling (!) about this, is that you are born with an inherent feeling for something - be it a language or other field, and whether you get the chance to let this develop depends on your choices in life. My son, bilingual in English and German, has an amazing feeling for Spanish. Not only did he go from zero to B1 in two months simply by listening to Spanish programmes on the Internet, reading Spanish newspapers and chatting away nineteen-to-the-dozen to whoever he met, but when he visited Ecuador he also picked up so many of the nuances and idioms that the locals couldn't believe that he'd only spoken it for such a short time. He also writes Spanish and translates German documents but he couldn't tell you what case or tense he's using! To mention a different case: a husband and wife pair who come for private lessons had different goals: he needs it for work in the construction industry and she wanted to be able to help the kids with homework. He took English till Abitur, and she only had a couple of years of English at school, with the added disadvantage of general learning difficulties. Yet when we take a text with new vocabulary, he doesn't understand it, and she 'feels' into it and comes up with a correct or near-correct meaning.

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## On the lighter side...

### A Whole lot of Nothing



*How to talk for a long time about absolutely nothing*

*Alex Chapman explores the use of hedges as an avoidance strategy*

To tell you the truth, as far as I know, I think that the bottom line is that at the end of the day, there was basically no competition.

But at this moment in time, as I said, with all due respect, I hear what you are saying.

Yeah, absolutely, but when all is said and done, it's not what you say or do, is it, but you know what I mean, don't you? You understand what I'm trying to say, I'm sure.

So to be honest, what I'm trying basically to say, is, I don't know.

Yes sure, but on the one hand I agree, whereas on the other hand, you never know. Therefore, reading between the lines, you can never judge a book by its cover. I also know that what I am not saying is that I know that people listen to me when I have something to say. But speaking out loud and looking at the final result I would like to have some straight answers to my straight questions.

But let's come back to the point and recap, let's just go over it again. Let's seize the chance, as I do not wish to repeat myself.

So before we start, are there any questions?



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## ELTA-Rhine Events

### The Tax Man

**Speaker: Kai Nickel**

*An overview of the ELTA-Rhine July Event held on 16th July 2011*

*Kai Nickel gives us the low-down on dealing with finances in Germany*



*Kai Nickel, at his presentation on July 16, 2011*

### The Basics

- Deadline for Tax Declaration (Steuererklärung Abgabetermin): 31.05. in the following year.  
Exception: if the declaration is submitted through a Tax Agent, the deadline is extended to 31.12.
- Quarterly Income Tax payments are due on 10th of March, June, Sept. & Dec. (unless the 10th falls on a weekend - then the following Monday will be the deadline)
- Umsatzsteuer (Ust - VAT equivalent) is due annually or quarterly on the 10th of the month.

- Documentation Retention Period: 10 years, for financial records, receipts and invoices

### Possible Bookkeeping Methods:

#### a) Bookkeeping according to bank statements/cash book

All bank statements to be retained and kept in gapless chronological order (e.g. in a ring binder)

The documentation for incoming and outgoing invoices to be filed directly after the individual bank statements.

Recommendation: Open a separate bank account for professional purposes (no private expenses)

#### b) Bookkeeping according to theme

Different types of expenses and income are filed separately, according to type:

Income: Professional fees (Honorar) in association with

- §4 Nr. 21a bb UstG
- §19 Abs. 1 UstG (explained below)

Business Expenses (*Betriebsausgaben*)

Depreciation according to Inventory (*Abschreibung laut Inventarliste*)

Stationery (*Bürobedarf*)

Mobile phone

Internet costs

Travel costs (*Reisekosten*)

Further Education/Professional Development (*Fortbildung*)

Books

Catering/entertainment costs (*Bewirtungskosten*)

Postage (*Porto*)

Bank fees/interest (*Kontoführung/Zinsen*)



The conversation was so engrossing that the view was forgotten.

### Correct Invoices

A receipt must contain the following information:

- your full name and address and the client's full name and address
- your tax number (*Steuernummer*), which will have been allocated by your local tax office (*Finanzamt*), or your Umsatzsteuer identification number, allocated by the Federal Tax Office (*Bundeszentralamt für Steuern*)
- a unique, consecutively allocated, receipt number (*Rechnungsnummer*) with one or more sets of numbers
- type of product or service (*Leistung*), using standard designations
- date/time of the delivery of product or service; in the case of §5, Satz 1, the date of payment or down-payment, if the payment date is fixed and does not coincide with the date of the receipt
- the fee for the goods or service, including itemised taxation rate (and tax payable) or statement of tax-exemption status, as well as agreed discounts
- in the case of §14b Abs.1 Satz 5 mention of the client's obligatory receipt retention period (*Aufbewahrungspflicht*)
- in the case of tax-exemption status, one of the following statements should appear on the receipt, depending on the reason for tax-exemption:

#### **Tax-exemption according to §19 UstG** (Small Operator - *Kleinunternehmer*)

"Es erfolgt kein Ausweis der Umsatzsteuer aufgrund der Anwendung der Kleinunternehmerregelung gem. § 19 UstG"

#### **Tax-exemption according to § 4 Nr.21 b UstG** (Educational Purposes)

"Es erfolgt kein Ausweis der Umsatzsteuer aufgrund der Steuerbefreiungen für die unmittelbar dem Schul- und Bildungszweck dienenden Unterrichtsleistungen selbständiger Lehrer gem. § 4 Nr. 21 b UstG"

- Certificate of Tax-exemption (*Bescheinigung der Steuerbefreiung*)

If you are claiming tax-exemption according to § 4 Nr. 21 b (Educational Purposes), you need to get a certificate from the institution you teach for, showing the tax-exemption status, to keep in your records.

### Pension Insurance

*(Rentenversicherung)*

According to §2 SGB VI, self-employed professionals who are required by law to take pension insurance include Teachers and Educators (incl. child care workers) who do not themselves regularly employ an employee subject to compulsory social and health insurance (50% of which is paid by the employer).

Pension Insurance is calculated at 19.9% of gross income, e.g. a monthly income of €2,550.00 x 19.9% = €508.44 per month.

You are not required to pay Social Insurance if:

- you are only a 'trainer' or a volunteer, according to § 3 Nr. 26 and 26 a EstG (up to €2,100 per year)
- you have a 'mini-job' (up to €400 per month) or you take on only occasional, not 'professional' teaching contracts (up to 2 months or 50 days per year)
- you already receive superannuation payments or a retirement pension
- you employ (as stated above) a worker for whom you pay social insurance
- you submitted an application for exemption from the Social Insurance law before 30th September 2001

Recommendation:

In agreement with your client, state in an unambiguous service description that you operate as a consultant (*Berater*) not a teacher (*Lehrer*)

If you want to be sure, you can begin a legal process to clarify your status. However, before you shoot yourself in the foot, you should get expert advice.

Check whether employing an employee subject to social insurance would be economically viable or worthwhile: this criterion can be fulfilled by offering a 'midi-job' (from €401.00 per month).

**VAT-Obligation**

*(Umsatzsteuerpflicht)*

In principle, every business person is required to pay VAT (Umsatzsteuer)

Exception:

- Small operators (*Kleinunternehmer*) according to the above-mentioned § 19 Abs. 1 UstG
- Special VAT-free earnings according to the above-mentioned § 4 Nr. 21 UstG (Educational Purposes)

**Small Operators**

Prerequisite: The earnings in the previous calendar year did not exceed €17,500.00 and in the current calendar year

are not expected to exceed €50,000.00.

(If you choose to forgo the Small Operator rule, you have the advantage of being able to claim Input Tax deductions.)

With regard to the above-mentioned limits (€17,500 and €50,000), only net income, and furthermore, only income which is subject to VAT, is taken into account (tax-free revenue is not included in the calculation).

### **Giving advance notice of becoming subject to VAT**

Newly-established businesses use an electronic form (Elster-Formular) to provide information on a monthly basis.

The VAT should be separately listed on all invoices from the beginning of VAT-obligation.

VAT that you have paid to other businesses (listed on incoming invoices) should be calculated and subtracted from the sum of the VAT you have collected.



### **Interaction with the Tax Office**

(Finanzamt)

Always submit paperwork punctually (e.g. application to extend payment date).

Note: decisions made by the Tax Office become legally binding after 1 month - so don't leave anything too late.

Applications should be justifiable - the Tax Office will be forced to reject applications if their claim seems to be threatened. In short, I don't have enough money right now for the tax, but will definitely have in the future (e.g. outstanding payments from clients).

Tax Office workers are not allowed to give legal advice, but can provide tips and hints.

### **Income Tax**

#### **Depreciation of Assets:**

either: Low-value fixed assets up to €150.00 and Compound items €150.00 - €1000.00

or

Low-value fixed assets up to €410.00 and Compound items €150.00 - €1000.00

in both cases with depreciation according to the official tables.

#### **Non-declarable Expenses:**

- Apartment (exception: home office - *Arbeitszimmer* - see below)
- Food (exception: business-related catering and entertainment costs - *Bewirtungskosten* - see below)
- Clothing (exception: typical work clothing - *Berufskleidung*)

- General school education
- Childcare costs (theme: Childcare costs by bank transfer and invoice)
- Personal daily needs, e.g. healthcare, toiletries, etc.
- Newspapers
- Radio
- Visiting cultural events

### **Car: 1% Rule**

1% of the new price of the car is to be recorded monthly as profit (*Gewinn*) (e.g. Golf V for €22,000 increases profits by €220.00 monthly; over 12 months €2640.00.) All costs are Business expenses (*Betriebsausgaben*) - with the possibility of higher depreciation rates.

To this is added, in the case of VAT-obligation, €2112.00 (80% of €2640) x 19% = €401.28

### **Per diem Allowances, Costs for Travel within Germany** (*Übernachungskosten Inland*)

For a business trip within Germany, the travel and living expenses can be claimed at the following rates per calendar day:

- €24.00 for an absence of 24 hours
- €12.00 for an absence of less than 24 hours, but more than 14 hours
- €6.00 for less than 14 hours but more than 8 hours

(§4 Absatz 5, Satz 1, Nr. 5, Satz 2, EStG)

There is no flat-rate for overnight expenses - keep your receipts!

### **Per diem Allowances, Costs for Travel Abroad** (*Übernachungskosten Ausland*)

For business trips abroad, there are flat-rates according to the destination, which are in general higher than the domestic rates.

### **Catering and Entertainment Costs** (*Bewirtungskosten*)

Requirements for a valid receipt:

The catering/entertainment receipt should not be hand-written, and should be dated appropriately.

It should include:

- the place and day of the service
- the catering costs, itemised
- the grounds for the catering (*Anlass der Bewirtung*)
- the names of all people catered for (*Namen der bewirteten Personen*)

The operator can claim 70% of catering expenses and 100% of Input Tax.

### **Presents** (*Geschenke*)

The lawmakers have set the tax-free limit for presents to Business contacts at €35.00 (per person receiving a gift, per year) net, for people with VAT-Obligation, and €35.00 incl. VAT for people without VAT-Obligation. In contrast to a tax-free allowance, exceeding this limit results in the complete invalidation of the deduction from business

expenses.

People you have given presents to need to be recorded in your documentation.

This is an auditing field for the Tax Office.

Recommendation: No presents through the organisation.

### **Home-Office** (*Häusliches Arbeitszimmer*):

In short:

According to BVerfG, allowance is to be made for the Home-Office, if it stands at the centre of the business activities

or

a flat-rate of €1250.00 can be claimed if it comprises at least 50% of the business activities, and no other work-space is available.

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### **Members' Day**

*The Art of ... professionalising your language training business*

Speakers: Christine Burgmer and Kerstin Brandes

*Idea Slam*

Speakers: various

19 September 2011

### **An Overview**

As the room in the Alter Feuerwache was still full with the previous group, we sat patiently outside on the stairs chatting. Hardly had the room emptied, when all the members present swarmed in and spread out like busy bees to set up tables, get the coffee machine going, boil tea water, unpack food and place the chairs in position for the workshop. As a reward for the hard work we all had a good old chinwag with a cup of our preferred brew and food, of course!

After this, teachers became students as Christine Burgmer and Kerstin Brandes held a wonderful workshop on *The Art of ... professionalizing your language training business*, which was very entertaining and gave us many interesting ideas to take back home with us.



And, of course, once again we all dashed back to the buffet for a cuppa and a chinwag. But don't think Members'

Days are all about munching food and chatting. Before the workshop we had been given the task of suggesting ideas for the Inaugural Idea Slam and at the same time pick the topic we would most like to talk about. The topics with the most votes were then discussed in groups. Once again, plenty of ideas were bouncing around the room to be taken home.



The ELTA Choir in full voice

To complete a very successful day the ELTA choir sang a variety of pieces by composers such as Monteverdi and Arcadelt, in different languages, including Latin, Gaelic and Italian. As a bit of a mystery Davine Sutherland placed a box containing the Sconestone in front of the choir before the performance and promised the audience an explanation afterwards. The stone is looked after by a keeper, who shows the stone to as many people as possible while it is in their care. The stone can be touched and held on condition that one commits oneself to doing a good deed for mankind - which can be as simple as calling in on an elderly neighbor or maybe finally deciding to recycle more, thereby protecting the environment for others. Thank you, Davine.

A worthy end to a brilliant Members' Day.

by Pat Schmitz

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## **The Art of ... professionalising your language training business**

*Christine Burgmer and Kerstin Brandes, of 2TRAINERS1, on their workshop presented at the Alte Feuerwache on 10.09.2011*



Why did we decide to run such a workshop? Because we wanted to support ELTA-Rhine in professionalising its association, and to help those language trainers who are not content with the fees they are getting. We know that trainers can earn more if they are prepared to invest a lot of time, energy and possibly money in taking their language training business to the next level, and we wanted to give them lots of new ideas to help them on their way.

Even though the weather was perfect, a small, dedicated group of highly motivated and interested language trainers came to the Alte Feuerwache in Cologne, interested in learning more about trainers' fees and looking for new ideas on how to boost their business.

After a short introduction, we jumped into a warm-up activity<sup>2</sup> to help people connect and to help us get to know participants better.

We discovered that the majority worked for universities, universities of applied sciences, colleges, the VHS, private language schools or on their own, and were either freelancers or had employment contracts. Many had been teaching for seven years and more. By far the greater number of hours was taught on behalf of language schools and the VHS.

We conducted a short anonymous survey and discovered that fees varied enormously, even though the majority of participants surveyed were language trainers with many years of experience. Most of our participants earned between €26 and €40 per training hour. Yet, several participants earned considerably less than €26 (and had to put in a lot of hours per week to make a living), while a few earned between €41 and €50 - and more.



We defined the three main areas which we believed made our success possible, and asked participants to form small groups and to discuss these areas using three task sheets we had prepared for them. Topics included:

- advertising material (business cards, flyers, stationery, etc),
- marketing strategies (placing adverts in newspapers,



survey results

- going to networking events, publishing free newsletters, etc.), and continuing professional development activities (reading material about teaching and using technology in teaching, attending workshops and conferences, studying EFL onsite or online, etc.).

Each group presented its findings to workshop participants, and a lively discussion ensued. This could have gone on for several hours, but it was time to come to a close ...

We would like to thank participants for being such inspiring and active members of the group and for their excellent feedback (see some comments below). We sincerely hope that they can implement some of our ideas to attract more clients, earn a higher hourly rate - and to have a lot more fun in the process.

Christine Burgmer + Kerstin Brandes

[www.2trainers.de](http://www.2trainers.de) [www.english-trainer.de](http://www.english-trainer.de) [www.wortwelten-brandes.de/](http://www.wortwelten-brandes.de/)

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## Idea Slam

An opportunity for all participants to offer and exchange ideas about different teaching topics. Participants divided into groups of 4-6 people, based on the topics they wanted to discuss or know more about. Volunteers then presented the ideas to the whole group, and the minutes were written up for the benefit of all. Here they are:

### Mike's Idea: Teaching E-mailing, Telephoning, and PowerPoint Presentations

Minutes by Marc Abernathy

Mike's approach to e-mailing is that students need these skills, and it is important not to treat them as an empty vessel. Most students will have experience e-mailing in their native language, so they need language and phrases and not necessarily skills.

To teach e-mail writing, Mike asks his class to analyze a collection of genuine e-mails he has collected over the years. He asks his class to divide the e-mails into three categories: formal, informal, and somewhere in the middle. Next he asks the students to decide how and why the e-mails belong in different categories, in particular asking students what stylistic, lexical, and grammatical differences they can discover. After that, Mike uses a functional approach and divides the e-mails into categories, such as indicating an attachment, signing off, etc. and then asks students to pick out sentence stems and put them into one of the categories. While going around the class, he can correct mistakes. During the next class, Mike asks students to come up with a list of e-mail types and choose favorites. Once they have learned phrases, Mike tests the students. The advantage to using real e-mails is that students get to see spelling and grammar mistakes that native speakers make. It also allows him to pick phrases and point out the function of these phrases.

Mike uses a timed competition to help students' skills in using phrases in telephoning. With repetition, phrases are committed to memory without going into detailed grammar explanations. He also uses class time to talk about ways to interrupt, slow down, and repeat.

This technique for e-mailing and telephoning allows him to talk about techniques for recognizing informal and formal differences.

Usually appropriate for level B1 and up.



The Idea Slam Ideas

**Cait's Idea: Group for Brainstorming How to Deal with Teaching Grammar**

*Minutes by Angela Tuckley*

First of all, we discussed that there's a desperate need to exchange ideas, resources and materials on grammar. An ESL teacher is not trained in how to teach grammar.

We agreed that there are confusing ways to teach grammar and simple ways of teaching it. So, the objective of such a meeting of ideas would be to nurture the simple ways.

Then certain questions arose: What? How often? When? Where? etc.

Judith came up with the idea of adding such a session onto the ELTA events. It could take place at the event venue or we could go to the pub or somewhere else. But the "when" is now set.

The topic for the kick-off session is ....the good old present perfect! Everybody attending has to bring an idea; it could also be a good 'bad example' of how (not) to teach it.

The materials would then be archived in an internal forum and accessible to ELTA-Rhine members.

**Phillip's Idea: Working with Pictures**

*Minutes by Angela Tuckley*

Phillip's lead-in question was, "Have you ever used pictures in your class?"

These are some of the ideas which followed:

- Hilary uses a book with pictures, current newspapers, cartoons
- Monika explained "Stummer Impuls". She places pictures on the table without speaking a word – as a result a lot of talking ensues
- Phillip suggested covering up half of the picture and letting students guess the other half
- Bring a picture of 2 people and let the students describe their conversation
- Let students pick a picture and integrate it into an account of their week
- Have students explain the differences between German and English ads
- Stories can be developed – if there are groups, one group could start the story and the other could finish it
- Students could draw a picture of their week
- Cait asks students to draw a picture of their idea of "culture" or themselves in intercultural training
- They can spot the differences between 2 pictures
- Use pictures of drinks to practise offering, declining drinks
- Use postcards of abstract paintings to elicit descriptions and interpretations
- Let students draw a picture of what they remember from the lesson

Great ideas and very usable – thank you, Phillip, for initiating the session!

**Stephen's Idea: The Murder on the Bridge**

*Minutes by Pamela Jorquera*

Just the title "The murder on the bridge" catches your interest to listen and find out how it will end.

Stephen was our teacher and we were his intermediate students. He began telling us the story and explained any vocabulary that would be difficult for us (students) to understand. We got more and more involved and I personally was surprised when I heard the end.

Then we had a lively discussion about who was the most responsible for the death. I would recommend this speaking activity not only for intermediate and above but also for talkative pre-intermediates, or for students who feel confident in speaking.

(The complete story, diagram and lesson instructions can be found **here**)

### **Hilary's Idea: Games Workshop**

*Minutes by Lilly Lauterborn*

The group all contributed their ideas of games to this list:

#### *What's in the Bag?*

A game focussed on descriptive language, as well as speaking and listening skills. The students have the opportunity to practise describing a series of objects. They basically take turns reaching into a bag and have to describe their chosen object. After the object is guessed or revealed, students discuss additional ways to describe the object and associated verbs that can be used to describe its function. A task that can be used with an assortment of items or functional objects pertaining to their background.



#### *Chat or Penalty*

For this game all you need is: a box of chat topics, penalty topics and a die.

Chat topics can be an assortment of general interest themes which generate conversation, the sharing of opinions, likes or dislikes. However, the penalty box, which is a little more challenging for the student, provides them with a selection of tongue twisters or perhaps fun expressions for their pronunciation skills. They roll the die and if they get 1 to 4 they choose a chat topic. A result of 5 – 6 brings the nice challenge of a tongue twister.

#### *Recycling Vocabulary*

At the beginning of your class, write down all the important words covered in the last lesson on pieces of paper. Give each student a word and ask them to explain what the word means and how to use it. This is a good way to ensure that the vocabulary was completely understood in the last lesson and provides each student with a further opportunity to practise using it in conversation.

#### *Taboo*

In this game all you need are some small cards and a pen. Write down a selection of words you have already presented to your students. On each card, write related words that they may not use when defining the vocab item (e.g. *ice cream: cold, summer, sweet, flavour*). Each student takes a card and is asked to explain their chosen word without saying the word itself or the related words. The other students must then guess what that word is.

#### *Typical Mistakes made when Speaking English*

Start writing down the typical mistakes you hear your students make while speaking English. Compile a list on paper and use this as an exercise in your next class.

#### *Practising Sentence Structure*

Read out some sentences in German and ask your students to translate these into English. This is a good way for students to practise sentence structure and to focus on meaning.

#### *What's Your Shoe Size?*

This is a nice game that you can use for teaching comparisons. Get your students to stand in a line. Each student has to say their shoe size and create sentences comparing their shoe size with the person next to them. *"My shoe*

*size is bigger than Tom's shoe size"; "I take the same size shoe as Tom"..... this can also be changed using height etc.*

### *The Present Progressive Game*

Ask one of your students to stand outside the door. Get the others to perform an action when the chosen student comes in. The student is then asked to describe what their classmates are doing: "Mary is scratching her head", and so on.

### *Play Mobile*

For those of you who have children, why not raid their toy box. Perhaps you will find little objects which are ideal for the classroom. The perfect way to teach prepositions, for example. Take, for instance, a man and a horse: 'Put the man on the horse ..... next to his horse', and so on. You get the idea.

### *Small Talk*

Begin by brainstorming typical small talk topics with your students. List all the topics mentioned on the left side of a blank sheet of paper. Then, ask the students to write a 'break the ice' sentence beside each small talk topic. This can be developed creating a few ice-breaking sentences for each category. You can then put your students in pairs and get them to role play a category.

### *Using pictures from newspapers or magazines*

Select some pictures from the daily newspaper or a magazine that you feel have a lot going on in them. Ask the student to describe what they see in the picture. Brainstorm the vocabulary and write all the words down on the board. Then you can ask them if they can create the story behind the picture. For more advanced students, you can present the article that goes with it and develop this into a deeper discussion.

### **Uwe's Idea: Generating Work-related Vocabulary for Low-level Students**

*Minutes by Mike Hicks*

Situation:

The problem discussed was how to generate vocabulary specific to a student's job, when that student has a very low level. Uwe's personal situation was with two students who take one-to-one lessons and have very particular requirements for the specialist vocabulary they need; there does in fact seem to be a "company lexis" that exists.

Possible solutions:

- Sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) with the firm so as to allow better access to authentic emails and presentations. This builds trust, appears professional and is in general a good idea.
- Ask the students to bring in emails and presentations etc. so as to collect genuine vocabulary.
- Use wordle to create visualizations of vocabulary. Students can then be asked to create collocations from the words, be pre-taught vocab for a text.
- Use a language chunking approach. Learn set phrases rather than individual vocab.



*...reporting back...*

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### **The Sconestone**

*The beautiful hand-carved Sconestone, in its equally beautiful hand-carved wooden box, was a highlight of Members' Day. Davine Sutherland, as the current Keeper of the Stone, brought it along for all to see and hear about it, and this is her story...*

The Sconestone was carved by a Canadian of Scottish ancestry, Warren MacLeod, based in Nova Scotia, in honour of the 'Year of Homecoming' in Scotland in 2009, when people from all over the world were encouraged to come back to their ancestral home, and learn about their Scottish roots.

Warren was coming to Scotland not just to go to his family's area but also to attend a music festival led by Runrig (one of many cultural events which took place throughout 2009) in the town of Scone, which used to be the Royal town of Scotland, where the kings were crowned. Now, the kings were crowned on a square slab of stone known as the Stone of Scone, or the Stone of Destiny. According to legend, Jacob in the Old Testament laid his head on that very stone when he was in the desert, dreaming of the ladder between heaven and earth, and over the years it had made its way to Scotland. It was then stolen by the English and placed in Westminster Abbey, whence it was stolen back by a group of Scottish students in the 1950s, but it was taken back to Westminster before being returned to Edinburgh Castle in 1996. There remains to this day controversy as to whether the stone in the Castle is the original or a copy, with the original safely hidden in the care of a 'keeper' elsewhere in Scotland; we Scots know what we believe!



And so, inspired by the story of the Stone of Scone, and wanting to bring something from New Scotland to Old Scotland, Warren MacLeod carved the Sconestone. He used as his basis the decorated stone orbs which have been found in several neolithic sites and graves around Scotland. As nobody knows the symbolism or function of these orbs, Warren invested the Sconestone with his own meaning - it carries around the world the message of Scottish hospitality and kindness and brotherly love between nations, and is passed on periodically to a new 'Keeper', whose job it is to tell people about it, let people hold it, ask questions, etc.

At the concert given by Runrig in Scone it was presented by no less than Scotland's First Minister, Alex Salmond, to its very first Keeper, Neil Galbraith, a tireless charity worker from Glasgow, whose work in Africa is supported by Runrig. Now it's come to Germany, and it's time to pass it around here and let it work its magic. If you're interested in borrowing it to show to classes or other groups, or just seeing it yourself, get in touch. I'll probably keep it in the Englisches Institut in the centre of Cologne most of the time. At the end of October, it's moving on to a French Keeper, so I need it back by then. ;-)



Taking a pledge of kindness

But remember, if you touch it, it comes with consequences: you are pledging to do an act of kindness to your fellow humans, for animals or for the planet; something extra, however large or small, that you wouldn't be doing anyway.

[One participant suggested 'being kind to your students']

More information: [www.sconestone.com](http://www.sconestone.com) or you can follow the journey of the Sconestone on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sconestone-On-a-journey-of-kindness/70772647644?sk=wall>

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## December event and annual Christmas party

Date: 10 December 2011

Time: 15:00 - 21:00

Venue: Alte Feuerwache, 50670 Köln, Melchiorstrasse 3, Offener Treff

The programme will start at **3:00** with a meeting of the **Grammar Group** until 4:30.

After that we will have a break for tea or coffee and a chat.

Between **5:00 and 6:00** we will hear from our guest - **Storyteller Lorcan Flynn**: Read what he has to say about his art of storytelling:

About 3000 years ago, the first Celtic people began to arrive in Ireland. They found a country that had been occupied for about 3000 years before their time. Those older people left huge stone monuments, which impressed the Celts - who believed that only the Gods could have built such marvels. The oldest stories still told today in Ireland are the stories of the meetings between these older people and the newcomers – the Celts. You will hear some of these stories tonight.

The storytelling tradition still survives in Ireland. People still like to gather round an open fire on a cold night and listen to the "Séanachies" tales of long ago. A kind of magic is created and for a little while it's easy to forget the world outside the friendly circle.

Lorcan Flynn comes from a family of traditional Irish storytellers. The stories told to him by his parents, aunts, uncles and family friends had been learned from their own parents in a line stretching back thousands of years.

If you have heard these stories before and enjoyed them, come along with your friends. If you didn't, send your enemies. Lorcan is a regular contributor of the story-telling group which meets every month at the English Library in Düsseldorf. To learn more: <http://tinyurl.com/Lorcan-Homepage>

Who knows, you might even be inspired to contribute a story of your own.

After **6:00** we will have our Christmas party, including a performance of our ELTA choir, followed by food and drinks for everyone.

**Since we have to plan the catering it is absolutely essential that you register for the event and the party.**

Grammar group 3:00 - 4:30

Coffee break 4:30 - 5:00

Storytelling 5:00 - 6:00

x'mas party 6:00 - 9:00

To register please click on this link: <http://www.doodle.com/s7t86ux9zehzmfbb>



### Making 'real' articles accessible to English language learners

Speaker: Karen Richardson

[www.compass-elt.de](http://www.compass-elt.de) (<http://www.compass-elt.de>)

Date: 14th January, 2012

Time: 14:00 - 17:00

Venue: **Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg**, Grantham- Allee 20, 53757 Sankt Augustin

In this 2-part workshop we will look at ways of adapting genuine texts\* to make them accessible to learners of English and so that they provide meaningful language input. We will also look at tools which can help the teacher do this.\* genuine texts: texts taken directly from newspapers, magazines, websites, company literature, etc and not texts that have already been simplified , i.e. texts in course books.

Part 1 will look at resources already available and the speaker will take you through the process she uses and the important factors to consider when writing up the regular Guardian Weekly and Business Spotlight lesson plans on [www.onestopenenglish.com](http://www.onestopenenglish.com).

Part 2 is the practical part of the workshop in which, concentrating on what we have talked about in part 1, participants will work together and, with the help of the speaker, turn a text of their choice into a rounded lesson plan for their students; one that they can easily use in their next lesson.

So that everyone has something personal to take away from the workshop participants are asked to bring the following items if possible: a USB-stick with an e-version of the article they'd like to use in class, a print out of their article, coloured pens or highlighters.

### The ELTA Grammar Group

Are you struggling to find an inspiring way to teach grammar? Or do you have some ideas that really work for your students? Are you a Grammar Geek? Or does the future perfect simple keep you awake at night? Bring you out in a cold sweat?

Whatever your thoughts, if you're interested in exchanging ideas, sharing nightmare grammar classes or are able provide the panacea for our combined linguistic woes, join us!

The inaugural meeting was in October 2011, and our next meeting will be before the Christmas event and party on **December 10th**. More details to follow soon.

### Registration for Events

We will create such a link for each event and post it here as well as sending it out on the elist. This will make registering easier for everyone.

To find out more about our events please contact Vasanthi Sarnow (mailto:events@elta-rhine.de)

### **Further events are planned on the following dates (subject to change):**

11 February 2012: AGM and February event

*Page updated: 10.11.2011*

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## **ELTA-Rhine Activities**

### **Pulling up the drawbridge**

*Review of a meeting of the Literature Group to discuss The Finkler Question by Howard Jacobson, held at Astrid Kölblinger's in Rheinbach on 17th July 2011*

He should have seen it coming. Jacobson should have realised that what started off as a promising conceit was not going to carry the weight of the book he eventually wanted it to be.

Julian Treslove is the perfect anti-hero, a Gentile with so little identity that he can earn his money as a look-alike for whichever celebrities happen to be in demand; such an uneventful life that he spends every moment on the look-out for the catastrophe that never comes; and when he ultimately does get mugged in broad daylight round the corner from his home – it's by a woman. Finally convinced of the need for an identity, albeit a borrowed one, he decides to adopt the religion of his two best friends, who happen to be Jews, or Finklers, as he has come to call them. And what better religion for him to choose, given that many Jews, and foremost among them the eponymous Finkler, an immensely successful popular philosopher, are in denial.

So far so good. Our author spins this trope for all it's worth, and there's a lot of mileage to be got out of someone as negative as Treslove. His thorough preoccupation with the trivialities of his life harks back to Jerome K. Jerome's naive narrator and long stretches of *The Finkler Question* are very funny. This is also the first book we have discussed for a long time with such an unashamedly male perspective and I particularly enjoyed Treslove's paean to his own uncircumcised member. In the end, though, the long stretches get too long and the reader's loud guffaw turns first to a wan smile and then to a yawn.

Somewhere along the line, indeed, Treslove's creator seems to tire of him, too. For he turns out to be a tool in the hands of an author who is genuinely interested in exploring what it is to be Jewish. And as the real Finklers in the story are gradually fleshed out, their would-be co-religionist withers on the authorial vine and at the end of the book is finally, physically, excluded from the assembly of the chosen. When the story began, it was Treslove who was in mourning for his own un-lived life, whilst his two friends, both recently widowed, struggled to get a handle on their sorrow. At the end, it is Finkler who has moved on and is now capable of genuine mourning for his real losses.

Perhaps this conclusion was originally intended and, with the assistance of a more forceful editor, could have been satisfactorily reached. As it is, events seem to have caught up with the novel as, during its writing, Israel launched ferocious attacks on the Palestinians and a wave of moral opprobrium, spiked with cases of grievous bodily anti-Semitism, washed over London. One gets the distinct feeling, at any rate, of an enlightener with second thoughts, a fence-sitter with cold feet and can hear the clanking of chains as the drawbridge between the author and his non-Jewish readers is rapidly drawn up.

In the end, we thought Jacobson would have been better advised to write two books: a short novel along the lines of Jerzy Kosinski's *Being There* about the adventures of a non-identity – and a non-fiction analysis of what it means to be Jewish. Despite the similarity of theme, we felt that *The Finkler Question* had been worsted by our last book, Zoe Heller's *The Believers*, on nearly every front.

Astrid and Gerald's beautiful house and garden in the Eifel foothills is one of the Lit Group's more remote venues and

meetings there tend to be small but intense. This time, it took three attempts to get the discussion started, but when we finally got going we discovered that the book's context, at least, had gone under the skin. Both Astrid and Ulla reported their early experiences of anti-German sentiment and seeing anti-semitic demonstrations in London. Reaching out to other cultures, belonging and not belonging to the culture you live in, are subjects that affect all language teachers to a greater or lesser extent, so it's a pity that more of you weren't there.

*Graham Sutherland*

**The next meeting of the Literature Group will be at 4.00 p.m. on Sunday 16th October to discuss Heart of Midlothian by Walter Scott. This meeting will be at Elizabeth Hormann's, Neußer Str. 966, 50737 Köln-Longerich, Tel. 0221 / 745067**

**New members are always welcome but please phone the host in advance to let them know you are coming.**

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### **The ELTA Choir**

After singing to their hearts' content at Members' Day, the ELTA Choir will be meeting again on Sunday 23rd October, and then Sunday 27th November. Anybody interested in joining us for a bite to eat, a chat and a sing, please contact Davine Sutherland at [davine\\_sutherland@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:davine_sutherland@yahoo.co.uk)

Newcomers are always welcome.

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### **The Grammar Group**

Are you struggling to find an inspiring way to teach grammar? Or do you have some ideas that really work for your students? Are you a Grammar Geek? Or does the future perfect simple keep you awake at night? Bring you out in a cold sweat?

Whatever your thoughts, if you're interested in exchanging ideas, sharing nightmare grammar classes or are able provide the panacea for our combined linguistic woes, join us!

The first meeting of the ELTA-Rhine Grammar Group will take place after the ELTA-Rhine workshop What's the word? How to deal with vocabulary on October 15, 2011 in the Alte Feuerwache.

The theme for our first meeting is the Present Perfect. Bring along your ideas, the activities that have worked for you, stories, games, questions and frustrations.

If you're interested, you can contact Cait at [ckinsella@elta-rhine.de](mailto:ckinsella@elta-rhine.de) or Judith at [jellis@elta-rhine.de](mailto:jellis@elta-rhine.de), or just come along on the day.

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### **Teaching Materials**

## The Murderer on the Bridge

Approx 30 minutes.

This is a speaking exercise suitable for intermediate to advanced levels. For intermediate students you cannot insist on very much accuracy. For advanced students it might be a useful way of checking or even introducing the use of relevant modals (should've, could've) and third conditional (would've... if...). ("Kuddöww" "Schuddöww" and "Wuddöww"). In this activity German native speakers tend to make the mistake of using "he/she had to" and "he/she must have" instead of the above.

There are two methods I have used. The simplest way is to tell the story, drawing the picture on the flip chart as you go, and then asking the students to decide on their own ranking. Another more interesting way is to give them an instructions sheet and four envelopes and let them get on with it themselves (see below).

In the discussion, some students are not keen on making judgements and may say "It depends". If that happens, you might ask "what does it depend on exactly?"

One idea is to have a very brief initial discussion and then to divide the group into five teams, allocating each with a character from the story. Each team then prepares a defence: arguments in favour of their allocated character and arguments against the other four. A lively debate could ensue when the teams then share their ideas. After the debate each student writes their own new ranking, but this time with four positions, ignoring for the sake of fairness their own team's character. The ranking positions are then used as scores (i.e. each first position scores one point for that character and each second scores two points, etc.) and the scores are added up. The character with the highest number wins.

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### INSTRUCTIONS SHEET

Please do the following:

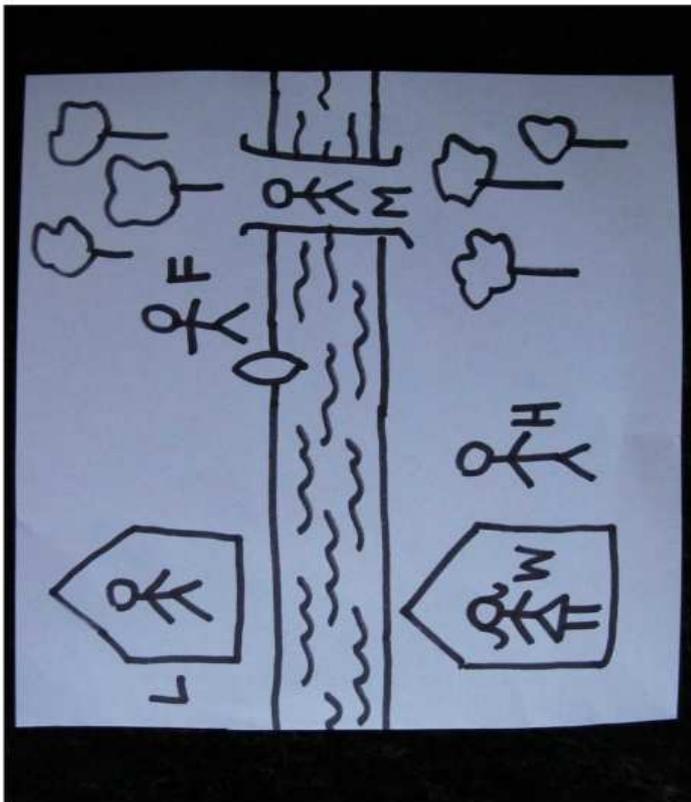
- 1) Open envelope A and put up the diagram where everyone can see it.
- 2) Decide who is going to be the reader. Choose one person to do this job.
- 3) After this nobody is allowed to ask any questions.

Please do not discuss anything. The reader should open envelope B and read the instructions.

Envelope A - diagram  
Envelope B - text  
Envelope C - text  
Envelope D - text

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### Envelope A



**Envelope B**

I am going to read you a story.  
If you look at the diagram you can see all the elements in the story.

If anything is unclear I can repeat it.  
But we are not allowed to discuss anything at this stage.

A woman (W) lives in a house by a river.  
She often crosses the river.  
She often does this when she wants to visit her lover (L).  
The lover lives in the house on the other side.  
She often visits her lover when her husband (H) is out at work.  
The river is very wide and deep and the current is very strong.  
The best way to cross the river is to pay the ferry man (F) to take you across.  
There is one other way to get across the river...  
If you look at the diagram you can see there is a bridge.  
However the bridge is in the middle of a dark forest.

And on the bridge there is a murderer (M).

The murderer murders every unaccompanied woman who crosses the bridge.  
("unaccompanied" means "alone")  
The murderer does not murder men or accompanied women.

One day the woman goes across the river to visit her lover.  
It is late and she wants to go home.  
She realises that she has no money.

She asks the ferryman to take her across for nothing.  
He says no.  
She asks her lover to walk her home over the bridge.  
He says no.  
She telephones her husband and asks him to come and pick her up from her lover's house.  
He says no.

So she asks everyone again.  
They all say no.

So she sets out alone.  
She crosses the bridge...  
...and the murderer murders her.

That is the end of the story.

Now I have finished reading it, we will put the story back into envelope B.  
We will not look at it again!  
However, we will leave the diagram up for reference..

*(Now replace the story in envelope B and open envelope C)*

**Envelope C**

Each member of the group should now take a sheet of paper  
and a pen or a pencil.  
Each person should work separately.  
Please do not show each other what you are doing.

First write 1 to 5 down the left hand side of the piece of paper.

Now put who you think is most responsible for the woman's death at the top of the sheet (number 1) and who you think is least responsible at the bottom (number 5).  
Put all the characters in order of responsibility. You are not allowed to discuss anything at this stage. The word responsible means "verantwortlich"

You should now wait until everyone has finished.

When everyone has finished, show each other your answers, but do not say anything yet.

*(Now open envelope D)*

**Envelope D**

That's all folks! Discuss your ideas. Defend your point of view.

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Return to Teaching Materials

**Participles****-ing and -ed (and irregular) forms****A. Add a participle in each space:**

1. ein wartendes Mädchen - a ..... girl
2. ein kaputtes Fenster - a ..... window
3. die vergessene Pizza - the ..... pizza
4. die arbeitende Mutter - the ..... mother
5. Ich sah ihn radfahren. - I saw him..... his bike
6. die redenden Kinder - the ..... children
7. genau genommen - strictly .....
8. die nebenan wohnende Frau - the lady .....next door
9. aufgeregte Fans - ..... fans
10. der spannende Film - the ..... film

**B. Finish the sentences using a participle made from the verb in brackets**

1. He saw his friend ..... to Jenny. (to talk)
2. The car crashed into the mountainbiker ..... down the hill. (to ride)
3. John hurt his leg .....football. (to play)
4. The book ..... at the bus stop belongs to Albert. (to find)
5. The people ..... in the street are all very friendly. (to dance)
6. I heard my brother ..... a lie. (to tell)
7. My uncle always has his car..... (to wash)
8. They stood ..... for the bus. (to wait)
9. .... (to look) down from the tower we saw many people ..... (to shop) at the market.
10. The thieves drove off in a ..... car. (to steal)

**Answers:**

A. 1. waiting 2. broken 3. forgotten 4. working 5. riding 6. talking 7. speaking 8. living 9. excited 10. exciting  
 B. 1. talking 2. riding 3. playing 4. found 5. dancing 6. telling 7. washed 8. waiting 9. looking/shopping 10. stolen

[Front Page](#)[Return to Teaching Materials](#)**Reviews*****A Comedy of Errors***

Shakespeare Festival 2011

Globe Theatre Neuss

Hammer Landstrasse 2

41460 Neuss

Tel: 02131-904120

[www.shakespeare-festival.de](http://www.shakespeare-festival.de)

"Shakespeare?" he asked, raising an adolescent eyebrow in incredulous dismay. "I don't think so." "The tickets", said the mater familias in her best steely schoolteacher tone "have been bought." Desperate, he pulled his ultimate "get out of jail" card from his sleeve. "I'll babysit so all of you can go and enjoy it!"

Mater sniffed in disdain. His fate was sealed.

And so it was that on the 16th of July the Hormann family, in its relentless pursuit of English-language culture, made its way to Neuss to see the all-male Shakespeare Company, Propeller, perform A Comedy of Errors. The somewhat convoluted plot, involving two sets of identical twins, a shipwreck and a grieving father with a price on his head, will be familiar to most English teachers. In the Propeller version, the venue has been moved from Ephesus to Mexico. Sombreros, Latin music and an assortment of bells and whistles have been added but the language is Shakespeare's and the characters' Greek names have been retained. (For a more expansive exposé of the story line see: [http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study\\_guide/literature/Comedy-of-Errors.id-203.html](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/Comedy-of-Errors.id-203.html))

A prelude of lively Mexican melodies encouraged the audience to take their seats (wooden benches – thankfully cushions were provided) and created an inviting atmosphere. The long introductory tale of shipwrecked woe told by Ægeon [grieving father with price on his head] in the first scene gave us momentary pause. Was this really an appropriate introduction to Shakespeare for the children? We needn't have been concerned, for the first scene gave way to the second and from there on in it was constant action. It was, by turns, raucous, hilarious and...confusing as the two Antipholi (I have it on good authority – Masterplots, 2nd Series, 1955 - that this is the correct plural for Antipholus) and their sidekicks – the Dromio brothers of Ephesus and Syracuse – were repeatedly seen – but never together – by all the other characters. We were enchanted. Even the four-year old clapped enthusiastically once he realized that the forays into fisticuffs – heralded by drum rolls and whistles – were only pretend.

It's difficult to single out any one performer in this distinguished cast, but if push came to shove our votes would have to go to Robert Hands and David Newman who played Adriana, the fiery wife of Antipholus of Ephesus, and her meek, lady-like sister, Luciana, who periodically performed Miss Piggy-like feats of karate. The vision of one member of the cast, exiting the stage in some haste, adorned by nothing more than a lighted sparkler, will not soon be forgotten. Finally, Chris Myles' cameo performance as Æmilia, the Abbess of Ephesus, in thigh-high boots and mini-habit, also deserves mention.

Æmilia, of course, turns out to be Ægeon's long-lost wife, so with satisfactory reunions [Antipholus of Ephesus/Adriana + Ægeon/Æmilia] and a new union [Antipholus of Syracuse/Luciana] not to mention the Ephesus Antipholus paying off Ægeon's fine [thereby saving his neck], the play ends on a noisy high note.

The Festival is over for 2011. Unfortunately we went on the very last day or we would have had more to report. The gallery on the Propeller Website provides a tantalizing glimpse of what you missed. [Adriana is in yellow; Luciana in pastels, wearing the hand knitted sweater] [http://www.propeller.org.uk/archive/the\\_comedy\\_of\\_errors](http://www.propeller.org.uk/archive/the_comedy_of_errors). If you click on "video" you'll even see a bit of the action.

The 2012 Shakespeare Festival will run from June 5th to July 5th. The program is not yet set but Festival organizers will be working on it from October. Ticket sales begin on the first of April. It's not clear if Propeller will be back with its 2012 touring program, Henry the Fifth and A Winter's Tale. The company has performed at the Festival five times in the last eight years and the organizers have assured me that it will be back at some point. We live in hope.

Last, but not least, for those of you who might want to take students along next year, there is a comprehensive description of the educational program at <http://www.shakespeare-festival.de/en/education/>.

*Elizabeth Hormann*

### **BESIG Conference 2011**

The 2011 Annual Conference of the IATEFL Business English Special Interest Group will be held in Dubrovnik, Croatia over the weekend 18 - 20 November. Delegate registration from 1 September to 7 November 2011

Members £105

Non-members £155

Additional fee for Pre-Conference Event on Friday £15.00

More info at <http://www.besig.org/events/conf2011/index.htm>

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Book Reviews:

### ***in company* pre-intermediate**

### **Summertown Readers**

### **Puzzle Books**

### **BOOKS OFFERED FOR REVIEW**

Dear members,

The following titles are currently available for review. New on our list is Fit for FCE, just released in August. We've also got new copies of Language Leader Intermediate, both the Student's Book and the Workbook.

We provide criteria to help you with writing your review and the book is yours to keep after reviewing. This is a great opportunity to keep up-to-date with all the teaching materials out there and will benefit those of us who are always looking for new books to try out in our classes. The reviews also help other teachers to choose new books for courses or their schools. So please do not hesitate to contact me (email: [kkellermann@elta-rhine.de](mailto:kkellermann@elta-rhine.de)) with your name, address and the desired title and I will gladly post it to you.

Karina Kellermann

	NAME	PUBLISHER	AUTHOR(S)	LEVEL	ISBN	COVER	
1	Business Start-Up 1	Cambridge/Klett	Mark Ibbotson, Bryan Stephens	A1-A2	978-3-12-539763-7		Student's Book
2	inspiration	MacMillan/Hueber	Judy Carlton-Sprenger, Philip Prowse	A1-A2	978-3-19-002979-2		Student's Book
3	move – Upper Intermediate	MacMillan/Hueber	Sue Kay, Jon Hird, Peter Maggs	B2	978-3-19-302964-5		CD
4	New Inside Out	MacMillan/Hueber	Sue Kay, Vaughan Jones	B2	978-3-19-502970-4		Student's Book + CD
5	Straight forward	MacMillan/Hueber	Roy Norris	C1	978-3-19-152953-6		Student's Book + CD
6	Next	Hueber	Birgit Meierholz-Harle, Myriam Fischer Callus, Gareth Hughes, Sue Morris	A2/2	978-3-19-0029334		Student's Book, Companion + CDs
7	Next	Hueber	Birgitte Köper, Judith Mader	A2/2	978-3-19-0129331		Teacher's Guide
8	Next	Hueber	Myriam Fischer Callus, Gareth Hughes, Ingrid Gärtler	B1/1	978-3-19-0029341		Student's Book, Companion + CDs
9	Power-Wortschatz	Hueber	Hans G. Hoffmann, Marion Hoffmann	A1-B1	978-3-19-107909-3		

10	Key	Cornelsen	Jeremy Taylor	A2	978-3-06-020099-3		Coursebook, CDs, Phrasebook, Teaching Guide + Photocopiable Material
11	Sprachkurs Premium	Cornelsen	Lestra	B1	978-3-589-01571-9		2 Books + Audio-MP3-CD
12	Language Leader Intermediate Coursebook	Pearson Longman	David Cotton et al.	B1	978-1-4058-2688-4		CD
13	Language Leader Intermediate Workbook	Pearson Longman	John Hughes	B1	978-1-4058-8428-0		CD
14	Fit for FCE	Hueber		B2	978-3-19-009423-3		CD

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## ***in company* pre-intermediate**

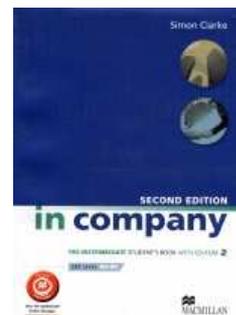
### **Second edition**

**By Simon Clarke**

**Level: A2-B1**

**Macmillan/Hueber**

**ISBN: 978-3-19-032981-6**



*in company* does a great job of breaking down the wall between real life and textbook learning. In my experience as a language trainer and language learner, there is a certain degree of artificiality that is accepted as part of language learning. Furthermore, textbook writers assume a traditional classroom model as a given, with multiple students and months of lessons several times a week. While *in company* doesn't do away with all of these faults, it is the best example I've seen so far of moving away from that model. The text respects the student as a real person who comes to language learning with real knowledge, and respects teachers by allowing them flexibility in lesson planning to adapt to the realities of their clients. One example of this flexibility is that the text encourages engaging discussions. In fact, the excerpts and main chapter text, in the form of screen captures, text boxes, and side bars, are the main characters in this book. The grammar and exercises, while relevant, take an unobtrusive yet integrated backseat. As I began to browse through the book, I found myself reading the articles and text out of interest rather than just obligation.

There is a lot to like in *in company*. First, the book reads like a magazine and has a sensible layout and much eye-appeal. The text is approachable and not overwhelming. Second, preparation time is kept to a minimum because while the sections within each chapter are connected (material that relies on completing one section before moving on to the next), they can easily be divided and merged into a separate lesson to fit the client's needs. Many of the chapters are about five to seven pages long and the connected material is about two pages per chapter. Language trainers searching for a variety of material on different topics will be pleased that they can piece together their own individual lessons by including several excerpts from different chapters.

Another thing to like about this book is that the material is extremely practical. Topics include telecommuting, work stress, the impact of social media, asking for upgrades, and dealing with office gossip. These topics and texts are good for generating discussion even if teachers don't use the text as planned. The dialogues, words, phrases, and collocations are ones that students can use immediately in specific situations. Each chapter includes many listening exercises, and the speakers have a variety of English-language accents and include non-native English speakers. Importantly, I don't find myself cringing or holding back laughter while listening to the CD. Finally, this book covers essential grammar points, such as the important tenses, conditionals, modals, comparatives/superlatives, adverbs of frequency, and the passive, and is appropriate for an A2 business English learner.

The list of dislikes for this book is much shorter. I prefer textbooks to have answer keys for the exercises included with the student's book, and *in company* doesn't, although it does include the listening transcripts. Some of the

content includes games and role-playing activities, and I nearly always skim over this part of a textbook. To its credit, *in company* has less frequent games and role-playing material than other textbooks I've used, and I'm grateful. Finally, I think an index is always helpful for quick searches during a lesson, and unfortunately, this textbook doesn't include one.

The book is 159 pages, full-color, and includes a student CD with interactive exercises. The class audio CDs, teacher's book, and case studies are sold separately. The book is divided into 20 chapters and includes five case studies. At the end of each chapter is a two-page "Language Links" section that includes additional practice and grammar.

Relevant, inviting, and approachable. If I had to choose, these are the three adjectives I would use to describe this textbook. For a pre-intermediate Business English student, *in company* does a great job and is worth the investment.

by Marc Abernathy

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## Summertown Readers

### Langenscheidt

#### ***Superstar***

**By Douglas Campbell**

**Level: B1**

**ISBN: 978-3-52-6513650**

**Book + mp3-CD with downloads and integrated exercises € 12.95**



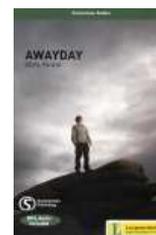
#### ***Awayday***

**By Chris Faram**

**Level: C1**

**ISBN: 978-3-52-6513704**

**Book + mp3-CD with downloads and integrated exercises € 12.95**



These books are two of many short stories published by Langenscheidt, aimed at pre-intermediate to advanced adults learning business English. They are 60-70 pages long with 18-26 chapters.

Each chapter is headed with the instruction "Skim read the chapter once" and three questions about the text content. At the back of the books there are word lists with key vocabulary from each chapter and more exercises.

Phrases such as staff appraisals, departmental shuffles, office stationery and Head of Human Resources introduce business vocabulary in context.

I would recommend the books, as the chapters are short. The instruction to skim encourages readers to look at the texts as a whole and guess the unknown words first. The size of the books - 19x12cm - means they fit anywhere and can be read on the bus, train, etc. And with great storylines, such as the ones below, learning is more fun.

## **Superstar**

When John was at college he dreamed of becoming a rock star. The reality was a job in accounting. He discovered a talented band one night in a club and decided to quit his job and manage the band to stardom. The bubble burst when, without any savings, and with the boyfriend of the lead singer taking over the management, John once again found himself back in his old job.

## **Awayday**

The executives of an international chemical company are put under pressure by the Head of Human Resources. They are sent away on various "activities", including outdoor survival, to test not only their strengths and their relationships to other colleagues, but also how far these relationships would survive when faced with moral commitment to the company.

*Reviewed by Pat Schmitz*

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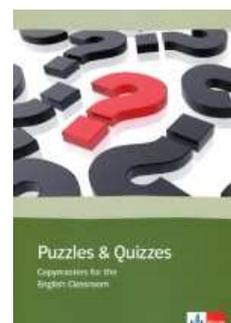
## **Puzzles & Quizzes**

by **David Shallis**

**Copymasters for the English Classroom A1-B1**

**Klett Verlag**

**ISBN: 978-3-12-534606-2 € 14.99**



This book is in A4 format and has 88 pages. The index at the front of the book indicates varying skills at different levels, for example, sounds and spellings, grammar, words and sayings.

The introduction states that "... the activities are designed for all teachers of English as a Foreign Language and can be used with groups or individual learners... can be used to open or round off a lesson, introduce or revise a specific language point...." Each puzzle or exercise is on the right-hand side of a double page, with the answer key printed on the left.

Puzzles and Quizzes is clearly structured and all the exercises and puzzles are short and easy to follow. There are some interesting well thought-through topics such as What is it short for..., dealing with contractions. Obviously the usual I am – I'm, but also half a page of pop songs using shortened forms such as gonna, wanna, ain't, in which the student has to match the full form to the short form. How often have students come to me asking for translations for their favourite songs, as they are stumped by the "lack" of proper grammatical structures!

One request to publishers, though, is that copy masters are more practical if they are spiral bound. Pages from this book are difficult to copy with a home copier/printer. Fortunately, not having too many pages, it is okay to flatten it in a larger copier with a heavy lid.

In spite of this slight technical hitch an all-rounder and a good book to have, which I strongly recommend.

*Reviewed by Pat Schmitz*

## **Lustige Sprachrätsel**

**By Almuth Bartl**

**Hueber Verlag**

**ISBN: 978-3-19-009581-0**

**64 pages € 6.95**

Lustiger Sprachrätsel is in A5 format, with a soft cardboard cover. The book is aimed at school pupils in their first year of learning English and would work for Grundschule age, as the activities are full of cartoon mice and other entertaining images. The pages can be removed individually and used for something to share with other children.



As the name indicates, it is intended for fun free-time learning, with German instructions for the children to read themselves. There are picture puzzles, crosswords, and labyrinths, among other puzzles styles. Some puzzles also ask you to colour in the pictures. This is a book which gives children an incentive to learn in a fun way. A great stocking-filler for Christmas or a children's birthday party present.

The book is also available in French, Italian, Latin and Spanish.

*Reviewed by Pat Schmitz*

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## Teaching Tools

### Easy Flip Sheets

I first heard about these during a group-work activity at a recent seminar and thought it was too good to be true: paper that sticks to a wall without any tape, Blu-Tack, or pins necessary. Sceptical, I wrote the name down. I dismissed it as my not really having understood him properly. After all, he was speaking in German and it had been a long day.

A few weeks later, when I asked my director about putting up posters in my classroom and hearing that it wasn't allowed, it came back to me. Desperate, I ordered them online from Amazon. I'll try anything, I thought, especially as it only costs 9 euros. It arrived after three days packed in a huge box belying its 60 cm width. Excited, I tore off a sheet to try it out.

It supposedly clings to any flat surface, using static electricity. And it does! Not to mention, it also picks up any miniscule particles also on the surface, namely dust. Did you know that dust can lie on a vertical surface? I found that out when I tested the sheet on my door. The sheet stuck as if by magic. Taking it down was simple, I just pulled on a corner and down it came, together with tiny flecks of dust stuck to the back of it. After dusting my door, I packed several sheets in my bag, folding them gently, to try out in class.

We created posters in class, using permanent markers and hung them on the wall. At the end of class, I simply took them with me. This is the best bit: non-permanent markers work as well, so you can use a sheet as a whiteboard. Simply erase the writing with a damp cloth, let dry for a few seconds and *voilà*, you can write on it again. Careful though: if you place the sheet on a white wall, you may want to mark the corners so you don't end up writing on the wall! It can also be used as a white screen for presentations or projectors.

This product is incredibly useful if you have to teach in rooms that do not always have the equipment you need. Walking into a room and seeing no whiteboard or flipchart becomes no problem. I have also stuck maps or post-its on the sheets to avoid sticking anything directly onto a wall.

However, since every silver lining has a cloud, there are a few disadvantages. The more uneven the surface is, for example wallpaper, the more difficult it is to write on. Wind has also caused a couple of my sheets to fly down during class. The second is that the sheets come in a roll, which is 60 cm wide. This is not a problem if you travel by car, but if you go by public transport, this is not very convenient. I have taken individual sheets with me loosely



Available in a range of languages

folded in 4, and they can also be folded much smaller. However, this would then lead to lines on your sheet when you unfold it and then it doesn't lie as flat. There is also a limit to how many times you can erase and re-write. Even a non-permanent marker, if it has had time to dry, doesn't erase as cleanly as it would on a whiteboard.

Nevertheless, I find it achieves its aims. I would definitely recommend it if you have taught or are likely to teach in less-than-ideal situations. It is available as a 20 metre roll perforated every 80 cm, but you can cut off smaller sections. There is also a lined version for those who prefer a flipchart substitute. I purchased mine on Amazon for around 9 euros (shipping not included). Just to see your students' faces the first time you hang it up is worth it.

By Karina Kellermann

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## Training Page

Teacher Development Courses

Remember to keep an eye on ELTA-Rhine's event page: <http://www.elta-rhine.de/events.htm>

Workshops are free to ELTA-Rhine members.

And please take a look at my list here to see if there is a teacher development course that interests you. If you were at our workshop on 10 September, you'll know how important it is to invest time and money in continuing professional development if you want to move your business forward.

If you snooze, you'll lose ...

The **Consultants-E** offer a wide selection of online training and development courses for teachers of English. You'll find more on their website. Take a closer look.

*Cert IBET*: Certificate in International Business English Training / *Cert ICT*: Certificate in Teaching Languages with Technology

3 October 2011

*E-Moderation*: A Training Course For Online Tutors

1 October 2011

*WebQuests*

20 November 2011

*mlearning in Practice*

1 November 2011

*Moodle Starter and Moodle Smarter*

10 October 2011

<http://www.theconsultants-e.com/>

And you might find their resources helpful in your teaching practice:<http://www.theconsultants-e.com/resources/default.aspx>

**The Pyramid Group** is offering a workshop in Cologne entitled *Teaching technical vocabulary to business clients – and getting them to remember it*.

22 October 2011

<http://www.technicalenglish.biz/>

**Skylight** is offering a selection of one-day trainer-the-trainer courses in Cologne. The feedback I've heard has been good, and I was very impressed!

*CEF Can-do statements*

17 September 2011

*Lean Design for Business English training*

24 September 2011

*Scenario technique*

1 October 2011

*Transforming business processes into scenarios*

8 October 2011

*Coach Approach for Business Language Trainers*

15 October 2011

*Blended learning*

12 November 2011

<http://www.cltc-corporate.de/en/cltc-c-certificate/overview.html>

**Englisch nach Maß GmbH** is offering an accredited *CertTESOL* course in Troisdorf (near Cologne/Bonn):

7 November – 3 December 2011

[http://www.englisch-nach-mass.de/html/download/Englisch\\_nach\\_Mass\\_GmbH\\_CertTesol\\_course.pdf](http://www.englisch-nach-mass.de/html/download/Englisch_nach_Mass_GmbH_CertTesol_course.pdf)

**International House** is offering a *Cambridge CELTA* course in Frankfurt/Main:

3 October – 29 October 2011

[http://www.suarez.de/deutsch/seminare\\_fuer\\_lehrer/celta-frankfurt.html](http://www.suarez.de/deutsch/seminare_fuer_lehrer/celta-frankfurt.html)

**Pilgrims** in Canterbury are offering a course entitled *Creative Methodology for the Classroom*:

16 – 22 October 2011

13 – 19 November 2011

[http://teachers.pilgrims.co.uk/teachers/courses/date\\_fees.asp](http://teachers.pilgrims.co.uk/teachers/courses/date_fees.asp)

**International House** offers *CELTA and DELTA* courses and *online training*.

<http://www.ihlondon.com/teacher-training/>

**LTS Training and Consulting** in Bath are offering a five-day course entitled *Developing intercultural training skills*

3 – 7 October 2011

28 November – 2 December

<http://www.lts-training.com/ICTTcourse.htm>

**Teacher Development Interactive** offer online courses for ELT professionals.

<http://www.teacherdevelopmentinteractivetdi.com/>

Well, that's about it for today. I'd love to hear from you if you do manage to attend a good workshop, seminar or course. Or if you need help, just drop me a line.

Let's keep in touch!

Christine Burgmer

<http://www.english-trainer.de/>

<http://www.2trainers.de>

PS Don't forget to look at Russell Stannard's Teacher Training videos. They're all F.R.E.E.

<http://www.teachertrainingvideos.com/>

PPS Do you know <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/seminars> and <http://www.teachertube.com/>

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