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Email us to write for the next ELT Ireland Bulletin!

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Welcome to the tenth ELT Ireland Bulletin!

by **Laura O'Grady** (President of ELT Ireland)

ELT Ireland launched with an ELTed event in April 2013 and has now been running for over 10 years.

The ELT sector has developed a lot in that time, which has been reflected at our events. In recent years ELT has been scarred by the pandemic experience, with lots of old hands having left it and the new people who have come not being entirely sure of their place in the profession. We have seen engagement fall and to work ELT Ireland needs a broad spread of active members.

In the normal course of things, committee members in a voluntary organisation like ELT Ireland would serve 2 years and then be replaced. You would ideally have a term limit of 4 years, but that has never been possible as appeals for people to put themselves forward for positions have gone largely unanswered. At least one of our committee members has been involved for all 10 years and then a few for 7 or 8 years and a couple more for 4+ years.

We have to face the fact that a large chunk of our committee have now moved on out of ELT and / or got expanded responsibilities or family commitments. Having weighed this up the committee has taken the decision to scale back activities and only run events when there is an organiser committed to making it happen, and a named person can be assigned to all the tasks involved.

We have reviewed all the activities we have on the agenda with this in mind and are revising our agenda as follows;



Committee Members at 2023 Conference

Pic by ELT Ireland

Annual Conference / Event

We did not hold this event in 2024. It was not just the organising of it over two days, but the arranging of speakers, programmes and exhibitors, which we were not able to commit to. We replaced the Annual Conference in the Calendar with a 10th Anniversary ELTed event to be held over a full day in The Teachers Club on Parnell Sq. on the 10th of February and will include the AGM and Committee Elections.

ELTed Events:

The call for speakers was opened for our 10th Anniversary ELTed, and members who would like to run an ELTed in their school during the year, we are happy to give guidelines on the Promotion, Ticketing, Venue set-up, Schedule and Speaker Programme. ELTed's have provisionally scheduled one in Cork for April.

Manager Meet-Ups:

We are continuing to hold three per year with a focus on members' preparations for the IEM. Dates are on the website and participation is free to members interested in ELT management and staff of member-institutions. April of 2014 we ran our inaugural ELTed event in the teacher's club.

10th Anniversary Bulletin:

This too was a major undertaking, to solicit contributions, review and edit them and arrange the layout and printing. We were able to publish our 10th Annual Bulletin and thank you to all those who have contributed.

Newsletter & Website:

We have streamlined our website so that it only has to be updated a couple of times a year and have already removed the jobs board service. The frequency of our emailed newsletter has been reduced.

Membership:

In light of this reduced activity for the coming year we have temporarily reduced the individual membership fee to €5 per person, and member tickets for all events will be €5 for the main event in February and free for other events during the year. The reduced rate is €20 / €30 / €40 for institutions which includes a ticket for one / two / three representatives to our main event in February plus member tickets for any two / three / four staff members to all events. All non-member event tickets are inclusive of membership.

NB: Institutional members have only one vote at AGMs and Individual memberships are non-transferrable.

Funding:

In addition to running the events described we have used the funds that were available to cover the 2023 annual returns with the CRO and Revenue, maintain a bank, Paypal and Eventbrite account, as well as url registration, web hosting and zoom subscription. This will be accounted for at the AGM along with ways to minimise ongoing costs at reduced activity levels, such as filing returns without the support of an accountant.

AGM:

The ELT Ireland Committee Elections will take place during the AGM February 2024, the majority of current committee members have indicated that they will not be able to put themselves forward for a further term. Nominations for new committee members were open to all current members and the nomination form was circulated in January 2024.

Thanks to everyone who has supported us over the last 10 years and we look forward to celebrating those 10 years with you on February 10th 2024.

I would finally, like to thank all of our current Committee Members for all of their hard work and willingness to volunteer and give up their free time to ensure that ELT Ireland could indeed become a '*network for professionals involved in all aspects of English Language Teaching that promotes learning, development and best practice through the sharing of knowledge and experiences.*



ELTed at Future Learning, Dublin - 13th May 2023

Pic by ELT Ireland

Events Update

by Gabriela Pozza (Events Coordinator)

Our ELTeds in 2023 were a hit! We organised two events in Dublin, hosted at Future Learning and IBAT, and another one in Cork at Erin School of English. With approximately 75 attendees and 22 speakers, the gatherings were a dynamic hub of insights into teaching language systems, the impact of positivity in the classroom, strategies for addressing culture, and ways to enhance our students' communication skills.

ELTeds provide a fantastic opportunity to connect with like-minded professionals, soaking in success stories that are not only motivating but also inspiring. Attendees leave with a treasure trove of ideas for activities and resources, as well as a renewed enthusiasm, innovative approaches, and a clear sense of purpose in their teaching. Speaking at an ELTed event goes beyond contributing to the professional community; it's a chance for teachers to showcase expertise, connect with colleagues, and play a part in the continuous development of our field.

My time as Events Coordinator has come to an end. Creating a space - online and face to face- where teachers share knowledge and inspire one another was incredibly fulfilling. I would like to wish the best of luck to my successor and extend an invitation for you to contribute with a talk, an event, or an article - no idea is too small! Looking forward to seeing you at our future events!

Letter from the Editor

by Órla Ní Shéaghdha (Bulletin Editor)

What an honour to be the editor of the 10th edition of the ELT Ireland Bulletin. A lot of work has gone into making this issue and I had the pleasure of working with seven talented ELT professionals who contributed their time, knowledge and expertise. From swapping ideas at the Article Writing Forum, to penning their first draft, to taking part in the Network of Reviewers, each writer put in so much effort to polish the finished articles you are about to read. To mark the Bulletin's 10th Anniversary, we have a wide range of issues including reflections on how it all began, the future of AI and language teaching, rethinking familiar teaching approaches and an (almost) A-Z of ELT acronyms. I would like to thank this year's contributors for their hard work and dedication throughout the writing process. I hope you enjoy reading this edition and that it inspires you to share your own ideas. So, if you are interested in contributing to our eleventh issue contact us at info.eltireland@gmail.com and keep an eye on our social media for Bulletin updates.

The Founding of ELT Ireland

by Lou McLaughlin (Founding President of ELT Ireland)

The beginning

On returning to live in Ireland in 2014, I looked to connect with professionals in my sector - the English Language Teaching sector. On learning that there was no association in place, it seemed obvious that the gap needed to be filled. Connecting with similar minded individuals soon gave rise to the germination of an idea which blossomed into the starting of an association for English language teachers in Ireland – ELT Ireland.



Inaugural ELT Ireland Event, Teacher's Club - 14th January 2014

Pic by ELT Ireland

At the inaugural meeting on 14th January 2014 held in Dublin to ascertain if there was an interest from others in the field we (the founding members) were delighted with the turnout. The decision was taken to move forward with the founding of the association which would be a forum for professionals in the field to meet and share expertise and knowledge, furthering their own (and others) professional development. This led to the Constitution of ELT Ireland being passed in 2015 at the first AGM.

Our mission

Working in the field of education, it goes without saying that the learning process continues throughout our careers. An important aspect of this process is the sharing of knowledge, research developments and new ideas with colleagues. The mission of ELT Ireland was, from the outset, to provide the platform for these shared networks throughout Ireland to flourish.

Connecting to the world

In the first eighteen months, ELT Ireland became an official affiliate of IATEFL (International Association for Teaching English as a Foreign Language) so as we could further the wealth of knowledge available for our own members. The mission of IATEFL is the linking, developing and supporting of English Language Teaching Professionals Worldwide and our affiliation allowed Irish ELT professionals access to that worldwide network. ELT Ireland also developed partnerships with both IATEFL Poland and the English Language Teachers Association of the Czech Republic. These agreements provided the opportunity for our members to attend and partake in their annual conferences, leading to further opportunities for development. As ELT Ireland president, I joined IATEFL as the Associates Representative and sat on the IATEFL Board of Trustees for 6 years. This raised the profile of ELT Ireland within the international community and among other teaching associations.

Growing and Developing

Over the last decade, we have seen our fellow ELT colleagues become more involved with various aspects of ELT Ireland. Our initial fortnightly #eltchinwag produced many lively discussions ranging from material development, to learning styles to opportunities for CPD. Colleagues from around the world joined us for these chats and, in doing so, brought new insights and opinions from a variety of cultural contexts.

We were very keen to ensure that all of those working in ELT around Ireland were an active part of the network and had the opportunity to become involved. To this end our ELT-ed (Education & Development) sessions took place over the years in Dublin, Limerick, Waterford and Cork, and provided teachers, researchers and managers with the chance to showcase their work and ideas in front of an enthusiastic audience. In order to further promote these ideas, all sessions were recorded and are available for viewing on our website www.elt-ireland.com. It also provided a source of CPD for members in that they are encouraged to turn their initial talk into an article for the ELT Ireland Bulletin.

The ELT Ireland Bulletin (ELTIB) itself has been a wonderful opportunity for those in the local sector to share their ideas and practical solutions to many problems in the classroom. Those who were hesitant about contributing quickly became ardent supporters and followers. The initial bulletins emerged from the initial brainstorming sessions which took place at the AWF (Article Writing Forum). These forums provide guidance and support for anyone interested in materials development or

article writing in the ELT sector. They were also a place where participants from a variety of institutions could come together to discuss and generate ideas for each annual ELTIB.

The manager meet ups were another successful initiative through the years. They were held in Dublin and focused on topics that are of particular relevance or concern to academic managers and all of those involved in ELT management. To date, the structure has been that of a workshop based around a particular topic, with ideas then collated and shared by ELT Ireland. Over time members took ownership of these smaller gatherings which provided a space dedicated to discussing and dealing with all matters related to management within the ELT institution.

Relationships both national and international were an important part of ELT Ireland. We invited IATEFL LAMSIG (Leadership & Management SIG) to host a joint event with us at a global level while at home we supported QQI at a number of events beginning in 2016 providing guidance on set-up, speaker options, strands as well as running the twitter live stream throughout.

The Annual Conference – The Family Get-together

Our first conference took place in the Teachers Centres in Dublin and its growth has been a testament to the hard work and dedication of the ELT Ireland committee. It became a place marker in all calendars over the years and we owe huge thanks to the support we received from sponsors from our very first event to the last. It was an opportunity for us to bring some of the “big names” from abroad to Ireland to give those a chance to meet them if they couldn’t travel abroad to international conferences to see them. We also showcased local talent and expertise in Ireland and strengthened the local and national network. Our event grew and attracted speakers from around Ireland and abroad through our own network, that of IATEFL and those of the affiliates. The success of the conference reflects the wonderful speakers, presenters and trainers that have all taken part and contributed to raising awareness of the pressing matters each year in ELT in Ireland and beyond.

As the founding President of ELT Ireland, I am honoured to have been a part of the committee and of the community. It has been a privilege to work with the other committee members who share the same drive and interest in creating a wonderful association. Over the last 10 years, ELT Ireland has grown into a wonderful network and it was an honour to be part of that from the very start.

It takes so much work and dedication to grow something and tend to it constantly while balancing and juggling full-time work, family life, and other commitments. I learnt so much from working alongside such a wonderful committee and those colleagues have become firm friends.

About the author:



Lou McLaughlin is the Executive Director of Eaquals (Evaluation & Accreditation of Quality Language Services). She is the Founder Chair of ELT Ireland, the network for ELT professionals in Ireland, served on the IATEFL Board of Trustees as the Associates Representative until 2021 and served as a Trustee for the Bell Education Trust. She is currently a member of the IATEFL LAMSIG Committee. Lou holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics, Masters in ELT, DELTA, TESOL Cert. in Leadership & Management and Trinity TESOL Cert. Her special interests are Young Learner teacher training, teacher cognition and management in ELT. Lou is a frequent speaker at international conferences and was the co-editor of *Children Learning English: From Research to Practice* (2015).

"The mission of ELT Ireland was, from the outset, to provide the platform for these shared networks throughout Ireland to flourish ."

What do I Think I Am Doing?

by Peter Lahiff

The challenge of AI forces a re-examination of the basics of the language teaching profession

Every other webinar at the moment seems to be about how Artificial Intelligence is changing the teaching and learning sector. As someone who works in a technology enhanced teaching context, this prospect should fill me with excitement, but it just leaves me cold. I have to ask myself whether that makes me an educational dinosaur trying to ignore the AI meteor blazing across the sky. In order to work out whether this is a flash in the pan, or an earth-shattering event, I am going to review how my ten core beliefs about language teaching will be impacted by this metaphorical meteor strike. The following reflection is based only on my experience as a teacher, which is inevitably informed by my own preferences as a learner. I cannot claim general applicability beyond that.

1. Learning is social and gamification is empty without people to play against

Even before the pandemic I remember being told that the costs involved in travel and the environmental concerns were going to gradually erode the educational travel business which includes most private language teaching in Ireland. When the sudden closure of schools came and everyone was forced to go online overnight, it seemed like the prophecy was coming true. As the novelty wore off, however, we realised that learning through a laptop was a flat, tasteless, odourless experience, which was isolating and deeply unsatisfying. The lack of social interaction was not merely neutral, it was damaging to the learning process and to the psychological wellbeing of old and young alike. In the post pandemic environment we have seen that the only element of what we do that has seen an enduring change is that we are now running preparatory webinars to answer questions and set expectations before students come to Ireland and even these get a poor uptake from adult students.

It is only from working together to figure things out and helping each other to understand that most of us really learn. Confirming your understanding with a classmate stays with you longer than the notes taken down from the teacher. If I had to pick a technology that has changed students' proficiency in English of the period that I have been involved in teaching, it is the ability to chat with people on the other side of the world while cutting a swathe through a multi-player online game. There is lots of talk about points and badges being the secret to modern learning, under the banner of gamification. Judiciously managed competition can definitely be a powerful motivating force. If you are playing against yourself, or a machine, however, it just feels empty. It is the social element of recognition from leaders and peers for work done well that drives us. The social element is also especially important when students are studying a long way from home and find in the classroom a support network, a knowledge base and a community.

2. Learning takes effort

Never believe anything that claims to make the process of acquiring new skills easier or faster. Learning is an effort and it takes time. The only way to learn a language faster is to be exposed to it more of the time, but you are just packing the necessary hours into fewer days, and will hit a limit at around 4.5 hours a day. Mental exercise is the same as physical exercise, if you don't sweat, then there will be no gains. I am not saying there has to be pain for any gain. There are ways to make this necessary effort engaging, relevant, and even exciting at times. You do have to take care to calibrate the challenge so that you are pushing yourself towards something you can achieve and get that reward that brings you back for more. The initial discomfort and bewilderment that comes from being immersed in a language you are learning for the first time, is not something that can be avoided. You have to climb that hill and lift that weight before it will start to get easier, but when you do put in the effort, it does. Getting comfortable with some discomfort is an essential first step.

3. Mistakes are good and so is repetition

We have tools that help us to avoid making mistakes. Your spelling and grammar is autocorrected in a click and you don't need to pay attention to what you were doing wrong. You cannot get something right without first getting it wrong, you have to fail better, as Samuel Beckett put it. In order to encourage learning, we have to reward the risk-taking that leads to mistakes and not rely on tools that thoughtlessly eliminate them and penalise the linguistic risk takers.

**“Distraction
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The most old-school of teaching techniques has to be choral drilling. Rows of cherubic six-year-olds chanting their times tables is the defining image of the mindless memorisation that used to characterise mass education. This went out of favour in language teaching when the focus shifted to more authentic practice. Coming back to the same thing several times is essential to learning, however. It is just that giving the opportunity to refine, elaborate, and tell somebody new, takes the boredom off it. Nobody enjoys having to do a second draft, but combining that with the social incentives of publication, performance or presentation, motivates us to do it.

4. Distractions have always been with us

We are distractible by nature, and prefer jumping around to giving sustained attention to something. Students have always passed notes, looked out the window, and played noughts and crosses in the back of classes. The trouble for us today is that smartphones are designed to be uniquely distracting devices and of course their buzz and bleep is going to pull students, and teachers, in. The applications that run on our personal devices are designed to maximise the amount of time and attention that we give them and if unchecked, are proven to have a detrimental effect on our personal and societal well being.

Distraction does not need to spell the end of civilisation, but we do need to recognise the nature of these devices and adapt our strategies accordingly. Teachers need to instruct learning in a way that helps students resist the temptation to be distracted. Of course we would expect more self-control from adult students, and older teenagers, but even then they need direction to help manage their pocket distraction machines. We all do.

5. Technology is Meaningless

“It is very important that technology serves our purpose and that we do not allow it, or the people who design it, dictate what our purpose should be”

We should not look to technology to give meaning to what we do. It is the medium and not the message. Like any tool, it can help get the job done, and we should use it whenever it can be of use. It is very important that technology serves our purpose and that we do not allow it, or the people who design it, to dictate what our purpose should be. When technology is not useful to our purpose we should put it down and try another way. Technology is not an end in itself and it is not inherently good or bad, that depends on the meanings that we give it. This is not an argument against the judicious use of technology in education. What its use can do is give the classroom a sense of relevance to the world that students are living and working in.

6. Reflection is hard work and autonomy is often unwelcome

There is a lot of focus in modern theories about teaching on metacognition, or thinking about thinking. It is seen as an essential skill which we need to develop in order to be autonomous learners, who can take an active part in their learning process. This normally involves reflecting on how you did in a particular task and considering how you would improve in the next attempt. The trouble with these prescriptions is that reflection is easier said than done and some people are much better at it than others, and it may improve with maturity. Of course it is something that you can learn, or at least fake until it starts to click with you. If students are not asked to consider how they think they did at a particular task then they may not realise that this is a question they should be asking themselves. As with many other skills, we should expect a range of aptitude, from those who are naturally reflective to others who only get there with a lot of scaffolding and encouragement. There will always be some students who do not welcome autonomy being thrust upon them, and while they may come round in time, we should expect that there are some who will decide it is not for them. Ultimately they have the autonomy to decide they do not want to be autonomous learners.

7. Creativity isn't for everybody

This is in a similar vein to the previous point about autonomy. As uniformity and rote learning has fallen out of favour in education, creativity has been elevated as an untapped potential in all of us just waiting to be unleashed by more enlightened approaches to learning. A lot of the breathless talk around AI focuses on its potential to eliminate the hum drum parts of most jobs, leaving the creative tasks that everyone, it is assumed, would rather spend their time on. The assumption that everyone is naturally creative and would enjoy a utopia where they had nothing but creative tasks on their to do lists. The trouble is that people do not have the same aptitudes and that is true as much of creativity as it is in anything else.

8. We have innate skills to learn any language

Learning to speak the languages of the people around us is an instinct which is hard wired into our baby brains, while writing is a cultural invention that needs a system of formal education to learn. We are so used to relying on the technologies of writing as an aid to learning that we can lose sight of the obvious fact that someone can learn to speak without knowing how to read and write a language, and that the opposite is also true. For large parts of history people who wrote did it in a different language to the one that they spoke, whether that be Latin, Arabic, Mandarin or Sanskrit. We can manage multiple languages without difficulty, selecting the appropriate tools to get the message across in different linguistic contexts as easily as we switch registers between talking to friends or colleagues. In Ireland we think we are monolingual because the Irish language has become part of the wall-paper, and it is only when you have to explain signs and transport announcements to bewildered visitors that we realise it is there and most of us engage with it to some extent, without thinking. The use of languages to communicate is fundamental to what we are as a species and putting those languages into writing is a cornerstone of the culture we have built since we scratched markings on rocks. If we lay the foundations for and communicate the joy of connecting across cultures early on then the facility to deal with different languages will stay with us as we get older and help keep our brains supple.

9. Complexity and Feedback

“There is definitely potential for these new AI tools to be used in correction and criteria-based grading, while also keeping an eye on the longer term objectives and outcomes.”

Learning builds on each individual's existing knowledge and past experience, which means they engage with the material in their own way and take things from it that the teacher might not have intended, or have a block on those things that the teacher has prioritised for them to learn. We have to recognise that teachers make necessary simplifications in our explanations in order to make things digestible to the whole class. It may be true that students “can’t handle the truth” about how language works, but while we do need to withhold some of its complexity, we have to be careful not to mislead them as they may struggle to unpick that later. Technology allows teachers access to analysis of how language is actually being used to update their explanations to fit very specific contexts while it allows students to independently explore topics they are curious about. The potential for personalisation has existed for some time, but the realisation of it runs up against the limitation of learner autonomy already alluded to. Making all the complex choices to personalise our learning seems too difficult. What students often want from teachers is the comfort of decisions about what is best for their learning being made for them, with deadlines being set and enforced by social pressure and an external authority.

Timely, actionable feedback is the most important intervention that a teacher makes in learning, and it takes a lot of judgement, experience and time to get it right. At a higher level feedback is about picking out the thing you want to encourage in order to be able to sincerely say, “I really like the way you ...”. This is challenging because it is much easier for us to spot what is wrong, while competent execution of a task often goes under the radar. Students will smell fake praise and feel discouraged. It is easier in a way to pick out that “one thing you can improve on ...” but here the challenge is to prioritise the things that would make a real difference and make it specific enough that the students can do something about it. It is equally important to ask students how they did with a task, getting feedback from them is key to being able to recalibrate and redirect the objectives. It is also developing the habit of learner autonomy, mentioned above, which is the secret of the most effective learners. The shift away from the teacher being the source of all knowledge in the classroom has made more room for meaningful feedback but it is still a huge element of a teacher’s workload. There is a role for AI in providing more regular correction and grading and to flag options for the teacher’s consideration.

10. Nothing matters more than consistency

Language teaching is as much subject to fashions as any other field and, in striving to keep up with best practice, we cannot lose sight of the fact that people successfully learned languages under the old-fashioned approaches too. Any educational approach can be effective if it is applied consistently over time. It doesn’t matter what other good things you are doing, if there is no consistency then the students will not learn effectively. Little and often is more powerful than an occasional educational binge. It is important not to give up just because you are unable to give it your all, all the time.

In order to be consistent you need to have an overarching plan and know how each class and activity fits into it. Experienced teachers are very good at reading the room, and adapting activities in response to perplexed expressions, and extending or cutting short activities depending on how the students in front of them are getting on. That ability is dependent on having familiarised themselves with the material in advance and knowing where it is going. Some effort is required to

process the lesson plan so that it can be manipulated in this way. This “uploading” into working memory is the main purpose of lesson planning and we cannot do without it. Teachers find it quite difficult, however, to specify meaningful learning objectives and lesson outcomes in their planning, to the point where it is of doubtful value. Having a tool that recommends objectives and outcomes for teachers to choose from, which are consistent with the level, the student learning experience and what has been covered so far, would be a very useful application of technology, AI or otherwise.

Conclusion

Where does this top 10 survey leave us when it comes to a reflection on what will happen to teaching in the context of AI? There is definitely potential for these new AI tools to be used in correction and criteria-based grading, while also keeping an eye on the longer term objectives and outcomes. Things that we don’t have time to do enough of and which are difficult for teachers to do well. I look forward to those things improving the quality of the educational experience as a result. I don’t, however, believe the hype about all the creativity and reflexivity that will be unleashed when AI takes over our hum drum tasks. It misses the point that it is not everyone’s goal to be reflective and creative and an aptitude for these, as for every other skill, varies a lot between people. An element of effort, repetition and consistency of approach is necessary to train our brains. There can be no gains if we take away that pain.

An ability to communicate with other people using languages is the secret of our success as a species and the essence of who we are. It is something which we must never lose sight of. We can learn to communicate with others most effectively through harnessing social interactions in the classroom and beyond. Using technology to eliminate effort and avoid mistakes is to eliminate learning. Instead we need to focus on using it to maximise engagement while minimising the avoidable distractions it brings. Using technology in the classroom is necessary in order to make the learning relevant to the world that students are using the language in, but we need to plan to close our laptops and put our devices away in order to allow room for the social interactions that lead to effective enjoyable learning. It is that pleasure of connection and of working things out together that truly motivates, along with getting recognition as an able partner or team member.

Ultimately we have to recognise that, while the context we live, work and study in, has changed beyond recognition, our brains are as they have been since the mist of evolutionary time. We are social, language-using, communicative animals. If these new technologies are used to train robots, and their operators, to speak to other robots, then we will have chosen the wrong path in this moment of new possibilities, and earned the professional extinction that may follow from that.

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About the author:

Peter Lahiff works on the development and management of project-based and technology enhanced language courses for young learners and adults at Future Learning where he is the Academic Director. He is a founding committee member and former president of ELT Ireland.



Syntax in the language classroom

by Giulia Villa

It has always been interesting to me how students of every level of proficiency, happen to make similar mistakes when it comes to sentence structure. Throughout their language learning journey students gain the ability to use lexical and grammatical expressions of increasing level of difficulty. Nevertheless, they still tend to construct sentences without – or with too many – subjects, to misplace adjectives and adverbs or to be incredibly confused when learning passives or relative clauses. Similarly, I dove multiple times into teaching word formation or comparatives and superlatives just to realise that my students could not clearly distinguish between adverbs, adjectives, and nouns. While it may be difficult to get over such barriers, I would like to propose an “easy” fix to the above problems, namely Syntax.

If you have ever studied Syntax throughout your career, I sense your puzzlement. Syntax is a complex subfield of Linguistics that aims to develop a cross linguistic theory of sentence structure, and it is by no means necessary for students to know that much about grammar to become fully proficient English speakers. It may seem a mere over complication. If that is what you are thinking, I want to stop you there; teachers are not expected to dig into the depths of Syntax with language learners. However, the purpose of this article is to outline how a basic knowledge of English Syntax allows students to master sentence structure, from its simplest to its most complex forms.

Why should I use Syntax in the language classroom?

Before we dive into practical examples, I would like to clarify the benefits of using Syntax in the language classroom.

Firstly, it allows students to gain great awareness of English sentence structure. By following a simple methodology, learners acquire the ability to construct grammatical sentences and to develop a clear system for self-error correction within sentence structure.

Additionally, it is possible to apply this same system to teach grammatical categories (i.e. nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.). This allows students to not simply learn rules associated with nouns or adjectives, but to be clearly aware of what is meant by each word class. While these are the main instances where I have applied this method consistently, I have occasionally used it in other settings, such as when teaching word building.

This article focuses mainly on the first application i.e., developing a method to produce grammatical sentences according to their linear structure and using that same system for self-error correction.

Subject – Verb – Object (SVO)

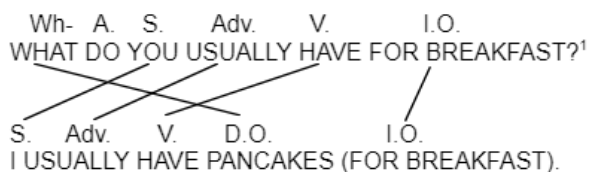
The very first concept I would like to introduce is also the first – and most important – piece of information that a teacher applying this method would illustrate to their students, namely SVO (subject, verb, object). This is the basic (linear) structure of an English sentence, meaning that – looking at the linear word order - the subject precedes the verb and the (direct) object follows the verb. If needed, the teacher might go into more detail and explain the difference between direct object (never introduced by a preposition) and indirect object (introduced by a preposition). However, this is easier to identify - and better prove - through examples, so I usually leave this distinction for a later stage. While SVO might sound like an intuitive – and not essential – concept, it will soon be evident that by giving students this information the teacher is providing them with a method to check for grammaticality. Practically, if the elements are in the wrong order, or if one of them is missing, the sentence is ungrammatical.

This is a very general claim, that does not account for interrogative sentences, intransitive verbs (verbs that don't require an object) or ditransitive verbs (verbs that require two objects), just to name a few. However, once one gets to practical examples, it becomes clear that this simple method can be tailored to many aspects of the target language, while also providing students with a system that can be applied to every English sentence. It is up to the teacher to illustrate how the system can be used in all cases, even if not every sentence has the same internal structure. As students move on into their language learning journey, they encounter a number of different sentence structures and should be able to recognise how this same method can be applied to each of them with minor variations.

“By following a simple methodology, learners acquire the ability to construct grammatical sentences and to develop a clear system for self-error correction within sentence structure.”

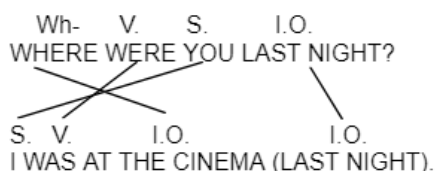
Teaching sentence structure: wh- questions

Now that the context and purpose of the method are clear, it is time to dive into practice. The first step is a productive task where students need to produce the target language – for the purpose of this example, ask and/or answer wh- questions. Assuming that students would be struggling to complete the activity producing grammatical sentences, take one of the wh- questions from the activity, write it on the board, and label each word or chunk according to its grammatical function in the sentence. Then, ask students to produce an appropriate answer keeping in mind the SVO rule. Therefore, firstly elicit the S (subject), then elicit the V (verb) and finally the O (object). Each sentence can have various degrees of complexity, which might lead you to introduce the position of adjectives or adverbs, the distinction between direct and indirect object, or a number of elements needed to form the V of a specific tense. While writing the answer, label each word or chunk with the corresponding grammatical categories, as for the question. Repeating the operation for a few sentences will provide students with a method to analyse any given wh- question and to produce a grammatical answer accordingly.



Wh- = wh- word; S. = subject; V. = verb; D.O. = direct object; I.O. = indirect object; A. = auxiliary; Adv. = adverb.

These are the labels I use, however, feel free to change them to whatever you feel appropriate, as long as you are consistent in their application.



Teachers can tailor this model to any aspect of the target language that they are aiming to teach and that is appropriate for the level of the learners. However, the real goal is for students to develop a system that allows them to analyse any aspect of the English (linear) sentence structure without great difficulty, as long as a similar methodology is followed.

Self-correcting sentence structure mistakes

Once students become familiar with this system, correcting sentence structure mistakes also becomes straightforward, as illustrated below.

*MY FAVOURITE MOVIE IT IS "BARBIE".

When a student produces such a sentence, write it down and ask them to identify the subject(s) and verb(s). Students would individuate "is" as the only verb, while they would find two subjects, "my favourite movie" and "it". Keep in mind that this might require some support, depending on the students' level and/or their familiarity with the method. If they are familiar with the SVO rule, they will immediately recognise the sentence as ungrammatical, as it has one verb only, but two subjects; hence, they would be able to correct it without any extra support.

Will lower-level students not be confused with the terminology?

Some teachers might be wondering whether it may not be confusing to mention technical terminology to low level learners. Most students I have taught benefited from it, even at lower levels, and, even if this is not fully agreed upon in the literature, there is some consensus about the potential benefits (Sutton, 2020). Usually, if something is featured in the syllabus, I introduce the related terminology. Therefore, if auxiliaries or adverbs feature in the syllabus, I proceed to explain what they are, using the terminology and methods above, independently of the students' level. When it comes to subjects and objects, I mention them from day one, and all my students have got used to it quite quickly, showing great benefits when moving from simple to more complex sentence structures. While knowing terminology might seem quite irrelevant, I have noticed that it allows the teacher to establish a "language to talk about language" with students. As learners gain familiarity with the new vocabulary, it becomes easier both for them and the teacher to introduce new aspects of the target language. Having described the lexis of grammar itself, the teacher can easily show how different aspects of the target language resemble each other and behave according to patterns. Hence, a new rule is never fully new, as it follows the same patterns and can be described using the same lexis as

"When it comes to subjects and objects, I mention them from day one, and all my students have got used to it quite quickly, showing great benefits when moving from simple to more complex sentence structures."

the ones previously learnt. This motivates students and helps them to see grammar not as a set of independent rules, but as a system that can be codified.

What to take away

Now that this article is coming to an end, here are the main points that I would like readers to take away from it.

Firstly, be patient with students, and with yourself as a teacher. Learners might take some time to fully grasp this system, especially if it is new to them, and the same may apply to teachers. However, I recommend not to refrain from the use of technical terminology when seeing students struggling. They will learn to master it as long as it is applied and referred to consistently, and the long-term benefits will be extraordinary.

Secondly, teachers should be creative and experiment with the method. I have briefly mentioned that teaching sentence structure is just one of the ways the use of Syntax can be implemented in the classroom, therefore teachers are encouraged to use this system as a tool for whatever they think appropriate. One of the great aspects of this method is that it allows to clarify – or revise – the ground rules of the target language while also building its most complex aspects using the same – agreed upon - system and lexis.

Finally, listen to students and check their understanding consistently. There is no point in moving forward and completing all the planned activities if what is being taught is still unclear. Take the necessary time and unravel learners' doubts with patience and attention. Using this method can be time consuming, and it might seem like learners are moving backwards rather than forward. There is nothing wrong if this is the case, it is just a sign that students are learning to master aspects of the target language that they used to know only partially (White, 2003). Specifically, and most importantly, they are learning to codify grammar systematically, rather than memorising it in chunks.

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When A Frog Grows Hair - ESOL Learners' use of Idioms

by Dr Justin McNamara

As English language teachers we are constantly faced with a barrage of questions, not just from our students but we often question ourselves. What is the most important language skill? Should I focus more on grammar than vocabulary? What are the most important features our students need to learn?

The literature points to the importance and frequency of lexical chunks or bundles for both ESOL students and native speakers. According to the Common European Framework of Referencing (CEFR) the four categories below are indications of B2 level of competency.

1) **Collocations** such as *bark and dog, write and letter*

2) **Delexical Verbs** e.g. *make an effort, have a party*

3) **Idiomatic language** *hit the roof, a piece of cake* and

4) **Multi-Word Verbs** e.g. *go on, put up with*

Furthermore, these four are stipulations of a Band 6 and above level of ability in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examination and occur highly frequently in native speaker discourse.

In this article I will focus on the various types of idiomatic or figurative language used by two cohorts of ESOL learners living and working in Limerick city, Ireland. This article draws data from the PhD research I carried out while teaching ESOL to adult learners at a higher education setting in Limerick City. The students range from 18 to 65 years old and are from different countries all the way from China, Italy, and Spain to Brazil and the DRC, and at the time of analysis these learners had been living in Ireland from four weeks to four years.

All in all, there were twenty-four students who were divided into two cohorts based on a short, written placement test on the first evening of classes. The two cohorts were A2 pre-intermediate and C1 advanced. There were nine learners in the A2 group and fifteen in the C1 group. The majority of the students worked in Limerick city and attended lessons for three hours per week. At the end of the twelve-week course, students received either a Level 3 or Level 4 FETAC certificate in ESOL and the classes were taught the language skills via the Communicative Language Teaching method.

I recorded the entire lessons for the twelve weeks and removed my (the teacher's) contributions, I also collected samples of writings done in the classroom and their written homework. This totalled to a corpus of 170,000 words for analysis. I looked at the four language chunks mentioned above, but idiomatic language yielded, I feel the most fascinating results within total, there were 423 idiomatic expressions articulated by the students: 194 by the A2 group and 229 by the C1 students. A great and surprising result for me. Later on, we will look at some of the idiomatic expressions used by these learners, but first some points to consider:

"Idioms are institutionalised in language and society and without prior knowledge of the setting or context they are often then decomposable or difficult to interpret."

How many idioms are there in British and Irish English?

This indeed is a difficult question to answer. This is because 1) the definition of the term idiom is complex and 2) due to the fact that idioms are an open word class there are new idioms created every day. If we were to listen to a movie, series or pop song, we would no doubt encounter expressions and phrases that would be new to some of us. Also, we need to take into account slang (a further form of figurative language) where, based on city or area, a new lexical item can emerge at any given moment and the debate as to how many idiomatic expressions exist in the language is ongoing. A simple search on Google states vaguely 14,000 plus, AI Chat GPT states over 25,000, while Erman and Warren (2000) stated that 58% of English is idiomatic, there are over 6,000 idioms in the Oxford Dictionary of Idioms (2020) and Sorhus back in 1977 claimed that we encounter something idiomatic once every five words in spoken English. The question remains unanswered, and it could be predicted will continue for time and time to come.

Idioms are imbedded in the culture, language and context in which they originate

An integral feature of idiomatic language is, according to the literature (Malinowski, 1923; Firth 1957; Carter, 1998, and McCarthy, 2002, for example) that in order to understand the intended meaning one requires a knowledge of the culture, context and language in which the expression occurs. Idioms are institutionalised in language and society and without prior knowledge of the setting or context they are often then decomposable or difficult to interpret.

Take the example “to have a whale of a time at the party”. An ESOL learner may be able to understand each word separately or the context from the sentence in which the idiom is used, however the overall interpretation can be highly complex for the learner. To confirm this point, when teaching idiomatic expressions to my students, I always begin with the following introductory task: in pairs, students think of an idiom from their first language, they say this idiom in their mother tongue, then they translate it literally into English, word for word, their partner tries to interpret it--in thinking figuratively and they try to explain it to the rest of the class. This short communicative activity confirms this notion. The table below shows a range of examples given by the students from each of the groups:



Everybody had a whale of a time at the party.

Source: Oxford University Press

Table 1: The Idiom interpretation test: student examples

Language	Idiom	Direct Translation	Intended Meaning
Spanish	<i>Cuando a una rana le crece pelo</i>	When a frog grows hair	Virtually impossible to happen, similar to <i>when pigs fly</i>
Italian	<i>Un uomo di bronzo</i>	A bronze man	A rich man
Polish	<i>Gówno dla ciebie</i>	Shit for you	Good luck, similar to <i>break a leg</i>
Portuguese	<i>Chovendo canivetes</i>	It's raining penknives	Raining heavily, similar to <i>raining cats and dogs</i>
Swahili	<i>Hakuna mapigano kanisani</i>	No fighting in the church	Don't do something negative close to home, similar to <i>don't bite the hand that feeds you</i> .
German	<i>Die Karotten sind gekocht</i>	The carrots are cooked	You can't change the past, similar to <i>don't cry over spilled milk</i>
French	<i>Tu as des tomates dans les yeux</i>	You have tomatoes in your eyes	Your view is clouded by your emotions, similar to <i>wearing rose tinted spectacles</i>

Context and Culture

As far back as Firth (1960) and in fact, even earlier Malinowski (1930) argued that a language exchange is constructed in different ways, on almost a cline. The first and most fundamental part is the context in which the speakers are talking, next in importance is the speaker themselves: who they are, what their role is in the interaction and the purpose; what they are communicating and why, only then is the meaning and finally the actual form--tenses, voice, aspect, etc. This highlights further the importance of the setting in which we speak a language and idioms and figurative language though an example of form, understanding the location and area in which they are expressed is of utmost importance and comes prior.

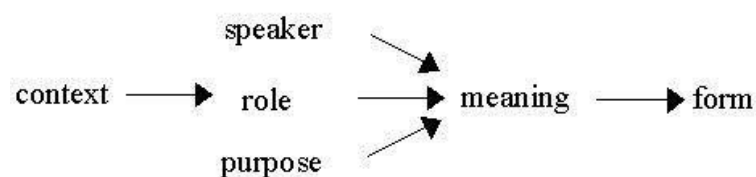


Fig. 1 The structure of an utterance (Malinowski, 1930).

Types of figurative language

So, what type of idioms or figurative language were these students using? As mentioned earlier, with the difficulty in defining an idiom, I took McCarthy (1998) and Carter (1987)'s terminology and then searched to see what examples (if any) were being used by the students.

Table 2 shows the type of figurative language, an explanation and then the expression used by the students.

Table 2: Figurative Language: Student examples

Type of Idiom	Structure	Student Example	Occurrences
Clausal Idiom	Verb+Complement	<i>Hit the roof, kick the bucket</i>	10
Idiomatic Phrasal Verb	Lexical verb+particle	<i>Take after somebody, get up</i>	14
Prepositional Idioms	Introduced by a preposition	<i>Over the moon, in two minds</i>	4
Binomials and Trinomials	Fixed and irreversible	<i>To and fro, no way shape or form</i>	4
Frozen similes	Comparative with like or as	<i>Happy as Larry, as sober as a judge</i>	5
Possessive phrases	Showing possession with apostrophe	<i>The bee's knees, the cat's whiskers</i>	4
Nominal compounds	Two nouns compounded to form one	<i>Blackmail, honeymoon</i>	12
Cultural allusions	Slogans, catchphrases, proverbs	<i>A fish out of water, once in a blue moon</i>	13
Gambits and discourse markers	Connectors and backchannels	<i>Of course, well</i>	53
Hyperbole	Exaggeration and understatement	<i>Dying for a drink, I could eat a horse</i>	52
Full idioms	Complete, canonical idiom unedited	<i>It's raining cats and dogs, drive me up the wall</i>	43

You can imagine my delight as a researcher and language teacher that my students used such expressions in their speaking and writing. As mentioned above, these learners were living and working in Limerick for various durations of time from four weeks to four years. They naturally acquired or picked up expressions that they had encountered within that time.

Another activity I tend to do with students is to get them to teach the group words or phrases they assimilated since their arrival in Ireland. This activity and the general recordings conducted in the classroom led to over 229 Hiberno English or Irishisms.

Table 3 overleaf shows eight examples of Irishisms being used by these learners.

Table 3: Hiberno/Slang Expressions used by the learners.

Phrase	Meaning in context
<i>What's the story?</i>	Local greeting in Limerick.
<i>Give me a hand.</i>	Help me.
<i>I'm grand.</i>	I'm okay.
<i>I am broke.</i>	I have no money.
<i>Can I go to the loo?</i>	May I go to the bathroom?
<i>Shit happens.</i>	Things happen.
<i>She's just stingy</i>	She's mean with money.
<i>He was so drunk-legless.</i>	He was very drunk.

Conclusion

This article introduces the topic of idioms and figurative language based on the analysis of data collected as part of my PhD thesis. It introduced tasks that compound the theories available in the literature: that idioms are institutionalized in the culture and context in which they originate and can be difficult to interpret for a second language learner. Be that as it may, this article shows how the adult ESOL learners at an institution in Limerick city did indeed use these creative examples in their speaking and writing.

As seen earlier, in total there were 423 idiomatic expressions used across both cohorts. Overall, this amounted to 194 expressions articulated by the A2 group and 229 by the C1 group. Interesting enough is the fact that the majority were found in the spoken corpus; at a ratio of 63%-37%. It could therefore be deduced that these students were more comfortable in attempting a figurative expression when speaking rather than writing.

The article also compounds the theory that even being in a country for as little as four weeks, learners acquire and pick up expressions that they hear on a regular basis.

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The Secret to Student Exponential Growth

by Anna Machura

“Wisdom comes with age.” To me, wisdom comes with every student in the classroom, with that invaluable experience I gain through a positive student-teacher interaction. It is about exchanging feedback, discovering things that seem to be overlooked on the way to success and revealing secrets to unlock students’ potential. I have prepared some useful tips and more insights into the topic, backed up by scientific research in education, that can serve as a practical guide for both new and experienced teachers. Is there a proven formula to student exponential growth? It seems that the main ingredients are the following: proper assessment, “the real thing” – practicality and authenticity, creating the flow in class, followed by reinforcement and enough guided self-study time. To be precise, we focus here on applying the right amount of every element, of the best quality only, each one added with love and care, mixed professionally, served fresh and with a big smile.

Measure What You Treasure

Measuring progress is key. How can you be sure your students are advancing at the optimal pace? My first tip for you is to think about the 3 A’s – Arrangement, Adaptation, Adjustment. These three form the cornerstone of didactic evaluation. At the start, we need to carry out careful assessment for learning (to inform teaching and learning), and assessment of learning (to demonstrate achievements) going forward. The fact is that students’ skills and needs are quite varied; often not instantly or fully identified, and subsequently addressed. Therefore, teachers should exercise a good dose of adaptability and make the learning content fit for purpose; in other words, adjust it accordingly. Only then can we talk about unlocking the door to students’ real potential. It is a journey, constant discovery, a learning experience for both parties, the students and teachers. Hence, getting to know each other well through building better rapport is paramount. What also helps is applying the “whole approach,” that is seeing the big picture of each learner, as an individual, independent person with true hopes, beliefs and unique experiences outside of the classroom. This, in particular, justifies the need for a holistic approach to learning and teaching interaction.

Dis(comfort) Zone

Imagine what could happen if you dared to leave your comfort zone more often? You probably thought about new, exciting experiences awaiting you, maybe even a rush of adrenaline went through your heart, lungs, and brain. Well, there is only one way to find out what would really happen. How about giving it a try soon? Here is a clue. Every new experience creates new connections in your brain; neural pathways are formed, which in turn makes you more adaptable to ever-changing circumstances. Simply, it is a quick way to become smarter. Besides, you can teach yourself how to implement tiny changes into your daily routine, gradually, one step at a time. If you are willing to build such atomic habits, you will observe remarkable results in your life. Now, it is time you passed this knowledge on to your students so that they could also become more intentional and strategic about their development. The main message is: Staying in your comfort zone is the enemy of growth. Although realising and accepting the fact may cause some initial discomfort, it is all worth it. Feeling slightly uncomfortable with that pressure is normal, it is a part of success. Most gems need time and pressure to mature in the process, after all.

The Missing Elements

What are the next steps? Discipline yourself, be consistent in what you say and do. You need to be a bit gritty to maintain such integrity. Stay calm and be patient, the results, (you can call it “manifestation of your consistent patterns”) will follow. Be specific and realistic in setting your goals. Yes, you as a teacher, should also stick to the plan. In short, do what you preach, or rather teach. There is nothing better than a good role model. Following by example is authentic, convincing and needs no further explanation. Last but not least, overcoming challenges, getting back up on track after an unpleasant incident or event is another “secret” revealed. Is it possible to turn a challenge into an opportunity? I have checked that and I do know, it is. Challenge, chance and change all start with the same thing, right? What follows matters. Luckily, you can choose to cope with an issue for your own benefit, go through a process of trial and error, and make progress; “or deal” with the initial “ordeal” (pun intended). Adversity alone does not develop resilience, though. Proper evaluation, learning the lesson and making a plan for the future is the ultimate aim. To be honest, it is “filling the gaps” as you go that makes a difference how big the next step is going to be. You can tiptoe or make strides with pride. Remember, we are discussing ideas of how to grow exponentially, that is sharply and significantly.

It’s Your Turn

Let us join the dots: engagement equals empowerment; giving students enough space for autonomy and flexibility enhances taking initiative; this approach positively impacts motivation, self-esteem and leads to better performance. When the responsibility for achieving the learning outcomes is shared, we create a strong sense of community, full of mutual

respect and cooperation. Each learner feels included, recognised and appreciated. The learners start caring for each other more, which is truly rewarding to watch. With such collaboration, a team is formed. Inclusion and diversity come forward. The teacher only facilitates the growth as part of the group. We grow and succeed together. That makes total sense as there is no “I” in “team,” right?

You will probably agree that emotions (“the feel-good factor”) play a significant role as well as thinking about the learning process itself. Indeed, these are the core elements to student exponential growth. That is also why metacognitive skills, emotional intelligence and the art of asking the right questions should be taught in class on a regular basis. Finally, you can consider adding memory improvement techniques to help students remember and recall information better. Critical and analytical thinking skills? Absolutely! It is quite a powerful combination. At this stage, we have clearly moved “from ordinary to extraordinary.”

To conclude, let us remember that self-awareness is the beginning of all wisdom. Knowledge is precious, but only using it is a visible and measurable sign of intelligence. Design your teaching right to make your students bright and smart. It is an art in itself.

Below, you can find one of many activities that I have designed and used with my students successfully. You just need a dice. Make it multisensory, include self-reflection time in class. Enjoy!

Instructions for the students: throw / roll the dice, catch it and check the number. Then, answer the question(s).



NOW, IT'S YOUR TURN!	
WHAT THINGS DID YOU LEARN TODAY? (E.G. VOCABULARY, GRAMMAR)	PRAISE A CLASSMATE FOR GREAT PARTICIPATION IN THE LESSON
HOW ARE YOU GOING TO USE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT TODAY?	WHAT HELPED YOU MOST TO DISCOVER YOUR POTENTIAL TODAY?
WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF THE LESSON TODAY? WHY?	SUMMARISE THE LESSON IN THREE SENTENCES (OR KEYWORDS)
HOW DID YOU FEEL TODAY? WHEN?	SUGGEST A TOPIC FOR THE NEXT LESSON (OR TODAY'S HOMEWORK)
WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT YOUR CLASSMATE(S) TODAY?	DESCRIBE YOURSELF (OR A FRIEND) USING THREE POSITIVE ADJECTIVES
WHAT EFFECTIVE LEARNING STRATEGY DID YOU USE TODAY?	FINISH THE SENTENCE: 'IF I WERE THE TEACHER, I WOULD...'

DESIGNED BY ANNA MACHURA

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ReSTART the planning process: Rethinking the Communicative Approach

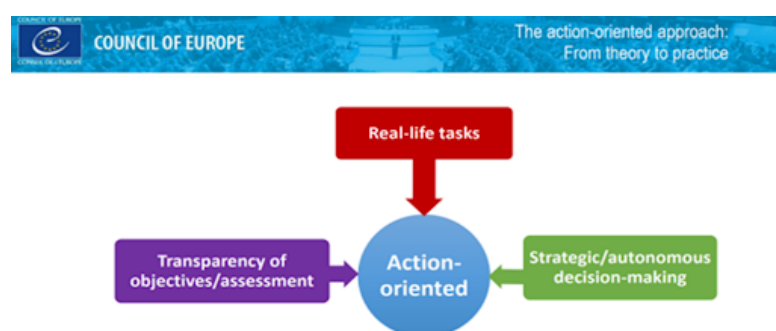
by Nadine Carroll

Aren't you tired of churning out lessons where students do a bit of listening or speaking and writing task for homework? Wouldn't it be better for your learners to have tangible 'products' related to their individual needs? Can't they also decide on the content and reflect on what success looks like for their own context and ability?

ELTed was the inspiration for me to create a model for revolutionising my planning. The idea came to me when I attended a session at the ELT Ireland Annual Conference in Dublin where somebody was presenting the STAR interview technique of Situation, Task, Action, Result and it got me thinking about the work I had been doing recently in preparing students for actual job interviews live in Cork and online.

Background

To add some background, for some years now I have been disillusioned with the communicative approach insofar as if students were speaking, I felt I had done my job, but this is clearly not enough. Having recently been involved with workshops to align the CEFR with learning outcomes, I have come to the conclusion that the Action-oriented Approach (AoA) is the way forward in my language teaching.



Source: E. Piccardo (2019)

The AoA dictates that there is a scenario or a situation like a real-life authentic task that learners need to work towards, and that classroom activity should feed into facilitating that outcome or scenario. I gave the example of a job interview which tied in nicely with the star technique. (See sequence of lessons leading to interview below).

Action-oriented Approach in theory

The **AoA** promotes the organisation of learning through realistic unifying scenarios which span several lessons and lead up to a final collaborative task or project. (COE website)

This approach is a kind of extension of task-based learning (TBL) and / or project-based learning (PBL). As Bandura reminds us, 'action is motivated and directed by cognised goals rather than drawn by remote aims' (Bandura 1989: 1179). We are all often guilty of having lofty or vague or 'taken from the textbook' aims which bear little or no relation to our students' actual needs and wants. By having descriptors that can offer the focus and signposting necessary for a particular real-life scenario (e.g. renting a flat, job interview or even just buying a coffee), the teaching and learning process is driven by action at two levels, both in the design of the curriculum and delivery of classes. The planning process involves planning backwards from our learners' real life communicative needs ensuring alignment between planning, teaching and assessment and using performance descriptors as signposts to communicate to users(or learners) in advance.

In other words, when we find out exactly what an individual student wants to do or achieve with the language we can create scenarios and opportunities for them to realise that goal, e.g deliver a presentation, present a poster, do a podcast etc. Then we can use descriptors which will facilitate the measuring of a learner's ability to do such tasks. In this way, the learner develops over time and can self-assess, receive peer and teacher feedback, and be assessed formatively and summatively.

Action-oriented approach in practice

Here is a sequence of tasks/lessons I planned over 4 weeks with a group of B1+ learners where the ultimate aim/goal/task/ scenario was a final summatively-assessed job interview after 4 weeks of formative assessment.

Series of Lessons

LO's/ assessment criteria		
1	CV creation and feedback	CV adapted depending on type of job student want. Feedback on initial draft of CV
2	Language focus of past and recent activity	Depending on level
3	Creation of cover letter	B2+ Can write formal <i>correspondence such as letters of enquiry, request, application and complaint with appropriate register, structure and conventions.</i> B2 Can use formality and conventions appropriate to the context when writing personal and professional letters and emails. B1 Can write a basic letter of application with limited supporting details.
4	Interview 1# Peer assessment	Confidence of delivery and overall demeanour Knowledge of language related to the specific job Clear and intelligible pronunciation
5	Vocabulary related to roles and responsibilities	Depending on level
6	Research into chosen area/job (hwk)	Based on students' own research and level
7	Create job description (dream job)	Job title and summary, Main responsibilities and skills and competences
8	Revision of past tenses and modality for ability /capability and conditionals for describing hypothetical situations	Depending on level
9	(Practice) Interview for job based on own job description	Self-assessment and peer assessment Informal teacher feedback
10	Interview 2# Teacher assessment (+peer)	B1+ Can carry out a prepared interview, checking and confirming information, though they may occasionally have to ask for repetition if the other person's response is rapid or extended. B1 Can use a prepared questionnaire to carry out a structured interview, with some spontaneous follow up questions. A2+ Can make themselves understood in an interview and communicating ideas and information on familiar topics, provided they can ask for clarification occasionally, and is given some help to express what they want to.

Learning outcomes were taken and adapted from the CEFR. Other teachers covered other areas and other content, e.g. topics such as money, travel or education and language e.g. comparatives, cause and effect etc, but reference was made as to how that content could be relevant to a job interview. The AoA has the learner as a social agent and someone who is strategic and autonomous in their decision making in terms of what type of interview they want and what position they want to apply for. This is far more meaningful than giving learners a contrived scenario like interviewing to work in the circus or for the generic FCE summer job as an intern in a hotel etc, which could be limited in scope and motivation.

As acting Director of Studies and a main course tutor, I lead the team in the introduction of projects to the curriculum. I chose the STAR technique because I intended for teachers to rethink their approach to planning and to avoid blindly teaching the coursebook and going through the motions as it were. I wanted teachers to really address learner's needs in a practical and visible way rather than merely pay lip service to a needs analysis form. By focusing on a finished product or scenario, learners have a tangible outcome – something they have worked on and moulded to suit their own needs. Through self-evaluation and peer and tutor feedback the learner will be in no doubt of their progress and skill development.

START Planning process

In a nutshell, you pick a **situation**/scenario e.g. job interview, newspaper article or podcast etc which is aligned with the learner's field of interest/study or career and then define a **task** or series of tasks to be undertaken to succeed in the scenario. In class you then do activities or take **action** to achieve the outcomes and then you assess the **results** either formatively via formal or informal feedback from peers and/or the teacher or summatively via rubrics. Then comes the reflection – the **Think** stage of the 'ReStart' attitude to planning. This is where you can tweak the process to increase level of difficulty or adapt to a different audience or supplement with more content etc.

Through the transparency of shared, tailored or negotiated learning outcomes, the learners have real agency in the process of learning and responsibility to follow through to achieve the objectives they have set themselves. The autonomous decision-making element inherent in these authentic tasks empowers the learners and allows them to measure and visualise their progress via rubrics, feedback and self-evaluation against the CEFR adapted descriptors.



Source: Nadine Carroll (2023)

Recent examples of latest project

The last (most recent) project that learners were working on at UCC Language Centre was a submission to our whole university student magazine. While getting published is not a scenario that all learners would need or express a wish to do, it does provide an opportunity for learners to write a poem, conduct a survey, do some research or write an extended piece on a topic close to their heart. In this way the product is chosen by the learners and the teacher assesses accordingly depending on the genre etc.

Furthermore, knowing that their work would be “published” and viewed by an audience lent authenticity since learners are likely to have their written work read and “judged” in real life after their course, especially if they work or study in English. I created a list of learning outcomes according to level as a basis for assessing learners' output, but the sense of achievement is palpable when they see their work in print or on the Language Centre's Student Webpage we created for the purposes of collating all the material. This becomes both a showcase and a virtual portfolio for the learners.

See samples from 2 students below who contributed to the college magazine on monthly topics of Fear and Connections respectively.

Source: UCC Language Centre's Student Webpage (2023)

As an A2 student recently commented, 'I am really proud of my article and never thought I would be able to print anything for public'.

This really goes beyond communication for communication's sake in the communicative approach but adds to students' self-worth and ability to take decisions in the trajectory of their learning by:

- negotiating or deciding what success (for them) looks like in a given task
- producing something that is meaningful and personal to them and
- giving them the feeling of autonomy in that process.

So, restart your planning – as Emerson says, 'Tomorrow is a new day – begin it well and serenely with too high a spirit to be cumbered with your old nonsense.'

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<https://rm.coe.int/0900001680a938e4>

Piccardo, E and North, B. (2019)'The Action-oriented Approach: A Dynamic Vision of Language Education'. *Multilingual Matters*

Write it on your Heart – Ralph Waldo Emerson

<https://sites.google.com/ucc.ie/languagecentrestudentspage/fear-articles>
Students articles reproduced here with students permission.



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Nadine Carroll has been teaching English for over 25 years and has worked as DOS and in Academic management. She is a passionate teacher trainer who regularly works as a CELTA tutor and as a University Language Teacher at UCC (Cork). Her involvement with CPD programmes is always fuelled and nourished by maintaining contact with the classroom. She contributes to curriculum development and is currently teaching and engaged in studying Teaching and Learning at UCC.

Distinguishing Language Acquisition from Learning Difficulties in the Adult ESL Classroom

by Veronika Rogochaia

Introduction

ESL teachers occasionally come across advanced students who still struggle with spelling or reading acquisition. Despite our awareness of how to work with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and various literacy difficulties, addressing the needs of such students can be demanding in reality. This article aims to explore the reasons behind these challenges and share my findings and views on the matter.

Definition

Many researchers in the field have noticed that there is a limited number of ESL teachers who are familiar with the distinction between learning difficulties and learning disabilities. This lack of awareness contributes to labelling and confusion in terms of selecting learning materials and managing teacher-student relationships. It's important to note that only learning disabilities affect intelligence whereas learning difficulties create obstacles to a specific form of learning but without affecting IQ. Learning difficulties can be overcome and are not considered insurmountable obstacles to language acquisition. Most of the time it is learning difficulties that we encounter in class.

There are many of them, but the more well-known are:

- dyslexia
- attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- dyspraxia
- dyscalculia

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Assessment

The primary barrier to effectively addressing our students' needs is the lack of prompt recognition and assessment. In practice, the majority of our students come from countries where literacy difficulties are perceived as a disease. Those diagnosed with it may feel labelled and experience stigma and become a stigma. The labelling, coupled with a lack of information, leads to people's fear of being assessed. Consequently, we have a lot of adult students with varying forms of literacy difficulties who remain unaware of their condition and needs. Moreover, they often have already faced negative learning experiences. This, in turn, may lead to disappointment and cause self-consciousness.

In their eagerness to help students, teachers who recognise signs of literacy difficulties, for example, an overwhelming amount of spelling errors or struggles with reading at higher levels, are often inclined to jump to conclusions. Not being trained to assess and diagnose SEN correctly, ESL teachers decide that their students have special needs and may even share these thoughts with the students. Unfortunately, it leads to the opposite of the expected effect. This information may have a devastating impact on students' self-esteem and expectations. They may begin to feel there is something inherently wrong with them, subsequently losing motivation to study—a crucial element in achieving their learning goals.

In the book "Why Do English Learners Struggle With Reading?" the authors give fascinating statistics. They assert that English learners in immersion programs without primary language support were almost three times more likely to be identified for special education than those in bilingual classrooms. Importantly, this identification is based on assumptions rather than an official assessment process conducted by professionals, which means the findings may be biased and unreliable.

"In their eagerness to help students, teachers who recognise signs of literacy difficulties, for example, an overwhelming amount of spelling errors or struggles with reading at higher levels, are often inclined to jump to conclusions."

Of course, there are some testing systems and assessment questionnaires suitable for use by ESL teachers to better understand their students.

Those ESL teachers who suspect literacy difficulties such as dyslexia and ADHD in their adult English learners may find value in a 'Diagnostic Interview for ADHD in Adults (DIVA)' (DIVA Foundation, 2010) and a 'Guide to the Assessment of Adults with Specific Learning Difficulties' (C.Klein, 1993). These diagnostic tools can address many questions, offer clarity to understanding students' struggles and aid in the development of learning materials. However, it is crucial not to share these thoughts with the students until they have been seen and assessed by a professional. As ESL teachers, our role is to educate ourselves, proactively select learning materials, and adapt our teaching methodology to cater to the diverse needs of our students.

Behaviours associated with literacy difficulties

There are many behaviours associated with literacy difficulties.

They include:

- difficulty following directions
- difficulty with phonological awareness
- slow to learn sound-symbol correspondence, difficulty remembering sight words
- difficulty retelling a story in sequence
- confusion with figurative language
- slow to process challenging language
- poor auditory memory
- difficulty concentrating
- frustration, and low self-esteem

Every ESL teacher has observed a student with one or more of the behaviours listed above in their classroom. The official statistics reveal that 100 % of teachers participating in the research reported having at least one undiagnosed student with dyslexia or/and other literacy difficulties (Dyslexia Association Ireland, 2021). Even though the statistics were gathered in primary and secondary mainstream schools in Ireland, it is reasonable to assume that similar numbers can be applied to a multicultural ESL environment, given that dyslexia is a condition that transcends age, nationality, and socio-economic status.

The Dyslexia Association Ireland (DAI) also reports that approximately 10% of school students may have some degree of special needs, particularly related to literacy difficulties. It is a big number that cannot be overlooked and should be considered when designing ESL learning materials and syllabi.

How not to confuse literacy difficulties with acquiring a second language

Surprisingly, the field of distinguishing between learning difficulties and language acquisition remains significantly under-researched with limited literature addressing this matter. Nevertheless, some studies have already offered intriguing perspectives on the subject.

It is noteworthy that behaviours associated with literacy difficulties can be easily mistaken for the ones connected to acquiring a second language (Hoover et al., 2016). A team of scientists compared these conducts and distinguished a few crucial differences that should be considered before concluding special needs. If we take all the behaviours related to literacy difficulties (listed above) and add one or more of the following statements to them, we will get behaviours associated with acquiring a second language (McCardle et al., 2005, Burr et al., 2015, Hoover et al., 2016):

"Even though we avoid the use of L1 in communicative English classrooms, understanding the specifics of our students' first language, their background and any other barriers that may impede understanding of the material is crucial"

Main behaviours related to literacy difficulties	Added statements
difficulty following directions...	
difficulty with phonological awareness...	
slow to learn sound-symbol correspondence...	
difficulty remembering sight words...	
difficulty retelling a story in sequence...	...because the meaning is not well understood
confusion with figurative language..	...in their L1 it works differently
slow to process challenging language...	...with words with multiple meanings
slow to process challenging language...	...students understand more than they can convey
poor auditory memory...	
difficulty concentrating...	
frustration, low self-esteem...	

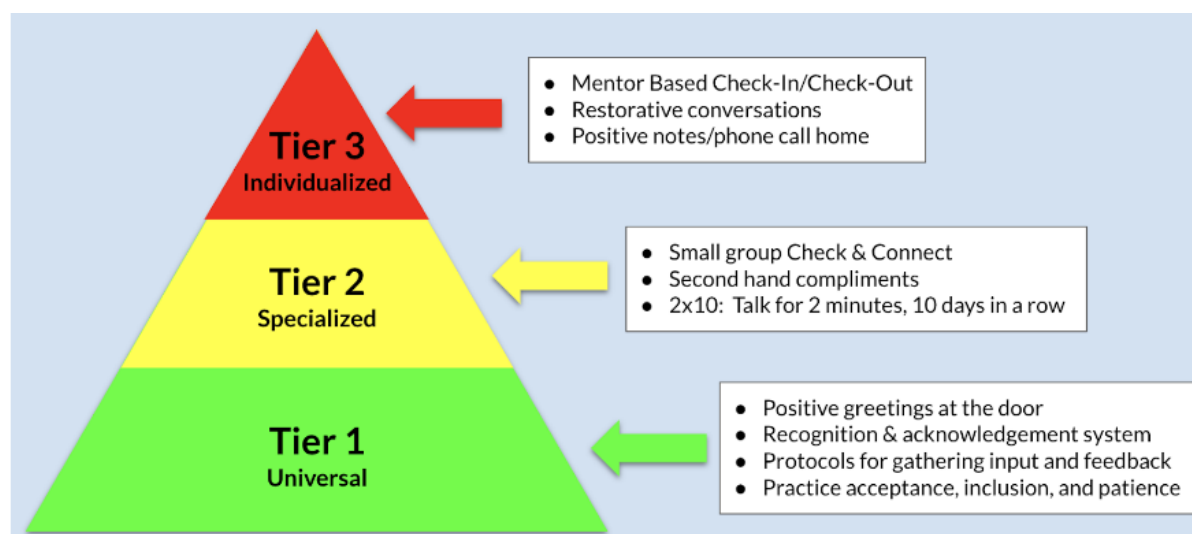
This means that it is important for us as ESL teachers to conduct some research. Even though we avoid the use of L1 in communicative English classrooms, understanding the specifics of our students' first language, their background and any other barriers that may impede understanding of the material is crucial. We must also be aware of the possibility that we may be misled and confuse these two very similar types of behaviour.

What can we do?

Since this field is still being researched, there are not that many techniques that we can apply in our teaching. What I would recommend is implementing MTSS (a multi-tiered system of supports) which is already successfully used in mainstream classrooms and adapting the learning materials, making them diverse and multi-sensory.

Principles of UDL (universal design for learning) are also widely used in schools and colleges and can be beneficial for all our ESL adult learners regardless of their needs. These principles include:

- Multiple Means of Engagement – the “Why of Learning”
- Multiple Means of Representation – the “What of Learning”
- Multiple Means of Action and Expression – the “How of Learning”



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Conclusion

To sum up, addressing the challenges posed by ESL students with literacy difficulties requires a nuanced understanding and proactive approach. The distinction between learning difficulties and learning disabilities, often overlooked, plays a pivotal role in effective teaching. Teachers need to be aware of the prevalence of undiagnosed students with literacy difficulties in their classrooms. While such learners need recognition and assessment, educators should remember that the associated behaviours, if misunderstood, can lead to detrimental effects on students' self-esteem and motivation.

It is important that we, as ESL teachers, avoid premature conclusions about students' needs and seek professional assessments. We can help English learners by educating ourselves, choosing appropriate materials, and adapting methodologies to cater to diverse students' needs. Furthermore, educators should understand the nuances of their first languages, background, and potential barriers to comprehension. Applying techniques such as MTSS and principles of UDL can enhance the inclusivity of teaching methods. I would be pleased if some of my ideas on how we can tackle this situation could help my ESL colleagues.

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The (almost) A-Z of ELT in Ireland

In any profession a mastery of the acronyms that describe its different practices and players is an important part of career development. What these letters stand for is something that classroom teachers often only have a vague awareness of and what role they play in what is happening in the profession. Making an effort to break these codes can unlock the discussions that have an impact on how we work. Here is a list of essential acronyms floating around ELT in Ireland and how the organisations involved describe them.

A is for

ACELS: Accreditation and Coordination of English Language Services

"The national body currently responsible for the development and management of an inspection / recognition scheme for English Language Education providers nationally. ACELS was established in 1969 under the auspices of the then Irish Department of Education and the aim was to manage and develop standards through an inspection/recognition scheme."

In 2012 ACELS was incorporated into QQI but, "Since a court ruling in January 2015, ACELS, as a non-statutory function of QQI, has only been able to continue its mandate on a restricted basis. It therefore continues to inspect and monitor the ACELS recognised providers, as at the time of the ruling, but is not permitted to open for new applications from other English language education providers (ELE)." Three years after the International Education Mark is fully operational, the ACELS scheme will be discontinued. Read more at: www.acels.ie

ALPHE: Agents, Language Providers and Higher Education

Alphe Conferences are 2 day in-country events, which are an opportunity for language providers, high schools and higher education institutions to meet in person with study travel agents from around the world." Twelve conferences are now held worldwide in London, Frankfurt, Tokyo, Seoul, Bangkok, Taipei, São Paulo, Istanbul, Spain and Hong Kong."

Read more at: www.studytravel.network/alphe/conferences

ALTO: Association of Language Travel Organisation.

A "forum that joins leading educational travel agents, language schools, international academic course providers, universities, national associations and service providers as one global community. Membership is open to the leaders and decision makers of organisations involved in international education."

Read more at: www.altonet.org

ALTE: Association of Language Testers in Europe

"ALTE is an association of language test providers who work together to promote the fair and accurate assessment of linguistic ability across Europe and beyond. ALTE organises training and conferences on aspects of language assessment, and operates a quality auditing system of European language examinations."

Read more at: www.alte.org

AMCF: Academic Management Competency Framework from EAQUALS

This professional development framework, "has been designed to provide guiding principles and tools for managers which will contribute to the enhancement of quality in language teaching and learning. The AMCF comprises descriptors spanning four development levels to represent the range of competences that might be required across an academic manager's role. It is intended as a tool to support managers in the awareness raising of their own strengths and possible development paths."

Read more at: www.eaquals.org/resources/the-eaquals-academic-management-competency-framework/

B

C is for

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

First published by the Council of Europe in 2001 and extended in 2020, "CEFR provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively."

Read more at: www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/uses-and-objectives

CELT: Certificate in English Language Teaching

This initial teacher qualification was developed by ACELS as a national equivalent to Cambridge ESOL's CELTA, Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults. From 2021 the CELT course has been replaced with the new QQI award Certificate in TESOL.. Read more at: www.acels.ie/celt

CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning

“CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both subject content and language [... so that] there is a focus not only on content, and not only on language. It is an innovative fusion of both. Across the European Union, advocates of CLIL cite four benefits of the CLIL approach to MFL learning and teaching. CLIL; supports authentic language use, promotes inter-linguistic awareness, models real language use in context, focus on communication and fluency. Read more at: www.ppli.ie/teaching-and-learning/clil/

CoP: Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners

“One of the statutory functions of QQI is the establishment of a Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners (the Code) and the authorisation of an International Education Mark (IEM) for use by providers in compliance with the Code. This statutory Code sets out expectations relating to the quality of services and supports available to international learners in Ireland.”

Read more at: www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/quality-assurance-of-education-and-training/what-is-the-international-education-mark and see PDF of the Code of Practice

D is for**DFHERIS: Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science**

This is the Irish government department that has responsibility, through QQI, for the English language Education sector and “is responsible for policy, funding and governance of the Higher and Further Education and research sectors and for the oversight of the work of the State agencies and public institutions operating in those areas.”

Read more at: www.gov.ie/en/organisation/departments-of-higher-education-innovation-and-science

E is for**EAL: English as an Additional Language**

This refers to “students for whom English is an additional language [and who] may require support and scaffolding. There is no such thing as a ‘typical’ EAL learner. [...] Each student will have different pastoral, social, linguistic, academic, and cognitive needs based on their background and life experience.” There are no specific requirements in Ireland for a primary or secondary school teacher to take on English language teaching duties. Read more at: www.pdst.ie/post-primary/literacy/eal

EAQUALS: originally European Association of Quality Language Schools

This association aims, “To foster excellence in language education across the world by providing leadership, guidance and support to governments, teaching institutions and individuals. Equals provides practical guidance and support to both teaching institutions and individuals through Equals Accreditation.” In recent years it has moved beyond the original focus on Europe to and has dropped the use of the acronym from its logo. Read more at: www.eaquals.org

EI: Enterprise Ireland

“Enterprise Ireland is the Irish state agency responsible for supporting the development of manufacturing and internationally traded services companies.” It also “manages the Education in Ireland national brand under the authority of the Minister of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science. Enterprise Ireland is responsible for the promotion of Irish Higher Education Institutions overseas.” This has been expanded to cover English language education as part of the development of the IEM.

Read more at: www.educationinireland.com/en/about-us/

ELE & ELTO: English Language Education & English Language Teaching Organisation

ELE is the term used by government bodies and policy makers to distinguish courses provided by private sector language schools, which are referred to collectively as English Language Teaching Organisations. ELE includes foundation year programmes run by ELTO which prepare students to undertake higher education. The term ELE Provider has replaced ELTO more recently.

Read more at: www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/quality-assurance-of-education-and-training/english-language-education

ELSU: English Language Students’ Union

An organisation which came prominence during the pandemic closure of schools, aiming to “represent and fight for English Language Students’ rights in all aspects of their experience as a student, worker, their health, living conditions and wellbeing (physical, mental and emotional).” It has also been involved in highlighting attacks on delivery drivers in the media. Read more at: www.elsu.ie

ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages

In the further education sector ESOL is the term used to describe English language teaching, which is mainly delivered through the literacy services of the country ETBs (Education and Training Boards) which has been given the job of integrating refugees and asylum seekers. There is a more developed ESOL sector in the UK. Read more at: www.adulteducationsoutheast.com/about/esol/

EPG: European Profiling Grid

This is a Continuing Professional Development framework “with descriptors spanning six ‘development phases’ in a language teacher’s professional evolution. It is available in 13 languages and is being used by schools, universities and language teaching institutions in many countries to help language teachers assess their professional strengths and training needs, and to support people who are managing and supporting teachers.”

Read more at: <https://www.eaquals.org/our-expertise/teacher-development/the-european-profiling-grid/>

F,G,H,**I is for****IALC: International Association of Language Centres**

“An international non-profit association that for 40 years has been accrediting independent language centres that teach the language of their country. As well as outstanding teaching standards and service, IALC language schools have individual character and a real connection with their local community.” Members must, “Be independent of a chain, corporate group or franchise network of more than six language schools.” Read more at: www.ialc.org

IATEFL: International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language

Founded in “1967 as a forum for English language teachers (ELT) and other professionals to make contact with one another and share ideas, [IATEFL is] now one of the largest and most internationally representative teaching associations in the world.” It “is a global professional membership association, and a UK registered charity [... that] support[s] teachers and other ELT professionals in their professional development, and provide[s] a platform where they can offer their views, exchange research and teaching experiences and learn from each other.” They do this through their annual IATEFL conference held over 5 days in different locations in the UK each year, and a wide variety of Special Interest Groups.

Read more at: www.iatefl.org/about

ICOS: International Council of Overseas Students

The organisation collaborates “with our members, student organisations and government agencies to ensure that international education policy and practice in Ireland is quality-driven and remains firmly focused on the educational and social needs of all students.” ICOS is governed by its “26 institutional members, including all of the universities and technological universities in the Republic of Ireland, many of the Institutes of Technology and all the major independent third level colleges” and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI). Read more at: www.internationalstudents.ie/about-icos

ICEF: International Consultants for Education and Fairs

States that its mission is to, “drive excellence in international education, through professional development, market insight and gathering the industry together at an increasing number of specialist events.” Including the flagship conference held in Berlin each November for thousands of agents and education providers from over 110 countries.

IEM: International Education Mark

This “is a new statutory quality mark and part of a suite of legislative measures designed to protect international learners. The new mark will be awarded to higher education and English language education providers who have demonstrated that they meet national standards to ensure a quality experience for international learners from pre-enrolment through to the completion of their programme of education and training.” It is due to begin accepting applications in 2024.

Read more at: www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/quality-assurance-of-education-and-training/what-is-the-international-education-mark

ILSG: Independent Language Schools Group

“Formed in 2019 to cater for quality independent language schools and quickly grew to more than 20 schools in 2020.” ILSG was formed because “the closure of the ACELS scheme meant [that the schools’ association Marketing English in Ireland] was effectively prevented from welcoming new members.” This meant that schools who started after 2015 had no formal basis to lobby the government during the pandemic. ILSG joined forces with MEI at the start of 2021.

Read more at: www.studytravel.network/magazine/news/0/27946

ILEP: Interim List of Eligible Programmes

Schools that “wish to provide third level or English language programmes to non-EEA / non-Swiss nationals must apply for inclusion on the Interim List of Eligible Programmes (ILEP). Providers must meet certain criteria for each type of approved programme to be included on the ILEP.” This, “is an interim measure until the introduction of the International Education Mark (IEM) by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). When launched, the new mark will be awarded to higher education and English language providers meeting national standards. Once the IEM is fully implemented, providers must gain authorisation to use the IEM to be eligible to recruit international students.

Read more at: www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-study-in-ireland/what-are-my-study-options/interim-list-of-eligible-programmes-ilep/

IRP: Irish Residence Permit (previously a GNIB card)

This, “is a small wallet-sized card that shows you are legally in the State through the type of immigration permission you have, represented by a stamp number. Each stamp shows what you can do while you are here, for instance study, work or invest in a business.” If you are coming to Ireland from outside the EU and Switzerland, and wish to stay for more than 90 days, you must apply for an immigration permission and then register it once it’s granted.

Read more at: www.irishimmigration.ie/registering-your-immigration-permission/information-on-registering/irish-residence-permit

ISD: Immigration Service Delivery officer of the Department of Justice,

Based in their offices on Burgh Quay, this is “an executive office of the Department of Justice. It is responsible for the administrative functions of the Minister for Justice in the areas of: immigration, visa, international protection, citizenship matters.” It is responsible for ILEP and has been separated from the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB), which deals with; border control, registrations, permission to remain, deportations and investigations.

Read more at: www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/5ba62-immigration-international-protection-and-citizenship-services

J is for

JLC: Joint Labour Committee

This is an independent body which brings together employer and worker representatives to set minimum employment conditions in a certain sector.” A Joint Labour Committee for English Language Schools was established in 2020 by order of the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Read more at: www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2020/si/42/made/en/print

K,L

M is for

MEI: Marketing English in Ireland

This “is the leading and longest-serving association of English Language Education (ELE) providers in Ireland. MEI have been representing English language schools all across Ireland since the 1960s.” It represents schools in meetings with government bodies and runs events marketing Ireland as a study destination. MEI was previously branded MEI - RELSA (Recognised English Language School Association) and offered a three week initial teacher qualification titled the RELSA Certificate in Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language. Read more at: www.mei.ie/about-us/

N is for

NA: National Agency - Erasmus+

“The EU works with National Agencies to bring the Erasmus+ programme as close as possible to the participants. The National Agencies are based in EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme and their role involves; providing information on Erasmus+, selecting projects to be funded, monitoring and evaluating Erasmus+, supporting applicants and participants, working with other National Agencies and the EU, promoting Erasmus+, sharing success stories and best practices” In Ireland the national agency is Leargas which focuses on Irish people going to other countries under Erasmus+. Read more at: www.erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/contacts/national-agencies

NFQ & NARIC: National Framework of Qualification & National Academic Recognition Information Centre

“The NFQ allows you to compare qualifications to help with your choice of programme or course, knowing that it will be recognised at home and abroad. All qualifications included on the NFQ are listed in the Irish Register of Qualifications. If your qualification was obtained outside Ireland, NARIC Ireland, the National Academic Recognition Information Centre will help you find out how your qualification is understood in Ireland.”

Read more at: www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-framework-of-qualifications

O

P is for

PCN: Progressive College Network

This organisation was formed “to meet the demand for an alternate representative body for the private college community in Ireland.” It comprises schools that are not members of MEI and is focused on lobby on behalf of these schools regarding changes in the regulation in the English language sector in Ireland since 2015. Read more at: www.pcn.ie/about-pcn/

Prep. ELE: Preparatory English Language Education Certificate

“This is a Certificate in English Language Teaching to Secondary Level Students (awarded to State Qualified Teachers).” It was developed and certified by ACELS but from 2021 QQI “has ceased renewing providers’ recognition and certifying trainees for this course. Providers can still offer the Prep-ELE course and self-certify trainees on course completion.”

Read more at: www.acels.ie/prepelt

The PIE: Professionals in International Education

"A trusted, leading voice in the international education sector, connecting professionals, institutions and the businesses that support hundreds of thousands of people to study abroad every year." It was "founded in 2011 to provide news and insights for the industry. Today, we reach almost 200,000 unique readers each month from 143 countries."

Read more at: <https://thepienews.com/about-us/>

Q is for

QA: Quality Assurance

"An ongoing, continuous process of monitoring, evaluating, maintaining and enhancing the quality of an education system, institution or programme. [...] QA processes promote accountability, openness and transparency. They also help ensure that, at the end of a programme of study or training, the qualification awarded to a learner is credible and trustworthy." This is a core element of QQI accreditation. Read more at: www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/quality-assurance-of-education-and-training

QE: Quality English

"Quality Education colleges are carefully selected from the best independent colleges offering academic and vocational courses which are taught in English. They offer exceptional service, unique character and a choice of courses. They must be independent and accredited." There are 65 schools and colleges in the group from the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Malta, USA, Canada, Cyprus or South Africa. Read more at: <https://www.quality-english.com/about-us/>

QQI: Quality and Qualifications Ireland

"An independent State agency to promote the enhancement of quality in Ireland's further and higher education and training, quality assure providers, and to support and promote a qualifications system that benefits learners and other stakeholders." The International Education Division of QQI is responsible for the roll-out of the International Education Mark which is one of the organisation's statutory functions. Read more at: www.qqi.ie

R is for

RELSA: Recognised English Language School Association

See MEI

S is for

SI: Select Ireland

"A group of well established and vastly experienced independent English Language Schools located in Ireland." This is a group of nine schools within MEI that work together to market them as being distinct. Read more at: www.select-ireland.com

STN: Study Travel Network

"StudyTravel brings together agents and education consultants, who recruit and advise students, with educators who are looking for international students." It is the publisher of Study Travel magazine which "is read by over 22,000 agent readers in 129 countries, providing news, statistics and market insights on all of the industry sectors." as well as organiser trade events. Read more at: <https://studytravel.network/magazine/overview>

T is for

TEFL & TESOL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language & Teaching English as a Second / Other language

These are catch-all terms which describe the full range of initial teacher training courses from the more cursory online training to a full masters programme, which is often called an MA TESOL. The Cert. TESOL and Dip TESOL from Trinity College London is second only to the Cambridge certificates in international recognition.

U is for

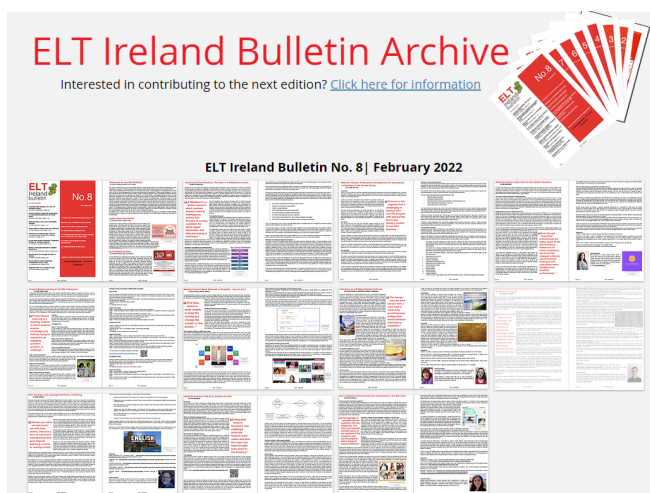
UFLT: Unite's English Language Teachers Branch

Unite the union has had an English Language Teachers' branch since 2017. "Working for better working conditions and standards within the English Language Education sector." Read more at: www.eltunite.com

V,W,XYZ

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