

ELT Ireland bulletin



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Editor: Peter Lahiff

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Welcome to the ELT Ireland Bulletin!

by Dr. Lou McLaughlin (President of ELT Ireland)

Welcome to the first ELT Ireland Bulletin. Since our foundation little over a year ago, ELT Ireland has gone from strength to strength. This has been due to the hard work and dedication of the committee members and also to the great support shown for the association by all ELT professionals throughout Ireland and our Irish counterparts living abroad.

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 is to provide the platform for these shared networks throughout Ireland to flourish. We have already begun to form the initial foundations for these working relationships which have been laid over the last twelve months.

Connecting to the world

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

Our affiliation allows Irish ELT professionals access to that worldwide network. ELT Ireland has also developed partnerships with both IATEFL Poland and the English Language Teachers Association of the Czech Republic. These agreements provide the opportunity for our members to attend and partake in their annual conferences, thus leading to further opportunities for development.

Development to date

Over the last year, we have seen our fellow ELT colleagues become more involved with various aspects of ELT Ireland. Our fortnightly #eltchinwag has produced many lively discussions ranging from material development, to learning styles to opportunities for CPD. Colleagues from around the world have joined us for these chats and, in doing so, have brought new insights and opinions from a variety of cultural contexts. Our ELT-ed (Education & Development) sessions which took place in Dublin, Limerick and Cork, 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 This very bulletin 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. Finally, our first annual conference here in Dublin has been the major milestone for our development as a professional ELT association.

As President of ELT Ireland, I am honoured to be a part of these developments and growing connections and to share the passion that I have for ELT. It has been a privilege to work with the other committee members who share the same drive and interest in creating something which we hope will last for many years to come.

All the best,
Lou



Group photo from ELT Ireland's inaugural event, ELTed Dublin, in April 2014

Pic by ELT Ireland

Bulletin Review Panel

All ELT Ireland Bulletin articles, with the exception on those marked as features, have been recommended by a review panel and revised in accordance with suggestions from the reviewer.

Thanks to Louise Guyette, Lou McLaughlin, Jane Seely, Daniel Zuchowski for their help with the review and editing process .
The Editor.

I'd like to write an article but ...

by Peter Lahiff (Events Coordinator of ELT Ireland)

The ELT Ireland Article Writing Forum was set up to encourage members to write about English language teaching. It is not a seminar about writing, but an open forum where people can generate ideas and get suggestions and give each other support. When they are first introduced to it the response of many people is, "I'd like to write an article but ...". Here are some answers to the most common 'buts'.

... I don't have anything original to say

A quick search for any ELT related topic would turn up that a large number of journals, articles, blogs and tweets that have already been written about it. It is easy to see why you would come to the conclusion that anything worth saying has already been said by someone more eminent and well-qualified. A closer look at those writings would show that only a very small number are truly original. Most of them are discussions on familiar ideas and reflections on or recommendations for implementing them in different contexts or in different ways. Writing about an idea does not lay claim to being its originator, but it pushes it to the forward once again, bringing it to the notice of a new audience, and helping to give it the attention it deserves.

If your mind is still blank when you sit down to write, then the best way to crystallise your ideas is in conversation. As you talk, fragmentary thoughts become coherent arguments. As you listen to others, new ideas are sparked from the often unexpected connections between their knowledge or experience and your own. At the Article Writing Forum participants often surprise themselves with the ideas they come up with.

... I couldn't write an academic article

Writing about ELT does not have to mean digging back into your university experience to write an academic article. You can start with 140 characters tweeting on an ELT-related topic. The best way to get started with this is by joining in on one of ELT Ireland's twice-monthly twitter chats #eltchinwag - just search for this hashtag to find the most recent tweets and include it when you comment.

Blogs are another a fantastic way get started, and three to four hundred words is enough. These are a great way to reflect on an experience or capture an idea. If you develop a following then you will also have the benefit of some feedback, but to begin with just consider it as a professional conversation with yourself. These contributions don't need to be the result of research but it is good to get into the habit of referencing. Use these to let your readers know where you first came across an idea, what the terms used really mean, and where they can find out more. It doesn't matter if you didn't take notes or you can't remember exactly. A few minutes of judicious searching should give you what you need.

“Editors spend most of their time worrying about how to get contributions in, not keep them out”

... I don't know how to go about getting published

An important thing to know about editors of publications is that their biggest concern is how to get enough content to fill their pages in time for the deadline. They spend most of their time worrying about how to get contributions in, not keep them out. Having said that, the more familiar you are with what a particular publication and who it is aimed at, the easier it is to get something into it. The best training for writing is reading.

There are three types of publications, commercial, professional and academic. Commercial publications are directed those involved in the marketing of courses, professional publications are directed at those who make these courses happen, and the last type are those who study different aspects of teaching and learning. Professional publications are the best place to start, their interest in usually in something that you have tried out and which you can recommend to others and explain how they can go about it. References are usually kept to a maximum of five and not then only at the end. Academic articles are usually reviewed by two people who decide whether to recommend it to the editor and may suggest changes. If any of these publications types are interested in your topic, they will



Redrafting is probably the hardest part of writing, but it is essentially to getting it to come out right

Pic by ELT Ireland

work with you to make sure it fits. This process is meant to be constructive so be prepared to be flexible.

... I don't think I'd get anything out of it

Writers do not really exist in isolation, their work is part of a conversation with other writers and an effort to make sense of the world around them. Teaching too can be solitary. It is often left to a single person to wrestle with the challenges behind their closed classroom door, with both struggles and achievements are hidden from view. The academic manager's position can be even more isolating, without the safety valve of a staffroom where frustrations can be vented. Writing about our experience plugs us into a broader professional community and helps us make sense of what we do. Publishing also helps us to build up a professional profile for ourselves, for English language teaching in general and for Ireland in particular as place where that is done to a high-standard.

The writing forum is open to all ELT Ireland members and staff of member institutions and is a place for sounding out and generating ideas, getting suggestions, and supporting each other's' development as a professional community. New people are always welcome. The Article Writing Forum met several times in the last year, calling on the hospitality of member institutions, with between six and twenty people participating each time. We'd be happy to bring it to your place, just send us an email Whether large or small there is always a lively generation of ideas, some of which have ended up filling the pages of this bulletin. No more 'buts', just come along and see.



Article Writing Forum

How we Hosted an ELTed in Limerick

by James Gaffney (Director of English Week)

I attended ELT Ireland's launch event in April 2014. It was an ELTed – Education and Development event in the Teachers' Club in Dublin, and it was a great occasion.

The enthusiasm in the room was infectious, from the committee to the speakers to the attentive audience. The ELTed events are modelled on the TED Talks, the difference being that at an ELTed, teachers and other professionals in the Irish ELT sector deliver short, informative talks, informed by their experiences and research in the ELT classroom. The focus of the talks is largely practical rather than theoretical; the aim being to improve the quality of the ELT sector in Ireland.

In her opening address, Dr Lou McLaughlin, President of ELT Ireland, remarked that too many Irish schools seemed to be overly protective of their slice of the ELT cake; she observed that there seemed to be very little sharing of ideas and practical experiences among teachers of different schools. It was into this vacuum that ELT Ireland stepped. Continuing the metaphor, she said that if ELT Ireland could play a role in promoting best practices in ELT, the cake could grow bigger for everyone.

At the coffee (and cake!) break, Lou asked me if I would be interested in hosting the next ELTed in Limerick. One thing that struck me was Lou's determination that ELT Ireland would be a genuinely all-Ireland organisation, rather than Dublin-centric. Before I knew it, I had an ELTed of my own to organise within seven short weeks.

While organising such an event seemed daunting at first, in fact, with the help of the ELT Ireland Committee and my colleagues at Limerick City College, it was very manageable.

Our preparations were helped immensely by Lou McLaughlin and Peter Lahiff, ELT Ireland's Events Coordinator. We devised a schedule with a strict timeline for the project. ELT Ireland all the promotional materials.

I printed the event programmes, while I also organised camera operators to film the event. In keeping with ELT Ireland's embracing of the digital space, it was important to have high quality video to upload for those who couldn't attend in person. Traditional media wasn't neglected completely though; I also publicised the event in the local papers as well as local events websites, along with the obligatory social media sharing in the lead-up to the event.

Our main challenge was ensuring that we had a line-up of qualified, motivated and relevant speakers for the day itself. As the days ticked down to the main event, we still had several gaps in our running order. That's where drawing on our networks, persistence, and good old persuasion came in.

When the 7th of June finally arrived, we had a full line-up of speakers, and were treated to a range of fascinating talks; motivation, music, practical corpus linguistics, pronunciation, error corrections, syllabus design, interactive teaching tools and cultural integration were the topics covered by our panel. You can watch videos of all the talks at ELTed Limerick on the ELTed page of the ELT Ireland website.

While ELT professionals are undoubtedly busy people, and might be put off hosting an ELTed, I would say that it is well worth it. ELT Ireland offer lots of support, making it very doable. Not only that, but the benefits, such as networking opportunities, showcasing your institution and motivating your team, make the extra work well worth it.

Group photo from ELTed Limerick 2014 hosted by Limerick City College and Organised by James Gaffney (far rt.)

If you would like to host an ELT Ireland event in your part of the country then email us at info.eltireland@gmail.com

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