

MY IATEFL'S 2012 EXPERIENCE

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Keep the candle burning and keep the dream growing!

This year I am extremely happy to participate in the 46th IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language) Conference 2012 that was held in Glasgow, Scotland, from 19th to 23rd of March, 2012. Moreover I was also proud to be selected by British Council Kazakhstan as a participant of IATEFL for setting up ELUTA and attracting more than 100 English teachers in TA work within a year. I was granted to visit Scotland and what's more to attend the IATEFL conference for the first time.

As ever, I am extremely grateful to the British Council Kazakhstan, namely, Ardak Bekturova – Projects Manager, Brian Maguire – EL Consultant, Gulmira Rymbayeva – Projects Officer, for helping to broaden my experience and ideas and visit a truly unforgettable event.



The annual conference is a major event in the ELT calendar and I think my colleagues are delighted to know from my feedback that this year in Glasgow didn't disappoint! There were 2,500 delegates from 116 countries, and a total of 581 sessions given by 650 presenters. The aim of the conference was to link, to develop and to support English Language Teaching professionals worldwide.

British Council Glasgow online grew to around 60,000 delegates from over 170 countries. This represents an approximate increase of 20% on last year. There are around 50 video sessions and 70 interviews on the site, so if you couldn't come to the conference, or missed a talk that was recorded, there's still the chance of many worthwhile viewing hours ahead the Glasgow Online website at <http://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2012>. The Glasgow Online website features live and on-demand video webcasts of conference presentations and workshops, video interviews, moderated discussion forums, photo albums and conference reports.

Glasgow Online provides teacher audiences worldwide with an opportunity to share ideas with colleagues before, during and after the conference. Last year over 50,000 teachers all over the world spent over 15,000 hours watching the video we made available as part of the IATEFL Glasgow Online Project.

The delegation from Kazakhstan was presented by Gulmira Rymbayeva – the British Council Kazakhstan, Svetlana Shesterneva – journalist of the newspaper “Panorama”, Viktoria Kondratenko – English Teacher of the Shymkent Academy of Languages and me.

There were three main Venues: Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre, Clyde, and Crown Plaza Hotel. The Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre is situated near the River Clyde and is within walking distance of a wide range of hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions.

During the Conference there were numerous ELT resources exhibitors and a Poster Forum where fascinated teachers walked around stands the whole day studying new literature and discussing with other participants and editors, sometimes if they were lucky, even with authors. The generous-sized exhibition hall was likely to stumble across demonstrations of new books, learners' and teaching adds, dictionaries and e-resources presenting by Macmillan, Oxford University Press, Collins, Cambridge University Press, Pearson, Longman, etc.

The brand new books on English Testing and Teaching, Blended Learning and Technology in the Classroom flew off the stands, and no new dictionary or course book was complete without an interactive CD-ROM or even a DVD-ROM.

NEWS!!!

On this Conference the British Council had been hosting a networking reception to launch its brand new website – Learn English Teens - <http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/>. This new website is aimed at teenagers around the world who is learning English as a foreign language and accompanies the popular LearnEnglish, LearnEnglish Kids, and TeachingEnglish websites.

One of the most pleasant moments in this Conference was to see my colleague Saltanat Meiramova who makes research work on the State Programme “Bolashak” this academic year in Scotland, Glasgow. She was the only reporter from Kazakhstan. We attended her Section where she made a wonderful presentation with a paper "Applying a cognitive approach to teaching figurative language in TEFL classes".

Saltanat Meiramova in her paper examines the useful effect of a cognitive approach to the process of acquiring figurative language in TEFL classes at university level in Kazakhstan. Part of this approach involves the use of a classification of colour-based figurative expressions and colour symbolization in English and three other languages, namely French, Russian and Kazakh. The author argues that the existence of common patterns of idiomaticity in English, French, Russian and Kazakh languages of different origins proves that idioms cannot always be regarded as strictly culture-bound elements. Rather, they seem to be the result of commonly shared human experience. Finally, the paper is regarded as the attempt to define what essential teaching skills, content knowledge, contextual knowledge, specialized cognitive skills teachers need to find out the optimal ways to teach students to figurative language by using a cognitive approach based on practical pedagogical experience at university level in Kazakhstan, and how these can be acquired.

Moreover she presented her paper "New Strategies in EAP/ESP Teaching in Kazakhstan: Task-based Approach Application" at the Pre-Conference Event on theme "Cutting-edge developments in teacher education, materials design, and assessment and testing in ESP and EAP" – 19 March 2012. The purpose of this Pre-Conference Event is to provide a topical overview of cutting-edge developments in the above-mentioned three areas of ESP and EAP across the continents.

S. Meiramova notes that in Kazakhstan English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) are core disciplines for students studying in majors “Foreign language: Two Foreign Languages” and “Foreign Philology”. EAP/ESP teachers face new challenges, working with materials and tasks from different subject areas and enriching repertoire of teaching techniques and the rationale for their appropriate use.

Though as it was mentioned above over 2,500 ELT professionals, including teachers, trainers, authors, publishers, and providers of in-service training took part in this conference, all arrangements were well-organized. Noteworthy every Day Conference Programme includes:

08.15 - 08.45 – “How to ...” track

08.30 – 17.30 – Exhibition

09.00 – 10.10 – Plenary Session

10.25 – 18.40 – Sessions, Presentations, Symposiums, Talks, Workshops

18.45 – 21.30 – Evening Events

We take it for granted that our days were so busy that we hot debated our preferable attendances so that to manage in time to go everywhere as much as possible.

It goes without saying that there were following significant Plenary speakers: Diana Laurillard, Steve Thorne, Adrian Underhill, James E.Zull, and Derek Dick (Fish) that we highly appreciated.

In addition we decided to follow different tracks and sessions through the Conference. This was made easier by the programme which, as well as giving detailed descriptions of every workshop, provided a section called *Areas of Interest*. It gave delegates hints who were interested in specific subjects and overview of the workshops in that area of interest, e.g. *English for specific purposes (ESP), materials design, teacher development, and global issues*.

Totally we visited numerous sessions and workshops, some were interesting and new, and some were hackneyed and boring. Having a long teaching experience I dare say that several sessions nevertheless were not urgent or new for Kazakhstani English teachers that's why they were not of great interest for us. This is a particularly effective way to develop due to the planning and research which takes place before the session as well as the discussion and feedback which it provokes.

It is obviously that in the frame of involving people in the process of getting knowledge of a foreign language by using information communication technologies there has been opened the great opportunity before professional continuous development. There are plenty of ways to keep up your continuous professional development in ELT. If several of these activities are combined into a planned, interlinked programme, with monitoring and evaluation, even if only by the teacher him or herself, there can be real, satisfying results for teachers wishing to keep up and improve their professional development.

In addition, it's good if a teacher can keep up to date on relevant literature, theory and practice; have thoughts on their own role as a change agent; and keep developing.

There is a lot to be learnt through taking advantage of all the experienced and expert practitioners in the field of ELT here in Glasgow by attending sessions they gave to us. Knowing these names from readily-available articles and books written by 'experts' and participating in workshop or talks with these invited professionals is fantastic fabula.

We are lucky to attend a very useful track "How to create a Personal Learning Network (PLN)" by Nik Peachey. The word PLN seems to have become very popular recently, so Nik Peachey taught us how it works.

What's a PLN?

- Firstly, PLN stands for personal (or professional) learning network. That's fine but what is a personal learning network and why would we need one?

- Well a PLN is a group of people, any people that can help you to develop and learn. He thinks it's very important to stress that a PLN is people, because so much talk about PLN gets tangled up in technology and websites etc, but at the heart of PLN is the concept of people who connect together to help each other grow and learn.

- The technology comes in because it is a tool that can help you to connect to those people and it can help you process the information you get from those people into meaningful and hopefully useful knowledge.

Nowadays Nik is tempted to believe that anything you need to know or learn can be found on the Internet, if you know where to look, but that knowing where to look can be challenging. As Michael Wesch wrote in 'A Vision of Students Today' in 2008 "more than 2,000 gigabytes of new information is being created every second". That's an awful lot of information to sort through to find what you need, but that's where your PLN can help. They can point you the necessary articles, the best sources of information and guide you along the way, so that you save time and access the highest quality resources.

For N.Peachey though, the PLN and accessing useful information is just the beginning of turning that information into knowledge. In order to truly develop he believes you need apply some critical thinking to that information, try to apply what you have learned to your own context and most of all feed what you have learned about the information back into the global community from which your PLN was formed.

So let's get started on the first part of that process and that is connecting to those people.

There are many web based tools that can help you to connect with other English language teachers, but here N.Peachey starts with just 3.

The first of those and probably the most useful is Twitter. Creating a Twitter account is quite simple and it's free. Just go to <http://twitter.com/> click on 'Sign up' and follow the instructions.

Okay so now you have a Twitter account, but that doesn't mean you have a PLN. In order to get that you need to start 'following' people'. To follow people you just need to go to their profile and click on 'Follow'.

Following the right people is very important because you need to follow people that share the kinds of information that you will be interested in. Here is a good list of people to help you get started. When you visit the links below you'll see a column of 'tweets' (short information statements'). Be sure to look through them. If you don't find them interesting then don't follow them, but if you do, clicking on follow will mean that all the information they share will come directly to your Twitter page. It will also mean that you can respond to the information and post questions to these people.

According to Peachey's choice he **recommends following Twitter people:**

- <http://twitter.com/thornburyscott>
- <http://twitter.com/LukeMeddings>
- http://twitter.com/English_Phrases
- <http://twitter.com/ozge>
- <http://twitter.com/vale24>
- <http://twitter.com/SeanBanville>
- <http://twitter.com/esolcourses>
- <http://twitter.com/russell1955>
- <http://twitter.com/harmerj>
- <http://twitter.com/NikPeachey>
- <http://eltchat.com/>

So that is the beginning of your PLN. Another good source of contacts is the tried and tested traditional Yahoo groups and discussion lists. They aren't as fashionable as Twitter, but there are still some great sources of information and some really useful contacts to be made through them. The other good thing is that the information comes directly to your email inbox; you just need to send an email subscribing to the list. Here are some his **recommended Email discussion lists** that you might think about subscribing to:

- http://groups.yahoo.com/group/evonline2002_webheads/
- <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/learningwithcomputers/>
- <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/~tesl-l/>
- http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/dir/Schools__Education/

The third suggestion N.Peachey has for building your PLN is web based social networks. When most teachers think about social networks they think of Facebook, but that isn't the only one. There are many web based social networks which were constructed specifically for teachers, and all you have to do is sign up. Here are some networks that you could have a look at and consider joining.

So his **recommended social networks:**

- <http://www.classroom20.com/>
- <http://www.technologyintegrationineducation.com/>
- <http://eflclassroom.ning.com/index.php>
- <http://tefl-me.com/>

Undoubtedly, another well-attended workshop had Raymond Kerr – “Total Physical Response frenzy!” This was very much a hands-on workshop that looked at one of the most versatile Young Learners classroom activities –TPR. It explored ways of developing skills using TPR as well as making it more student-centered. All participants took an active part in this workshop.

The TPR script can be varied to keep the students' interest:

- draw the actions/instructions on a partner's back of hand with a finger;
- draw the actions/instructions on a sheet of paper, and then describe their drawings;
- act as a mirror with a partner. One pupil acts out the sequence and the other mirrors these actions;
- act as a puppet with a partner who moves the puppet according to instructions;
- make simple plate or sock puppets and have them carry out of sequence of instructions.

And on the top of that, this year's IATEFL Pecha Kucha Evening has been facilitated by Jeremy Harmer. <http://www9.jeremy-harmer.com/>

Firstly Jeremy Harmer explained in detail this new technology and had presented his own Pecha Kucha which in Japanese: ペチャクチャ, IPA: [petca kutca] means chit-chat and is a presentation methodology in which 20 slides are shown for 20 seconds each (approx. 6' 40" in total), usually seen in a multiple-speaker event called a Pecha Kucha Night (PKN). Video art has also been presented here.

Pecha Kucha Night was devised in February 2003 by Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham of Tokyo's Klein-Dytham Architecture (KDa), as a way to attract people to Super Deluxe, their experimental event space in Roppongi.

Pecha Kucha Night events consist of around a dozen presentations, each presenter having 20 slides, each shown for 20 seconds on a timer. Thus, each presenter has just 6 minutes and 40 seconds to explain their ideas before the next takes the stage. Conceived as a venue through which young designers could meet, show their work, exchange ideas, and network, the format keeps presentations concise and fast-paced.

This IATEFL's Pecha Kucha Evening included eight presentations. This year's Pecha Kucha featured: **Geoff Tranter, Barbara Sakamoto, Shelly Terrell, Herbert Puchta, Willy Cardoso, Vicky Saumell, Helena Gomm.** The presenters and much of the audience were English teachers from the various colleges, schools, high institutions, linguistic centers, etc. all over the world but fun was had by all! By now you know the format: each speaker is allowed a slideshow of 20 images, each shown for 20 seconds, giving a total presentation time of 6 minutes and 40 seconds before the next speaker is up. Here you can see more <http://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2012/sessions/2012-03-22/pecha-kucha-part-1>

One of the attractions of Pecha Kucha is the wide range of the 20×20 talks. Most consist of professionals showing their creative work, but presenters often speak about such topics as their travels, research projects, student projects, hobbies, collections, or other interests.

To sum up I'd like to point out my feedback of the 2012 IATEFL Conference:

1/ learning to attend workshops and talks, enriching and enlarging knowledge a lot in FLT, trying to choose from over 650 presentations and speakers of over 2,500 ELT professionals, including teachers, trainers, authors, publishers, and providers of in-service training;

2/ meeting up with your new friends and colleagues from the world of ELT and making some new ones, having a great time in Scotland;

3/ enjoying great plenary speakers;

4/ networking with ELT professionals from around the world;

5/ in organizing this year's NATEK conference in my University.

You can see and share at <http://www.facebook.com/BritishCouncilTeachingEnglishKazakhstan> the most detailed reports of this Conference event and photos which Vika Kondratenko and me were updated every day.

Thus in the nearest future the results of international cooperation promote creation of more effective system of professional self-development of foreign languages teachers in Kazakhstan, achievement their competent growth, and preparing for activities in the conditions of new educational model.

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