

# EATE

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# EATE SUMME SEMINAR IN PÄRNU 23-24 AUGUST 2022



*Committee members Siiri Vimberg, Merit Harju and Ilmar Anvelt receiving seminar guests*



*Liljana Skopinskaja spoke about text construction issues*



*Evi Saluveer and Ülle Türk – two of our most beloved presenters*



*Terttu-Triin Tomusk spoke about integration between English and history*



*Terry Lemanis' topic was CLIL, culture and 21-century skills*



*Lunch in the open air*

Photos by Reet Noorlaid

**Estonian Association of Teachers of English**  
**www.eate.ee**

**Chair**  
Erika Puusemp  
erika.puusemp@gmail.com

**Editor of OPEN!**  
Ilmar Anvelt  
ilmar.anvelt@gmail.com

**Current account**  
EE331010152001597007  
in SEB

# OPINIONS: EVERYBODY HAS ONE

Carol Kahar

St Catharines, Ontario, Canada

## Two plus two makes four. Or does it?

That was a moot question when teaching in Toronto in the mid-60s. As teachers we were instructed to accept our students' opinions when answering basic math questions. The students were never wrong; just 'almost right'. Fortunately, they were usually close to the correct answer. As teachers, we could only hope that the student would finally guesstimate the correct answer. Fortunately, this 'new math' did not survive. However today, in another context, students are encouraged to express opinions on a variety of topics. Unfortunately, it is not always required that they support their opinions with facts or knowledge. Social media is another platform that not only welcomes opinions but tends to equate them with knowledge. Disquieting...



*Winston blubbered, How can I help seeing what is before my eyes? Two and two are four. Sometimes, Winston. Sometimes they are five. Sometimes they are three. Sometimes they are all of them at once. You must try harder. It is not easy to become sane (George Orwell, 1984).*

Plato focused on the difference between opinion and knowledge. He concluded that *something* needs to be added to opinion to attain knowledge. Knowledge is opinion *plus something* – truth, justification, reliability, etc.

The *plus something* matters today as new information technology has become an integral part of our modern lives. Little by little, it has transformed school curricula, education, and even the way we learn. Today, the Internet is its own universe, and our use of the Internet on tablets, smartphones, and social media platforms greatly influences and even changes our opinions. But should we accept or even value everyone's opinions? According to Plato, opinion is *the medium between knowledge and ignorance*. Confucius concluded that *real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance*.

## Is everyone entitled to an opinion?

Philosopher and writer Umberto Eco was a lifelong critic of what he called, "the society of ignorance". In his last book, *From Stupidity to Insanity*, Eco focused on the impact of the Internet on education and on writing. In humorous and sarcastic tones, he concluded:

*Social media gives legions of idiots the right to speak when they once only spoke at a bar after a glass of wine, without harming the community. Then they were quickly silenced, but now they have the same right to speak as a Nobel Prize winner. It's the invasion of the idiots (Umberto Eco).*

Let's reflect on these two concepts: opinion and knowledge. While an opinion can be based on solid knowledge, there are distinct differences. Plato argued that those who are satisfied with superficiality (e.g., recognizing colours and shapes) will not reach true knowledge. However, the person who can observe and then turn these shapes and figures into ideas, will gain understanding of their context.

Søren Kierkegaard argued in *Two Ages* that the only way to acquire knowledge is through silence. The philosopher recommended that one should first know how to listen, pay attention, and stay focused. Then one needs to go deep into the thought without giving an opinion. Knowledge, at the end of the

day, is absolute and to be valued. Otherwise one will hold opinions and value individual self-expression above knowledge.

*Only someone who knows how to remain essentially silent can really talk - and act essentially. Silence is the essence of inwardness, of the inner life (Søren Kierkegaard)*

Kierkegaard's proposal on how to acquire knowledge is a useful tool for society today. The non-stop treadmill of tasks and responsibilities leaves little free time in the average work or school day. We could benefit from taking time out for reflection and balancing busy-ness with contemplation.

In the classroom, a contemplative approach to learning has the goal of encouraging deep learning through focused attention, reflection, and heightened awareness. Such an approach would lessen the merit of impulsive opinions. Kierkegaard would approve.

Our society was called "the age of ignorance" by the late Charles Simic, American poet laureate and professor of American literature. In his 2012 article in the *New York Review of Books*, Simic noted that much of the American population at one time believed that Barack Obama was Muslim. Simic concluded:

*The rebellion of dull minds against the intellect: That's why they love politicians who rail against teachers indoctrinating children against their parents' values and resent the ones who show the ability to think seriously and independently. Stupidity is sometimes one of the greatest historical forces.*

This is not the time to focus on propaganda or disinformation, but Mark Twain had much to say:

*How easy it is to make people believe a lie, and [how] hard it is to undo that work again!*

## **The role of social media**

The emergence of social media and reliance on various platforms is increasingly impacting the way in which we interact with each other and with the world as a whole. Our virtual network is often as important as our physical network and thus information we digest online is significantly influential.

Many depend on social media platforms to find new *friends* or to search for current events, world news, or perhaps personal advice. Studies have found that individuals who are *externally focused* ask questions on social media platforms and are more likely affected by social media commentary. The *externally focused* tend to seek other people's opinions on social media and are statistically more likely to change their points of view based on the comments of others.

Those more *internally focused* rely on their own opinions when making decisions, unlike those who are *externally focused*. For example, students with an *internal focus* might blame poor grades on their failure to study whereas students with an *external focus* may blame an unfair teacher or test for their poor performance.

## **Social media can affect bias**

Many rely on social media for information. Those who have already made up their minds on something, say politics or religion, tend to limit research to that which confirms their current views. Their social media research is unlikely to change their thinking.

Users need to be aware of the influence of social media. Those immersed in the various social media platforms need to think critically about their topics of interest before taking a stance. Plato and Kierkegaard would agree.

Mental capacity is about being able to make your own decisions. Hours spent on social media diminish the time left for making decisions or focusing on specific problems and tasks. Frequent use of social media interferes with other daily interactions, forcing the user to split attention in multiple directions. This fragmented attention leads to less effective concentration and impacts critical thinking skills.

**In other words, one stops questioning. When one stops questioning, one stops thinking critically.**

### **Does social media impact our critical thinking skills?**

The answer is yes. Critical thinking refers to our ability to analyse, interpret, infer, and problem-solve. But how does social media affect critical thinking?

Many educators think that social media is influential in critical thinking development. Why? Because the medium is engaging to students, leading to information literacy as students concentrate on learning and manipulating the platform's tools. If properly guided, this may be so.

However, it should be noted that the most susceptible to the cognitive and behavioural downfalls of social media use are youth and young adults. They are at an age when their emotional intelligence and critical thinking skills are still immature and evolving. The young, in particular, are reliant on positive feedback received through social media. That makes them less likely to be critical of any information presented. They do not want to appear to be 'rocking the boat' or not in agreement with their friends. The effect is distressing as they have yet to acquire critical thinking skills. They are not yet able to appreciate the complexities of making an *informed decision*.

Society today seems to encourage and even esteem opinions. Differences between opinion and knowledge have become blurred. There are times, as on social media platforms, when opinions are presumed to be knowledge or fact. Without critical research, one becomes dependent on the opinions of others in their milieu. A failure to employ critical thinking skills when using social media is not isolated to the younger population. It is a problem shared by many in our society. Umberto Eco spent a lifetime railing against this situation.

### **Digital literacy is crucial**

Digital literacy is a skill set used to navigate the various platforms of information technology in which society operates. This literacy encompasses a wide range of skills related to the effective and appropriate use of technology. To keep things simple, let's consider this definition. The American Library Association characterizes digital literacy as:

*The ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.*

### **Is there an upside to social media when it comes to critical thinking skills?**

In contrast to evidence that it harms critical thinking skills, social media, when used correctly, can be a powerful tool to strengthen one's critical thinking skills. These various platforms can be a resource in developing critical thinking skills. One can learn how to search for information and sort out requisite facts, thus enabling effective decisions and solutions to problems.

### **How to strengthen critical thinking skills on social media**

The overwhelming amount of information that is fed through social media platforms has made critical thinking skills vital. It may seem strange, but practising scepticism will be the crucial accompaniment needed to strengthen critical thinking skills on social media. One can then discern the difference between opinion and knowledge. Being diligent and questioning can be the most effective safeguard for *digital natives* of the Internet.

Digital literacy has become indispensable for the global citizen for a variety of reasons: these are the skills needed to communicate, find employment, receive further education, or just socialize. Acquiring the right set of digital skills is not only important for learning and workforce readiness, but also vital to foster a more open, inclusive and secure society.

### **Dangers of social media: free but...**

Most social networking sites and resources are free. This matters if one is an educator with a tight budget for materials. Social media can help build relationships between teachers and students. Inviting rather than resisting social media into the classroom can have huge benefits. It can be used to promote collaboration, share resources and ideas, and provide real-time feedback.

Social media is a powerhouse, but, on the flip-side, social media does not forget. Once something is out on the Internet, it can always be found again. That means digital literacy is more important than ever. Students must learn how to be responsible and effective when using these tools. An educator can help students develop the requisite skills.

### **However, any commitment goes beyond that to the student in the classroom...**

#### **Internet access in the 21st century**

It is overwhelmingly agreed that Internet access is a fundamental human right of the 21st century. The United Nations agrees, but some countries have gone a step further and declared by law that the Internet should not only be accessible but available to all citizens. There is a qualitative difference: the possibility can then become reality. In Estonia, Finland, France, and Spain, for example, Internet availability – not just access – is a human right enshrined in law. *Tiigrihüpe* (The Tiger's Leap) as initiated by the late President Meri, brought the Estonian educational system rapidly to the 21st century. Estonia has become E-stonia, making it one of the most digitally advanced societies in the world.

**Internet access and availability have become powerful mechanisms for private citizens to make their voices heard.**

#### **Responsible global citizenship**

The UNESCO International Bureau of Education defines critical thinking as follows:

*Critical thinking is a process that involves asking appropriate questions, gathering and creatively sorting through relevant information, relating new information to existing knowledge, re-examining beliefs and assumptions, reasoning logically, and drawing reliable and trustworthy conclusions.*

Critical thinking skills help global citizens make responsible choices when consuming information about the media, environment, or democracy. These skills enable one to evaluate the abundance of information, misinformation and disinformation available in this digital age. These skills also play a central role in making evidence-based decisions and encourage the kind of civic engagement and participation needed to preserve a functioning democracy.

According to UNESCO, responsible global citizenship is linked to critical thinking through four literacies:

1. media and information literacy
2. health literacy
3. ecological literacy
4. democratic literacy

As this framework indicates, critical thinking is a necessary skill to achieve responsible global citizenship. With this skill, opinion would no longer have a commanding influence on knowledge. Umberto Eco would most definitely approve.

## And in closing...

With critical thinking skills and digital literacy, one is better equipped to determine the merits of the myriad of opinions swirling about today. I am drawn back to Toronto and the young students I taught decades ago. Perhaps today they would be less inclined to guesstimate. In all likelihood, they would make use of an applicable app on their smartphones to solve math questions. If they have acquired the skill of critical thinking, they would have the option.

As Winston Smith concludes in George Orwell's 1984:

*Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two makes four. If that is granted, all else follows.*

## WHAT DO WE NEED TO LEARN A LANGUAGE – WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Anneli Sigus

Department of English Studies  
University of Tartu

*My teaching path has been rather typical, I believe. I received my master's degree in teaching and then went to work in a school. Despite having learnt all the different theories about language acquisition, this information took a back seat in the everyday reality of being a full-time teacher. Years passed and I did learn snippets here and there about what works in language teaching (mostly from people affiliated with some publishing house who were presenting a new textbook), and I learned a lot from practical experience, but I did not actively keep an eye on what the researchers were doing or theorizing about. In the past two years at the university, I have learned a lot about what the research says is (and is not) effective in language teaching, and I have been completely amazed by this knowledge. And I have kept thinking, "Why did I not know or remember this when I was teaching at school?!" So, this article is for anyone who is interested in the aspects of language learning that are supported by research, and what the teacher should give priority to in the classroom.*



Most practising language teachers are familiar with the name Stephen Krashen, either from their teacher training days or from articles about language acquisition and teaching. Many even remember his "monitor model" developed in the 1970s and 80s with its five core hypotheses:

1. Language learning and acquisition are completely separate processes – we can spontaneously use only the language we have acquired unconsciously ("naturally picked up", one might say), but not the language we have learnt consciously through grammar rules and lists of vocabulary (the Acquisition – Learning Hypothesis).
2. We can use learnt language to "monitor" and correct texts that we have already produced. However, this can only be done if we have enough time and know the rules of the target language (the Monitor Hypothesis).
3. Aspects of language are acquired in a specific order (the Natural Order Hypothesis).
4. Language can only be acquired if there is sufficient input, which should be at the learner's level or slightly above it, the so-called *i+1* level (the Input Hypothesis).
5. Language acquisition can only occur if the learner's mind is not blocked by anxiety, lack of motivation or other negative emotions that would "filter out" the reception of input (the Affective Filter Hypothesis).

While Krashen's model has received its fair amount of criticism, mostly for its relative vagueness and untestability as well as strict separation of language acquisition and learning, it has had a great impact on how we understand language acquisition and teach languages. Furthermore, it spawned a variety of research, and from these findings it can be said that he was on the right track with most of his model. In the following sections, I will give a quick overview of current knowledge in second language acquisition based on Krashen's famous model.

### **What Krashen got mostly right**

**The natural order of language acquisition.** Many teachers have had the frustrating experience that despite having taught some aspect of grammar to students repeatedly, students still keep making mistakes in applying it. It can be something basic, like the 3rd person singular -s, or something more complex, like conditional sentences. From my personal experience, I have noticed that many students keep using the past form of the main verb in past simple negatives and questions. So, despite having studied past simple since the 4th or 5th grade, it was not uncommon to hear a student ask something like: "Did you went to the cinema yesterday?"

This happens because the learner's language develops at its own pace and according to its own rules. While Krashen based the hypothesis on how native speakers' language develops and extended this to language learners, a variety of research supports that there is, indeed, a difference between what students are taught and what they actually acquire. The teachability of a structure does not mean that its learnability is the same since a student must reach a stage where they are actually able to acquire the said form. According to Manfred Pienemann's Processability Theory (1998), different structures are acquired in stages with each new stage being built on the previous one. So, a new structure cannot be acquired unless the student has internalized the structures preceding it. While Pienemann has shown his theory to be generally universal, there are also studies (like Murakami and Alexapoulou, 2015) that imply the order of acquisition for a learnt language is affected by the student's first language.

The order of acquisition certainly does not mean that teachers should not teach structures that have been shown to be acquired at later stages. However, it does mean that teachers could try to be mindful of the fact that what they have taught might not be learnable for a student because they have simply not reached that stage yet. Naturally, in a grammar test at the end of a study unit, the learner should be able to show what they have learnt. However, if they make mistakes in speaking, this is also natural. Patience and persistence will go a long way.

**The Affective Filter.** While it might seem self-evident nowadays that learning happens best in a positive and supportive environment, this view has not always been the case. Still, even nowadays students often fear making mistakes, and this fear and anxiety will inhibit their willingness to practise the language they are learning in active communication. Yet, Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in the target language is a great predictor of success in language learning and is considered one of the main factors for language development (for a general overview, see Reinders 2016 or Dewaele & Dewaele 2018). Negative emotions will certainly also have an effect on a student's motivation, which has been considered one of the two most important learner variables in language learning (with the other important variable being learning strategies, Griffiths and Soruç 2021). Fortunately, the teacher has a great impact on students' motivation, and there is a lot the teacher can do to foster a positive atmosphere and group dynamics (I recommend works by Zoltan Dörnyei and Jill Hadfield for these topics). I am certain that most, if not all, teachers have experienced that some groups just will not speak, no matter how hard the teacher tries.

I have experienced that pointing out to students how they actually learn about each other with various speaking tasks really helps them understand each other better and think about the people they are sharing the classroom with. For example, with a task like "Speak to your partner about what you did during the weekend" or giving students thought-provoking situations for practising conditional sentences and having them explain their thoughts: "If I were of the opposite gender, I would ... because ..." they learn about each other, and they might actually have rather similar opinions and



preferences. Another useful practice is leading by example. The teacher makes it clear that it really is alright to make mistakes, that no mistakes or questions are ridiculed or frowned upon, and any student's attempt to ridicule someone else's response will be mitigated as quickly (and peacefully) as possible. Everyone is in the classroom to learn and practise, and it is important that they should want to come to class and actually do that.

Motivation is also closely linked to the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci 1985, 2000) which has become widely accepted in the educational setting. According to this theory, there are three things a learner must feel in order to grow psychologically: autonomy, competence and connection/relatedness. This means that if the language learner feels that they have control over their learning, they have skills to experience a sense of achievement, and they feel a sense of belonging to their group, which will lead to higher intrinsic motivation.

For example, when I was working with upper secondary students, I realised at some point that the students' homework was not MY responsibility. I told students that they would get extra points for homework (and this could help raise their course mark), but I would not penalize them for not doing homework, because as long as they were not failing, it was up to them. But I DID explain to them (every now and again) what benefits they get from homework and why it actually helps them; how checking the tasks in class is actually personal feedback to them since they will see their mistakes; how trying to dig up the practised structures from their memory will signal the brain that this information is important and should be remembered. And, of course, that they were not there learning for me, but gathering skills and knowledge for themselves and their future. As a result of this change, checking homework became less stressful for both me and the students, and it seemed to me that the proportion of students doing their homework was actually higher than before. So, giving the students the power and autonomy to decide what they do with a homework (and relevant motivation to actually do it) has given very positive results in my experience.

P. Thompson (2019, chapter 4.4) has given a good brief summary of the Self-Determination Theory and how to apply it in the classroom, but for a more academic overview, the reader can take a look at McEown and Oga-Baldwin (2019).

However, when discussing learners and the process of language acquisition, it is also good to keep in mind the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory that has become more widespread in second language acquisition research since the late 1990s. This approach sees language learning as a complex process where different variables impact each other and language acquisition itself is not linear, but constantly affected by different factors within and outside the language learner. While this view does make research and analysis of language teaching and learning processes more complex (in both the academia and the classroom), this theory does offer a more holistic approach to learning and reminds us to look at the bigger picture.

The Complex Dynamic Systems Theory also coincides with the idea of plurilingualism as it is discussed in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Companion Volume (in English 2020, in Estonian 2023). Many people might believe this approach to be redundant when we already have the term "multilingualism", but there is an important distinction to be made here: with "multilingualism", we refer to various languages that exist side by side, but still remain separate entities. From a "plurilingual" perspective, we recognise that the different languages that a person comes into contact with will all shape their linguistic knowledge and connections. Knowledge of different languages will be combined into a unique network in a learner's mind with different aspects influencing each other. Naturally this does not mean that the language teacher has to know all the different languages their students do. However, it does mean that the teacher should guide students in making their own connections - the teacher should not only teach new knowledge but also teach students how to incorporate that knowledge into their own existing systems and how to make sense of language rules in relation to the languages they know.

## What Krashen got almost right

**The Input Hypothesis.** While it has been concluded by a variety of research that ample target language input is a necessary condition for language acquisition, it has also been determined that it is not enough. In addition to input, learners need to actually use the language to express themselves (the Output Hypothesis by M. Swain, 1985) and also practice it in negotiating meaning with others (the Interaction Hypothesis by M. Long, 1996). These three aspects are widely regarded as the three language acquisition essentials (see Lessard-Clouston 2018, for a good overview).

The role of social interaction in learning has been discovered to play a very important role as well, because in working together learners will co-construct knowledge. This is the core principle of the theory of social constructivism (originally developed by Lev Vygotsky) and the idea that learning happens in the learner's Zone of Proximal Development. While Vygotsky believed it was mostly a more knowledgeable parent or teacher that would create the support for a child's optimal development, M. Swain has offered an expansion to the theory by proposing that students will actually provide each other with scaffolding for development and, by working together, they will create (or co-construct) knowledge the student would not have reached alone. In addition, in verbalizing their thoughts and ideas about how they understand the language structures work (*linguaging*) in their discussions with other students, learners actually transform their indistinct inner thoughts into more specific knowledge, which helps to remember them better and combine them into their knowledge network. This is why using group activities are so beneficial in the language classroom – the students try to make sense of the target language together and discuss it.

I often used to give my students the task of first checking their homework/exercises together in pairs or small groups before checking with the whole class. What often happened was that students started discussing any discrepancies they had in their answers and really talking about the language structures and rule application. Often this also led to interesting questions from students and actual interest in why one or another structure was used in that context. I was not aware of it then, but now I know that this approach was not only more engaging for me and the students, but really supported their language acquisition process.

Regarding Krashen's *i+1* model for input (that the input should be at a level slightly above the language learner's current level), one can see similarities with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, although this connection was not intended by Krashen himself.

In terms of classroom practices, this all mostly means that students need to hear and use the target language in lessons. However, a substantial part of language use should be done in meaningful interaction where students (attempt to) express their thoughts in the target language. A good way of providing effective language use for the students' development is to implement (elements of) the action-oriented approach as described by the Council of Europe in the CEFR Companion Volume.

## What Krashen (most probably) did not get right

**The Acquisition - Learning Hypothesis and the Monitor Hypothesis.** Strictly separating the processes and outcomes of conscious language learning and unconscious acquisition as well as the idea that we can only use learnt language to correct our text, is one of the more critiqued aspects of Krashen's theory. Over the decades, there has been a lot of research into how exactly (or even if) learnt language becomes effectively usable in different contexts and there is still debate about the exact nature and connections of learnt and acquired language. Indeed, we can correct our texts when we have more time and can focus on the language rules we have learnt, but this is probably due to less stress and a smaller cognitive load on the working memory that enables us to access information that has been stored in the brain.

In terms of the connections between learning and acquisition, there are three main positions. Researchers believe that learnt and acquired knowledge are either

- a) completely separate, like Krashen (the non-interface position),

- b) closely connected in that learnt declarative knowledge is turned into usable procedural knowledge and then through practice, its use becomes automatized and implicit (R. DeKeyser's (1997) strong interface position), and
- c) connected, so that learnt language can be converted into acquired language, but to a differing extent depending on many variables such as the language structure itself, the learner's developmental level, frequency of exposure to the structure, etc (the weak interface position). For a more detailed discussion on the topic, you can read Barrot (2020).

These ideas have been discussed since the end of the 1990s already. What is new then? Firstly, with advancements in technology and neuroimaging, research has been able to look at brain activity during language use and language learning. On the basis of this neuroscientific information, M. Ullman (2005, 2015) has put forward the Declarative/Procedural memory model in language acquisition, according to which people have two types of memory. Declarative memory mostly retains explicit knowledge that we can consciously retrieve and procedural memory that operates across domains (motor, music, language skills) to create the (automated) patterns for using the knowledge. These two memory systems operate in different areas in the brain, but they interact in various ways to optimize learning and processing. However, we cannot use both systems simultaneously for the same knowledge. If one begins consciously thinking about some automatic activity, this will slow the process down; for example, tying one's shoelaces or taking notes. As is the case with other brain activity, the specific functioning of the different memory systems might be (to some extent) affected by hormones and changes in brain chemistry as we age. It has been observed that procedural memory tends to slow down at adolescence, which makes it more difficult (but not impossible!) to incorporate new systems of knowledge, like the grammar of a new language, for example. Yet, this is compensated by a more active declarative memory, so learning new vocabulary might become easier to some extent. In a way, Ullman's model offers a compelling explanation as to why adult language learners often have problems with acquiring the grammar of a target language despite being very diligent learners. For a more thorough review of the model, you can read Gotseva (2018).

### **What Krashen did not cover**

In addition to Ullman's model of two memory systems, there are also findings that look at other aspects of how we learn a language. Based on a variety of research, it has become apparent that language is not learnt or processed as separate units, but as more or less formulaic groups of words, or "chunks of language". This enables us to process language faster and thus benefits fluency. What is more, some researchers (for example, N. Ellis) even believe that, for younger learners, grammar learning begins with acquired phrases from which learners will "unpack" parts of grammar sequences. This, however, might not be the case with adult learners, but learning formulaic phrases still benefits their language acquisition by giving them confidence as they are able to express some ideas and also gain fluency (Thornbury, 2019). So, it is good for teachers to keep in mind that teaching fixed phrases and expressions is often more beneficial for learners than single vocabulary items. I will definitely try to keep this in mind in the future, since learning vocabulary in phrases might also help students with difficult aspects of English, like dependent prepositions, for example.

Another important idea that has implications for language teachers is that of transfer-appropriate processing (Lightbown, 1999, 2008). The idea is simple – it is generally easier to retrieve information from the memory in a situation that resembles the learning situation. So, if we want students to be able to have conversations about everyday topics, this is exactly what they should practice in the classroom. However, not only is it good to practice the types of situations students might encounter but also to approach errors in the way they might get treated in everyday contexts outside the classroom. So instead of explaining what mistakes students have made and offering the correct answer or having them correct the mistake in isolation, it might be more beneficial to indicate to the student that there was some miscommunication and give them a chance to paraphrase or repeat the thought to correct the mistake. In general, if a student has encountered a structure or phrase in different, ideally realistic, settings often enough and the contexts have been cognitively stimulating (engaging and challenging), there is a greater likelihood that the student will have adequate triggers for retrieving

the structure in a social situation.

Overall, it can be seen that we have come a long way, and language acquisition is now seen as a much more complex process than it was considered in the days of the grammar-translation method or even Krashen's heyday in the 1980s. There is a lot that was not covered in this article, but hopefully it serves as a small bridge between knowledge from decades ago and what research says now. It is impossible to say what, if any, single idea is the most important one at this time, but the CEFR Companion Volume (2020) that is the guiding document for language learning and teaching in Europe, makes very good use of different research findings. It really encourages the idea that we as teachers should foster learner autonomy and positive group dynamics in the classroom, make use of versatile, realistic, and engaging tasks and see the learner as a social agent and a whole person with their own emotional and linguistic background.

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Photo by Andres Tensus

## NOTES FROM A LITTLE CLASSROOM: PLANETS IN A LEARNING SPACE

Jari Lutta

Hills and Bridges language school (Sillamäe / Bridgehill)

*"That rare miracle of fiction has again come to pass: a human being has been created out of ink, paper, and the imagination."*

(Clifton Fadiman on Holden Caulfield and J. D. Salinger's greatest novel; *Book-of-the-Month Club* selection July 1951)

*"Our "real life" is a sort of "fiction" designed by Nature, hence there's no such thing as "non-fiction".*

*Alternatively, there shouldn't be such a thing as "fiction". Choose either one. I believe one of them must be phony."*

(The author of the notes)

### Part 1

Teachers are always in their classrooms; they can't truant or just casually skip their classes unless very ill. I'm not any kind of a hero, but over the past five years I've taken sick leave only two times when I wasn't able to function and had to undergo urgent operations (I wonder if this is a superpower). Students come and go, and teachers welcome everyone, allowing them to feel there's nothing to fear in this *Learning Space*. We all are small or big planets in the vast *Space* of endless knowledge, and we all help each other to move forward, to some individual or collective destinations...

This series of very short stories could be viewed as sketches of my daily teaching work in a small classroom, a "teaching experience" story, a teacher's diary, or a collection of curious instances over the last five years of my work in Estonia. Having done some research into another topic (*Open! journal, Indo-European connections and the English language in India*, five parts in 2018–2022), I decided it was the right time to start writing about my daily classroom experiences. I love writing in my diary, after all, so why not share some of that with others? Honestly, because of the war that all sensible people hate and because of all those unimaginable and heart-breaking things we've been witnessing, I wasn't able to do anything creative. Finally, I seem to be gradually returning to normal, as life must go on, as well as all its acts. I just thought I could write down some notes on what interesting things happen in my classroom space. A concept of "space and planets" came to mind. Whatever notable experience we come across shouldn't just come and vanish, as these are valuable observations (at least for myself) that contribute to lasting, thoughtful and improved teaching. Naturally, writing down each and every minute point isn't possible or necessary. So, here I'm just sharing with you the things that may be of interest. You know what the routine of daily teaching work is like when you have classes one after another, day after day, but "flashes of truth" or "surprises" appear every now and then, and you just want to capture those moments.

In my classroom people are getting what is called "additional education": schoolchildren of different ages and adults from all walks of life attend this private school just because they want to improve their English, so it's not compulsory, which makes it less formal. There are only nine seats in this little classroom with only one window, and my seat is the tenth. The fewer students in here, the better I feel, honestly. Big classes are neither my bowl of soup nor my cup of tea. Apart from groups, I also give some lessons for individual students, but it makes no difference in terms of what I'm trying to



*"Zero tolerance  
of energy wasting" (Fin.)*



Planets

recount. I'm really grateful to Irina Matviitchuk, Head Teacher of the language school *Interlink*, where I've been working since 2018 (and experienced some changes to my job this year). Irina is an expert educator and, especially in the beginning, she was very kind to guide me in my work with groups of students and to help me get more experience in teaching. I'm also truly grateful to Ilmar Anvelt, who has always encouraged me to write for this teachers' journal, which is a great experience in itself.

Naturally, the names of the learners appearing in my notes have been changed. Remember, they are planets — individual planets. In time these notes might turn into a book, but I'm not sure about that, just like we can't be sure of anything in these turbulent times. Let's hope the planets will move around smoothly, including our planet Earth. Let's hope that reason and humanity prevail here.

\* \* \*

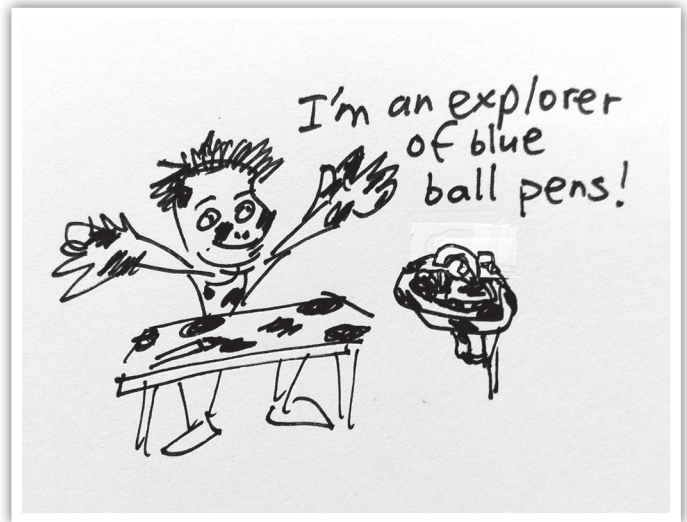
Mercury and Jupiter are quite apt planets – they are two boys studying in the 6th grade. Not really friends, but they get on well. Oftentimes they tend to mock each other, not bitterly though. Needless to say, they dive into their phones whenever possible, just to make it to the next level in their favourite games. When I notice they are being distracted by their phones, I have to say my magic phrase, “Sticky hands! Sticky hands! Who's got sticky hands here?” It works, and they put their phones away, those small digital adversaries to any classwork. The last resort is a wooden box with a picture of a pirate on it. Kids hate the idea of depositing their phones into the pirate box till the end of the class. Jupiter is from a somewhat rich family, his grandmother lives somewhere in Boston, so he is a bit proud of having visited America a few times with his family. Sometimes he talks in class about what he saw in Boston or New York, like some museums, statues and parks. He is not at all aloof from culture, and that's a pleasure to see. Others listen to Jupiter's narratives about the States and feel a bit envious. Indeed, it's so far away from Estonia and quite expensive to travel there. Jupiter is really curious; he can go on talking and reasoning about things non-stop. I believe he is going to be a bright person. Brainy and attentive; that's what he is. At the same time not a “swot” or “sickener”. His mate and rival, Mercury is from an “ordinary” family. He is also curious but not as talkative as Jupiter; a bit tricky, I'd say. Apprehensive of my remarks about his behaviour (though I'm never too strict with anyone, remembering that my being quite naughty at school didn't prevent me from always being attentive to the English language), Mercury feels embarrassed when he is late for lessons or when he is seen doing something wrong, like playing on his phone, hiding it slyly behind his textbook on his lap. Mercury is always quick to react, almost like a magician, “Where do you see any phone here?” and instantly answers my questions, often correctly, trying to show he is with us in the classwork and isn't falling behind in any way. Kind of a skill or something, innit?

We are doing some grammar exercises. Jupiter says to Mercury, “Okay, if you answer this one wrong, what will you give me? What's your bet?” Mercury replies with utmost certainty, “A *hundred*.” Then he bloops it and Jupiter goes, “C'mon, give me a hundred, now!” Mercury at once retaliates, “Well, I didn't say a *hundred* of what. I just meant a hundred percent accurate information. So, alright, I admit I didn't give you *that*, but I don't owe you anything, do I? You must be foolish, I just didn't answer a *hundred* percent correctly, that's it. What d'ya want, man?” A perfect duel. What a smart kid, I remark to myself. Perhaps that was the plan from the start in this short battle of wits.

Mercury starts messing around with his ball pens again. He has the mind of an engineer and feels he is a brave explorer of things. Expectedly, an ink mess is accumulating, and the boy ends up staining the desk, his hands and what not. “What's a matter, distinguished explorer?” He looks bewildered and asks to go out. He is absent for a considerable time. Later, after the lesson, I notice that the washbasin

in the toilet is all blue. Well done, Mercury, it's so creative! Our washbasin is now remarkably blue! The cleaning lady will be happy to have some extra work, I'm sure. Mercury really tends to look natural in all his activities. La Rochefoucauld once said, "Nothing interferes with naturalness as much as the desire to appear natural." No grumble on my part though, I just dutifully clean up the washbasin after his art or lab work, whatever you call it. It makes me smile, it makes my day, really. But next time I'll try to prevent that blue mess from happening. I laugh to myself, "Can'tcha ask Mercury to use pencils next time instead? Exploring pencils entails less calamity."

Some kid planets have already been in my classroom *Space* for a few years, like Venus who is in the 7th grade now. A sensitive, emotional and creative girl (will make a good actress or artist) who speaks better English than her peers do, as she is exposed to the language more than others, being an English teacher's daughter. Never proud of that, she is rather into her fun things and social media videos. Venus loves speaking English and isn't really attentive to the coursebooks and exercises with which I'm trying to engage kids. You have to be trickier with such imaginative and restless kids and somehow get them interested in each and every task, for instance, asking them their opinion about the subject first; acting out a bit of similar emotion on their "wavelength".



Blue ball pens

One day, Venus comes in and starts playing her endless game on the phone before the lesson, fervently commenting on her progress in the game. Suddenly she starts praying for some "magic heroine" to appear and save the situation. Literally, praying with folded palms. Virtuality is something more for today's kids than we adults can even start understanding. They are a "gaming generation", a different species of life.

Neptune is a bright 7th-grader, passionately into reading, finding out about new things in world history and culture, well into his studies and especially interested in sailing, his greatest hobby. A successful chess player in the past, he has won several junior chess competitions in the region. I guess Neptune will make a good scientist, researcher or even philosopher. He is keen on writing down each and every new English word I say and explain. Exceptionally unusual diligence, compared to most of his peers, as we see. It's always engaging and amusing to talk to Neptune on various subjects. He has shown a special interest in the card game "Time Traveller Box" where you randomly take out a card from the box, hand it to the participant who looks at it for 12 seconds, then gives the card back and answers questions related to the picture they have just seen. Not only about what is in the picture but also something more about the historical period depicted - ancient civilisations, Middle Ages (Neptune's favourite period!) or modern times. And he is curious to know about the future of the world, though the cards in that box are only about the past. He felt really sad when all 100+ cards were done at one point. I'm engaging him now with describing other pictures from different textbooks, and this activity delights him too. It develops his memory and imagination. He seems to imagine himself being amidst those events in history. He is indeed travelling in time.

One day, Neptune asks me, "Can you please check my essay named "Time Capsule"?" - "Yes, sure. Let's see what you've written for the future inhabitants of this planet." - "Well, basically it's about the tough times we are living in, you know, what else... and about how we are trying to survive as the human race on this planet." I feel that kind of guilt that an adult can feel in front of a kid when something goes wrong around us. Naturally, in his message he wrote about the recent pandemic and the war that we are witnessing now. He has rather little hope of survival for our civilisation and he's surer than not that there will be other creatures on Earth instead of us. He is sending some "cultural items" to them, the prime of which is a *katana*, a Japanese sword, as he is really into Japanese cul-

ture. Other things from generous but cool-minded Neptune: the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a few old Roman maxims in Latin (let those guys in the future rack their brains to find out the meaning!) and a dynamo hand crank charger for an MP3 player with some of the best pieces of music created by the humanity. Overall, Neptune is not worried about the prospect that our civilisation isn't likely to stay. He says, at least someone (other creatures from other civilisations) will populate our planet and get his message from the year 2023. When? It's an open question. In 1000, 200 or 50 years from now...?

A group of 9th-grade teenage planets are in the classroom *Space*. We are reading and discussing an article on birth order and the advantages/disadvantages of living in a big family. One girl, a planet called Themisto, answers that she has four brothers and sisters, and I comment, "Oh, you've got a big family!" Themisto feels somewhat uncomfortable about that (in quite "ordinary" families having many siblings often means less money for each child and hence some social disdain among peers, unfortunately). Perhaps she didn't like being asked at all, but it was her turn to answer. I didn't mean anything negative, and her reaction made me sad. She skips the lesson next time but then comes when we are doing a test and everything seems to be alright again, I feel. I might be too emotional about such situations and people's reactions. Situations come and go, and perhaps you don't have to pay much attention to such things. But I still think, "you've gotta be more careful, stay more reserved, avoid even neutral comments on any personal state of affairs if you don't really have to say something." That means being quite sensitive, which helps class activities to run smoothly. In some classes or with some students, certain topics can even be skipped altogether, considering the social aspect of things.

We often start our lessons with the younger groups by playing *guess-the-word* with gaps with four to six attempts and, of course, the notorious "hangman". But the idea of a hangman has never been appealing to me at all. Why should we hang anyone? It's quite weird and cruel. I've got a better idea - let's bring a villain to the stage, who has to climb four to six steps up with a pin in his hand to pop a balloon. So, to make it relevant for the kids of today, I ask my group of 7th-graders, "Hey, tell me who are the villains in your games or films nowadays? What are their names? If it's not a big secret, of course." The kids are a bit startled by my question. I feel that for them it is a sort of secret they are not supposed to share with "outdated" adults. Then, after a pause, Jupiter decides to disclose a bit of something and answers, "Well, if you really need to know, I can tell you one villain's name. That's William Afton. He is from a game called 'Five Nights at Freddy's'. Originally, he was a *treacherous purple pixel-like guy*, you know, who later transformed into someone else after being trapped in sort of springs and so he turned into an ugly creature of swamp colour. He looks like... erm... what should I say... like a *despicable rabbit or something*. His long ears are rather torn, and he looks very unpleasant and scary. After that 'spring trap' his name was also changed, and now he is known as Springtrap. It's all complicated, you know... so don't dive deep into that, if you don't really have to. Just check out what he looks like. Well, perhaps I *could* be interested to know your opinion about his appearance... He is always chasing after kids, trying to turn them into *animatronics*, kinda evil robots, and then into some kind of *fantoms*." Hmm, now I'm startled. At the same moment I google it, trying to get what it's all about and who that goddam William Afton aka Springtrap is. I find out that he looks intimidating but tolerable. Anyway, he could be a suitable evil character for our guess-the-word game. Hanging someone and piercing a balloon is not the same, I suppose, in terms of teaching kids some ethical values. I wonder who was the first to start drawing a "hangman" for this game meant for kids. Was that in the 19th century? Let's just not allow the "despicable rabbit" pierce a balloon, that would be enough for the game. The world is already full of cruelty.

In our short warm-up time, Venus recalls that her nose has been bleeding today. She doesn't remember it ever happening to her before. The left sleeve of her white hoodie is stained, and she is proudly showing this as evidence. Other kids immediately start recalling their own instances of nose bleeding, when and how it occurred. But, as always, I have to interrupt them soon and ask to open the required page in our coursebooks so we could get into a discussion about different types of unusual houses (in trees, underground, in caves and on the water) and then do some exercises. It could be almost as exciting as nose bleeding stories for them. Venus is receiving a call from a boy of a bit younger age who had been attending classes in her group but had to drop studying with us due to com-

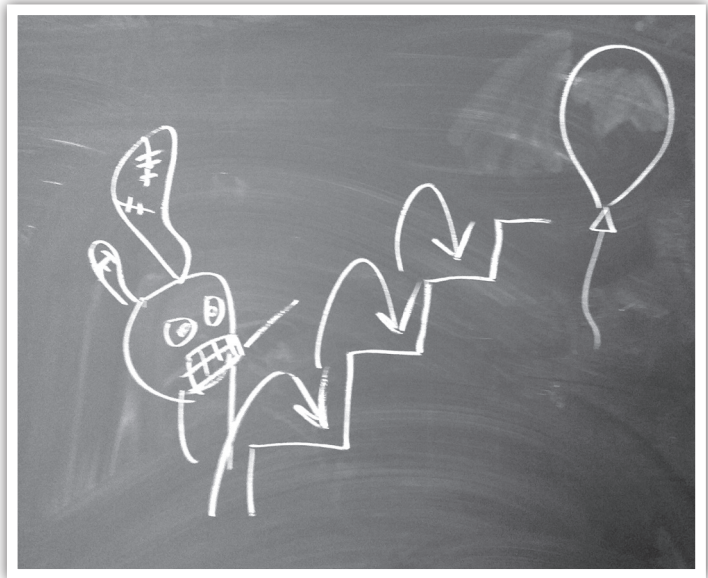


muting problems (he lives in another town). She is showing me her phone screen with the incoming call, and it reads "his name such and such" and in brackets "incredible moron". For kids, sympathy often borders on hate. Well, the same can often be true for adults as well.

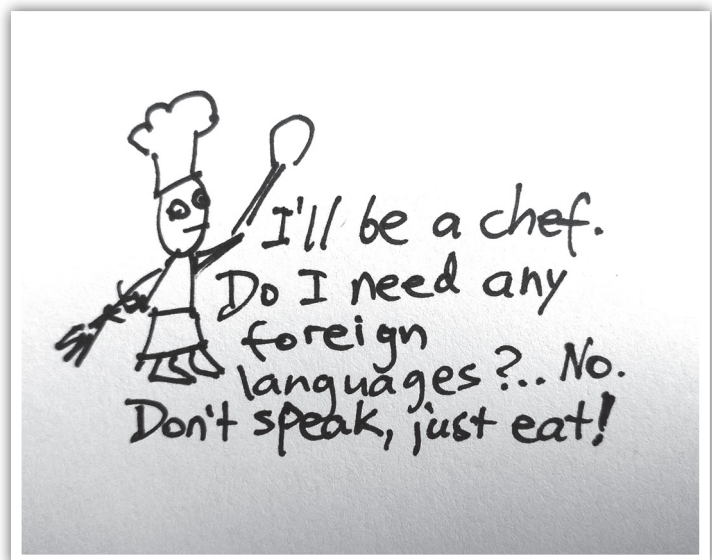
Pluto is an 8th-grade boy. Since the first year when he appeared in my class, he has been saying that any studies involving reading or writing *are simply not possible for him*, as he has "terrible dyslexia". Observing his behaviour, I believe he's exaggerating a bit there, but it has become his *modus operandi* over the years, and so he can only repeat words and phrases after me. Apart from that, Pluto keeps saying he is dreaming of becoming a cook and that's why he doesn't need any languages anyway, as he "can cook anything without saying anything in any country where he ends up." You just don't need to speak, do you? He is most sure about it, and so he just won't make much effort to learn anything except culinary skills. For some mysterious reason he keeps coming back for the course every year, pretending he is eager to participate (might need a place to sit and relax before going home after his tiring school lessons?). The *dyslexia* pretext makes his life jolly careless, despite all my efforts to get him somehow involved in classwork by giving him some easier tasks to do. Pluto often wags classes, and once he was dramatically caught. His parents told him they would pick him up with their car after the class, and during the whole lesson he was sitting somewhere in the building for one hour. He could as well have sat in the classroom, but this time he opted for a change. When Pluto's parents pulled in, something went wrong with his plan, because from the window at the other side of the building I saw him walking away hurriedly. I opened the window and called his name, but he pretended *that it wasn't him at all*, leaving me to feel that I was mistaken and unable to recognise people. Later, I got to know that his badly planned truant had been revealed. Next time he came, he tried to show some exemplary diligence. I'm sure Pluto is gonna be a great cook, but perhaps with no foreign languages. On the other hand,... you never know how life turns for everyone.

Haumea planet is a 7th grader now; she used to go to an art school but had to leave because of the load of homework from her main school. Sadly, but that's how it goes sometimes. She is a girl I've been worried about, as she has some disabilities, like a speaking defect. Fortunately, she is not bullied by others, at least those in my classroom (I'd never allow even slight bullying of anyone, that's another advantage of a small classroom). Over these past three years, Haumea has made significant progress in English, and I really admire this.

Once Haumea came to the lesson and said excitedly (for no visible reason), "Today I want to learn English *really hard!*" I reacted to this cheerfully, "Sure, go ahead!" And she *really tried hard*. On other days she can be a bit sluggish. Emotional and active Venus loves seeing her at the classes, hugging her and saying she is her best friend. But for some reason they don't see each other outside the classroom.



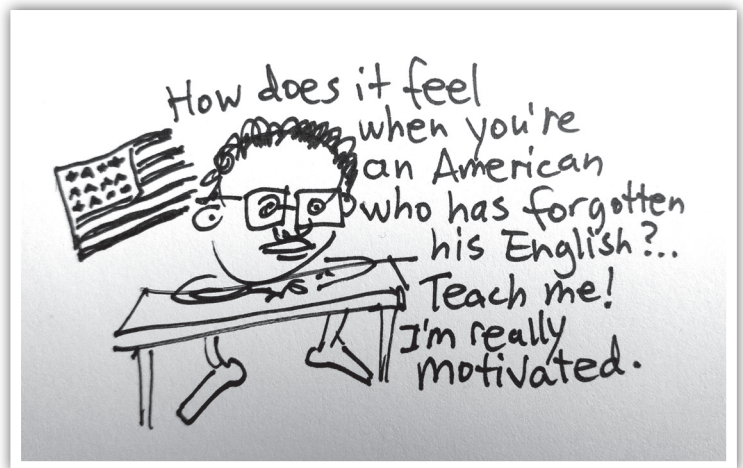
William Afton aka "Springtrap" instead of the notorious "Hangman"



Chef

Now, here's a couple of stories about adult learners. I've become a part of someone's amazing *twist of life*. The guy is an American, now in his mid-twenties; let's call him Enceladus (a planet again). He needs to restore his English, and I've been chosen to help him with that. An American who has forgotten how to speak English? It may sound weird at first, but it has a perfectly clear explanation; the guy was born in the US, got his American citizenship and, when he was five, his parents split up, so he went with his mother to her country. For some reason she didn't try to help him retain his English (perhaps started hating it because of the fallout with her ex?), so the boy studied Italian (still remembers some lines from Dante), French and what not. Recently, as a young man, he had to come to Estonia, got employed here and started his English course. Enceladus knows many words, has a good American pronunciation but can't understand how the grammar works and how to properly pronounce words of somewhat more advanced vocabulary. Yes, it happens... an American can forget the English language. I've seen that. And yes, his plan is to go back to his motherland, after having learnt English up to a tangibly satisfying level. He'd also like to explore Estonia, I believe.

I feel honoured to teach Ceres, a man who works as an electrician for an Estonian company. He is not an ordinary electrician. He loves classical French and English literature (Hugo, Balzac, Poe, Jack London and many other authors), and books are his constant companions, which is so rare these days, especially for electricians. He comes from the country that is now torn by the war, though he had moved to Estonia with his family a few years before the war started. His parents are still in his country, and he regularly sends them some necessary items and money to help them survive. His mother worked as an elementary school teacher (this explains his love of reading), and his aunt taught physics and maths to the current president of Ukraine in his hometown. The world is small. And now, those old people are living amidst the war drama. Any war is bad, what to speak of such a stupid and cruel conquest war. In the 21st century, after all the UN agreements between all the countries and after all those decades of peace after WWII. Where are we as the humankind at this point?... "Peace is the virtue of civilisation. War is its crime" (Victor Hugo).



American

Oberon is now in the 7th grade, and he is much taller than his peers, looking almost like an adult. He has been in my classroom since the beginning, so it's the 5th year of our learning interaction. When he was younger, it was pretty hard for him to grasp anything in English, but as he continued to attend classes, his skills grew. I'm sure he is now doing well in English at school, too. It's so satisfying to see his progress. Oberon is like a living result of my efforts. He has always been into music, first learning how to play drums and now he is keen on vocals, regularly taking part in various competitions and performances in Tallinn and our region.

Varda is also one of the "old-timers" in my classroom, and she seems to be fond of parkour. Her favourite activity is jumping from the roofs of garages with "hood" boys and girls, and she isn't afraid of breaking her arms or legs, which has already happened to her. I'm sure Varda's parents aren't very happy about her pastime, but she is a daredevil and her latest passion is taekwondo. You would never suspect that this shy-looking 7th-grade girl is so adventurous. When she comes to English lessons, Varda always shares with me her joys or sorrows over her test results at school. She can't be viewed as very talented in languages, but she enthusiastically offers some complex English words for our guess-the-word game and writes them with gaps on the board. The most surprising was once the word *incomprehensibilities* when the kids of this group were 5th-graders. Obviously, no kid could guess it, and we had to ask Varda to avoid such long and intricate words.

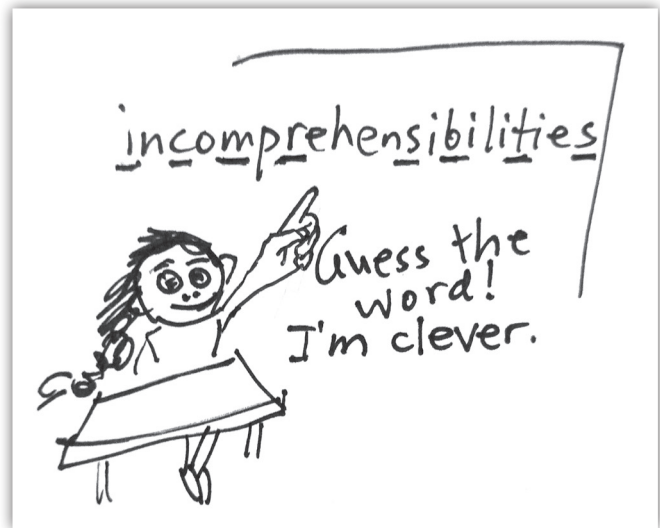
Not long before completing these notes, I was in a public sauna of a spa centre, and whilst sitting on hot wooden shelves, I overheard a dialogue between a mother and her teenage daughter who were sitting at some distance. Let this teenage planet be called *Dysnomia*. This wasn't any classroom, of course, but saunas can sometimes be a sort of learning space too, just like any other place where we can hear about other people's learning experiences. The girl was saying she saw no end to "this trip of studying English". Getting some sauna heat, she was complaining that the English vocabulary is just "endless" and often confusing. And though she can understand all the verb tenses, the "variety of words" in English makes her feel lost. She has to take lessons from a tutor, because in English lessons at school they "don't do much".

Her tutor, she expressed with apprehension, might soon give up on her, constantly being a witness to *Dysnomia's* bad memory for vocabulary. Her concerned mother was trying to encourage her to go on with her English studies, "You know, there's no other way, my dear. Nowadays, you simply can't do without English." *Dysnomia* sighed and had to agree.

*Makemake* is an open-minded and kind-hearted planet, though a bit lazy and forgetful. He is now in the 10th grade; in the past he spent a few years learning from me. When the time came for him to go to high school, I plainly told him he should become more responsible for his English. He often relied on me too much in checking his homework. The boy is resourceful but was always reluctant to put enough hours into his studies and, more often than not, even to look up the meanings of words. Again, endless computer games and *Naruto* anime series (some 700 hours) hindered his learning process. I even thought he would choose or have to go to a vocational school, but he made it to high school, and I hope he has changed his attitudes now that he is there. I saw him on an ETV programme recently - he was shown as a very busy lad doing a test on some school subject with his peers.

Once *Makemake* said that a "cleaning lady" meant "just a *neat and clean* woman" when I asked him what he understood it to mean in the text. He would sometimes confuse "better" with "battery", "more" and "most", and plenty of other simple words. Inattentiveness and bad memory aren't your best friends really when you are trying to learn a language. Words like "bought" and "thought" used to make the boy rather annoyed, because "so many letters here are not pronounced!" *Makemake* used to be loquacious and loved to reason on different subjects, just like *Jupiter* does. You just have to always direct them to trying to say all that in English. *Venus*, for instance, has no problem with that. She always tries to avoid L1, knowing that now she has a chance to speak English and is supposed to do that. Nothing phony, just that natural and voluntary feeling of a need to speak, which should be evoked in young and any other age learners somehow. Planets are floating in the *Learning Space*...

To be continued  
 Drawings: Jari Lutta



*Incomprehensibilities*



*Gaming*

## ONCE LOST, BUT NOW FOUND: THE MISSING STORIES OF HARRIS BURDICK

William Bintz

College of Education, Health and Human Services,  
Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, USA



"Of all the paths I have followed, only books brought me closer to my dream; it is in them that I get lost telling stories without words."

Ana Juan (2017)

### Vignette

My granddaughter is in kindergarten, and she loves for me to share wordless picturebooks with her. Recently, I shared *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* (Van Allsburg, 2011), an almost wordless picturebook, that I had not yet shared with her. Sitting on my lap, I first did a picture walk with the book, slowly flipping through the pages so she could see each illustration. Halfway through the book, she stated: "This book doesn't have many words. It also doesn't have a story. Where's the story grandpa?" I showed and read her the title and explained,

"The stories are missing and that is why it's a mystery. You see, there were stories at one time. Then, a man named Harris Burdick contacted a children's book publisher to see if he liked the stories and pictures Burdick drew for each story. The man liked the illustrations and wanted to read the stories that went with each one. So, Burdick left the illustrations with the man and promised to bring the stories the next day. But Burdick was never heard of again and that's why the stories remain a complete mystery."

My granddaughter responded: "We could write new stories, Grandpa." I smiled and said: "That's a great idea." She grabbed several sheets of blank paper, a collection of writing tools (markers, crayons, pens, pencils), and sat at the kitchen table energetically writing a story based on one of the illustrations in the book.

### Reflections

Afterwards, I reflected on this whole experience from both a grandfather and a reading teacher point of view. As a grandfather, I was reminded once again that books are powerful tools not only to enjoy but also to build relationships. My granddaughter and I thoroughly enjoyed *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* and experienced a nice discussion about the mystery around the missing stories. She extended the whole experience by writing her own story to replace the missing one, based on one of her favorite illustrations in the book.

As a reading educator, I was reminded once again that picturebooks are instructional tools with much power and potential to actively engage, even inspire, all readers. My granddaughter was actively engaged while reading and discussing *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*, identifying important details about illustrations (all were black and white), noting features about the book (included words but not stories), and asking questions, e.g., "Where's the story, Grandpa?" In many ways, this question inspired her to write a missing story because "All books need stories, Grandpa."

Like her, this experience also inspired me. Specifically, it inspired me to apply the lessons I learned from my granddaughter by developing a unit of study that teachers could use with middle grades

students (grades 5–8), as well as with a wide range of English Language Learners (grades K–12). The purpose of this article is to share the unit of study.

### Unit of Study

"Many picturebooks have excellent illustrations that inspire students."  
(Morgan & Collett, 2009: 220)

This unit of study is based on four fundamental principles about the interrelationship between reading, literature, and learning. One notion is that picturebooks and illustrations really matter to all students of all ages and all grade levels. Anthony Browne (2019: 2), an international, award-winning author and illustrator stated:

"Picture books are for everybody at any age, not books to be left behind as we grow older. The best ones leave a tantalizing gap between the pictures and the words, a gap that is filled by the reader's imagination, adding so much to the excitement of reading a book."

This unit of study is also based on the principle that visual reading is important for all readers but especially for beginning readers. David Weisner (2020: 3), an internationally recognized author and illustrator of many wordless picture books, stated,

"Before reading words, children are reading pictures. Pictures work with text in a way that is unique among art forms. Picturebooks tell stories through art, a visual language, a language that is not simple, but complex, rich, and multi-leveled. Visual reading is as important to a child's development as reading written language is. Take away the pictures and you deprive kids of a wealth of understanding – not to mention a lot of fun."

This unit of study is also based on the principle that almost everybody loves a good mystery story. This unit focuses on a collection of 14 black-and-white illustrations, each of which is unique and invites students to reunite the beautiful black-and-white illustrations with the mystery stories that were lost at one time but are now found. But beware! This invitation is not for the unimaginative, and most certainly not for the faint-of-heart.

Finally, this unit of study is based on the principle that reading aloud has much power and potential to create positive dispositions on reading, as well as enhance reading comprehension. Simply stated, there is just something special about reading aloud to people of all ages, especially children. It is a joyful experience for children and the joy is reflected in their eyes, hearts, and souls. Mem Fox (2022: 2), an internationally renowned children's book author and advocate for reading aloud, characterizes the practice as "magic". Reading aloud to children comes natural to most adults, but tips are always helpful. Table 1 illustrates some general tips for reading aloud (Trelease & Giorgia 2019).

**Teaching prompt:** After I read aloud several picturebooks by Chris Van Allsburg, a famous author and illustrator of mystery stories, we are going to write and illustrate our own mystery story based on three things: 1) what we learned from Chris Van Allsburg about important characteristics and features of mystery stories, 2) what illustration we self-select from a total of 14 black-and-white illustrations in the picturebook *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*, and 3) how we write mystery stories for each self-selected illustration to replace the original mystery stories that are still missing.

**Procedure:** The following is a two-week unit of study based on readings of literature by Chris Van Allsburg. It is organized by instructional time per day, targeted skills, instructional strategies, and student products.

## Two-Week Unit of Study

### Week One

Day	Time	Targeted Skills	Instructional Strategies	Student Products
1	60 mins	<p>Defining mystery story</p> <p>Exploring definitions of mystery stories</p> <p>Developing critical characteristics of mystery stories</p>	<p>Teacher reads aloud <i>The Wretched Stone</i> and students use "Say Something" (see Sidebar 1) strategy to comprehend and discuss the story.</p> <p>Students do a "Quick Write" (see Sidebar 2) to record and discuss understanding of the text.</p> <p>Students use "Story Summary with One Character Included" (see Sidebar 3) strategy to identify, record, and share academic vocabulary for mystery stories.</p> <p>Students use "Three Plusses and a Wish" (see Sidebar 4) as a reflection strategy to deepen understanding of mystery story genre.</p>	<p>Students brainstorm characteristics of mystery stories on a changing Classroom Bulletin Board</p> <p>Students add characteristics of mystery stories based on reading and discussing <i>The Wretched Stone</i> by Chris Van Allsburg</p> <p>Students start developing a Writer's Notebook</p>
2	60 mins	<p>Understanding and using mystery story structure</p> <p>Understanding the role of building suspense and recognizing text clues in mystery stories</p>	<p>Teacher reads aloud <i>The Stranger</i>.</p> <p>Students use "Story Frame" (see Sidebar 5) to record and discuss understanding of story.</p> <p>Students use "One-Minute Reflection" (see Sidebar 6) to update characteristics of mystery stories.</p>	<p>Students submit Story Frame.</p> <p>Students use "Three Minute Pause" strategy to update characteristics of mystery stories on Bulletin Board.</p>
3	60 mins	<p>Understanding and using story elements, especially mood, in mystery stories</p>	<p>Teacher reads aloud <i>The Garden of Abdul Gasazi</i>.</p> <p>Students use "Storybook Plan" (see Sidebar 7).</p> <p>Students use "Beginning, Middle, End Pyramid" (see Sidebar 8) strategy to record new characteristics of mystery stories.</p>	<p>Students submit "Storybook Plan" and "Beginning, Middle, End Pyramid" and use both to update characteristics of mystery stories on Bulletin Board.</p>

4	60 mins	Understanding story sequence of mystery stories	<p>Teacher reads aloud <i>The Sweetest Fig</i> and students use “Word Sorts” (see Sidebar 9) strategy to recognize and use story sequence.</p> <p>Students use “Three Minute Pause” (see Sidebar 9) reflection strategy to update understanding of mystery story and narrative writing.</p>	Students use the Word Sorts strategy and Grand Finale Comment reflection sheet to update characteristics of mystery stories on Bulletin Board
5	60 mins	Understanding characterization in mystery stories	Teacher reads aloud <i>Probutidi</i> and students use “Wordstorming” (see Sidebar 10) strategy to analyze main character.	Students submit “Wordstorming” sheet and use it to update characteristics of mystery stories on Bulletin Board
<b>Week Two</b>				
6	60 mins	Understanding organization of mystery story	Teacher reads aloud <i>The Widow’s Broom</i> and students use “Mystery Story Response Cube” (see Sidebar 11).	Students submit “Mystery Story Response Cube” sheet and use it to update characteristics of mystery stories on Bulletin Board
7	60 mins	Generating and posting potential ideas and story lines for mystery stories	<p>Teacher reads aloud <i>The Mysteries of Harris Burdick</i> and displays collection of illustrations of <i>The Mysteries of Harris Burdick</i> (portfolio edition) around room.</p> <p>Students use “Gallery Walk” (see Sidebar 12) and post potential ideas and story lines for mystery stories under each illustration.</p>	Students use post-its for Gallery Walk
8	60 mins	Writing the Mystery Story	Writer’s Workshop (composing, drafting)	First Draft
9	60 mins	Writing and Revising the Mystery Story	Writer’s Workshop (semantic editing/revising)	Second Draft
10	60 mins	Editing a Mystery Story	Writer’s Workshop (syntactic editing/revising)	Edited Draft

<p>Publishing and Celebrating Mystery Stories</p> <p>Reading Professional Authors' Versions of Selected illustrations in <i>The Mysteries of Harris Burdick</i></p>	<p>Students publish and celebrate their mystery stories at a public event, e.g., Author Fair, Mystery Story Writers Fair, etc.</p> <p>Teacher introduces students to <i>The Chronicles of Harris Burdick</i> by Chris Van Allsburg. This book is a collection of 14 mystery stories written by 14 professional authors, corresponding to the 14 black-and-white illustrations in <i>The Mysteries of Harris Burdick</i>. All professional authors were invited by Van Allsburg to select one favorite illustration and write a mystery story for that illustration. Students can read the mystery story by the professional writer for the same illustration they selected to appreciate another version of the same illustration.</p>
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In week 2, this unit of study primarily focuses on student composing, revising, and editing personal mystery stories. It is important to note that these are integrated processes. Composing includes brainstorming, quick-writing, rough-draft writing. At this stage, students spend time working together as “writers” and sharing rough drafts with each other to give and receive feedback. Here, the goal is not to produce a final thought and certainly not a finished piece. Rather, it is for students to experience the messiness of first-draft writing and thinking, explore multiple ideas for a mystery story, receive constructive feedback from other writers and develop a first draft of a piece of writing.

Revising involves sharing and discussing first draft writing in author circles. At this stage, students share and discuss first draft writing, focusing on the characteries and features of mystery stories highlighted in Week One. Students also engage in *semantic editing*, the process of editing a piece of writing solely for meaning. They read first draft mystery stories with one question in mind: does this mystery story make sense?

Editing involves sharing and discussing second and third draft writing in author circles. At this stage, students share and discuss draft writings, continuing to focus on *semantic editing*, but also *syntactic editing*, the process of editing a piece of writing for syntactical features. They read second and third drafts focusing on sentence structure and variety, vocabulary and word choice, grammar, spelling, etc. Here, the goal is for students to collaboratively think, write, and rewrite in author circles to create mystery stories that will be published and celebrated at a public event, e.g., Author Fair, Mystery Story Writers Fair, etc.

As an extension to this unit of study, the teacher introduces students to *The Chronicles of Harris Burdick* by Chris Van Allsburg. This book is a collection of 14 mystery stories written by 14 professional authors, corresponding to the 14 black-and-white illustrations in the original, *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*. All professional authors were invited by Van Allsburg to select one favorite illustration and write a mystery story for that illustration. Students can read the mystery story by the professional writer based on the same illustration they selected to read a yet another different version of the story for the same illustration.

In sum, the primary purpose of this three-week unit of study is to: 1) actively engage students in the mystery story as a literary genre, using a collection of picturebooks by Chris Van Allsburg, 2) have students experience how teacher reads aloud from selected picturebooks in order to enjoy the mystery stories, but also see and hear what good reading looks and sounds like, and 3) have students experience a variety of instructional strategies to learn and reflect on important characteristics and features of the mystery story genre for the purpose of applying these characteristics and features in their own mystery story based on one, self-selected illustration in the picturebook *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*.

#### Final Thought

I began with a vignette about my granddaughter and myself having an enjoyable experience with *The*



*Mysteries of Harris Burdick*. This experience inspired me to develop a unit of study based on the same book for older readers, including middle grades readers (grades 5–8) and English Language Learners (grades K–12). It also inspired me to develop a unit of study that included personally meaningful and culturally relevant literature, and student learning experiences that initiate and sustain active engagement over time. In the end, I hope this article will do for teachers what the experience with my granddaughter did for me, namely, it inspired me.

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## SIDEBARS

### Sidebar 1

Say Something

Students organize themselves in pairs.

Teacher reads aloud a piece of literature and stops for student discussion in pairs at predetermined points. These points can be episodic, e.g. a change in narration, an introduction of a new character or setting, etc.

After reading the entire text, students discuss as a class what they talked about in pairs.

### Sidebar 2

#### Quick Write

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Book Title \_\_\_\_\_

### Sidebar 3

#### Story Summary with One Character Included

This story is about \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ is an important character in the story.

\_\_\_\_\_ tried to \_\_\_\_\_.

The story ends when \_\_\_\_\_

**Sidebar 4.**

**Three Pluses and a Wish**

**Plus #1:** What did this book teach you about the important characteristics and features of mystery stories?

**Plus #2:** What did this book teach you about *reading* mystery stories?

**Plus #3:** What did this book teach you about *writing* mystery stories?

**Wish:** What would you like to know more about reading and writing mystery stories?

**Sidebar 5**

**Story Frame**

In this story the problem starts when \_\_\_\_\_

After that \_\_\_\_\_

Next \_\_\_\_\_

Then \_\_\_\_\_

The problem is finally solved when \_\_\_\_\_

The story ends \_\_\_\_\_

The mood of the story was \_\_\_\_\_

Flip the page over and write your reflections on the story.

**Sidebar 6**

**One-Minute Reflection**

What was the most important or useful thought you learned from this mystery book?

What two questions do you still have about mystery stories? What remains unclear?

What would you like to know more about reading and writing mystery stories?

**Sidebar 7**

**Storybook Plan**

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_

CHARACTERS \_\_\_\_\_

PLACE \_\_\_\_\_

TIME \_\_\_\_\_

PROBLEM \_\_\_\_\_

SOLUTION \_\_\_\_\_

MOOD \_\_\_\_\_

## Sidebar 8

### Beginning, Middle, End Pyramid

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Reflections:

Line 1: One word naming a main character in the story.

Line 2: Two words telling about the beginning of the story.

Line 3: Three words telling about the middle of the story.

Line 4: Four words telling about the end of the story.

Reflections: Reflect on and record what you have learned from this book about what makes a good mystery story.

## Sidebar 9

### Three Minute Pause

**Minute 1:** With a partner, think about what you have just learned about the mystery story. Summarize what you have just learned.

**Minute 2:** With a partner, make a connection between the mystery story just read and the one or ones read aloud before.

**Minute 3:** Independently, write your current understandings and new questions you have about mystery stories

## Sidebar 10

### Wordstorming

Procedure: During and/or after the read aloud, students record words from the text and/or from background knowledge in the appropriate boxes below that characterize important features of mystery stories, e.g., S for suspenseful, C for clues, E for evidence, F for Foreshadowing, etc.

<b>A-B</b>	<b>C-D</b>	<b>E-F</b>	<b>G-H</b>
<b>I-J</b>	<b>K-L</b>	<b>M-N</b>	<b>O-P</b>
<b>Q-R</b>	<b>S-T</b>	<b>U-V</b>	<b>W-X-Y-Z</b>

## Sidebar 11

### Mystery Story Response Cube

<b>Book Title:</b>	<b>Topic: Mystery Stories</b>
What did you learn about mystery stories from this book?	What surprised you about this mystery book?
What connections do you see between this mystery story and others we have read?	What questions do you have about reading and writing mystery questions?

## Sidebar 12

### Gallery Walk

1. In general, a gallery walk is an instructional strategy in which students explore multiple pieces of content that are displayed around the room. This strategy is often used as a culminating activity from an experience, project, or unit of study. Here, the gallery walk is the culminating activity in the unit of study.
2. Individually, students place their final draft mystery stories around the room in "gallery style."
3. In small groups (3-4 students), students "tour" around the room, stopping to read different mystery stories by other students. After reading, students collectively in the group discuss each mystery story, and individually write responses to the story on post-it notes and leave them for the author to read. Responses focus on communicating one or more strengths of the mystery story.
4. After groups of students have read and responded to several mystery stories (other than their own), students remove their mystery stories from the gallery and return to their seats to read the responses of other readers.
5. As a culminating activity, students write and share written reflections on the whole experience of a "Gallery Walk."

### SUGGESTED TIPS FOR READING ALOUD

1. Preview the book by reading it to yourself ahead of time. Such an advance reading allows you to spot material you may want to shorten, eliminate, or elaborate on.
2. Remember that reading aloud comes naturally to very few people. To do it successfully and with ease, you must practice.
3. If you are reading a picturebook, make sure the children can see the pictures easily.
4. Allow listeners a few minutes to settle down and adjust their feed and minds to the story.
5. Set the stage for reading. Read the title, show the illustration, introduce the author and illustrator. Discuss briefly.
6. Remember that the art of listening is an acquired one. It must be taught and cultivated gradually—it just doesn't happen overnight.
7. Vary the length and subject matter of your readings.
8. Position yourself so that you and the listeners are comfortable. Your head should be above the heads of your listeners for your voice to carry to the far side of the room.
9. Use plenty of expression when reading. If possible, change your tone of voice to fit the dialogue.
10. Adjust your pace to fit the story. During a suspenseful part, slow down, draw your words out, bring your listeners to the edge of their chairs.
11. When possible, encourage the listeners to join in on repetitive parts of the story.
12. Allow time for discussion after a reading a story. Do not turn discussions into quizzes or insist upon prying story interpretations from readers.
13. Do not read too fast. Read slowly enough for readers to build mental pictures of what they just hear you read. Slow down enough for listeners to see the pictures without feeling rushed.
14. Try to read a story that you personally enjoy. Your dislike may show in the reading.
15. Don't be unnerved by questions during the reading. Foster curiosity with patient answers, then resume the reading.
16. Relax and have fun!

## HOW TO TURN YOUR SOCIAL NETWORK CONTACTS INTO A CAREER OPPORTUNITY

Rick Shaum

Englewood, Colorado, United States

*Rick Shaum is an executive coach in the USA who helps leaders become more effective in their roles. His decades of experience in the world of business help him share insights that leaders find valuable. Rick knows how to utilize connections effectively and enjoys teaching these skills to others. The following is a summary of his presentation at Agape Café in Tartu, on 27 April 2023.*



I hope that you find this topic beneficial. Oftentimes we have family friends and their children who don't know what to do to get a job or how to get a job. So, I do a lot of work with people in transition. They can be young adults that are trying to think about their career initially. And also, sometimes adults reach a point where they want to do something different than what they've been doing. I just want to give you some simple ideas that I think will be helpful. If you are in the university or trade school or military school, whatever training you do, you may have the idea that you would have one job for the rest of your life. No, probably not. In the United States, and probably in Estonia and other European countries, if you are in your twenties, it's likely that you will have five to ten different jobs over the next thirty years. Many people just don't want to have any job. Most individuals want to have a job where they do work they enjoy with people they enjoy, working for a company that they think is doing good work. That's three things. Because I could do work I enjoy but with people I don't enjoy. That's not very much fun. I could do work but not enjoy the people. And I could do work I enjoy with people I enjoy, but I don't feel good about the work the company is doing. So, in the United States, many young people want to get all three. If you just want a job, that's easy. But if you want to meet all three, you'll have to be very targeted in what you do. And that's why I want to show you what I've learned about networking and about building connections, and how it can be helpful to you. So, I'm going to give you three simple ideas tonight. It's going to be A, B, C. I want to give you three ideas that will be helpful as you think about the connections and the network that you can build over time.

So, the A, the first thing that I want to say is you have to have access to your network. That is something that's hard for you to understand perhaps because you live in a world in which access is a whole lot easier. When I started my career many years ago, there was no internet. I would literally write down; I would collect business cards from people. And I would try and keep all the business cards because that was how I had their contact information. You live in a world in which access to your connections is a lot easier. And I want to encourage you to think about using a platform, to use technology to access your connections. You have two options if you're going to use technology. Option number one, you could build your own technology for connections. Maybe some of you have coding skills, but that's kind of hard to write your own program. The other way is you could use someone else's technology. That is what is called social media. There are two primary platforms that people use - Facebook and LinkedIn. I'm going to show you how I use LinkedIn because I believe LinkedIn is better for business and career connections than Facebook. Facebook is good for friends and social connections, but LinkedIn is really designed to help you with career connections, professional connections. In order to access the platform, you have to build a profile. When you build a profile, you have a home page on LinkedIn. You can write a paragraph about yourself. It shows activity, and

it also shows work experience. You can put in your educational background. You can also put in licences and certifications. And you can also have skills where other people have said you're good at something. If I ask you, are you good at leadership development? You might say yes, but how do I know? On LinkedIn I would say I have 40 or 50 people who have endorsed me, and I even have people who have given me recommendations. I have about 20 recommendations where other people have written about me, and they have been willing to write that the work I do has helped them and is very beneficial.

The B of what I want to say is once you have access, step number two is build your connections. The more connections you have, the more powerful is your network. Now, let me just show you the power of building your connections. In order to build your network, you want to have to think of this as a way of promoting yourself or just talking about what you've done and who you know. You can see here that I have about 1450 connections. These are what are called first-level connections. I am connected directly to these persons. If I say how many second-level connections I have, it's over one million. There are a million people I could get to if I asked someone, "Hey, would you introduce me to someone else?" Now, how would you build your connections? As I understand, here in Estonia and maybe in some of the other countries nearby, when you go to school, you're with the same class for many years. Even though in university or trade school you may not be doing the same thing, you could connect with all your friends from school. So, you could also reach out to your friends at the university. I would also encourage you to reach out to the parents of your friends. And the reason for that is your friends don't have jobs. They are the same age as you, but their parents might have jobs. As a father of four children, if someone reaches out to me and says "Rick, I am going to school with your son, David. Would you be willing to connect with me to maybe help me get a job," I would say, "Yes." We always want to help young people get jobs. Why do we want to help young people get jobs? So, we get pension. No older person would be unwilling to help you get a job. If you start building your connections, if you add two connections a week, that would be a hundred connections every year. I would also encourage you to reach out to your family. If you have aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, there's a lot of people you can reach out to. If you have a job, you can reach out to other people who work at the same job and connect with them on LinkedIn. So, LinkedIn is designed to keep track of people that you work with or people that you know well that might be helpful to you in the future.

Now, the C is - connect to your relationships. I'm going to look for people I'm connected to in Estonia. I have 83 results. I live in Colorado in the United States. The secret is what I call having a specific reasonable request. So, if I reached out to Armand (a connection of mine in Estonia) and said, "Hey, who do you know that I should be connected to?" he would say, "I don't know." Because that's not very specific and it's not reasonable that he would go through all his connections to tell me. On the other hand, if I said "Armand, I saw on LinkedIn that you're connected to Collins Merton Marquata. I'd like to meet Collins because I am going to be in Tallinn next month. And I'd like to find out more about the project office he works for, or there is a job I would like to apply for. Would you be willing to introduce me to Collins because I'm going to be in Tallinn?" That is a specific reasonable request. I'm not asking him to go through all his connections. I've said just one. And I've given a reason why. Let's say I wanted a sales job. Again, there's a million of results, but the point is that LinkedIn says to me that there are people who I know that work there. Here's an example. Here's a job for vice president of talent management. And it is in the area where I live. If I put my resume in there, they don't know who I am. But I have two connections - Jacob Reed and Brian Noble. Jacob Reed used to be a roommate with my oldest son, and I go to church with Jacob's parents. Jacob could introduce me to the hiring manager at that company. He works there, and he would say, "Yes, I will introduce you." In fact, I did this years ago, there was a job I applied for about 14 years ago. I looked on LinkedIn, and I saw that I knew someone who knew the hiring manager. And I reached out to Vince and said, "Hey Vince, I saw on LinkedIn that you're connected to this person, will you put a good word in for me?" He did, I got an interview and ended up getting the job. It was all by connections. And later on, they told me if it hadn't been for Vince calling, I wouldn't have gotten an interview. So, in many areas of life, there is a saying that we have in America which is: it's not what you know, it's who you know that's important. And so, when you want to connect with the hiring manager or with human

resources, it's great to be able to use LinkedIn to know that you're only one person away from being able to get access to the company you want to work for. It's pretty amazing when you think about it. When people change jobs, they stay on LinkedIn. They just update their profile, so you don't lose track of them, which is very nice. I can always look up their email address even if they've changed it because I'm connected to them. Most people have their mobile numbers on LinkedIn. In the world of jobs, if you don't get an interview, you probably won't get the job. And it's easier to get an interview if someone introduces you into the company than if you just submit a piece of paper or an electronic application, and they don't know who you are, and they get 300 applications. I do agree it doesn't guarantee that you'll get a job. But it's better to get the interview which is your opportunity to position yourself and talk what you do and who you are, and that is the best way for you.

As you go through your career, keep your LinkedIn profile. Keep adding two connections a week. I encourage people to make that a rule. And if you do that for the next ten years, you will have about a thousand connections. With a thousand connections, you have a lot of opportunities to connect with people, and it can be very valuable.

So, these are the three ideas - A, B, C. A - have access to your network, for which I recommend LinkedIn. B is build your connections, add two a week. We talked about some ways you can do that. And then C is connect with those people. When you have specific reasonable requests, you will find that they are very willing to help you.

## **"EAT YOUR VEGGIES, DEARIE"**

### **SOME FOOD OPTIONS IN ULSTER COUNTY, NEW YORK STATE**

*Julia Hirsch*

*Highland, New York*

For the past few weeks, I've been trying to buy some Romaine lettuce, the crisp sort that is appropriately called "long lettuce" in England because of its elongated leaves. On May 5<sup>th</sup> the only ones on the shelf had been packed at their source in Salinas, California, on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and, not surprisingly, looked distinctly limp. Three days later the old packages were gone, and new ones appeared, dated April 25<sup>th</sup>. They were frozen solid, not a good condition for a lettuce leaf.



While the scarcity of a particular type of lettuce in a supermarket that sells an abundance of vegetables is certainly a "first world problem," the situation reflects the entire realm of contemporary food production, distribution, and consumption in the United States. Large-scale agriculture, refrigeration and rapid means of transportation offer the consumer a great many choices, but there is often a distinct loss of freshness which results in a lack of taste, texture and ultimately a shortened "shelf life." That's hardly surprising given that the average distance food travels from farm to store is about 1300 miles.

This is where Community Support Agriculture comes in. In the Hudson Valley of New York State—which includes Ulster County, one of nine of the 62 jurisdictional areas that make up New York State and where I now live—there are 115 CSAs, a humble proportion of the more than 30,000 CSA's in the entire country.

Community Supported Agriculture lives up to its name. Typically, a CSA farm is owned and maintained by a single family and derives its support from local customers who buy a seasonal share prior to the growing season. This advanced payment enables the farmer to purchase seeds, plants, and other materials early on. In exchange for the purchase of their share, customers have weekly access to the

produce as it is harvested, in a quantity—generally between 5 and 7 pounds of produce—which the farmer has established will be proportionate to the consumer’s investment. CSAs offer different payment options in order to accommodate both those who have ample means and those who live on restricted budgets. The price of a share is also affected by the total number of shareholders. Most CSAs offer full as well as half shares. Some offer inter shares which offer few options and a different pattern of distribution. It did take me some fancy arithmetic to compare one CSA’s price list for shares and half shares to another. I concluded that the variation between them amounted to between two to five dollars for the entire season. Prices for individual items may exceed those at the local supermarket (where they are not nearly as fresh) but on average the prices are fair—and are well worth the cost.

In addition to the overhead that will be apparent to the customer—seeds, plants, plastic sheeting to keep down weeds—the farmer has operating costs the consumer never sees, such as debt service and the maintenance, repair or acquisition of equipment. One doesn’t farm to become rich: as the farmers I spoke to made perfectly clear, it is the love of the land, the love of growing things and dedication to sustaining, and being an integral part of a community that are their driving motives.

CSAs began to develop on the East coast of the United States in the 1980s at a time when large farms began to decline all over the country. In contrast to mass-production agriculture which devotes its entire acreage to a single crop, CSAs feature small crop production, producing modest quantities of a variety of crops. This is in sharp contrast to the acreage used in mass agriculture: according to a survey of California farms, 71,300 acres were dedicated to Romaine lettuce—the very one I was looking for last week—in the year 2021. CSAs may also grow unusual crops (such as extra-large beets, or an uncommon kind of gourd) that may not appeal to many customers: that makes them attractive to customers who like unusual products. CSAs will box produce for pick-up by restaurants or others who are entitled to a large weekly bounty, but those collecting a small amount pick up what they are getting at the CSA itself on a set day of the week. Those who prefer not to be a shareholder—perhaps because they can’t consume even half a share over time—can purchase what the CSA has to sell as they would in a store. CSAs often add products to their inventory such as honey, eggs, bread, cheeses, yoghurt and smoked meats grown or prepared by other enterprises. CSAs have become very inventive in creating additional opportunities to draw people to their farms by offering “farm-to-table” dinners, concerts and “pick-your-own” opportunities. CSAs not only sell to their subscribers and customers but take their produce to farmers’ markets of which there are some 400 throughout the state and four in Ulster County.

My interest in CSAs began some fifteen years ago when I started to spend more time in Ulster County. I discovered Bellevista Farm (not its real name), a family farm which measures 77 acres, just by walking around, and became a “shareholder.” I liked the idea of supporting a family enterprise. But I also liked the opportunity to rummage around in baskets of green beans, carrots, potatoes, broccoli, onions and tomatoes: there was the special pleasure not only of having some choices—this tomato or that—but of touching and smelling the produce, a sensory pleasure that is hardly possible in the supermarket where items are either prepackaged in cellophane or have lost their fragrance in the process of travelling from field to store. Ten days ago, in preparation for writing about CSAs, I called the farm, which is about three miles from where I live, to see if anyone was around to talk to and indeed Megan (not her real name), who now runs the farm, agreed to let me come by. I learned that her father had started the farm in 1994 and had been farming since he was ten years old. The farm has about 100 subscribers and, in addition to upholding that trade, also contributes food to three local food banks—places where people in need can pick up free food. The farm grows twenty different crops, and, before long, sixteen rows of strawberries will be ready for picking. While I was shy to ask probing questions about the economics of the farm—costs, overhead, financing risk factors, and profits—I did learn that farmers on the average make a 3% to 5% return on their work. (Given that my savings bank pays me 3.75%, that seems pretty good.) Farms also have to be accountable in other respects: scales are subject to inspection and the safety measures around the use of heavy machinery are subject to scrutiny. Farm work is relentless, especially during the growing months when Megan works at least sixty hours a week.



Although the CSA will not get going until the end of the month, I could see rows and rows of green coming out of the earth at Bellevista. At some distance, about some fifteen copper-colored chickens were ambling around their outdoor pen: I don't know if they are the "layers" whose eggs are sold in the farm shop. But they are "free-range" and enjoy every bit of their ability to move around a large open space. Last summer, when the carrots were out, I was told that the chickens like carrot tops and I was allowed to offer them to the birds. That was a delightful experience, knowing too, that the green stuff that many of us discard is a treat for another creature. Other forms of environmental awareness also abound: there are shelves in the shop lined with the empty egg cartons and small green cardboard boxes that have been returned to be used again. Megan has some new plans for more community uses of the farm, including a short-stay camping site, and building the coffee shop that was supposed to happen last summer. I look forward to that one, as I have visions of lingering over my latte while looking at the mountains in the distance and picking some flowers—last year's were zinnias, coreopsis, and small sunflowers—before heading home.



*Water Street Market*

Meanwhile, there's a new CSA, a mile away from me, that is preparing for their second season. They've printed a handsome brochure that I came across at the wine store I go to. They cultivate four acres but also sell lovely greeting cards, vinegars, and many more flowers both fresh and dried. Aside from offering full, spring, and fall shares some with, some without mushrooms, they sell their produce at farmers markets in five different locations beyond our county, as well as in New Jersey.

Another newcomer this season is a dedicated cultivator of mushrooms. I had seen bags of his mushrooms—nothing like the smooth-capped pale "button" mushrooms I see at the supermarket—and was curious about them and their grower, thinking I might have spotted another CSA. It turns out David (his real name) isn't yet. For now he sells his Phoenix Oysters, Falcon Oysters and Lions Mane every week at a particular location in Water Street Market—a kind of open-air "arcade" off the main street of New Paltz, which, according to its website, aims at creating the atmosphere of a "quaint European inspired shopping village." David started foraging for mushrooms twenty years ago, but established Black Oak Mushrooms this year. He grows many of his mushrooms in his 800 sq ft, garage in a mixture of oak sawdust and soy pellets. His main clients are restaurants—and the casual passersby like me. But he sees the prospects of a CSA in the future.

CSAs are only one form of agriculture practiced in the Hudson Valley which includes vineyards and apple orchards (according to the 2017 US Census of Agriculture, Ulster County is the thirteenth largest apple producer in the entire United States). There are also numerous small farms with particular specialties such as Veritas Farms which raises grass-fed beef and lamb and has "resurrected nearly extinct breeds," according to its website, and Ronnybrook Farm Dairy which, as stated on its online site, is dedicated to producing milk and milk products, such as yoghurt and butter which are minimally processed while also assuring the humane treatment of animals. But CSAs stand out for their idealism and dedication both to the land and to creating a more personal connection to their customers and their community.

While it is apparent in all quarters of American life—industry, education, urban life, and health care, to name just a few—the Covid pandemic had an enormous and as yet uncharted impact, it is unclear how it had affected CSAs and small "niche" farming. It is not impossible that the isolation bred of the pandemic will enhance new opportunities for community building. If that is the case, then for sure CSAs will continue to thrive and grow.

Note: This account of CSAs benefited enormously from the experience and insights of Delany Talliaferro, manager of Talliaferro Farms, Jared Smith of Laughing Fork Farms, Gavin at Huguenot Farms, and David Warner of Black Oak Mushrooms. Each of these farms has its own website. Statistics about CSAs were drawn mainly from <https://extension.psu.edu/community-supported-agriculture-csa>, <https://rodaleinstitute.org/blog/the-history-of-community-supported-agriculture> and <https://ulstercounty.ny.gov>. These last three sources do not seem to be entirely current.

## THOSE WERE THE DAYS – STUDENT LIFE IN TARTU 1973–1978

Enn Veldi

Associate Professor Emeritus  
Department of English Studies  
University of Tartu

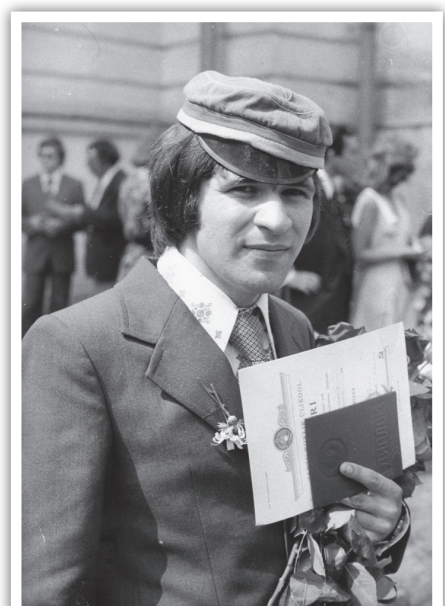


I belong to the generation of students of English who was admitted to the University fifty years ago. In the early 1970s I was fascinated by long hair and rock music. In fact, I was allowed to wear long hair only during my freshman year; during the second, the third, and the fourth years of study male students underwent military training; a short haircut was then mandatory. As for rock music, I played the bass guitar six years in a club band. Our English vocabulary was shaped by words and expressions that occurred in the song lyrics of the Beatles, for example, *don't let me down, with a little help from my friends*, and *let it be*. We collected and studied song lyrics. As printed lyrics and sheet music were often not available, we had to write down song lyrics by ear. In fact, this activity could be interpreted as an exercise in listening comprehension. We had reel-to-reel tape recorders at home, which played taped rock music almost incessantly.

In 1973 there were four entrance examinations: the English language (oral), the Estonian language (written, composition), the Estonian language (oral), and history (oral). The entrance examinations were held in the first half of August, and the lists of admitted students were made public during the last week of August. The educational policy of the period favoured people with previous work experience. For this reason, the age difference among the students could be about six years.

In 1973 the entrance examination in the English language was held simultaneously in three rooms on the second floor of the Languages Block (*keeltemaja*) by an examination board of two lecturers. I was examined by Gustav Liiv and Aino Jõgi; I appreciated their friendly attitude towards student applicants.

The examination procedure was in those days as follows. Upon entering the examination room and presenting your document (in this case an examination sheet with a photo, *eksamileht*) you had to draw a numbered examination card (*eksamipilet*) from a set of about twenty cards, which were laid out on a table. The number of the chosen examination card was then registered in the minutes. Each examination card listed three questions. The first question was reading an unknown text in English with the help of Silvet's English-Estonian dictionary, the second question was a grammar exercise, and the third question was a topic of conversation. The list of conversational topics included some that were specific to



Enn with his university diploma

the Soviet era, such as working on a collective farm.

The first meeting of the first-year students was on September 1. At first Oleg Mutt, head of the Department, gave a brief overview of the curriculum. He began by introducing English-language academic terminology, for example, 'booklet of academic achievement' (õpinguraamat), 'assistant professor' (dotsent), 'laboratory assistant' (laborant), 'full-time student' (statsionaarne üliõpilane), 'course/term paper' (kursusetöö), 'graduation/diploma paper' (diplomitöö), etc.

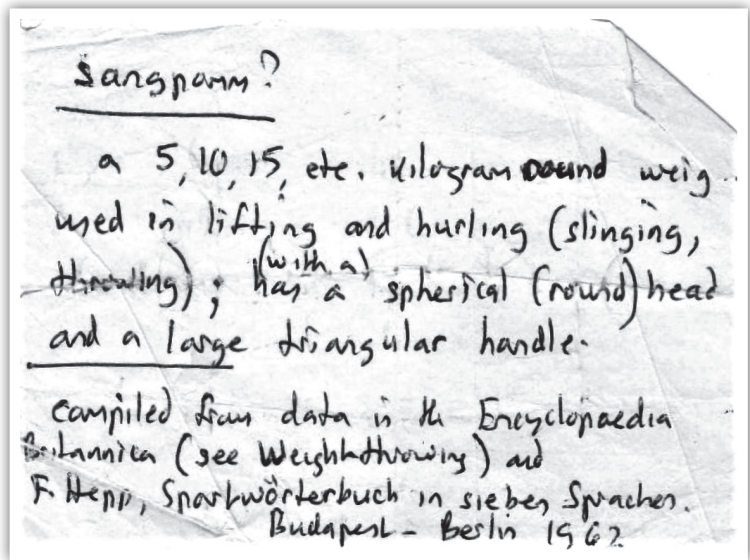
He then pointed out that Benjamin Beresford was the first lecturer of English in Tartu (1803).

We were told that in order to complete our studies in five years, we would have to pass about thirty exams and thirty prelims or preliminary exams (*arvestus*). The academic subjects were divided into four groups: 1) socio-political subjects (history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Marxist philosophy, political economy); 2) general subjects (logic, psychology, general linguistics); 3) the pedagogical cycle (pedagogy, methods of teaching English, teaching practice); 4) English philology or English studies – the main subject. It appeared that English-related subjects constituted only one third of the curriculum. During the first two years we had 16 hours of practical English a week, which included classes in analytical reading, practical grammar, practical phonetics, conversation, newspaper reading, and home reading. At the end of the second year, students were expected to be proficient enough in practical English in order to proceed with theoretical subjects, such as history of the English language, lexicology, theoretical grammar, and theoretical phonetics.

Starting with the third year the number of classes devoted to practical English started to decrease: the third year (14/8), the fourth year (8/6), and the fifth year (6/6). In reality, by the fifth year our students' proficiency in English had deteriorated and some refresher courses were already needed.

We were also told that unfortunately there were no English-speaking socialist countries in the world; therefore, the University could not send us abroad to practise our English. Instead, we were encouraged to speak English among ourselves. In the fifth year, instead of visiting Great Britain, our students visited Moscow for a week. They spent their time in Moscow looking for additional material for their graduation papers at the Library of Foreign Literature.

Our course was divided into two groups for practical English classes. Aino Jõgi, our course supervisor,



Oleg Mutt was an unrivalled authority with regard to any linguistic aspect of the English language. He was enthusiastic about words and was always willing to consult his lexicographic and encyclopaedic resources in order to explain less known word meanings or to seek translation equivalents. The accurate equivalent for *sangpomm* is 'kettlebell'.



First-year students after raking leaves on Toome Hill in the spring of 1974. The event was called a *subbotnik*. Photo by Urmas Taul.

taught analytical reading to group A and Helgi Susi to group B. I was in group B.

In the first year we used a new original textbook that was written by Heino Liiv and Nora Toots. Because the textbook had not been published yet, all the materials were handed out to students in the form of typewritten carbon copies. This textbook was certainly more interesting than the standard Soviet textbook series for students of English, known by the name of their editor as Arakin's textbooks, which we used in our second, third, and fourth year of study. The selection of the texts was fresh and contemporary. For example, Lesson 1 of the textbook *Button Arrives in Dimity Hall* introduced North American university life. In fact, it was Chapter 2 of *A Course in Murder* by the Canadian author Elizabeth Chaytor, which had been published in 1969.



Heino Liiv

The coursebook included a number of texts that are still remembered because of their good humour, for example, *A Schoolboy's Essay* and *A Cow in the Bath*.

**(2) A Schoolboy's Essay**  
From "Let's Speak English II"

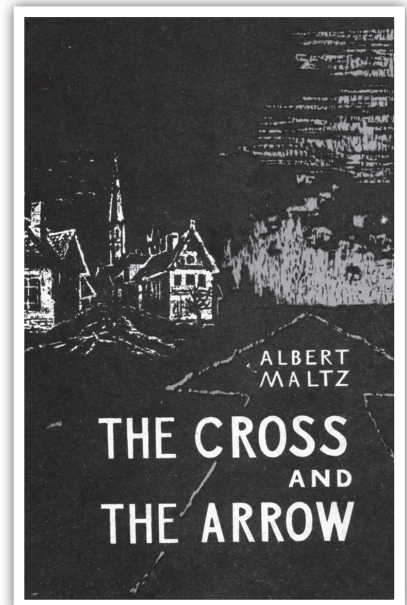
The bird I'm going to write about is the Owl. The Owl cannot see at all in the daytime, and at night it is as blind as a bat. I do not know much about the Owl, so I will go on to the animal which I am going to choose. It is the Cow. The Cow is a mammal, and it is tame. It has six sides, right, left, fore, back, upper and lower. At the back it has a tail on which hangs a brush. With this it sends the flies away, so that they will not fall into the milk. The head is for the purpose of growing horns, and so that the mouth can be somewhere. The horns are to hit with. The mouth is to moo with. Under the cow hangs the milk. It is arranged for milking. When people milk the milk comes, and there is never an end to the supply. How the Cow does it, I have not yet found out, but it makes more and more. The Cow has a fine sense of smell. One can smell it far away. This is the reason for fresh air in the country. The man Cow is called an Ox, it is not a mammal. The Cow does not eat much, but what it eats it eats twice, so that it gets enough. When it is hungry it moos, and when it says nothing it is because all its inside is full of grass.

Cecil Hunt

Helgi Susi taught analytical reading in a highly principled manner. I was at first surprised when she told us that school copybooks were required for our written tests. Moreover, when she returned a marked test, we had to write a correction of mistakes. For example, in one of the translations from Estonian into English I made an error in the spelling of the verb *to lose* (spelling it as *\*loose*). In order to avoid this error in the future, she asked me to provide three examples in the correction of mistakes.

All the fiction that was prescribed for home reading had been printed in the Soviet Union. The book titles that I remember included *The Cross and the Arrow* by Albert Maltz, *The Path of Thunder* by Peter Abrahams, *The Citadel* by Archibald Cronin, *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway, and *The Man of Property* by John Galsworthy. Since these books were used for students' home reading for many years during the Soviet period, the lecturers had ample time to prepare glossaries and exercises, some of which were published by the University.

Most lecturers at the Department of English studies had graduated from the University of Tartu in the late 1940s and early 1950s (Oleg Mutt in 1948, Gustav Liiv, Helgi Pulk (b. Lahk), Helgi Susi, and Asta Luigas in 1949, Aino Jõgi (b. Nõmm) and Hella Laan in 1950, Amanda Kriit and Laine Hone (b. Võsamäe) in 1951, and Nora Toots (b. Ploomipuu) and Gunnar Kiviväli in 1953). Two lecturers had graduated from the University in the 1960s – Ann Pikver (b. Randalu) in 1965 and Leili Kostabi (b. Hellenurm) in 1966. Those lecturers that had defended their PhD theses became associate professors (Oleg Mutt, Urve Lehtsalu (Hanko), Gunnar Kiviväli, Heino Liiv, Nora Toots, Asta Luigas, Aino Jõgi, and Ann Pikver). Part of their expertise came from the four-month refresher courses in Moscow that the university teachers had to attend every five years. A major problem was that the majority of our lecturers had never visited Great Britain. Who would have thought then that Ann Alari (she graduated in 1977) will publish a book entitled *My England* (see Alari 2012).



Albert Maltz.  
*The Cross and the Arrow*

The 1970s witnessed some (although modest) progress with regard to visiting English-speaking countries. Oleg Mutt was fortunate to spend the summer of 1976 in Oxford. His talk at the English Club on September 28 drew a huge crowd. Everybody wanted to hear about his first-hand impressions of Great Britain. Also, Oleg Mutt corresponded extensively with outstanding Anglicists all over the world. This enabled him to keep up with the new research developments and to read new academic literature, which was not available at the university library. Hilja Koop visited the United States twice and shared her experience and teaching materials with the students. She is remembered for introducing American jazz chants to our students.

Among the students Reet Sool was able to visit her relatives in Canada. The trip was so beneficial to her proficiency in English that she won the first prize at the English language competition on the all-Union level. Our coursemate Ingrid Normak (Sild) visited her relatives in the United States and shared her travel impressions with us at the English Club.

In retrospect, the most fascinating subject for me was history of the English language, which was taught by Oleg Mutt. Although every student of English was required to pass this exam, Oleg Mutt knew very well from his experience of teaching that many students were not enthusiastic about language history. Once Oleg Mutt admitted that teaching such students was like *casting pearls before swine*. On the other hand, he was wise enough not to fail anybody at the exam no matter how little a student understood this subject.

In fact, history of the English language is so complicated that the first introductory course cannot provide more than an overview of the most important developments. Moreover, you cannot understand Old English unless you study Gothic, but Gothic was not taught to English philologists.

During my post-graduate days in the 1980s I had to focus on the history of the English language for the second time. I then took an introductory course in Gothic at Leningrad University (now St Petersburg), which lasted for a semester and ended with an exam. In Leningrad I was examined in Old English and Middle English by three professors whose speciality was history of



Oleg Mutt

Manfred Görlach

Einführung  
in die englische Sprachgeschichte

Rededicated to Enn  
during my lecture tour,  
Tartu 20/9/99 Manfred

Oleg Mutt  
Tartu 1976

Passed on to Enn Veldi  
with congratulations and  
all good wishes for the future  
Dec. 18, 1985 Oleg Mutt  
Quelle & Meyer Heidelberg

Title page of Manfred Görlach's book with dedications  
by the author and Oleg Mutt

the English language. The examination consisted in the reading and translation, as well as lexical and grammatical analysis, of unknown texts. It took me four months to prepare for that exam. As a result, I knew perhaps one hundred times more than before, but even so you realize that it is only the beginning; one's knowledge of the history of the English language is always limited.

After passing this difficult exam in the history of the English language in Leningrad, I visited Oleg Mutt at his home in Võru Street on December 18, 1985. Such a visit was a rare event for everybody who knew Oleg Mutt; I was fortunate to get a glimpse of the everyday environment where he lived and worked. I remember his massive writing desk and a set of the volumes of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in a bookcase. He used to read the encyclopaedia for terminology. There were recently published books on his desk, for example, *The State of the Language* (1980). He mentioned that Johannes Silvet used to pass his books on to him. He then said that now it was time to pass on a book to me as well. It was *Einführung in die englische Sprachgeschichte* (1974) by Manfred Görlach, a German Anglicist from the University of Cologne. It is said that books sometimes have interesting destinies. It so happened that when Manfred Görlach visited Tartu in 1999 with a lecture tour, he rededicated this book to me. In fact, it is the only book in my home library that has two dedications.

The Student Research Society held its meetings on a regular basis; the annual conference, which was held in spring, was a more festive event with guest speakers from Riga, Vilnius, and Leningrad. I would like to thank Heino Liiv for recognizing the research-oriented academic potential in Krista Poolakene (Vogelberg) and me already in our first year of study. Heino Liiv then taught practical grammar to us. It was in the spring term of 1974 when Heino Liiv approached me with a book by Jean Piaget from his home library and asked me to speak about it at the next meeting of the Society. I remember that at the same meeting Lehti Kalme analysed the work of Somerset Maugham. Krista's first research publication in English studies dates back to 1976 (see Poolakene 1976).

My next report at the Student Research Society was about English loanwords in Japanese. They are easily recognizable in Japanese because they are written in *katakana*, one of the two Japanese syllabaries. I gathered the material by reading through a two-volume Japanese-Russian dictionary, which had recently been published. I attended the annual conference of the Student Research Society in Vilnius; the other students who visited Vilnius in 1976 were Irina Petrova (she focused on the hyperbole) and Karin Sibul. Next year I visited a student conference in Tbilisi. This paper was published in the first collection of our student research papers (see Veldi 1978).

We wrote the first term paper in our second year of study. All the papers were in literature and were supervised by Asta Luigas. My topic was 'The Importance of John Steinbeck's Novel *The Grapes of Wrath*'. The next term paper was supervised by Oleg Mutt, and it discussed problems of linguistic relativity.

In the fifth year there was an option whether to write a graduation thesis or to take a state exam in English studies. The state exam in 'Scientific' Communism was mandatory for everybody. The option to write a graduation paper was granted to those students who had no satisfactory marks in the main subject. In our course 17 students out of 23 were granted this option.

The activities of the English Club were supervised by Helgi Pulk. The evenings of the English Club were held at the Sophocles Café in the basement of the Main Building. The first event of the English Club that I remember was an evening of American Negro spirituals in the spring of 1974. The songs that I performed there was *Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho* and *Go Down, Moses*.

There are two songs that represent the student folklore of this period. The first one is the English version of the Estonian song *Saaremaa*.

(2x) I'm sailing in a little boat and looking through the telescope.  
(Chorus) No place is better and so fine than Saaremaa in summertime.  
(2x) There's growing nothing else you see than junipers and pine trees.  
(2x) The salty water now I drink and tell my darling what I think.  
(2x) If you should like to be my wife, this isle remains your home for life.

I received these lyrics from Ants Aaver; earlier students had passed them on to him.

The American sociable song *She'll be coming round the mountain* had a modified version that humorously portrayed Soviet reality.

She'll be drinking Russian vodka when she comes.  
She'll be taking no zakuska when she comes.  
She'll be given fifteen sutkas when she comes.

Note: *zakuska* means 'appetizer' in Russian; *sutki* is a plural noun meaning 'day and night, 24 hours'; it occurs in a grammatically distorted form in the song; fifteen-day arrest was a typical penalty in the Soviet era, especially for rowdy behaviour

The initiation ceremonies of the first-year students were also held in the Sophocles Café. There was a tradition that the fourth-year students were responsible for the initiation ceremony of the freshmen. Below is a selection of questions and practical assignments that were used during the initiation ceremonies. They represent student folklore of these years.

*Can what you can, what you can't can can first* (a translation assignment from English into Estonian).

*Which classes are taught in Room 306 in the Languages Block?* (The answer is a toilet; if a student did not know the answer, s/he had to leave the Sophocles Café, walk to the Languages Block and back, and report the answer to the Learned Council).

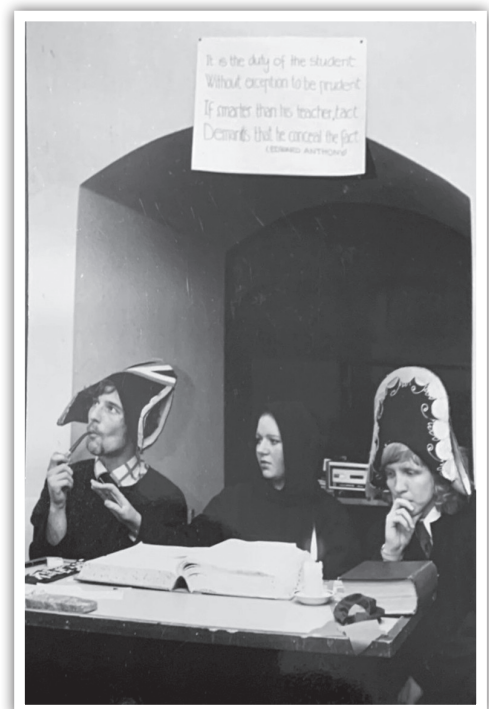
*How many steps does a freshman descend before s/he reaches the Sophocles Café.* (19; the Sophocles Café was in the basement of the Main Building).

How many steps has the staircase of the Dean's Office?

How many pillars has the main building of the Estonian Agricultural Academy?

How many pillars has the Pedestrian Bridge?

In which hand does Barclay de Tolly hold his sword?



*The Learned Council (Ants Aaver, Meelike Maran (Palli), and Raul Murel) is testing the theoretical knowledge and practical skills of the first-year students in 1975. Photo from the private collection of Karin Sibul.*

*Which subjects are taught by Aron Stoot? (Nora Toots read backwards).*

*Who are the largest ladies of the United States? (Miss Ouri and Mrs Sippi).*

*What is written on the Angel's Bridge?*

*What is the price of the English-Estonian Dictionary by Johannes Silvet at a second-hand bookshop? (then 45 roubles).*

Last but not least, fifty years ago Gustav Liiv turned 50; this year we will celebrate his 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The following is a selection of diploma papers from the period under discussion.

Note: an asterisk next to the title of a diploma paper indicates its absence in the Department library as of 2021 but existence in the Department records. The following list is only a selection. The information about the supervisors is usually available, but the names of reviewers are not always known. Moreover, starting with the mid-1970s there was a requirement that the reviewers should not be members of the Department of English. Due to the shortage of available outside reviewers the problem was solved in this way that some papers were reviewed by lecturers of the Department of English, but the reviews were signed by lecturers of the Department of German.

### 1973

**Krista Kaer.** *The Development of the Exchange of Publications between the Scientific Library of Tartu State University and the Libraries of the United States of America.* Supervisor Leida Alver. **Toomas Raudam.** *James Baldwin and the Problem of Being (The American Negro Problem in James Baldwin's Works).* Supervisor Gustav Liiv, reviewer Jaak Rähesoo. **Mart Reitel.** *Individual and Society in Graham Greene's Post-War Fiction.* Supervisor Gustav Liiv, reviewer Asta Luigas. **Kersti Tigane (Unt).** *The Development and Character of the Exchange Relations of the Scientific Library of Tartu State University with Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland, Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia and New Zealand.* Supervisor Leida Alver, reviewer Pille Tiirmaa. **Viivi Verrev.** *The Vocabulary of South African English.* Supervisor Oleg Mutt, reviewers Gunnar Kiviväli and Gustav Liiv. First prize.

### 1974

**Lehti Kalme.** *W. Somerset Maugham As a Novelist.* Supervisor Asta Luigas, reviewers Gustav Liiv and Jüri Talvet. Second prize. **Riina Koger (Kütt).** *On 'False Friends of the Translator' in English and Estonian.* First prize. **Ene Kongi (Joon).** *The Grammatical Peculiarities of American English.* Supervisor Oleg Mutt. **Sirje Murumets (Ainsaar).** *The Cloze Procedure as a Reading Comprehension Test in English Language Teaching.* Supervisor Oleg Mutt, reviewers Jaan Mikk and Urve Lehtsalu. **Merike Pilter.** *On Translating Estonian Tense Forms into English.* Supervisor Heino Liiv, reviewers Huno Rätsep and Aurelie All. First prize. **Kadri Sepp (Thalström).** *Onomatopoeic Words in English.* Supervisor Gunnar Kiviväli, reviewers Jaan Soontak, Aino Jõgi, and Heino Liiv. Prize essay. **Anne Vahi (Tartu).** *Some Notes on English Toponymy as a Source of Linguistic and Historical Data.* Supervisor Oleg Mutt, reviewers Johannes Silvet, Helme Tõevere, and Ele Kaldjärv. Second prize.

### 1975

**Maie Kark.** *The Catalogue of the Tibetan Manuscripts and Xylographs Contained in the Manuscripts' and Rare Books' Department at the Scientific Library of Tartu State University.* Supervisor Linnart Mäll, reviewer Olaf Langsepp. First prize. **Anne Kõvamees.** *Local Surnames in English – Their Origin, Classification and Comparison with Estonian.* Supervisor Oleg Mutt, Reviewer Helme Tõevere. **Daisy Leisik.** *The Terminology of Ball Games.* Supervisor Gustav Liiv, reviewer Jaan Soontak. **Aino Pärn.** *Problems of Translating Phraseological Units from English into Estonian (based on a 'Reader's Dictionary of Phrase and*



*Idiom*' by M. Rauk and C. Parts). Supervisor Urve Lehtsalu, reviewer Tiit-Rein Viitso. Correspondence student. **Vaike Seppel**. *Principal Differences in Educational Terminology in British and American English*. Supervisor Oleg Mutt, reviewer Malle Laar. **Monika Uustal (Veisson)**. *Some Features of the Language of English Schoolchildren*. Supervisor Oleg Mutt, reviewers Malle Laar and Gustav Liiv. First prize.

#### 1976

**Urve Aava (Tiimus)**. *Lexical and Syntactic Stylistic Devices in English Nursery Rhymes*. Supervisor Urve Lehtsalu, reviewer Eda Tammelo. **Ilmar Anvelt**. *English Terms of Painting and Their Estonian Equivalents*. Supervisor Urve Lehtsalu, reviewer Leopold Kivimägi. First prize, correspondence student. **Peeter Kohandi**. *Psycholinguistics and the Teaching of Grammar*. Supervisor Heino Liiv, reviewer Uno Siimann. **Mall Laur**. *Free Word Association Tests from the Linguistic Point of View*. Supervisor Laine Hone, consultant Kalju Toim, reviewers Malle Laar and Kalju Toim **Tiina Randviir**. *The English Drama in the Sixties*. Supervisor Hilja Koop, reviewer Lidia Tsekhanovskaya. **Epp Rebane (Leibur)**. *The Problem of 'Untranslatability' (with Special Reference to Lacunae) in Estonian and English*. Supervisor Oleg Mutt. **Madis Saluveer**. *Some Problems of Semantic Analysis of Different Types of Linguistic Influence from the Viewpoint of Making Inferences*. Supervisor Haldur Õim, reviewer Rutt Veskimeister. **Reet Sool**. *War and Peace in Kurt Vonnegut's Novels*. Reviewer Jüri Talvet. **Inna Tammet**. *Folk Customs and Traditions in Thomas Hardy's Wessex Novels*. Supervisor Asta Luigas, reviewer Tiina Aunin. **Suliko Valdsoo (Liiv)**. *English-Estonian-Swedish-Russian Terminology of Field Crops*. Supervisor Oleg Mutt, reviewers Lilia Luik and Gustav Liiv. First prize. **Uno Viigand**. *Exclamatory Phrases in Present-Day English*. Supervisor Gustav Liiv, reviewer Liilia Otsmaa.

#### 1977

**Ann Alari**. *Saul Bellow and His Protagonists on a Quest*. Supervisor Asta Luigas, reviewer Ott Ojamaa. **Tiia Eisen**. *Grammatical Transformations in Translation*. Supervisor Urve Lehtsalu, reviewer Georg Allik. **Tiia Johanson (Haud)**. *Some Characteristic Features of Black English*. Supervisor Oleg Mutt, reviewer Eda Tammelo. **Meelike Maran (Palli)**. *A Contrastive Analysis of English and Estonian Sentences of the Structure NP + V + ADJ*. Supervisor Heino Liiv, reviewer Madis Saluveer. First prize. **Irina Petrova**. *Hyperbole and its Translation from English into Estonian*. Supervisor Gustav Liiv, reviewer Eda Tammelo. **Reet Pobul (Talpsepp)**. *The Method of Henry James*. Supervisor Asta Luigas, reviewer Jaak Rähesoo. First prize. **Maire Püvi (b. Näpinen)**. *Contrastive Study of Colour Words in English Advertising and in Estonian*. Supervisor Oleg Mutt, reviewers Urve Lehtsalu and Mari-Ann Palm. First prize. **Tiina Ranna (b. Hellenurme)**. *Relations Between the English Prepositional Phrases and the Estonian Case System*. Supervisor Helgi Pulk, reviewer Ele Kaldjärv. **Karin Sibul**. *G.B. Shaw's Historical Plays*. Supervisor Asta Luigas, reviewer Jüri Talvet. First prize. **Tiina Staak**. *Nicknames of the Inhabitants of the United States. Their Origin, Meaning and Classification*. Supervisor Oleg Mutt, reviewer Georg Allik. **Marju Toomsalu**. *Lexical Transformations in Translations*. Supervisor Urve Lehtsalu, reviewers Mari-Ann Palm and Gustav Liiv. Second prize.

#### 1978

\***Ants Aaver**. *Indefiniteness in English and Estonian*. Supervisor Heino Liiv. **Inga Anderson (Jufkin)**. *The Portrait of the Hero in Graham Greene's Post-War Fiction*. Supervisor Asta Luigas, reviewer Jaak Rähesoo. **Inna Feldbach**. *Aspects of Technique in Virginia Woolf's Major Novels*. Supervisor Asta Luigas. First prize. \***Jane Jõgi (Tammeorg, b. Indre)**. *Measurement of the Readability of School Texts on the Basis of Their Grammatical Structure*. Supervisor Laine Hone. **Heli Kergandberg (b. Palm)**. *Adjectives Used in Descriptions of a Person's Appearance*. Supervisor Aino Jõgi, reviewers Lilia Luik and Ann Pikver. First prize. **Imbi Kuusksalu**. *Study of Some Lexical Sets in English*. Supervisor Aino Jõgi, reviewer Lilia Luik. **Tiia Lamp (Krass)**. *Analysis of Word Test Results in the 11<sup>th</sup> Forms of Experimental Schools*. Supervisor Laine Hone, reviewer Rutt Veskimeister. **Rein Lillipuu**. *Judo Terminology*. Supervisor Gustav Liiv, reviewers Jaan Soontak and Urve Lehtsalu. First prize. **Maie Mihkels (Yli-Kleemola)**. *Lexical Borrowings in Present-Day English*. Supervisor Aino Jõgi, reviewer Helme Tõevere. **Anu Nõmmsalu (Ruus)**. *English Phraseology Connected with the Sea and Seafaring*. Supervisor Oleg Mutt, reviewer Eda Tammelo.

**\*Ama Oja (Elwe-Oja).** *Reported Speech as a Means of Characterization.* Supervisor Urve Lehtsalu. **Mai Roht.** *Analysis of Cloze Test Results in the 11<sup>th</sup> Forms of Experimental Schools.* Supervisor Laine Hone, reviewer Rutt Veskimeister. **Evi Saluveer (b. Petraudze).** *British and American English. Problem or Synonymy.* Supervisor Gustav Liiv, reviewer Reet Sool. **Tiina Torn.** *Some Problems of Modern Man in Iris Murdoch's Later Novels.* Supervisor Asta Luigas, reviewer Jaak Rähesoo. **Enn Veldi.** *Georgi Butian's Principle of Linguistic Complementarity (an Exposition and Critique).* Supervisor Oleg Mutt, reviewer Madis Saluveer. First prize.

Special thanks go to Merike Pilter for an extended and inspiring email discussion that covered many topics related to this article. I am grateful to Ants Aaver, Leili Kostabi, Karin Sibul, and Ülli Roostoja for participating in our joint effort to document the 1975 initiation ceremony of first-year students. As a result, we were able to put together a set of fourteen photos of that event together with the names of the participants. I would like to thank Jaak Aru, Lehti Kalme, Suliko Liiv, Mart Reitel, Toomas Raudam and Madis Saluveer for responding to my emails and providing valuable insights. I would also like to thank Karin Väina (Poola) who forty-four years ago gave me a list of questions used during a student initiation ceremony.

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### HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW BELFAST? (photos on p. 71)

1. Jaffe Fountain in Victoria Square – a monument to Daniel Joseph Jaffe, a German merchant who came to Belfast in 1850.
2. Belfast City Hall in Donegall Square, in the heart of Belfast city centre.
3. Titanic Museum, a monument to Belfast's maritime heritage on the site of the former Harland & Wolff shipyard where the Titanic was built.
4. Belfast shipyard.
5. Waterfront Hall, one of Northern Ireland's leading entertainment venues.

# LEOPOLD KIVIMÄGI – THE PHLEGMATIC GRAMMARIAN

Ilmar Anvelt

Editor of Open!

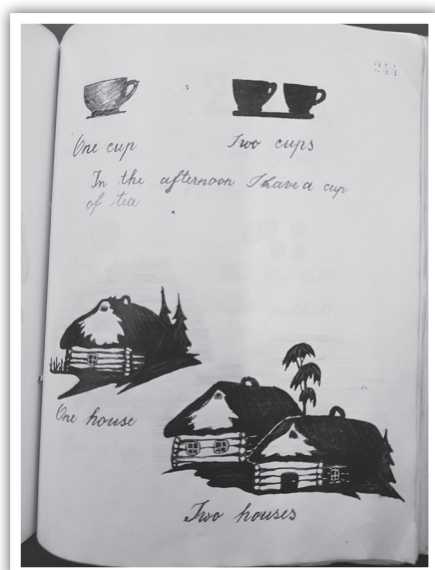
Leopold-Johannes Kivimägi was born in Tallinn in 1909, entered the University of Tartu in 1927 and graduated from it in 1934. On 1 February 1934, he submitted an application to the Faculty of Philosophy and asked that his prize essay *Accidence and Syntax of the Adjective in Present Day English* from the second semester of 1932 would be acknowledged as a Master's thesis. Professor Heinrich Mutschmann and Privatdozent Ants Oras found that "[t]he unanimous opinion of both reviewers is that the paper is a valuable addition to the knowledge of present-day English morphology and, as a Master's thesis, deserves to be assessed as "good". The diploma of *Magister philosophiae* in English philology was issued to Leopold Kivimägi on 30 September 1934 (EAA.2100.1.5250).



Leopold Kivimägi's booklet of academic achievement

After graduation from the university, he served in the Estonian Defence Forces and worked as a teacher of German and English at Vändra and in Tallinn. He upgraded his education in London, Oxford and Southampton in England and in Heidelberg and Munich in Germany.

In July 1941, Leopold Kivimägi was conscripted to the Soviet Army and was sent to the rear of the Soviet Union. Initially, he served at the construction of airfields and did forestry work in Arkhangelsk Region. In February 1942, he was called to active service, but in July 1942 was regarded unfit for combat service. Thereafter, he worked as a secretary who registered the new arrivals at the 63rd Estonian Reserve Rifle Regiment. He was awarded the rank of junior sergeant and received the medal "For the Victory over Germany". (If not mentioned otherwise, information on Leopold Kivimägi's activities in the Soviet period has been retrieved from his personal file in the National Archives of Estonia EAA.5311.11k.1860)



Drawings by a student of Leopold Kivimägi

Still serving in the army, he wrote an application to the Dean of the Faculty of History and Philology at Tartu State University:

Please allow me to work at Faculty of History and Philology in the area of English philology to improve my education and to prepare myself for the position of a lecturer of English at the university. For my special research theme, I would choose the usage of prepositions in present-day English in comparison with Estonian (theoretical treatment with my own examples collected from English sources).

As there was a great shortage of qualified lecturers of English after the war, correspondence follows between the university and the Council of People's Commissars of the Estonian SSR and Head of 63rd Estonian Reserve Rifle Regiment to allow Leopold Kivimägi to be released from the army and take up work at the university. A characteristic detail of the period is the letter to the Rector of Tartu State University by Hell Maran, Head of the Personnel Department

of the People's Commissariat (Ministry) of Education where she writes:

As Comrade L. Kivimägi was asked to be released from the army as a specialist, i.e., he was discharged from the army exceptionally, he did not receive from the military authorities the full equipment and food ration cards that are provided to discharges.

People's Commissariat of Education asks for your order to procure for Comrade L. Kivimägi from the resources of Tartu State University full equipment and food rationing cards that are provided to discharges.

As of 25 September 1945, Leopold Kivimägi was employed as senior lecturer at the Department of Philologies of Western-European Peoples. On 10 May 1946, the Council of Tartu State University equated his Master's degree to the Soviet degree of Candidate of Philology (EAA.2100.1.5250). For the reassessment of his degree, a committee was appointed which consisted of Associate Professor Johannes Silvet, Senior Lecturer Arthur Hone and Professor Konstantin Ramul. Although the committee gave a generally positive evaluation of Leopold Kivimägi's master's thesis and recommended awarding him the Candidate's degree, they also drew attention to some shortcomings:

Theoretically, the author has little essential to add to Otto Jespersen's treatment of the the same theme in the 2nd volume of his English grammar, but the collected new material is a valuable addition to more profound knowledge of English grammar.

The author's treatment of the subject is thorough, although, at some places, his explanations are somewhat confusing and, at a few times, even erroneous (e.g., on p. 144, 'two blacks make a white' where black does not mean 'Negro').

The language of the paper leaves somewhat to be desired, as there are grammatical and stylistic errors and a great number of uncorrected spelling mistakes. The paper would need thorough revision, then it could be a fairly useful addition to the theory of English grammar.

The decision of the university had to be confirmed by the Higher Attestation Commission in Moscow, which, however, did not award him the degree (see below).

The great housing shortage in post-war Tartu can be seen from Rector Professor Alfred Koort's letters to the mayor of Tartu and even to the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist (Bolshevik) Party of Estonia Nikolai Karotamm and to Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Estonian SSR Arnold Veimer where he asks for their help in finding a flat for Leopold Kivimägi so that he could bring his family from Haapsalu to Tartu. Finally, Kivimägi receives a flat in Riia Street.

Access to foreign books, newspapers and journals was extremely limited in Estonia after the war. With the help of the university, Leopold Kivimägi managed to get from the Ministry of



*Leopold Kivimägi*



*House in Riia Street where Leopold Kivimägi lived*

Foreign Affairs of the Estonian SSR the 1945 issues of the newspapers *Daily Herald* and *PM*, which were sent to him to Tartu. Leopold Kivimägi writes to the Dean of the Faculty of History and Philology:

This is the first time when our Ministry of Foreign Affairs has allowed to use its English-language materials outside the Ministry, and I have to make full use of this opportunity.

The newspapers became available to me as late as on 20 June; the date for their return is 2 August. Therefore, it is inevitable for me to devote the vacation planned for me in July to studying the language material of these newspapers, and I am afraid that the first half of August must also be spent on that work.

In August 1948, the Department of Foreign Languages was founded at Tartu State University, which was meant to teach foreign languages the students of all specialities. Leopold Kivimägi was appointed Acting Head of this department. The committee formed in February 1949 – Professor Harri Moora, Associate Professor Eduard Laugaste and Associate Professor Villem Altoa – finds that Leopold Kivimägi should be awarded the title of Associate Professor. The committee notes that Leopold Kivimägi has taught many courses and special seminars of English language and literature which are usually taught by professors and associate professors. They also mark his good organisational and administrative skills at launching the new department. The committee has signed their opinion on 7 February 1949.

It is surprising, however, that a few days earlier already, on 29 January 1949, the Higher Attestation Commission in Moscow refused to give him the Candidate's degree but decided to award him the title of Associate Professor for which usually a Candidate's degree was required. The Higher Attestation Commission issued the Associate Professor's certificate to him on 14 March 1949.

As Leopold Kivimägi's master's thesis was not equated to a Candidate's thesis, he had to start writing a new thesis. On 3 October 1951, he is sent to Leningrad State University for this purpose for one year. The theme of his thesis should have been *Prepositions Expressing Space and Time in Present-day English*. He could not finish his Candidate's thesis within the set time. His supervisor, Associate Professor V N. Zhidaglo says in his opinion of 28 November 1952 that Leopold Kivimägi submitted 440 pages of manuscript to him, but none of its parts met the requirements of a Candidate's thesis. He says that the degree applicant does not sufficiently know the material and the necessary literature, and his methodological preparation is inadequate. Nonetheless, the supervisor admits that Leopold Kivimägi is diligent and persevering to the extent that his relatively poor health allows. He is extremely slow in his work. Somewhat, but not essentially, his work is hindered by his not particularly good command of the Russian language. The supervisor still hopes that Leopold Kivimägi can bring his thesis to the end.

On 21 December 1952, Leopold Kivimägi was also given a reference from Leningrad, which was signed by the head of the department of degree applicants and its party organiser. It is noted there that Leopold Kivimägi was extraordinarily hardworking, diligent and conscientious. His zeal, persistence and perseverance served as a model for all the degree applicants of the department. It is said that the department of degree applicants and his supervisor will remain in contact with him and help him in his research. Although Leopold Kivimägi made efforts to continue writing his Candidate's thesis, it remained unfinished.

Leopold Kivimägi was unexpectedly made redundant from the post of associate professor as of 1 September 1959. The corresponding order was issued by the rector on 30 June 1959. On 14 July 1959, Leopold Kivimägi writes a detailed complaint to the higher education minister of the USSR. He mentions that during his entire working life he has not received any punishments but many commendations – he has been awarded an honorary certificate from the Communist Party Committee of Tartu, has worked with students on collective farms, made presentations at conferences, is one of the co-authors of the textbook of English grammar, etc. He also says that the order was issued at the time when he was on sick leave, which is illegal. Neither was his family situation considered – he is the only one of his four family members who worked. His wife is incapable of working because of tuberculosis, his son is deaf-mute and his daughter is a school student who recently underwent an operation. He was not offered

any other work at the university, although there were, for example, vacancies at the library. He draws attention to the fact that, according to the law, the workplace administration is obliged, if possible, to offer another job to the employee who was made redundant, but this was not done. Leopold Kivimägi asks for his rights to be restored and be given an opportunity to continue his work.

Meanwhile Leopold Kivimägi goes on sick leave again, and when he recovers in October, correspondence follows whether he could be employed on an hourly basis. The rector issues a new order according to which he is released from work as of 6 November 1959. L. Gordeyev, Acting Chairman of the Estonian SSR Committee for Higher and Specialised Secondary Education, sent a letter on 28 December 1959 where he says that the dismissal of Leopold Kivimägi was correct in essence but formulated incorrectly. In December 1959, H. Puusepp, head of the personnel department of Tartu State University, sent a letter to head of the personnel department of the Committee of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education where it is stated:

It was decided to make L. Kivimägi, Associate Professor of the Department of Foreign Languages, redundant, as he had not proved himself as a researcher and, as he is clinging to the anachronisms of religion, it is out of the question to employ him as an educator.

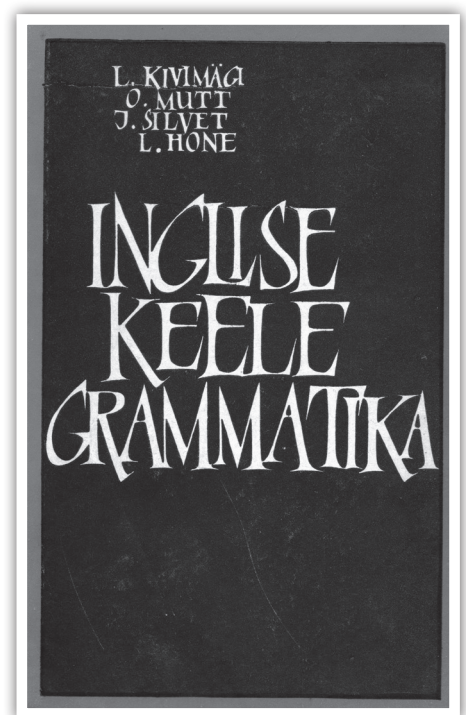
This is the only time when Leopold Kivimägi's religiosity is mentioned in documents. I remember that his adherence to religion was known at the department, although not often talked about. Nonetheless, it was taken into account; for example, his lectures were never scheduled on Saturdays, which was still a working day in those times. Leopold Kivimägi's activity in the church has been mentioned in the magazine of the Estonian Methodist Church, *Koduteel* (Pajusoo 2019). As an interesting detail, I remember that Leopold Kivimägi used the titles 'Mister' and 'Miss' when speaking to students. At the time of my studies (the first half of the 1970s), other lecturers generally used the Soviet-style 'Comrade' plus surname; some (Urve Hanko and Gustav Liiv) used just the first name and the surname. Later, students were generally called by their first names.

Until 1967, Leopold Kivimägi fulfilled teaching assignments, receiving extremely low hourly pay – for practical language classes 1.20 roubles per hour (hourly-paid lecturers without the associate professor's qualifications even got only 1 rouble per hour), for lectures 2 roubles and for supervision of graduation theses 2.50 roubles per hour.

It was in these years that he published his main work, a thorough and systematic grammar of English (*Inglise keele grammatika*, co-authors Oleg Mutt, Johannes Silvet, Laine Hone; 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1962, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1968). For many years, it was an irreplaceable handbook for university students and other learners of English in Estonia.

As he was approaching retirement age, he wrote an application to the rector on 22 May 1967 where he noted that he would retire in two years. He says that his pension would be based on the hourly lecturer's average monthly pay, which is close to the subsistence minimum. He mentions his service in the Soviet Army, continuous work at the university, his wife's difficult health status, many degree applicants whom he has taught and who have become renowned researchers, his work on the textbook of English grammar, many books that he has translated or edited. He finishes:

Considering the work done, the greater part of which has been closely related to Tartu State University, I ask you, Comrade Rector, to restore me to the associate professor's post for two years and enable me to earn the corresponding pension.



*English Grammar, 1968*

Initially, he is appointed to the associate professor's post for one semester as of 1 September 1967. His working as an associate professor is extended for several times until he retires on 16 July 1970. During retirement, he works for the Laboratory of Aeroionisation and Electro-aerosols where his main job is translating research articles into English. Before his 70th birthday, scientific supervisor of the laboratory Kalju Kudu and head of the laboratory Lembit Visnapuu write to the rector about Leopold Kivimägi:

His excellent command of English has been highly appreciated by the editors of foreign scientific journals where the researchers of Tartu State University have published their papers which have been revised or translated by Assoc. Prof. L. Kivimägi.

We ask you to pay tribute to Assoc. Prof. Leopold KIVIMÄGI for his self-denying excellent long-time work at Tartu State University.

In addition to the work at the laboratory, he continued fulfilling teaching assignments at the Department of English. He was given the last teaching assignment in 1977. He resigned from work at the Laboratory of Aeroionisation and Electro-aerosols in 1987. Leopold Kivimägi died in 1988 and is buried in Raadi cemetery in Tartu.

Writer Mihkel Mutt recalls in his memories (2009: 114–118) that Leopold Kivimägi visited his father Oleg Mutt, then Head of the Department of English, regularly a few times a month staying for as long as three hours. As they had no phone at home to make an earlier appointment, Mihkel Mutt says that “an unexpected guest is more horrifying than a Tartar.” He describes Leopold Kivimägi's phlegmatic nature:

“Kivimägi was taller than average, with a gentleman's appearance and a scholar's skull, bespectacled, always wearing a suit – a moderate and calm person whose dignity bordered on unhurriedness.” Mihkel Mutt expresses suspicion that perhaps he visited their home to check on something. He comments:

At a certain period, snooping and relations with security organs were a rule rather than exception even among intellectuals. And many who were suspicious in the eyes of the organs snoopied and complained against others to raise their own rating and to prevent the worse for themselves and their next of kin. [---] Leopold Kivimägi had been between the rock and the hard place a lot in his life; he had been repressed and, as religious, was doubly suspicious in the eyes of the authorities. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that he might turn others in to avoid his own ultimate sufferings.

To me, Leopold Kivimägi taught a special course on English prepositions. According to my memories too, he had a very phlegmatic character. As I heard, in an amateur play at the Academy of Sciences, he had been given the role of a stone who would sit quietly in the corner.

Laine Hone, who was his student in 1946, remembers Leopold Kivimägi as a peculiar lecturer (1990: 163):

Leopold Kivimägi taught us two hours of grammar per week. Although L. Kivimägi had a good command of the language, he was very slow by nature, and his teaching was somehow monotonous and drowsy. He had served in the Red Army during the war; therefore, he had no problems of political kind, although he was religious. But he kept his religious convictions to himself, and we did not know during our whole period of studies that he was religious. This became known only in Rector F. Klement's time when the circumstances had become more liberal. Then, Kivimägi had delivered a sermon in Elva cemetery, and someone had complained



*Leopold Kivimägi's grave in Raadi Cemetery*

to the rector. In our second year, L. Kivimägi lectured on English literature. He did it very slowly, dictating word by word. Some students made use of the situation and shouted that they could not write everything down, after which Kivimägi started to dictate even more slowly. When Arthur Hone took the course over when we were in our third year, it turned out that Kivimägi was 150 years behind the schedule.

Despite all these controversial issues, Leopold Kivimägi will be remembered for his most significant publication – the bulky English grammar written in cooperation with his colleagues – Oleg Mutt, Johannes Silvet and Laine Hone.

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## WHY IATEFL?

Erika Puusemp (EATE)  
in cooperation with *ChatGPT*



*IATEFL stands for the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language. It is a professional organization that brings together English language teachers and educators from around the world to share knowledge, expertise, and best practices in the field of English language teaching. IATEFL was founded in 1967 and is based in the United Kingdom, but it has members and affiliates in more than 100 countries. The organization hosts an annual conference, publishes a range of professional development materials, and provides a platform for networking and collaboration among English language teaching professionals.*

The Estonian Association of Teachers of English (EATE, see also [www.eate.ee](http://www.eate.ee)) is a member of IATEFL (see also [iatefl.org](http://iatefl.org)), our umbrella organisation. EATE members have participated in IATEFL Annual Conferences, some teachers are individual members of IATEFL.

*Attending an IATEFL conference can be a valuable experience for English language teachers and educators for several reasons:*

*Professional Development: The conference provides an opportunity for attendees to learn from experts in the field of English language teaching, participate in workshops and training sessions, and stay up-to-date on the latest trends and developments in the industry.*

*Networking: The conference is a great opportunity to network with fellow English language teachers and educators from around the world. You can exchange ideas, share experiences, and build professional relationships that can help you in your career.*

*Inspiration: The conference can inspire you to become a better teacher and to try new approaches in your classroom. You can attend talks and presentations from experienced educators, see demonstrations of new*



teaching techniques, and engage in discussions with other teachers.

*Exposure to New Cultures:* As IATEFL is an international organization, attending the conference can expose you to new cultures and teaching practices from around the world. This can broaden your perspective and help you better understand the needs and challenges of learners from different backgrounds.

Overall, attending an IATEFL conference can help you develop professionally, connect with colleagues, gain inspiration and exposure to new cultures, and ultimately become a better teacher.

The 56<sup>th</sup> International IATEFL Conference and Exhibition took place on 18–21 April 2023 in Harrogate. Harrogate is a town in North Yorkshire, England. It is located in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales, a region known for its natural beauty and picturesque landscapes. Harrogate is a popular tourist destination, famous for its historic architecture, beautiful gardens, and spa heritage.

The town is home to several notable attractions, including the Royal Pump Room Museum, which tells the story of Harrogate's spa history, and the Harrogate Convention Centre, which hosts a range of events and conferences throughout the year, including the annual IATEFL conference.



Harrogate Pump Room Museum



Old Magnesia Well Pump Room



The Royal Hall inside view



The Royal Hall outside view

Harrogate is easily accessible by train, with frequent connections from major cities like Leeds and York, and it is also well-served by road and air links, with Leeds Bradford International Airport located just a short drive away.

The representative of a member organisation (as I was this year) is always required to attend Associates' Day on the previous day, any other participant can choose SIG events on that day if they so wish.

*A SIG is a Special Interest Group within the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL).*

*SIGs are communities of IATEFL members who share a common interest or expertise in a particular area of English language teaching (ELT). They provide a platform for members to exchange ideas, share resources and best practices, and network with like-minded professionals.*

*There are currently 16 SIGs within IATEFL, covering a wide range of ELT topics and areas of interest, such as Business English, Materials Writing, and Pronunciation. Each SIG is run by a committee of volunteers who organize events, conferences, webinars, and other professional development opportunities for members.*

*Joining a SIG is a great way to connect with other ELT professionals who share your interests and to stay up-to-date with the latest developments and trends in your area of expertise. Membership in a SIG is included in IATEFL membership, and members can join as many SIGs as they wish.*

*The IATEFL 57<sup>th</sup> International Conference and Exhibition will take place in Brighton on 16–19 April 2024, with Associates' Day and SIG events on the 15<sup>th</sup>.*

*Brighton is a seaside town located on the south coast of England, in the county of East Sussex. It is a popular tourist destination, known for its vibrant culture, eclectic architecture, and pebble beach. Brighton is situated approximately 50 miles south of London and is easily accessible by train, bus, and car.*

*The town has a rich history and is home to several notable landmarks, including the Royal Pavilion, a former royal palace with a distinctive Indian-inspired architecture, and the Brighton Palace Pier, a Victorian-era pier with amusement rides, games, and food stalls.*

*Brighton is also known for its thriving arts and culture scene, with numerous galleries, theaters, and music venues. The town hosts several annual events, including the Brighton Festival, an arts festival featuring music, theater, dance, and visual arts, and the Brighton Pride, a LGBTQ+ pride festival and parade that attracts thousands of visitors each year.*

*Overall, Brighton is a lively and diverse town with a unique character, offering something for everyone, whether you are interested in history, culture, or just enjoying the seaside.*

*I sincerely believe that it would benefit each teacher to participate in international conferences every now and then, and that of IATEFL is a prime example of what such an event for teachers of English could offer.*

*To become a member of IATEFL, you need to visit the IATEFL website and follow these steps:*

*Click on the "Join Us" button in the top-right corner of the homepage.*

*Choose the membership category that best suits your needs. There are different types of membership available, including individual membership, institutional membership, and student membership.*

*Fill out the membership application form with your personal and contact details.*

*Pay the membership fee using a credit/debit card or PayPal. The membership fee varies depending on the membership category you choose and your location.*

*Once you have completed the application process and paid the membership fee, you will receive a confirmation email with details of your membership. As a member of IATEFL, you will have access to a range of benefits, including access to the members' area of the website, a subscription to the IATEFL newsletter, discounts on IATEFL events and publications, and opportunities to participate in special interest groups and online communities.*

In order to be able to choose individual membership but pay considerably less than the sum mentioned on the official IATEFL webpage (<https://www.iatefl.org/get-involved/membership#individual>), you need to be a member of EATE and get a special code for registering that is sent to EATE once a year. Access to one SIG is included, but you can join as many SIGs as you want by paying extra.

Some ideas/questions I came back with from the conference:

- In the working world, English is nowadays taken for granted, as is the use of MS Office.
- The in-company jargon has to be learnt on the go (Think of how many industries there are, each with their own jargon...).
- Schools are part of overall education, and other skills should be taught through teaching languages.
- The aim of any teaching should be to help children develop into a well-rounded individuals proficient in 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (listed as follows at <https://www.panoramaed.com/blog/comprehensive-guide-21st-century-skills>: critical thinking, communication skills, creativity, problem solving, perseverance, collaboration, information literacy, technology skills and digital literacy, media literacy, global awareness, self-direction, social skills, literacy skills, civic literacy, social responsibility, innovation skills).
- In language learning, all languages are important, texts should be as authentic as possible, and more tasks should be such that are useful in many contexts, including academic study and working life (e.g., summary writing).
- Teaching is a multitude of talents. Exceptional teachers create a community where people feel safe, as they belong. But what do we mean by belonging? Who decides? What does it mean to be an OTHER? What is privilege?
- Our stories are narratives of our identity, so use more stories in teaching.
- Reflection (= an ability to reflect on one's own performance and that of others, identify strengths and weaknesses, and make plans for further development) is important and needs to be taught. What have you lived through as a learner?
- In your most smiley face ask your students tough questions, e.g. How would you show that you know the vocabulary?
- Ask students to describe detailed pictures (and write corresponding stories) using VAKOG model (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, olfactory, gustatory)
- Do whatever it takes to keep your own cup full.

*As a language model, I cannot provide specific advice without knowing the context of the teacher's situation, but here are some general ways that teachers can "fill their cup":*

*Professional development: Teachers can attend conferences, workshops, or online courses to learn new teaching methods, techniques, or technology. These experiences can help teachers feel re-energized and motivated to try new things in their classrooms.*

*Collaborate with colleagues: Teachers can collaborate with other teachers in their school or community to share ideas and experiences. This collaboration can lead to new perspectives and approaches to teaching.*

*Take breaks: Teachers can take breaks during their workday or take time off to rest and recharge. This can include taking a walk outside, doing some exercise, or reading a book.*

*Connect with students: Teachers can connect with their students by building positive relationships with them.*



*At IATEFL from Estonia -  
Anu Ariste, Erika Puusemp, Jennifer Uhler*

*This can help teachers feel more fulfilled in their work and make a positive impact on their students' lives.*

*Pursue personal interests: Teachers can pursue their personal interests outside of work. This can include hobbies, volunteering, or spending time with family and friends. Taking time for oneself can help reduce stress and improve overall well-being.*

*Ultimately, filling one's cup is a personal process that can vary depending on the individual. The key is to find activities and practices that promote personal and professional growth and enhance overall well-being.*

Here, ChatGPT gave up. I won't. One way to get the support of other teachers outside your own school is to be a member of EATE and IATEFL. Try bot and you won't regret it.

## **BALTIC STATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE FELLOWS AND LOCAL COLLEGES HOST A WEEKEND COMMUNITY BUILDING EVENT FOR EARLY CAREER TEACHERS**

**Noora Mahmassani**, English Language Fellow at Narva College of the University of Tartu

**Lisa Brisbois**, English Language Fellow at the University of Latvia

**Heather Gaddis**, English Language Fellow at Vytautas Magnus University



*Noora Mahmassani*



*Lisa Brisbois*



*Heather Gaddis*

As English Language Fellows working with pre-service and in-service teachers in the Baltic Region, we have been able to share and compare the needs of our students in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. A common theme we noticed was a concern about the sustainability of a teaching career. Understanding the importance of addressing this concern in light of the teacher shortage in each of our countries (as well as in our home country, the United States), we decided to pool our knowledge, networks, and resources to create an event for early career educators, which we named the Baltics Early Career Teacher Retreat and held in Riga, Latvia, from April 21<sup>st</sup> to April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023.

Along with our local colleagues, Vasily Nosov (of Narva Keeltelütseum), Milda Karčiauskienė (of Vilnius Duke Gediminas Pre Gymnasium), and Anna Stavicka (of the University of Latvia), we designed a two-day professional development event to include a mix of discussions, workshops, and community building activities. Riga, Latvia was selected due to its central location between Estonia and Lithuania and because of the desirable event site in the JFK Reading Room at the National Library of Latvia.

We had three main objectives for the event. First, to create a sustainable professional learning community that supports and elevates the voices of early career educators. Second, to model and promote multicultural and multilingual teaching practices. And third, to create mentoring relationships between experienced and early career teachers. Participants were selected for

the event based upon their curiosity and expressed desire to work towards these goals. In all, twenty-two students were selected to participate.

Before the main conference day, we hosted pre-departure meetings with our individual country groups, the whole group, and a dinner for all in Riga with the goal of creating community and prompting participants to share questions and topics they would like to address with their peers and the experienced colleagues.

The theme of the morning of the conference day on April 22<sup>nd</sup> was creating tolerant and nurturing classroom climates and relationships. To begin, Noora and Lisa delivered a workshop titled "Teaching for Tolerance." In the first part of the workshop, we led participants in reflective activities about multiculturalism, the cultural filter, and diversity on a macro scale. In the second part, the early career teachers participated in two activities which can be used with students of all ages to foster pride in personal identity and build a safe learning environment: creating a "safe space" classroom pledge and writing an "I am From" poem.

The next workshop of the day was led by Vasily. He presented on the importance of building relationships with students and drew upon his more than twenty years of experience to offer techniques and guidance on difficult issues like student mental health and the role of social media in educational spaces. One of the most powerful moments of the event came when Vasily affirmed that the students' ideas for creating safe learning spaces were similar to his own and then was able to offer concrete examples and strategies for how to turn these ideas into actions.

The afternoon's themes were fostering relationships between early career educators and plurilingualism. The first session was a world cafe style discussion facilitated by Milda, which included questions that the early career educators shared in pre-event meetings and that were focused on the following topics: communication with colleagues and parents, balancing work, school and home life, lesson planning, and creating relationships with students. The early career educators shared ideas from their own experience, and group facilitators synthesized the contributions of all the groups in a short presentation to the entire group.

The final session was a workshop delivered by Heather on plurilingual pedagogy. During the workshop, participants explored ways in which identities and language backgrounds are interrelated and how that understanding can be leveraged in their teaching. Activities included creating and sharing a plurilingual identity portrait and talking about the languages used in their communities. Students shared that this session helped them conceptualize "friendships between



*Participants and organizers outside of the conference site, the National Library of Latvia.*



*Vasily Nosov presents for early career teachers on building relationships.*



Students share and compare their plurilingual identity portraits.

languages” and “a more open-minded view of languages”.

All in all, we believe that the sense of camaraderie and enthusiasm about being an educator inspired by the event will help sustain the participants as they navigate the challenges of their university studies and first years in the classroom. The most important measure of success for the event was the desire expressed by participants and local colleagues alike for similar future opportunities for professional learning and community building, and as all three of us are planning to continue in the region next year as Fellows, we plan to do exactly that.

## SOME THOUGHTS ON BRITISH DESSERTS

Kärt Roomäe

PhD student, University of Birmingham



At the time of writing this article, which serves as the second part of my travelogues from England, I am about to start my second year of PhD. Time really does fly, especially when so much is happening. That being said, I decided to focus on a more timeless aspect of the British culture, namely food. Having been to several parts of England during my trips, I have seen different types of food served in various ways. In this instalment, you will be guided through some of the most iconic desserts available here, based on the photos I took.

Before describing all those mouth-watering treats, a few terminological clarifications might be in order. The first meal of the day is **breakfast**; both children and adults would normally have cereal or oatmeal. From what I know, toast with a few toppings is not unheard of either. Breakfast is sometimes followed by **elevenses**, a mid-morning snack consisting of tea or coffee and biscuits. For **lunch**, Brits don't always have warm food. Instead, they tend to bring lunch boxes filled with sandwiches, crisps, and fruit. Occasionally, you can also spot a small cheese snack of French origin, Mini Babybel. Timewise, lunch could be followed by an afternoon tea or its scaled-back, scone-only version, **cream tea**.

However, from what I've seen, **afternoon tea** is more often an early afternoon treat for weekends, especially as a celebratory meal or when friends are visiting. It is already by nature an elaborate affair. Scones feature in both versions and there comes the infamous question about which goes on first, clotted cream or jam, usually a strawberry or raspberry one it seems. Not to be overdramatic but it is almost nation-dividing. I still don't know which order is the right one! The traditional afternoon tea consists of small cakes and different sandwiches too; I had a watercress and egg one for example and another one was salmon-topped. You also get free refills of tea, so the whole meal can be considered

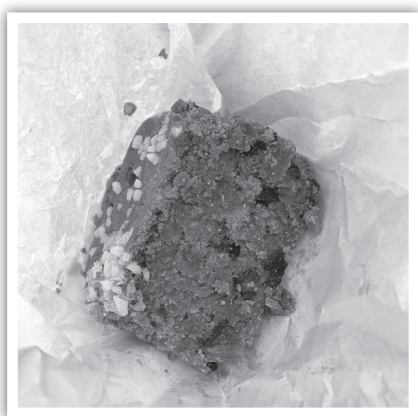




multi-course, and it does take a while. Then again, it almost feels compulsory to order it at least once when living in England.

After the pompous but rare afternoon tea, it is time for the actual **tea**. No, I don't mean another type of afternoon tea; apparently, what we know as *dinner* is often called 'tea' here. I was trying to gauge whether this can be considered a regional difference but turns out that no, choosing between *tea* vs. *dinner* is very much a question of personal preference. Some charts show that in the Southern parts of England, 'dinner' predominates but again, such classification does not always hold true. This at times quite a heated debate also marks the end of daily meals.

Moving on to desserts, here is just a small selection of the ones I have either tried myself or heard good things about. Baking is not my forte, so unfortunately none of these are my creation; rather, they have been indulged on various trips as I mentioned earlier. One exception is a homemade raspberry **trifle**, in the photo that was kindly shared by a good friend who is a local. This cold dessert is a popular one and not very difficult to make, as jelly cubes, e.g., Hartley's ones, can be bought from the supermarket. The other layers include sponge cake, custard, and whipped cream, plus whatever fruits that would complement the jelly. **Custard** likely stands out from the ingredients as another quintessentially British item. It is a sauce used in desserts, usually made from milk and eggs, plus occasional flour and sugar. Not my personal favourite, even though custard tarts, which I first sampled in Portugal, are an exception.



Another one I had never even heard of before moving to the UK is called **bread pudding**. Estonians might get confused by the similar-sounding *saiavorm* but the two are not quite the same. The British version tends to be darker and less fruity, even though sometimes, raisins or sultanas and peel are used. In the Estonian cuisine, you would normally have apples, cinnamon, and cardamom as main ingredients. This is perhaps why the version I had in Sheringham, North Norfolk, was thicker and not as crumbly as *saiavorm*. Both can be served with milk, but in the UK, custard or ice cream can also accompany the pudding. Alternatively, it can be quite nice without a sauce, even if a bit dry. The one in the photo was massive, almost a meal on its own.

The next dessert is associated with a debate that almost always comes up when Americans hear British English. Are the small treats you serve with a cuppa (British term for 'a cup of tea') called **biscuits** or **cookies**? A very divisive question indeed, maybe because it is such an everyday matter. Brits would argue that a *cookie* is a type of biscuit, denoting only the flat, large, soft and gooey yet crispy one, whereas *biscuits* are small, firm, and dense treats you can dunk in your cuppa. In the photo, you can see a cherry Bakewell cookie from one of the cafés in Selly Oak, a district of Birmingham I reside in.





With a cuppa, locals normally prefer biscuits with filling, such as custard or bourbon creams, but also ginger nuts and digestives covered in milk chocolate. Lots of variety! The cherry Bakewell one in the photo combines two cultures, British and American, considering that **cherry Bakewell tarts** are quite common here, full of cherries and almonds.

Last but not least, I will briefly touch upon **fudge**. Before coming to Birmingham, I thought there is just one type of it, the smooth and soft square-shaped dessert sold at fairs and summer fêtes. Turns out that there is also a much creamier version of it, such as showcased by the Fudge Kitchen ones I photographed in Bath. The Scottish, meanwhile, make **tablet**, a similar treat that has a considerably crumblier, brittle texture. Apparently, fudge is made with double or clotted cream while tablet-making involves condensed milk and its characteristic gristle texture is achieved thanks to higher boiling point. They are both incredibly sweet, especially tablet, but this also means they last for a while.



The desserts and ingredients I reviewed above constitute only a tiny part of what can be found in the British cuisine. Historically very multicultural, different parts of the UK have had a significant influence of invasions from various time periods as well as trade relations with other countries. This has led to an intricate array of dishes. In future instalments, I am looking forward to introducing you to some savoury meals and will perhaps reflect on beverages too.

*My PhD studies are funded by Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, Kristjan Jaak scholarship program, and Haridus- ja Noorteamet.*

## INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION 2023



The 13th National Public Speaking Competition was held at Tallinn Secondary School of Science on 21 March 2023. Its winner was Sandra Näks from Tallinn School No. 21 (teacher Laura Lainväe), the second place was held by Richard Johan Kaup-Lapõnin from Tallinn Secondary School of Science (teacher Kristi Vabanurm). Sandra also represented Estonia at the International Public Speaking Competition held in London from 8 to 12 May. We publish Sandra's speech at the Estonian competition and an interview with her made by Kristi Vahenurm, the main organiser of the competition in Estonia.

*Sandra Näks and Richard Johan Kaup-Lapõnin*



## FREEDOM

### The winning speech by Sandra Näks, Tallinn School No. 21

Close your eyes and imagine with me for a second. You are free. Similarly to Icarus, you are soaring through the sky, loose of all earthly shackles, defying the laws of both man and nature. You feel happier than ever before because you can do whatever your heart desires. And as you are there, reaching for the sun, nearly touching it... you fall.

"A man is born free, yet everywhere he is in chains" – this is the opening line from the book *The Social Contract* by an 18th century political philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In this book Rousseau summarises his entire philosophy, but there is one thought that seems to linger, a thought that plagues philosophers to this day: How can a man live freely within society?

Some say that laws curb our freedom, that we should just forget them, let humans fly like Icarus, isn't it our right? But both me and Rousseau agree that we often forget that humans are not meant to fly, that some limitations are there for a reason – so that we would not fall like Icarus.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am here to discuss why we, humans, are so obsessed with the thought of having absolute freedom but forget our collective responsibility to protect the weak. I will be analysing why humans even want freedom, how laws affect our freedom and showing you the importance of those laws that ground us, how our society could not exist without them. In short – this is an analysis of a species who thirsts for freedom and how they couldn't exist without the thing that chains them: laws.

We all need freedom.

Wherever you look, there are people fighting for it – be it university students in China, women in Iran, soldiers in Ukraine, gay people in Libya. No matter your age, skin colour, sexuality, gender, nationality, we all want freedom, need it, yearn for it, because in some way that makes us human. Doesn't it? Some believe that laws endanger that freedom. And yes, we can see it happening all around the world, with so many suffering from laws that limit, control and oppress us. We lose loved ones to those laws, but it also brings us closer together, there's a common enemy. But that enemy isn't the law, it's those who made it. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." Each country has a representative, someone who makes sure that this article is fulfilled. There are countries where that power is used properly, and everyone is free and equal. But in countries, where that power is in the hands of the wrong people, they suffer. They suffer from the actions that a selfish person with too much power took. We all need freedom, but it's not the law that endangers it, but the people who made it.

Laws give freedom to both the weak and the strong.

I am free. I have the freedom of speech, of self-expression and so much more. All of this is dictated in a law, a law which states that if my freedom is taken away, the one who took it will be punished. I am weak, but I can't be anyone's slave, because laws protect me. What if we take those laws away?

Well, in a lawless state people have absolute freedom to do whatever they want. But is it really everyone who has this freedom, or is it just the strong?

In the novel *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding gives us a pretty good look at what would happen if we were to put humans in a lawless society. So, what happened to those schoolboys who were unfortunate enough to find themselves on that deserted island?

A lot of them died.

What started as an innocent question of who will lead us became a war for power where only the

strongest survived. Some boys didn't die purely because an adult found them and took them back to England. If you put those same boys in a society with laws, they are equal. It wouldn't have been about their physical prowess. Both the weak and the strong have the freedom to do whatever they want in a society with laws.

Humans are a species that wishes to fly. They want the freedom of the wind in their hair but whenever they look down, they see their feet chained to the ground. But if you were to ask Icarus whether he wanted to fly again or walk on the beach with his dad, I think he would have picked the latter. Even though he didn't have that absolute freedom, he was still a free man, the chains he must have seen holding him to the ground were just metaphorical – limitations that protected him. We humans are free, and to protect that freedom we need to come together and build a society that protects us all and not just the ones at the top, a society which promotes positive social change, based on the soft metaphorical chains that hold us, make us equal men standing side by side, because that is how we can truly be free in a society that chained us.

**I know that you go to School no 21 in Tallinn, and you are a student in form 11. What else would you like to say about yourself?**

I like to think of myself as a cultured person. I'm very much into music, arts, history, literature, philosophy, and I love to go to museums and art galleries.

**How did you find out about the National English-Speaking Competition?**

I found out about the competition through my English teacher. One day in class she let us know about a speech competition and, as I have done debate before, thought that it could be something fun.

**How much support did you need to prepare for the contest?**

For the contest in Tallinn, it was minimal. I wrote most of the speech and my English teacher read it through once, and I did some modifications. For the international competition the help was much bigger. Me and my teacher had a brainstorming session and there were many more drafts than for the first speech. But I don't think I could've gotten as far if I didn't have the support of my teacher.

**What is the most memorable thing you remember about the contest day in Tallinn?**



*International competition participants*

The whole day was sort of a blur. I was so nervous, I don't remember much, but I feel like the speeches of the other contestants was something I'll never forget. It was really interesting to see how everyone's personalities were shown through their speeches, and how each individual brought their own point of view to similar topics.

**What were your first emotions when you were announced as the winner of the national contest and were going to represent Estonia in London?**

I was certain the wrong name was called out. While waiting for the results, I just felt lucky that I had gotten as far as I did, and when my name was called, it felt wrong, but right after that it was pure bliss.

**I also know that you consulted Ross Allen, the British Ambassador to Estonia, when preparing for the international competition. He was a serious debater at school himself – what kind of advice did you get from him?**

To be myself and stay true to what I believe in. I think that advice was something that fed my drive. The one comment I always got after my speeches was that I sounded very passionate. That was all thanks to Ross Allen who told me to just be myself in front of the audience, which I did. I believe I got as far as I did thanks to listening to the advice Ross Allen had given me.

**What did you learn about public speaking in London and how did the competition support your personal development?**

When I got back from London, I felt like a whole new person. Not only did my experience help me with confidence in public speaking but also in everyday life. I learned how to better express myself and how to seem sincere in the eyes of the public, how to properly use body language and enjoy public speaking. The coaches did an amazing job, but the other contestants were also great at helping me not only be a better speaker but a better person.

**I know that you had a good friend who accompanied you to the contest. Did many of the contestants have someone from their home country there to support them and how important do you think it is to have someone there to help you?**

Most of the contestants had at least one person accompanying them, but I feel that it wasn't really necessary, because most of the support came from the contestants. I remember when the finalists were announced, and not a single person was sad or disappointed, but instead you could feel the happiness in the room for those of us that got into the final. We were even taught a new word by our coach Dave Smith, which I feel sums up my experience perfectly: confelicity, which means feeling happiness from the joy of others.

**What advice would you give to the next person who will have the honour of representing Estonia?**

My advice is: do what you love. Make a speech that makes you happy, not something that would please the judges. Everyone can make a calculated speech where every point is accounted for, but this is your chance to show your thoughts to people from all around the world, and, in the end, even if you don't win, you can be proud of what you did. And, of course, take in every second of that experience because those people you meet and the experience you will get is something for life. Me and the other competitors still stay in contact regularly, and I know I will remember all the 38 people forever.

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

I want to thank everyone who supported me: my teacher, my coaches, my parents, my friends, the English-Speaking Union. I was gifted with an experience that I will never forget and met some amazing people who've helped me improve as a person. Leaving London after the competition was extremely hard as even though I knew those people for only a mere five days, it felt like a lifetime, so thank you!

**Sandra Näks was interviewed by Kristi Vahenurm**

# Experienced Educator

## ANNE WITH AN E

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANNE-MAARJA TAMMARU



### **When and why did you decide to become a teacher? Why English?**

Fun fact. I did not. 😊

Like many young people I did not know what to do with my life after secondary school. Somehow, I chose English; from time to time I think it could have been history... But I have not regretted it. Being an English teacher enables me to do so many different things and use a large variety of methods, and it is really rewarding to know that my students can cope with their English wherever they are.

### **What makes you a cool teacher?**

Humour. I also try to keep track of what young people like and do. Having two sons is a great help. I do not worry about tomorrow, although I will grow older.... Never being afraid of talking about myself and acknowledging my mistakes is another good clue.

### **How would you change the educational system if you could?**

We should think how to avoid the tension of studying so that students' mental health would not suffer. Students should have far more freedom to decide what they need. I had a wonderful opportunity to visit schools in Iceland recently, and there, students on secondary level can choose how long they study in high school. This is the country which changed the educational system when problems accumulated and did not try to change students.

### **What does teaching at the college give you?**

It's a new world. The world of grown-up people from different walks of life. I believe that despite being a lecturer, I have learned from my students how the real world outside the school works! I feel I need this different perspective on life.

### **What is your next big project?**

To find out what good have three compulsory national exams given to Estonia. Maybe it's high time for changes?

### **What are your other hobbies beside teaching?**

Reading, if possible 24/7. I love cinema and detective series on TV. Gardening - I grow flowers and

everything edible Estonian summer can provide. I love history. Right now I am into Estonia after the Livonian war and the Golden Swedish era. Vikerraadio broadcasts *Õöülikool, Eesti lugu, Müstiline Venemaa* taught me to enjoy weeding. A win-win situation – I grow intellectually, (weeds sadly have to start a new life cycle somewhere else) and my crops flourish...

**Suggest a good book to read and a film to watch.**

I love Marvel studio fantasy films with superheroes. I feel we know so little about people and their real powers. From books I have discovered Icelandic noir writers. Icelanders are very proud of them.

**What kind of magic power would you like to have?**

I would like to be able to teleport, be invisible and read people's minds.

**If you were an animal / a flower, who would you like to be?**

A cat. What a resilience! Try to be adorable, fiercely independent and curious at the same time. I also envy their physical abilities.

**What is your superpower?**

Honesty. I do not criticise without proposing solutions to problems.

**What else would you like to achieve?**

To learn a new foreign language and live each day with peace on my mind.

**What makes you shine?**

My sons are my Sun and Moon and Everything. I must have done something good in this or in my previous lives to have them.

**What/Who has inspired you?**

My aunt Ülle Udam, the translator of many Japanese, French, Italian books into Estonian and her husband Haljand Udam, the orientalist and translator from many oriental languages. He translated the Quran into Estonian. I miss them so much.

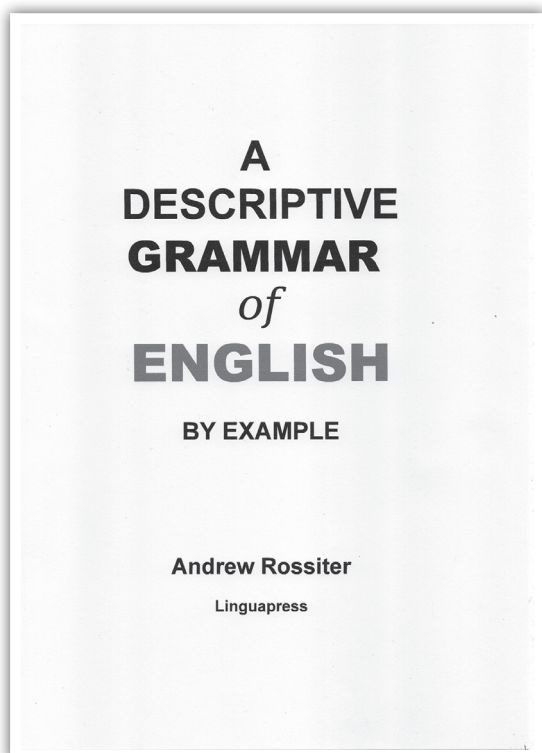
**Anne-Maarja Tammaru works at Pärnu Ühisgümnaasium; she was interviewed by EATE Committee members. Photo by Arko Kask.**

# Reading Recommendations

## A DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR OF ENGLISH

Julia Maakar

Tallinn Kristiine Gymnasium



Andrew Rossiter's descriptive grammar of English contains the essential grammar aspects. The descriptions given in the book are relatively informative, what is more, the examples are comprehensible. What makes it attractive is the number of examples: the grammar aspect description is quite concise and there are enough examples. The grammar book does not contain exercises, but the examples can be easily used for practice. The author of this article brought out the examples of the difficulties students had the most problems with, and how the book was used in order to help students in grammar comprehension.

The most difficult grammar aspect that causes trouble for my students is the verb and its tenses. I focused on practicing different tenses in the classes of years 6, 7 and 8. Although, according to the National Curriculum, students are supposed to know present tenses, past tenses, and future forms, they find it difficult to either differentiate what tense to use or struggle with forms (e.g., Present Continuous - I am working, I am work or I working).

Present Simple tense and Past Simple are also used in the Estonian language, and students usually do not have problems with them because they make connections quite easily. However, when it comes to Present Perfect and Present Perfect Continuous, students struggle to understand how these tenses are used and often replace them with a more familiar past tense.

What is more, the students found it difficult to use the verb have: they omitted 'have' in sentences where they had to form the Present Perfect form with the verb 'have', e.g. *I have just had breakfast*. The same problem appeared in forming Past Perfect Tenses.

In order to deal with this problem, the teacher gave students examples from the book and asked them to come up with their own examples using the verb 'have' as the main predicate. This seemed to have worked successfully because most of the students admitted they understood the rules better.

Since there is no Future tense in Estonian, students have problems with understanding how future forms are used in English. Year 6 students struggled with differentiating Future Simple, 'be + going to', and Present Continuous. The teacher used the book to explain the rules and together with the students came up with examples which were comprehensible to them. Year 7 students used the grammar book rules in preparing 'flipped classroom' lessons and the feedback was rather positive: students who prepared the lesson had a better understanding of the rules. Students were given the task to use at least one rule and make a task based on it.

Year 8 students found it difficult to understand the difference between defining and non-defining rel-

ative clauses, to be more accurate, they struggled to decide which clause is defining and which is not. Apparently, the rules in the students' book used in the lessons were not enough, and the grammar rule explanation from the reviewed book was used in the lessons. The results of the following test were quite positive and the students admitted that extra rules were helpful.

The section 'Punctuation' caught my attention because this part of English needs to be considered more thoroughly.

All in all, the book is useful and covers most important aspects of grammar. The feedback from the students is rather positive. The book, in my opinion, should belong as a handbook to every EFL teacher's collection.

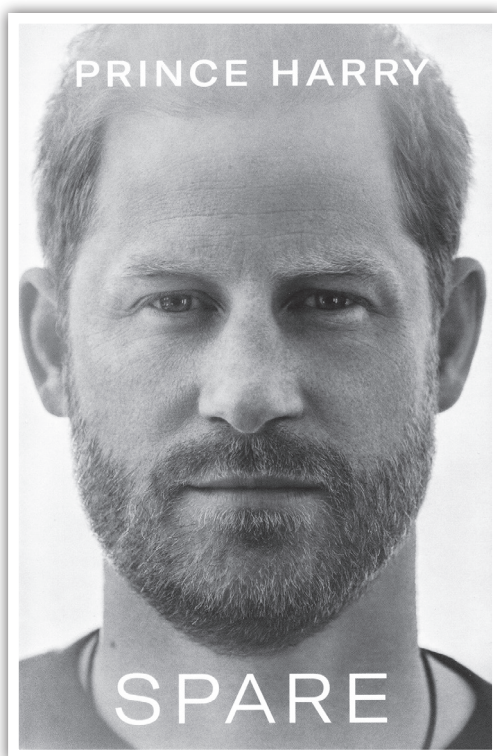
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## HARRY, THE SPARE PRINCE

*Ilmar Anvelt*

*Editor of OPEN!*



Although the title of this section in our magazine is "Reading Recommendations", I'm not sure whether to recommend Prince Harry's book *Spare* or not. If you are expecting royal splendour, it's not for you; if you are content with the (mis)adventures of a young (and not particularly young) man, either military, drug-related or sexual, it's quite readable. As I haven't been a fan of the royal family who watches all the events in their life with keen interest, I could approach the book from a neutral point of view. For me, it was not scandalous; it was primarily the story of an unhappy person.

Not everyone is cut out to be royal. Queen Elizabeth II was as royal as can be, but it seems to me that Harry would have felt much better if he had been born into an ordinary family. He was not very bright at school and not interested at all in his historic ancestors. As I heard in a BBC news programme on 5 March 2023 from Prince Harry's own mouth, he "was trapped in the royal family" and "feeling strange in this container."

He was given four names, none of them Harry – Henry Charles Albert David. Harry is a Middle English form of Henry and often used as a diminutive. His brother, Prince William, however, calls him Harold. The diminutive of Harold is also Harry, so perhaps William (Willy) has given him a name which sounds more formal and grown-up.

As Harry lost his mother, Princess Diana, at the tender age of twelve, a motif that keeps repeating in the book is that he cannot believe that his mother is dead; she must be alive, be in hiding

somewhere. As we can understand from the title of the book, his brother is the Heir, he is the Spare. This is something that he takes as a fact, not being worried about it. By now, he has moved even to the fifth place in the order of succession to the throne – after Prince William and his three children. When Prince William and Princess Kate had their first child, George, reporters asked Harry in my opinion an annoying question if he was miserable because the baby had moved him one link down in the chain of succession to the throne. As Harry said, “I was delighted for Willy and Kate, and I was indifferent to my place in the order of succession.” By now, as William and Kate have three children, the likelihood of Harry ever taking the throne is very slim, and I don’t think that anyone, including Harry himself, would imagine a medieval story of killing his brother and his children in order to become the king.

Another repeated motif in the book is how the yellow press disrupts his life, particularly his relations with women. The phrase “We were papped” (discovered by the paparazzi) crops up in the book now and then. However, he could be said feeding the greedy journalists with several of his foolish pranks.

We should consider that the wording we can read in the book does not come from Prince Harry himself but from his ghostwriter – John Joseph Moehringer. Moehringer also helped to write the memoirs of the tennis star Andre Agassi and the co-founder of Nike, Phil Knight. An anonymous commentator of *The Economist* (all their articles are published anonymously to express one collective voice) says about Moehringer’s work: “What suits publishers may not have best served Prince Harry, who emerged with little dignity. But in an age of selfies and social-media exposure dignity is not going to sell books.” Naturally, the ghostwriter can emphasise some things and play down some others, although I think that dignity or presenting himself as a princely ideal were not Harry’s primary concern. Another article in *The Economist* bears the title “Prince Harry’s autobiography is an ill-advised romp”, which makes the impression that it might have been the ghostwriter’s or the publisher’s idea rather than Harry should show himself as a victim of ruptured family relations and the yellow press.

Although he does not feel very much at home among the royals, we should not forget his unlimited monetary resources compared to most of us. When not feeling happy in London, he could take the plane and stay with friends in Botswana. Not everyone can do that at a whim.

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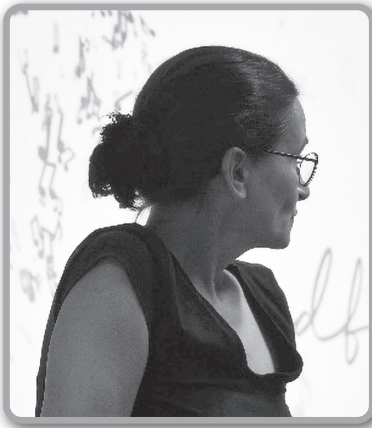


# Come and Share

## TEACHER'S WELL-BEING – IT STARTS WITHIN

Marta Bujakowska

Freelance teacher and teacher trainer, Poland



It is essential to do something for ourselves for our well-being so that we could activate both our body and mind. I would like to offer some exercises like Superbrain Yoga, finger and nut exercises. They are excellent for teachers to be done at home but even better to be practised at school with students or even online. Once students practice them with teacher monitoring, they can easily do them on their own.

In my search for some tools to support teachers not only methodologically but also in a more general way backing up their well-being, I came across Superbrain Yoga some years ago. I have been using it myself ever since as well as sharing it with teachers. It is best to be used on its own or as a warm-up before any physical or mental gym/exercise.

### **Superbrain Yoga warm-up exercise**

Superbrain Yoga is an amazing ancient Indian technique of increasing brain power through exercise that may help improve the brain and activate the left and right hemisphere of the brain, synchronised by breathing.

SuperBrain Yoga is a scientifically validated method to help energize the brain and enhance its sharpness and clarity. This simple and easy to do technique helps develop and increase intellectual capacity; it sharpens memory and concentration. Scientific studies on Superbrain Yoga show dramatic improvements in children diagnosed with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and Down Syndrome. SuperBrain Yoga can be a part of an effective routine to help people with dyslexia, or other development challenges and also people suffering from Alzheimer's disease, poor memory or just the elderly. It even helps those who feel confused or muddled sometimes, and those who have a problem with short-term memory.

This exercise has been practised in the form of an experiment and children (in the autism spectrum and those who suffer from ADHD) were found to have improved mentally after doing this exercise regularly for three months.

In a more general sense, the benefits I am talking about comprise of:

- improving emotional intelligence in children and adults,
- increasing the focus or the power of concentration,
- normalising the behaviour patterns of children,
- increasing the memory to retain and recall new information,
- increasing listening skills,
- improving group dynamics substantially.



Here is the instruction for you to follow:

- Stand up straight in a quiet place. Lift your head and back upward slightly. Lengthen your torso, front, back, and spine, keep your head straight up like you wanted to touch the sky with its top. Keep your shoulders wide and open your chest. Keep your feet flat on the ground.
- Place your tongue on the roof of your mouth just behind your teeth. Keep your tongue there for the whole exercise.
- Touch your right earlobe with your left hand and your left earlobe with your right hand. Use your thumb and forefinger to hold your earlobes; your thumb should be in front. Press on your earlobes.
- Bend your knees to lower your body towards the ground. Try to keep your back straight, don't slouch as you do so, inhale through your nose. Then, lift your body to the initial position as you exhale.
- After doing one squat, repeat the exercise 15 to 21 or more times. Keep your back straight and your tongue on the roof of your mouth all the time.
- You can then change the hold of your hands i.e. touch your left earlobe with your right hand and your right earlobe with your left hand. In this way, you cross your left arm over your right arm. Repeat the exercise.

If you decide that you want to engage yourself in this practice regularly, it's important to have the space to practice. Find a quiet place in your home free from distractions, such as your bedroom, a living room without a television or if the weather permits a balcony, terrace or garden. It's good to have a lot of light, especially sunlight.

### **Finger exercises**

We all have been working online for some time now, and we use our hands but rather in a very repetitive way when tapping the keyboard. However, if you are ready for more exercise, I would like to share six finger exercises with you as well as some additional nut or, if you prefer, nutty exercises for our hands. To help with the tiredness and monotony of online teaching, I suggest finger exercises which may be used anywhere and anytime - with students or without in face-to-face or online teaching. Most of all, however, they cater for our well-being.

These six finger exercises are meant to strengthen your mind, but a side-effect could be physically exercising your hands and helping them to stay agile and healthy. They improve your memory, sharpen your attention, help you focus and boost your brain health in general.

These exercises for the brain were developed by Joshi Rose Tsutsumi, a Japanese researcher and author of the book *Finger Self-massage*. He says that if you repeat this short finger workout daily, the stimulation travelling from your fingers directly to your brain will help to rejuvenate your body and make your brain more efficient.

Each fingertip has more than 3000 mechanoreceptors that act as a highway to your brain, particularly its sensory cortex. When you do a finger workout, you improve synapse connections and fire neurons which is great for the functioning of your brain. As with any proper workout, it is good to do some

warm-up before, like Superbrain Yoga for example. The order of this set of six finger exercises, however, is laid out in a way to be self-contained, and the first exercises can be treated as a warm-up.

### Exercise 1

- inhale deeply through your nose
- bend your elbows and lift your fingers to eye level
- keep palms facing each other, fingers touch
- breathe out through your mouth,
- lower your right hand,
- bend fingers of the left hand and cover the fingers of your right hand as if you're trying to catch a hand that's sliding down
- repeat the other way around
- repeat 15 times, breathing a little faster than usual
- do the exercise smoothly and do not hurry
- do not lower your hands
- coordinate your movements with breathing as always when you do any physical exercise



### Exercise 2

- hold your hands in front of your chest; your palms should be facing each other and touching, your wrists should be pressed together as well; do not strain, you should feel comfortable
- breathe in and out several times as you normally do
- quickly separate your right and left wrists and palms
- simultaneously spread your fingers wide, only the tips touching
- bring your palms back together and take a quick breath through your mouth, your fingers still splayed out
- separate your palms, only your fingertips touching breathing out at the same time while pressing your fingertips together
- turn your wrists so that your middle fingers are directed away from your chest
- repeat the same movements in this position at least 10 times
- your breathing should be rhythmical and your fingers should be spread as much as possible

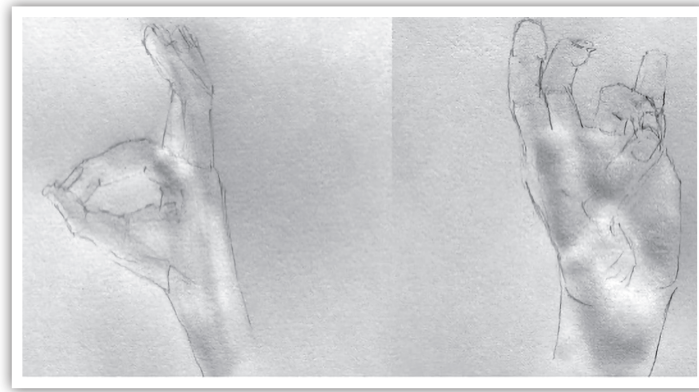


### Exercise 3

- breathing in and out rhythmically and normally, lift your arms bent at the elbows to your mouth, your palms facing you and your pinky fingers touching
- exhale completely and retain for some seconds
- inhale through your nose, bending all your fingers one by one: start with the thumb on your right hand and finish with the thumb on your left hand
- exhale through your mouth and straighten all your fingers
- now start with the thumb on the left hand
- repeat these movements at least 10 times
- bend and straighten each finger thoroughly and completely



#### Exercise 4



- tightly press together the tips of your thumb and index finger on your right hand, slightly curving your index finger
- repeat the same movement with the other fingers
- repeat this exercise 20 times for both hands
- simultaneously start with the index finger on your right hand and the little finger on the left
- go as fast as you can in opposite directions

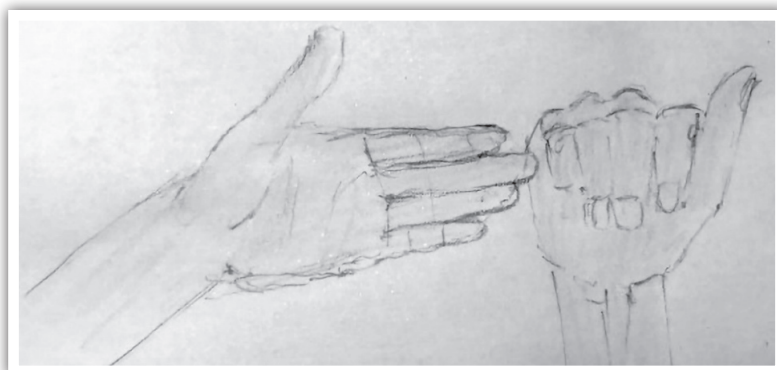
#### Exercise 5

- with the tip of the thumb on your right hand, press down on the bottom of your right index finger keeping your index finger as straight as possible
- repeat with the other fingers
- apply effort to do this exercise
- repeat this 20 times for both hands



#### Exercise 6

- hold your left hand in a loose fist and the fingers on your right hand straight and gathered together
- bring the tips of the fingers on your right hand toward the bottom of the pinky on your left hand
- switch your hands
- repeat these movements for each hand in turns as quickly and precisely as you can at least 10 times for both hands
- breathe out through your mouth every time you switch hands



## **Nut exercises**

As a follow-up or a separate exercise for your wellbeing, I suggest two nut exercises. They massage your hands and use all acupressure points in the palms. They help you focus as it is not easy for beginners to do them correctly. For this exercise, you'll need four walnuts. You can replace walnuts with any other nuts or hard balls big enough to assist you.



### **Nut exercise 1**

- take a walnut and start to roll it around your left palm while pressing on it with your right palm with some effort
- keep doing this for at least one minute
- turn your left hand up and start to roll the nut around your right hand pressing on it with your left hand
- again keep doing it for one minute

### **Nut exercise 2**

- take two walnuts in each hand and start to roll them by using circular motions in your right hand clockwise and in your left hand counterclockwise
- do it for at least one minute

Both exercises work like acupressure massaging different receptors on our palms. Our brain ages, our memory, attention span and concentration weaken. Luckily, this finger workout can help us deal with these problems. And it can prevent the ageing of our fingers too! Enjoy the finger gym!

Give yourself an occasional break. All of the exercises suggested here should ideally be relaxing. If you find yourself stressing out about your superbrain or finger exercises, take a day off. The exercise should make you feel better mentally and also physically. If it is causing stress, a break can help you recharge.

All drawings made by my daughter Zosia Przybyło.

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Marta Bujakowska is a freelance teacher and teacher trainer from Poland with a strong intercultural focus and special interest in creative methodology, CLIL, reflective teaching and learner autonomy. In her career, she has taught all age groups and levels changing her preferences from time to time, which helped her develop as a teacher and led her into teacher training. Nowadays, she predominantly works with teachers, running sessions and teacher development courses. Being surrounded by active fellow teachers makes her feel whole. She believes that teachers should regard their self-development as unlimited. She volunteered for IATEFL Poland from 1994 to 2021 and has volunteered for IATEFL International since 2017, being a member of Associates Committee. Email: [marta.bujakowska@gmail.com](mailto:marta.bujakowska@gmail.com)

## PICTURE BOOKS FOR ALL AGE GROUPS

Ingebjørg Mellegård

Østfold University College, Norway  
Faculty of Teacher Education and Languages



Traditionally, picture books have been positioned as children's literature primarily suited to be used with young children. This myth is by no means true any longer. Today, there is a myriad of picture books available exploring a wide range of topics that students of all ages can relate to. It all depends on what picture books teachers choose and how they approach them.

Having been engaged in in-service training of English teachers in Norway for years, I have had many requests from teachers about what picture books to use with different age groups. Teachers find it difficult and time-consuming to select meaningful books that have potential to motivate students for developing reading pleasure and learning English. As a response to this, two colleagues and I, at Østfold University College, have created a database of picture books aimed for use in the English classroom. The books have been categorized according to *age groups* and *themes*; in addition, a brief summary of each book is presented. Connections to the English curriculum in Norway are mentioned, but this represents no barrier for teachers outside the country to take advantage of this resource; English curricula across borders contain many of the same core elements.

What are the unique qualities of picture books that make them so useful as language learning vehicles? First, picture books give access to stories; the story structure helps readers to connect to other people's lives, cultures and ways of living. Second, picture books combine two levels of communication, the visual and the verbal, which facilitates multiple constructions of meaning. This interdependence between words and pictures allows emergent readers to rely more on the images than the verbal text in their meaning making. Finally, picture books pave the way for a dialogic way of teaching. Pictures speak to us in a different way from verbal text; pictures trigger our personal reactions. In this way, picture books spur personal engagement and involvement; we add a personal dimension to the story, and new stories may emerge. In the classroom, picture books can be read in one sitting and thus, constitute a means of creating a community of readers where students can engage in dialogue, develop their language proficiency, share their personal experiences, explore complex themes together, learn to value others' perspectives and develop critical thinking.

Here is the link: <https://www.hiof.no/english/services/knowledge/picture-books/>

### **Biographical note:**

Ingebjørg Mellegård ([ingebjorg.m.mellegard@hiof.no](mailto:ingebjorg.m.mellegard@hiof.no)) is associate professor of English linguistics and didactics at Østfold University College in Norway. She has long experience as an English teacher in primary and secondary school and as an in-service teacher trainer. Her main interests centre on professional development of English teachers, curriculum theory, course design and English didactics. She has been to the University of Tartu on Erasmus exchange visits many times lecturing on picture books and other aspects of English didactics.



## HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW BELFAST?

*(answers on p. 42)*

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