

Bulgarian English Teachers' Association

E-Newsletter

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HAPPY

NEW

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Editors' note

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the BETA-IATEFL e-newsletter!

The key word in the current issue is *conference*. The issue comprises five conference reports and one seminar report preceded by brief etymological remarks *regarding Christmas*. For the sake of convenience, the reports are organised around a geographical principle – from closest to Bulgaria to farthest.

Thus, the journey of the reader starts from the Balkans – Northern Greece, Albania, Montenegro, and Croatia – and extends further to Poland and Finland.

Tsvetelena Taralova discusses “European School Education Platform (ESEP) and eTwinning in English Language Teaching. ” Mariyana Mircheva represented us at the 13th International Conference on Education “Adjusting to new realities in education and exploring new ways of teaching and learning.” Reneta Stoimenova contribution finds expression in two reports: on ELTAM Day 2023 Montenegro’s National Conference and an eTwinning seminar held in Helsinki.

Further, Ivana Kasunić shares her experience at the 31st Annual International HUPE Conference. Last but not least, Lina Yanbastieva-Petrova offers a detailed description of her representing BETA at the 32nd IATEFL Poland Conference.

On behalf of all members of BETA Committee, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Georgi Dimitrov (E-Newsletter Editor)

Etymology of "Christmas"

Georgi Dimitrov

"Church festival observed annually in memory of the birth of Christ," late Old English *Cristes mæsse*, from **Christ** (and retaining the original vowel sound) + **mass** (n.2).

Written as one word from mid-14c. As a verb, "to celebrate Christmas," from 1590s. **Father Christmas** is attested in a carol attributed to Richard Smart, Rector of Plymtree (Devon) from 1435-77. **Christmas-tree** in the modern sense is attested by 1835 in American English, rendering German *Weihnachtsbaum*. Christmas cards were first designed in 1843, popular by 1860s; the phrase **Christmas-card** was in use by 1850. **Christmas present** is from 1769. **Christmas Eve** is Middle English *Cristenmesse Even* (c. 1300).

Works cited

https://www.etymonline.com/word/Christmas#etymonline_v_28081, retrieved 9 December, 2023.

Representing BETA-IATEFL at an international conference

Tsvetelena Taralova



Tsvetelena Taralova has been a teacher of English and a head teacher at the National High School in Finance and Business in Sofia, Bulgaria. She is interested in using ICT in teaching, project-based learning and intercultural communication. For eight years she has been an eTwinning ambassador for Bulgaria.

What does it entail to serve as a representative of BETA-IATEFL at the "To TESOL or not to TESOL? Teachers at the helm of continuing professional development" online conference, hosted by TESOL Macedonia-Thrace in Northern Greece on April 1-2, 2023? How does this participation benefit BETA members?

In my capacity as a BETA member and co-opted board member, I was honored to be chosen as the representative of our association at the 28th online conference organized by TESOL Macedonia-Thrace. This two-day event featured more than 25 presentations, including notable sessions led by Dr. Christina Gkonou, Dr. Ron Morrain, and Andre Hedlund. Dr. Gkonou initiated the conference by exploring the concept of understanding critical incidents in teaching, while Dr. Ron Morrain discussed transversal skills. Andre Hedlund rounded off the event with his session titled "The Owl Factor: Know, Show, and Grow."

During the conference, I had the opportunity to conduct my own online session titled "European School Education Platform (ESEP) and eTwinning in English Language Teaching." In this session, I introduced participants to the newly launched European Commission website, ESEP, and its potential application in ELT classrooms. To engage the audience, I began with a poll to determine their ESEP registration status and then proceeded to elaborate on the platform's various sections, including eTwinning. I also shared teaching methods suitable for "Erasmus+" and online eTwinning projects, highlighting best practices from my school, The National High School in Finance and Business in Sofia. As an eTwinning ambassador for Bulgaria and an Erasmus coordinator at our school, I took great pleasure in showcasing our work on projects such as "Save, be happy," "From Facebook to Tik Tok. Become a savvy digital citizen" and "EU Career navigator" to colleagues from Greece who expressed interest.

Throughout the conference, educators and teacher trainers from the region, along with representatives from IATEFL partner organizations, showcased their institutions, including TESOL Greece, ETAL (Larissa's teachers' association), IATEFL Poland, ETA, and ELTA Serbia. The conference also featured a roundtable discussion involving representatives from all partner organizations, where we talked about strategies to motivate our colleagues to join our respective associations.

In addition to my presentation, I had the privilege of attending sessions on a range of topics, including the effective use of visuals and visual aids in learning, teaching grammar through virtual tours, self-reflection in teaching, the role of the native language in ELT, and the use of artificial intelligence and learning management systems in our classrooms.

While the conference attracted around 30 participants, predominantly university lecturers and representatives from private ELT institutions, I had the opportunity to connect with a few teachers. These new connections hold the potential for future collaborations between my school and theirs.

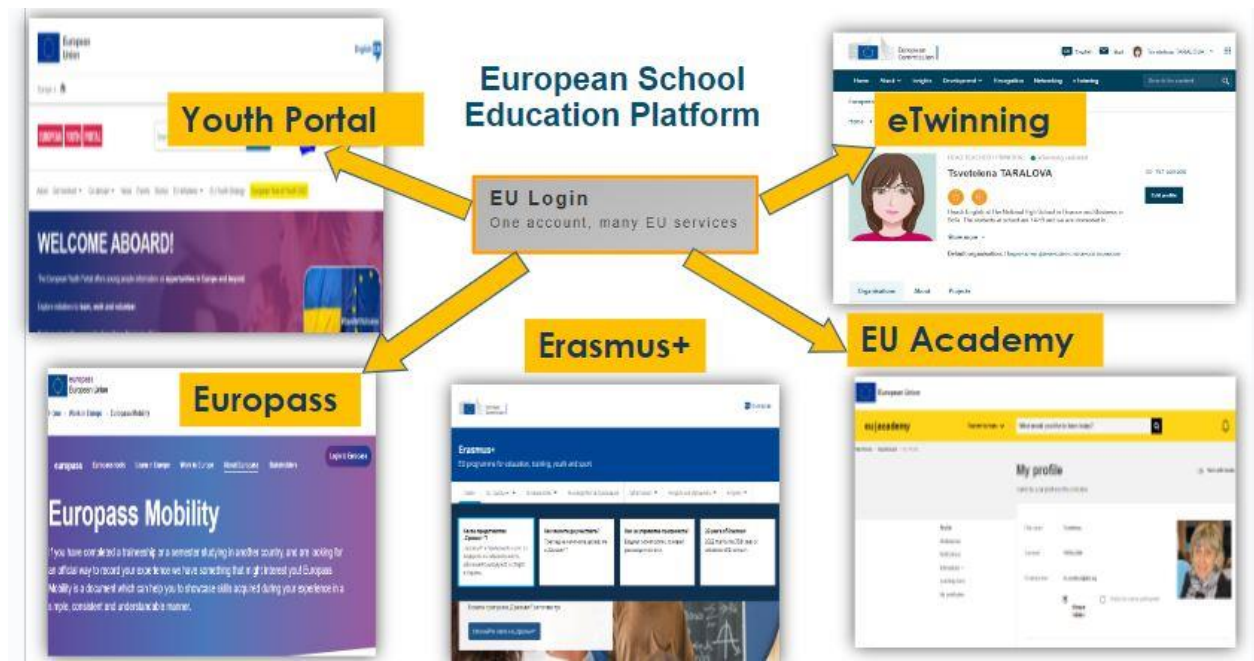
Overall, representing BETA-IATEFL at this international conference was a rewarding experience, and I look forward to continuing to contribute to our association's growth and collaboration with educators from around the world.

Pictures:

Top 10 reasons to join an association:

1. **Broaden your knowledge**
2. **Take charge of your career**
3. **Build a better resume**
4. **Enhance your network**
5. **Be a leader**
6. **Become a mentor**
7. **Make a new friend**
8. **Give back to the community**
9. **Strength in numbers**
10. **Stay inspired and stay motivated**

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STEM activities



For my family:

Note: we use central heating

	KWh	Price for KWh in your currency (Lev)	Price in your currency (Lev)	Price for KWh in Euros	Total price in Euros
Daily usage	87	0.32	27.84	0.16	13.92
Nightly usage	49	0.17	8.33	0.09	4.17
Average price	-	0.25			0.12 Euro cents
Total	136				
Other taxes	136	0,01	1.36	0.005	0.68
VAT 20%			7.50		3.75
Total price paid by the family			45.04		22.52



4. ELECTRICITY SAVING STRATEGY. Write what you and your family can do to save electricity.

14

Student's portfolio

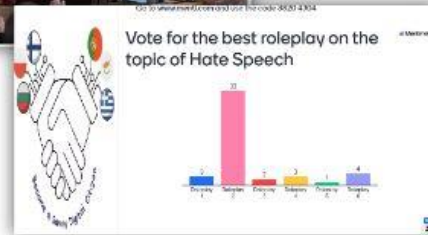
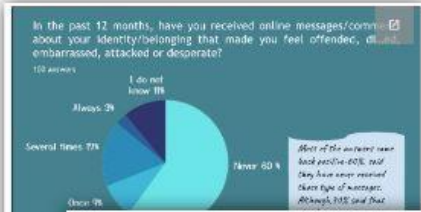


Student's portfolio
Европейски навигатор в професията



Период на проекта: 1.06.2022 - 31.06.2023

From Facebook to Tik Tok. Become a savvy digital citizen



Google Slides, Emaze, YouTube, Mentimeter

ELTA Albania in person

Mariyana Mircheva



Mariyana Mircheva is a university lecturer with over 30 years of experience in teaching Business English. She has actively participated in developing the syllabus for first and second-year students. Her interests range from methodology of teaching English as a foreign language to aspects of linguistics like morphology and pragmatics.

She has been the head of the English section of the Department of Foreign Languages and Applied Linguistics at the University of National and World Economy for over 7 years.

The 13th International Conference on Education “Adjusting to new realities in education and exploring new ways of teaching and learning” – an event awaited by many teachers and educators in the region and not only. COVID-19 pandemic, regional and global financial and economic crises and subsequent social, political, and economic changes have had their impact on teaching and learning and have even forced upon us new methods and approaches, which, it might seem, we have been trying to postpone. In the beginning of 2020 we became social recluses, we started acquiring new technical and communication skills, we started to adjust to the new reality in education and actively thought about and discussed what the future holds for us. Most educators saw this new reality as a mixed blessing, they had good enough reasons to be optimistic along with being somehow scared and apprehensive. I personally think that today, two years on, optimism prevails. People

eagerly resumed the face-to-face conferences so that they could again meet their friends and colleagues in person, 'wearing their smart clothes'.

The 13th International Conference on Education, held on May 26th and 27th in Tirana brought together both young and experienced teachers and educators from Slovenia, North Macedonia, Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Ukraine and many other countries, all enthusiastic about the present and future of language teaching, curious to find out how change was felt in educational institutions in neighbouring countries and how to adopt the new normal faster and more efficiently.

The focus of most presentations was on difficulties teachers encounter and solutions they come up with mostly in primary and secondary education. Schools work closely with various publishing houses designing new coursebooks, teacher materials and develop platforms and applications to improve students' motivation to study and participate more actively and thus achieve better results.

The year 2020 has gained importance due to the massive impact it has had on all aspects of our life. The main threats and opportunities today are mostly associated with the technological advances and the development AI, in particular. Schools and universities went online which by some educators was seen to be a threat because of all the uncertainties mostly related to new technology they had to use and learn how to use to both their and their students' advantage. Gradually, teachers and lecturers began to perceive these changes as opportunities which could facilitate the teaching and learning process and bridge the gap between educators and their students. It is as clear as daylight that technology will continue to be part of the education activities and in fact it will gain greater importance. The future progress

of education is intrinsically linked to the ability to harness the potential of educational technology.

The digitization of the teaching activities calls for enhancing digital skills and competences. Students nowadays illustrate very high level of computer competence and teachers have to match students' expectations and skills. The digital transformation has drawn attention to implementing the flipped classroom method and student-centered teaching style which is inclusive and interactive. Lecturers should be facilitators, not instructors. University lecturers in Bulgaria still favour lecturing and pack their lectures and seminars with information rather than urging students to work on their own or in groups and pairs, analyse the data they find, interpret it and then present it to their colleagues and stimulate discussions and critical thinking. Urging independent work and research shifts the focus from the teacher as the authority in the classroom to the learner. In addition to independence I could add another positive characteristic of digitalization – flexibility. Students can be assigned different tasks and the outcome of their work can be presented using different tools and platforms, thus bringing diversity into the classroom.

However, certain risks exist in this digital environment: the greatest one would be learner isolation, overdependence on technology, high risk of cheating, copying other people's works.

One major difficulty we as teachers encounter nowadays, even at university, is the short attention span students have. The long journalistic texts we used to introduce to our students are definitely a thing of the past. It is a very tough task to make students read texts for more than 5-6 minutes. Therefore, adjustment to the new reality and requirements is on the agenda.

It also gets increasingly difficult to find the right motivation for students to work on topics they find difficult to understand and share opinion on, so the educator's role is to motivate them and introduce the topic in an interesting and enticing way. This also means that curricula should undergo changes and consequently develop new resources.

Each threat brings along new opportunity. So take the initiative, seize the opportunity and 'go the extra mile'.











ELTAM Day 2023

Montenegro's National Conference in a day

Reneta Stoimenova



Reneta Stoimenova has been a teacher of English, and sometimes of English literature, for over 30 years now. She has been part of various teacher training courses in the UK, the USA, Ireland, Greece, France, Romania, Iceland, and Slovenia, and has also presented at English teachers' conferences in Albania, Romania, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bulgaria. She teaches English at Ekzarh Yosif Foreign Language School in Razgrad.

The 9th National ELTAM Montenegro conference took place in the city of Nikšić on May 13th, a day after the massive, very popular, country-wide celebration of St. Basil, patron of the city's largest Christian temple of St. Vasilij. Nikšić is also the second largest city in Montenegro and seat of the national organization ELTAM (English Language Teachers' Association of Montenegro). I, with my presentation and enthusiasm for setting up school English-writing Wikipedia clubs, embarked on an adventurous bus-and-train journey through former Yugoslavia to reach the final destination of my speaker proposal, a place situated between the mountains and the sea in Nikšić Field, the largest karst field in Montenegro. My route, starting in Sofia, went through Nis, with a stopover in Belgrade, and then headed for the Adriatic on the night train through the Dinaric Alps, overlapped the ancient Roman

road Via Militaris, which diagonally connected Rome with its Asian provinces through Singidunum (now Belgrade) and Serdica, aka Sofia.

Montenegro, despite using the Euro as its national currency, is not in the EU, a fact I discovered accidentally during the evening city tour when I realized that the country had just received her first cohort of Peace Corps volunteers, some of whom were among the guests and presenters at the conference. Also, the conference was organized with the help and financial assistance of the U.S. Embassy in Montenegro. Talks and demo classes were delivered by presenters from the Peace Corps, the Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, ELTAM, SOL (UK), U.S Fulbright Scholars, Pearson, IATEFL Poland, the hosting institution of the Faculty of Philology in Nikšić, and BETA Bulgaria.

Among the keynote speakers was Hansley Cazeau – a Haitian-American educational consultant and culture enthusiast, in his own words, and official U.S. English Language Fellow in Montenegro, whose captivating Plenary Session 1 was both entertaining and educational. He talked about the future of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) and its various current uses for educational purposes in his “ChatGPT a gift or a curse?” – an exploration of AI Chat GPT, its effects in classrooms and how teachers can manage.

ELTAM’s team signature presentation topped off the conference with their board game “What do you know about Montenegro?” created over a series of workshops within a project called “Activate – Make a Difference” (the title of the conference itself).

More conference and culture highlights can be seen in the photo summary below.



Cathedral Church of St. Basil of Ostrog

The temple dominates the city skyline reaching really high. I had the happy coincidence of coming to the city for the feast of Saint Basil (12 May), a date which launches the feast as the city's main holiday.

St. Basil of Ostrog is a local 17th century Christian saint, who used to live in a cave monastery in the village of Ostrog near Nikšić. The village is situated on the railway from Podgorica to Nikšić.

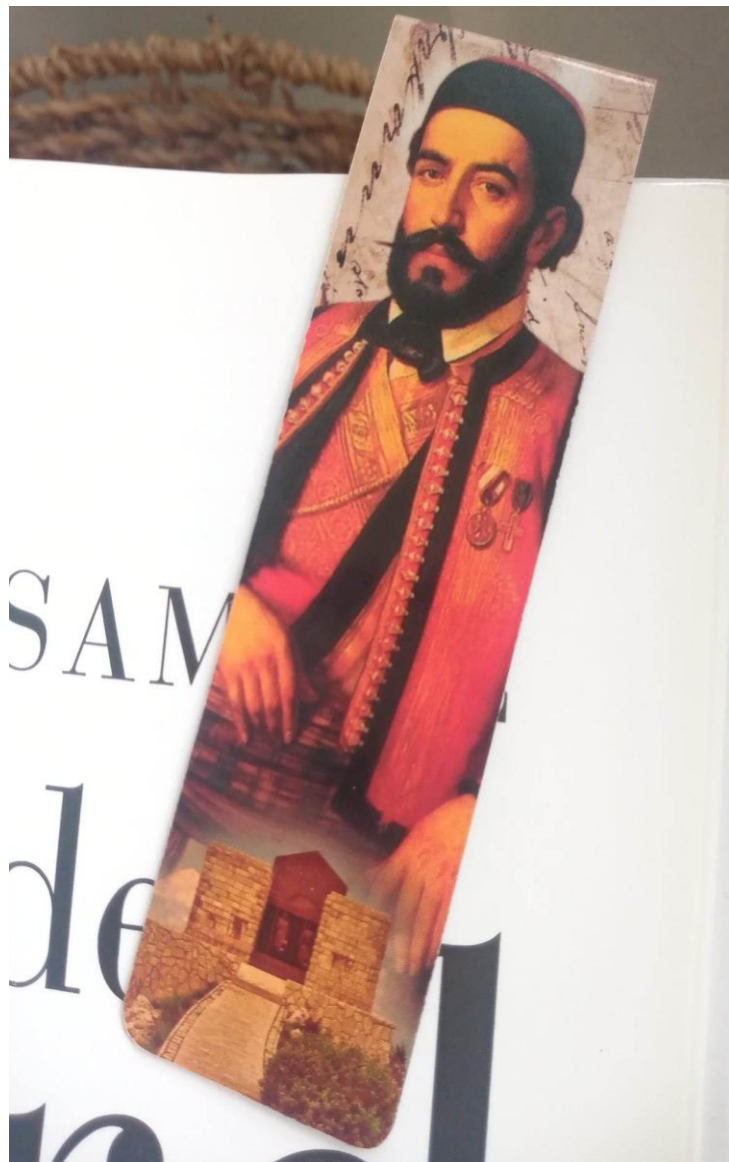


Hotel Yugoslavia was the evening pre-conference venue for friendly chat, cake, and coffee in the very heart of the city of Nikšić



Earlier in the evening, part of the city tour included the **Bedem Castle**, dating back to a 4th century Roman fort built here; subsequently destroyed and rebuilt by the Ottoman Turks who held the castle, the city, and the country for a period of 500 years until 1878, when Montenegro gained independence.



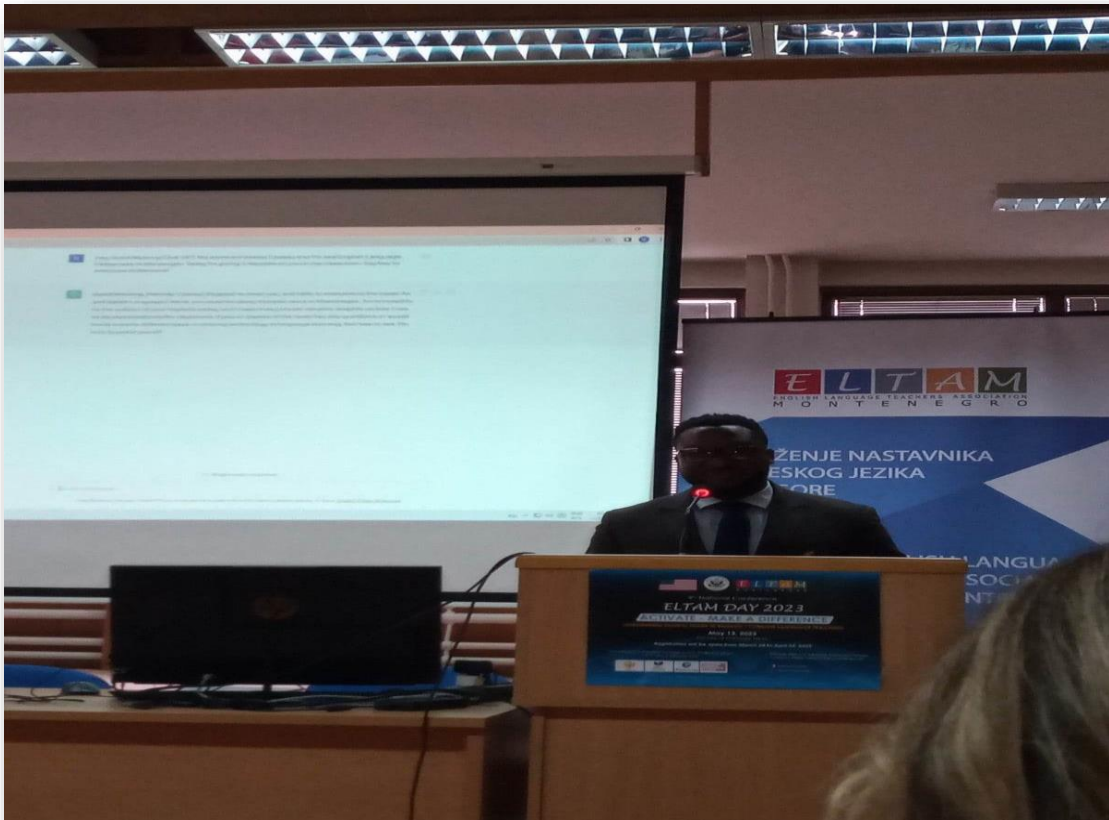


The Dynasty of the House of Petrović-Njegoš

is the Serbian family that ruled Montenegro from 1697 to 1916. While Montenegro was part of the Ottoman Empire, the local Christian ruler was both a bishop and a prince. The man whose image can be seen above is **Petar II Petrović-Njegoš**, Prince-Bishop of Montenegro in the 19th century, poet, and philosopher, widely considered as the most important poet in Montenegrin literature. His bust decorated the Philological/Philosophical Department of the University of Montenegro in Nikšić,

where the conference took place. His image can also be seen on popular bookmarks as the one in the second photo.

Bulgaria has indirect links with the last and only king of Montenegro, whose daughter was the mother of Giovanna of Savoy, wife of King Boris III of Bulgaria.



“ChatGPT a gift or a curse?” - keynote speaker Hansley Cazeau, U.S. English Language Fellow in Montenegro, whose Plenary Session 1 opened the conference.



My humble self in front of the conference insignia before talking about my experience with advanced English students at the Ekzarh Yosif Foreign Language School in Razgrad in writing and publishing articles in the English section of Wikipedia.

“Inspire and be inspired”- 31st Annual International HUPE Conference

Ivana Kasunić



Ivana Kasunić is a teacher of English and Croatian language and literature in Elementary school Nikola Tesla Rijeka, Croatia, with seventeen years of teaching experience. During the years she has participated in numerous international projects, eTwinning and other. She has always loved teamwork and enjoyed in various creative projects, as well as in shaping young minds through the beauty of language and literature.

The annual international conference of the Croatian Association of Teachers of English language was held from 20th – 22nd October in the city of Poreč in the hotel resort Valamar. We take immense pride in reporting that our annual gathering brought together teachers and educators from several European countries (Slovenia, Hungary, Ireland, the UK), countries from the whole region (Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and from the USA.

It is significant to highlight the support of those who helped make this conference a success. It is the support of the President of the Republic of Croatia, The Ministry of Science and Education (MZO), and Teacher Training Agency (AZOO).

The heart of the conference lay in four inspiring plenary sessions and fifty – seven engaging talks and workshops, each designed to equip English teachers with innovative strategies and resources. Workshops covered a spectrum of topics, from games, poetry, and stories in teaching young learners, to incorporating AI and digital tools for effective language acquisition. Educators actively participated in sessions exploring projects, mental health, and podcasts for educators and innovative approaches to teaching the four language acquisition skills.

We are proud to underline our collaboration with the United States Embassy, Australian Embassy, and British Embassy. We are especially delighted to announce our latest collaboration with the Embassy of Ireland in Zagreb. Thus, our conference was enriched with a unique exhibition dedicated to the life and work of Seamus Heaney. It was in the Diamant Hall where all participants attended the plenary session, workshops, and the exhibition. Other talks and workshops took place in five facilities of this outstanding resort.

A special segment of the Diamant Hall was dedicated to our partners and leading publishers – Alfa, Naklada Ljevak,/ Pearson, Profil Klett, and Školska knjiga where they displayed the latest editions of ELT books. Our friends from the publishing companies took part in creating the special moments in the form of coffee breaks and raffles and those in-between moments, educators and experts got together, shared a few laughs, and exchanged a hilarious classroom story or two.

Other social events helped to make this conference unforgettable. On Friday evening we dimmed the lights and enjoyed the cozy part of the socials, eating popcorn and screening the famous Swedish movie on teacher lives *Another Round*.

On Saturday afternoon the time came to ditch the conference and hit the streets. This was the chance for a bunch of educators, accompanied with the city guide, to turn into urban explorers. The city walk was a chance to stretch those conference-weary legs, swap stories about favorite finds, and maybe get a little lost in the charm of the city of Poreč.

Saturday night was reserved for the stand-up comedy and pub quiz showdown. After a day of soaking up knowledge, educators kicked back for a night of laughs and brain-teasing antics. The stand-up comedy was like a breath of fresh air, with jokes about the quirks of teaching life that only educators truly get. And then, entered the pub quiz—a battle of wits where teachers transformed into trivia warriors. It was not just about knowing the capitals of countries; it was about the friendly rivalry, the hilarious team names, and the collective aha-moments when the answers were revealed.

The closing ceremony was the moment to reveal the details of our Fourth Short Story Competition, and it was also the opportunity to call out the raffle winners and for a round of applause for the organizers who pulled off this educational gathering, and maybe a sentimental moment or two. The closing ceremony was the bow tying together days of learning, laughing, and creating memories that will be swapped like treasures in the years to come. The note we all took with us was that "goodbye" is just code for "see you next time!"



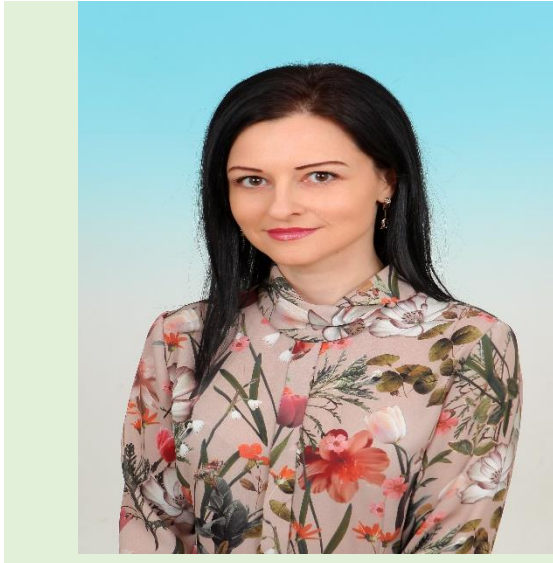






Representing BETA at the 32nd IATEFL Poland Conference

Lina Yanbastieva-Petrova



Lina Yanbastieva-Petrova is a head EFL teacher at Yoan Ekzarh Balgarski Secondary School, Shumen and a PhD candidate at Shumen University. Being a certified mozaLearn ICT Expert and a Master Trainer of the Essentials Intel® Teach Program she hosts webinars and trainings for teachers. Her main professional and research interests are in the realm of integrating ICTs and PBL principles in language teaching and acquisition.

Introduction

I had the privilege to represent the Bulgarian English Teachers' Association at the 32nd IATEFL Poland Conference, which took place from 22nd to 24th September 2023 at the Wroclaw University of Science and Technology in Wroclaw, Poland. This international event brought together more than 600 participants and was a remarkable gathering of educators, researchers, and experts from various European countries. This report aims to provide a brief overview of my experience at the conference, highlighting the key topics discussed, as well as my own presentation, thus showcasing the progressive state of English language education at a European and global level.

Highlights from a diverse and inspiring array of conference presentations

The conference was a remarkable experience, featuring a diverse array of presentation topics. Hugh Dellar’s presentation “Beyond the Native Speaker Paradigm,” for example, reminded us that English is a dynamic, evolving language spoken in diverse ways by people worldwide. He emphasized that many non-native English speakers demonstrate exceptional language proficiency, often surpassing that of native speakers, challenging the traditional concept of what constitutes “native” or “non-native” English. This insight underscored the importance of embracing the richness of English's global variations in language teaching.



Fig. 1. Hugh Dellar, “Beyond the Native Speaker Paradigm”.

Urszula Kropaczewska’s “Live Lesson” for young learners showed several interesting and engaging methods for teaching children.



Fig. 2. A live lesson for young learners, led by Urszula Kropaczewska.

Natalia Liashko's "STEAM Up Your CLIL" talk offered an innovative interdisciplinary approach to language education, differentiating between the concepts of STEAM (a term standing for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) and CLIL (an abbreviation of Content and Language Integrated Learning).

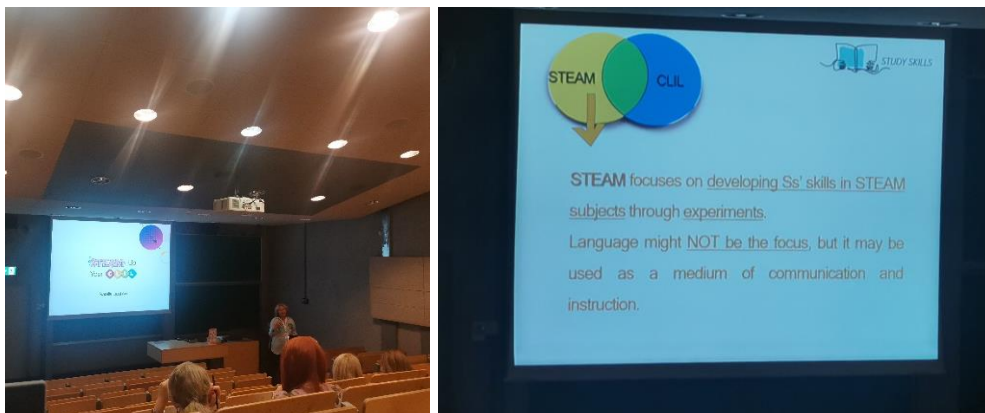


Fig. 3. Natalia Liashko, "STEAM Up Your CLIL".

Irina Kudriavtseva, the representative of the Belarusian National Association of Teachers of English, highlighted the potential of short stories for language skills

development with her presentation on “Using flash fiction to develop English learners’ language skills and literary competence”.



Fig. 4. Irina Kudriavtseva, “Using flash fiction to develop English learners’ language skills and literary competence”.

Maryna Sharamet’s insights on effective lessons provided valuable guidance on how to create engaging lessons by avoiding some “mistakes” teachers are prone to making in the classroom, while Olha Ivaniuk provided the attendees with ideas on “How to create a good vocabulary lesson.”



Fig. 5. Olha Ivaniuk, “How to create a good vocabulary lesson”.

A leading theme at the conference was the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in enhancing language teaching and acquisition. Several speakers discussed the potential of AI to revolutionize language education. They highlighted various applications of AI, such as language learning apps, chatbots, and automated assessment tools, which can personalize and optimize language learning experiences for students and facilitate teacher's workload at the same time. In "AI in Language Education: Get Your Life Back," presented by Alicja Wujec Kaczmarek and Aleksandra Szymańska, I witnessed an in-depth exploration of how artificial intelligence can play a transformative role in language instruction, promising to facilitate teachers and enhance the educational process. Michael Doherty's talk, "Let the Horse Do the Donkey Work: How AI Can Lighten the Load for Busy Teachers," offered a glimpse into the future of language education by emphasizing the role of AI in streamlining teaching tasks and improving the overall learning experience.



Fig. 6. Presentations related to AI attracted the attention of many educators.

All these talks and presentations highlighted the dynamic landscape of English language education and underscored the importance of keeping education systems worldwide updated and adaptive to technological advancements and new teaching trends.

Unveiling the power of language tools and games on mozaBook: my presentation at the conference

As a representative of the Bulgarian English Teachers' Association, I attended the conference with the responsibility of sharing insights into the latest trends and developments in the Bulgarian education system. My presentation, entitled "ELT in the Digital Era: Gamification with mozaBook", focused on the role of game-like activities in foreign language instruction in the context of teaching representatives of generations Z and Alpha. It was aimed at presenting the wide range of built-in tools and games provided by the educational presentation software mozaBook which can be applied during all the stages of a foreign language lesson.



Fig. 7. Lina Yanbastieva-Petrova, "ELT in the Digital Era: Gamification with mozaBook".

The audience received my presentation positively and was impressed by the fact that the Bulgarian Ministry of Education has provided all Bulgarian teachers and students with their personal 'digital backpack' which also ensures free access to both the educational platform mozaWeb (<https://www.mozaweb.com/>) and the educational presentation software mozaBook. After my talk I had the opportunity to engage in fruitful discussions with educators from different European countries.

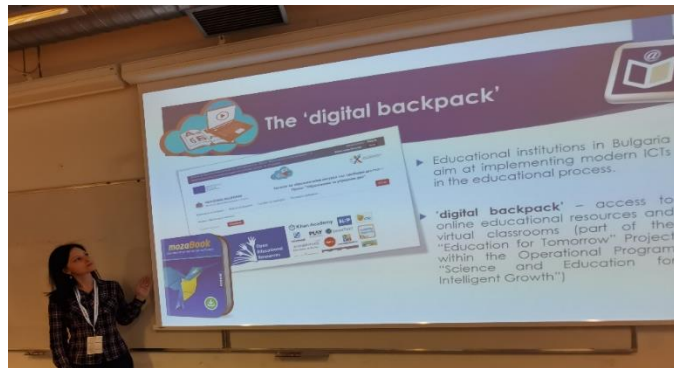


Fig. 8. Presenting the 'digital backpack', provided by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education.

Conference organization

The conference was very well-organized, offering a smooth and enriching experience for all attendees. The event featured more than a hundred sessions, such as plenary sessions, workshops, advanced lessons for teachers, presentations and talks, ensuring a wide range of engaging topics. During the conference, the 2023 National Finals of the Public Speaking Contest took place, and the award ceremony was held at the conference's opening ceremony.



Fig. 9. 2023 National Finals of the Public Speaking Contest, award ceremony.

In addition, the conference featured elections for a new president of IATEFL Poland. Małgorzata Bukowska-Ulatowska, who had previously served as President, transitioned to the role of Vice-President, while Rob Howard, the former Vice-President, was elected as the new President of the association for the next two years.



Fig. 10. Rob Howard's first speech as the new IATEFL Poland President.

The event also provided all participants with a great chance for networking with fellow educators and experts. The presence of representatives from other foreign English language teachers' associations and that of multiple exhibition stands from various publishing houses added to the overall experience, making it clear that the organizers had put in considerable effort to create an environment that promoted learning and collaboration.



Fig. 11. A warm welcome to representatives of BETA and other partner associations.

Key takeaways and insights

Global Collaboration: The conference demonstrated the importance of global collaboration in the field of education. Sharing experiences and good teaching practices with educators from other countries is invaluable in shaping the future of language education.

Organizational Excellence: A well-organized conference like this one not only enhances the learning experience but also reflects positively on the hosting organization. As a representative of BETA, I found inspiration in this event and

intend to incorporate some of the practices I observed into our upcoming conferences and workshops.

AI in Language Teaching: The potential of AI in language education cannot be ignored. It has the power to make language learning more engaging, accessible, and effective. As educators, we should stay informed about the latest developments in this field and be open to integrating AI-based tools into our teaching methods.

Conclusion

Participating in the 32nd IATEFL Poland International Conference was an enriching experience. The conference provided a valuable platform for sharing insights and learning from global peers. The discussions on current trends in English language teaching, such as using AI, emphasized the importance of keeping our teaching methodologies up to date with the latest technological advancements. I am grateful for the opportunity to represent BETA and look forward to implementing the knowledge gained at the conference to further enhance language education in Bulgaria.

eTwinning in Helsinki

Reneta Stoimenova

An eTwinning seminar goes perfectly well with Helsinki, or, in other words, if you'd like to fall in love with eTwinning, do it in Helsinki!

If you ever think of diving into the world of organic bio produce, democratic visions, peaceful life close to the nature, and urban cleanliness, Finland's capital of Helsinki is just that place. It also turned out that the city not so far from Aurora Borealis is the perfect venue for an eTwinning training, in which Ayfer Beadirova, Desislava Trendafilova, Antonia Delcheva de Amorim and myself (Reneta Stoimenova) had the honour of taking part as eTwinning teacher representatives of Bulgaria in the middle of September.



A picture of us in the cocktail hall of the Scandic Park Hotel where the venue took place.

The seminar was organized by the eTwinning section of the Finnish Human Resource Development Centre through the practical help and competent knowledge of Finland's two eTwinning ambassadors. They offered their kind expertise on how to make a successful eTwinning project by suggesting a detailed outline of a typical for

the e-platform project, which we had to follow step by step and create our own project proposals by also finding a partner from among the fellow participants. As I had been preparing for this event all summer, I knew exactly what my project would be about – about our common (Balkan) Roman heritage, going along the ancient Roman road of Via Militaris. It was an idea emerging as an outline in Helsinki, currently existent as a registered project on the eTwinning platform with an Istanbul school as a co-founder and partner.

Apart from the useful training, Helsinki is a worthwhile tourist destination. Among its modernistic cultural characteristics is its world-wide known concept of a modern multifunctional library designed to “promote lifelong learning, active citizenship,

democracy and freedom of expression”, evidenced by the photos I had published below:



Oodi Central Library in Helsinki, outside view

You can be at your leisure here:



The library is an ever-vibrant hub of various sorts of youth activities:



Right - “Joy ride” among the bookshelves – you can have the advantage of both books and bars.



Down left - The inside of the library is full of numerous small self-study cabinets like this one.



As part of the eTwinning social activities in Helsinki, dinner at famous Savotta national restaurant in the city centre just facing the market square:



Wild mushrooms at the harbour market – almost as typical of Finnish reality as the lakes in the North and the public sauna:



A harbour sauna:



Right - Rye and potato pieces of bread – the potato one is eaten with the butter in the middle of the tray.

Down - Wild salmon cooked tastefully with boiled beet root and forest morels (morchella) served in beautiful Finnish-made plates.





Obviously, Helsinki, a Nordic stone pearl warmed up by the souls of some 672 000 metropolitan citizens, delighted even us, the fleeting cohort of a handful of eTwinners.

Forthcoming events in the world of ELT

- **57th IATEFL Conference**, 16-19 April, 2024, Brighton, UK

<https://www.iatefl.org/conference/brighton>

- **22nd ELTA-Serbia**, 17-18 May, 2024, Belgrade, Serbia

<https://elta.org.rs/2023/06/27/save-the-date/>

- **FIPLV Congress and NZALT Biennial Conference**, 6-9 July, 2024, Auckland, New Zealand

<https://fiplv.com/>

Writing for the BETA-IATEFL e-newsletter

Have you ever wondered if you should write an article for the E-Newsletter of BETA-IATEFL?

- Please DO! Your contribution may act as a springboard for discussions, inspiration for colleagues or facilitate the work of fellow teachers!

What exactly do you have to do?

If you feel you have something you would like to share:

- Send us your article in MS Word format.
- Send us a photo of you (in jpeg format) and short biographical information (about 50 words) which will accompany your article.
- You will receive feedback from us within 10 days of your submission.
- Please, check the deadlines and the topics of the forthcoming issues. Note that the topics announced are just illustrative; if you would like to submit an article on a different topic, please do. It will be considered for publishing.
- We are looking forward to your contributions.

For further information contact: beta.iateflbg@gmail.com

Notes for contributors

- Your article must have not been previously published and should not be under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- The length of your article may vary - short contributions of 300 – 800 words are as good as long ones.
- Electronic submission of your article is preferred to the following e-mail address: beta.iateflbg@gmail.com
- Text of the article: Calibri, 14 points, with 1.5 spacing.
- Headings and subheading: Calibri, 24 points, bold, centred; first letter capitalised.
- Author names and title as well as contact details should be submitted in a separate file accompanying the article.
- About 50 words of biographical data should be included.
- New paragraphs – to be indicated with one separate line.
- Referencing should follow the APA referencing style.
- References in the text should be ordered alphabetically and contain the name of the author and the year of publication, e.g. (Benson, 1993; Hudson, 2008).
- Quotations have to include the relevant page number(s), e.g. (Peters, 2006, p. 76).
- Tables, figures or diagrams should be numbered accordingly and included in the relevant part of the text. Each should have an explanatory caption.
- The editors will not return any material submitted, but they reserve the right to make editorial changes.

Established 1991 in Sofia, BETA seeks to build a network of ELT professionals on a national and regional (Southeast Europe) level and establish the association as a recognized mediator between educators and state bodies, public and other organizations.

BETA members are English teaching professionals from all educational sectors in Bulgaria – primary, secondary and tertiary, both state and private. BETA activities include organizing annual conferences, regional seminars and workshops; information dissemination; networking with other teachers' associations and NGOs in Bulgaria and abroad; exchange of representatives with teachers' associations from abroad.

We are on the web:

<http://www.beta-iatefl.org/>

Thank you for your support!

Disclaimer. *The views and opinions expressed in the articles in this e-newsletter are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or the official opinion of BETA-IATEFL or the editors. Responsibility for the information and views expressed in the e-newsletter lies entirely with the author(s) of the publications.*

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