

modern English teacher

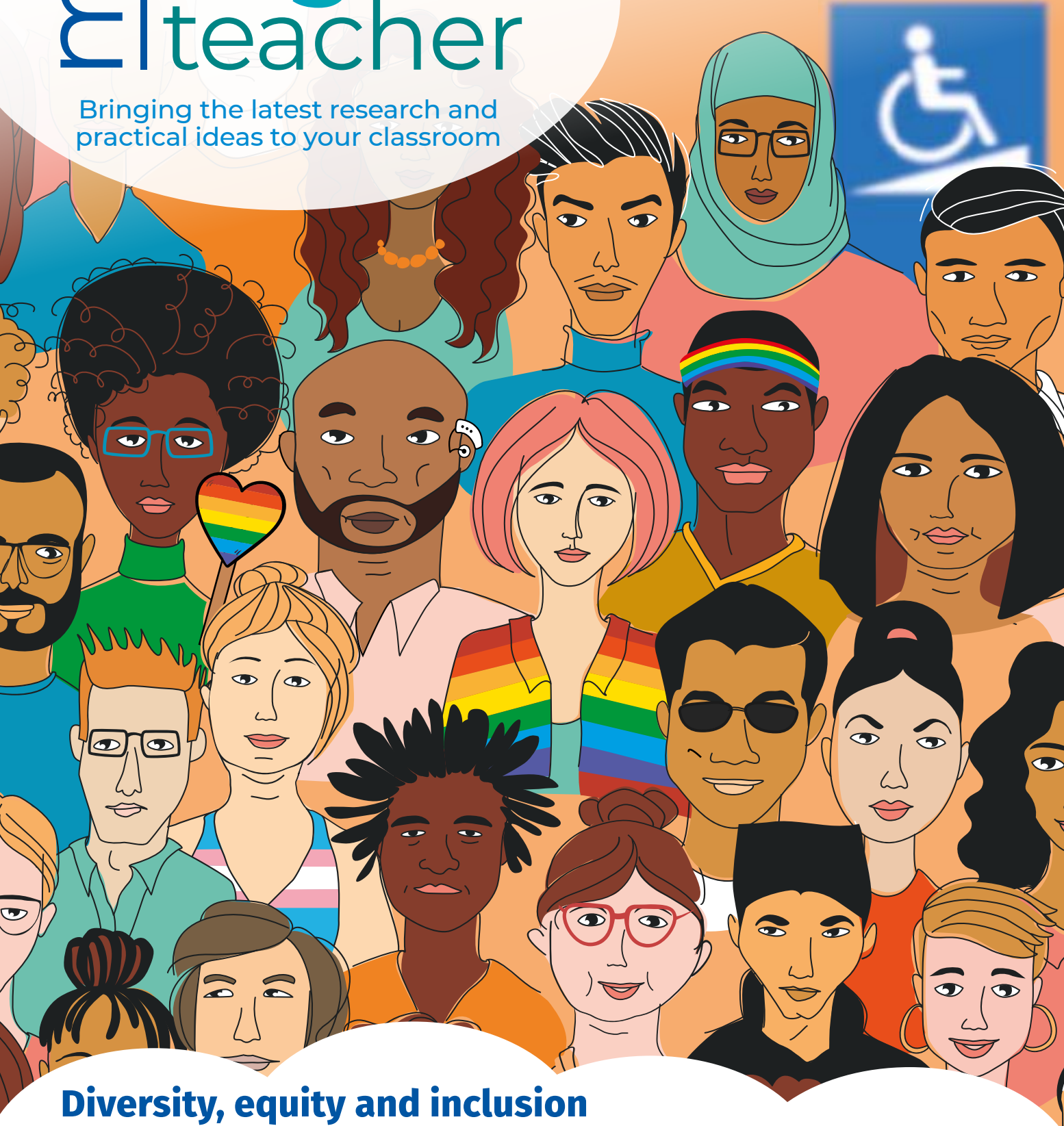
Bringing the latest research and practical ideas to your classroom

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Diversity, equity and inclusion

- Relationships
- Discrimination
- Humour
- Neurodiversity
- Safe spaces
- Gender inequality

- Multicultural classes
- Learner independence
- AI
- Phrasal verbs
- Integrated skills
- Organisational skills

Carol Lethaby
Varinder Unlu
Cameron Marklew
Alison Shepherd
Mark Smith
Clare Henderson

Fari Greenaway
Steve Tulk
Colin Finnerty
Irina Nosova
Andi Fellows
Anna Machura

(home of **Pavilion ELT**)



Making Space for Autism

www.pavpub.com/catalogue-2024/making-space-for-autism-strategies-for-assessing-and-modifying-environments

This environmental assessment and modification programme has an accessible, strengths-focused approach to supporting autistic people across different areas of their life. It reflects a paradigm shift from one where autism is treated as a deficit or impairment to one of strength, acceptance and autonomy.

ISBN: 9781803882420

Author: Sharon McCarthy, Micaela Connolly and Caolán McCarthy

Price: £50.00

University: The Autistic Guide

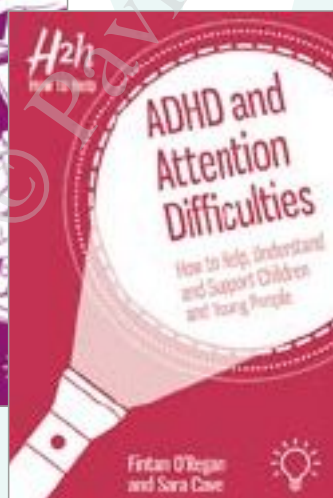
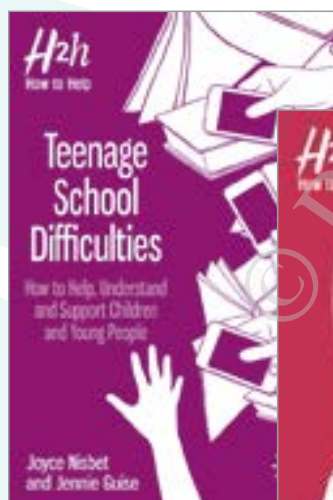
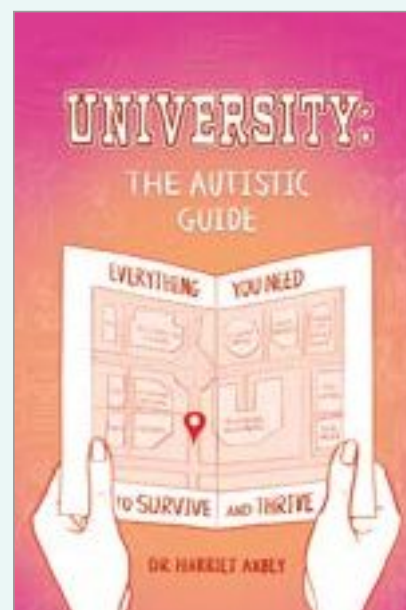
www.pavpub.com/catalogue-2024/university-the-autistic-guide-everything-you-need-to-survive-and-thrive

This helpful and informative handbook is a trusty guide to starting university for autistic young people, providing support and useful tips for what will be the biggest transition students will have ever experienced.

ISBN: 9781803882543

Author: Dr Harriet Axbey

Price: £19.95



The How to Help series

www.pavpub.com/how-to-help

The *How to Help, Understand and Support Young People and Children* series provides parents, carers, teachers and other professionals with practical, empowering advice for dealing with social, emotional and educational issues affecting young people today inside and outside school. Titles in the series include *Teenage School Difficulties* and *ADHD and Attention Difficulties*.

Price: £24.95



Editorial

A note from the editor

We are getting to the summer here in Europe, although you would not know it from the weather we are having. A very wet winter and spring, which have been neither very hot nor very cold, leave most of us convinced that global warming is the cause – yet how many of us are doing anything about it? There are elections all over the world this year, but you rarely hear any radical strategies thought through to ensure the whole planet does not overheat. Like so many things, most of us feel that we cannot do very much alone – so we don't do much at all. Conservation and sustainability are worthy concepts but more action is required.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are equally worthy and starting to be discussed openly, with most employers having a policy on them. The content of the articles on this topic in this issue show how far we have come since I started teaching but also how far we still have to go. On the cover of this magazine you will always see twelve contributors' names – six male and six female. Is that enough of a balance? What about backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, sectors of work? If you really want balance, the list would be endless. Look around your staffroom – does the staff reflect a wide range? Who writes the coursebooks, local writers or UK-based ones? What about your management team? Does that show diversity? The point of this issue is not to change the world, merely to bring your attention to some important values we need to be aware of.

As a parent I can see that my childrens' generation is automatically more tolerant and naturally less biased than my generation and, to be fair, my generation is more culturally aware than my parents' one. Be that as it may, change is still needed and employers need to stop employing people based on passport and stereotypes and start choosing the best teachers available – irrespective of nationality, colour or race.

Diversity is clearly an important issue in our classrooms and we really have to be on our toes to ensure that everyone is made to feel welcome and included. I remember one of my students in New Zealand feeling that she was not taken seriously by all the male teachers in the institution. She felt she was given less time to develop her arguments and to offer her opinions than some of her male classmates. It is very easy

to have favourites without realising it and to slightly ignore other people in the class. What can you do to make sure this doesn't happen?

In April I attended the IATEFL conference and, after one talk on diversity, the woman next to me asked me how the talk had made me feel being white, male and of a certain age. I was quite surprised by her directness but understood her point. I am also quite tall which, apparently, is a real asset in interviews! The point is we make a lot of superficial judgements without really weighing people up properly. I think we do this a lot with our learners as well. We need to be careful we don't judge too many books by the covers!

As I was putting this issue together I started to realise how many different areas of diversity there are in our society and, therefore, in our classrooms. Just towards the end of the process a colleague sent me an article about a group of learners who have been totally excluded from education – females in Afghanistan. A whole generation have been told they cannot study; schools and universities are closed to them. What are they supposed to do? They are the teachers, scientists, engineers and doctors of the future. Amazingly, a group of volunteer teachers has started to teach them online – it is a massive task but the fact that it has got off the ground is a huge achievement.

So wherever you are and whoever you teach, make sure your classrooms or Zoom sessions are friendly, welcoming and fair. Treat everyone as an individual with their own story to tell and reasons for being there. I really hope this issue opens your eyes to aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion you were not aware of before. Any thoughts you have on the topic could easily be turned into an article for future issues. Wishing you a good July and August.



Robert McLarty



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A warm welcome!

Welcome to the latest issue of *Modern English Teacher*. We are now into the second half of 2024, and we have lots of exciting things coming for subscribers during the rest of the year.

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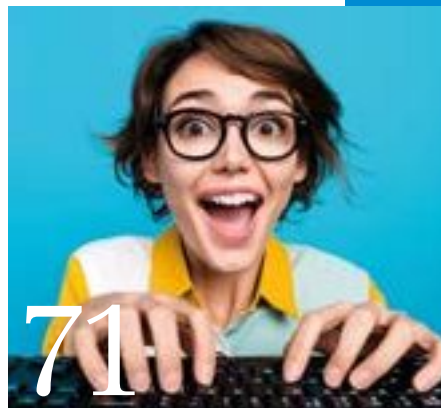


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We are delighted to announce an upcoming series of *Modern English Teacher* webinars, where some of our contributors will be shining a spotlight on some of the key topics we have featured in the magazine. Look out for more information on the first webinars soon!

We will also be making some major updates to the MET website later this year. This will make it much easier to view the PDF issues of both MET and *English Teaching professional*, among other improvements including accessibility tools and more.

Want to stay up to-to-date with everything we've got coming up? If you are not yet subscribed to the Pavilion ELT newsletter, make sure you are signed up for the latest news on webinars, upcoming books and special offers. You will also receive exclusive samples from the *ETpedia* series when you sign up! You can sign up either using the QR code below or at <https://news.pavpub.com/l/124/etpedia10>.



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Best wishes,
The Pavilion ELT team





Resources Online

Go to **modernenglishteacher.com/resources** for your extra printable resources, ready for use in class.



Resources online

Phrasal verb puns

This activity can be done in a number of ways depending on your class.

Step 1
Read the first question out and encourage group discussion on possible answers. Encourage them to think about the double layer of meaning in a phrase with they need to look for in this case (if not).

Option 1 You can then hand out the list of eight questions and ask them to find the eight answers.

Option 2 Cut the questions and answers into strips and give one or two to each student. Encourage them to mingle offering their question or answer to different students. The aim is to find the pairs.

Option 3 Hand out a list of answers. Give individual students new questions to read out and ask the others to raise their hand if the answer from the list supplied. Don't have any discussion until all eight have been read out.

Questions

1. Why do birds in a nest always agree?
2. Why are bathes juries so strong?
3. Make up a verb that fits together?
4. Doctor doctor! I've had a pair of curtains.
5. Doctor doctor! I can't sleep at night.
6. Why are ghosts so hard to beat at billiard?
7. What hearing do you need as a rubbish collector?
8. When is a deep sea diver happiest with his colleagues?

And the punchlines:

- A. Sleep on the edge of the bed and you're soon off.
- B. None you can talk to.
- C. Pull yourself together.
- D. Because they don't want to fall out.
- E. Because they hold up on with one hand.
- F. Because you can always see through them.
- G. when they let him down.
- H. You added me to sleep on it.

Key: 1D, 2E, 3H, 4C, 5A, 6F, 7B, 8G

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Resources online

Practical ideas for using large language models (LLMs)

With these four principles in mind, here is a selection of different practical ideas that we can pass on to our students for some of their class. I have provided more detail on how learners can implement these ideas, for others I have provided a brief model. They are flexible starting points for you to work with and adapt. As you do, I would encourage you to keep the four principles in mind.

1. Maximize efficiency while maintaining flow.

2. Be explicit about intended output.

3. Be mindful of the challenge and opportunities when sharing the intended output.

4. Encourage the use of other sources and resources, including people.

Increasing grammatical and lexical range

A learner can have a conversation with an LLM about, say, the weather. At any point, the learner can ask for a comparison of all of the different grammatical structures used within the conversation. A highly advanced prompt will produce a list of examples from the conversation alongside the name of the grammatical structure, for example:

Model verbs: (open, would), example: "You could consider finding outdoor alternatives."

One thing a learner might do with this list is to see what grammatical forms are missing from their list that have been included in theirs. Another would be to check that an approach used that the learner knows already, ChatGPT usually comes up with or has hidden examples in a list like this – it can be an enjoyable challenge to a learner to spot these.

A similar prompt can be given with the aim of generating a list of topic-based words, collocations and expressions, for example:

current fashion writing pieces

The basic text produced in this way can be edited, recorded and added to by the learner. The items can also be searched for elsewhere in search engines. Learners can be encouraged to find the same words used in different contexts, or to look for useful grammar.

Improving writing skills - summary writing

A learner can write a summary of a text they have been working on (either one they have studied or written themselves). They can then ask an LLM to write a summary of the text but the number of words can be specified. This provides some material for comparison and evaluation against each other in an easy, clearly and objective manner (should be encouraged to identify aspects they prefer about their own summary. The LLM can then be asked to evaluate the learner's summary and the learner can decide if they agree with the evaluation).

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Resources online

Summarising checklist

Complete the following checklist with 'DO' or 'DON'T'. Discuss with a partner why you would or shouldn't do these things.

1. take notes while reading the source text.
2. identify topic sentences in the source text.
3. put the source text to one side while writing your first draft.
4. include the main ideas of the text.
5. include supporting information and/or examples from the text.
6. be objective.
7. give your own opinion.
8. write in a neutral tone.
9. write more than the maximum wordcount.
10. repeat information.
11. use your own words wherever possible.
12. write more words than the limit set for the task.
13. write occasionally and check that your summary is answering the question.

Answers:

1. DO	8. DON'T
2. DO	9. DO
3. DO	10. DON'T
4. DO	11. DON'T
5. DO	12. DO
6. DON'T	13. DON'T
7. DO	14. DO

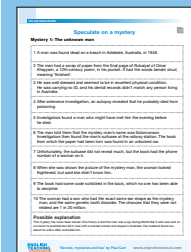
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Phrasal verb puns
Accompanies 'Phrasal verb puns' by Clare Henderson, page 47
https://www.modernenglishteacher.com/media/43160/met_334_phrasal_verb_puns_hrp.pdf

Practical ideas for using large language models (LLMs)
'The teacher's role in using AI' by Mark Smith, page 53
https://www.modernenglishteacher.com/media/43161/met_334_practical_ideas_for_using_llms_hrp.pdf

Summarising checklist
Accompanies 'Integrated skills' by Colin Finnerty, page 63
https://www.modernenglishteacher.com/media/43162/met_334_summarising_checklist_hrp.pdf

Spotlight on past resources
In this issue, our *English Teaching professional* throwback resource is:



Speculate on a mystery
Accompanies 'Secrets, mysteries and lies' by Paul Carr, *ETp* 118
<https://www.modernenglishteacher.com/secrets-mysteries-and-lies>

You can find other past resources from *ETp* in this section too.

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Anthea Fester

offers her views then talks us through the articles.

My first thoughts, or should I say questions, on the topic of accepting diverse communities and raising awareness are: how far have we really come if we still need to advocate so strongly for not marginalising diverse communities? Why are we not further along in our thinking if we are still discriminating against people based on differences?

I cannot answer those questions but potential answers or reasons that come to mind are: the need to retain a status quo; the existence of unconscious bias; deep-seated insecurities; and the impact of brainwashing as in accepting what we are told without questioning. These are some of the pillars that uphold racism, sexism and all forms of discrimination against those who are perceived to be different. There is an inherent fear amongst some that accepting and treating others equally will mean a negative shift in our status or positioning, in other words, we might not be able to retain our existing powers of authority if others are perceived to be equal. As well, there may be a lack of introspection or the ability to use intrapersonal skills to evaluate our own biases and the root causes of these biases. Frequently, they are developed in our earlier years, and we continue to retain them. We often get challenged to step outside our comfort zone and we get told that these challenges will strengthen us. One such step could be by accepting that we can be better, stronger and more rounded global citizens if we accept differences in people. It does not have to detract from our strengths and the people we are, but it can make us grow and enrich us as individuals and our societies.

Across several academic English papers that I teach, I continually try to hone my adult learners' critical thinking abilities by introducing them to different ways of thinking and being, initiating discussions or insights into topics around diversity and inclusivity. We start with the concepts

of objectivity versus subjectivity, critically evaluating our own beliefs and we lead into exploring what certain phrases may mean, such as 'normalise, don't marginalise'. I am ever hopeful that these sessions and discussions with learners will lead to a greater understanding of the issues and more accepting behaviour.

It is not surprising that in this *MET* issue on diversity the articles address challenges that so many communities, who are seen to be different, face. Each one of these articles offer pearls of wisdom on accepting and celebrating our diversity generally and in the language teaching sector specifically.

Varinder Unlu looks at the shift in English language teacher education from mostly white middle class candidates to a much larger percentage of L2 candidates wanting to work in the sector. Issues that have negatively impacted on the employment and acceptance of L2 candidates are covered, such as: the 'white saviour' syndrome; monocultural perspectives; power dynamics; patronising attitudes; and cultural insensitivity.

Carol Lethaby covers several notions related to gender inequality in the ELT world with a focus on: male firstness in pronoun grammar charts; defaults in professional stereotyping; semantic derogation; and how sexist bias is built into language. Possible solutions are suggested for sexist language in the classroom and sexism in the ELT industry.

Anna Machura looks at multicultural classes from the perspective of fostering a greater understanding among learners on a path of self-discovery that encompasses self-reflection and spiritual growth. Suggestions include a list of 10 commandments to incorporate into your classroom practices as well as some deadly sins to avoid on the way to inclusivity.

Steve Tulk evaluates true acceptance of rainbow communities without evidence of real systemic changes and provides some advice to ensure safe inclusivity.

Jono Ryan inspires readers by looking at what dedicated volunteer teaching through Victory Afghanistan does to support the resilience and perseverance of Afghani

women on their challenging journey to gain an education against all odds.

Roxana Franga suggests some changes that can be made to our practices by using gender-neutral language and by looking beyond traditional family structures in the class to ensure inclusivity for LGBTQ+ people.

Daniel Costa, meanwhile, explores discrimination and its inbuilt stereotyping, stating that it is one of society's ongoing deficiencies. The notion of a continuum from overt to subtle discrimination and how the latter has more negative impacts on people is also explored.

Cameron Marklew looks at the issues from a different perspective and describes the challenges faced by neurodivergent learners in successfully accessing and using executive functioning skills and recommends ways they can be supported.

The issue opens with **Fari Greenaway** addressing the multi-faceted role of an academic manager with a focus on how they might build positive relationships across all interactions including those with: managing teachers; managing peers; managing bosses; and managing yourself.

Ali Shepherd brings a lighter touch to the classroom and shares her views on the use of humour in a language class by describing situations where humour and laughter can help learners to relax, learn better and get to know the local culture better.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading each one of the articles as they enriched my thoughts and I hope you will feel enriched when you read them as well!



Anthea Fester is a language teacher educator, EAP teacher and researcher. Of mixed South African heritage, she is currently a Principal Academic Staff Member at Waikato Institute of

Technology in New Zealand where she teaches on several Certificate in English programmes and a Masters of Innovation programme. She teaches sessions on developing critical thinking skills, accepting diversity and practising inclusivity across all her courses.



The challenge of working relationships for managers

Most of us in academic management are in a middle management position between teachers and directors or owners. It is a challenging role of shifting priorities and demands from all directions. How can we build good working relationships for the benefit of our schools, our team and our own day to-day wellbeing? In this article we will look at some experience – based on suggestions for building healthy working relationships and having successful conversations with staff, peers and bosses.

The academic manager's role involves managing many people: students; teachers; administrative staff; other managers; stakeholders; directors; and ourselves. Academic managers play a

multifaceted role, not limited to traditional vertical management. This management goes beyond leading a team effectively, we must also engage in horizontal management by cultivating collaborative relationships with colleagues. Additionally, successful managers recognise the importance of managing upwards, aligning their efforts with superiors and administrators to contribute to the school's overall vision. By embracing a holistic approach to management, academic managers foster a positive work environment and enhance organisational performance (Mintzberg, 1983).

One of the principal keys to building positive relationships is good and effective communication. Good communication involves effective listening or 'active listening'.

Fari Greenaway

looks at fostering a positive atmosphere.

Active listening

- Pay attention – give the speaker your undivided attention. Avoid distraction.
- Show that you're listening – use your own body language and gestures to show that you are engaged.
- Defer judgement – do not anticipate what they are going to say.
- Ask for clarification.
- Summarise to check your understanding.

Let's look at four types of working relationship in more detail: managing teachers; managing peers; managing our director or boss; and finally, managing ourselves.

Managing teachers

Positive relationships with our colleagues and staff result in multiple benefits.

- Increased productivity
- Improved morale
- Reduced absenteeism
- Lower turnover rates



Foster a positive atmosphere

Foster a positive work environment of safety and trust. Good managers care about people and listen to them. They are honest, open and reliable. Set the tone, leading by example with a positive attitude.

'How does it help to make troubles heavier by bemoaning them?'

– Seneca

What this looks like in practice

Many years ago, I worked in a pupil referral unit in the UK, and was chatting to a member of staff complaining about some kind of error with my payslip. Another colleague who was passing stopped me and said, 'We share good news here, not bad news'. The comment gave me pause and has stuck with me ever since. Consider, will you help to change a situation or support the person you are speaking to by complaining? You could try implementing a 'good news Friday' tradition. We are very good at sharing concerns or problems, by acknowledging and celebrating small victories each week, uplift the team's spirits, fostering a positive work environment.

Build a team

Investing in relationships can help you to deal with potential issues before they become a problem. Look for and create connections with staff. Pre-empting

problems is a lot less work than sorting out the aftermaths. Take the time to develop relationships and keep the lines of communication open even when you are busy, your future self will thank you for it.

What this looks like in practice

Having an open door policy is one thing, actively leaving the office and speaking to teachers in their classrooms or the staffroom gives the manager a better idea of what is really going on and how people really are. At the start of each working shift, block out some time – say 20 minutes – to pop in and see each member of the team. Go around the classrooms, say hello. Go a different route each day.

Practice empathy

Criticism is easy, it can be more challenging to be empathetic. Practise empathy with staff, colleagues and bosses; try to understand their behaviour. Try to understand your staff and know what is holding them back, and what motivates or concerns them.

What this looks like in practice

A teacher being off sick with very little notice can cause difficulties and extra work. It is important to remember that we don't always know what's going on in their life, their level of stress or illness, be clear about your expectations, but be sympathetic.

Clear expectations

Being clear about your expectations sometimes means saying no, for example, to time off. Be fair and consistent.

What this looks like in practice

As far as possible, anticipate questions and problems (time off, sick days, welfare issues) and create a written protocol. Make sure everyone has access to it and refer back to it. Update it annually. This helps managers understand that decisions they are making are based on pre-existing protocol and are not a personal issue. This helps to ensure fairness and consistency.

Share responsibilities

Share responsibilities and tasks wherever possible. As a manager, you don't help your team by being the only one who knows how to do things and making the team dependent on you. Nobody becomes responsible by not having responsibility.

'Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.'

– Maimonides

Believe in your staff and trust them to come up with solutions, allow them to grow. You might feel that it is quicker and better if you resolve an issue, but as a manager, it's your duty to pass on skills and responsibilities.

Managing peers

Embrace difference

Everybody is different and differences enrich a team; in fact, they are necessary for a strong and effective team. Embrace difference of opinion as the opportunity to grow and learn. You may consolidate your own ideas or learn something new. In today's market it is essential that we innovate to survive, in order to do so we need to look beyond the way we have always done things. Instead of focussing on differences, work on shared goals and a shared company mission and vision to work toward a common goal.

Collaboration and consultation

Understand the difference between collaboration, consultation and when to take action. Bear in mind that asking for opinion can be taken as having a choice about the outcome, which is fine if that is true. However, if you are gathering ideas to make the final decision yourself, make the parameters clear. Who is leading the decision making? Consensus or group decisions might not be the best for the school staff and may lean towards options that require less change or less potential challenge. This is rarely in line with objectives for growth. Always set ground rules for discussions of a decision.

Managing your boss

Share criteria

When we want to propose or challenge something it is important not to just present the decision but to also present the reasoning behind it. As academic managers we usually answer to a director and/or a business owner. This may lead to conflicts between pedagogical principles and commercial needs or we may feel that the director has unrealistic expectations. We need to endeavour to understand their reasoning (by asking questions and clarifying our assumptions) and then share our thoughts. Sharing objectives and criteria we can then work together to improve. What are we trying to accomplish? Make sure you understand what your director wants and review what has been done before. One element of the role of the academic manager is to represent our department to other directors or company owners. We are employed as the experts in our position and may have valuable insights, but if we want them to be listened to, we need to present them in a way that is not blocking ideas or change. We can agree in principle with a goal (company growth, reduced costs, increased efficiency) and share realistic ideas. Your boss does not just want to hear no or reasons why something won't work.

Defuse conflict

It is difficult to argue alone. Instead of 'no, but . . .' try 'yes, and . . .' coming from a point of collaboration not conflict.

What this looks like in practice

I worked with a commercial director who frequently came into conflict with the staff. In our school board meetings, she constantly raised problems, complaints and issues that I had not been forewarned about. A sea change happened when I realised that she was stressed and worried. When I stopped arguing and being defensive, instead I said, 'Yes, you're right, what do you think we can do?'. And I asked her for help. She relaxed knowing that I was taking her concerns seriously and allowed me to offer solutions that I thought were reasonable.

Pick your battles

'Kerb your desire – don't set your heart on so many things and you will get what you need.'

– Epictetus

Choose the right time and the right approach. The way I personally manage this is twofold. Firstly, I am aware that I am not going to win all the battles, so I pick those that I think I might win, i.e. what I can create a sound business argument for and that will have a significant impact on the people it effects. The second is to have a running list. I then look for opportunities for casual conversations. Coffees, unexpected visits and car journeys are ideal moments for starting conversations.

- Identify the problem or need for change.
- Explain the impact of the problem or potential benefit of the change.
- Make suggestions and ask for more solutions.

Plan for results

What do you want the outcome of the conversation to be? Consider the impact of your messages. Highlight positive aspects to counteract potential negativity.

Managing yourself

The challenge of managing yourself is accepting that you do have some choice about how you respond to situations, i.e. stress is not entirely situation dependent. But let's start with some basics.

Believe in yourself

Remember that you were chosen for the job for a reason, because you are an expert teacher and you offer value to the school.

Be fair to yourself

As you would with anyone else, allow mistakes, just ensure that they are accompanied with learning.

Learn from the Stoics

I have quoted from three Stoic philosophers throughout this piece. Their wisdom still stands. We can only control what we can control and we waste time and energy worrying about the rest. The only thing you can control, the Stoics say, is yourself, meaning how you react to the situation around you. Recognise what is choice and what can't be changed. Understand that you can't change other people – you can only effect the information that they have. How we respond to a situation is a choice, is *our* choice; in fact, it is the only thing we *can* control. We have to manage ourselves and our responses in order to have better relationships with the people around us. So stress, anger, frustration and the rest are within our power to control.

Our ability to create effective communicative relationships impacts greatly on how successful we are as a manager and there are things we can do to improve these relationships. My hope is that from reading this you will be encouraged to consider what you can change and start to worry a little less about what you can't.



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Instagram (@farigreenaway) she empowers professionals to refine their skills and drive excellence in language teaching. From teacher to academic director, with nearly 20 years' experience in English language teaching, 15 of those in academic management, Fari currently oversees a team of nine academic managers across five academies, managing 59 teachers and 3,000 students.



Varender Unlu

looks at racism and bias in language teaching.

Inclusion and diversity in 2024

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are words that have become fashionable over the past decade. They are used in almost every presentation, every school has a policy on EDI and staff are asked to attend EDI training. Everyone and every school is inclusive. Or are they? What are we doing to ensure that we are fully inclusive and diverse in our everyday practices?

More than 12,000 people complete the Cambridge CELTA course every year and approximately 7,000 people take the Trinity College London CertTESOL with 600 courses run every year. Both qualifications have equal recognition in the world of ELT.

Traditionally these courses were taken by predominantly white middle-class candidates. However, there have been changes in the type of candidate that takes the course over the past 20 years. The candidature profile has diversified in terms of background, ethnicity and first language. In 2005 75% of candidates were speakers of English as a first language. In 2024, more than 60% of the candidates are from an L2 minority and the global majority; the figure for L1 white candidates is now around 40%. Both the Cambridge and Trinity are offered worldwide in over 70 countries, with more employers than ever before requesting teachers to have one of the two qualifications to work in their schools.

With so much diversity in the training part of the ELT industry, why is this not reflected in the delivery? L2 English-speaking teachers, especially those from non-Western countries, often face discrimination in the hiring process. They may be judged based on their accent, nationality and colour of their skin rather than their teaching skills and qualifications.

The belief that L1 English speakers are inherently better teachers is widespread. This leads to discriminatory hiring practices that favour teachers from predominantly white, English-speaking countries, often at the expense of qualified L2 teachers.

Many schools still insist on L1 white teachers, most publishers still opt for white writers. The excuse often given is that the market demands this.

Those teachers working in African and Asian countries are treated unfairly and not given the respect and acknowledgement they deserve for their dedication and work, often in challenging settings, where resources are limited. They are still seen as incapable of providing the 'right' kind of education for their students, that their own education as teachers is somewhat inadequate and inappropriate. These teachers hold degrees in teaching and have the passion to be teachers. The global minority often looks down on education in these countries and comes in as the 'white saviour' which perpetuates the problem.

The 'white saviour syndrome' in education refers to a phenomenon where white individuals, often with good intentions, enter communities of colour or underserved areas with the belief that they can 'rescue' or 'save' the students and teachers through their efforts. This concept has several critical aspects and implications.

Monocultural perspectives

Such teachers might impose Western cultural norms and values, disregarding the local cultures and linguistic diversity. This can lead to a homogenisation of education that fails to respect or incorporate students' cultural backgrounds.

Erosion of local expertise

Disregarding local expertise leads to local teaching methods and practices being overshadowed or dismissed in favour of Western approaches, undermining the efficacy of traditional or culturally relevant teaching strategies.

Power dynamics and patronising attitudes

The syndrome can also perpetuate power imbalances where the saviour views themselves as superior or more capable than the community they are trying to help. This attitude can be patronising and

■ Policies and practices should aim to promote equity and inclusion by addressing systemic issues rather than merely providing temporary solutions. ■

dismissive of the agency and capabilities of the community members.

Cultural insensitivity

Often those exhibiting white saviour syndrome may not fully understand or respect the cultural contexts and values of the communities they're serving. This lack of cultural competence can lead to ineffective or even harmful educational practices, unconsciously reinforcing stereotypes of those from the global majority, and setting their academic expectations lower by assuming they are not at the same level as their white peers.

Sustainability and dependency

Interventions driven by white saviour syndrome may not focus on building sustainable solutions or empowering local educators and leaders. Instead, they might create dependency on external help, failing to leave behind the resources and knowledge necessary for the community to continue progressing independently. By positioning themselves as the primary agents of change, these educators can create a dependency on foreign teaching methods and resources, which may not be sustainable in the long run.

Narrative and representation

The portrayal of white teachers as saviours can perpetuate the stereotypes about the inadequacy of local teachers and educational systems, thereby diminishing the perceived value and competence of local educators. The stories and narratives that emerge from these situations often glorify the 'saviour' while ignoring or downplaying the contributions and strengths of the community. This can

reinforce stereotypes and maintain a colonial mindset. Stories that highlight the efforts of white teachers often overshadow the contributions and successes of local teachers and students, reinforcing a one-sided narrative that does not reflect the community's agency and resilience.

Impact on teachers

Local educators often feel disempowered and devalued when an outsider is positioned as the one bringing about change. The marginalisation of local teachers can affect their self-esteem and motivation, undermining long-term educational outcomes. This can also create a divide between foreign and local teachers and often lead to local teachers losing job opportunities to white teachers. Then there is the issue of pay disparities – white L1 teachers frequently receive higher salaries and better job opportunities compared to their L2 counterparts.

Impact on students

Identity and self-worth are important for us all. Students might internalise the notion that their own cultures and languages are inferior if they don't see themselves represented in the classroom and all they have are white teachers.

Examples of global minority domination can be seen in various ways.

Teach for America (TFA)

This programme has faced criticism for sending recent college graduates, often from privileged backgrounds, to teach in under-resourced schools. Critics argue that TFA's approach can reflect white saviour tendencies by implying that these external white recruits are better suited to address educational disparities than local, experienced teachers.



Volunteer programmes abroad

Many programmes that send Western volunteers to teach in developing countries are criticised for promoting white saviour syndrome. Volunteers might lack proper training or understanding of the local educational context, leading to ineffective or detrimental teaching practices.

British Council initiatives

There are some positive implications of the work the British Council does in supporting professional development opportunities in many countries. However, the Western-centric approaches and erosion of local languages and traditions are an issue.

There are things that we can do to address these implications – starting with recognising and accepting there is a problem with hiring white teachers over local ones. Equity and inclusion are vital, ensuring there is recognition and validation of the skills and knowledge of local teachers, integrating local qualifications and certifications with international standards.

Policies and practices should aim to promote equity and inclusion by addressing systemic issues rather than merely providing temporary solutions.

English language teaching itself is not inherently racist but, like any educational field, it is influenced by systemic racism and bias. It is essential to address and actively work against any racist practices or biases that may exist within the industry.

So, what can we do to make things better?

- Stop having conversations about the global majority without them. In other words, consult and include them.
- Make your EDI policies realistic and not just a tick-box exercise. By this I mean, look at your context and what is possible and what is not possible. Do not copy and paste a policy from another organisation.
- Check and question your conscious and unconscious biases honestly.
- Nurture and give opportunities to those who are excluded.
- Don't put stock images of diverse faces on our marketing materials. This is false advertising as the reality in our schools is far from diverse.
- Stop making excuses.
- Stop the virtue signalling. One black face in a sea of white does not mean you are inclusive and diverse.
- Diverse hiring panels ensure that recruitment panels are diverse and representative of different backgrounds to minimise biases in the selection process.
- Anti-discrimination policies: implement clear anti-discrimination policies that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on race, ethnicity or any other protected characteristic.
- Training and awareness: provide training for recruiters and hiring managers on unconscious bias, diversity and inclusion. This can help them recognise and mitigate bias in the recruitment process.

- Monitoring and evaluation: regularly monitor recruitment data to identify any patterns of bias or discrimination. Take action to address any disparities and improve diversity in hiring practices.

Racism in ELT is a complex issue that affects various aspects of the educational process, from curriculum design to classroom interactions. By recognising and addressing these biases, educators and institutions can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for all learners and teachers. This involves a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion at all levels of the education system.

By proactively addressing racist recruitment practices, English language schools can create a more inclusive and equitable work environment for staff and set a positive example for students. After all, we are educators. It's our responsibility to pass on a more equitable and fairer world to the next generation of educators.



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Laughter is the best medicine

Alison Shepherd

looks at humour and a pedagogy of care.

It is sometimes said that ‘all teachers care’ and it is because they care that people go into teaching. As an educator, I can certainly relate to this statement. However, US educator Nel Noddings (2005) argued there are teachers who care about their work but may be unable to develop relationships of care and trust. She continued by asking the crucial question: Do the students know you care? Translating an ethics of care into a pedagogy of care may be restricted by things such as juggling overloaded curricula with a lack of time, or having to ‘teach to the test’ rather than to the students’ holistic needs. One aspect of a pedagogy of care that is less talked about, but easily incorporated, is the use of humour in the classroom. It is this idea that I discuss in this article.

Laughter in the literature

English teaching pedagogy has long promoted the idea of lessons being enjoyable, promoting education quality, as this encourages retention as well as learning (Gozcu & Caganaga, 2016; Hasbi *et al.*, 2022). Not only can humour make classes more enjoyable, but Haggstrom *et al.* (2020:5) found that it can be ‘an important part of the instruction and was employed by teachers as a strategy to lift the learners’ mood if they were feeling down or unmotivated’. For teachers working with marginalised students, this space for enjoyment may be particularly important. For example, Anne Smith (2016) taught creative English classes to adult refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the UK and found that

sessions were characterised by laughter, as humour was intentionally featured in most of the plots within the sessions and the ‘playful tone encouraged lighthearted exploration of the topics’. For one research participant, this was her imperative for attending: ‘I have to come,’ she said. ‘This is the only place I laugh’. That is not to say that migrants don’t already utilise humour in their migration journeys (Franck, 2022), however, Jessica Stroja (2023) found laughter for refugees’ trauma recovery is particularly important for those without access to pre-existing support or migrant networks upon arrival to a new country.

As well as learning about language and culture through local accent and dialect, understanding a region’s humour can help students to understand the culture

and language (British Council, 2024).

I am from the north of England which has produced many a great comedian – from Morecombe and Wise to Peter Kay and Sarah Millican, to name a few. The region also has a long history of humour to deal with class-based adversity (Fox, 2017). So, as a northern educator teaching people now living in the north, why wouldn't I want to draw on these traditions to help students understand the place they now find themselves?

Humour in the classroom

I learnt quickly that you can't take yourself too seriously when teaching language, as you often have to act things out and there are many miscommunications that you can navigate more smoothly with a sense of humour. I enjoy putting students at ease by making them laugh, either with jokes or games that can make practising learnt language much more fun and lighthearted. Whether I am teaching EFL in a language school or ESOL for migrants at a community centre, laughter in the classroom has always been part of my rapport-building with learners. Humour can be part of everyday interactions, it does not have to be planned, though lessons teaching jokes or incorporating funny videos or activities can also be utilised.

During my year-long, classroom-based doctoral research, the word 'laugh' appeared in my research fieldnotes 227 times and 'joke' 234 times. I noticed I used humour to make the difficult parts of learning a language less stressful, as well as to connect with students when conversing both as a group or one-on-one. For example, one day we were practising creating conditional sentences. I modelled an example of: *If I were president, I'd . . .* Then, to check understanding that this conditional is imaginary, I clarified that I wasn't president, adding 'but maybe one day I will be'. People laughed, including a new woman who had not spoken in class yet, so I knew she understood what I was saying even if I hadn't been able to ascertain her speaking ability at this point. Students then began to give lighthearted examples such as: *If I were famous, I'd buy a villa in Bali.* *If I were rich, I'd visit every country in the world.* People seemed entertained by the answers shared, and there was lots of laughter as

■ I noticed I used humour to make the difficult parts of learning a language less stressful, as well as to connect with students when conversing both as a group or one-on-one. ■

we appreciated people's creativity and wishful imagination.

Another instance can be seen during a photo-based activity I facilitated where I asked students to take photos of moments when they used English during the week and bring them to class to discuss. Diana shared a photo of a cat and, when it appeared on the projector, students laughed, asking teasingly: 'You spoke English with the cat?' Diana replied, half joking, half serious: 'Yes, I speak to it in Ukrainian and it doesn't understand. But in English.!' She smiled and nodded. We all laughed, and I affirmed that researchers believe that cats and dogs can learn some words in our language. When I asked students in a focus group what they thought made a good teacher, one group mentioned using 'different approaches, not only grammar, such as 'games'. Another group added: 'music, pictures, songs, jokes.' In our classes 'jokes' did not refer to teaching them jokes as part of the class (though I'm sure that could also be fun) but rather the weaving of humour throughout the class.

The power of laughter also rang clear one semester at the language school when a Turkish student approached me and said: 'Do you know which was my favourite day in my year here?' I said I didn't. She replied: 'That day we all laughed.' Now, this is an extreme example because that day we laughed so hard someone came out of the office to check on us (we were laughing too hard to be able to talk to her). Incidentally what had happened was one of the more outgoing students announced to me that he'd learnt how to 'speak like a local' and proceeded to say, 'bottle of water' like 'bo'ul o' wa'er', complete with the glottal stops common in the area. I chuckled and told him that sounded

pretty good. Another student decided to try and soon everyone was attempting to say 'bo'ul o' wa'er' with varying degrees of success to the point where some of us cried laughing. I emphasise here that I was laughing *with* my students, not *at* them (or 'laughing with my heart' as a Greek student said). The fact that we all knew one another well enough at this point made it a safe space to try new things and make mistakes, enjoying the (sometimes frustrating) learning process with a sense of humour.

Furthermore, humour as pedagogy does not necessarily have to remain within the confines of class time. During one break, a student approached me to talk about something and, one way or another, we got talking about British versus Ukrainian humour. She said that when people make jokes out of everything Ukrainians say they have an 'overmind' (are really clever) and if they tell a dark joke it 'made their eyes go black'. She then proceeded to translate Ukrainian jokes to me for the remainder of the break and, although some of them didn't translate amazingly well into English, we both had a laugh.

It is worth pointing out that jokes relying on language are more difficult with beginner learners. In one conversation class, I was talking to a Ukrainian woman in her sixties who was a beginner learner, so we communicated via English, Ukrainian, her phone translator and gestures. She told me her host family was a couple her age who look after their three-year-old grandson twice a week. She mimed that he would hug her when he saw her, so I joked he had three grandparents. She corrected me saying 'only two' so I had to explain my joke (after which she then understood and laughed, so we got there eventually).