



55th International Conference & Exhibition

-
17th May 2022 to 20th May
2022

MY EXPERIENCE AT 55th IATEFL

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On the 16th of May 2022, I attended the 55th IATEFL International Conference & Exhibition in Belfast as the PAET representative. This day, which was a remarkable experience, served as an opportunity to meet with other associate representatives, share our ideas regarding the activities of our associations and the ways we support and empower English teachers who are members to our associations. The rest of the conference 17th -20th May, was also a chance to broaden my horizons in education, build a network of professional colleagues, and find out what's new in English language teaching.

During the 55th IATEFL International Conference & Exhibition, I participated in many sessions and special interest groups (showcases) of various topics, such as "Inclusive Practices & Special Educational Needs", and "How to become a successful classroom creator".

The topic of Inclusive Teaching Practices is not only concerned with assisting learners with disabilities or learning differences. As Smith (2020:9) indicated, 'inclusive' teaching practices embrace the diversity in any group of learners and enhances accessibility and representative to all'. This topic highlights the importance of inclusion as a process that is concerned with the recognition, participation and accomplishment of all students and the removal of obstacles. To be more precise, in such a process of inclusive teaching practices, there should be no barriers of students' learning difficulties or socio-economic status. Instead, such a dynamic process must respond to the learners' needs and interests, as well as their own personal characteristics. Therefore, a teaching-learning process develops through the planning and preparation stages as well as throughout teaching and evaluation, in a safe learning environment where all members of the classroom feel they belong. In such an environment, students can get together in groups whereby through worksheets with differentiation they think-pair-share, and they disagree with each other until they reach a conclusion. These strategies enhance raising students' expectations.

Within the context of inclusive education, I was given the opportunity to attend a special interest group named "Discover yourself to help your students fulfil their potential", which was presented by Jana Jilkova. In this session, Mrs. Jilkova pointed out the necessity of understanding firstly ourselves and then our students. For instance, we should firstly comprehend ourselves by realizing what makes us feel happy and satisfied, what contributes to our success and what our goals are so as to help our students achieve their own goals. In order to do that we should consider our both our strengths and weaknesses, as well as the given

opportunities and threats. A few of the attributes, she specified, that we should have are empathy, good listening skills, be able to face new challenges, develop critical thinking, and interpersonal and communication skills. During the teaching – learning process, the teacher could ask students to get into groups and visualize the job they would love doing. While working in groups, we appreciate each other’s strengths and talents and as a result we can locate areas of difficulty and be more willing to support them when necessary. Group work is particularly important in the teaching-learning environments because it promotes ‘better interpersonal and socio-emotional skills’ (Smith, 2020:9). These precious qualities are vital in assisting students thrive in their education, workplace, and throughout their lives. During the end of this lifeline exercise, they should then answer what was the job they visualized doing, what tasks they fulfilled, what skills they developed, and what they enjoy the most at this job. Visualizing oneself succeeding is the first step that can lead to remarkable results enhancing success.

Another appealing topic I attended, was “How to become a successful classroom creator”, presented by László Németh. Nowadays, global issues and procedures have acted as a stimulant and there is an imperative need of change in language education. Consequently, digital literacy has become a key skill and online resources as well as teaching materials have come to the leading edge of language teaching. In fact, this trend has consequences for lesson planning and materials writing. Presently, social media is an interesting ‘means of motivation and interest’ for the students (Paragas & Francisco, 2020:4). Likewise, in this session the teacher used social media to intrigue his students towards creative writing, especially through the pandemic, since students were already using the social media to a large extent to communicate with their friends. It is of utmost importance for learners to be constantly challenged with tasks in regard to skills and knowledge. According to Mr. Németh, social media like Facebook, Instagram and Tik-Tok are creative spaces whereby students were challenged to engage in writing. What is more, he further explained that there is an additional use of social media like pop culture references. To be more precise, using social media throughout a lesson, the teacher can introduce the topic, then students can write a small paragraph on Facebook by guessing some personal information about the other student and post it to their friends. What is important is that students must interact and collaborate with each other. Finally, according to Mr. Németh, students will internalize what they have learned by doing freer practice through writing activities (students can scan the following QR codes).



Eventually, with the teacher’s guidance, the students will be able to be creative and write a blog or an essay. This lesson procedure is important, especially for the online teaching, whereby students can be more interested in creative writing and teachers can diverge from the plan and set realistic goals and expectations.

Overall, my experience at 55th IATEFL International Conference & Exhibition in Belfast was a fruitful and amazing experience. I had the unique opportunity to meet leading trainers,

theorists, practising teachers, materials writers and publishers, and exchange ideas with fellow professionals from all sectors of English language teaching and learning.

References:

Paragas, Francisco (2020). 'International Journal of Academic Multidisciplinary Research' (IJAMR) ISSN: 2643-9670, Vol. 4, Issue 10, October – 2020, Pages: 4-7.

[Proceedings-of-the-27th-IATEFL-Slovenia-Conference-2022 \(1\)_220607_181412\[7089\].pdf](#)

Smith, A.M (2020). *Activities for Inclusive Language Teaching*. Stuttgart:Delta.