

TEFL Debates and Cakes

by Maria Heron and Carole Robinson

Maria Heron, CELTA Centre Manager, hosts a regular TEFL debate at NILE exploring current trends and news. Aimed at keeping up with topical debates in the ELT world, teachers, trainers and staff have all found these sessions very useful.

Maria and NILE trainer Carole Robinson provide their own reports below on the TEFL debates and the issues raised at one recent meeting.

I spent an evening this winter watching my colleague, Rod Bolitho, being interviewed on-line by Julian Wing of the British Council (see weblink below). Rod talked about his teaching, his understanding of language learning and about his professional and personal interests. I found the interview fascinating, but thought it was rather sad that I had to listen to his ideas on-line when he sits a few metres away from me in the NILE office. Then the idea of having monthly TEFL debates started to take shape.

We have now had six lively teatime debates on humanistic versus less humanistic English teaching; multiple intelligences & mixed abilities; corpus linguistics & language teaching; CLIL; technology in ELT; and the role of coursebooks. We take it in turns to choose articles and lead the debates. The debates have all been very well attended, though I am not quite sure if that is the effect of the stimulating topics or the delicious cakes!



Maria Heron, CELTA Centre Manager

One recent TEFL debate was on the subject of CLIL. The participants read three articles* before the debate about the topic. The discussion focused on the need for good training for CLIL teachers and how cooperation between language and content teachers was essential.



Carole and Bavarian teachers 2009

The everyday problems of implementing such goals due to timetable and financial limitations were made very clear, as was the fact that the reality of CLIL provision in many countries is far from ideal. It was suggested that the training which NILE undertakes could focus more on how content and language teachers could successfully work together within the current national frameworks, promoting flexibility and sharing ideas.

Another issue raised was how language and content should be assessed. Should learners be able to choose if they take tests in their mother tongue or in the L2? Should learners be assessed on language and content simultaneously? Can weak L2 ability conceal strong knowledge of the subject area? One question posed in one of the articles was whether CLIL meant the end of ELT in its current form. The participants could see no immediate cause for alarm, but agreed that CLIL would probably tighten its grip on the ELT industry over the next few years. Although no definite conclusions were reached, the debate raised plenty of questions to consider.

Carole Robinson, NILE Trainer

If you would like further information on CELTA or would like to take part in future TEFL debates,
please contact Maria Heron :

Telephone: 01603 664473 Email: maria@nile-elt.com

Rod Bolitho talking to Julian Wing – video

(<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/rod-bolitho/rod-bolitho-video-interview>).

***The articles mentioned in Carole's report are:**

1. English Language Teachers' New Role. Authors: **David Marsh** and **Peeter Mehisto**

<http://www.guardianweekly.co.uk/?page=editorial&id=927&catid=22>

2. The CLIL Debate: an EFL Teacher's perspective. Author: **Adrian Tennant**

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?catid=58057&docid=157120>

3. CLIL: Complementing or Compromising English Language Teaching? An opinion from a CLIL Biology Teacher. Author: **Lyubov Dombeva**

<http://www.onestopclil.com/section.asp?docid=975&catid=280>