

## Eltas Event Review by Angeline Fischer

Author: Angeline Fischer

DRAMA METHODOLOGY FOR THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM WITH PETER DYER  
20<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2014, HELD AT EURO AKADEMIE, STUTTGART



cated movements were introduced: clapping knees, clapping hands, right finger snap and left finger snap while simultaneously telling a story. In this exercise, one learner begins the story then passes it on to another learner who continues to tell the story following the same rhythm. After this, the language of interrupting was practiced in pairs. One person took on the role of optimist and the other pessimist. The optimist says a sentence starting with “Fortunately...” and the pessimist continues using “Unfortunately...” in the next sentence, and so on to complete a story. Lots of funny stories resulted from the activity, and other variations involved using sequences such as “yes, however” and “yes, moreover”.

### Miming and acting activities

Another fun exercise involved miming giving and receiving a gift. The ‘gift giver’ would mime only the size of the gift and ‘bring’ it to another participant. The ‘receiver’ would then pretend to open the gift, imagine and react to what it could be, thank the giver and eventually disclose what the object was.

Peter Dyer’s dynamic teaching style kept ELTAS members entertained throughout this interactive workshop. During the event, teachers took on the role of students as Peter led participants through various tasks. Here are some of the best activities from the day:

### Warm-ups

Beginning with a series of warm-up exercises, participants were asked to stand in a circle. Teachers were told to ‘send’ and ‘receive’ claps to their neighbours forcing participants to stay alert, respond and

initiate interaction. The next warm-up involved throwing and catching balls across the circle sequentially. After establishing an initial pattern, multiple balls were received and thrown in the same order. At each throw, balls were called out as ‘ball 1’, ‘ball 2’ and ‘ball 3’ for each respective ball. This proved to be a fun and challenging exercise, building greater engagement within the group.

### Active listening & participation activities

After a quick break, more compli-



Another performing game called ‘the forgetful storyteller’ involved Peter beginning a story and then feigning forgetting. A student would then chime in with their ideas to further the story along. Peter would then re-join and continue the story, forgetting time and time again, with different learners adding twists to the story, creating something new. Another popular activity was having pairs walk together side by side to create stories. For each step taken, participants created a story, taking turns to add additional words. This slowed the pace down considerably, helping to reign in those who tend to dominate exercises and encourage those more reluctant to participate. One final activity was using pictures to stimulate drama work. One learner first mimics a position from a picture and then ‘freezes’. Another participant joins by entering the scene and begins a dialog. After several

sentences they freeze and a new participant enters the scene.

Peter Dyer’s workshop was a hands-on session with interactive learning. Using these techniques proved to be an entertaining way to increase student engagement and liven up the classroom. ■



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## Eltas Event Review

Author: Roland Scholl

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS DAY WITH MICHAEL SWAN AND CATHERINE WALTER  
18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2014, STUTTGART

Despite a nationwide train strike and glorious late-summer weather, both of which might have tempted some to stay away, about 50 ELTAS members and guests managed to attend and arrive on time for the ELTAS OUP Day in Stuttgart's Haus der Wirtschaft. Only very few of those who had registered were unable to get there.

Michael Swan was introduced as: "This is Mike and he likes grammar" and the first workshop was called *Some things that matter in grammar teaching and some that don't*. He gave us seven bad reasons for teaching grammar and a few good reasons for teaching some. Michael recommended teachers look critically at grammar in course books, to think about how much is really needed, and to not get obsessed about tiny mistakes. Instead consider comprehensibility, acceptability, frequency of problems, and the concept of teachability/learnability. The ultimate message of this session was that teachers should be selective and make students confident by applying the

three "EXs" – simple EXplanation, realistic EXamples and personalized EXercises.

The second session after the coffee break was with Catherine Walter. On introducing herself, she apologised for the fact that after 35 years in the UK, she still hasn't found an accent to replace her 'soft' Texan one! Catherine's session was called *The learner as a creative writer of grammar rules*. She suggested that we shouldn't depend on grammar emerging from vocabulary during instructed learning and proposed that it is more effective to teach grammar rules in a natural order and explicitly (rather than implicitly). Again using the three "EXs", she suggested teachers start with examples, then give explanations, but also help students develop rules and then practise them.

After lunch there was no chance for a nap because Michael cleverly diverted us with his next session titled *What's happening in English and how much does it matter?* He reminded us, with a lot of interest-

ing examples, that language and rules are always subject to change, often due to mistakes, and new forms rapidly spreading throughout the world. Strangely, he noted that sometimes 'old' forms become accepted again. A few of his examples were:

Use of "who" instead of "whom" – "Who did you vote for?"

Use of "like" instead of "as" – "Like you said ..." "You wanna come with us?" "John and me saw ..."

Michael stated that language change and variation are inevitable. They don't degenerate, they change like landscapes. Michael's ultimate message was: "Don't get upset about changes in informal language. Stay calm because many just don't matter". However, he also ended by saying that it's important that we stay informed and know what's new, whether or not we need to teach it. In the second afternoon session Catherine talked about *Pronunciation as a two-way street* and

indicated that pronunciation and grammar are naturally connected. She also considered dictation, although long out of favour, valuable in learning correct pronunciation. The day was closed by OUP who presented all participants with a copy of *Oxford English Grammar Course* by Michael Swan and Catherine Walter. Further, after collecting our badges, OUP held a generous raffle of books and DVDs. ■

*"Hier ist Platz für  
Ihre Anzeige –  
contact us!"*

*Use of "who" instead of "whom" – "Who did you vote for?"*

*Use of "like" instead of "as" – "Like you said ..."*



**ROLAND SCHOLL** is a quality management expert and trainer/coach for intercultural communication in English language. He also provides translation of quality, purchasing and customer technical documentation for automotive suppliers. Roland also works as a freelance trainer for business and technical English, in language schools and companies in the Stuttgart region.