

Editorial



As befits our first issue of a new year, we are looking towards the future – but not forgetting what the tumultuous events of last year have taught us. As more and more teachers are returning to the classroom, or teaching hybrid classes, with some students physically present and others still online, our contributors are, as always, looking for creative ways to make the best of things and discovering methods and approaches that they will continue to employ, once things return to ‘normal’.

In our main feature, Morag McIntosh explains how she did her utmost to give her students – who found themselves in lockdown in Scotland – the best possible cultural experience, given that all the attractions they would normally have visited were closed to them. Using virtual tours of museums, palaces and zoos, she found ways to make their stay fun, and this has given her insights into ways to enhance and improve the experience of future students, especially if circumstances were to change rapidly again, forcing another switch to online teaching.

The lessons that many teachers have learnt from Covid involve resources. The resource that Jeremy Harmer learnt to appreciate during the Covid-19 lockdown is silence. He reveals how his experience of using *Zoom* for an online folk music club, which requires everyone except the performer to mute their microphones, has led to a greater understanding of the importance of really listening to a musical performance, and has increased his empathy for those who are sharing their gifts with an audience. He links this to teaching, underlining the importance of giving our full attention to our students when they are speaking, and encouraging them to do the same when their classmates are speaking. The Scrapbook in this issue also takes silence as its theme. As ever, there is a photocopiable and downloadable worksheet to use with your students.

For a number of reasons, Christopher Walker found that digital coursebooks were not always a convenient or easy answer to remote teaching. He believes it is time for digital

materials to be designed with online teaching in mind, rather than being adapted from books which are better suited to the physical classroom.

David Wilson’s students are immigrants hoping to make a new life in the UK. During lockdown, he encouraged them to use their daily exercise periods to photograph signs and labels – the linguistic landscape – and share them in their online class as a way of linking new vocabulary to the realities of their new environment.

Wing Wu’s young students were having trouble with the third conditional and lacked experiences which would lead to the expression of regret. He found that soap operas with dramatic storylines provided plenty of examples of characters who regretted what they had done, wished they had behaved differently and speculated on what the results would have been had they done so.

Happy New Year to you all, and may this year be somewhat less of a rollercoaster than the last!

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ENGLISH TEACHING PROFESSIONAL

Published by: Pavilion Publishing and Media Ltd,
Blue Sky Offices, 25 Cecil Pashley Way,
Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex BN43 5FF
Tel: +44 (0)1273 434943
Email: info@etprofessional.com
Web: www.etprofessional.com
© 2021, Pavilion Publishing and Media Ltd
ISSN 1362-5276

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Photos: All pictures from Gettyimages.com
unless otherwise stated

Subscriptions: Pavilion Publishing and Media Ltd
Email: info@pavpub.com
Web: www.etprofessional.com/etp-subscriptions/

Numéro de Commission Paritaire: 1004 U 82181.
Prix à l'unité = EUR14.75;
à l'abonnement (6 numéros) = EUR59.
Directeur de la Publication: Christine Hicks

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