

ELT for Social Justice – Addressing the Issue of the Holocaust

By

Mark Andrews

Margarita Kosior

Adam Janiszewski

27 January, the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp, has been designated by the UN as International Holocaust Memorial Day.

"The International Day in memory of the victims of the Holocaust is thus a day on which we must reassert our commitment to human rights. [...]"

We must also go beyond remembrance, and make sure that new generations know this history. We must apply the lessons of the Holocaust to today's world. And we must do our utmost so that all peoples must enjoy the protections and rights for which the United Nations stands."

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

(Un.org, 2016)

Reasons for and approaches to integrating Holocaust Education into the English classroom.

The common European framework describes the role of educators as playing “an essential role in fostering intercultural dialogue and in preparing future generations for dialogue. Through their commitment and by practising with their pupils and students what they teach, educators serve as important role models. Teacher-training curricula need to teach educational strategies and working methods to prepare teachers to manage the new situations arising from diversity, discrimination, racism, xenophobia, sexism and marginalisation and to resolve conflicts peacefully, as well as to foster a global approach to institutional life on the basis of democracy and human rights and create a community of students, taking account of individual unspoken assumptions, school atmosphere and informal aspects of education.”

In 1980 I first visited Buchenwald concentration camp, as part of a five-month study trip to the German Democratic Republic, it was the first time in my life that I was directly confronted with fascism and ever since then have felt that we, as educators, have a responsibility to discuss these issues in classrooms across the curriculum. On a human rights and English language teaching course in Sinaia in Romania in 2003 we discussed ways in which to use this famous quote below, attributed to Pastor Niemoller, himself imprisoned first in Sachsenhausen and then Dachau:

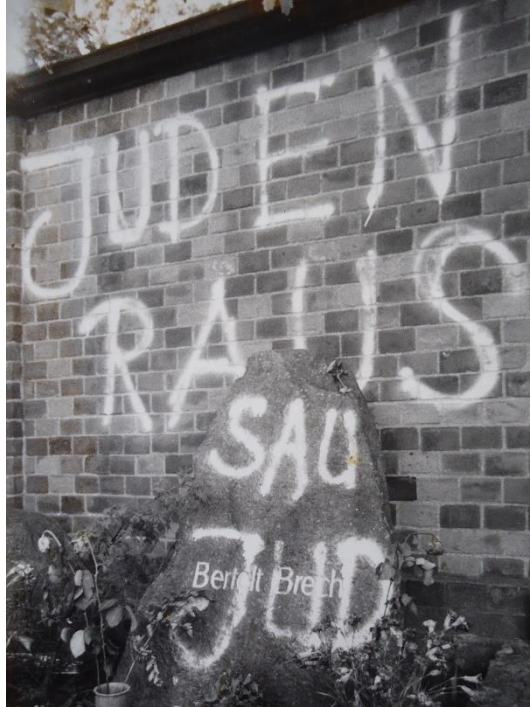
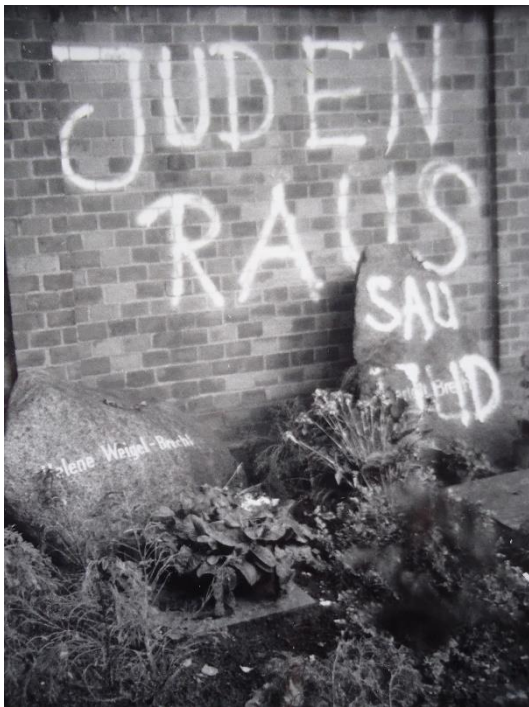
First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a communist; Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a socialist; Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a trade unionist; Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Jew; Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak out for me.

It is part of education and a part of language education that we do all we can to create a world in which this never happens again and that we avoid scapegoating people on the basis of their religion or ethnicity. This is a central challenge in Europe today.

Why now?

Since 1989 there has been a huge rise of nationalism in Eastern and Central Europe. A British historian, Sir Ian Kershaw, noted for his biographies of Adolf Hitler, has described the rise in populist far-right groups, xenophobia and racism across Europe as “extremely worrying” and that democracy is deteriorating on every level across the continent. It naturally makes one “think back to the pre-second world war period.” He said it was wrong to draw direct parallels between the current climate and “the dark ages of the 1930s, but he did say support for populist political groups “echoes” that period, “with an antipathy towards outsiders now directed at Islam and migrants arriving from beyond Europe.”

In June 1990 I took photographs of Bertolt Brecht’s grave in East Berlin, another key moment in deepening my commitment to do something about racism in my English classes and make Holocaust education a part of my work. In German it says “Jews Out. Pig Jew.”



How to work with the Holocaust with students in the ELT classroom

As a teacher trainer in Budapest in 2010, 20 years later, on my methodology course at ELTE University in Budapest we visited an exhibition at the Holocaust Museum linking present day examples of anti-semitism with the past and the students wrote lesson plans of what they might do in their classes with a similar visit. As English language teachers and as educators we have a responsibility today to bring young people up in a spirit of democratic citizenship and finding space for holocaust education may well contribute to this in a positive way.

The beginnings of this project

At a summer camp in 2015 in Serbia, organized by SOL (Sharing One Language), we visited a site in Novi Sad on the Danube where Hungarian fascists shot Jewish people into the Danube. There is a monument there now.



Photo by Mike Harrison

On the following day of the course we had a discussion at the end of the day which lasted two hours 20 minutes on what we could do in our English classes with holocaust education, the aims of which would be to bring young people up in a spirit of internationalism and anti-racism. This poster captured the ideas that teachers came up with and which inspired Margarita Kosior to do the work she did around Holocaust day this year.

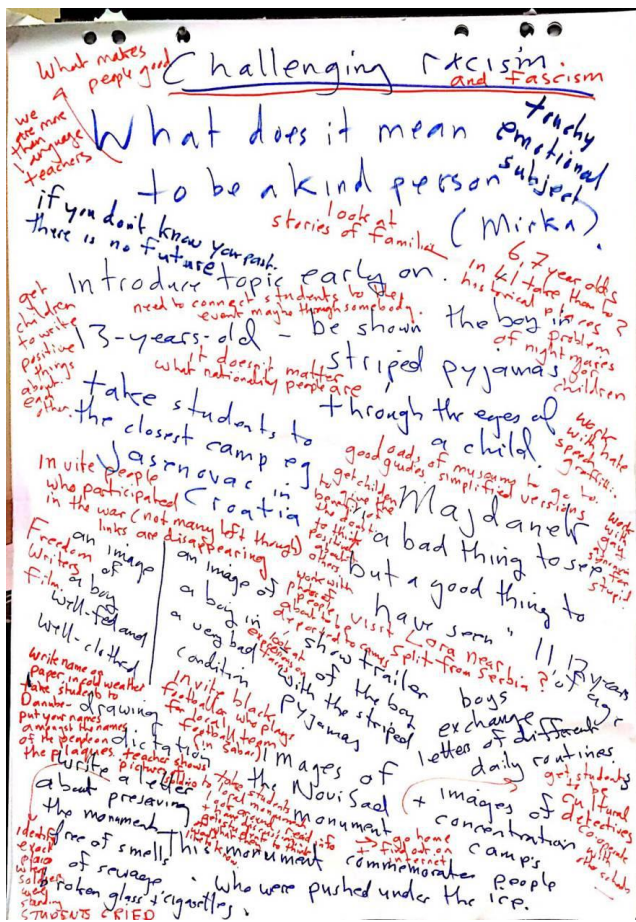


Photo by Mark Andrews

Eva Nagyová in Slovakia, who was also on that summer camp in Serbia in 2015, also did some work on the Holocaust in her town this year. Like Margarita, who visited the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, Eva went out of the classroom too and made these observations after her work.

"Students are more connected to the reality, dealing with educational topics and showing that many of these issues are connected to the place they live in. It helps them to know and understand their home town better from a different perspective. They also enjoy exploring in other surroundings than a classroom.

I try to choose topics which students can use for the maturita speaking examination, they need to be able to speak and have an opinion about various topics in English. I believe having a closer personal relationship with the topic makes them understand it and remember it better.

I plan the curriculum including some international memorial days, some are connected with the topics in the book and as a follow up I organize a lesson in the gallery, museum or in the town. I

usually do it in the last lesson of the day when we don't need to hurry back to school for the next lesson or when the school has a program in the town after the program and we stay in and do it."

This was the gallery visit to the Holocaust Museum.



Photo by Eva Nagyová

In 2016 there is a huge need to challenge a view of the world which is reduced to "us and them" and Holocaust Education done well is a way of challenging this and locating it within the present day.

The philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah in this year's BBC Reith lectures has said that a feature of our evolved psychology is that we need "us'es" to 'thems', and complicated stories make fixing the us really hard and so we prefer simpler stories. And the story that was invented in the eighteenth century of the nation with the single spirit is a nice, simple story. It's not true of anywhere, and I think if you wanted to make it true you'd have to engage in the kind of barbarism that we saw in the middle of the twentieth century.

Reasons for doing this work in English

On Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2016, Milan Ivanić in Osijek Croatia did a lesson on Diana Budisavljević, a woman who saved 12,000 people, mostly children from Ustaša held in concentration camps in Croatia. Doing the lesson on Diana a student in his class asked him, with a look of shock on her face, why they were talking about her in an English class, why don't history teachers talk about her. Milan's reaction was:

"This is precisely why I did the lesson and why I will keep on doing it.

I feel it is, firstly, easier to address such difficult topics in a foreign language and secondly, if it was just another history lesson it would be just another boring thing to forget whereas now it became a discussion topic that they can, and some hopefully did, bring home.

Another benefit for your language teaching is pupils' activity. When we spent a class on talking about the refugee crisis and how the media was reporting on it *my class came alive, suddenly those who usually drowse through the lesson came alive, had something to say, wanted, demanded to be heard.*

All of a sudden I went from someone pulling language out from them (they giving me a run for my money) to someone just moderating a debate with a smile of ease and satisfaction on my face.

Not only do they want to talk, but they find themselves in the need of some vocabulary, trying to express thoughts and opinions, and again here you are offering it to them with ease, instead of pushing it onto them and threatening them with tests and quizzes, CLIL at its finest!"

My own work on Holocaust Day in Budapest, Hungary involved taking students to a shoes memorial which commemorates, like in Novi Sad, the Jews who were shot into the Danube by Hungarian fascists. The students imagined a person whose shoes were on the banks of the Danube, how old they were and how they might have lived. They also cut stars of David out of yellow paper and put them into shoes as well as pink triangles. They then threw their own names into the Danube on pieces of paper. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iNJHLIAT50>).

If we are going to teach about the Holocaust we need to understand what we mean by the word "holocaust", where it comes from and what connotations it has for different people. This might be a good place to start with any work on the Holocaust in the ELT classroom. Different people define it in different ways and maybe students could define what they understand by it in no more than 30 words, drawing on their existing knowledge and then compare what they have written with everybody else in the class.

Finally, it is important to be sensitive to how students respond to this topic and to decide on appropriate age and level of English to do this. There are linguistic, cultural and pedagogical aims with working with this topic, it won't be the cure for all prejudice and discrimination but if teachers are thoughtful in their teaching, there should be a greater chance that students will be more open and accepting of other people and other cultures and not so quick to judge in negative ways.



Auschwitz-Birkenau

Photo by Mark Andrews



Mark Andrews has been involved in teaching social issues in ELT since training teachers in the German Democratic Republic in 1982. Between 1987 and 1989 he developed materials for working with music and social issues in a language school in Brighton and on a British Cultural Studies project with the British Council in Hungary between 1996 and 2002 he co-authored a coursebook, "Zoom In". The book had specific linguistic, cultural and pedagogical aims to get students to think about the world more, care about the world more and to do a little bit to make it better. More recently with SOL (Sharing One Language) he has been involved in

developing intercultural skills in both students and teachers. He believes that there is a need to integrate Holocaust Education into the school curriculum and is interested in exploring space in English Language Teaching as one way of doing this.

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Growing up close to the place with human ashes

I was born and raised in Lublin, Poland. My family home is within a walking distance of 15 minutes from what is known today as Majdanek National Museum, but between the years 1941 and 1944 operated as a concentration and death camp. I have been asked a number of times: what was it like to be growing up so close to the "cemetery of Europe" (Aleksander Ford). The weird, and possibly scary, thing is that it was very normal.

I have visited Majdanek dozens of times: with school, with visitors from abroad, with local friends, and on my own. In fact, my first visit to Majdanek and other places in my hometown commemorating the victims of the Holocaust, took place when I was only five months old. On 1st November (All Saints' Day) 1978, together with my parents, I lit my first candle in memory of those who didn't survive the war. Back in primary school, a member of the scout troop in my area, I remember laying wreaths and guarding the tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the main cemetery in my hometown.

My father was born in 1928 and when World War II broke out he was just an eleven-year-old boy. Towards the end of the war, however, he was already a teenager engaged in the fight for the independence of Poland as a member of the Armia Krajowa (abbreviated AK), or Home Army, which was the dominant Polish resistance movement in World War II German-occupied Poland. I remember that my father was an active member of war veteran organizations for years, but we never talked about the war; I was too young and still not curious enough to ask questions. Unfortunately, I was only 17 when my father got sick and 19 when he passed away. Today I feel I missed my chance to talk to a "living library", and even if he had wanted talk, being a wild adolescent, I probably wouldn't have listened. But, perhaps, it is no coincidence that I am the one writing about Majdanek today, remembering all those All Saints' Days when in silence, I lit candles there, together with my father.

Despite its importance and the gravity of what it represents, Majdanek does not have crowds of visitors, just as Lublin itself is not a very popular tourist destination, and I have often found myself walking on my own among the old barracks. Such a walk gives you time and opportunity to think and reflect on the horrors which took place in Majdanek, Auschwitz and other concentration camps decades ago, and are taking place in many parts of the world today.

Crows flying above the grounds and perched on the barbed wire surrounding the area add to the gloomy atmosphere of the place.



Photo credits: Dimitris Tzouris

People living in the nearby neighborhoods can see watchtowers, barracks and fences from the windows of their homes and from the windows of their cars and buses on the way to and from work; just ordinary landscape for many inhabitants of Lublin.

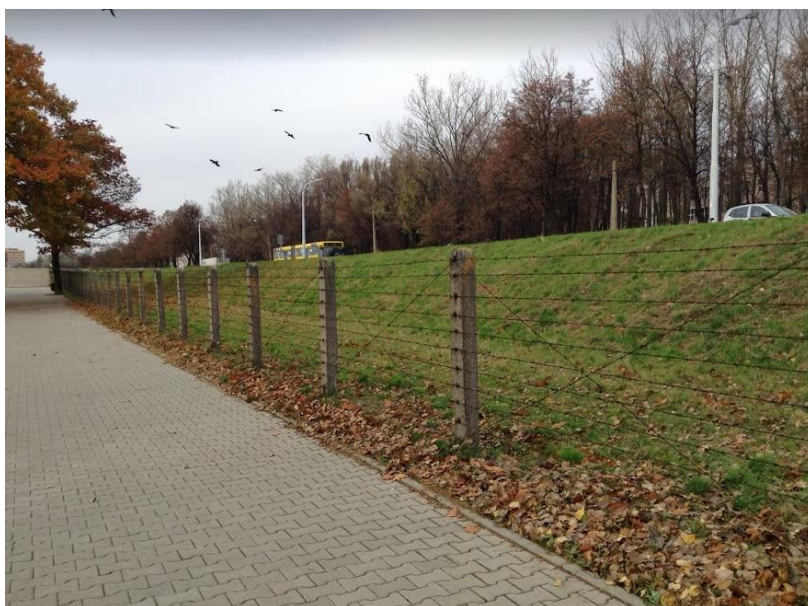


Photo credits: Dimitris Tzouris

I don't think anybody can stay indifferent after a visit to a concentration camp, especially to a place as atmospheric as Majdanek. If you read Trip Advisor reviews, you will find comments such as the following: "life experience rather than a visit" or "a visit to hell and the worst of mankind". I remember the words of a Belgian friend of mine after walking the grounds of Majdanek: "It's is a bad thing to see, but it is a good thing to have seen it." It's like a warning, just like the words engraved on the frieze of the Majdanek memorial dome containing the mound of ashes of camp victims: "May our fate be a warning to you". These words may make you shudder. The question is, for how long they will stay in your memory?



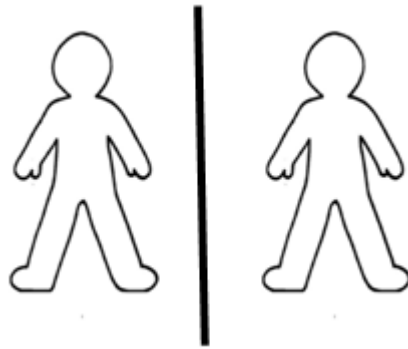
"May our fate be a warning to you"

Photo credit: Dimitris Tzouris

On educating the whole person and how this can be done

27 January, the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp, has been designated by the UN as International Holocaust Memorial Day. Since for me ELT involves not only teaching the language, but even more importantly educating the whole person, I devoted the end of January to a series of lessons of Holocaust commemoration sessions and projects. I was curious to observe my students and their reactions as they were learning more and more about that time in history making parallels with the events of the early 21st century and observing how worrying these parallels are. All this was even more important when you take into consideration that I live and work far away from Majdanek or Auschwitz, in Thessaloniki, Greece, a place where the only thing most teenagers know about the Holocaust is that Germans made soap from Jews. Needless to say, my students were surprised to find out these were only rumors never supported by any evidence.

The very first stage of our Holocaust tribute was based on the trailer of a powerful movie directed by Mark Herman entitled "The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas", a story of a German boy and the son of a German Nazi, Bruno, living with his family close to a concentration camp, and a Jewish boy named Shmuel. The trailer follows the story of Bruno and his family as they move out of town and into the countryside where the boy explores the area around the house and one day finds himself by the barbed wire surrounding the camp. Shmuel is Bruno's peer, but, using Bruno's words, "they are not meant to be friends". Despite this, the boys spend a lot of time together sitting on the two sides of the fence discovering the so many similarities between them, but also growing more and more aware of the differences. And this is what I based my first task, a drawing dictation, on: the differences between the two boys. The drawing dictation started before watching the trailer, when the students still had almost no idea of what the lesson was going to be about. During the task, students got paired up and each student received an outline of a body to draw on.



Body outlines for drawing dictation

One student in each pair received a picture of Bruno, a neatly-dressed German boy, and the other one a picture of Shmuel in his striped pyjamas, and was asked to describe it to the partner. The results were stunning. The students produced images which resembled the original pictures.



Drawing dictation
Photos by Margarita Kosior

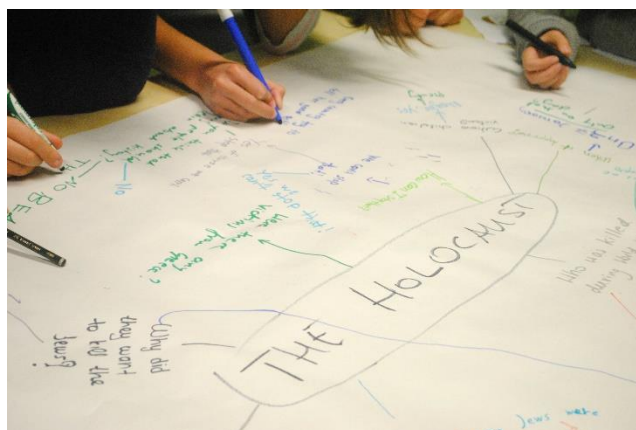
However, I was surprised to discover that despite the striped pyjamas and the worn-out appearance, most students did not realize that Shmuel was a concentration camp inmate. The image was simply absolutely unfamiliar to them. This did not discourage me. On the contrary, it reassured me that what we were doing in class was not only time and effort well spent, but it was a necessary stage in transforming my students into global citizens.

Students easily get engaged when you ask them to predict. Based on screenshots from the trailer, my students were asked to predict the plot of the whole movie. With the occurrence of the Nazi flag on one of the cards, some students would start realizing what that English language session was going to be about. Many of them still did not understand why, whereas others remembered that they talked about “the killing of the Jews” at school the previous day. “The Holocaust” rang a bell.



Predicting a sequence of events (“The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas”)
Photo by Margarita Kosior

It was time to check how much my students actually knew about the Holocaust and how much they were curious to find out. During a silent discussion, they all wrote their comments and questions around the word “holocaust”. Questions and answers, ideas and reactions got connected with lines like in a mind map. In this way, after fifteen minutes, there were several discussions going on on that piece of paper in various corners of it. During that activity, during which they were not allowed to talk and the only means of communication was paper and markers in their hands, my students realized that the Holocaust is a multifaceted issue and there seem to be more questions than answers in front of their eyes.



Silent discussion in Thessaloniki, Greece
Photo by Margarita Kosior

The silent discussion was a great springboard for a real discussion and finally providing answers to questions. Each student picked a question which they believed they should or would like to know more about and then I announced a mobile moment of three minutes during which the students got online (using their Smartphones and the computers available in the classroom) and did research. After the time was up, they reported back to the rest of the class and more discussion ensued.

Despite having spent substantial time discussing the Holocaust by that time, some students still thought it was an issue that did not concern them much. It was something that happened a long time ago to people in some distant places which they could not even find on the map of Europe. To their surprise, they found out that Greece was among the countries with the highest percentage of Jews murdered during World War II.

Now that the students started realizing that the Holocaust extended beyond the gates of Auschwitz, we talked about other places which witnessed the horrors of the Holocaust and about memorial sites commemorating the victims: the Novi Sad Raid Memorial, The Shoes Memorial on the Danube in Budapest, Hungary, The Majdanek Museum in Lublin, Poland, and the Jewish Museum in Thessaloniki, Greece. Places they had no idea even existed and would probably never find out, if it was not for their English class at the end of January; stories so atrocious that sounded unreal.

During the last few minutes of the session I asked my students to write down personal reflections on the topic of the Holocaust. Here are a couple of excerpts:

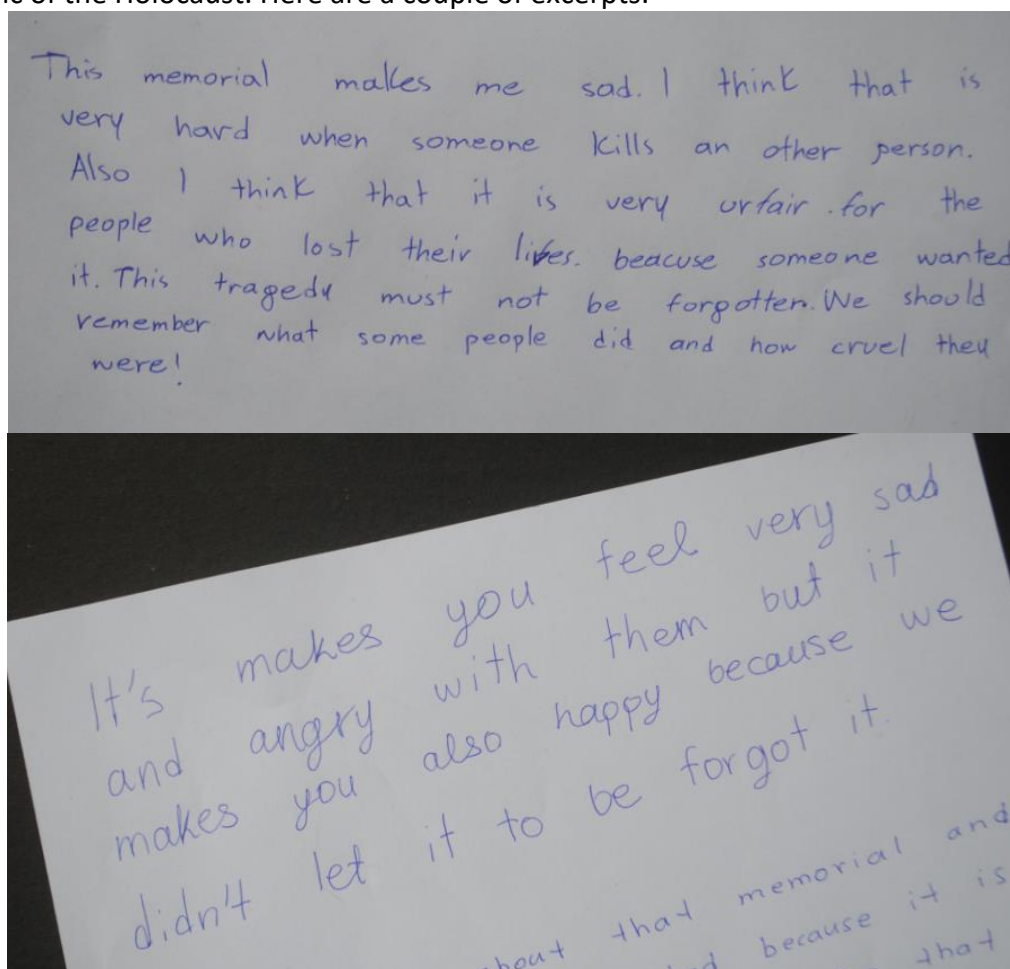


Photo by Margarita Kosior

We concluded our tribute to the Holocaust with a visit to and a guided tour of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki.

Are war and the Holocaust such abstract notions for young Greeks after all? Even though some of them don't realize it yet, not anymore, I'm afraid. Flooded by the waves of refugees arriving in Greece on a daily basis, with the borders closed, you can hear many people refer to Greece as the Auschwitz of the modern times. And Greek teenagers are beginning to realize that whatever happens in one region eventually affects many other areas. Whatever happens hundreds or thousands of kilometers from home, can still affect their lives. I am not saying that my students have been transformed forever. Well, not all of them. But the first step has been made: I feel together we managed to fight the attitudes of apathy, selfishness, and ignorance in a bunch of young Greeks. And this is something.

Meanwhile, in Lublin, Poland, my former university professor and today a colleague, Adam Janiszewski, offered the same lesson to a group of his students. The same content in a different context. Not only geographically speaking, but also because Adam's students were older and more mature than mine. Adam was not the only English Language instructor I shared my lesson plan with. I also sent it to Eva Nagyová in Slovakia who successfully used some of my activities with her students during her own lesson on the Holocaust, and to Marcin Stanowski in Warsaw, Poland who sent me some comments after his lesson. Marcin's students got really engaged with the topic, to such a degree that the lesson steered away from the original plan. Being quite good at history, the students engaged in endless discussions which eventually evolved into topics such as a child's perception of war or protecting a child from a trauma; proof that all social issues are interrelated in such a way that one problem leads to another: crime and war arise from prejudice and xenophobia, prejudice from the fear of the unknown, poverty and homelessness are caused by political decisions and economic developments and the list may go on.

I personally feel a great responsibility lying upon my shoulders: to awaken the force in my students which will allow them to create a better future and to allow their voices to be heard when they speak up against injustice. It often feels like a lonely battle, but there are a lot of us in this fight. Just open up to the possibilities out there and you will be amazed at how much we can all do when we stand united and fight for a cause.



As an advocate for social justice, Margarita Kosior believes in spreading awareness of global issues through ELT.

Margarita has incorporated social issues into her teaching since the beginning of her career when, as a novice teacher, she still didn't know much about Global Education. She simply believed that what she was doing was the right thing to do.

Since then, she has participated in relevant projects, presented at conferences and written ELT materials based on social issues ranging from modern day slavery, disabilities, the Holocaust, to

kindness, as an underlying value necessary to make a big change in the world.

Margarita shares her insights and teaching tips on her blog: [ELT for a Better World](#).

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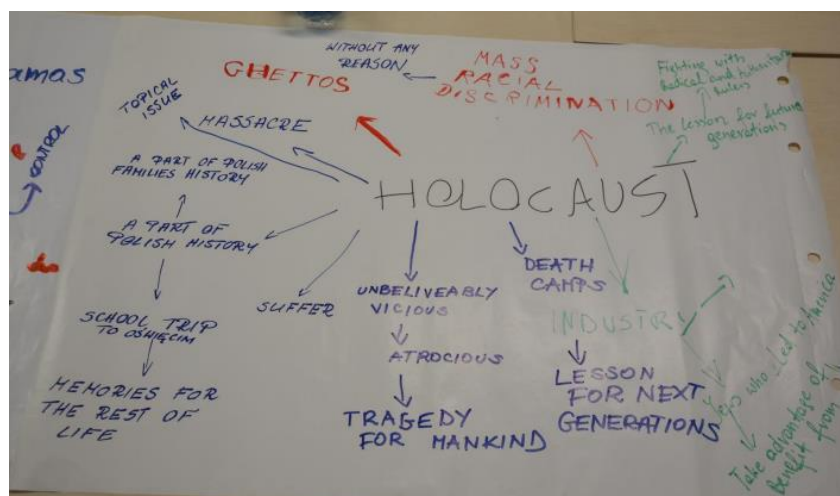
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Adam

When I learnt that Margarita was planning to do a project across the borders, I jumped at the chance. A great idea in all respects. I did not realise, though, that the project would go far beyond the class. I returned to the topic a few times with my students, and they were vividly interested in how the other participants responded highlighting the fact that English became a tool with which they turned the meeting at school into a crucible where various thoughts and ideas intermingled giving them a lot of food for thought. In Lublin we all live in the vicinity of the Nazi death camp and we know that for many people this is the most common association with the place we live in. This is probably why we do not think more deeply about what happened during the war than the obvious. Commemorating 27 January at Linguaton made us all uneasy, pushed us out of our comfort zone, and made us infinitely more aware of our fragility. When the shadow line is removed, there is hope that perhaps one day, just perhaps, history will not repeat itself.

I conducted two courses on 27 Jan, i.e. one for pre-advanced (students aged 16-30 – basically only 2 adults) and the other upper intermediate – Business English (students aged 28-44)

The students in the former group were very willing to discuss the issue at hand. Some of the students knew that 27 Jan is the Holocaust Memorial Day (this was announced on the radio). They knew how many Jews were killed in Poland, but had no idea about the proportion of those relative to the entire Jewish population. They found it hard to express their ideas in writing (poster – mind map), since they are not accustomed to doing such things and they feared that whatever they wrote would be a gross oversimplification.



that I will always fight against people who are full of hate. I suppose that other visitors felt the same.

If people understand the causes of the Holocaust, the world will be better. Therefore, it is essential to raise awareness among people about the Nazi crimes.

(Małgorzata Jawor Piotrowska)

I have been living in Lublin for almost 30 years. I know for what reason Majdanek Death Camp was created. I know where it is located. I always look at it when I pass it, but I have never really stopped to think about what that place means to me or what it means to me to live in the town where Majdanek Death Camp is located (...) Places like Majdanek are important to all of us as – living in Lublin or not. They are reminders of how awful people can become if we forget our humanity. Places like Majdanek should teach us respect for another person's life. Then, maybe we would be finally safe from becoming monsters to each other.

(Jolanta Jarosz)

Majdanek has a special meaning to the inhabitants of my city, where it is located. (...) For me, it's a horrible place where a lot of innocent people faced humiliation and lost their lives. I think this should not happen again in future. In my opinion, everyone, and politicians specifically, should bear this in mind and feel responsible for humans when they make political decisions.

(Adas)

The session with the Business English Group was different and diverged from the original plan. Already from the very start, the debate took another turn. While they said that what happened at Majdanek and during WWII was indescribable and impossible to imagine, they said that the matter is highly complex. Generally, they feel that the Holocaust has become a money spinner. Films are made, books are published – all about the tragedy of Jews, and this is done at the expense of other nations who shared a similar fate during the war. Everyone talks about Jews but hardly anyone about Poles. They said that Poland was the only country where any assistance offered to Jews ended in capital punishment. And if you go to Jerusalem, the Yad Vashem and check the Righteous among the Nations list, the majority of those listed are Poles. And yet, the world does not seem to know much about such eminent Poles as Mr Karski.

Some said that Poles fear that many Jews who visit Poland seek damages for the property they had owned before the war, and Poland is not in a position to pay, since no similar reparations were offered to Poland by Germany. Some mentioned known cases of Jews filing cases in courts once their property was fully restored. This, in turn, led us to talking about anti-Semitism in Poland. And while many confirmed its existence, they added immediately that Poland is not more anti-Semitic than Germany or France. The fact remains that it is Poland that becomes front page news when anti-Semitic incidents happen in Europe.

Many said that Polish-Jewish history is far more complex to discuss by laymen, and that we should remember that Jews considered Poland as the Promised Land. Those who have visited the Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw were eager to confirm that in our somewhat distorted history, decency, fairness, and friendly coexistence prevailed over anti-Semitic sentiments that rose when Poland was going through hard times.

There is no denying that what happened during the war is absolutely unacceptable and should never be forgotten – this was a sentence frequently mentioned when it seemed that we deviated from the main topic too much. For instance, some said that from our perspective, it is important to assert that the death camps here were not “Polish”(as is frequently said) but were operated in Poland. Some added that we have all become obsessed with political correctness which pushes us to talk about the Nazis and not Germans who brought about the death of so many people during WWII.

At the end of the meeting I showed them the scene from “Sophie’s Choice” where Meryl Streep (who plays a Polish woman) is forced to choose which of her two children will go with her and which will be killed on the spot. This scene was so shocking that many of us had tears in our eyes and did not want to talk about the matter any longer.”

Holocaust Memorial Day was not front page news. It was mentioned as the third most important event of the day. Since the establishment of the new government in Poland, the news programmes focus on domestic affairs far more than on international ones. Bearing this in mind, I was glad to discuss the Holocaust in class, and I feel that speaking out on issues such as this one does make courses of English worthwhile. You must continue to build public awareness of things. Otherwise what is no longer front page news quickly moves towards oblivion. These meetings have also shown that it is impossible to see the world as white and black. Wherever you look, everything has various shades of grey, and in Poland two people will have three points of view. I think that my students felt the same. Finding some common ground is not an easy task, but talking about the Holocaust proved that we should try and try again.



Co-founder and co-owner of Linguaton School of English, Adam Janiszewski has been involved in teaching since 1982, initially in the Department of English at Maria Curie Skłodowska University in Lublin where he obtained his doctoral degree, and later in the Lublin Business School offering the first Business English courses to local entrepreneurs. He specialises in ESP courses offered at Linguaton for over 25 years. Together with his wife Aneta he published *Test Your English*, a coursebook for advanced students of English, *Sing-a-Song*, a collection of 100 songs for children, and *Are You Ready*, a set of test tasks for middle school students. Social issues have always been an integral part of the syllabi of his Business English courses.

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Conclusions

Mark

I hope that this article inspires other teachers to find a way of incorporating work on the Holocaust in their classrooms. For me reconnecting with this topic last year in Sremski Karlovci gave me the incentive to visit Terezin, Sachsenhausen and Auschwitz again this autumn. There are very few good materials there in the bookshops for teaching the Holocaust and none about teaching it in English. Obviously we have to avoid preaching to young people, moralizing about things tends not to be

very effective, however not to spend time on learning about the Holocaust runs the risk of making the likelihood of further discrimination and inhumanity in the future even greater.



Sachsenhausen, Germany
Photo by Mark Andrews

Margarita

So, here are the four of us: Adam, Eva, Marcin and myself, making sure that history does not go forgotten and hoping that our contribution is just a small stone dropped into a river sending out ripples far and wide. And I am sure there are many more educators like us around the world. I would like to thank my colleagues for their willingness to participate in the project. But first and foremost, I would like to thank Mark Andrews for inspiration, because it all started like this: "Morning, Margarita. Have been putting together some stuff on the Holocaust and was wondering if you have any opportunity of doing anything with your students around Holocaust Day, January 27th."

Adam

As a former tourist guide, I recall organising guided tours of Majdanek for foreign tourists. I also recall that many of them left the theatre where a documentary was shown half way through being totally devastated by what they saw and not finding enough strength within to stay on. Perhaps we all need a blow like this one. Watching the atrocities on a TV screen we somehow feel safe or we have become immune to human boundless suffering. Commemorating the International Holocaust Memorial Day here in Lublin has deprived us of complacency and made us more vulnerable emotionally. But isn't it a way to assert our humanity?

Appendix

Some images from the Auschwitz Concentration Camp:

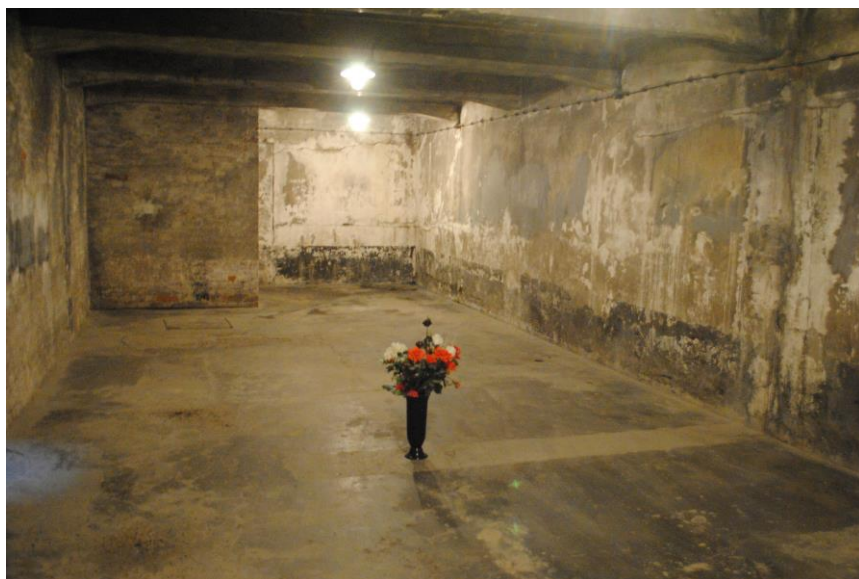




Photo credits: Margarita Kosior