

TESOL

MACEDONIA THRACE
NORTHERN GREECE

e-bulletin

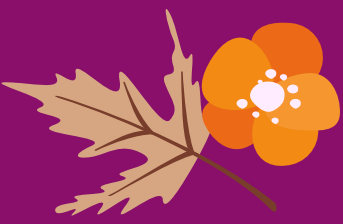
ELT *easier*

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Interview with Paschalia Patsala

Questions by Maria Theologidou



1 Could you tell us more about you and your professional background?

My love and abiding passion for the English language was my motive for pursuing a BA in English Language and Literature, an MA in Theory of Lexicography and Applications, as well as a PhD in Theoretical and Applied Linguistics. My main areas of interest include Linguistics, Lexicography, Educational Technologies and Teaching & Learning in Higher Education. I am also attending a PGCert in Learning and Teaching as well as a PGCert in Clinical Neuropsychology.

Having held several administrative positions in educational institutions, currently I am the Head of the English Studies Department of The University of Sheffield International Faculty, CITY College, where I also hold the position of Faculty Manager of Accreditation, Programme Review and Student Engagement, working on areas related to Quality Assurance of new and revised Programmes as well as on Student Engagement matters.

2 What will your session mainly focus on?

My presentation mainly emphasises the focus on dialogue and exchange with society—complementing knowledge transfer—that has become one of the greatest challenges in education, with certain educational institutions adopting a more outward-looking orientation. My aim is to explain how developing a strategic approach to Public Engagement will enable educational institutions in the area of foreign language teaching to rediscover their roots as active contributors to positive social change, and help language teachers gain great educational benefits, enhancing at the same time the overall impact of the foreign language teacher's vocation.

3 What do you hope participants will gain from your session?

This session is aimed at any foreign language teacher who wishes to participate in opportunities and challenges related to Public Engagement, or to colleagues who can incorporate in their foreign-language programmes civic engagement actions. Another benefit from attending this presentation is that it will add to participants' own ideas about civic engagement, helping them identify similar practices they could also implement, while becoming confident and self-directed members of a social environment.

The current session will also demonstrate how trainee teachers can combine their MA or BA programme of studies with a goal-directed process embodying a feeling of authenticity, contributing at the same time to a societal outcome. Public engagement experiences and extra-curricular activities have proved to be significant for students' personal and professional development; focusing their learning and teaching experience on projects engendering a purposeful and collaborative social activity makes trainee teachers motivated to strive for the best within a more engaging learning environment. Furthermore, it creates higher-education communities of learning where academics, professional services, students, citizens and external organisations co-produce knowledge and share a range of opportunities to understand their place in—and contribution to—the real world.

4 How does your session reflect the changing face of ELT?

There are many foreign language teachers who feel strongly about ending barriers to education but unable or hesitant to take more concrete actions towards that direction. Thus, adopting a Public Engagement strategy can make a difference and provide a creative response to social issues. Moreover, 'engaged learning' attracts a lot of attention nowadays in Higher Education as it serves a great number of purposes, including challenging the students to apply what they have been taught in the classroom, broadening the horizons of both students and outside 'partners,' sharing learning, and building strong relationships between the university and its surrounding communities.

After all, teaching a foreign language to a vulnerable population can have a massive impact by drawing our attention to significant contemporary or social topics, finding new approaches to foreign language teaching, or simply brightening people's lives!