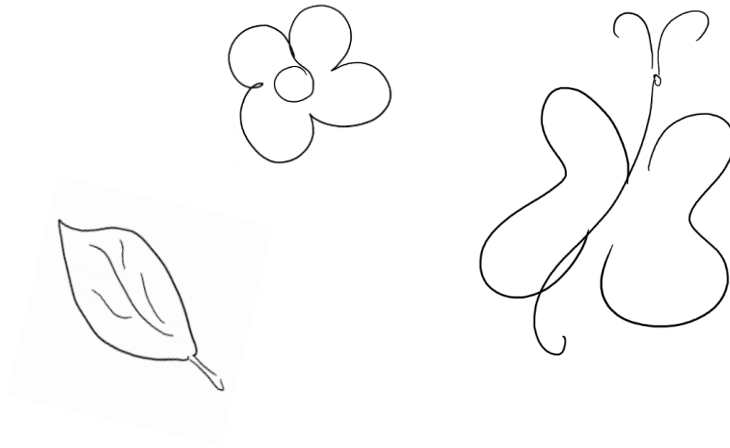




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*Teaching Stories - Old and New*  
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*please have a look at the back cover!)*

## ***Cătălina Cocan – On Leaves, Flowers and Butterflies***



Cătălina has been teaching English in various public and private schools for almost 20 years.

She has written *The Violin Effect*, a book for beginner teachers, offered as online open resource to anyone interested in the teaching profession.

Together with her dearest friend Alina Jiman, she is co-editor of *Povestiri Transparente*, a student magazine raising funds for humanitarian causes.

She is editor of *Teaching Stories. Old and New*, a no-frills magazine for teachers who have a story to tell.

## ***On Leaves, Flowers and Butterflies***

Teaching magazines are known to comprise well-thought, laboured articles.

Most teaching magazine articles take into consideration synchronic and diachronic perspectives on various aspects of teaching. They heavily draw on the safe realm of bibliography, as background to the unveiling of personal research into the educational field. Finally, the majority of teaching magazine articles abound in metalanguage, making them rather unfit for jocular bedtime re-readings.

Teaching magazine articles hardly ever tell stories...

Hence, please allow me to tell you the story of leaves, flowers and butterflies. *(You can see them just above the name of this magazine, on the page following Amely Art painting. Come back here after noticing them, please. And yes, turning this page is what comes next. You're very welcome! 😊)*

*Leaves* are the epitome of change. They grow (changing shape), mature (changing texture), only to be lost (changing colours in the process). Just like *Love*...

*Flowers* transition, too. A tiny bud left to the hands of time fully blooms, only to finally change its vivid colours into a yellowish blob enriching the ground. Thus, making the *Connection*: what has been, what will follow...

*Butterflies* gently touch time throughout their short lives, a day or so. They don't have all the time in the world to live life to the fullest. Towards the end of their day (or so), they leave their puny legacy on a leaf and fly out. There is *Wisdom* in their living, one might say. *(Allow me to be the one spelling this out for you. Thank you!)*

Since leaves, flowers and butterflies all seem to share little more than change and vanishing, let us allow them a moment of fiesta! Let us grant them eternity by acting as metaphors for *Love*, *Connection* and *Wisdom* (the sections of this teaching magazine)!

Teaching with *Love* is the epitome of young teachers (very young, to be exact). Happy to be around students, although exhausted at times, they have energy, ideas and drive. Alina, Andrada, Lia, your fresh perspectives and honest insights into the beginning of teaching are greatly treasured in our no-frills teaching magazine!

Making *Connections* in the classroom is another staple of teaching which requires no further introduction. Claudia, Maria, your caring for the people entrusted to you is to be cloned and used (over and over again!) in various teaching environments!

Guiding peers through the thin path towards *Wisdom* has been the painstaking, yet rewarding journey into sharing that Luisa and Palmina have embarked upon. Heartfelt thanks for your effort of putting together tried-and-tested ideas for other teachers!

*Yes, my dear friend, you're right! (if you're still reading these very many Editor's pages, that is...)*

*Everything in Teaching Stories – Old and New - is bound to be very different from what you might have expected. Even worse, you've got no one else to blame for the indecent amounts of time you'll be spending reading the following pages (except your English teacher at school who coaxed you into reading in the first place...).*

*Having gathered a bunch of storytellers who just happen to be teachers, too, we can now safely allow *Love*, *Connection* and *Wisdom* stories to have the floor!*

*(One last thing, before we finally begin – three pages of introduction would be quite enough for the first issue, I reckon...)*

*Make sure to drop us a line if you, too, would like to be part of our storytelling tribe!*

*Happy reading!*

*Cătălina*

## *Alina Jiman - Antipodes*



Alina has been teaching English in different public schools for almost 3 years and now she is teaching English at a private kindergarten in Cluj-Napoca.

The first year of teaching English in a public school, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod Secondary School, Cluj-Napoca, was Alina's first encounter with her mentor, Catalina, who brought confidence, making Alina to give her best shot.

Alina and her beloved mentor, Catalina, coedit Povestiri Transparente, a student magazine raising funds for humanitarian causes.



## ***Antipodes***

The Antipodes, being of Latin origin and referring to people living on opposite sides of the world, have also the origin of a teaching experience. It can be considered a harsh experience for a new qualified teacher but I choose to see it as a way of how you understand to remain the same humble person no matter the place in which you are as a teacher.

The first year of teaching English made me be part of two different schools, one that was situated in Cluj-Napoca, and the other one in a village, not far away from my hometown, Dej. The distance between these two was approximately sixty kilometers. This spatial distance was tinier than the distance of how I perceived the people around me, not the students. And here comes the great big lesson for me with a need of knowing how to tackle this great discrepancy between these schools. If I'm writing right now...the key was...I will lie because at that time Alice had no key to unlock any door of her experience. It was a needed process of being there and taking part in these experiences.

This was my onset situated at the Antipodes where the only thing I struggle with was to give my best shot no matter on which side of the Same World I am.

Another thing that give me a clear vision of how should I consider myself in this universe of English teaching is made up of three places (buildings). I see them every Friday when I go home. These are like three photos of me. Even if we change one photo with another, it is me with the same attitude towards the children or grown-ups. Theses are my three favorite photos of all time. One is the school from the village, one is the school from my second year of teaching English in Gherla and one is the Montessori kindergarten where I am now. These images or photos of my every Friday are here to nurture the same person, humble and special in the same time.

## ***Andrada Jichici – Children of the World***



Andrada Jichici is an English teacher at Ion Agârbiceanu *Secondary School* in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

She studied English and Italian at university and has a Master's Degree in Creative Writing.

She lived in London for while, immersed in the English language with its many accents.

She believes in the unique flavour of every soul and wants to enable her students to enjoy and explore their uniqueness. She's interested in performance art and dance therapy and she's an animal rights advocate.

She returned to teaching after having a variety of other jobs and experiences that revealed to her the power of finding and sticking to your soul in a world that asks for obedience and conformity.

## ***Children of the World***

I am a beginner teacher, a child on the path of teaching children. Every week I meet with roughly five hundred students, half of which are in preparatory grade. Recently, the topic of pets and domestic animals popped up in my preparatory grade textbooks. Below are some of the things I have learnt while preparing and delivering these lessons. Together with some of the things I have noticed and lived with the youngest students this school year so far:

*Young goats are called kids and are very social. They wag their tails to show they are excited. They also get very attached to one another and to human friends.<sup>1</sup>*

I am always glad to feel the enthusiasm of my early primary students. How they genuinely get excited just by seeing me, how they wave their arms higher and higher to make sure I see them, and how they get extra excited and surprised if we happen to meet on a day different than our usual English class day. In one of the buildings I work, there are 8 preparatory classes on the same floor. Every time I walk the hallway I feel I am in a castle at a royal event with greeting after greeting and wave after wave warming my heart. I have also noticed they react the same way when they meet their own teacher, their Religion teacher, P.E. teacher, school handy person. I know it's not me, it's them 😊 and their enthusiasm.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.peta.org/features/reasons-never-to-drink-goats-milk/>

*Sows sing to their baby pigs.*<sup>2</sup>

*Baby pigs recognize and react to their mother's voice within the first 2 weeks after their birth.*<sup>3</sup>

I have trouble getting the younger students ready to start the class. While I am learning a lot in this respect, I have discovered that singing the same song, one quite similar to a lullaby '*Raise your hands above your head*', and doing the same movements with the children, is a great way to get us focused and quiet (at least temporarily). And there is a moment when the class settles down and I hear my voice clearly, just before the children start singing with me, and their eyes are clear and curious and this moment is the moment we can start.

*Pigs form close loving relationships with their family and friends.*<sup>4</sup>

Recently a girl from Ukraine has joined one of the preparatory grade classes I teach. On the first week she was accompanied by her mum, now she is on her own. I had noticed the friendships formed between lots of the children, by the end of the second semester of school, a fact which I considered endearing and totally normal. But I was very touched by the way the children connected with their new colleague from Ukraine instantly, how they offered to give her lots of coloured pencils, how they asked, at the end of the lesson if they could go and dance next to her, how they clap hands harder when she shows us her drawing, how now,

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.peta.org/teachkind/lesson-plans-activities/animal-alphabet-flashcards/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.goodnet.org/articles/11-fun-facts-about-baby-animals-to-make-you-smile>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/pigs/hidden-lives-pigs/>

after three weeks with us, she is holding hands with the other girls and exchanges hearts made of paper, how the fact that she does not speak Romanian, nor they Ukrainian is not a barrier at all. And I feel humbled by the fact that English might well be their common language should they ever choose words to communicate.

*Pigs dream.*<sup>5</sup>

One day a boy told me 'Am visat că eram într-un castel făcut din gogoși'. Mmmm.

*According to Petakids.com, fish 'are like the songbirds of the sea'. Despite not possessing vocal chords, fish communicate by using a variety of squeaks, smells, pulsations and movement. Some fish even form a chorus and sing together in the mornings and evenings.*<sup>6</sup>

One of the ways I keep early finishers busy is by singing 'Ten little fishies'<sup>7</sup>, a song I found on You Tube and of which I did not think too much, initially. It revises numbers, as one fish is joined by another and so on. We sing and move our hands as if they are fish. The fish are also chased by a shark but they all manage to escape. But this simple song has shown me how much children love singing. Put anything into a song and they will like it. Ask them to clear their desks, come to the board,

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/pigs/hidden-lives-pigs/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://headlines.peta.org/fish-are-superior-beings/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dg0cQtVisLw>

turn off the lights or be quiet; they will respond to song much better than to normal speech.

*Baby cows enjoy playing hide and seek games.*<sup>8</sup>

Everyone knows children love playing hide and seek and playing games in general. While I always try to incorporate a game in each lesson, I remember now a recent event when one of the boys in a preparatory grade came to me at the end of the class, and suggested a game: each child in the first row will be a fruit and I, as teacher, will be picking them one by one and say I want to eat them...(!?) I am not sure I got this right... The break had started and it was noisy. I promised we would play it the next time we meet. He's been ill for two weeks now and I really look forward to seeing him again, and understanding exactly what he meant, and playing the game, or a version of it with the class.

*Cows bear grudges.*<sup>9</sup>

At the beginning of March I noticed there was a lot of love in the air in all my classes. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> March celebrations with flowers, songs and chocolates might be responsible for this. Around this time, in one of the classes, a girl and a boy hugged and kissed each other on the cheek in a ... quite prolonged ... manner. So I gently asked them both to stop. The girl frowned at me. At the beginning of the class she had gifted me with a rose, the smallest most trampled rose I had ever seen, but which,

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.peta.org/teachkind/lesson-plans-activities/nouns-and-verbs-worksheets/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/cows/hidden-lives-cows/>

coming from her, I received with all my heart. At the end of the class, she come to me and requested her gift back. I returned the gift with admiration for her long-lasting grudge. 40 minutes is quite impressive for a preparatory grade student!

*Bees dance the 'waggle dance' to show members of their group the direction and distance of a food source.<sup>10</sup>*

Like music, movement makes children learn with great pleasure. At the beginning of the school year, I used movement because I love it and because I needed a way to use up all that extra energy the children accumulate during a class. But more recently, watching my students move, I got reminded what a great memory our bodies have, how learning can be done with our bodies, too, not just with our minds. Our bodies have the memory of an elephant, one could say 😊 . And speaking of animal related idioms<sup>11</sup>, below is a bunch of cruelty free idioms. Can you guess their initial, often cruel, version? See the footnote below for both.

*'cry over burnt toast'*

*'feed a fed horse'*

*'more than one way to peel a potato'*

*'put all your berries in one bowl'*

*'take the flower by the thorns'*

*'packed in like pickles'*

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12Q8FfyLLso>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.peta.org/teachkind/lesson-plans-activities/animal-friendly-idioms/>



And my favourite, *'feed two birds with one scone'*, which for me illustrates that balance between feeding my soul and that of my students when an activity feels right. Like feeling my fed wings spreading and starting to fly towards a clear blue sky.

## ***Lia Mușină – Teachers in the Wild***



Lia Mușină studied English and French language and literature at the Faculty of Letters, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. She also graduated from a Master's program at the same University.

A teaching career had never been a priority to her until she fell in love with it while still an undergraduate, during teaching practice. She took a part-time position as an English teacher in kindergarten while still a student. It was only after getting her MA degree that she began working as full-fledged teacher.

Right now, she is in her second year of teaching and she cannot see herself doing anything else.

## ***Teachers in the Wild***

I would like to start by saying that I am new in this field, and I am still in the process of figuring out my style as a teacher. Thus far, I have mostly worked with younger children, and one thing that I have noticed about them is how they perceive us, teachers. They seem to forget that we too, are humans, with our own lives and passions, and not just some beings who exist only inside the classroom and have all the answers. It amused me greatly at first, but I soon realised how important it is to prove them otherwise. This helped me break the wall between me and my pupils, and bond better. I am going to share a few light-hearted stories that helped in my journey of discovering myself as a teacher.

My stories about encountering pupils out in the 'wild' are many, but they all have one thing in common. Whether they see me on the bus, in the streets, or in shops, their initial reaction is the same. They widen their eyes and look at me with utter disbelief. Some, however, get over it quickly and engage, others become shy and give me a quick wave or look away. I remember one particular 7-year old yelling as loud as she could 'Teacheer!!!' from the other side of the zebra crossing. It is never a dull moment with them.

Inside the classroom, I mentioned at some point to a class of third graders how much I enjoyed the *Harry Potter* series when I was in primary school, and they couldn't fathom the fact that I was too, once, their age. Similarly, I expressed my excitement to a class of first graders, when I found out that a cartoon I used to love as a child is still popular today. Somehow, this led to a kid asking me in shock if I also have a mom and a dad.

However, my most vivid memory, and the moment I realised that I needed to break the stereotypes that teachers are 'know-it-alls', was when a fourth grader asked me to translate a word in English from the area of mechanics. My response was: 'I don't know! Let's find out!'. I could hear the whole class gasp, and another child mentioned that it was first time they had heard a teacher admitting that they don't know something. I chuckled at first, then I let them know that no one, not even teachers, know everything, and that everyday we learn new things, even when we are old. We then proceeded to go on the Internet and find out through an online dictionary the translation of that particular word.

From then on, I tried my hardest to refrain from giving them every piece of information and encourage them to look for it on their own, which helped develop a certain degree of independence. I also became more open about things that I do not know, and they take pleasure in teaching me new things. They really enjoy our trivia moments. Moreover, I try to keep myself updated on current culture and incorporate it in my lessons, thus making it more fun and engaging.

My approach is not yet perfect and I did experience difficulties with it. Nonetheless, the degree of success was fairly high, and I am confident in it, as I am a firm believer that we improve by learning from our mistakes. I am aware that I have a long road ahead of me, and I feel both scared and excited at the same time. It helps knowing that I am not alone in this, as I have my pupils, and also my colleagues who have been nothing but helpful in guiding me and showing me the ropes.

***Claudia Morar – On the Polarity of Teaching***



I have been a teacher of English and German for over 25 years now, still very fond of words and what they can do.

Currently living in Cluj-Napoca, I am half Romanian, half German, constantly torn between the rigors of the two cultures.

I write whenever I must.

## ***On the Polarity of Teaching***

Most pedagogy books, which presumably are read at the beginning of one's teaching career, disclose the multitude of roles a teacher is to hold. Much like at a glamorous Celine Dion concert, one is to exit left, put on a new outfit and matching feather boa, return to the limelight, perform impeccably and then, again, rush backstage. There, dozens adroit hands help you slip into yet another frock and drape on you the paraphernalia of your final encore.

The theory makes it sound a breeze, as that is how any study on teaching will present your personas, like a playlist which, as long as you know the lyrics, will run just fine. The friend, the form teacher, the counsellor, the parent, the evaluator, the expert, all are supposed to be etched in you as soon as you say "I Do" to your first Titularizare. You go in and walk out enriched and embezzled.

To an extent, it will, indeed, be a new you. However, your Doppelgangers will have no brass band accompanied epiphanies, but rather quiet, eerie, self-conscious little moments that leave them breathless. A second of bliss, a blink of pride...The happinesses of teachers are small, but mighty. One cannot fathom how life changing one insignificant, sometimes bizarre class digression can become, be it someone's phrasing, or work.

It was no different for me.

I have always liked poetry, and therefore, loved bringing it to class. All sorts of verse, maybe of lesser poets but stanzas that seemed meaningful to students. As I came across this poem called "Teacher reading a poem" in an old British textbook, I added it to my collection of poems I would read aloud. It was something about the convoluted sounds, for example of Annabelle Lee, that mesmerized students and had them stand still and listen.

So, I was standing at the front of the class, poem in hand, and started reading. The poem was about a teacher reading a poem to students, his thoughts taking him back to this youth, when he was roaming the green hills as a young lad... Memories overwhelm him, he is taken aback, keeps reading, but the students, sitting in their desks, rustle greasy paper, impatient to eat their lunch. It was a short and quite forward poem and, at the end, as I was expecting reactions with my heart pounding, I did hear a voice: "Teacher, are you aware that you are a teacher reading a poem called Teacher reading a poem?"

That, for me, was the breaking point. I was not only assuming the pre-designed roles, but duplicating, actually multiplying like in a kaleidoscope, and would, again, for other students, when reading the same poem, when teaching the same lesson, when replying to hellos along corridors for the coming years. I imagined my reflection shooting from thousands of shards, under different angles, like my body was no longer mine but had conceptualized and now belonged to the school. I learned then that teachers will be forever split, and not just like other people say, "between office and home", but right within themselves, where teacher and inner child and mother and wife and writer and patient and body coexist and the teacher next day and the teacher in two years' time and the teacher during the pandemic all have to negotiate territories.

It was a very brief flash.

Meanwhile, I lost the poem and made many attempts to recover it, whenever I wanted to return to that realm of momentary innocence. But then again, now I am not so sure I want to find it. With years going by, my former self has gained different layers, but the teacher reading a poem might feel safer inside, roaming the hills.



## ***Maria Mustăţea – The Universal Happiness in Teaching***



Maria is combining teaching and researching in her everyday professional life as an assistant Ph.D. in Communication Sciences at the Faculty of Political, Administrative, and Communication Sciences (the Babeş-Bolyai University).

She is constantly searching for new educational activities and tools that shape the minds of future communicators.

With a focus on advertising and everything related to cleaner and more mature means of communication, she encourages students to develop projects that will bring a meaningful change in their lives and communities.

## ***The Universal Happiness in Teaching***

It is Thursday, October 5<sup>th</sup>. The watch is slowly unwinding its mechanisms, not caring for the seconds vigorously jumping in the present moment, then quickly fading away. It is 17:20. It feels like three hours passed since 17:15. I am trapped in a time loop.

I prepared everything, from outfit to backpack and laptop and I decided it is time to leave the house and go to my first seminar. I will have more than enough time to think about it on the way to the faculty. Besides, according to my watch, I have at least five eternities until then.

I reach the main building, I take two deep breaths and I enter. I must have let my courage back home, somewhere near the vacuum and the second shelf of books. I decide to take the stairs and I go to room IV/1. As I enter, I stumble across a group of luminous and smiling faces. The tickling nerves start cooling their jets. There is one remaining seat in the back of the class. I am grateful.

This was not because I was an introverted freshman, but because I was a freshly appointed assistant (and back then also a Ph.D. candidate) who was thrilled to see so many students at the introductory class.

The moment the first "Hello, everyone!" came out, all the shadows of doubt and worry vanished. The first two hours of my teaching experience blissfully flew away in a couple of moments (probably to make up for the previous eternities I had to endure on the way there).

By the time the seminar ended, I already knew I see myself doing this in the long run. I know, those who already "matured" in this profession or the cynics will tell me to give it time before I get fed up with seeing grades and preparing for a new year of courses.

However, here I am a couple of years later, writing this and feeling more determined than I was at the beginning. I have seen the good, the bad, and the evil as the movie would say, yet I am still defending the teaching gates.

I work with students searching for a way to make a living, but eager to keep their passions alive. Their youthful drive is what rejuvenates me and keeps me going. It is the age of growing, getting employed, and understanding how the world works. Each year I see hope and disappointment, joy and fear, courage and unconventional ideas that feed these young minds. I have the privilege of lighting up a part of their journey. And I am happy.

I believe there is universal happiness in teaching. Professors and teachers of all educational levels seek to stimulate the thirst for knowledge and make it tempting while getting there unveils a lot of obstacles and white nights. Nobody said this would be easy.

But in such a troubled world that is developing so fast and does not seem to care about wise decantation, we are all necessary. Now even more than ever. So, educators of all kinds, when things get unbearably rough, please go back to that initial moment of happiness in teaching.

## ***Luisa Filip - Cascading New Knowledge. What's in It for Me?***



Luisa is an experienced ELT professional who has been working with students and teachers of all ages for many years; she holds a BA in English Language and Literature and a MA in Education.

She is a teacher trainer, mentor trainer and a TESOL graduate from Oregon University.

She was an English language county inspector for many years contributing to training, assessing and developing teachers. These aspects of teaching have remained her main strengths and interests.

Since 2019 she has resumed full-time teaching and is happily working with upper-secondary students in a Romanian and English bilingual-teaching college in her hometown Cluj-Napoca, in northern Transylvania, Romania.

## ***Cascading New Knowledge-What's in It for Me?***

### ***About training intercultural competencies***

Before I address the title I would like to make a few things clear.

This article is the product of my participation in the spring of 2022, in a course offered by Arizona State University and The Department of State, USA called: "Professional Development for Teacher Trainers".

The purpose of the course was to offer teachers methods, tools and techniques for promoting professional development in our teaching context.

I work in a public Romanian-English bilingual college in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, where students follow the national curriculum for all subjects but in English, they have an extended curriculum for the bilingual strand. They study 5 hours of English every week in the common core curriculum and one hour in the optional classes: British and American Geography in the 9th grade, British & American History in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and ECC (Elements of Culture and Civilization) in the 11th and 12th grades. Basically, 9th graders are level B1/ B2 and by the end of the 12th grade, when they take the Baccalaureate, they will reach level C1-C2 in English and will have passed an international certificate (in most of the cases FCE or CAE, some IELTS or TOEFL).

That is why I consider it useful to propose a training course for teachers on "Teaching interactively inter-cultural competencies in an English bilingual class".

As to cascading new knowledge, I believe it just fair to share some of it with my fellow professionals who want to learn from my experience. This is how I thought of planning and developing my training course.

This is a possible scenario.

## **Step 1-Plan**

This can be done by conducting a Needs Analysis with potential participants and by developing a Needs Analysis Survey Tool for the Focus Group created.

The discussion will take place with the focus group created in the school's English department or within the members of the local teachers' association.

There will be several discussion points and participants will take turns in describing their classroom experience and expressing their opinions on the best strategies to teach intercultural competencies.

Questions:

1. How do you define intercultural competencies?
2. What are the intercultural competencies you intend to focus on and develop with your students in this school year?
3. How do you plan on involving and motivating your students to take interest in the optional English class?
4. What methods do you use to develop both linguistic competencies and communicative skills?
5. How will you group your students to create opportunities to study the same content from different perspectives?
6. What assessment methods will you use in order to have students develop learner autonomy and a multilingual mentality?
7. What resources, courses, and supplementary materials do you plan on using in this school year for your optional courses?

## **STEP 2 - Conduct**

Conduct your Needs Analysis. Now that you have planned, you're ready to conduct your own needs analysis.

**Use your needs analysis tool that you created or the provided survey tool in your teaching context.** For example, if you are using the provided survey, give the survey to the teachers in your school and collect the results.

### **STEP 3 - Share and Reflect**

Share and reflect on your experience conducting your Needs Analysis.

**Think about the questions below and write your answers. Write 4-10 sentences.**

- How would you describe your experience with conducting your needs analysis?
- What went well with your needs analysis?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Would you make any changes to the tool you used?

#### **My Answer:**

My experience with conducting the needs analysis in the focus group was open, professional, and enlightening with regard to how to approach students for building interest and motivation to study optional courses.

Building intercultural competencies is considered both an aim and an outcome by all English teachers in the department.

The discussions were honest and responsible and three of the younger colleagues admitted needing more guidance and assistance in planning and developing their History and ECC lessons for advanced students.

All participants considered building intercultural competencies to high school students as being of major importance for building intercultural knowledge and vision.

1. 2. The intercultural competencies which all participants planned on focusing in the optional courses in this school year are:

1. Participation in decision making and in solving community problems in a global society
2. Giving arguments and expressing opinions on aspects of culture and civilization

3. All of them agreed that the best way to motivate and involve students in the optional classes is to offer them up-to-date materials that would challenge their interests, develop their critical thinking and flexibility in exchanging ideas and in working in a team .

4. As for best teaching methods, participating teachers suggested: designing posters, charts, reading and analysing different functional texts, expressing opinions on cultural topics, creative writing, using role-play.

5. As ways of students “grouping” were suggested: individual work , pair work and group work.

6 As favoured assessment methods in the English optional classes all decided for: project work, oral presentations, compiling portfolios and class debates.

### **Training Course outline:**

**"Teaching interactively intercultural competencies in an English bilingual class".**

**Trainer:** Luisa Filip

**Length:** 5 weeks

**Training sessions:** 3 hours

### **Course Description and Goal Statement:**

The goal of the course is to provide ways for analyzing and interpreting cultural aspects of the English-speaking world using a CLIL ( Content and Language Integrated Learning)-oriented approach, develop personal and interpersonal skills in a student-centered optional English class.

### **Course Objectives:**

**By the end of the training, participants will be able to:**

1. Take their students through different aspects of Culture& Civilization, History, Geography past and present from the English speaking world using a CLIL approach (Content and Language Integrated Learning) that would help students better understand social, moral, historical, geographical, religious, aesthetic, scientific or technical characteristics of these cultural spaces. (using a specific course for Culture and Civilization or by providing/ designing personal materials).
2. Help students develop awareness and critical thinking when interpreting cultural aspects of the English -speaking world and when comparing and contrasting different cultural aspects.
3. Help students understand that they are different from others and make them re-analyze their own system of values.
4. Help students develop autonomous and reflective thinking when analyzing cultural aspects of the English-speaking world.
5. Help students develop new values and attitudes in relation to others and themselves.



**Assessment:** Participants will be assessed using **formative assessment** tools along each session. In groups or pairs they will practice from the course book or design CLIL -oriented learning activities for teaching both content : History, Geography, Notions of Culture and Civilization and English language with the purpose of improving students' abilities of interpreting and analysing historical, geographical, cultural aspects of the English-speaking world. Participants will reflect on how to analyze and relate to cultural documents, how to operate with knowledge and build values and attitudes, on how can language teachers contribute to developing intercultural competencies.

In the last session, for **summative assessment**, they will submit individually an electronic portfolio with three CLIL Lesson plans for teaching interactively a lesson of Geography, History and NCC for an optional course.

Week 1:

**Unit 1: Teaching about Culture & Civilization in an optional class for the bilingual strand, using the CLIL method ( Content and Language Integrated Learning), according to the Romanian curriculum for bilingual classes:**

-teaching Geography ( of Britain and USA)-intermediate students ( 9th grade)

-teaching History of Great Britain-upper-intermediate students (10th grade)

-teaching ECC ( Elements of Culture & Civilization) to advanced students ( 11th and 12th grades)

Objectives	Activities	Assessment
<p>By the end of the first session, participants will be able to:</p> <p>-use efficiently the course books and materials for teaching an optional class in : Geography/ History/</p>	<p>-in groups, participants will analyze a sample lesson from one of the courses for teaching: Geography, History, ECC and identify aims, objectives, skills practiced, learning outcomes.( each group</p>	<p>-in groups, participants refer to ways of applying CLIL to teach Geography, History, or ECC to high school students from the bilingual strand</p> <p>-in groups, Pt complete a chart with a CLIL lesson</p>

<p>ECC, provided by our department according to the Romanian curriculum for bilingual classes</p> <p>-apply effectively the CLIL method ( Content and Language Integrated Learning) and include both scientific content and language skills practice in an integrated student-centred approach</p>	<p>will work on one of the courses.</p>	<p>plan and the stages and practice activities for an optional course</p>
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**Week 2:**

**Teaching a Geography Lesson using CLIL; how to analyze and interpret scientific and cultural aspects.**

Objectives	Activities	Assessment
<p>By the end of the second session participants will be able to:</p> <p>-plan and conduct a Geography lesson for an English optional class using the CLIL method</p> <p>-devise learning and practice activities to help students understand and acquire specific</p>	<p>-participants work on groups to design and apply learning and practice activities for teaching a content at their choice from the Geography course book</p> <p>( integrated skills)</p> <p>-in groups Pt use the internet to find other materials ( video films/</p>	<p>-Pt use a flipchart to present their group's work for the practice and production part of the lesson</p> <p>-Pt will design tasks for students to compare and contrast aspects from</p>

<p>vocabulary to discuss geographical aspects about UK and USA</p> <p>-apply practice activities for teaching Geography that develop students' analytical skills and critical thinking.</p>	<p>documentaries) and devise learning activities for the content they have chosen. They can decide for Listening and Speaking activities or Reading and Writing activities.</p>	<p>the English- speaking world and their country in order to help them explore, discuss, interpret and analyse specific details/facts/events.</p>
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**Week 3:**

**Teaching a History Lesson using CLIL; how to analyze and interpret historical and cultural aspects.**

Objectives	Activities	Assessment
<p>By the end of the second session participants will be able to:</p> <p>-plan and conduct a History lesson for an English optional class using the CLIL method</p> <p>-devise learning and practice activities to help students understand and acquire specific vocabulary to discuss historical aspects about Britain</p>	<p>-participants work on groups to design and apply learning and practice activities for teaching a content at their choice from the History course book (integrated skills)</p> <p>-in groups Pt use the internet to find other materials ( video films/ documentaries) and devise learning activities for the content they have chosen. They can decide for Listening and</p>	<p>-Pt use a flipchart to present their group's work for the practice and production part of the lesson</p> <p>-Pt will design tasks for students to compare and contrast aspects from British history and their country's history, in order to help them explore, discuss, interpret and analyse specific details/facts/events.</p>

	Speaking activities or Reading and Writing activities.	
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**Week 4:**

**Unit 4. Teaching an ECC ( Elements of Culture and Civilization) lesson using CLIL; how to analyze and interpret social, moral, historical, geographical, religious, aesthetic, scientific, or technical characteristics of English-speaking spaces of the global world.**

Objectives	Activities	Assessment
<p>By the end of the session participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-plan and conduct an ECC lesson for an English optional class using the CLIL method</li> <li>-devise learning and practice activities to help students understand and acquire specific vocabulary to discuss cultural aspects about the English-speaking world. (Britain, America, Canada, Australia, India, New Zealand, Hawaii, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>-participants work on groups to design and apply learning and practice activities for teaching a content at their choice from the ECC course book</p> <p>( integrated skills)</p> <p>-in groups Pt use the internet to find other materials ( video films/ documentaries) and devise learning activities for the content they have chosen. They can decide for Listening and Speaking activities or Reading and Writing activities.</p>	<p>-Pt use a flipchart to present their group’s work for the practice and production part of the lesson</p> <p>-Pt will design tasks for students to compare and contrast aspects from English-speaking countries/ regions and their country’s cultural heritage, in order to help them explore, discuss, interpret and analyse specific details/facts/events.</p>

<p>-devise learning and practice activities which stimulate the understanding of otherness and reduce prejudice.</p>		
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**Week 5:**

**Unit 5. Ways of assessment and designing lessons and learning materials for teaching a CLIL lesson for the optional classes of the bilingual strand.**

Objectives	Activities	Assessment
<p>By the end of the session participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-devise a full lesson plan using the CLIL –oriented approach in order to teach Geography, History or ECC in an optional course</li> <li>-design assessment tasks using a sample lesson from the course books or materials from the internet</li> <li>-evaluate assessments using student-centred criteria</li> </ul>	<p>Participants work in pairs to create a full lesson plan for a CLIL-oriented student-centred lesson</p> <p>Each participant will submit in their electronic portfolio three full lesson plans. (one for each of the three optional courses taught in our bilingual school)</p>	<p>Participants take turns to present one of their lesson plans and discuss and appreciate each other’s work.</p>

## **Reflection and Revision**

### **A. Participants' description:**

The participants at my training course are the English teachers in the English department in my school. We are 14 teachers altogether. There are 13 full-time teachers and one supply teacher. Most of them are mid-career teachers and most of them hold the first degree (the highest teaching qualification in our system of education). Two of them have passed the second degree (and qualify for the first!), my supply colleague has just passed her probation degree. All have a very good command of English, have passed exams with high results which have placed them in our school. They are all very committed and like teaching and working with students. As we teach in a public but selective school, the level of the students, their expectations, as well as that of their parents and that of the school management is for teachers to be well-prepared, equipped with student-centred skills and with all resources to facilitate active and integrative learning where all students participate and make good progress.

### **B. Challenges:**

All my colleagues considered building intercultural competencies for high school students as being of major importance for building intercultural knowledge and vision. The intercultural competencies that all my colleagues planned on focusing on in the optional courses in this school year are:

1. Giving arguments and expressing opinions on aspects of culture and civilization
2. Participation in decision making and in solving community problems in a global society

### **C. Interests:**

The skills and topics my colleagues are interested in improving after attending my training course are:

-the need to teach students to read critically and to decode the enormous and chaotic flow of information coming from the media

-to develop awareness of the different meanings of citizenship from the local dimension close to the life experience of the student to the global dimension of the citizen of Europe and of the world.

Answer the Reflection Questions:

1. What are the most important characteristics of my participants to think about in planning my training?

One of the most important characteristics of the participants (my teacher colleagues in the English department of my school) at my training course is that most of them have a good knowledge of cultural aspects of the English-speaking world, they have student-centred classroom management skills, are prone to new technology and know about how to cater for students' interests in order to raise motivation.

2. Which of the challenges my participants shared will be talked about in my training? How will my training help participants to overcome those challenges?

All my colleagues considered that the curriculum and course books offered by the ministry to teach the optional courses: British & American Geography, British History, ECC (Elements of Culture & Civilization from the English-speaking world) are in some ways obsolete and need to be supplemented with new materials. Then we all agreed that we need some coherence with regard to when, what and how we want to supplement the courses being used. Suggested resources : courses on culture and civilization: Eyewitness-Culture in Changing World, A CLIL Oriented Approach, Pearson/ Longman; Across Cultures-Pearson, Britain-Oxford UP, Cultural Links –Black Cat Publishing, etc, the internet, YouTube, newspapers, magazines, etc.

On another occasion, I would probably try to record/ film a lesson so as to have a detailed scenario of the whole teaching process which we can debate on.

I might include other specific questions on the list for discussions for the focus group.

## **Peer Mentoring Plan**

In designing my peer mentoring plan I am thinking of considering my suggested training course: "**Teaching interactively intercultural competencies in an English bilingual class**". As my plan is to help and support the English teachers in my department with delivering quality lessons of culture and civilization in the optional classes of : British& American Geography ( 9<sup>th</sup> grade) , British History ( 10<sup>th</sup> grade) and ECC ( Elements of Culture& Civilization-11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades), I intend to raise motivation by asking the 14 English teachers in my school to collaborate, observe each other and then participate in my training course.

### **Step 1: Collaborate: Teacher support group**

**Goal:** the English teachers in my school will meet in the first semester every week and then once a month to discuss peer observation, do lesson planning and give feedback in order to improve ways of teaching about culture & civilization using the curriculum imposed by the ministry but also other resources.

#### **Collaboration Goal:**

1. I will invite more experienced volunteer teachers to give demo lessons of culture and civilization after attending my course.
2. I will also invite them to conduct feedback sessions for participants to enlarge their methods, gain new ideas and enhance confidence.
3. I will ask participants to compile a list of valuable online resources for teaching about culture& civilization that may be shared with all English teachers from our Teachers' association.
4. I will organize a demo session with tips on teaching about ECC and how to make use of different resources so as to raise students' motivation and challenge their interests.

### **Step 2: Coach and Mentor**

I am thinking of giving a follow-up to the course on Teaching about Culture& Civilization which I intend to run for the English teachers in my school.

This will consist of coaching and mentoring other English teachers in my town, from other schools who wish to try their hand at teaching lessons of ECC.

Many teachers are resistant or reluctant to being observed, some have not been observed by a fellow professional since they have completed their formal



qualifications according to our educational legislation. The head teacher or head of department may have observed them for a short while but in most cases it is not a constructive learning experience. The observation forms are completed and the reports done but the progress and continuous learning are not accounted for. I plan on pairing the teachers in my school for peer observation and feedback and then I intend to have them all come to our teacher support group sessions where we can discuss, exchange ideas, give and offer feedback, and reflect on personal performance and ways of improvement.

### **Step 3 : Create**

**I intend to have teachers in my English department who have taken my course plan and then teach an ECC lesson. They will observe each other and I plan on observing one volunteer teacher.**

**Topic:** Suggested ECC Lesson, for teaching about American history

Participants: 13 English Teachers of the English department in my school

General Topic : How to teach optional classes of Culture & Civilization

About Teaching ECC ( Elements of Culture and Civilization) Lesson using CLIL approach ( grades 11th and 12<sup>th</sup>. 17-18 year old students, Level C1)

course book: "Eyewitness-Culture in a Changing World", by Adriana Redaelli & Daniela Invernizzi, A CLIL-Oriented Approach, Pearson-Longman, 2013.

Specific Topic: ECC Lesson, "Eyewitness", Section 7. Americas: **"Change Is Gonna Come" ( from the Civil war to the Civil Rights Movement). CLIL lesson ( history).**

## Step 1: Select and Set: ECC Lesson for teaching about American history

### Step 2: Plan:

Objectives	Activities
-plan and conduct an ECC lesson for an English optional class using the CLIL method	-participants work on groups to design and apply learning and practice activities for teaching a content at their choice from the ECC course book  ( integrated skills)
-devise learning and practice activities to help students understand and acquire specific vocabulary to discuss cultural aspects about the English-speaking world ( America) and raise cultural expression and awareness.	-in groups Pt use the internet to find other materials ( video films/ documentaries) and devise learning activities for the content they have chosen. They can decide for Listening and Speaking activities or Reading and Writing activities.
-devise and deliver learning and practice activities which stimulate the understanding of otherness and reduce prejudice, build attitudes and shape moral values and civic competencies	-Pt will design tasks for students to compare and contrast aspects from English-speaking countries ( America) and their country's cultural heritage, in order to help them explore, discuss, interpret and analyse specific details/facts/events.
-devise a full lesson plan using the CLIL –oriented approach in order to ECC in an optional course	Participants work in pairs to create a full lesson plan for a CLIL-oriented student-centered lesson

### **Step 3 : Explain, Model, Guide**

Procedure Chart: T/PPP = direct instruction by trainer P = participants work individually P/PPP = participants interact with each other

### **Step 4: Estimate and Anticipate**

Time: 2 hours

Materials: White board, markers, projector, computer, flip charts, colours.

### **Step 5: Reflect**

**Answer the questions below:**

1. Look at the interaction column in your procedure chart. Count how many activities are: T/PPP, and how many are either P or P/ PPP.

P or P/PPP: 6                      T: 4

Have you followed the 80/20 rule for student participation/ teacher-talk?

Yes, the session is student-centred, I give only instructions and feedback. Participants spend more time working individually and with each other.

2. Review the 10 Ways for Engaging Participants. Check (✓) which of the strategies you used in your plan.

-maintain balance between teacher instruction and student participation

- use a variety of questioning techniques ✓

-plan activities that appeal to different learning styles ✓

-encourage critical thinking ✓

-practice, do, create ✓

-use authentic materials or students bring own materials ✓

-create a comfortable environment ✓

-give students decision –making responsibilities✓

-encourage students to reflect ✓

3. Did you use at least three strategies? If yes, explain how you used three strategies. (Write 3-6 sentences )

I have used **authentic materials** and have invited participants to suggest other authentic resources from personal class experience.

I have made use of visuals (video materials from You Tube, course book), I have prompted discussions, I have asked them to write in groups a whole lesson plan on the topic using their creativity in order to foster critical thinking, build attitudes and shape moral values, **to suit different learning styles.(VARK)**

I have encouraged them to reflect on their own teaching and that of their peers when presenting their lesson plans.( **Critical Thinking**)

**Training Lesson Plan ( Model) – please turn over**

Time	Stage and Purpose	Interaction	Procedure	Explain, Model, Guide
20 min.	1. Warm Up Preview topic and session objectives and reflect on personal experience	T/PPP	Participants discuss the teaching curriculum for ECC ( offered by the ministry), reflect on personal experience with teaching ECC, and how it relates to the course book. Participants guess what the objective of the training session is. Objectives are written on the board. Participants discuss lesson sample from the “Eyewitness” course book:	Explain
30 min	2. Present examples of task-based learning and practice activities using the readings offered by the course book, from personal teaching experience. Compare and contrast ways of	T/PPP P P/PPP	Section 7, “Change is Gonna Come” and brainstorm ways of delivering the lesson. Participants discuss and compare personal approaches to focus students interest and raise motivation.	Model

	dealing with the topic.			
30 min	3.Using multi-media resources to teach about American history: You-Tube: Trailer: Sam Cooke and song "Change is Gonna Come"	P/PPP P T/PPP	Ask Pp in teams to come up with personal ideas of devising Listening and Speaking activities using the two videos.	Guide
40 min	Guided practice in creating a full CLIL lesson plan to teach the topic" Change is Gonna Come"	P/PPP P T/PPP	Pp work in groups to create their own lesson plan using the course book and other multi - media resources Groups present lesson plans. Trainer and participants give feedback on their work and reflect on what they would do differently when they do it again.	Guide

**Disclaimer:** All the above learning materials were created by me while completing different assignments for the training course I have taken in order to qualify as a teacher trainer. Some of the templates I used were part of the learning materials of the course content offered by Arizona State University.

**Conclusions:** The training course I have created for the final evaluation (and which was included in this article) is a potential learning activity which may be run in my school (or any other school) for teaching optional classes about culture and civilization.

Building intercultural competencies are of paramount importance to educate high school graduates and equip them with cognitive, analytical and critical skills which are so necessary to survive and thrive in the modern world. Once teachers and students understand the relevance of trans-cultural awareness for building intercultural competencies so as to improve knowledge and communication, the English classroom will become more animated and the sense of accomplishment will bring meaning and values to all parties concerned.

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***Palmina La Rosa – Be the sparkle of change! Be a teacher coach!***



I've been involved in teacher training and education for almost 30 years.

I founded Giga International House in 1997 and, in January 2021, we launched CTD – Coaching Training and Development, a division of Giga IH.

I became a qualified Coach, approved by International Coaching Federation (ICF) in 2018.

In 2020, I attended the High Impact Leadership Course, held at the University of Cambridge Institute of Sustainability Leadership.

I am currently the AISLi Accreditation and Inspection Coordinator (the Italian Association of Italian Language Schools). I look after the accreditation processes and inspection procedures and manage the AISLi inspectors' team.

I am also a Career Guidance Specialist accredited by ASNOR (the Italian Association of Career Guidance Specialists).

I am dedicated to pursuing excellence conveying passion and enthusiasm for my work.

## ***Be the sparkle of change! Be a teacher coach!***

To coach or not to coach? This is the question that many teachers ask themselves when talking about the need to acquire coaching skills to enhance students' performance in their learning process.

I would like to share my story to help teachers answer this question.

When I was a teenager, those who knew me would have not bet a penny to see me in a profession which would have involved giving presentations, leading teams, negotiating in public meetings, and making strategic decisions. I was very shy. However, I had dreams of being more confident. I had visions of myself as a successful woman but was struggling to be able to make it real. Then, along the path of my professional life as teacher first and educational manager later, I came across the practice of coaching and my life changed.

This life event made me think, "what if I had known about these coaching strategies when I was younger? Would my objectives have been easier to reach?". Coaching has played a fundamental role in my life because it helped me to reach my full potential. We, as teachers, also have this power: we can make a significant impact on our students' performance and ensure they maximize their talents.

So, what can we do to fulfil this mission? As language teachers, we aim at giving our students everything they need to achieve a high level of language competence. But being a successful student is not just about knowledge. It's about being able to perform as responsible citizens, to communicate effectively, to think critically and to creatively find solutions and opportunities. We should be able to support our students to enhance the life skills that are needed, no matter what their life journey will be outside our classrooms.

So, what can we do to enhance our students' competencies? The answer is integrating coaching techniques in our teaching.

But what is coaching? ICF, the International Coaching Federation, defines coaching as *“partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. The process of coaching often unlocks previously untapped sources of imagination, productivity and leadership. We all have goals we want to reach, challenges we're striving to overcome and times when we feel stuck. Partnering with a coach can change your life, setting you on a path to greater personal and professional fulfilment”*.

As teachers we should experience a shift in our techniques and methodologies. We should investigate the differences, and similarities, between teaching and coaching to facilitate this shift. We should analyse

the kind of actions that a teacher performs in the classroom as opposed to coaching.

A teacher teaches, explains, marks, supports, asks questions, gives answers, assesses. A coach guides, supports, asks questions, set goals. The actions are similar. However, there is a difference that is the way coaches support their coachees. It's the "how". It's using "powerful questioning techniques". It's supporting the coachee without giving the coach's personal view and input. It's about creating a relationship where coachees have the responsibility for their development.

Similarly, effective teachers are able to create a trustworthy environment. They are active listeners, they show interest in what the student says or thinks thanks to their questioning skill. They are empathetic and are able to create a good relationship with their students. A kind of relationship which becomes more like a partnership, one in which both sides, the teacher and the student, work together to reach a goal and where the teacher's role is to guide the student to explore possibilities and to empower them to find their way.

You may than argue, should all teachers become qualified coaches? The answer is no, or not necessary. What they need is to master some coaching techniques that they can apply in their classroom. And a miracle, a true miracle will happen.

In fact, the benefits of mastering coaching techniques are numerous. First of all, coaching empowers teachers to become better in their profession. The reason for this is that the teacher becomes more aware of the developmental process which lays behind coaching itself and is able to apply it for themselves and for their students. The teacher becomes more aware of what is most significant for their students.

Applying coaching techniques in the classroom also develops a mindset for success. The students become more aware of their objectives and are able to better focus on their strengths rather than on their weaknesses.

Coaching practices will support teachers to investigate on the “how” they teach and “how” their students learn and will teach them to give constructive and positive feedback. As a result, students will have an opportunity to reflect and develop.

This, and more, is what you can give your students if you acquire coaching techniques.

If these inputs resonate with you, you will now be able to answer the opening question of this article and you will start investigating the world of coaching, as a magic world of opportunities.

If you decide to integrate coaching techniques in your teaching methodology, you will become a teacher coach and you will be the sparkle of change.

***Ladies and Gentlemen, we give you ... the Storytellers!***



Alina Jiman



Andrada Jichici



Lia Mușină



Claudia Morar



Maria Mustăța



Luisa Filip



Palmina la Rosa



Cătălina Cocan