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# NEVER BEFORE

## № 32



<http://www.vsu.ru>

In this issue:

- ❖ Congratulations to our English Teachers  
❖ Towards UN English Language Day
- ❖ Recollecting Last Summer  
❖ Introducing a New ETA
- ❖ Greetings from Poland  
❖ Arts and Politics in English Classes

## Congratulations to our English Teachers



This spring the Voronezh Association of Teachers of English celebrates its 25th anniversary. Today we publish congratulations on this occasion to VATE from a 4th year student of Applied Mathematics and Mechanics Department Elena Em.

The teacher is the greatest profession in the world. Every student remembers the one who him taught. The tenses, conjunctions, the words and the rules, The one who described English grammar in use.

You act like a sculptor — day after day. You make a steadfast, rigid stone obey. The knowledge which is hard to obtain, You try to pass on in the easiest way.

This 25th anniversary is a high-day for us. Your work is worthy of great respect, thus We want to congratulate your adorable crew. For your work and your patience, thank you!

## Recollecting Last Summer

(Some thoughts after attending summer courses at the University of Bath, England)

Have you ever had a feeling that you want to hug a city? What I mean is to spread like a fog to cover the beige buildings, the trees, carved bridges and rivers. I couldn't think I might have such a feeling before I visited Bath last summer. Well, actually, during my stay there I was curious about every corner, every street, every English peculiarity that I may meet, and every English person I may speak to. The month spent in the ancient Roman

for instance, not trying to get first and knocking down their neighbours. And when did you last apologize to somebody who hit you? Never? But they do. To all the strangers who they might make feel inconvenient they do say sorry, and you have to get accustomed to it if you don't want to be a cad. (We were doing our best and on the second week we occasionally said sorry to the chair we accidentally collided with.)



VSU students in Bath with the Head of English Philology Chair Lubov Tsurikova and the English teachers Martin Griffiths and Ben Van Praag

I'm crazy about vintage dancing and historical costumes and I've found my cup of tea in England. Not only had I attended classes of the Regency dancing studio in Bath, but also visited a Fashion museum which represents the history of dresses, men's suits and shoes for the last 400–500 hundred years. It's amazing! You can take an audio guide with short stories about the various costumes as

city was full of music, sounds, songs, and do you know why? Because each new turn to a new square made you hear the magical sounds of flutes, guitars, or violins. Bath is famous among free musicians who travel from the north of the city to the south (or if we speak about Bath — top down as Bath was built in the form a bowl) and play melancholy and inspiring tunes giving pleasure to listeners and earning money for the next day.

well as try on a reconstructed dress of the XVII–XIX centuries absolutely for free!

Other museums in Bath offer special boxes for children with activities which backup what elderly visitors may read or listen to during the tour. Truly speaking, we've seen a great number of parents, who were interested in touching the cloth, guessing what century a spoon refers to, as well as making jigsaw puzzles of ancient maps and art masterpieces with their children or even instead of them. I guess it proves that they are not as snobbish as we are used to thinking of them.

Half of a year had passed before I understood that I had come across a lot of traditions, features that we were told about during our English classes. When did you last queue to buy something? Probably it was in the canteen downstairs, you might have been annoyed as you had a short break, great hunger and a dozen of people around you with the same desire. Well, you are not English, sorry. What came as a shock to me was the fact that Englishmen are silently queuing at the bus stop,

We absorbed the atmosphere of England, the soul of Bath, and as spring came I understood that I want to have this city in a small painted music box to be able to keep it near my heart all the time.

*Darya Kozelskaya*  
3rd year student of the department of Romance and Germanic Philology

## Towards UN English Language Day

In February 2010, the United Nations launched UN Language Days to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity as well as to promote equal use of all six of its official working languages throughout the Organization. French Language Day is celebrated on March 20th, Russian — on June 6th, Spanish — on October 12th, Arabic — on December 18th, Chinese — on April 20th. The UN English Language Day is observed annually on April 23rd and coincides with William Shakespeare's birthday and World Book and Copyright Day. On the eve of this day the first year students of the International Relations Department conducted a survey about English language in their lives and the role of Voronezh State University in enhancing students' knowledge of English.



VSU is completely different. At first it was hard to get used to "the new rules": to be active at EVERY lesson, to express your point of view on EACH issue, to do this and that. And I'm not mentioning the number of new words and expressions! I was totally out of my element! But everything has changed quickly. I fell in love with English! We discuss news, books, some unusual topics, etc. It's not boring any more.

**Sergey Filimonov:**

I've always asked myself: What is English for me? What role does it play in my life? I found the answer, it's my faithful helper who gives me a wonderful opportunity to socialize with people from different countries and make friends!

**Nikita Zozulya:**

I love English classes in my favorite university. Of course, they wouldn't be so interesting and exciting without our teachers. Due to their exceptional professionalism and effort every lesson gives us lots of knowledge which enhances our English skills. What I love most is when everybody expresses their own opinions about certain topics which make English classes memorable and informative.

**Tatyana Minakova:**

The first association with English classes of the majority of learners is boredom and difficulty. I can say for sure that people with such opinion would apparently change their mind if they attended our English lessons! They bring us a lot of pleasure and satisfaction. Our classes aren't just a process of getting knowledge. It is a place where we can fully express ourselves. Our English lessons involve various discussions and debates on every issue you can just imagine. It's also a great chance to get better acquainted with our class mates.

It would be a great mistake not to mention our fascinating teachers who pay loads of attention to every student. Our amazing tutors are an essential part of our team and it's thanks to them that our classes are so intriguing, entertaining, and challenging!

**Kristina Kazakova:**

To be honest English has never been my favorite subject. When I was at school, this language seemed boring to me. But English in

I'm learning not only to speak English, but also to think in English. But the most incredible thing is that it's just the beginning!

**Victoria Polukhina:**

What comes to my mind when I think about my English lessons at Voronezh State University? Well, it is, certainly, the creativity, efficiency and friendly atmosphere. Every time I go to my classes I know that I will definitely get new useful information and improve my language skills. During our English classes we discuss really important and significant topics, deliberate on the hottest issues, hold debates on controversial matters. Thanks to our teachers and their professionalism we broaden our minds, learn how to overcome all difficulties in studying a foreign language and just become more educated. Apart from that, our English group has a sense of community and we are always ready to help each other and cheer each other up.

**Tatyana Mishina:**

Learning a foreign language is not easy. It takes time, patience and years of dedication. I've been studying English for a long time and I know from personal experience how difficult it can be sometimes to find the motivation to move forward in times of defeat. Luckily for me, since I entered Voronezh State University the problem of staying inspired has disappeared. And that is because of our qualified teachers. Their lessons are always interesting and remarkable. In the classroom you are not afraid to think outside the box and express your honest opinion about any topic. It helps students not only to improve general language skills but also to broaden their horizons. I've learned lots of things already and I am looking forward to new lessons and surprising experiences.



# Introducing a New ETA

*This academic year the English Chair for the Science Departments of Voronezh University hosts a new English Teacher Assistant Jessica Gumucio. Today Jessica introduces herself to our readers and shares her impressions of life in Voronezh.*

I am twenty-two years old and a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant for the Department of English for Science Faculties of the Romanic and Germanic Philology Faculty. I help teach English to students who study Applied Mathematics & Mechanics and Computer Science. I have lived in Voronezh since September and will be here until the end of June.

I was born in Baltimore, Maryland but my family moved to North Carolina soon after I was born. Now my family lives in Liberty, North Carolina. My immediate family includes my mom, dad, and sister. I also have two half-brothers and



a large extended family that lives all along the East Coast. Both of my parents are from South America — my mom is from Peru and my dad is from Bolivia. My mom and dad are self-employed; they own a “bodega” — Spanish for small grocery store. They moved to the United States at an early age and lived there ever since. In every sense of the word, they are Americans. But they also have chosen to keep their Latino roots alive. I grew up speaking both English and Spanish at home and school. My parents made sure to raise my sister and me according to our Latin heritage. We learned the history, traditions, and culture of our family.

My hobbies include reading, programming, listening to music, dancing, and watching television series. I am obsessed with Russian literature and my favorite book is *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin. I also love *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky and *Omon Ra* by Victor Pelevin. But I will read basically anything; I'm a bookworm. I know how to program in Python, Java, JavaScript, and C++. I dabble in HTML, MathLab, Mathematica, and TeX. I'm currently trying to teach myself SQL, but that's easier said than done. I've been dancing since I could walk and I absolutely enjoy dancing Bachata, Merengue, Salsa, Kumbia, Modern, and Hip Hop. I am hooked on Tricia Miranda's dance choreography videos on YouTube. When I'm not busy teaching classes or practicing my language skills, you can find me at home religiously watching Netflix or walking around the city listening to music on my phone. I'm a huge fan of the Marvel films and *Game of Thrones* so I can talk possible theories anyday. And if you need music recommendations, I am your girl. I listen to everything from hip-hop to house music to country. My current favorite artists are Chance the Rapper, Kendrick Lamar, and The Lumineers.

I graduated from Davidson College in May of last year. I studied Mathematics, Computer Science, and Russian Studies during my four years there.

I graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics and a minor in Russian Studies. My focus in math is number theory and algebraic groups, while my focus in Russian Studies is twentieth-century Soviet literature. I have been studying Russian for 5 years now. While my friends and colleagues will say that my Russian is impressive, I adamantly believe my language skills are okay at best.

When people realize that I minored in Russian studies, their first question is “Why Russia?!” Well, my college, like most colleges and universities around the world, has a language requirement. I could have chosen to either study Spanish for two more years or study a new language. And of course, I chose to study a new language (Spanish can get awfully boring after almost 18 years). I gave myself two choices — Russian or German. By chance or maybe fate, my first class was Russian. And so I went to the class and I loved it! What solidified my love for Russia was my 20th-century literature class. We read Bulgakov, Nabokov, Zamyatin, and many others. I fell in love with Russian literature from then on. I continued to take language and literature classes throughout my four years and I almost decided to major in Russian Studies (unfortunately, I didn't have the time to double major in both Math and Russian Studies).

My first time in Russia was in Spring 2015. I studied abroad at the Independent University of Moscow and the National Research University Higher School of Economics in a program called “Math in Moscow” (corny, I know). It was an amazing experience to study math every day, learn to live independently, and finally practice my Russian with actual Russians, not just other university students. I studied in Moscow until May and then moved to Vladimir because I was awarded a Critical Language Scholarship. This scholarship allows the awardee to study the language full-time for a whole summer. I had intensive, all-day courses which included grammar, phonetics, literature, history, speaking practice and mass media. I also had time to explore nearby cities and towns! I was able to visit Suzdal, Bogolyubovo, Nizhy Novgorod, Tula and Saint Petersburg. That summer really helped improve my language skills in so many ways and I am thankful to my hosts and teachers, who helped me every day.

Now, I'm back in Russia, specifically in Voronezh and I couldn't be happier at this opportunity. I have traveled to many places around Voronezh, visited art and history museums, and met so many kind-hearted people. My students are all incredibly smart, focused, and energetic (most of the time). If there is anything to know about me is that I am an extremely protective person and passionate about helping others, especially when they come to me and ask for help. I may have a slight problem with saying no to people. But I am always willing to help when the other person is willing to do the work. So, when I see my students really trying, I absolutely will do anything to help them succeed. We have talked about many different topics, from the American elections to how to write mathematical proofs in English. I can only hope that my students have found these topics as interesting to learn about as I have found them to teach. I am extremely grateful to Marina Abramovna Sternina for allowing me to teach here at VGU. Without her, I wouldn't be here! She and my other colleagues have welcomed me with open arms! I am also grateful to Irina Karpenko, who has helped me from day one. Adjusting to this new life in Voronezh would have been one hundred times worse without her. My last comment can only be this: Everyone I have met here in Voronezh is welcome to visit me anytime with open arms and an open heart. You will always have a friend in me and a home wherever I am.

*Twice a year students of our University have an opportunity to apply for participation in one of the existing exchange programs and go to study abroad. One of those who became an exchange student this term is a 4th-year student of the Applied Mathematics, Informatics and Mechanics Department Andrey Volodin. Today he shares his impressions about his life and studies in Poland.*

## Greetings from Poland

It's already been 2 months since I first came to Poland. It was a bit terrifying at first. I have never left Russia for such a long period before, especially on my own.

In Poland I live in the city called Lublin. It is relatively big and is considered to be a “student” city as 30 % of its population are students. And that is really cool, as wherever you go there are young and fun people everywhere.

I was nervous and felt very lonely at first here. However everything soon turned out right. Poland has a lot in common with Russia. You can see familiar attributes wherever you go. That can be both entertaining and sad, depending on the conditions. But anyway, Poland did kind of a good job to be a European country. My favorite things here so far are:

1. Apply Pay is widely accepted, you can pay with your smartphone almost everywhere, which makes you feel really futuristic.
2. They have scheduled buses in Poland. That is simply amazing — you can see when the next bus will come and go to the station just a minute before it arrives.
3. They take care about old and/or disabled people. For example, there are special men in the places with lots of traffic who stop cars to allow old people to cross the road. Also, there is a rich infrastructure for deaf/blind people or those who have to use wheel-chairs. That is inspiring, and that is not even the capital of the country!
4. Polish girls are like Russian girls! That's a plus :)

The city itself is cute. It has a small old town, an old castle and several places to visit. It is not that beautiful, but it feels somewhat cozy, especially in good weather. I already ate ice-cream here, wearing a T-Shirt, while in Voronezh it was snow.

Of course the main purpose for me to come here is education. And it... hmm, didn't meet my expectations... fully. But don't get me wrong. It is somewhat cool to see how things work in a different country and experience other approaches. The system here is much better than what we have in Russia. Here you can pick a set of classes of your own choice. Also, the evaluation system is much better. It takes everything into account: from attendance to the exam mark.

But even though I study in one of the top universities in the city — Lublin University of Technology, there are still some problems. Teachers barely speak English. Sometimes it can't even be called English. They just say some words and you have to construct a sentence from them yourself. A lot of technologies that are being taught here are deprecated already and have little practical application. Anyway, it is still a very entertaining experience. And it is nice to compare this place to VSU and to see that we are actually not that bad. Really, I do feel proud of VSU here sometimes, because we have some things that are at least not worse, and sometimes even better.

I already miss my country but there are still so many things to do and see here, so I'm excited about what's coming next.

## Arts and Politics in English Classes

English classes during my Bachelor Degree studies made an invaluable contribution to the development of my language skills. They also enriched me with a profound knowledge in many realms directly connected with my professional interests in international politics. While reading myriads of texts about international affairs, discussing political news, and doing profession-oriented activities, we learnt a lot and it incredibly boosted my English proficiency. That is why, starting a Master Degree program in International Relations, I hardly imagined if there were any issues left for us which we had not touched yet. No doubt, there is always room for perfection, but after all, politics remains politics, I thought. It is quite difficult to have a complete rethink in this field after 4 years of studying world politics, both in Russian and in English.

Fortunately, I was wrong and the way out was to view professional matters from a different angle. This term during our English classes we were offered a chance to find links between politics and other spheres of life, such as art, sports and science. Although the connection is not initially evident, when going deeper into the topic you understand that all these realms are inextricably intertwined. To prove this idea, we were asked to investigate a topic which we liked and prepare a presentation. We were given full freedom to choose a topic from among the following themes: Sport as a Political Tool, Political Posters and Entertainment, Film Industry and Politics, and others.

I decided to speak on what happens when Politics and Art meet. My investigation proved a popular saying that “the sky is the limit for a gifted individual” and showed some features of well-known politicians we were unaware of. It turned out that key political figures try

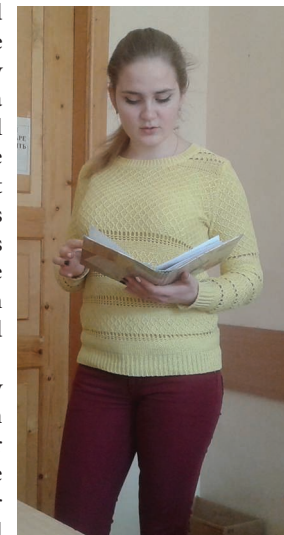
themselves in different arts. I was surprised to find out that Bill Clinton plays saxophone and even considered pursuing a music career before deciding to dedicate his life to public service and politics. Another American politician, Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, is an accomplished pianist. It was so unexpected to get to know that she is so skillful in playing the piano that Elizabeth II, Queen of England, in 2008 invited her to perform in Buckingham Palace. Silvio Berlusconi is a musician, too. He even released an album with songs written by him.

Top Russian political figures are also multi-talented. Our Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu is an artist: he is fond of painting. He prefers using a watercolor technique on wet paper. In addition, he enjoys woodcarving and even has his own home studio for his creative activities. Dmitry Medvedev is famous for his photos. His black and white photograph of the Tobolsk Kremlin was sold for 51 million rubles at a charity auction in St. Petersburg. To find out information about our president Vladimir Putin was of a particular interest for me. I can say that he is an all-round person, indeed. He is well-known in the world for his judo performances and fishing passion, but I also found out that he is not afraid to play the piano, sing songs and sell his pictures at charity events.

I must say that to work on the presentation was really fascinating for me because when I started to work on the topic I did not expect that such political giants are keen on something else, besides politics and, more than that, are extremely successful in what they do.

To sum up, I have to say that I like how we established connections between the topics of our professional interests and neighboring areas.

*Sophia Arkhipova*  
Master Degree student, 2nd year  
Department of International Relations



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