

## How John Haycraft changed the world of teacher training

Melanie Butler asks Brita Haycraft about the origins of the International House organisation



**I**t was London. It was the Swinging Sixties – love was all around and revolution was in the air.

In April 1962 an advertisement appeared in the *New Statesman* magazine. It read, ‘Courses for teachers of English to foreign students. 3 hours seminars per day. Class room practice.’

These words, placed in the paper by John Haycraft, founder of International House (universally known as IH), heralded another revolution, one in EFL teaching that would lead to the development of the four-week course – still the model of initial training for native-speaker teachers which predominates in most of the world.

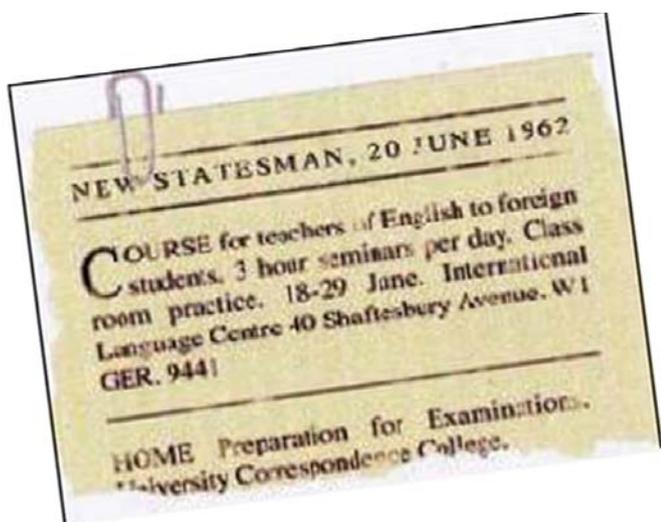
Although the very first IH course didn’t take four weeks, the other elements will be familiar to any teacher who has ever taken a ‘cert’: morning classes in grammar, pronunciation and the basics of teaching, and, from day one, afternoons spent in classroom practice. This exhilarating if terrifying rite of passage involves teaching real students while your course tutor and course mates observe you, ready to give feedback when the lesson ends.

**Where did the idea of observed classroom practice, revolutionary in its day, come from?**

To find out we asked Brita Haycraft, widow of John and cofounder of International House. She told us, ‘It was definitely John’s idea. The Yale Drama School, which he attended the year after Oxford, had inspired him with its collaborative system of students jointly putting on scenes, monitored by the tutor, everyone commenting on a performance afterwards.’

Classroom observation, another common feature of initial training, was also there from the beginning. According to Brita, IH teachers ‘would often notice one or two trainees at the back of the class taking notes, just as they themselves had experienced during their teacher-training course. It still goes on.’

Up until 1962 most training courses were run by school chains such as Berlitz and the British Schools Italy, which used a particular method of teaching and a set of materials and pre-planned lessons which teachers were trained to use and had to stick to religiously. ‘John wasn’t too keen on “methods”,’ Brita told us.



And neither was she. 'Teaching on summer courses once or twice for well-known institutions, we were handed one syllabus which was supposed to be repeated in the four parallel classes,' she recalls. 'The fourth time, you knew it by heart.'

Extraordinary to us after a decade of IH-type teaching: easy but kind of sterile.'

Not an approach that would be used at IH. True, to begin with trainees used one textbook, John Haycraft's BBC course *Getting On In English*, but soon 'other coursebooks were dipped into to offer a wider range of approaches' and the process of lesson-planning, familiar to generations of trainees, was born.

'There was an awful lot of pre-lesson photocopying on the then available machines. The TT teaching practice got everyone into the habit of thinking up our own lesson containing the target grammar point or vocab,' remembers Brita. 'Each lesson was newly created and never repeated from an earlier class for the same level. It was intensive but a very stimulating practice.'

The seminars, or sessions as they were originally called, were originally conducted by John Haycraft, who, since there was not yet any training for trainers, 'just asked the keenest of teachers to co-tutor with him'. A trainer training system gradually emerged. Potential trainers would start by being the third teaching practice tutor and sit in on the morning sessions, gradually progressing to doing the last session themselves. 'Gradually the course times lengthened, the number of courses increased and feedback would confirm if the new tutor had any flaws or not,' Brita explains. 'You could say that all the staff nurtured new teachers and each other. They still do.'

Any surplus IH-trained teachers easily found jobs in other schools in London and outside. Others went to *Academica Britanica y Casa Internacional* in Cordoba, the IH mother house founded by the Haycrafts in 1950s.

In the summer of 1962 an Italian school owner, Ausonio Zappa, arrived with a group of students from Rome and asked the Haycrafts to send him some teachers, and thus IH Rome was born. In 1963 IH London teacher Colin Macmillan started a school in Lisbon, and another member of the IH family was added. So began IH World, a group of language schools linked not by a single regimented method but by a new way of training teachers, and organised not as a commercial franchise operation but as a system of affiliation.

The demand for IH training courses grew rapidly. By the mid '70s IH London ran up to five TT courses a month and courses were also offered by IHs in Rome, Lisbon and Barcelona and were being planned for Cairo.

John Haycraft was determined to spread the message about the new way of training, even beyond the IH family. He tried to persuade other UK school owners to try it, 'but it took twelve years before Bell School did, prompted by John, as a teacher trainer of ours was moving to Cambridge', remembers Brita.

From that moment on, 'Bell was also deeply into teacher training' and then in 1978, the British exam board RSA rang up asking to certificate the IH teacher training courses. 'John, believing that education should be open to anyone, simply said yes. No strings attached.'

And so the RSA preparatory certificate was born, which was then acquired by Cambridge Esol and became the Celta. The teacher training revolution which began with that little ad in a London magazine became John Haycraft's gift to the world.