

From the Associates

IATEFL's Associates Representative, Les Kirkham, brings news from Teachers' Associations around the world.

We have a variety of items for this special pre-conference issue: a 'Point of view' article from Daniel Xerri, a member of our Associate in Malta (MELTA); an update from Associates in Namibia and India on the two projects that won funding from the Hornby Trust grant last year; and a photograph from my visit to the recent UzTEA (Uzbekistan) Associate's conference in Tashkent. I will include a full report about this visit in the next issue.

As always, please address any feedback or suggestions to me at leskirkham@gmail.com. I particularly look forward to any comments on Daniel's article. Please send this to me and I will include it in a subsequent issue. And if anyone else has a 'Point of view' topic they would like to air, please send that too.



Les Kirkham,
Associates
Representative



Some of the 300 participants at the UzTEA Conference at the Uzbek State University of World Languages, Tashkent, with the IATEFL Representative and their President



(Left to right): Feruza Rashidova (current President), Les Kirkham (IATEFL Associates Representative), Jamilya Gulyamova (past UzTEA President & current Deputy Director of the British Council in Uzbekistan)

POINT OF VIEW: Why collaborate? Associations pooling their knowledge, skills and resources

Daniel Xerri of MELTA (Malta)



Some time ago I attended a workshop based on a multinational project entitled 'Language Associations and Collaborative Support' (LACS). The purpose of this project was to increase collaboration amongst language associations in different countries. It also aimed to help with the dissemination of the work of the European Centre of Modern Languages (ECML), which was created by the Council of Europe to promote excellence and innovation in language teaching.

It was interesting to find that language associations all over Europe face similar challenges, with membership numbers, financial support and the publication of newsletters and other materials. Even though IATEFL already provides its associates with help in trying to form partnerships with other teacher associations, by also forming an alliance with associations that are not necessarily ELT-oriented they can achieve a wider sense of co-operation and further advantages.

Some possible benefits of collaboration

The most immediate benefit is the availability to an association's members of knowledge, skills and resources that are being promulgated by other associations. The annual confer-

ence organised by IATEFL offers something of the sort; however, other language associations in Europe and elsewhere organise conventions and publish materials that could be of interest to the members of an EFL association.

Whereas different associations can easily share their publications, attending international conventions is expensive. A feasible solution to this could be to organise a conference in one's own country and issue an international call for proposals through other associations, inviting submissions from speakers from other countries willing to travel from abroad and share their ideas. It would even be more feasible if an association could influence the implementation of a national ELT policy obliging teachers to keep a record of their continuous professional development because in this way attending such a conference will be considered a career plus. Such a conference will not just attract teachers of English but also teachers of other modern languages who might be interested in methods and techniques that can be applied to the teaching of their respective subjects.

Another area in which collaboration with other language associations could be of benefit to an ELT association is that of how such associations manage to influence national policies on language teaching and school accreditation. Since an association represents the views of its members, those members depend on their

association to give voice to their needs and concerns. Even though every country has its own contextual characteristics, an association can learn by collaborating with other associations that have successfully influenced the drafting and implementation of effective policies concerning language teaching.

Finally, given that the LACS project is meant to spread the work of the ECML with regard to new pedagogies, curricular design and language policies that address the needs of 21st century students and teachers, one of the most important benefits that can be derived from collaborating with different language associations is the dissemination of such work amongst as many teachers as possible.

Conclusion

It is undeniable that ELT associations depend almost entirely on the hard work of their committees and the unflagging support of their members. Such associations face a number of challenges but perhaps one way of overcoming some of these challenges is by ditching the practice of insularity and resolutely taking part in the pooling of resources, knowledge and skills that many more European and international language associations need to engage in.

Further information about the LACS project can be found at <http://lacs.ecml.at/>

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