



International Federation of Language Teacher Associations  
Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes

# The Nordic-Baltic Region

## Electronic Newsletter No.1 (March 2017)

### PRESIDENT's Note



Sigurborg Jónsdóttir, Iceland

A lot of questions have come up, at least in my country, after the Pisa results were published. How do we evaluate / assess our students and what are we evaluating? Are we still looking at students ability to decline verbs and fill in blanks or are we including other abilities such as to be able to use what they have learned in order to express themselves, both in writing and speaking? Have we moved from the end of term or

schoolyear exam? Do we use ongoing assessment with a lot of feedback to the students? Does one method exclude the other? This is where Associations of Language Teachers can step in and use their experience and know how to help their members in moving towards new and exciting ways of assessment and teaching by offering training and all kinds of on-line resources. Our students are so much more exposed to the target language than they used to be, thanks to the internet, that gives them a chance to learn a language in a different way, instead of focusing just on classical literature in class. Today's students are no longer as dependant on the teacher regarding direct contact with the language they are learning, as they used to be. Still they need our guidance in sorting through it all. We, in the Associations need to be on our feet and maintain an ongoing discussion amongst our members on this development, its advantages but also disadvantages. Quite often we curse for exemple Google translate, but it has its advantages. Therefore its interesting to read about the different seminars and workshops being offered by the Associations.

## **ESTONIA: FORTCOMING EVENTS**



Karola Velberg and Kati Bakradze (Estonian Association of Teachers of English board members).

The beginning of the school-year has brought many changes into the Estonian Association of Foreign Language Teachers. We have 5 new board members with

refreshing ideas and energy being guided by 2 grand highly experienced members Ene Peterson and Terje Kruusimaa. We are looking forward to new seminars, conferences,

and activities and work hard in order to offer the language teachers of Estonia the best programmes for personal as well as professional development.

In April we start with an active learning seminar which is organized by board members Terje Kruusimaa and Tiiu Müür. During the seminar participants learn how to combine movement and language acquisition, how to use space around them, and motivate students to move and play; also what to do when you have little materials to use in the classroom. The seminar is held in Tartu and participants have the possibility to visit Estonian National Museum.

Just before Tartu's seminar we have a seminar in Kohta-Järve, where we focus on how a student from a Russian school manages better in university and work life. Moreover, the situation with the Estonian, English and Russian languages in the eastern part of Estonia and the future for Russian schools and kindergartens are discussed and analyzed. The seminar is focusing on nurturing the needs of and collecting feedback from the Russian teachers of English and Estonian.

Estonian Association of Foreign Teachers's members also educate their teachers - Estonian Association of Teachers of Finnish have already had a suggestopedian seminar in January with the help of INNOVE and are now looking forward to the summer seminar. Also Estonian Association of Teachers of English have opened registration for EATE summer seminar in August, where the main theme is English language as a life skill. Association of Teachers of German have their annual conference „Deutsch variable“. These are the highlights of the grand seminars held annually alongside with side seminar all around the school year.

Teachers are facing revolution in teaching, learning and assessment, new ideas and innovative decisions are forming. Specifically, there is a tendency in Estonia to apply figurative assessment to the each child's educational progress in creative subjects like the arts, physical education, music. The ongoing type of giving feedback is mainly applied to the primary school students; nevertheless, the same system has been taken into use in some schools for the age group 7-12. That concerns the foreign languages, then according to the national curriculum for upper secondary schools, the prior division of foreign language into A- and B-languages is no longer valid and students enrol in the courses according to their language levels (B1 and B2 language courses).

By the time of graduation, pupils should have achieved the level of an independent user (B- level according the Common European Framework)) in at least two foreign languages. In all, motivating and meaningful learning and teaching, focusing on the gifted students as well as supporting each individual are just some of the hot topics discussed, applied and practised in Estonia.



Photos from the events in Latvia mentioned in the article.

## NEWS from STIL



Petrina Rós Karlsdóttir, President of STÍL

### Assessment and Evaluation

Here in Iceland there are a lot of changes going on in the curriculum, therefore the tests and exams are changing too. In the upper secondary education there are exams produced by each school and each teacher but not centralized. The last research shows us that the biggest part (60%) of Icelandic students go to University, almost one quarter studies (35%) craft and trade and almost 5% drop-out. There are new systems in grades in formal assessment in elementary schools. Students get their grades in Letters (A, B, C...). This is rather contested by the upper secondary school which gives grades in numeric (of/10) and it has been a little problematic how to class the students when they enter the upper secondary schools.

## Teacher Training

Recently the Teacher studies were extended to 5 years. So people have to study a lot longer but the wages and other conditions for young teachers have not been amended. So fewer people enter these studies than before. Those intending to teach in upper secondary schools apart from other courses, participate in a one year course preparing them for the actual teaching. The trainees have a certain school mostly in and around Reykjavík which is their "home school" and where they do the actual planning and teaching under the supervision of a

teacher trainer. The University together with these schools are responsible for the organisation but the financial resources come from the State, which is only enough for a week or two of teaching each term.

## Continuing Education by STIL

STIL will organize a seminar in relation with Institute of continuing education of the University of Iceland and get a specialist from abroad in the practical domain concerning directly the methods of teaching. The number of participants depends on the time and issue, the seminar is organized for 2 days and women teachers are usually in majority. Our next training seminar will take place in August 2017 about writing in Secondary school "PREPARING STUDENTS FOR ACADEMIC Writing assignments" by Carol NUMRICH, Colombia University.

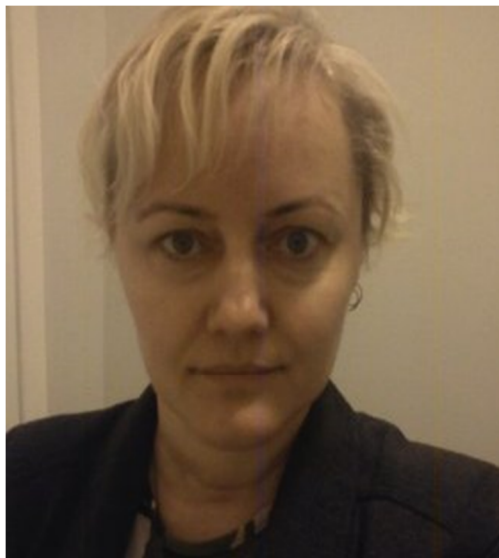
## Seminars and Conferences

We are planning to have a conference about educational system in Canada next fall. Since Malfridur is now on-line that is the much easier and we will observe and enjoy the results. Our general meeting will be 30th Mars 2017.

**Our main activity is as always to remind the authorities of the importance of language learning and language teaching. STIL wants also to organize workshops of dialogue between different levels of education in terms of curriculum changes.**

**Because of lack of financial support from the authorities STIL, as all association has had some financial problems to organize and follow our goals.**

## **Teacher Training and Secondary Exams in Latvia**



**Nora Kalnača, member of the Board of the Latvian Association of Teachers of English.**

**The students are marked with grades 1-10, of which 1-3 is not enough, 4-7 optimal and 8-10 high assessment. Each mark has a verbal description, for example, 6 is "almost good". Grades are given for all unit tests, sometimes for other tasks as well, for example, presentations, any kind of individual work, etc. For daily/weekly smaller tests, we grade the students with I (pass) or NI (not pass). To get an I, the student**

must complete the work for at least 45%. The number of assessments (unit tests) per semester must not be lower than the number of lessons per week. The students have English exams at the end of Grade 9 (B1) and 12 (B2). At the end of secondary school (Grade 12) the exams are centralised. All the students take the exam on the same day and there are strict regulations for missing the exam. Exam in one foreign language is obligatory, and very many students choose English. In most Universities, the certificate of English exam is a requirement, so students look carefully if their desired study programme at the university asks for it. If not, they can choose some other foreign language, which they had studied, and find to be easier. For the last couple of years, the secondary English exams are assessed as following: less than 5%- not pass (no certificate), 5-39%- insufficient for a level (with a certificate), 40-69%- level B1 (CEFR), 70-94%- level B2 (CEFR) and more than 95%- C1.

There are many opportunities to get teacher training. Most publishers organise their promotional events, and they always invite a guest speaker. The attendees get a certificate of attendance, which is officially recognised as all such events are approved. The Latvian Association of Teachers of English also organises one event a year: annual conference in August where all teachers, not only LATE members are invited to come and learn, and share their experience. There are a couple of events organised by the Ministry of Education.



**CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD TEST**

- Reliability
- Validity
- Usability
- Objectivity
- Comprehensiveness
- Discrimination



Figure 6-3. Effective tests have six primary characteristics.



# LITHUANIA: LANGUAGES - QUO VADIS?



Dr. Roma Kriaučiūnienė, President of LKPA

## Round-table Discussion on Language Policy in Higher Education

On January 20, 2017 Lithuanian State Language Commission together with the Institute of Foreign Languages of Vilnius University (VU) and Language Teachers' Association of Lithuania (LTAL) had a round-table discussion "Language Policy in Higher Schools: Objectives, Needs, Benefits."

The aim of the event was to bring together representatives of Lithuanian higher education administration and the Ministry of Education and Science, managers of foreign language institutes, heads of Lithuanian and other languages departments, professionals, and anyone interested in language policy issues in the area of Lithuanian higher education in order to discuss language policy in Lithuanian higher schools.

The discussion was attended by assoc. prof. dr. Valdas Jaskūnas, VU vice rector for studies, assoc. prof. dr. Jurgita Šiugždinienė, vice rector for studies of Kaunas University of Technology (KUT), Egidijus Kinderis, president of VU Student Representation, Egidijus Zaikauskas, translation and language coordinator of the European Commission Representation in Lithuania, assoc. prof. dr. Daiva Vaišnienė, chairperson of Lithuanian State Language Commission, and representatives of a number of Lithuanian universities and colleges (KUT, VDU, LMSU MRU, VU, LEU, VGTU, VIKO).

The participants of the meeting shared their various experiences in teaching Lithuanian and foreign languages for specific purposes based on different language policy and managerial approach of higher education institutions; they discussed the teaching and learning quality of academic Lithuanian language and other foreign languages, disputed the relationship between Lithuanian and other languages in higher schools, and surveyed the attitude of academic community towards creation of professional terminology in the mother tongue. It was emphasized that high school is not only to ensure the multilingual development, but also to warrant the continuity of learners' linguistic competencies acquired in general education institutions, thus increasing the potentials of high school graduates to integrate into the social, cultural, economic and political, professional and academic performance space of Europe.

The participants welcomed the four language model (mother tongue, state and two foreign languages) recommended by the European Union, the implementation of which depends upon creating favorable conditions by mutual commitment of all Lithuanian higher education institutions. It was noted that higher schools should strengthen students' motivation making them aware of the importance of Lithuanian and foreign languages, and being prepared to convey the quality of the acquired specialty knowledge on an academic level in various professional multilingual and multicultural environments, thus being able to write scientific texts in Lithuanian and foreign languages.

At the end of the discussion it was decided to pursue a joint language policy among Lithuanian higher education institutions ensuring the expansion of students' mother tongue and other language competences on an academic level.

Photos: Participants of the round-table discussion on language policy in higher education .



## Workshop Google Documents, as a Daily Tool: Options you Did Not Know

On January 25, 2017 Language Teachers' Association of Lithuania (LTAL) together with the Institute of Foreign Languages of Vilnius University (VU) invited language professionals to a workshop on the innovative educational technologies. The participants were introduced to practical application possibilities of Google documents in the study process, learned how to create multimodal teaching and learning content and attractive motivating educational environment for students of the modern generation, and how to spice learning activities and facilitate collaborative learning.

The seminar was conducted by Evelina Jaleniauskienė, LTAL board member, PhD student of Educational Sciences, lecturer of English of the Department of Modern Languages and Intercultural Communication of the Faculty of Social, Humanitarian and Arts Sciences of Kaunas University of Technology (KUT). She was assisted by Regina Petrylaitė and Tatjana Vėžytė, LTAL members, lecturers of the same department.



# USEFUL MATERIALS ON TESTING, EVALUATION and ASSESSMENT

The Cycle of Creating a Good Language Test:

<https://eltguide.wordpress.com/2016/11/08/the-cycle-of-creating-a-good-language-test/>

Testing and Evaluation of Language Skills

<http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jrme/papers/Vol-1%20Issue-2/F0123133.pdf?id=1662>

What is Language Testing?

<http://languagetesting.info/whatis/lt.html>

Evaluation and assessment

<http://www.ecml.at/Thematicareas/EvaluationandAssessment/tabid/1628/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

Common European Framework of References for Languages: Learning, Teaching. Assessment

[https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework\\_EN.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf)

Languages in Secondary Education. An Overview of National Tests in Europe. Euridyce Report.

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts\\_and\\_figures/187EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/187EN.pdf)

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