



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

The Nordic-Baltic Region

Electronic Newsletter No.2 (June 2021)

PRESIDENT's Note



Sigurborg Jónsdóttir, FIPLV NBR president

Dear Colleagues, we are happy to present to you the June issue of the NBR Newsletter. This is the last issue before everyone disappears into summer after a long and difficult school year. Please enjoy reading all the great articles prepared for you by our member associations. The Estonian article highlights the activities of the Communication Club of the teachers of Estonian as a second language. The Latvian Association talks about the various benefits of reading for other competences, both the printed version and an exciting online possibility. SUKOL in Finland introduces amongst other the results of surveys on „shool

attendance" in the time of online teaching together with the new Curriculum, starting this August. In the Lithuanian articles we read about a project on preparation for final language exams and more. Finally the Icelandic article informs us about school life these past months.

Hopefully the Covid situation will get better day by day and we can go back in the autumn to a fairly normal situation with students coming to school and interacting with each other and the teachers, without having second thoughts. It's time to learn from this extraordinary situation and look to the future. We teachers should use this time to recharge our batteries and enjoy all the wonderful things Summer has to offer.

Take good care and wishing you all the very best.

The European Language Gazette

20th Anniversary of the European Day of Languages. Preparations in Full Swing

It is difficult to believe that 20 years have now gone by since the inaugural European Day of Languages in 2002! With things starting to open up around Europe, we are optimistic that EDL will flourish again this year.



A Journey Across Europe's Languages

This downloadable booklet seeks to encourage interest in Europe's rich tapestry of languages from an early age. Children can accompany Lara on her journey to discover the different languages spoken across the continent. Sets of stickers and sound files covering the respective languages are also available for this resource which will be available in English in July with translations/adaptions into other languages following shortly afterwards: see

<https://edl.ecml.at/languagejourney> .



News from STIL



Dr. Hólmfríður Garðarsdóttir, President of STÍL, Reykjavík, Iceland.

An interesting and an exceptional school year has come to an end in Iceland. Teachers work environment and labour conditions have been completely turned

upside down by the pandemic throughout 2020 and 2021. Simultaneously, teacher's ability to reorganize, rearrange and modify their teaching methods, ways of working and work rhythms have radically changed and been appraised by educational authorities, Union leaders, headmasters, rectors, etc.

Teachers themselves are however exhausted and acknowledge that these past semesters have been challenging, demanding and strained their capacity to the maximum. This year's vacation-time will nevertheless be used to evaluate this unrepresented experience. What have been the positive and the negative outcomes? What changes are here to stay? Which ones are not productive and therefore have no place in the future language teaching and learning? What are the most effective and relevant teaching tools at the present? Do they work equally well for beginners, intermediate- and advanced learners? Do they fit every teacher's teaching practices and techniques? Are teachers still the centralized component of all teaching or is education slowly progressing towards a more autonomous learning?

All these questions, and many more will inevitably be discussed at teachers meetings, gatherings and conferences these coming years and amongst those are the FIPLV World Congress of Modern Languages, to be organized in Warsaw, Poland, 27-29 June, 2022 (see: <https://fiplv.com/>) and the FIPLV/NBR Conference Future of languages, to be organized in Reykjavík, Iceland, 8-10 June, 2023 (see: <https://vigdis.hi.is/en/events/fipltv-nbr-conference/>).

As most of you know the Future of languages conference was first scheduled for 2020, then postponed to 2021 and will now be offered in 2023. The draft program has been modified for the new dates, the guest speakers, Dr. Ofelia García (<http://ofeliagarcia.org>) and Ms. Sara Breslin (<https://www.ecml.at>), have confirmed their willingness to stay on and most of the already registered participants have ratified their participation. Nevertheless, when the times comes (after the FIPLV conference in Poland) STÍL, the Association of Languages Teachers in Iceland, will extend a renewed call for papers and open a platform for new participants from our extended community of active teachers and researchers in the field of language education.

The program will consist of theoretical and practical presentations as we join forces to learn from each other's experiences and practices, while simultaneously gaining knowledge about future perspectives and challenges. Through open

lectures, topic-based panels and workshops, and poster presentations, all interested will be able to select the activities that most correspond to their personal and/or professional interests. A wonderful venue for social gatherings will be open to all participants both inside and outside the conference venue in "Veröld - the house of Vigdís", at the University of Iceland.

The central aim of the conference is to offer teachers of languages and others interested a chance to consider the future of languages, language learning and teaching. Furthermore, it will offer a fantastic opportunity for collaboration between otherwise relatively small and isolated teachers associations. We truly believe that sharing research-based expertise with practical input from enthusiastic and dedicated educators from different educational surroundings and levels, such as primary- and secondary schools, community centres and higher education institutions, will contribute to the advancement and our deeper understanding of the tasks and challenges ahead.

Until then, the preparatory team and board of STÍL continue the preliminary work and all involved are committed to offer an up-to-date and interesting two-day conference followed by a day trip of tree planting to recompensate for our air travels 😊 Wishing you all a wonderful summer.

Language Teachers' Association of Lithuania (LKPA) Meeting the Demand of High School Graduates How To Perform Best During the State Exam?



Audronė Auškelienė, Director of Public Service Language Centre, active member of LKPA.

Covid-19 pandemics and online teaching

For the whole year lasting pandemics and online teaching has been a challenge for students and their teachers, especially for high school graduates, preparing to take State exams. For the vast majority of them online teaching/learning has required extra skills, time and efforts to adapt and transform to a different style of learning. Very likely, that without additional support, the majority of the students wouldn't have been able to prepare for the State exams properly and present themselves at their very best.

Developing foreign language communication competences to high school graduates preparing for the State examination

Language Teachers' Association of Lithuania (LKPA) prepared an application for the project that aims to help high school graduates to better prepare for the State examination of a foreign language (English, German or French). The project is being implemented by active members of LKPA - expert teachers of foreign languages working in Lithuanian high schools. The idea and initiative for this project came from language teaching and teacher-training experts of Public Service Language Centre.

Free online consultation sessions to high school graduates

From May 2021 LKPA experts started offering free online consultation sessions for high school graduates from all over the country on Zoom platform promoted on Ministry of Education platform www.pagalbamokytis.lt/abiturientams and LKPA website www.lkpa.vdu.lt. During these online consultation sessions students' communication speaking, listening, reading and writing skills will be developed. Before the exams that start in mid-June, 15 free consultations to high school graduates will be held online and later will be uploaded and offered for the study of rest of school graduates, who were not able to take part in virtual consultations before. The consultations will help school graduates to better prepare for the State examinations of foreign languages, learn to better apply communicational speaking strategies: plan, create and produce and correct their oral presentations in a monologue as well as in a dialogue.

Teacher training workshops to high school graduates' teachers

Another project activity is practical „hands-on“ training to language teachers of high school graduates „Developing and evaluating communication skills in preparation for the foreign language State examination.“Virtual trainings will take place online in September 2021 and firstly will be offered to sixty LKPA members, foreign language teachers of high school graduates, and afterwards, will be uploaded on YouTube channel and offered for other teachers throughout the country.

Relevance and perspectives of the project

As we truly believe, that the project activities will remain relevant and up-to-date after the project, we are ready to continue organizing free online consultation sessions for high school graduates and practical in-service teacher training workshops to language teachers of high school graduates high school graduates smooth and successful completion of the school year the best performance with the highest results during the State exams! Good luck, dear high school graduates!





Dr. Almantė Meškauskienė, Deputy Director of Foreign Languages Institute at Vytautas Magnus University, President of LKPA

The Institute of Foreign Languages of Vytautas Magnus University (VMU IFL), in cooperation with the Language Teachers' Association of Lithuania, organized the 6th International Scientific Conference "Sustainable Multilingualism" (Lith. Darnioji daugiakalbystė). The Conference was held online on June 4-5, 2021.

The importance of Sustainable Multilingualism

VMU IFL organized the first Conference dedicated to multilingualism in 2011. The aim was to contribute to the development of language policy in the country by providing a platform for researchers and language teaching practitioners to discuss the development of multilingualism, i.e. aspects of language preservation and language teaching and learning.

"Sustainable multilingualism is the process of ensuring the harmonious coexistence of languages in a country, city or institution and human consciousness. It is the education of a multilingual person who, through learning the home language and other languages and his/her intercultural experience, develops and improves his/her general communicative competence. This competence allows improving mother tongue, communicating in several languages, understanding, comprehending the written or spoken text of other languages, and mediating with others who do not speak a common language. The future belongs to multilingual people who have general communicative competence in several languages and are able to use those languages flexibly," says VMU IFL Prof. Dr. Nemira Mačianskienė, Chair of the Scientific Committee of "Sustainable Multilingualism".

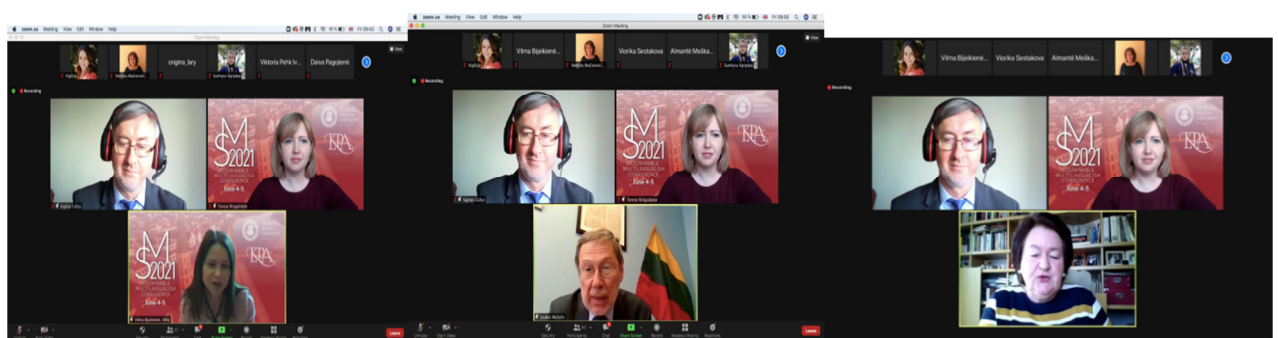
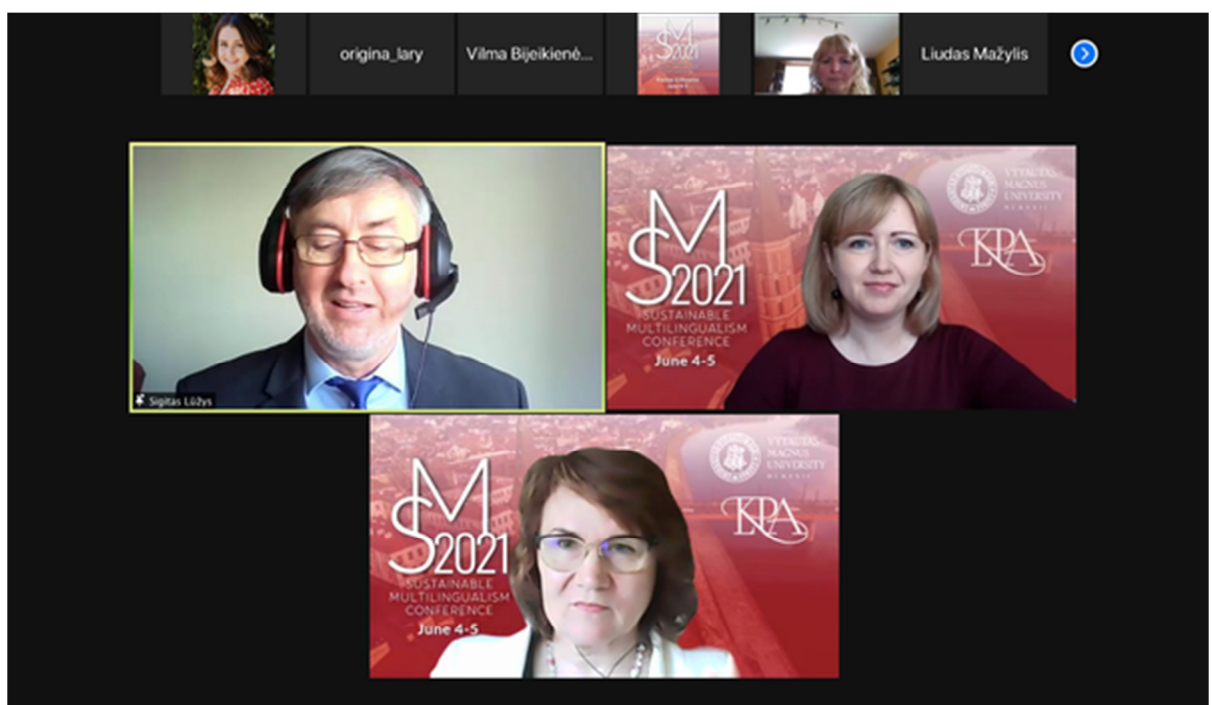
A Wide Range of Conference Themes

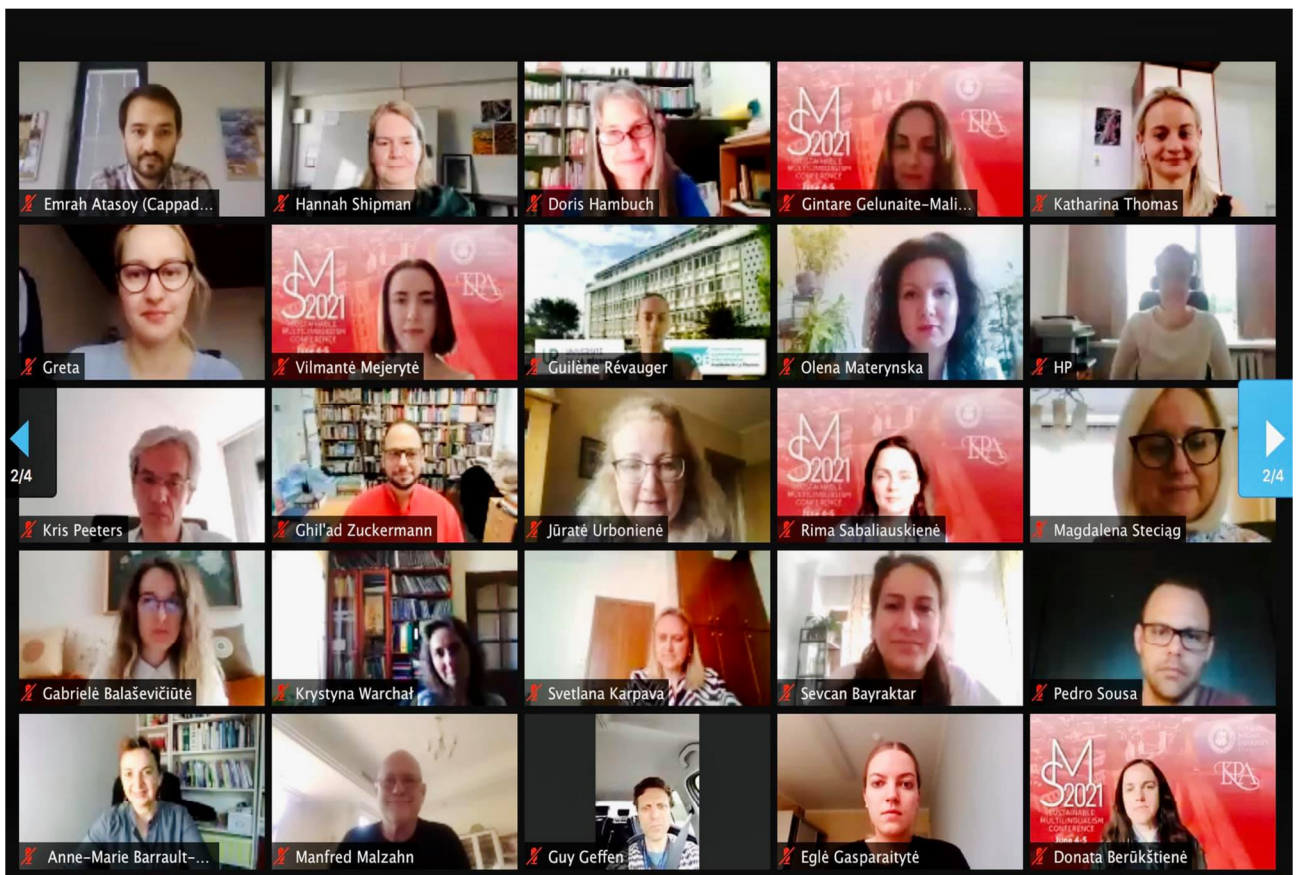
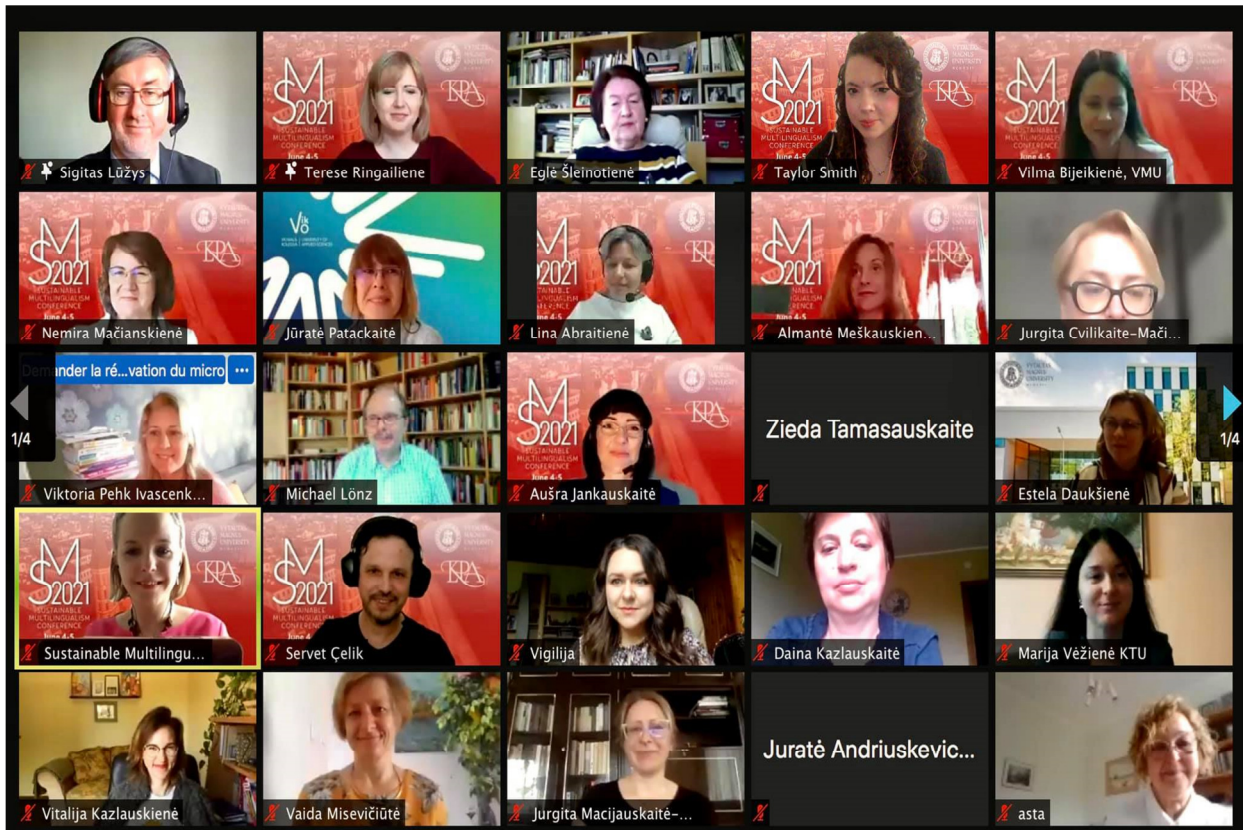
“Sustainable Multilingualism 2021” aimed at bringing together researchers, language policymakers, language teaching professionals and students, and all the interested in the discussion on preserving and nurturing multilingualism. As the Conference was held online this year, researchers from all over the world were invited to present their research and insights on the following topics (in English, Spanish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, French, Russian and German):

- **Language policy implementation (regional, national, institutional levels)**
- **Language preservation, revitalization, linguistic human rights**
- **Less widely spoken & taught languages**
- **Minority & regional languages**
- **Psycholinguistic perspectives of multilingualism**
- **Contemporary Lithuanian language studies**
- **Issues in translation and interpreting**
- **Virtual language teaching & learning**
- **Innovations in classroom language teaching and learning**
- **Plurilingual approach to language teaching & learning**
- **Linguistically sensitive teaching**
- **Content and Language Integrated Learning**
- **Intercultural communication in language teaching and learning**
- **Teaching and learning mediation competences**
- **Formative assessment**
- **Language teacher professional competence development**

Keynote Speeches by World-Famous Scholars

The conference “Sustainable Multilingualism” has always received attention from world-famous scholars and multilingualism specialists. This year's plenary speeches in English and Lithuanian were given by Ghil' Ad Zuckermann, Professor at the University of Adelaide (Australia), Déirdre Kirwan from Trinity College Dublin (Ireland) and VMU IFL Latin Lecturer, Sigita Lūžys, the winner of the Martynas Mažvydas Prize. The keynote speakers presented their latest research on the challenges of language teaching and learning as well as translation and the future of a multilingual world.





Lithuanian Studies at Vytautas Magnus University. Success Stories Made Possible by Dedication and Work

Our Story



Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) has already been acknowledged in various rankings as one of the most international universities of Lithuania, and an important part of its international reputation and outreach lies in the initiatives related to a wide scope of initiatives promoting Lithuanian language, culture and teaching.

In this newsletter, we shall introduce various initiatives organised or contributed to by VMU throughout the years to make Lithuania visible in the world and the world here in Lithuania. Just like VMU itself, our projects grow, evolve and change reacting to the ever-changing needs of the world: from academic study programmes, courses and training projects designed for students and teachers, to the inclusive and welcoming initiatives for immigrants, World Lithuanians and those who want to come back to Lithuania, explore their roots or make it their new home. From those who can experience Lithuania in person, to those who can reach us at the comfort of their home through digital platforms.

The core of the Lithuanian studies at VMU is World Lithuanian University (WLU), revived by the World Lithuanians and continuing the activities of the diaspora, dedicated to mobilising the academic community of World Lithuanians, taking care of fostering the protection of the memory of the diaspora and its future, raising awareness about the protection of the Lithuanian identity and the situation of the Lithuanian studies abroad. WLU has provided a

platform for a variety of meaningful initiatives, forums, and events both in Lithuania and abroad and is continuing its mission successfully.



Another far-reaching project is an initiative jointly implemented by VMU, Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Education Commission of the World Lithuanian Community and Lithuanian Embassy in Ireland, a Series of Forums of Lithuanian Education dedicated to the identity, bilingualism, and questions of the Lithuanian education.

Every summer, VMU hosts courses for Lithuanian teachers working abroad, (held online for the second time in a row), which serve as one more valuable tool for mobilizing the potential of Lithuanian studies, raising the qualification of teachers working in Lithuanian schools and Baltic centers.

For the majority of summers and winters within the last 22 years, foreigners with Lithuanian roots, members of the Baltic centers and ERASMUS+ students have been attending intensive Lithuanian language and culture courses at VMU. For the second year in a row, the courses are also held online. Every year, over one hundred students come to the courses, seeking to improve their different levels of Lithuanian language skills and the knowledge about Lithuania. The courses already unite over 3,000 students who studied Lithuanian in various Lithuanian programs and activities offered by VMU.

This year, VMU has also launched a one-semester (or one-year) Lithuanian language and culture study program for the Lithuanian diaspora and foreigners. These studies feature Lithuanian heritage and culture, traditions, customs, societal attitudes and values, as well as everyday realities.

Since 2017, VMU has been participating in the Lithuanian Academic Scheme for International Cooperation in Baltic Studies which will run until 2023. Project activities promote cooperation between the Baltic centers, active language and culture studies.

VMU also implements a variety of projects like Innovations in Lithuanian Studies: From Science to Practice or Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project diLILAC: "Digital transition of Lithuanian language and culture courses", university experts also prepare teaching aids, carry out Lithuanian study modules and programmes and, thus, annually increase the numbers of those who love and promote Lithuanian language: foreigners, communities abroad, education councils, societies and the diaspora.

While most of the projects, courses, studies and initiatives are made possible by the cooperation of various institutions, national and international stakeholders, it is also very important to note that they build a large and close-knit community of people who first and foremost experience this sense of Lithuanianess, and in a very personal way, become its ambassadors and join us in creating new ways for continue this line of work.

The VMU World Lithuanian University (WLU)



Bringing Lithuanians together around the world The World Lithuanian University is a platform at Vytautas Magnus University for the benefit of Lithuanian diaspora. The World Lithuanian University is a space where all Lithuanians around

the world can develop the practical imagination and intellectual capacity, stimulate their thinking, and foster their Lithuanian identity.

WLU is involved in a variety of activities of which the most important ones are the diasporic education, the collection of Lithuanian diaspora virtual archives, events for world Lithuanian scientists, scholars, researchers and students; education on history, culture and heritage of Lithuanian diaspora, contemporary Lithuanian migration and identity issues, and attention to the Lithuanian-oriented education in Lithuanian diaspora. More information:

<https://pasauliolietuviai.lt/en/>

16th World Lithuanian Symposium on Art sand Sciences



When the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania announced 2019 as the year of the World Lithuanians, VMU, together with the Lithuanian World Community, Ministry of Education, Science and Sports and Lithuanian Foundation, invited everyone to the 16th World Lithuanian Symposium on Arts and Sciences which took place at VMU on 14–16 November 2019.

This was a celebratory event, which continued the tradition that started 50 years ago (in 1969, Chicago, USA). Discussing questions of science, culture, economy and demography of Lithuania and its nation, the 16th World Lithuanian Symposium on Arts and Sciences emphasized the importance of the collective wisdom of the World Lithuanian academic community.

More information: <https://pasauliolietuviai.lt/en/xvi-world-lithuanian-symposium-on-arts-and-sciences/>

Forum for Lithuanian-oriented education in Lithuanian diaspora



The first Forum for Lithuanian-oriented education in Lithuanian diaspora took place on March 12th, 2021. An online event was organized by VMU, Lithuanian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, member of Lithuanian Parliament- The Education Committee of the Lithuanian World Community and Lithuanian Embassy in Ireland.

The document marked the need of support from the Lithuanian State to keep the existence of Lithuanian heritage schools and to promote the establishment of new schools. Provision of constant support to the maintenance of schools and assistance for teachers who work there was a strong argument as well.

More information available in Lithuanian here.

<https://pasauliolietuviai.lt/lituanistinio-ugdymo-forumodeklaracija/>

Lithuanian Language and Culture Course

The Lithuanian Language and Culture Course at Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) is known for deep-running traditions and well-earned reputation. It has been organised for more than 20 years, and since 2020, it has consolidated its potential and expertise with VMU Education Academy (former Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences), which has its own long and impressive history

of organising Lithuanian Language and Culture Courses. As a result, our potential students can choose from two sites, and experience Lithuania to the fullest.

Each summer (and winter), VMU offers an intensive 4-week course for those who want to improve their language skills, deepen the cultural knowledge, meet new people, and visit the most beautiful places in Lithuania. The course is celebrated by the global Lithuanian community members, people tracing their family tree, those who wish to work or study in Lithuania, foreigners who want to learn more about the rich and interesting Lithuanian history, and sometimes even by those who wish to talk to their Lithuanian significant others in his or her mother tongue. Every year, VMU welcomes people from more than 30 different countries.



The Lithuanian Language and Culture programme consists of Lithuanian language classes (available for all levels), cultural/ political/ economical / historical lectures, workshops, discussions, movie evenings, sightseeing tours and excursions to learn the language and deepen the understanding about Lithuanian life style and culture.

Since 2020, VMU offers the remote courses as well, making it possible for people to attend classes from wherever they are at that moment. When preparing the course program, different time zones are taken into consideration, thus, participants are able to successfully balance lectures with studies and/ or work. For the online courses to be equally engaging as the real-life ones, the

programme includes virtual visits to Lithuanian museums, Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, various quizzes, singing Lithuanian songs together, interactive remote “pink soup” cooking sessions, lectures of history, philosophy and other initiatives suggested by students and our team.

New students join the courses as a result of a highly positive feedback from the former participants, and it is not uncommon for the same participants to participate in the courses for more than 4 times. This can be explained by the fact that the courses offer a very immersive and diverse experience, covering not only academic subjects and show casing of cultural artefacts, but rather becoming apart of a community, consisting of the participants, organisers, mentors and everyone involved. It celebrates cultures of all of the participants, and allows people exploring different cultures, people, environments and themselves in them. Therefore, it is no coincidence that students often become Lithuanian language ambassadors in their countries, gain useful connections, participate in global projects, and even create families with people they have met there.

The good practice of Lithuanian Language and Culture course has inspired the development of Baltic Summer University (BSU) in 2017. BSU is a platform that offers a variety of summer courses that take place at the same time as the Lithuanian courses. This helps to create an immersive experience for all of the participants, join the activities outside of their courses and develop their intercultural, personal and academic skills. The list of courses every year is a bit different, but the most popular ones includes the courses of Methods in Molecular Genetics, Personal Branding, Creative Media Lab and Summer Internship Programme. University units can offer courses based on their areas of excellence and take advantage of the infrastructure and extra curricular opportunities offered by BSU platform. More information: bsu@vdu.lt

Participant testimonies

Diego Valencia, a Peruvian who moved to Lithuania with his Lithuanian wife and a dream to establish an organic farm here: “It is very important [to attend Lithuanian courses]. I don't want to live here without knowing Lithuanian language. I plan to have a business here, so language is very important.(...) Maybe because Lithuanian language is so archaic and old, you have numerous words to describe one verb or noun.”

Sophio Tabatadze, recent graduate of Master's studies at VMU Education Academy: "Lithuanian language has turned my life around. After my bachelor's studies and several visits to Vilnius, I learned to speak Lithuanian well and decided to study for my Master's in Lithuania (...). I am a great example for foreigners that Lithuania is a good place to live."

The Activities of LKPA were not Interrupted During the Pandemic



Juratė Patackaitė, LKPA, Vice President

On April 30 this year, a reporting meeting of the Language Teachers' Association of Lithuania and a seminar for the members of the Association took place. The seminar "NEARPOD Opportunities - All in One" and the use of this IT tool for distance learning was moderated by Vaida Misevičiūtė, lecturer at the Institute of Foreign Languages of the University of Vytautas Magnus and a member of LKPA. The workshop participants tested the NEARPOD platform in practice, and the lecturer Vaida answered the questions of the participants.

The President Almantė Meškauskienė (Deputy Director of the Institute of Foreign Languages of Vytautas Magnus University), who opened the reporting meeting, rejoiced at the active members of the association and their initiatives. The President introduced the activities fulfilled in 2020 and ongoing ones and invited everyone to the "Sustainable Multilingualism" Conference organized by VMU UKI in cooperation with LKPA, which will take place on June 4-5. The director of the Language Centre for Public Institutions Audronė Auškelienė, another member of the LKPA and the initiator of the project "Improving the communication skills of graduates in a foreign language in preparation for the

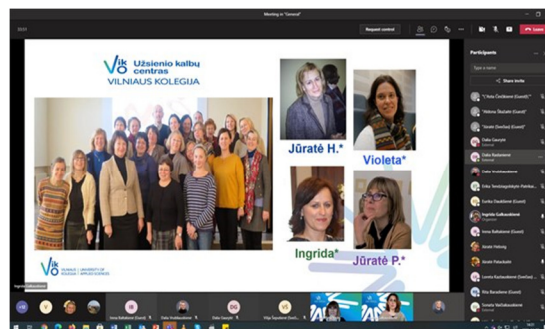
state exam in a foreign language”, presented the winning project, its team and planned activities, and expressed hope that such interesting activities will attract more members to the Association.

Honorary President Eglė Šleinotienė, FIPLV Secretary for Northern Europe and the Baltic States, shared the news of the associations of this region, the results of the activities of the Board of Governors of Lithuanian Teachers' Associations (LPAVT) and other significant matters for solving problems in the higher education and enlightenment system, also urged colleagues to report on their work done in the newsletters that she administers and distributes to FIPLV members since 2014. Jurate Patackaitė, Vice President of the Association (Head of the Foreign Languages Centre of Vilniaus kolegija/University of Applied Sciences) spoke on membership issues and presented the activities of the Council members in 2020. The financial statement was approved at the reporting meeting.

The second part of the meeting was devoted to presentations of activities and works of active, initiative members of the Association. The Vice-rector of VMU for public relations Dr. Vilma Bijeikienė provided interesting and useful information from the European Language Council, of which she is a member, and invited the members of the association to join international organizations. In other EU countries, in the opinion of the Vice-Rector, the focus on multilingualism has not diminished, and the Lithuanian linguists should speak and discuss it more boldly. Associate Professor of the Institute of Foreign Languages VU, Dr. Loreta Chodzkiene presented a project implemented by VU QuILL (Quality in Language Learning) and its partners. The project participants will discuss the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for higher education, focus on promoting EU languages and especially the business language, provide teachers with the opportunities to improve their skills and create an open access resource database for teaching languages.

A member of the Association Council dr. Olga Medvedeva told about the activities of the LKPA Book Readers' Club and reminded colleagues that they should not forget their hobbies. Even during quarantine, the club's readers communicate at a distance and discuss contemporary writers, focusing on EU authors, novels, stories and poems. Here they strive to get to know themselves better, get acquainted with the cultures of different countries and their

peoples, expand their horizons. Dr. Olga Medvedeva urged all interested LKPA members to join the Readers' Club. LKPA Council member Jūratė Derukaitė told the members of the association about the Centre for Lithuanian Studies and Foreign Languages of the University of Klaipėda, headed by her, and its activities. At the end of the meeting, the results of the survey "Needs and Expectations of LKPA Members" conducted by Council members Jūratė Patackaitė, Virginija Tuomaitė and Jūratė Derukaitė were presented and their implementation has been discussed.



**The 8th International Scientific Conference
Linguistic, Educational, and Intercultural Research
2021 (LEIC Research 2021), will be held online 21-22
October 2021 in Vilnius**



Prof. Roma Kriaučiūnienė, Director of Foreign Languages Institute at Vilnius University, former President of LKPA.

The conference is hosted by the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Faculty of Philology of Vilnius University (Lithuania) and is organized in collaboration with Leipzig University (Germany) and the Arqus European University Alliance.

The aim of the conference is to bring together researchers, university lecturers, and teachers, as well as representatives of educational institutions from different countries to discuss theoretical and practical issues on the following conference themes:

Linguistic Research: Cognitive Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Pragmatics, Corpus Linguistics, Lexicology, Meta-lexicography, Discourse studies/ Language in the Media, Public and other Types of Discourse.

Language Teaching and Learning: Language Acquisition, Language Testing, and Assessment, Language Teacher Education, Language Teaching Methodology.

Innovation in Language Teaching and Learning: Online Language Teaching and Testing, Language Curriculum Development and Syllabus Design.

Language Policy: Multilingualism, Languages and Rights, Minority and Regional Languages

Intercultural Education and Research. Literary Research.

We will be pleased to generate an atmosphere where you can share your expertise, experience, and resources with your colleagues.

To promote multilingualism, alongside keynote presentations and panel session to be held in English, we will offer a format of Interactive Language Cafés to be held in separate virtual rooms for each language of the Arqus European University Alliance with moderators for participants to discuss issues related to language, and to socialize in an informal setting.

We invite you to follow our updates on our conference website and on our conference Facebook account: <http://www.conference.uki.vu.lt/>

<https://www.facebook.com/onlineconferenceLEIR2021/>

We are looking forward to meeting you at the conference.



NEWS from ESTONIA

The Creative and Innovative Language Teaching Symposium 2021. For the first time online



Elen Laanemaa, Triin Kibar, Kerli Linnat, Aida Hatšaturjan, The Language Centre of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences

On 12th February 2021, the Language Centre of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences conducted the international one-day symposium dedicated to current creative and innovative methods of teaching foreign languages, including LSP, CLIL and EMI. For the past year and a half, the education system has been mastering the skills of distance learning to conduct not only regular instruction but also professional training courses, scientific and practical conferences. So, our educational institution switched to online mode as well and similarly our traditional biannual language learning and teaching conference was held online for the first time this year.

The purpose of the symposium was to discuss contemporary language learning and teaching methodology and share good experiences and foreign language teaching practices with our colleagues, partners and the wider audience of like-minded people.

The tradition of holding international conferences in the Language Centre of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences dates back to 2013, when we organized our first international conference on CLIL. Next year, we focused on the comparison of traditional and innovative teaching methods. In 2015, the theme

of the conference was multilingualism with its related problems and techniques. After a few years of hiatus (the academy was moving to a new building), we decided that 2019 is the year to bring the tradition back to life. Thus, the international symposium was supposed to be held in March in 2020 but was cancelled and postponed due to the state of the worldwide emergency. A year later, on a magical date, 12.02.2021, the symposium was successfully held and we finally got together - more than 120 registered participants in the vast Zoom platform already loved and mastered by many educational institutions.

This time there were three plenary speakers at the symposium. Anton Malmi, a PhD student from the University of Tartu (Estonia), gave an exciting presentation on "Some ways in which experimental phonetics can help language teaching" and talked about the experimental phonetics, which helps to improve pronunciation when learning a foreign language. Listeners were also intrigued by the creation of a special app that allows language learners to hone their pronunciation.

Mark Curcher from Tampere University of Applied Sciences (Finland) urged teachers to take a step back with a critical look at the web applications they use. The software giants came to our rescue a year ago but certainly not entirely disinterestedly - they got the same amount of lucrative user information with each set of classes. He recalled that we are primarily teachers, and when choosing IT tools, the goal should not be to reproduce classroom activities but the pedagogical task that they perform.

The last speaker at the plenary session was Liina Tammekänd, a lecturer from the University of Tartu (Estonia), who presented her fully online English course. The speaker discussed the skills students need and whether they can be taught online.

After the plenary presentations, the discussion continued in parallel seminars both in Estonian and in English. The first presenter in the English section was Tarmo Ahvenainen from the University of Applied Sciences of Southern Finland. He spoke briefly about the KiVAKO project and the tandem training research carried out within its framework. This form of language training is also familiar to the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, but the Finnish project involves many more participants and languages from all over the world, so an application

was created to find suitable language learner pairs in order to promote effective foreign language learning.

Roma Valiukienė, an experienced lecturer from the Language Center of Vilnius University (Lithuania), made a presentation on practical task-based language learning implemented online during the distance learning period. Special attention was paid to the use of scientific language and individual tasks both in the framework of language learning and in the evaluation process.

The presentation of Maia Boltovsky and Aigi Piirimees, lecturers from the Estonian Military Academy, was devoted to the research conducted at the Department of Foreign Languages of the academy on modern learning approach (MLA, in Estonian NÕK) and teaching values. The results of the survey showed that Estonian and Ukrainian students are significantly more dependent on teachers and less self-initiated, so attracting students from similar cultural background was quite a challenge for a teacher or lecturer using MLA.

The last presenter in the section on the English language was Marju Taukar, a lecturer from the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences. Her presentation was about the use of virtual reality in teaching LSP arousing great interest among the audience. Marju Taukar focused on the planning of educational activities and on one of the tasks performed in the CLIL classroom for the solution of misdemeanour cases.

In the Estonian-language workshops, teachers of Estonian as a second language Ly Leedu and Annika Bauer from Multilingua Language Centre (Estonia) presented samples of various quest games in "Treasure Hunt" format developed in cooperation of Multilingua Language Centre and the Estonian National Library which were originally intended for non-Estonian speakers. The presenters pointed out that the quest game approach allowed Estonian language learners to search for information as well as practise their listening, speaking and teamwork skills, develop their vocabulary and digital competence.

Next presenters were Tiina Rütmaa, Merilin Aruvee, Lea Nilson and Victoria Parmas from Tallinn University (Estonia). They talked about their project with an intriguing title "An Unobtrusive Language Learning", aimed at expanding knowledge about language learning and spreading methods and views on modern language learning. The innovation of integrating life or specialities is an optional

subject at Tallinn University that aims to bring together students from different professional backgrounds and allow them to achieve the overall goal of the course independently. The students set out to find ways to learn the language unnoticed in the course of a hobby.

The third speaker of the seminar, Ingrid Prees, a lecturer of Estonian from Virumaa College of Taltech (i.e. Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia), pointed out the keywords of our symposium, such as effective methods of language teaching and learning and the motivational aspects that contribute to one's progress in language learning. Ingrid Prees introduced several active training techniques in the workshop and presented the game "Tic-tac-toe" applied to the learners of Estonian with different levels of language proficiency.

In the final presentation of the seminar, Kairi Viil from TalTech spoke about how coaching skills can help in teaching LSP. The speaker stressed that in adult education it is important that what is being studied could be immediately used in real life. With such language learning, the teacher cannot be in their comfort zone or use textbooks. Both the instructor and the student are experts in their field and learn a lot from each other.

All in all, the symposium may be considered a success, it involved the entire audience in a discussion on new language teaching methods and approaches, invited them to debate and think creatively from today's perspective. The Language Center thanks everyone who contributed to the success of the symposium.

For more information, we invite our readers to visit the homepage of the symposium here: https://www.sisekaitse.ee/et/symposium-creative-and-innovative-language-teaching?language_content_entity=et



The Communication Club of the Teachers of Estonian as a Second Language Started at Full Speed



Ingrid Prees, Chair of the Association of the Teachers of Estonian as a Second Language

The Association of the Teachers of Estonian as a Second Language started the Communication Club in September last year and has had monthly meetings until the end of May this year. The meetings took place in the evenings every last Friday. The objective of the club is to bring the members closer to each other, make them feel as one family and share practical experience.

The Association re-started its activity after a long pause in June 2020. By the beginning of the academic year we had to acknowledge that face-to-face meetings in the event of pandemic were impossible. That is why and how the idea of conducting regular Zoom communication club meetings was created. The Club meetings enable to benefit from club activities as for members as for non-members.

According to Ingrid Prees who is the initiator of the Club and Chair of the Association the first club meetings were relatively modest considering the number of participants. As time went on the interest in meetings and sharing experience started to grow step by step. It was quite a surprise when language teachers from Finland and Germany showed their interest in our club activities. In total we had seven evening club meetings. Every club meeting was conducted on a different topic and by different teachers. Board members introduced interesting interactive websites, gave tips for using board games and songs in a language classroom and provided method-logical guidance for conducting Estonian classes. Long-standing members Ljudmilla Teperik and Nelli Kuldmaa introduced

thematic activities on the example of Tammiku lower secondary school in Kohtla-Järve. Their school is a member of a comprehensive school-based physical activity program with flexible design.

During seven club meetings non-members (as teachers as language specialists) were also kindly ready to share their experience. Teachers of Estonian Dina Jankovskaja and Marina Säkki from Soldino upper secondary school in Narva introduced different methodological techniques to make language learning more enjoyable and effective. Senior lexicographer Jelena Kallas from the Institute of the Estonian Language (<https://www.eki.ee/EN/>) has been our guest several times. During our last club meeting on May 28 Jelena Kallas together with her colleague Krsitina Koppel conducted the discussion on the topic "The use of language portals Sõnaveeb and Learner`s Sõnaveeb in practice"

Sõnaveeb <https://sonaveeb.ee/?lang=en> , Learner`s Sõnaveeb <https://sonaveeb.ee/lite>

Summer holidays have started, and the Communication Club is on holiday in order to start with new Zoom meetings in autumn, full of energy and ideas.

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EATE SUMMER SEMINAR 2021



Ilmar Anvelt, EATE Committee member

Although the virus situation in Estonia would have allowed the Estonian Association of Teachers of English (EATE) to organise our customary Summer

Seminar last year, we still decided to cancel it because of the great uncertainty earlier in spring when it was time for preparations.

This year, we hope that our Summer Seminar will be held in the resort town of Pärnu on the Baltic coast towards the end of August (24-25) as usual. Because of some rearrangements we cannot use our usual venue - Pärnu College of the University of Tartu. Therefore, this time's Seminar will take place in a school building (Lydia Koidula Gymnasium) instead. The good news at that is that the school allowed us to use the rooms for free.

There will be speakers from several Estonian schools and universities. Unfortunately, most foreign presenters still cannot be present in person but will make their presentations by video.

As the term in office of the current EATE Committee is running out, there will be elections of the new Committee. We would like to find new active candidates who would help carry on the activities of our organization.

EATE will celebrate its 30th anniversary in autumn. As the attendance of our Summer Seminars is usually greater than in autumn, we decided to have a modest celebration in August with cake and snacks and a surprise speaker.

Warm Greetings from Estival Finland!



Outi Vilkuna, Chair, The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL
outi.vilkuna@sukol.fi , <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/estival>

What an academic year this has been: a dive to the deep end of the pool with overnight changes in teaching methods and platforms demanding. Constant changes and not knowing how long situations would last demanded utmost resilience from all involved from top to bottom in each establishment from all involved alike. Great concerns arose about the equitability and reachfulness of such a leap to all concerned, of course main focus being on the pupils / students. Socio-economical and geographical aspects (also within Finland) had notable impact on how well at distance teaching and education fulfilled its' goals.

In Finland teachers have also been preparing the new upper secondary national curriculum which comes to force from August 2021 as well as the new laws on extension of compulsory schooling to all and the new regulations on assessment at the end of the first cycle (lower secondary education).

A survey has revealed an increase in school attendance problems among lower-secondary school learners in Finland. The VIP special support networks survey was funded by the Finnish National Agency for Education. It asked for school staff opinions on attendance in the 2019-2020 school year. Most respondents estimated that the number of learners regularly absent from school had increased. The number of learners whose absenteeism clearly affects their learning is estimated to be over 4,000 in lower-secondary schools in Finland. This represents approximately 2-3% of learners, who need special arrangements to be made in school to ensure their attendance and meet their learning needs.

The reasons for absenteeism are wide-ranging and include illness, problems at home and social problems at school, such as bullying. The COVID-19 pandemic has also contributed to absenteeism in Finland: a study by the University of Helsinki and Tampere University in May 2020 found that 8% of teachers had been unable to make any contact with some of their learners during the school closures.

Attendance problems appear to be equally common among both girls and boys. Learning difficulties, such as difficulties with reading and writing, are more common in learners with attendance problems. The EDUFI survey found that most learners with attendance problems received intensified or special support when in school. Teachers reported that the best ways to tackle absenteeism were individualised education, multi-disciplinary co-operation and support for learners' families.

The aim of the two new passed laws is to ensure the academic level of the Finnish population and prevent social exclusion. By the end of 2019, altogether 3,435,387 persons, or 74 per cent of the population aged 15 or over had completed a post-comprehensive level qualification. The share of persons with an educational qualification grew by one percentage point from the year before. Thirty-two per cent of the population had completed a tertiary level qualification. This and more interesting statistics are to be found here

<https://findikaattori.fi/en>

Over 23 000 applicants to higher education institutions' English-taught study programmes and art study programmes. A record number of applicants participated in this spring's first joint application to higher education: the number is approx. 3000 more than the number of applicants in the corresponding joint application last spring. There are also more study places available. The application included English-taught study programmes, studies offered by the University of the Arts and the theatre study programme at Tampere University.

<https://studyinfo.fi/wp2/en/>

The European Commission opened the first calls for proposals under the Erasmus+ programme period 2021-2027 on 25 March 2021. The deadlines for learning mobility and Partnership for cooperation applications are in May. In addition to familiar actions, funding is also available for new actions that enhance European cooperation. In the new programme period 2021-2027, the priorities of Erasmus+ and its sister programme (European Solidarity Corps) are inclusion, digitalisation and environmental responsibility. Participation in the programmes is facilitated so that newcomer organisations and small organisations can also benefit from the opportunities provided by the programmes. In Finland we anticipate there will be great interest to these programmes.

The reports on languages and other subject choices in general upper secondary education provide information on the choices the pupils who have completed the general upper secondary education syllabus have made in learning foreign languages and for other subjects. In the opening screen of the report, users can select the geographical view (region) or the organisational view (education provider). Data is available for the 2010-2017 reference period (Note! Since 2011, data has been collected every two years).

<https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/general/Pages/Kieli--ja-muut-ainevalinnat.aspx>

The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL is launching a virtual platform discussion event on August 31st inviting all Finnish Labour Unions, Employer Unions, the Finnish Ministry of Education and other parties of interest to join. The event will be opened by two lectures of topical issues:

1. The multilingual Finland of the Future: challenges and solution, professor emeritus Riitta Pyykkö, university of Turku
2. How choosing to study foreign languages and one's school is related to educational equality professor Sonja Kosunen, University of Helsinki

After the opening lectures there will be seven workshops on issues from preschooling to future teacher training

https://www.sukol.fi/liitto/koulutuskalenteri/keskustelutilaisuus_kieltenopetuksen_tilasta_ja_tulevaisuudesta.63.html

Something to look forward to and a way to keep the discussion on the importance of learning foreign languages going. Have a relaxing summer!

Latvian Association of Teachers of English



Inga Linde, LATE president

Spring period was very intensive for teachers in Latvia as in most of the schools the lessons were conducted online which immensely increases the workload. Nevertheless, we managed to organise a workshop for teachers and the

LATE/Pearson "Reading Circle" project for students was carried out all through the year.

On 17th May, 2021 an online workshop "Developing Engagement in a Period of Change: Visible Thinking and Building Core Vocabulary" was conducted by Dace Miška, Oxford University Press representative in Latvia.

In the first session Dace discussed the role of visible thinking in fostering deep learning and the benefits the students will derive. Bearing in mind the challenges of using thinking routines in the ELT classroom, the teachers had the chance to explore possible solutions. The teachers had a chance to focus on different thinking skills to see how they can support the students and how teachers can incorporate them into the infrastructure of their classes.

The second session emphasized that Oxford 3000 and Oxford 5000 are research-based word lists that were designed to help learners build a core vocabulary of high-frequency words and phrases. Teachers had a chance to extend their knowledge on how the word lists were compiled, how the words are now graded by CEFR level and how both teachers and learners can use them build vocabulary in manageable stages and focus their efforts on high-frequency, high-value words that will enable learners to build a solid, core vocabulary.

LATE is grateful also to Iveta Vītola, Pearson Regional Manager for the Baltics, for the cooperation and support of LATE activities, and particularly about the "Reading Circle" project for students. This was the second project year and students from 16 schools had the chance to read 8 Pearson Graded Readers books during the school year.

Although due to the Covid-19 pandemic schools had to shift to the online learning, teachers managed to carry on reading using the online codes provided by Iveta Vītola and Pearson.

Laura Ende, one of the "Reading Circle" teachers says, "Reading online is a great way how to motivate and encourage our students to read. There are many advantages. For instance, listening to the recording while reading the text. It is easy to follow the text because the sentence you are listening to, appears highlighted. It is perfect for different levels of English. Student can adapt the size of the letters, page layout according to their needs. I ask my students to vote for the book they are going to read. A chapter per week is a requirement.

The task is to write a paragraph where they predict what will happen next. It is done before reading next chapter without a doubt. If the students are asked to read one book, it is easier for a teacher to think about various tasks and discuss the events or questions raised. Have you noticed that students practice listening, writing, and speaking skills by reading online? What a great tool to learn the language!"

Reading Circle Project

Sharing experience: Laura Ende,
Salacgriva Secondary school



As Laura says, "Braveheart is an excellent choice for reading! While reading it students had to write down important information (quotes, descriptions...etc.). After that the students were given a template of a sword and they could decorate it. Students had to put down the information they considered to be important and then present it and explain why they chose the particular quote and what they liked/didn't like about the book."

The school year is over and teachers are already planning the work of the next school year. Meanwhile, the Latvian Association of Teachers of English is getting ready for our annual LATE conference "Setting Goals; Meeting Goals" which will be held online on 25th-26th. August, 2021.

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