



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

The Nordic-Baltic Region

Electronic Newsletter No.1 (March 2021)

PRESIDENT's Notes



Sigurborg Jónsdóttir, FIPLV NBR president, Iceland

As previous Newsletters, this one is coloured by the pandemic. Despite our hopes at the beginning of this year, we are still waiting for the completion of vaccination and a new beginning. The situation varies between the countries. We have been lucky in Iceland to have had schools open since January just until a few days before the Easter break. But we hope to be able to open again after Easter. This uncertain situation has taken its toll everywhere. Surveys show that attendance and learning is not the same. Many pupils need the solid frame given by schools. It is difficult for teachers to keep pupils motivated the longer this uncertainty continues. Despite this the associations are doing

their best to support teachers, introducing new ideas and keeping up with the support by organising on-line meetings, where teachers can discuss their concerns and ideas with other colleagues. We know that it will not replace the face-to-face meeting and socializing, but still, we are able to maintain a certain amount of personal contact.

This is where a medium like Facebook comes in handy. NBR has a Facebook-site: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/677820838960243> as I am sure, many of you are aware of. I would like to appeal to all our members to post interesting things relating to language teaching and learning. We are so lucky to have our brilliant Eglė Šleinotienė posting so many interesting ideas and articles. But it would be wonderful, if more members would post things they would like to share with others. As an umbrella organisation, we represent many wonderful languages taught in our countries. Let them flower like the wonderful dandelions at Easter.

Enjoy a relaxing holiday. Stay safe and keep up the good spirit!



ECML OFFERS NEW MATERIALS

**“ProSign - Promoting excellence in sign language instruction”:
cutting-edge resources for sign language teacher education
and programmes where sign languages are taught**

The website is in both International Sign language and English and has been developed in a bottom-up process involving deaf experts and experienced sign language teachers from inception to completion. The resources contained on the site are intended for sign language teachers, sign language teacher educators, curriculum developers, sign language evaluators, and professionals involved in sign language teaching, learning and assessment.

The ProSign resources integrate sign language education into Council of Europe language policy developments, building upon the work carried out between 2012-15 to establish European standards for sign languages for professional purposes in line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The highlights include a model

of a signed version of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and different ways in which it can be used by teachers and learners. There are examples and resources for the assessment of signed language learners' proficiency as well as an adaptation of all CEFR levels to sign languages (from A1 to C2) in a modality neutral version. This work is directly related to the latest edition of the CEFR Companion Volume.

These cutting-edge resources will enhance quality, professionalism and standardization of sign language teacher education and programmes where sign languages are taught. Moreover, they will help increase awareness of the linguistic and cultural diversity of sign languages in Europe, and of the importance of sign language teaching and learning within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

This text and further promotional information is also available in International Sign language and English. www.ecml.at/prosign

“Inspiring Language Learning and Teaching in the Early Years – Why it Matters and What it Looks like for Children Age 3-12”: New Resource Website for Pre-primary and Primary Teachers and Educators

This website is packed with resources and strategies for teachers and educators in the pre-primary and primary sectors to help young children develop their linguistic and intercultural competences. The resources take account of the linguistic repertoires of children – the different languages they encounter at home, at school and in society – so that they can engage successfully with linguistic and cultural diversity. They are underpinned by a set of key guiding principles, also available on the website.

Users will become more aware of the benefits of early language learning in the context of multilingual classrooms and can choose from an extensive bank of practical classroom materials and inspiring stories, organised into three age groups (3-6, 6-9, 9-12-year-olds).

These pedagogical resources will help create a great language learning experience which is stimulating and enjoyable for learners and teachers alike!

www.ecml.at/inspiringearlylearning

ECML Workshops in 2021: How to Get Involved?

Individuals with a special interest and professional background in the topic of one of the ECML project workshops listed below are invited to take up contact with the ECML National Nominating Authority in their country so that they can be considered for participation.

29-30 April 2021 (part I - online) and 16-17 September 2021 (part II). Workshop "CEFR Companion Volume implementation"

18-19 May 2021. Workshop "Mediation in teaching, learning and assessment"

22-23 June 2021. Workshop "Digital citizenship through language education"

28-29 September 2021. Workshop "Developing teacher competences for pluralistic approach"

November 2021 - dates to be confirmed. Workshop "Resources for assessing the home language competences of migrant pupils"

This particular workshop is open to all 50 countries which are signatory to the European Cultural Convention. If you are working in a country that is party to the European Cultural Convention but not a member state of the ECML (i.e. Azerbaijan, Belgium, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Monaco, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, San Marino, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom), you are welcome to contact the ECML secretariat to indicate your interest. ECML calendar is available here:

<https://www.ecml.at/ECML-Programme/ECMLCalendar/tabid/257/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

Greetings from Finland



Outi VILKUNA, chair of The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL. (https://www.sukol.fi/in_english)

We all set our hopes that the pandemic situation in our respective countries would be showing signs of diminishing by the beginning of the year 2021 and then we hoped that rapidly conducted mass vaccinations would solve the situation entirely by the beginning of summer and then finally, there would be some normality back into our lives. It does not seem to be happening and the only thing we can take for granted is that there is always a new normal to adjust to. We are all growing a little tired to the non-optional remote learning and working and what is thus proven is that we humans do really need our daily microencounters with our colleagues and students; they are the sugar and spice for our brains as well as for our emotional and social wellbeing.

<https://www.oph.fi/en/news/2020/finnish-schools-coped-well-transition-distance-education-students-hope-more-interaction>

Finnish survey reveals increase in school absenteeism showing that approximately 2-3% of all lower secondary school pupils in Finland constantly have a large number of absences from school. Non-attendance has negative consequences for both the individual learner and for wider society. It has been linked to mental health problems and school drop-out, which can both lead to difficulties finding employment and other financial and health problems later in life. 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.

The coronavirus situation has complicated also the organisation of National Certificate of Language Proficiency (YKI) tests. The YKI system is doing its best to ensure that a maximum number of candidates in need of the YKI certificate can sit the test as soon as possible. This certificate may be needed when applying for Finnish citizenship, a study place or a job, for example. In addition to YKI tests, language proficiency in Finnish and Swedish can be demonstrated in the Civil service language proficiency certificate system.

A record number of applicants, over 23 000, 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.

At these demanding times we have also had various ongoing development projects regarding eg. the renewal of the national assessment criteria of basic education diploma (perusopetuksen päättöarviointi) and the renewal of the curriculum and

assessment criteria for general upper secondary education (LOPS2021). The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL has offered training in both via webinars https://www.kieliverkosto.fi/en?set_language=en

Another imposing change in the field of education is the extension of the compulsory education. The aim of the Government Programme is that, having completed their comprehensive school education, all students gain an upper secondary qualification. The minimum school leaving age will be raised to 18 years. In addition, student guidance and student welfare services will be improved, along with the capacity of comprehensive schools to provide everyone with the skills to complete upper secondary education. The extension in compulsory education is due to become effective in 2021. The related new Act is designed to apply for the first time to those subject to compulsory education whose compulsory education under the current Act terminates in 2021. Locally education providers are dubious whether the government will indeed be covering entirely the expenses of this renewal and teachers are worried that it will imply restrictions of freely choosing teaching materials, enlarged group sizes (thus leading to disappearing of smaller groups such as optional foreign languages, etc.).

https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162875/MoEC_compulsory%20educaton.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

The Government will draw up an education policy report for skills and learning in 2030. The report aims increasing the level of education and competence in Finland. In addition, topics like equality in education, and reduction of the differences in learning outcomes will be targeted. The objective is that the level of education and competence among the population will rise at all levels of education, differences in learning outcomes will decrease, and educational equality will increase children and young people will feel well education system offers for all equal opportunities for learning Finland will be an internationally attractive place to study, conduct research and invest. In early 2021 the Government released an education policy report for skills and learning. The education policy report examined the entire education system. Unfortunately despite SUKOL efforts to affect and intervene the contents of this report so that it would include also a specific content focusing on foreign languages and cultural skills these topics were widely ignored in the report.

The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL has been widely referred to and present in the Finnish media (local and national newspapers, television and radio programmes, etc.) to promote the understanding and urgent need to support foreign language learning in Finland and demanding straight forward actions in stead of official complementary and supportive speeches that do not result in any tangible outcome and measures to be taken. The Finnish Network for Language Education Policies

- Kieliverkosto, is an open forum for all who are interested in languages and language education. SUKOL is an appointed member of this organisation which recently published a study on the surprisnly negative impacts of measures taken since 2018 aiming to improve the realm of foreign language learning in Finland <https://www.kieliverkosto.fi/fi>

The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL annual meeting will be held remote on April 24th 2021 and a seminar will be offered at the same date also remote:

https://www.sukol.fi/liitto/koulutuskalenteri/sukolin_kevatkoulutuspaiva_verkossa.59.ohjelma.html . Stay safe and enjoy the spring.

Lithuania:Substainable Multilingualism Conference



Prof. Nemira Mačianskienė, Vytautas Magnus University, The LKPA "Baltic Philologist Coffret" winner.

The Institute of Foreign Languages of Vytautas Magnus University (VMU IFL), in cooperation with the Language Teachers' Association of Lithuania, organizes the 6th International Scientific Conference "Sustainable Multilingualism". The Conference will be held online on June 4-5, 2021. Abstracts are submitted by April 1. You can find all the information here: <http://uki.vdu.lt/6th-international-conference-sustainable-multilingualism-2021/> or directly on Conference webpage <https://sites.google.com/view/sm2021/home>.

Good news! As the conference will be held only online, the fees have been reduced by 50%.

WE NEED TO SET OUR GOALS HIGH



Audronė Auškelienė, Director of Public Service Language Centre, (www.vikc.lt), The LKPA “Baltic Philologist Coffret” winner.

Interview with Eglė Šleinotienė, honorary president of the Language Teachers' Association of Lithuania, in April 2021 celebrating her anniversary, who says: My choice to study languages was determined by professional teachers and critical thinking - languages widen horizons, give knowledge, allow deep-dive into cultures, literature, etc.



Audronė: Dear Egle, you are one of the best-known personalities among language teaching professionals not only in Lithuania but in Europe as well. Having started as a EFL teacher at school, by continuously learning-life-long, you developed your competences as a teacher trainer, international project coordinator and expert, education manager, founder of a school for adult language education, in 2006 you founded the Language Teachers' Association of Lithuania, at present you are working as a secretary for the international Federation of Associations of Teachers of Languages and honourable president of the Association of Lithuanian Teachers of Languages.

Could you tell us about your childhood and teenage years? Did you have a teacher or a role model who you admired and who impacted your career choices?

Eglė: I belong to post-war or baby boomers' generation (born 1946 - 1964). I was born in a small village in Lithuania in the family of a librarian and a teacher. People lived poorly at that time. There were three children in my family. Our parents loved us and took good care of us, educated us showing their positive examples. Mostly we learned by doing. We lived in the same house where the school and library were located, so books were important part of my life from the very beginning. Large garden, a lake and a small forest within walking distance, other pleasures of nature influenced my life as well.

Later we moved to a small town, the school I went to was pupil-friendly, teachers were real professionals, but with different world outlooks. They tried to encourage us to think, be active, to develop our interests. Relations among classmates based on partnership and values impacted the wish to overcome difficulties and obstacles, to adapt to changeable situations. In 2020 we met at school after 50 years and shared warm memories of that materially miserable but emotionally rich and interesting period of our lives.

My choice to study languages was determined by professional teachers and using critical thinking process - languages widen horizons, give knowledge, allow deep-dive into cultures, literature, etc.

Audronė: What does critical thinking mean to you? Were you taught Critical thinking at school? How? Can you give a few examples?



Eglė: We were not taught critical thinking at school, but in reality, we were very good at it. To analyse information, data, facts to make decisions what to say in public was a daily routine activity. Lithuania was occupied by Russia, so at school we were poisoned by the soviet propaganda about wonderful life, but we lived

in the families whose close relatives were deported to Siberia and we knew the reality of life. Almost all of us had radio sets and listened to western radio programmes (disturbed/jammed by Russians), especially the BBC or the Voice of America. Information we received was really valuable to make choice and survive under such conditions.

Critical thinking to me is challenging process when I analyse data, facts, visions, opinions to make decisions, judgements, to communicate fruitfully and solve problems.

Audronė: *How were your University studies different from school regarding Critical thinking? What subject did you choose to study at University after high school? What were your choices of your postgraduate studies? Were they different from the undergraduate studies? Why? Again, can you draw a parallel with your critical thinking there?*

Eglė: *My choice was to study languages and literature at Vilnius university. Critical thinking was part of our studies there. The term critical thinking and the history, starting 2,500 years ago with Socrates discovery of a method of probing questioning that people could not rationally justify their confident claims to knowledge, I learned at university. We studied works of ancient and modern philosophers and had Latin as a subject.*

I would like to mention the role of studies of world literature to master my critical thinking skills. During lectures and workshops, we were encouraged to analyse works of various authors, compare opinions of critics and draw conclusions.

There were no postgraduate studies in Lithuania at that time (university studies lasted 5 years), but I actively participated in lots of long-life programmes: courses, workshops, shadowing programmes, seminars, conferences organised by the British Council, Goethe Institut, PHARE, USIS, The European Centre for Modern Languages and various universities.

Audronė: *Do you think critical thinking is useful only for handling serious issues, solve difficult problems and analyse complicated situations? Or is it also necessary for everyday life? Can you give a few examples from your personal experience?*

Eglė: *Critical thinking is useful not only in handling serious issues, but in everyday life situations as well. Family life, hobbies area, extra- school activities, etc. The only exception is religion, where you are a believer or not. Critical thinking skills have helped my family members to choose professions, they are needed to plan holidays or purchase expensive items.*

Audronè: Do you think it is possible to teach an individual critical thinking? What are the possible/best ways to do it? Do you believe there is a gap regarding Critical thinking skills taught at schools and Universities and the skills individual needs at work and in life?

Eglè: It is possible and vital to teach an individual critical thinking skill. Simple questions we ask can encourage or stop thinking. Inductive learning process allows the students to analyse, provide evidence to support their conclusions and find additional examples to expand the content in their categories. Projects, participation in debate clubs are very important in developing critical thinking skills. Teaching and practicing critical thinking skills are on-going processes and need to be improved and developed all the time.

Audronè: Critical thinking as well as communication competences are considered to be at the top of the 21st Century skills. Do you believe, that communication competences, e.g., communicating in a foreign language is closely related to critical thinking skills?



Eglè: Critical thinking in the 21-st century is one of the skills/competences needed to understand life better and, I would say, function properly in a rapidly changeable world. Variety of new technologies, the impact of rapid change in technology, loads of data and information we receive daily are unique features of this century. Self-awareness, self-control, taking self-responsibility cannot exist without critical thinking, working on priorities if we do not want to get lost.

The 21st Century Learning faces other challenges - it is more personalised, learner-centred and media focused. Interdependent Language skills allow us to communicate better, to reach different resources of information, to draw conclusions, make choices and feel safer in critical situations. The more languages we master, better we are in a global human resources market. I strongly believe that they will be vital for the next generation in order to be effective and successful in the global world in the unpredictable future.

Audronè: The year 2020 was the year of great challenges and changes for businesses education system, communities and individuals who in the presence of covid-19 pandemics

were forced to rethink their priorities and values, reorganize their work and life style. Do you think critical thinking could help people to adjust themselves in complicated situations, different workstyle and full of uncertainty future?

Eglè: The sudden global outbreak of COVID-19 in late 2019 and its second wave in 2020 have changed life of millions of people all over the world. Schools and universities were closed, teachers and learners, staying at home, had to reorganize their life and work. The load of work for teachers has been huge: planning and performing face-to-face teaching, evaluation of students' achievements, finding proper resources on-line and adapting them for teaching at a distance- are impossible without critical thinking and good communication skills.

It is good that teachers are not left alone: UNESCO, EU, various international organizations, ministries of Education and Science in the countries try to support all kind of educational institutions in their efforts to mitigate the immediate impact of school and university closures, to ensure the quality and quantity of continuity of education for all students. But teachers' role cannot be ignored, it is vital.



Photo:With FIPLV and NBR colleagues in ECML.

Audronė: We do not know how long the covid-19 pandemic will continue. Will it have ended by spring or summer of 2021 or will it continue until the end of the year or even longer? What would your advice be to Lithuania, and to European people on how to face challenges, handle stress and make the impossible possible?

Eglè: I am an optimist and do hope that Covid-19 pandemic will not last for a long period if all of us behave properly, follow experts' recommendations and restrictions our

Governments have set. In order to survive and feel safe in critical time teachers need support from politicians, Governments, Ministries, management of their institutions (moral, psychological, financial, improving teachers' well-being, etc.). Teachers' Associations are responsible for providing networks, offering solutions concerning methodology, developing and sharing materials, in showing that teachers are not alone. We expect and, in most cases, receive better understanding of our work from parents, students, local communities and mass media.

In Lithuanian we have a proverb „The rescue of the drowning is in their own hands“. Teachers need to remember that their personal life and professional career are in their hands, obstacles are part of our life, we need to set our goals high, in order to succeed, we simply need to believe that we can do and do it. So far, we are good at facing Covid-19 challenges, have lots of success stories in educational area. Stepping out of comfort zone is sometimes useful if we want to celebrate growth, improvement and visible achievements. I think that life after we surmount Covid-19 difficulties will be different and more challenging.

Play Your Way to Norway Platform for Learning Norwegian Language and Culture



Daiva Malinauskienė, SIH director.

Kristina Kudriašova, Project coordinator at SIH



Soros International House (SIH) started its activity in 1993 as a language teaching centre and till now is very active in this area as well as

in teacher training, adult education and in implementation of local and international projects.

Institution represents and belongs to a number of national and international networks:

- since 1998 it is a member of the Lithuanian Association of Adult Education and a Centre of Foreign Language Teachers Training,
- from 1993 till 2019 was a member of IH World Organization,
- since 2008 – authorized Pearson tests centre for the English language,
- since 2013 – a member of EURORESO (an international non-profit association with a scientific and educational purpose),
- since 2016 – a CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) Centre and a member of LieDM (Lithuanian Association of Distance and e-Learning Association) and
- since 2019 – a LanguageCert centre.

Its activities mainly are divided into two areas:

1. One part of the key activities of the institution is teaching languages for adults and young learners in groups and individually, using both conventional teaching methods as well as modern ICT tools, and providing training for language teachers, adult educators, education managers and teacher trainers.

2. Another part of the activities is the implementation of local, regional and EU projects. Since 2000 SIH has been actively involved both as a partner and as a coordinator in a number of international projects and has a lot of experience in implementing them in such fields as adult education and vocational training, teacher and adult educator training, development of teaching and training methodologies and tools, language teaching, intercultural learning, active citizenship and promotion of volunteering, integration of migrants, social inclusion of senior learners and ethnic minorities.

The projects coordinated by SIH were awarded European Labels and diplomas as the best projects of the year, were nominated for Star projects and were selected among the best Adult education and language teaching projects by the European Commission, were presented during the international Conferences and Fairs and included into different Compendiums of Best Practices.

• In 2012 at the “Multilingualism in Europe” conference organized by the EC, the exclusive “European Language Label” award was presented to SIH for the project “Learning by Moving”.

• “Seniors On-line” project coordinated by SIH was selected as a winner of Boldic Award for 2016.

• Another project coordinated by SIH, “ePublisher”, was shortlisted for N.I.C.E Award 2019.

• And finally, SIH was awarded a Special prize for the highest quality projects on social inclusion for project “Seniors Online” at the project quality contest 2019, organized by Lithuanian National Agency.

Besides, SIH team actively participates in activities of local and international communities of adult educators and language teaching and teacher training professionals. It takes part in conferences, workshops and other events organized by national and international governmental organizations, networks and associations, including the Lithuanian Association of Language Teachers. This association always provides a great opportunity to share good practices and experiences and to learn from the best language teaching professionals in Lithuania and worldwide.

Today we would like to share with you some news on one ongoing project which is being coordinated by Soros International House – an educational platform to learn Norwegian language and Norwegian culture, Play Your Way to Norway.

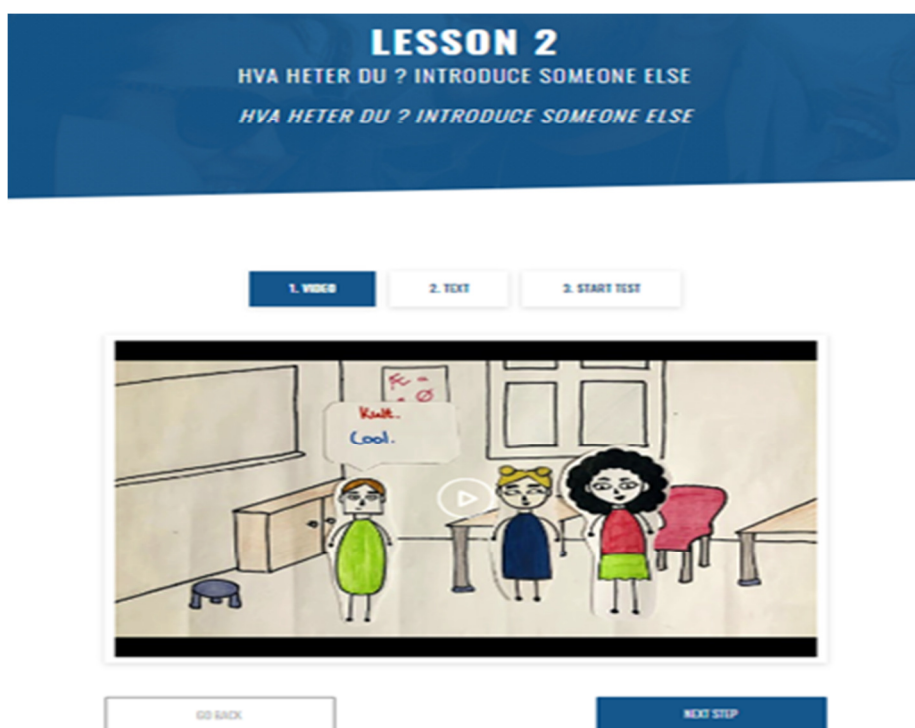
The Project

The free online educational platform Play Your Way to Norway has been developed under NORDPLUS / Nordic Languages program by project partners – coordinators in Lithuania, Soros International House, and Norwegian partners from Kristiansand, Aftenskolen.



The Platform

The platform consists of two modules - one on Norwegian language and another one on Norwegian culture. These modules offer short but extensive courses of Norwegian language for beginners and cultural topics for those who wish to delve into the world of Norwegian culture, history, geography, people's habits, etc. The platform could be a useful tool and resource for language teachers, as well as a self-study guide for school and university students, travelers, expats, and foreign language enthusiasts. The modules are divided into lessons, which include text explanations, videos, audios, and finally, short quizzes to test what has been learnt.



Prizes!

Upon completion of either module, a completion certificate can be downloaded for free. It should be mentioned that for a short time only, the project partners have established a prize for those who successfully complete both modules and receive their certificates by email until the end of April. The first ten learners to do this will have an opportunity to take part in a free one-hour virtual online tour of the Southern Norwegian town Kristiansand with one of the creators of the platform's culture content!

The platform is ready here: <https://www.playnorway.sih.lt/>

Read more about the project: <https://sih.lt/en/projects/international-projects/play-your-way-to-norway>

International Online Conference

As a final event of the project, the coordinators are organizing an international web conference. We would like to invite you to the Online Conference Diving into Challenges of Online Language Learning and Teaching. Benefits from OER, taking place online on Thursday 29 April 2021, from 15:00 to 17:45 CET.

- When: Thursday 29 April 2021, 15:00 - 17:45 CET
- Where: Online via Zoom
- Language: English
- Agenda: please follow this link to view the preliminary agenda for the conference
- Registration: please complete the online registration form here by 19 April 2021
- No registration fees

For further information please visit the Play Your Way to Norway platform and project information page on sih.lt or contact us at kristina@sih.lt

Follow news about the platform on:

- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Play.Norway>
- Twitter <https://twitter.com/Kristin56977088>
- Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/play.norway/>

Soros International House and Aftenskolen look forward to receiving your registration!

WHICH COUNTRY HAS NORWAY NOT BEEN IN A UNION WITH?
 Sweden France Denmark

MATCH THE NAME WITH THE CORRECT FACT.
Olav Haraldsen Harald Hårfagre
First Norwegian Saint Viking who gathered Norway into one kingdom
Håkon Haakonson King who expanded Norway in the 1200s


WHAT IS THIS A PICTURE OF?
 The United Kingdom after Brexit
 The current Kingdom of Norway The Kalmar Union

[How to conjugate a verb in Norwegian](#)

In the previous lessons we have learned a few pronouns to introduce oneself and someone else.
Here are all the pronouns conjugated with the verb **å være** (to be) and **å ha** (to have):

Jeg er	I am
du er	you are
han/hun/ det er	he/she/ it is
vi er	we are
dere er	you are
de er	they are

Jeg har	I have
du har	you have
han/hun/ det har	he/she/ it has
vi har	we have
dere har	you have
de har	they have



News from the Latvian Association of Teachers of English (LATE)



Ina Andija, LATE Board member.

For as long as I remember being an English language teacher, I have always been a fan of LATE. I have always enjoyed the annual August conferences and seminars organised by our association team.

Since March 2020 not only has the teaching life totally changed, but also the LATE routine. All the meetings now are organised online. One such meeting was on 29th December 2020 when LATE held an online Training Day entitled "Developing Engagement in a Period of Change".

It was its fourth winter seminar, but the first one held online on Zoom. One hundred and thirty-six participants took part in the event.

LATE President Inga Linde welcomed all the participants. It was such a sincere moment to see her smiling face on the screen!

In the presentation "Mediation and pluricultural/plurilingual skills in the classroom" Tatjana Kunda (VISIC) introduced the concept of mediation as specified in the Companion volume to CEFR (2018), and helped the participants find out how mediation tasks could be introduced into the foreign language classroom. Several tasks were given to the teachers to discover the answers.

This was followed by parallel workshops for the teachers, e.g., "Supporting Multilingual Classrooms - I speak English, I am literate" by Antra Dukāne, Liāra Belķeviča (from Saldus Region Druva Secondary School). In this seminar the focus was on English as a global language of communication and what threat it poses to other languages and the teachers were encouraged to ask their students to think about advantages and disadvantages of English as a global language, and to talk about an attempt to create an artificial Lingua Franca - Esperanto.

"Supporting Multilingual Classrooms - Practical experience of introducing multilingual classroom and extracurricular activities at Jaunmarupe Elementary School" was presented by Jaunmarupe Elementary School teachers Daina Grabovska, Antra Nāburga. The teachers shared their experiences as foreign language teachers at Jaunmarupe Elementary School introducing several multilingual classroom and extracurricular activities suitable for students aged 9-16.

"Supporting Multilingual Classrooms - The European Language Portfolio: How do I learn languages?" workshop was prepared by Solvita Matvejeva and Ineta Birziņa (Liepāja Music, Art and Design School). They encouraged teachers to reflect on our own language learning strategies as a vital approach in any language acquisition. They suggested that teachers can help in revealing these strategies and becoming aware of students' learning habits.

One more workshop entitled "Modify Teaching Online When You Have to Adapt!" was led by Aija Gudza (of the Baltic Council for International Education). Aija told the teachers that during the distant learning process we have to develop different tasks for our students so that the studying process remains challenging and attractive. Teachers are obliged to modify their teaching skills and invent something new. She also suggested that there are free online courses which can be used to explore new fields of study.

Two exciting workshops were presented by LATE Vice President and ELT Consultant Robert Buckmaster and they were the following: "The Tyranny of the Gap Fill: What are the Alternatives?" and „The Girl on the Wall". In the first session the participants got to know the benefits and weaknesses of gap fill exercises as well as an evaluation of different tasks. In the second of Robert's sessions the teachers found out how they could use photos in the lessons and in particular explore the ways they could use one photo which Robert calls 'The Girl on the Wall'. You can read more about this seminar on Robert's page <http://www.englishideas.org/Thoughts.html>

An absolutely amazing workshop entitled "ICT in English Language Teaching" was offered by Anna Beļska (of J.Pilsudska Daugavpils State Polish Gymnasium). During the remote teaching all the teachers have to acquire new knowledge especially in using ICT in online lessons.

Anna opened the ICT window to the teachers by sharing ideas how to acquire new skills and ideas for using ICT tools for teaching English, including interactive presentations, useful websites and online learning tools. The workshop participants discussed and reflected on skills necessary for 21st century education. To tell the truth, after the event the first things I tried out myself were www.mentimeter.com, <https://www.eslvideo.com> and <https://www.superteachertools.us/> .

Thank you, Anna! This workshop was a fantastic support for me to make exciting lessons for my students!

Every now and then the teachers of English are invited by LATE to different online events as it is still not possible to meet face-to face conferences or seminars. On 21st January there was a Teacher Professional Development Day event entitled "Developing Engagement in a Period of Change: Elaborating Writing and Reading Skills". Our president Inga Linde welcomed all the participants for the two workshops. Our well-known expert in State exams Tatjana Kunda (VISC) dealt with the topic the majority of senior grade teachers were interested in and this was about developing arguments in writing 'Building an Argument in Writing". Tatiana discussed the issues that make a good argument and tried to answer the question on how teachers can help their students think and how to express themselves to become better at writing clear and compelling arguments. The teachers got acquainted with the Common European Framework of Reference descriptions about the aims in writing and practiced revising essay structures, and every participant was eager to hear the advice on the improvement of writing skills.

Another fantastic workshop entitled "Techniques of Extensive and Creative Reading" was led by Anna Bejska (of J.Pilsudska Daugavpils State Polish Gymnasium). Anna and her students had taken part in the "Born to Read". project She shared brilliant ideas about extensive and creative reading activities, which the 9-14-year-old participants of the project elaborated and tested out in the English lessons. I will mention some of the main principles of reading they followed: the reading material is easy; learners choose what they want to read; a variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available; the purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding; learners read as much as possible. Anna showed how to make real books online which was really new for most of the participants.

News from The French Teacher Association in Iceland during the Pandemic



Margrét Helga Hjartardóttir, the Chair of French Teachers Association of Iceland

As so many others, the French Teachers Association in Iceland did need to pursue its activities somewhat in slow-motion over the last year, but nevertheless duly managed to organise and celebrate the main events actually scheduled during this strange period. When Covid 19 struck Iceland by force, in March 2020, we had just held our annual general meeting where we discussed many matters of importance for the Association and signed as a first-time event a contract between the French Embassy in Iceland, l'Alliance française in Reykjavík and the French Teachers Association, allowing our students to pass the DELF/DALF exams at a discount price. We hope that this will encourage them in larger numbers to add this international exam to their CV.

Our cherished "membre d'honneur", Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, former French teacher and President of Iceland, celebrated her 90th birthday in April 2020 and we did our best to honour her in several ways. The Association brought her a present last summer, when the first wave of the pandemic had slowed down, thanking her for all her precious support through the years. Vigdís is a great role-model for language teachers in Iceland, always emphasizing the importance of language learning and language skills.



Celebration of Mme Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, 90th anniversary.

Our annual competition among French students, normally organised during “la semaine de la langue française” in March, was held at the headquarters of l’Alliance française in June 2020. French students from elementary schools and high schools created and sent in short films, based on a given subject. In 2020 they were asked to create or interpret an adventure or tale (“créez un conte!”).

As usual, the French Embassy offered the prizes (a gift card to a French restaurant, French books etc). The best video from the high schools was a beautiful tale about the struggle between man and nature, a film with an important ecological message. This year, we were so lucky as to be able to celebrate this competition again under normal circumstances (though wearing masks and taking other precautions) on 20th March, “le jour de la langue française”. This time the subject was “Créez une bande dessinée/une BD” (comics) at the occasion of “l’année de la BD” (<https://www.bd2020.culture.gouv.fr/>) .

The participation was good, the jury had to select the winners from a number of creative and diverse short films. Once again, we were impressed by the creativity and imagination of the participating students.



Furthermore, the Association has held meetings, one "sur place" in September, others online, and tried to keep up the spirit of its members in a difficult situation. We are hoping to be able to hold our annual general meeting in April or May (we decided to wait for better conditions) and are planning a course for French teachers in Reykjavík or online in June or August.

When we look at the past months in perspective, it may fairly be said that all the activities of The French Teachers Association in Iceland have been shaped by the pandemic, which has compelled us to postpone and/or alter some events. But luckily, we have been able to maintain our most important traditions, like the annual competition, and we do permit ourselves to be optimistic about the future. We hope to be able to organise a course for our members in a French-speaking country in 2022 or 2023, as we usually do every two or three years. We have travelled several times to France and once to Belgium, these last years. Our next destination probably will be Québec in Canada once the pandemic has calmed down.



The German Teacher Association in Iceland, Þýzkukennarafélag, is Busy as Always



Stefanie Meyer, the chair

The German teacher association in Iceland, Þýzkukennarafélag, is - just like the country - rather small. Nevertheless, we are always busy doing something. Since November 2020, we attended in-service training, we held a competition for German students in Secondary schools and, just recently, we began planning a big celebration.

Just as in many countries, schools in Iceland face big challenges since the beginning of the pandemic. One of those big challenges being to teach online, something that was new for the students and for the majority of teachers. As we slowly adapted throughout the year 2020, there was one big struggle for the language teachers, for us German teachers. How do we get our students to speak? What methods are both meaningful and effective? With the help of the Goethe Institute in Copenhagen, which is the Goethe Institute that collaborates with Iceland, we organized an in-service training for the German teachers of our association: „Speaking in online lessons for beginners of German“. The training was, of course, online and the number of attendance spoke for itself.

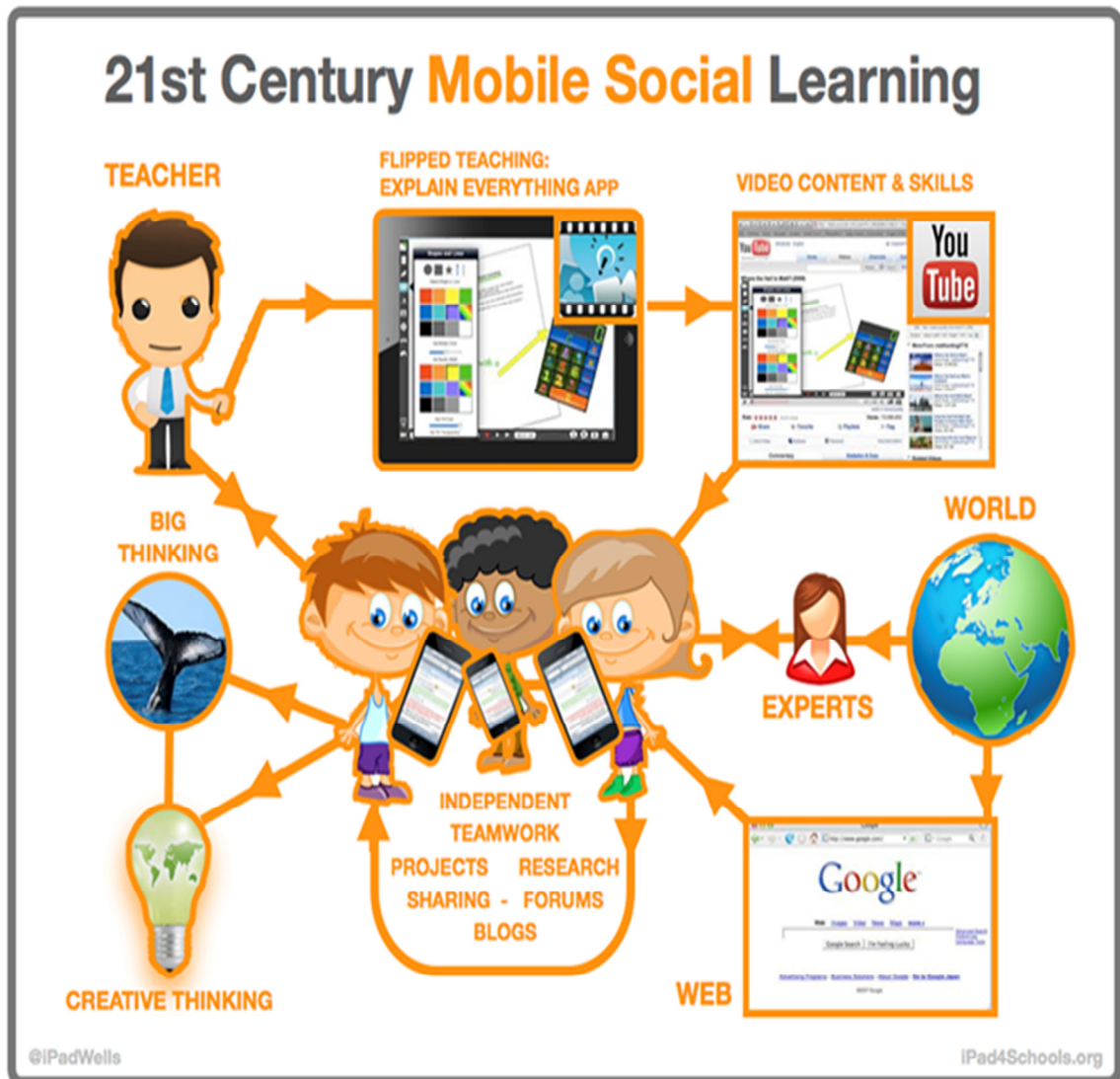


The second half of the school year started in January 2021 and it was a gentle start. We would not need to use our newly learned skills for another three months, as the Covid situation allowed for the schools to be open. Full classes attended, all wearing face masks and keeping distance. This was lucky for one of our association's traditions: Pýskupraut! What looks like a tongue twister, is, in fact, a big fun German test, that is taken by the best students all over the country, in order to compete for prizes, such as scholarships for German courses in Germany and book prizes. We held the 32. Pýskupraut on March 24th. The students have 90 minutes to complete tasks that test their skills in reading, listening, writing, vocabulary and grammar. The creation and correction of Pýskupraut is entirely done by volunteers so we can give the students the best possible prizes. This year the top 15 students are going to win book prizes mainly, but we also have two places for Eurocamp, a language camp in Germany, that is going to be held under covid restrictions, and two places for online courses in the summer. We are excited to give the prizes to the students - hopefully in person, though we are currently in another lock down, as Covid got the upper hand once again.

Despite the pandemic, that gets on our nerves, we really want to celebrate a big event for our German teacher association: Last year, our association turned 50 years old! Back then in 1970, when the German teacher association was founded by Baldur Ingolfsson, Iceland had 200.000 inhabitants and just a handful German teachers. We now grew to around 40 members, a group, in which everyone knows each other, at least loosely, and in which we share our love for German and teaching. Of course, we want to celebrate this milestone anniversary. A celebration in 2020 was not possible, but for this year, the board of the German teacher association has started planning a small gathering of German teachers and acquaintances. We want to eat and drink together and there will be a small concert by the Icelandic musician Svavar Knútur. We hope that Covid will allow for such fun in May and stay optimistic.

All in all, one can easily say, that this winter's activities have been strictly shaped by the pandemic, but it has also motivated us, to keep on going. We are happy to turn the challenges into growth, as in our in-service training, we are grateful for phases of milder turbulences that allowed us to hold the Pýskupraut and we are optimistic, that we will celebrate in one way or the other, that this little association has existed for 50 years and is still striving.

Free POSTERS



10 tips FOR MOVING TO ONLINE DISTANCE LEARNING



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1 Keep it Simple

Provide simple fun activities for your first couple of syncs so everyone can catch up and troubleshoot through unanticipated issues.

2 Use Platforms You Know

It's good to explore new tools especially if they can help, but try to steer clear of too many new tools.

3 Feedback

Have an assessment plan. Give feedback and remember that not everything has to be a graded assignment.

4 Screen & Movement Breaks

Plan your breaks! Schedule them and build them into your lessons.

5 Synchronous v Asynchronous

Asynchronous is great for providing information and synchronous syncs can help students stay grounded.

6 Human Connection

Do live video check ins and appear in your pre-recorded videos.

7 Guides & Expectations

Provide students and parents direction on learning from home.

8 Learning Zone

Designate a distraction free space for teaching and learning.

9 Self Efficacy

Encourage self-driven learner behavior.

10 Be Patient

Above all, be patient with others and yourself.



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Coding



Learning & Using Emerging Technologies



Jackie Gerstein - User Generated Education

Happy Easter to you, your families and colleagues!



The Electronic Newsletter is issued by: NBR President Sigurborg Jónsdóttir, Iceland;
NBR Secretary Eglė Šleinotienė, Lithuania;