When we hear of Greece in the news, the stories revolve around debt and politics. There is clearly more to life than this and the second ICC think tank brought together members of the ICC and representatives from different spheres of language education in Greece to discuss an issue that had both local and wider reaching importance. Participants came from as far afield as Germany, Spain and the UK. The ICC’s role was to facilitate the discussion and promote the debate.

The topic for consideration was the current state of language tests. Do current language testing systems really do fulfill the needs of students and the market place? Following a detailed plenary discussion, the themes that came to the fore were:

- The nature of the test taker – how has this changed? Do current tests cater for this?
- The use of technology – are testing systems governed by technology and supposed objectivity to the detriment of overall testing standards and actual profiling?
- Internationalism and regionalism – do global testing mechanisms reflect the needs of the different communities that use them?
- The Greek participants felt that the nature of test takers is changing. This is particularly the case in the way young learners absorb and impart information. We now live in a world of ‘screenagers’, who spend a sizeable portion of their time in front of a computer screen and consequently have different forms of communication to their predecessors. The amount of information that people are subjected to is increasing, but this doesn’t mean that people can actually process more information. We can’t. What we can handle over a period of time is fixed.

Kyriakos Vasilomandolakis presented the results of observing students in his own reading enhancement classes. He found that his young learners are in fact less able to process large amounts of text. This led on to a discussion about the impact on a learner’s ability to formulate argument and analysis. What role has social networking in promoting immediate, short, emotional responses like ‘great’ or ‘that sucks’ instead of really engaging in the issue?

Should testing therefore reflect the new ways of handling information or should it be a mechanism for helping to maintain a broader set of receptive skills? Indeed, has the division in to the four skills outlived its usefulness? Should we not be finding more integrated models that replicate how language is used beyond the classroom?

It’s safe to say that the think tank raised as many questions as it provided answers—if not more. But this is what marks out a successful event. Committed professionals engaging in issues that concern them and taking the time to consider the issue from a range of perspectives. Thanks to all who took part and to Nick Maras from Palso for hosting the event so smoothly.
Time to Think

How much time do we actually have to take stock and think? Not the thinking that is the number of things we have to do today and how to prioritise them. Not the thinking that is what kind of activities to slot into a session, or what materials need to be prepared or what forms and letters need to be completed for colleagues and parents and anyone else who needs them. We are all busy people—increasingly so it seems. In my own small corner of language education I am continually surprised, perhaps naively so, by the number of things to do that fill up my time and that have really not a lot to do with what I thought the main business of language education was.

Not that I am complaining. There are plenty of other, worse, things out there. But shouldn’t we, as professionals involved in language education, as people who more often than not have undergone years of study and training to arrive at where we are, allow ourselves the time really to think through issues that concern us—bigger picture issues, possibly—and provide the impetus for projects, products and other joint collaborations?

Conferences have their place in this, but each session is relatively short—a kind of inspiring taster, when we like what we see, a space to absorb as much as to engage. Which goes back to the question: Shouldn’t we allow ourselves time to take stock and think? Ideally shouldn’t we do this in the company of like-minded people?

Over the last year the ICC has initiated and been involved in three think tanks. In each locality (Berlin, Athens, Pilzen) a group of interested colleagues took a day to probe an issue that concerned them in more depth. We intend to run more of these in the coming years. They’ve proven to be thought provoking and fun, and have been well received by all those who took part. Anyone can set one up and ICC is ready and willing to help publicise the event and the outcomes. Happy thinking.

Rob Williams, President ICC

EUROLTA - Promoting a European Teacher Training Standard

This year’s Annual EUROLTA Conference, organised by the BVV (Bavarian Association of adult education centres in Bavaria) took place at the education centre in Nuremberg. The ICC representative, Christel Schneider, was warmly welcomed. She informed the audience about latest developments regarding projects with ICC involvement and steps forward as regards to disseminating EUROLTA in various EUROPEAN countries through the ELTACS project. The new steps to establish EUROLTA in 7 more European countries via the ELTACS project (www.eltacs.eu) was well received.

The event was well attended by EUROLTA trainers, teachers and assessors. Two Trainers from the EUROLTA centre ESL PROLOG-Berlin and a trainer from the Adult Education Association in Hesse (Hessischer Volkshochschulverband), who intend to implement and establish EUROLTA in their teacher training presented their organisations at the conference.

The Bavarian EUROLTA steering committee, the head of the BVV language department, Christine Loibl, and Dieta Heikal, head of the marketing department at the BVV informed about recent developments at the BVV. Myriam Fischer, director of the adult education centre (VHS) in Aschaffenburg and representative for EUROLTA at the BVV, facilitated the conference and informed about the progress and changes of EUROLTA Training in Bavaria. She also acknowledged everybody about the portfolio for trainees which will be used in future for all trainees getting started with EUROLTA training. Trainers were also informed about changes in the procedures. The conference attendees had a lot of opportunities to exchange ideas and best practice and discuss ideas and plans how to promote EUROLTA further.

For further information about EUROLTA and the teacher training scheme, please check the EUROLTA website www.eurolta.eu
For 35 years Studieskolen has offered language courses in more than 30 languages. We offer courses in European languages such as English, German, French, Italian, Greek, Russian, Portuguese and Spanish. Our portfolio also includes a wide range of other languages, for example the Nordic languages like Swedish, Finnish, Icelandic and Greenlandic, and languages that in Denmark are regarded as more exotic, for example Thai, Indonesian, Swahili and Hindi.

We offer beginners classes in all languages. In the European languages we offer classes at all levels, from beginners’ level to a very advanced level, and many of our students continue their studies year after year. The courses start six times a year which gives our students a lot of flexibility. They can have a break and then return when it suits them.

Studieskolen’s courses take place in the centre of Copenhagen, mostly at Studieskolen’s location in Copenhagen City. However, we also use classroom locations at The University of Copenhagen.

Studieskolen’s teachers hold academic degrees – many from a university in the country whose language they teach. We focus on quality in our teaching. Therefore we regularly organize pedagogical and didactic courses for all our teachers and we keep up with the newest teaching methods. Our primary goal is always to teach students how to communicate in the foreign language; therefore, lessons include conversation and group activities. However, we also offer courses with specific topics like grammar and written language. And of course a good sense of humour is a common thread throughout all our courses, as we recognise that learning is most effective in a relaxed and cheerful environment.

Finally, we ensure through evaluation that our clients are satisfied with the teaching.

Apart from foreign languages Studieskolen’s Danish Language Centre teaches Danish for Foreigners under contract with the Municipality of Copenhagen. We offer Danish Education 3 which is designed for students with a solid academic background who can be expected to learn Danish as a foreign language quickly and efficiently. The progression is fast and the level high.

Our Business Language Department offers a wide range of courses in a variety of foreign languages as well as Danish for foreigners. These courses are aimed at companies who wish to offer their employees further education in a foreign language. As well as group classes, Studieskolen Business also offers individual training for people who wish to develop their language skills for professional or private purposes.

Article: Charlotte Lorenzen
Photos courtesy of Studieskolen

For more information go to http://www.studieskolen.dk/?sc_lang=en
EU Project News

Two projects with ICC involvement ended in October this year

The PELLIC Project (Practice English for Language Learning & Intercultural Communication) finished with a THINK TANK Expert group forum, which was well received by all attendees.

The PELLIC Project Group had invited interested professionals to a forum to exchange ideas and expertise as well as best practice on running language classes with a special focus on PE methodology. Partners of the PELLIC project presented their results and materials produced during the project which included a demonstration on how Moodle can be used and adapted to support a wide range of international PE activities, and how other tools can be integrated to create authentic learning scenarios, i.e. using Second Life® as means of creating an exhibition.

A picture gallery and information about the project outcomes, materials and course information can be found on the PELLIC website. www.pellic.eu

ELTACS - the future of teacher training is in our hands

The ELTACS project, European Language Teachers Assessment and Certification Scheme will end in June 2012. So far the EUROLTA and International Procedures have been updated and have been translated into Czech, Greek, Swedish, Romanian, Lithuanian, Bulgarian and German. 16 Master Trainers have been trained on Moodle online. The final face-to-face sessions have been successfully carried out in Lithuania and Greece. The other participating countries will follow with their face-to-face training in the new year, 2012.

The Master Trainers will be responsible to train Trainer trainers running workshops in their country and help the newly established EUROLTA training centres with supporting materials like the institutional handbook and necessary guidelines for trainees.

The experience with Master Trainers has been very rewarding so far.

We strongly believe that establishing EUROLTA in as many EUROPEAN countries as possible will strengthen the quality of teacher training in Europe.
The ICC is involved in two new projects

PICT—promoting intercultural competence in translators is a two year project designed to develop a set of curriculum guidelines and materials to help teachers of translation include intercultural competence more explicitly in their work.

The project is hosted by the University of Westminster, UK and the group is made up of Universities from France, Finland, Poland, Bulgaria and Italy as well as the ICC. The ICC has the role of designing and maintaining the website and facilitating dissemination.

The project had its launch meeting in London on 10th and 11th November where, almost in think tank mode, the group discussed the profile of an interculturally competent translator through the perspective of knowledge, skills and attitude as well as the mechanisms needed to conduct a suitable situational survey.

The meeting culminated in a project launch event for staff and students of the university as well as other interested professionals.

From an ICC perspective, translation teaching has not yet featured highly, but clearly forms part of the spectrum of language education. In the coming months we would be interested in hearing from members willing to help with surveys and the appraisal/piloting of materials. For more information contact Rob Williams r.williams04@wmin.ac.uk

One of the new projects ICC is involved in is eurowersity – learning without walls. This exciting project is associated with the Avalon PROJECT and a number of other EU projects. Have a look at the ning community website to find out more: http://euroversity.ning.com/

Also contact: info@icc-languages.eu

A final word on projects...

PELLIC partners in full Think Tank mode

Photo: © Christel Schneider

I had the opportunity to spend a day in Pilzen at the final think tank event of the PELLIC project.

I knew next to nothing about Practice Enterprise and was amazed to discover a ready made network of virtual businesses (complete with real life mentors and national agencies) where students could learn about business practices in real time but without the danger of their mistakes losing money.

PELLIC taps into this environment to promote language learning and intercultural communication. The think tank looked at the challenges of broadening the scope in terms of learning environments, delivery, co-ordination, nature of companies etc.

What struck me as an interested observer was the huge potential of creating virtual learning environments for all forms of training. Why stop at business environments? Why not hospitals, schools—anywhere where intercultural communication is taking place.

What also struck me was the dynamism and the creativity of everyone involved. If language education is to evolve and improve, what better than getting a group of interested professionals in a room and having them produce something? Projects and Think Tanks allow us to do just that. So if any members have a project or think tank idea, please contact the Head Office or myself.

Rob Williams
Member News

dp (digital publishing)


The new approach and portfolio were also presented by Alexandra Berndt, Italy, at the ‘ICT for Language Learning’ conference in Florence, Italy, 20 – 21 October 2011. The session was chaired by Christel Schneider, ICC. Speexx was also presented with a stand at Languages & Business, the 10th Conference on Languages & International Business Communication October 26-28, 2011 at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Berlin. Uta Maly, Speexx, Germany will give a talk about New Technologies in Online Language Training at Online Educa, Berlin, the 17th International Conference on Technology Supported Learning & Training, the Largest Global E-Learning Conference for the Corporate, Education and Public Service Sectors.

SpeedLingua

SpeedLingua is happy to announce the launch of speedlingua web on 11.11.2011. speedlingua web can be integrated in all learning stages and programs of language learners, with its specific functions http://speedlinguaweb.com/index.php/en/product.

Palso

The PALSO Guide 2nd Edition, published this month, is one of the most complete syllabi of EFL teaching and testing, pre-A1 to B2 levels, available to the public.

The 1st edition, published 17 years ago, reflected the PALSO Federation’s philosophy of ‘transparency’ and attempted to explain what should happen in the classroom, how that would be assessed in the PALSO Examinations and what that assessment meant in terms of language facility.

As teachers and publishers addressed the changing scene, incremental adjustments were made to the Guide and the format of the PALSO examinations. Two years ago, it was decided to update and republish the Guide. Initially, it seemed a simple job. Additions would cover the Beginners test, introduced at the pre-A1 level. The change of name from PALSO to LAAS would be noted throughout. The narratives would relate to the CEFR. And a few words would be added to the Topical listings. The “completed” editing spanned the better part of 2010.

What’s new in the 2nd edition?

As before, the Guide first describes the teaching goals. Included here is the Functional-Structural Syllabus. A syllabus for the Pre-A1 level has been added. All tables have been color-coded like the F-S Syllabus for ease of use. The grammatical structures have been indexed.

Likewise, the Topics have been expanded. Nearly 2000 words were considered, some of which were found at higher levels in the 1st addition or not in the lists at all. Each change of level or addition was discussed in light of PALSO’s focus on Greece’s younger learners. The lexical index was, of course, expanded to reflect the changes.

Finally, the tables and narratives for the Testing sections of the Guide were updated, and examples of recent test exercises at five levels were installed.

The result is a fresher, more timely reference tool, written in clear language, to be accessed and understood by anyone and adapted for their own teaching/testing needs.

Karen Lee
www.palso.gr
ICC Annual Conference 2012

Preparations for next year’s conference are already in full swing. You may have noticed an extension to the deadline for a call for papers. Many have been received and approved, but there is still time if you wish to contribute. This year’s theme—Perception and Reality in Language Education—gives us the opportunity and the time to reflect on what our role is and whether our perception matches the perceptions and expectations of those around us. Prepare for a stimulating two days. For more information go to the conference website http://conference.icc-languages.eu/

Conference Calendar Update

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation (theme)</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Call for papers</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Educa</td>
<td>30/11/11 – 02/12/11</td>
<td>Berlin (DE)</td>
<td>Passed</td>
<td><a href="http://www.online-educa.com">http://www.online-educa.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETAS Convention</td>
<td>28/1/12 – 29/1/12</td>
<td>Yverdon-les-Bains (CH)</td>
<td>Passed</td>
<td><a href="http://www.e-tas.ch/events/agm/agm-in-yverdon">http://www.e-tas.ch/events/agm/agm-in-yverdon</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNTEC 2012</td>
<td>31/1/12 – 2/2/12</td>
<td>Karlsruhe (DE)</td>
<td>Passed</td>
<td><a href="http://www.messeninfo.de/Learntec-M2742/Karlsruhe.html">http://www.messeninfo.de/Learntec-M2742/Karlsruhe.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didacta</td>
<td>14/2/12 – 18/2/12</td>
<td>Hannover (DE)</td>
<td>Passed</td>
<td><a href="http://www.didacta-hannover.de">http://www.didacta-hannover.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC Conference</td>
<td>9/3/12 – 10/3/12</td>
<td>Pilsen (CZ)</td>
<td>10/12/11</td>
<td><a href="http://www.icc-languages.eu">www.icc-languages.eu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESOL Greece International Convention (Teaching, Testing and Technology)</td>
<td>17/3/12 – 18/3/12</td>
<td>Athens (GR)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tesogreece.org">http://www.tesogreece.org</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IATEFL</td>
<td>19/3/12 – 20/3/12</td>
<td>Glasgow (UK)</td>
<td>passed</td>
<td><a href="http://www.iatell.org/events">http://www.iatell.org/events</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BETA Bulgaria Annual International Conference -</td>
<td>31/3/12 – 1/4/12</td>
<td>Ruse (BG)</td>
<td>15/1/12</td>
<td><a href="http://www.beta-iatefl.org/annual-conference/conference-call/">http://www.beta-iatefl.org/annual-conference/conference-call/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ConnexXion – Bridging the Gap</td>
<td>20/4/12 – 21/4/12</td>
<td>Salzburg (AT)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tea4teachers.org/joomla/">http://www.tea4teachers.org/joomla/</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 5th International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF5)</td>
<td>24/5/12 – 26/5/12</td>
<td>Istanbul (TU)</td>
<td>6/12/12</td>
<td><a href="http://www.elf5.org/index.php">http://www.elf5.org/index.php</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EALTA Conference</td>
<td>31/5/12 – 3/6/12</td>
<td>Innsbruck (AT)</td>
<td>8/12/11</td>
<td><a href="http://www.uibk.ac.at/news/ealta-conference2012/">http://www.uibk.ac.at/news/ealta-conference2012/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIXEL (Future of Education)</td>
<td>7/6/12 – 8/6/12</td>
<td>Florence (IT)</td>
<td>16/1/12</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ebasesseo.com/2011/09/international-conference-in-florence.html">http://www.ebasesseo.com/2011/09/international-conference-in-florence.html</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>