

Railwaystation as the best place for 2,500 networking educators from all over the world

Jana Jilkova's report from 49th IATEFL annual conference; 10-14 April 2015

A week full of great impressions – that is how I could summarise my current experience. I am very pleased and honoured to have been given the opportunity to participate as a representative of ATECR at a trully international conference. About **2,500 delegates from more than 100 countries** from all over the world joined the IATEFL annual event and were offered about 500 speaker sessions. This was a great chance to inform ELT professionals and public about Association fo English Language Teaching in the Czech Republic (**ATECR**), its activities, developments and also about a new **SELTIC project** on manageable integration of English and Science in the classroom. Old agreements between associations were renewed and new ones signed. ATECR established the very first contact in Africa with teacher's association in Angola and was also contacted by representaties from Peru, Venezuela, Indie, Egypt.



Manchester, the third-most visited city in the UK by foreign visitors, after London and Edinburgh, became the first industrialised city due to a boom in textile manufacture during the Industrial Revolution. You appreciate how beautiful Manchester is as soon as you start walking through its streets. Every morning I walked past the Central Library, the spectacular building which was inspired by the Pantheon in Rome, joining crowds of peers to reach the venue. Manchester was a great choice for the **49th IATEFL Annual Conference**. The venue which used to be a railwaystation in the past, allowed hundreds of delegates to move from one session to another within short distances. And there was enough space to meet colleagues and relax, too. Pre-conference events started on 10th April and included Associates' Day. The **Associates' Day** enabled *160 representatives of teacher associations (TA) all over the world, including ATECR*, to get together. The day began with a warm welcome by IATEFL President Carol Read and SIG representative George Pickering. George introduced a new IATEFL training scheme and an IATEFL Leadership Development Course which aims to help develop the leadership and management capacity of volunteer leaders in IATEFL and IATEFL associates and to provide one means by which TAs might reward their volunteer leaders for all their hard work for the benefit of members. Then there was a report by Les Kirkham, the TA coordinator, and a presentation of 2014 and 2015 award winners where ATECR was also mentioned.

One of the main purposes of this event is to enable the teacher associates to share best practices and discuss future developments and educators' professional support to their current and potencial members. Tatiana Ivanova, a representative of St Petersburg English Language Teachers

Association, explained how their association was developing through the past 20 years, followed by an academic consultant Mark Griffiths, Trinity College on Testing, Evaluation, and then by IATEFL Patron David Crystal. I have been following David Crystal for a number of years and have a deep admiration for his work. Apart from being a linguist expert, he is an extremely engaging and funny presenter. This time he spoke on **'World Englishes: Where next?'** and accents. *Have you noticed that even the queen has changed her way of speaking?* Before the traditional TA closing discussion on where to go further in supporting ELT educators, 13 poster presentations of projects and achievements of 13 more associates were presented. **ATECR SELTIC project** was of a great interest. Tim Banks (British Council) asked about details, including copyright issues. He found everything correct.

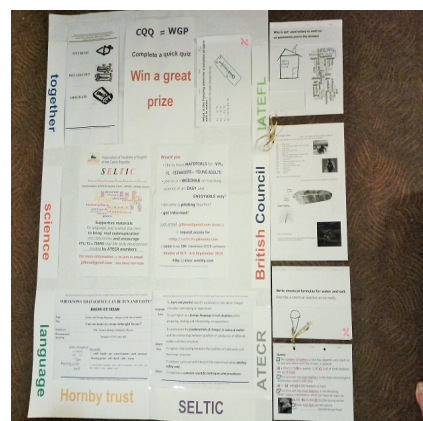


Foto: SELTIC project presentation

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Delegates were not only offered the general information about it but also joined a quiz and won sweet prizes. As one of the SELTIC topics were eggs, the conference was organised just after Easter, you can guess what kind of chocolates you could win :-) As you can imagine, the interest was enormous.

See more at <http://seltic4u.pbworks.com> and join us for SELTIC webinar on 23 June 2015.



SELTIC, one of the two funded projects chosen from the best proposals submitted for the period the period November 2014 – July 2015, is supported by the A.S. Hornby Educational Trust through IATEFL and the British Council. The fund award is used to support teacher and teacher association development. This project is co-funded by charity work of SELTIC team members and its partners.

Foto: SELTIC project presentation. Jitka Kolářová, Jana Jilková, Harry Kuchah (final plenary speaker)

It is tempting to follow other delegaters and stop this report here saying that 'it is impossible to choose highlights without omitting other important sessions'. It is true. However, I dare to continue. Despite practical hands-on tips, training and teacher's development sessions and sessions dealing with research topics, huge attention was given to IT. The use of tablets, mobile devices and variety of teaching and testing software was in the centre of interest. On the other hand, you could notice a new trend, which brings us back to a simplified way of teaching as in the old days, e.g. brain storming and using pen and paper but no technologies. Dyslexia and special needs topics were also popular among the audience even though their choice was limited. I think that the delegates of 49th IATEFL event will agree that there was far enough to learn and share, including publishers signature events and evening sessions.

Enjoyable evening programme enabled us to relax after busy conference days. British Council hosted reception at an admirable Victorian landmark of Manchester: the Town Hall. Other events included International Word and Music Fests, Pecha Kucha, International Quiz Night, enlightening theatrical comedy Mrs. Hoover's Singlish and the famous storyteller guru **Andrew Wright** Storytelling Evening.



Foto: Andrew Wright (on the left)

What I liked most was the enormous expertise available among the ELT delegates present at the conference and the will to share. And there nothing better than being given valuable advice over a cup of tea or two or a glass of wine at the British Council Evening event at Manchester's majestic Town Hall on further professional developments and networking or chatting again with **Malcolm Griffiths** whose decade of remarkable ELT support in the Czech Republic made him a well known and extraordinary person. I am passing his greeting on you.

Should you wish to refrain your thoughts, watch Donald Freeman's opening plenary **Frozen in thought?** How we think and what we do in ELT. Donald challenged a concept of *distributed responsibility between teachers and students*, as opposed to *shared responsibility*. He introduced it by using a metaphor of a chess game where **Each single action shapes what comes next**.

To catch up with this and other presentations and interviews go to watch IATEFL Manchester Online go to <https://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2015>

50th IATEFL event will be held in Birmingham. Why not to meet face to face heros of ELT like Ken Wilson, Jon Hird, Penny Ur, Jeremy Harmer, Scott Thornbury, Herbert Puchta, John Hughes, Jane Revell, Mike Hogan and many more? If you think about joining the ELT world in person, consider the offered **scholarships**:

<http://www.iatefl.org/scholarships/scholarships-how-to-apply>



Czech presenters at 49th IATEFL event

In conclusion, I would like to thank ATECR for supporting my attendance, and encourage all ATECR members to consider participating in next year's IATEFL conference on **12th-16th April 2016 in Birmingham** .

*Jana Jílková, ATECR regional coordinator
ICV & Pedagogická fakulta UK Praha
jjilkova@gmail.com
<http://atecr.weebly.com>*