

# Another workshop success for Fedele

**A**round 120 agents attended the annual agents' workshop organised by Spanish schools' federation, Fedele, in October. Held in La Coruña in the northern Galicia region of Spain, the agents met with 60 schools from all over the country.

The workshop balanced business over three days with a full range of social activities organised every evening. The social highlight of the workshop was a visit to the Parador in nearby Santiago de Compostela, after a tour through the city's famous cathedral.

Agent, Petra Wagner, who was at the event representing the Campus Fly team at Büro International University Bremen in Germany, said, "It was a very nice and friendly workshop, very personal and familiar. The social activities were, of course, excellent. What else could you expect of Spanish people?" She added that she felt the ratio of agents to schools was too high at some points, which meant it was difficult to maintain a full schedule of appointments.

Christopher Thebing from Kolumbus Sprachreisen in Germany agreed that the workshop was good. "There were a lot of quality schools and agents and I met many people with whom I had good talks," he said. "As a result of Fedele, we will work with some new schools that I met in La Coruña." His only criticism was that the school visits organised around the workshop could have been



Each school had its own booth for meetings with agencies

planned better. "During the first visit in La Coruña, I, together with many other agents, was still sitting in the plane," he said.

Sigbjorn Berge of Berge Language Training Services in Norway was another participant. "The whole event boosted my impression of Galicia as a tourist destination and it convinced me that language schools in Spain have a lot of quality to offer," he said. Many agencies seemed content with the event, while criticism noted by some agents concerned Spain's lack of diversity for dietary sensibilities. ●

## Agency offers Czech lessons

CHANNEL Crossings, a language travel agency based in Prague in the Czech Republic, which also runs two language schools, has branched into a new niche area: Czech language courses for foreigners. The courses were launched in the summer and have already attracted some students.

Petr Plocek from the agency told *Language Travel Magazine* that the response from clients had been positive. The agency offers total immersion courses, general language and Czech for special purposes. Plocek added, "We also organise a leisure time programme for students with weekend trips out of Prague." ●

## QE visits Ialca in Italy

REPRESENTATIVES of the UK schools' association, Quality English (QE), travelled to Italy last year to meet with members of Italian agency association, Ialca, and promote selected schools representing quality English language training.

Carolyn Blackmore, Chief Executive of QE, explained that the purpose of the mission was to promote QE and for schools to meet agents face-to-face.

After a dinner with Ialca members on a Friday evening,

the weekend continued with a presentation on Saturday morning from Ialca President, Paolo Barilari, and Trevor Williams from International School Exeter. A day-long workshop for schools and agents was then held. Blackmore said, "QE will consider proposals by Ialca to cooperate further in 2005," and noted that more business for schools using the QE brand name was expected from Ialca.

A trip to meet Aseproce in Spain was also held in March. ●



QE and Ialca convened in Rome

## Agency of the month



This month, **Lines Languages**, based in Belgium, which operates summer schools in the UK and France, nominates **Biltur**, an agency in Turkey.

In a series appearing each month in *Language Travel Magazine*, we ask a different language teaching institution to nominate one of their preferred agencies or agent partners, and to explain why this person/company is worthy of their nomination.



**Dirk van Nieuwenborgh, Director of Lines Languages, explains why:**

"Lines exclusively works with agents and has been a partner of Biltur, a major agency in Istanbul, for more than 10 years. Turkey is a very important but peculiar market. Our partnership has been based on trust and flexibility trying to meet

the students' requests. Biltur's approach is based on offering the highest quality to students while always giving Lines feedback on an immediate and long-term basis, allowing us to improve our programmes and services.

The agency's group leaders, who are former students, understand Lines' approach and services, and therefore the service provided matches students' expectations. The two directors also visit us on a regular basis.

Biltur is the perfect solution for a school like Lines. Our relationship is based on a win-win basis where the school trusts the agent to pass on the exact message adapted to the specificity of the market the agent is dealing with, while Lines guarantees exclusivity and transparency."

## Industry issues - agents speak out

January February March April May June July August September October November December

### Q How influenced are you by the history/reputation/size of a school when choosing to work with new business partners?



**Kimberly Haber, Adelante LC, USA**

"For our programmes, which include an internship component, it is all about the personal relationship we have with the school. So we might work with a large chain, say Don Quijote in Madrid, but in Seville we may work with a one-shop only institute because our team knows the personnel at each school. Whether it is a large school or a small school, established or new, we tend to choose a school based on the people who work there and our relationship with them. We have learned the hard way that the reputation, size and market share [of a school] often are not good indicators of how well a student will be received and taught."



**Michael Eck, STA Zurich, Switzerland**

"We select new partner schools at first based on demand. Listening to our customers, branches and sales agents we find out what schools, products or destinations are most requested.

The markets are different. In Latin America, for example, we only work with small to medium-size schools. In this region, many good schools are not even known in the business. We have quite a lot of repeat business and it is our experience that very often, our clients do not remember the name of the school. But they remember if it was a positive or a negative experience. In my opinion, a school's reputation is mainly limited to the language travel industry. The customers do not care if a school is part of an association or not. We do prefer working with schools that are part of an association because we have the guarantee [of] quality standards. But we do not exclude good products that aren't part of an association."



**Nora Leow, Guangdong Great World Education and Visa Consulting, China**

"Due to travel costs and the strict control by China's government on overseas travel, it is almost impossible for a Chinese agent to field-check

all possible partner schools. So comments from relevant academic associations and official councils are the most valuable judgements to gauge the reputation of the school."

**Mark Effendi, Ausindo Sydney (Perth), Australia**

"I would consider working with a new branch of a well-established school as opposed to a new brand. This is because students normally will have some opinion already of a well-established school. Also, it would be safer for us to recommend as hopefully it would be less likely to go bust. But we would also recommend other schools that better suit the student's need as long as we could establish that the school is reputable. I would find out through media, information available to the public and the school flyer/handbook. Best of all, via feedback and opinions of ex-students and from opinions of other agencies working in the field. I have no problem [with] the size of the establishment as long as someone at the school is willing to listen and help to solve a problem."



**Udaya Halim, King's English and Education Centre, Indonesia and Australia**

"There can be new schools offering good quality because they are backed by professional people who have experience in the industry. I don't mind working with a new school as long as I know who the people behind the schools are. We cannot deny the power of networking, can we? It is said that most businesses consist of 75 per cent connection and 25 per cent reputation. In the case that I know nothing about a particular new school, I will try to gather as much information as possible before I send any students. Both smaller and larger schools have pluses and minuses. Small operators can be more approachable and flexible. A new bigger operator with new marketing people, on the other hand, can be aggressive and demanding in their expectation to fill up classes and they tend to be impatient to let you promote the school and [sometimes] appoint so many agents that [it] creates unnecessary competition among local agents."



# Q&A



English UK is hoping to establish the English in Britain Accreditation scheme as the nationwide quality scheme for UK ELT. TONY MILLNS, Chief Executive, answers our questions.

## Fact box

**Full name:** English UK

**Year established:** 2004 (through the merger of Arels and Baselt)

**Number of members:** 330

**Type of members:** English language training providers accredited by the British Council through the English in Britain Accreditation Scheme

**Association's main role:** as the world's leading language teaching association, we aim to develop our members' professionalism and to protect and promote their business and interests

**Government recognition:** Yes

**Code of practice:** Yes

**Complaints procedure:** Yes

**Agent workshops/fam trips:** Yes

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### How has English UK developed since its inauguration in May?

Externally, English UK has begun to promote itself through a major marketing programme. We've published the second edition of the "English in the UK" guide and the new website will be launched shortly. Internally, the integration of the Arels and Baselt systems is being led by the new Board, and by the end of the year we will have completed most of the transition and have a very strong offer to new members. We've gained over 10 members since the launch and there are more in the pipeline.

### What are the combined benefits that English UK can now offer its members – representing both public and private sectors?

English UK has five main areas of activity: quality assurance; professional development, consultancy and research – including training and conferences; representation and lobbying both in the UK and internationally; marketing and promotion, especially in new and developing markets; business services and business development.

### How is English UK involved in the plans for regulating, and eventually accrediting, the UK English language teaching sector?

We have been campaigning on this issue for some three years, and we were instrumental in getting the government to act to safeguard the immigration process and the quality reputation of UK education. We are in regular contact with the Home Office and the Department for Education and Skills, and will continue to press for a move towards accreditation for UK ELT under the English in Britain Accreditation Scheme, which is the global benchmark for accreditation schemes. We believe that it is vital that there should be a single accreditation scheme for UK ELT, with clear international visibility, as a guarantee of standards.

### What sort of agency outreach plans do you have for 2005?

Agents continue to be one of the most important sources of bookings at member centres. We have a number of inward and outward missions planned and other events where we shall be building links with agents.

## On the move

Tom Walton is the new Marketing Director at Idiomas ¡Si!, based in Alicante, Spain, and is responsible for both the Alicante and Malaga schools. His role entails promoting Idiomas ¡Si! in the international marketplace. "I hope to convince more students that our schools combine a serious approach to language learning with the ability to take advantage of two beautiful coastal locations," he said.



After a year away, Kevin McNally has returned to the Hampstead School of English in London, UK, where he is now Marketing Manager. Mr McNally's main role is to develop Hampstead's relationship with agents and schools abroad.



Regent Language Training in the UK has appointed a new Academic Manager and Administration Manager to head up its Edinburgh school. David Van Den Bergh (top) has been appointed as Administration Manager, and will oversee the general running of the school, including student enrolments, accommodation, finances and customer service. Peter Venables will be responsible for student placements, teacher recruitment and overseeing all academic aspects of the courses at the school. Mr Venables said, "I look forward to providing first class educational experiences to students from around the world."



## Grapevine

The girls at the Aspect London office are feeling fitter since their 5km women-only charity race in London's Hyde Park. The team consisted of Natalia, Satoko, Leslie, Delphine, Sandra and Valerie.



Congratulations to Mark Gordon, left, who picked up Austrade's Australia-Latin America 2004 Language Education Award on behalf of the University of New South Wales' Institute of Languages. On the far right, David Nelson of University of Queensland's Institute of Continuing & Tesol Education, who received an award for Individual Recognition through Significant Contribution for his work in building the export market to the Latin American region. In the centre are Christine Bundesen, left, also of University of Queensland ICTE and Sue Blundell, right, Chief Executive of English Australia.

Enjoying an alfresco drink at the Fedele workshop, which was held in La Coruña in October (photo left), from left to right, are: Balázs Pokorádi, International House, Hungary; Nathan Manfroi, Enforex, Spain; Birger Reinhardt Larsen, SIOC, Norway and Svitlana Shtengelova, also from Enforex.

Spanish charm was also on the menu at the workshop (photo right). From left to right: Pia Kjær Pedersen of Language Education Danmark A/S/Aspect, Denmark; Manuel Angel Rodriguez from Quality Courses Abroad in Spain; Thora Bjorg Jonasdottir of Urval Utsyn agency in Iceland.



If you have any fun news stories or photos, tales of success or amusement, please contact amy@hothousemedia.com and ask to appear in the Grapevine section!



Cristian Calomarde is the new Director of STB Argentina. His role is to develop the agency business and to adapt the Brazilian STB model to Argentina, opening more STB offices and selecting representatives in different provinces. He says, "As part of the STB Group, our goal is to be leaders in the language travel sector in Argentina." Mr Calomarde has been working in the industry since 1995, and most recently was in charge of setting up Asatej's Madrid office in Spain.



The Association of British Language Schools (ABLS) in the UK has appointed a new Chairperson. Janet McQuirk of New Century Study takes over from Judith Godfrey. She said, "Judith is handing over ABLS in excellent shape, at the end of the most eventful, but one of the most successful, years in our history. ABLS already has many new members and is currently inundated with applications for membership."



Next issue - February 2004: **Special Report** finds out who's who in ELT • **Market Report** charts business trends in Australia • **Direction** looks at language plus programmes • **Agency Survey** canvasses agencies in Russia • **City Focus** visits Seville in Spain • **Status** provides data from the German market