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# Quality EFL centres in South Africa

- Setting standards
- Ensuring professionalism and quality
- Promoting the growth of the ELT industry in South Africa



# Brightness in South Africa

## Good promotion

With so many positive factors in South Africa's favour at the moment, it is an advantageous time for language schools to engage in promotion. *Language Travel Magazine* therefore asked a number of them about their promotional strategies for the coming year.

While some, like CT School of English, plan to increase levels of advertising and direct marketing, others are looking primarily to enhance their own provision. At The International English School (IES), the intention is to carry out more advertising through colleges internationally, while also undertaking more staff training to cater for exam needs and high advanced level provision, according to the school's Tania Copeland.

Destination marketing is particularly important for lesser-known locations. As Sean Fitzhenry of Port Elizabeth-based Bay Language Institute acknowledges, "Our destination is difficult to sell. Everybody knows Cape Town and the Kruger, but most people have never even heard of Port Elizabeth." Hence, Bay will be working closely with local tourism organisations.

2009 is a time of change for South Africa's national association, Eltasa, as it will rebrand as EduSA, to work within the umbrella organisation of the South African Youth Travel Confederation (SAYTC). "We hope to have everything completed by the end of 2009 when we expect all members to be using the new logos," says Secretary of Eltasa, Meryl van der Merwe.

South Africa is an affordable study destination whose star is rising, with more students considering learning English in the country. JANE VERNON SMITH reports.

The picture emerging from South Africa at the turn of the year was that language schools generally prospered in 2008. A number of factors have contributed to this positive trend. While schools' own efforts have undoubtedly played a part, as Craig Leith, Principal of Cape Town-based Good Hope Studies, acknowledges, the upturn is also a result of South Africa becoming better known as an EFL destination, according to Jane Diesel, Director at Inlingua Language Training Centre in the same city.

This in turn, she points out, has been helped by the presence of the national association, Eltasa, at a number of fairs. The country's low cost of living is also significant, as Tatiana Cavarsam of LAL highlights, along with a favourable exchange rate and exposure for the forthcoming 2010 football World Cup. Thus, while many markets have already begun to feel the cold wind of economic downturn, the South African language travel sector remains buoyant, with student numbers up by 20 per cent and more at a number of established schools.

Traditionally recruiting a large number of students from Germany and Switzerland (see pie chart), these nationalities continued to feature strongly in 2008. At The International English School (IES) in Somerset West, the number of Swiss students increased, as they showed growing interest in examination programmes. At International House Cape Town, Managing Director, Gavin Eyre, has observed an increase in Brazilian, Spanish, Russian and Turkish students over the last year. "Brazilian bookings are up by about 15 per cent [and] the rest [by] about 10 per cent," he notes.

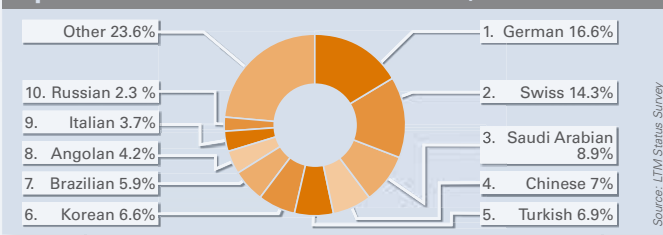
For LAL, the best increase has been a 285 per cent surge from the Middle East. "The Saudi Arabian market is growing once again," comments Cavarsam, "due to the forthcoming soccer World Cup and the competitive price of our long stay programmes, as well as the low living costs." Meanwhile, at Wits Language School, the greatest increase has been in students from Turkey. According to Course Coordinator, Trish Cooper, their share has risen from six per cent to 16 per cent on average per course, as Turkish people increasingly seek business opportunities within South Africa.

One trend that recurs across a number of schools is the growth in demand from other African countries. The Democratic Republic of Congo performed well at CT School of English in Cape Town, according to Many Bredell, and at Wits Language School, Cooper observes that, "The main reasons seem to be that these students are more mature and [are] self-funded. They have very clear goals, and are



PHOTOGRAPH: SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

## Top student nationalities in South Africa, 2007



Source: LTM Status Survey

aiming to improve their English as much as possible within a relatively short time-frame – six months on average."

With student numbers rising, language schools have observed growing interest in a number of course types. Examination programmes appear to be a significant growth area, and Bredell highlights Toefl and Cambridge programmes, in particular. At Bay Language Institute, courses preparing students for both exams and academic studies have grown in popularity, according to Sean Fitzhenry at the school, mainly because of the increase in the number of African students. As a result, there is also a trend for longer courses of between 16 and 24 weeks.

New school openings are also a sign of a buoyant market, and Wits Language School is planning to open a new school in Pretoria. Kurus English CC opened its doors in Cape Town in September 2008, and Managing Director, Johannes Kraus, says that he is expecting growth in the next couple of years. One factor in this is the view that the rand will remain weak against the major currencies, with the effect that the country will continue to be a cheap tourist destination.