

INTERNATIONAL

Eaquals

CONFERENCE



**21–23 OCTOBER 2021
BELFAST, UK**

HYBRID EVENT



Eaquals
2021 Celebrating 30 Years of Excellence

Eaquals 30th Anniversary Conference October 2021, Belfast, United Kingdom

**OZYEGIN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES**

**ATTENDEE
REFLECTIONS**

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This year, EAQUALS kindly organised its 30th Anniversary Conference in a hybrid mode, which enabled us to follow the sessions online. During this two-day hybrid event, the themes addressed were language teaching and learning, course design, CEFR and assessment, staff assessment and development, leadership and management, and business and marketing.

Following the opening of the conference on Friday, we had the chance to join the opening plenary "Leading in times of Volatility" by Joanne Murphy, which focused on the nature of management and leadership in conditions of uncertainty and risk. There were also elective sessions allowing us to get insights about the different aspects of COVID-19 and what it brought about in education. In the evening, we, as the ones who were following the sessions online, were given the opportunity to network and socialise in the form of a zoom meeting, which was appreciated since we were not able to join the conference dinner in person and had the chance to socialise in Belfast. It made us feel like we were also a part of this hybrid event.

Thank you for the opportunity and for the successful organisation of this event.



Reflection by Mohammad Khari

I had the opportunity to attend some of the sessions online.

- Opening Plenary: Leading in Times of Volatility

- Plenary: What's really changed? Exploring the impact of the pandemic on values-based decision making in higher education

- Probing the Principles of EAP Course Design

- Creative Writing for Students and Teachers

The event was done on a very nice online platform allowing the attendees to see the live broadcast of the sessions delivered in Belfast simultaneously, to connect with other attendees from all over the world via messages and video calls, to follow the event news on social media, and to benefit from many other practical features all in one place.

Creative Writing for Students and Teachers by Alan Maley

This workshop focused on potential advantages of creative writing for both learners and teachers. Through a series of simple practical tasks, Maley showed the attendees how to benefit from the idea of “writing within constraints” while fostering personal freedom of expression.

Participants had the chance of having hands-on practice on some of the tasks like “bucket list”, “Hello/Goodbye”, “mini-saga*”, “metaphor poem”, and “array”.

*A mini-saga is a piece of writing which has exactly fifty words, not including the title, which can have up to fifteen words.

Array

| | | |
|---------|-------------|----------|
| he | in | me |
| sent | I | most |
| parks | anyway | was |
| of | never | flowers |
| silence | took | wrote |
| it | said | what |
| letters | restaurants | how |
| to | cannot | love |
| spoke | we | remember |
| met | but | |

Bucket Lists

Make a list of TEN things you want to do before you die. Then combine them into a short poem. e.g.

After getting rid of my books,
And making peace with everyone,
I shall lose weight
By becoming a hermit
(just for a while!)
On a Scottish island,
Return home to find my son has children –
Then re-read the whole of Shakespeare, (on my Kindle)
And die in my bed with a bottle of champagne,
And be forgiven.

Metaphor poem

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Hope | a spoon |
| Life | a knife |
| Marriage | an egg |
| Love | a brush |
| Anger | a window |
| Disappointment | a mirror |
| Work | a banana |
| Happiness | a rope |
| Time | a bus |
| Hate | a cup |
| Fear | an alarm-clock |

So make up 3 metaphors by randomly combining words from each column.

Anger is an alarm-clock.
Work is a rope. etc

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These simple, limited, and yet challenging tasks are examples of CW (creative writing) that offer a wide range of benefits including: “language development”, - as learners are exposed to the language and make meaningful connections “fostering playfulness”, - since learners are encouraged to be creative and think outside the box “self-discovery through exploration/risk”, - reflecting on their own sentences and others’, learners can know themselves better and realize how much risk they take and how open they are to discover new meanings and connections “drawing on affect”, - as learners’ mood, emotion, and feelings play a significant role in their production when they are given the freedom to be creative “increased motivation from confidence/self-esteem”, - since learners see that they can produce meaningful sentences and make creative connections within the task’s constraints which leads to higher levels of motivation and confidence “being creative READERS as a result of being creative WRITERS”, - CW is not a beneficial asset for only the writing skill; it also helps learners to be more creative and confident in other skills like reading or speaking and “improving Expository Writing”. – these limited tasks can be used as stepping stones for further practice on more advanced writing genres and formats.

Reflection by Meltem Yilmaz

After the postponement of the EAQUALS Annual International Conference as a result of the pandemic, we were able to participate between the 21st -23rd of October, 2021 thanks to the opportunity of the hybrid event allowing us to attend via Eaquals' online platform. The conference program addressed issues of the five conference strands which were about Language teaching and learning, Course design, CEFR and assessment, Staff development, Leadership and Management and Business and Marketing. I had the opportunity of attending several inspiring sessions covering a wide range of topics and also as an online attendee, I had the chance of joining the networking meeting hosted by our director, Nergis Uyan. Below, I would like to share my reflections regarding some of the sessions I could attend.

Putting the Focus on Learning

The session was presented by David Byrne and Gillian Davidson and it was very interesting to see how they approached their syllabus design by putting the learners at the center of their learning to develop their learner autonomy. They reviewed the latest educational research of John Hattie and showed how they incorporated the “Visible Learning” techniques into their elective syllabus and online courses by creating a culture change in their institution. In their “Success Criteria”, they aimed to help students feel involved in the process by enabling them to know what and why they are learning along with how each section of the lessons build towards the outcomes. Teachers are provided with an outline for every lesson in which they are free to use their own materials and adapt them accordingly. As long as the main learning outcomes are met, teachers have the flexibility of choosing the context that students enjoy and areas they need most, which enables great differentiation opportunities in the school. Thereby, students have the motivation of a clear real life benefit as they are aware of the fact that the language input has a specific context. I really enjoyed the way they depicted their routine in which the course planners are seen both by the teachers and students so that they can understand the main purpose of the discussing objectives together.

Creative Writing for Students and Teachers

It was so inspiring to attend the workshop delivered by Alan Maley. He introduced the key features of Creative Writing, which are self-discipline, playful engagement with language, use of imagination and visualization, close observation and sensitivity to sound patterns. In his workshop, he emphasized that language is a living organism which is growing and changing; for that reason, using the key characteristics of creative writing helps not only language development but also expository writing. He suggested some techniques stimulating creativity such as metaphor poems and his idea of contextualizing the metaphors was fantastic.

Classroom Research and the Whole Teacher

I also had the chance to attend the session titled as “Classroom Research and the Whole Teacher” presented by Alan Pulverness. He shared the principles and practices of classroom research and discussed it under the humanistic approach in language teaching and emphasized the respect for the learners, self-actualization and the importance of learner autonomy. In his talk, he focused on the importance of problematizing, experimenting and reflecting in classroom research for teacher development.

Reflection by Team Leaders

EAQUALS International Conference was held on 21st-23rd October 2021, in Belfast, UK, as the 30th Anniversary Conference. The conference content addressed the themes of language teaching and learning, course design, CEFR and assessment, staff assessment, staff development, leadership and management, and business and marketing. After the postponement due to the pandemic, it was held as a hybrid event, so the participants had the opportunity to attend it online. We, as Team Leaders, were a few of those who had this opportunity, and below are some highlights from the conference as part of our reflection.

Leading in Times of Volatility by Dr Joanne Murphy

The opening plenary of the EAQUALS International 2021 Conference, 'Leading in times of volatility' was delivered by Dr. Joanne Murphy. The session was mainly about what leadership is and what it is not. Dr. Joanne Murphy also talked about certain models of leadership linking this to the topic of leading in volatile contexts. In her session, she mentioned that in leadership things can easily go wrong and we need to give enough credit to the people who have this responsibility.

We could relate ourselves to this easily. We agree that there are dark sides to leadership and it is not an easy job to do. Another thing we particularly liked about Dr. Joanne's session was that she recommended the audience to read fiction if they want to understand the challenges of leadership. She said fiction tells us a lot about the world. The books she suggested are 1984 by George Orwell, The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood.

Working Toward Excellence in Language Learning by Susanna Dammann

The session focused mainly on the philosophy of learner engagement and independence in all contexts including face-to-face, online and hybrid. Using the Indicators of Compliance and Excellence in Teaching and Learning from the Equals Inspection Manual, Susanna explored how teachers can help students go through a more effective learning journey. As part of this, classroom observations were one of the main areas discussed during the session, and how hard it can be for the observee and the observer to reflect on and evaluate the lesson when it is too concerned about the observation rather than the learning outcomes. The importance of focusing on learning outcomes was emphasized to ensure an engaging and effective learning process. Towards the end of the session, Susanna also offered some suggestions under the name of '10 Tips for Excellence' which can be used as a guide by teachers.

1. Check your plan for a variety of activity and relevance to learning objectives
2. Start each class with a brief review of learning
3. Then present and clarify learning objectives
4. Ban 'Do you understand?'
5. NEVER ask learners to read aloud in class
6. TTT can be useful BUT
7. LISTEN to your students and ATTEND to them
8. Collect 'interesting utterances' and use for delayed correction
9. Design delayed correction activities so the students do the work
10. End each class with review and 'What have we learned?'

Visible Thinking Routines in the English Language Classroom by Alex Warren

Alex's session mainly focused on how, as teachers, we can get our students to start thinking and asking questions by incorporating some visible thinking routines into our lessons. Throughout the session he highlighted the importance of the routines in the classroom culture and how it might facilitate a more inclusive and communicative classroom. He recommended that teachers include the three statements "I wonder, I see, I think" into their lessons using some visuals. I found it particularly helpful that Alex tried to create a discussion environment by using these three statements over some images in the session. He emphasized that when teachers ask higher-order questions such as "Why might this matter to me? Why might it matter to people around me? Why might it matter to the world?", they can help the students develop important critical thinking skills, make connections, consider different viewpoints, reason with evidence and go below the surface of the things. The session was quite useful for educators as it showed how students could look more critically at the content they are exposed to, draw connections between it and their own life, and increase their motivation for learning.

Classroom Research and the Whole Teacher by Alan Pulverness

On 22nd October, Alan Pulverness had a session named “Classroom research and the whole teacher.” The session was mainly about continuous professional development which he identified as voluntary, ongoing, process-oriented and requires teachers to get ready for the unexpected and to identify the needs with the help of their peers, which happens contrary to teacher training. In his session, he highlighted both the obstacles and the benefits of personal development. The obstacles he mentioned were the limitations of time, money, institution-based limitations, resources and teacher perceptions. On the other hand, the benefits he talked about that we could also relate to our own practices were professional satisfaction and motivation as well as the institutional improvement in teaching and learning. As one of the stages of personal development, he talked in detail about action research which he expressed as a productive option for teachers to take their own responsibility for development. The session was an opportunity to refresh our knowledge on creating the necessary conditions and following the principles and methods for action research which aims to find solutions through reflections systematically to immediate problematic situations.

Online Networking Event by Nergis Uyan

Eaquals conferences and events bring people together by not only professional sessions but also social gatherings. As this conference was a blended event, the social events were designed to include both face to face and online participants. Participants had the chance to gather socially in the coffee breaks, exhibition area and networking event. At the end of the first day, online attendees were invited to an online networking event. The event was hosted by Eaquals Trustee and Özyeğin University School of Languages Director, Nergis Uyan. There were 18 participants from Özyeğin University, Sabancı University and from different schools all around the world. The participants expressed their enthusiasm to have the chance to be a part of the international conference thanks to its blended participation format. To celebrate the 30th anniversary of Eaquals, the participants shared their personal experience with Eaquals. They talked about their first encounter with Eaquals, their role in the accreditation process and the transformative experience they had during this process as well as how they benefited from Eaquals conferences. We were happy to join the event and feel the connection Eaquals creates among our professional community.

Disruptive Innovation in English Language Assessment by Ben Beaumont & Alex Thorp

On 23rd October, Ben Beaumont & Alex Thorp had a session named "Disruptive Innovation in English Language Assessment". In their session, they shared how The Covid-19 pandemic brought about a fundamental change in the field of language assessment. A transition to digital and online assessment was both a challenge and an opportunity for expansion. In that process, the guiding values for their institution have been the communicative nature of their tests, learner centred approach and validity & reliability of the tests. They highlighted that with the transformation that started with the pandemic, a new vision is needed in the field. They expressed the need for a renewed emphasis on performance and 21 Century Skills; uptake of communication skills, teachers with digital teaching skills and requirement of predictive validity. The session was an opportunity to see that disruptions can turn into innovations that were long-due and the motivation to bring about this change sometimes come naturally.