

ASSESSMENT OF THE FEEDBACK PROVIDED BY THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE EALTA SITGES 2007 CONFERENCE

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As at the first three EALTA conferences, participants at the Sitges Conference, June 15-17, 2007 were asked to provide feedback with a questionnaire. The questionnaire was a slightly modified version of the earlier questionnaires. This makes it possible to compare the feedback over time. Altogether 80 questionnaires were returned, 8 more than at the Krakow Conference.

The EALTA conference had attracted a wide range of participants: of those who filled in the questionnaire, the majority were assessment professionals/university/college teachers/researchers. Teacher educators were also well represented as well as educational administrators. The fact that there were not very many teachers attending requires reflection and discussion.

The fixed-choice format was complemented by an opportunity to give reasons for the answer or to elaborate it. Some questions required the respondents to write their answers in the boxes provided for answering. The participants often did elaborate their answers and quite a few wrote at some length in the boxes. As before, these extremely valuable comments have all been transcribed, and they have been studied and discussed by the Executive Committee in order to see how EALTA can best be responsive to the members' views and needs. They will not, however, be circulated, but will be carefully consulted also for hints during the preparation of the next conference in Athens.

The fixed-choice answers were tallied and the results are presented in the Appendix.

Most of the answers are easy to summarise, and they can be expressed very succinctly in the words of one of the participant: *An excellent conference overall!*

1. According to the unanimous responses the organisation of the Sitges conference had succeeded very well.
2. The cost of taking part was found as very reasonable or reasonable by a large majority of the participants, although the hotel was considered expensive by some.
3. The locality of the conference received almost unanimous approval.
4. Practically all found the length of the conference to be appropriate.
5. Almost all considered the presentations to be of appropriate length.
6. Also, the number of presentations was found appropriate by practically all respondents.
7. The assessment of the quality of the presentations was clearly more positive than before, which is a very positive development.
8. The ratings concerning the opportunity for participation and discussion reached the same very satisfactory level as at the Krakow conference (70 out of 80 had a positive view).
9. The panel discussion, or symposium, is more difficult to assess as about one third of the respondents did not answer the question. Those who did answer found the panel either very interesting or interesting.
10. The extent of the parallel sessions received general approval. An equally small minority would prefer to see fewer or none or more of them.
11. Most of the posters were rated "good" or "mostly good". This is slightly up from earlier conferences. Judging by the comments, monitoring the quality of the posters has been quite successful. There were, however, 12 non-answers, which makes the interpretation of trend less certain.

12. One of the main goals of EALTA received again good support as almost all participants felt that they had learned very much or quite a lot during the conference (75 out of 80).
13. The Annual General Meeting received very positive ratings.
14. When asked to single out the best aspect of the conference the participants often stated that this was a hard question to answer. Most commonly were mentioned the opportunity to learn, the excellent organization, the good quality of presentations and the attractive locality.
15. When asked to indicate the worst aspect of the conference, it is noteworthy that the majority did not respond to this question. Several stated that there was nothing to criticize. The answers were scattered across most of the categories with slightly more answers related to the quality of posters and the opportunity for participation and discussion. The same features have stood out also in earlier evaluation reports.
16. When asked whether participants would you attend the next annual conference if money were no problem, almost all answered “definitely yes” or “probably yes”.
17. When asked what in particular the participants had learned at the conference, many different things were mentioned. By far the most frequent category of answers focussed on different aspects of the CEFR. Furthermore, the value of widening one’s perspective by learning about, and from, others, was mentioned by a number of respondents, as was standard setting. A few quotations from the questionnaires may illustrate these categories of answers:
- Many people have the same problems in using CEFR for different purposes, but there is a lot of shared interests and knowledge.
 - Examples of good practice and procedures. To have a critical view about the CEFR. We all face similar difficulties & other’s experience can help to cope with them.
 - About the standard setting procedures, the experiences in this area and the different methods that can be used, some advantages and disadvantages of these.
18. When asked what the participants would like to suggest for the next annual meeting and conference many views were presented. One category of responses concerned assessment in a somewhat wider sense than traditional testing. However, there were also comments that expressed satisfaction with the types of presentations that have been given at the EALTA conferences held so far.
- A bit less of testing and a bit more of other types of assessments.
 - The same level of presentations that we saw/experienced this year.
19. When asked whether the participants had any suggestions for topic(s) of a pre- or post-conference workshops, a few suggestions were given. In this case as well, the CEFR was mentioned by quite a number of respondents, as was what some of the commentators referred to as ‘statistics’. Another category of responses mentioned assessment in a wide sense. Again a few quotations have been chosen to give examples of comments given by some of the participants.
- If CEFR should still be the theme, why not focus on problems/critical views?
 - Statistics – many of us are teachers with no knowledge of statistics and many presentations involve stats. It is difficult sometimes to follow the presentations.
 - Formative assessment. Assessment of FL in ESP settings.
 - Language standards in a multi-cultural European framework: The pragmatic view.

Appendix

1. Organisation	7. Quality of presentations
Very good 71	Good 19
Good 9	Mostly good 47
Not so good 0	Mixed 14
Poor 0	Mostly poor 0
(No answer: 0)	Poor 0
	No answer: 0)
2. Cost	8. Opportunity for participation and discussion
Very reasonable 34	More than enough 1
Reasonable 33	Appropriate 69
Expensive 10	Too little 10
Too expensive 2	No answer: 0)
(No answer: 1)	
3. Locality	9. Panel discussion
Very good 69	Very interesting 25
Good 9	Interesting 24
Not so good 1	Not interesting 0
Poor 0	Waste of time 1
(No answer: 1)	(Not attended: 6)
	(No answer: 24)
4. Length of conference	10. What is your opinion of parallel sessions
Too long 1	None needed 3
Quite long 2	Too many 2
Appropriate 77	Appropriate number 62
Quite short 0	Too few 6
Too short 0	(No answer: 7)
(No answer: 0)	
5. Length of presentations	11. Posters
Too long 0	Good 10
Quite long 0	Mostly good 31
Appropriate 74	Mixed 22
Quite short 5	Mostly poor 1
Too short 1	Poor 2
(No answer: 0)	(NA: 2)
	(No answer: 12)
6. Number of presentations	12. Opportunity to learn
Much too many 0	Very much 30
Too many 6	Quite a lot 45
Appropriate 72	Not so much 5
Too few 2	Very little 0
Much to few 0	(No answer: 0)
(No answer: 0)	

13. Annual general meetingVery effective **26**Effective **30**Ineffective **0**Very ineffective **0**(Not attended: **8**)(No answer: **16**)**a. Which of the above aspects (1 to 13) was the best of the conference?**1 **15**2 **2**3 **11**4 **3**5 **1**6 **2**7 **13**8 **3**9 **5**10 **1**11 **1**12 **24**13 **1**(No answer: **8**)

(Tot. 90)

b. Which of the above aspects (1 to 13) was the worst of the conference?

1 -

2 **4**3 **2**4 **1**5 **1**6 **1**7 **2**8 **8**9 **2**10 **3**11 **10**12 **2**

13 -

(No answer: **44**)

(Tot. 80)

C. If money were no problem, would you attend the next annual conference?Definitely yes **54**Probably yes **22**Probably not **2**Definitely not **1**(No answer: **1**)**G. Please indicate whether you are:**Language teacher **22**Teacher educator **21**Assessment professional **32**University/college teacher **25**Researcher **21**Educational administrator **9**Other **6**