



Terry Lamb (previous President of ALL and current President of FIPLV) has shared with us the Foreword of a journal published by IILT (Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching). We reproduce it with thanks.

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I often say that language teacher associations changed my life. This is not intended to be hyperbolic – my life, and not just my career, would simply not be the same without them.

I first came across language teacher associations when I attended a conference in Bradford in the early 1980s, soon after I had started my language teaching career in secondary schools in London. This conference was organised by seven separate language teacher associations, five of them representing teachers of specific languages (Dutch, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, Russian) plus two other organisations focused on languages generally, all of which collaborated under the umbrella name of the Joint Council of Language Associations (JCLA). This conference was eye-opening for me, not just because of all of the information and practical tips I picked up, but because of the hundreds of language teachers who attended, all totally committed to their profession and to their own professional development. Following discussions with a view to creating a more permanent organisation, which could encourage greater collaboration and representation of language teachers, the Association for Language Learning (ALL) in the UK was formed in 1990. It is no surprise that the title of its national conference in 2026 is ‘Collaboration at the heart of languages education’.

It so happened that, in 1990, I moved back home to Sheffield from London and, wishing to meet other language teachers beyond those in my new school, I attended a meeting of the ALL South Yorkshire Branch. Eventually I was elected Chair of that Branch, which provided opportunities for me to meet and work with other teachers locally and, eventually, nationally when I was elected to the ALL National Council. Thanks to ALL, I had found my languages family, many of whom are still firm friends. I also found an endless source of learning, inspiration, and support, which has kept me engaged in the wonderful world of languages education ever since.

Eventually I became national ALL President, which happened just as the UK government decided that we needed to develop a national languages strategy. In no time I found myself representing ALL on the National Languages Steering Group, chaired by an education minister, as well as a range of other implementation committees and boards following that. For ten years I worked closely with the government on language curriculum and policy until a change of government meant that everything changed.

After my term as ALL President, I was invited to stand as President of FIPLV, the *Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes* (International Federation of Language Teacher Associations), which was established in 1931 following a proposal by the *Institut Internationale de Coopération Intellectuelle* (the predecessor of UNESCO) to bring language teachers across the world together in order to address collaboratively the innovations of the time. I accepted the invitation and have been committed to the work of FIPLV ever since, as President, Secretary General and Vice President, before my election once again as President in 2022. FIPLV represents all language teachers as an NGO both of UNESCO and the Council of Europe and works hard to create opportunities for exchange not just across languages but across the world.

As can be imagined, the global, national and local nature of my work with language teacher associations has given me professional opportunities to make a difference to language education that I could never have dreamt of when I decided to study French and German as my first degree, the first person in my family to attend university. However, as I stated at the beginning of this Foreword, engaging with language teacher associations has impacted on my life more generally, as I have had (and continue to have) opportunities to make close friends across the globe, to travel to places I never thought I would visit, and to meet and work with national and international experts almost on a daily basis. My life is not what it would have been without that first experience of the work of a language teacher association.

It was, therefore, a great honour to be invited to write a few words at the start of this Special Issue of *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, which focuses on 'Language Teacher Associations and Educator Professional Development and Learning Across Spaces'. I am delighted that this journal, which I launched over 10 years ago together with Hayo Reinders, has had the opportunity to focus on these tremendous organisations and the dedicated people who volunteer their time to ensure that other language teachers can benefit from the activities they organise. My special thanks go to Luis Javier Pentón Herrera, Sherry Lyons, and Drew S. Fagan, for proposing this important theme and for seeing it through to the end so diligently. The theme of language teacher associations is absolutely appropriate for a journal on innovation, as can be seen in the rich variety of excellent papers included here. Luis, Sherry and Drew have provided an illuminating overview of these papers in their editorial, so I will not comment further. However, I thank all the contributors for conducting research into language teacher associations, still an underexplored area in research terms, and for contributing to this issue. Finally, I dedicate this special issue (if a Foreword can include a dedication) to all the language teachers in the world who devote their time to supporting other language teachers: facilitating exchange across languages as well as supporting the development of language teaching of specific languages; representing the voices of language teachers in order to influence policy in ways that are appropriate for schools and language learners; encouraging others to take the valuable opportunity of engaging in the important work of a language teacher association. For those of you reading this who are language teachers, please support your language teacher association!