

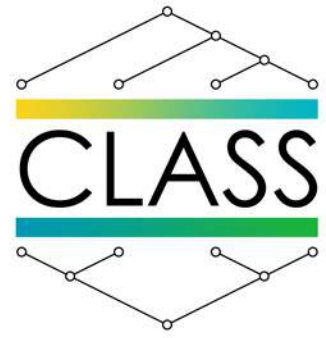
Editor's note!

Welcome to our sixth and last CLASS Newsletter!

We take this opportunity to share our latest events and final outcomes and to celebrate the programme's successful conclusion. Congratulations everyone, we made it!

Of course, it saddens us to realise that we haven't been able to meet each other in a very long time. Our last scheduled live meeting happened in Athens in September 2019 in what now seems a lifetime ago. However, we are grateful that everyone stayed safe during the pandemic and that despite the difficulties, all of us were able to contribute to the programme's requirements even from afar. Perhaps, this is the true power of collaboration.

On behalf of CLASS editing team we would like to wish you all the best on your future projects and personal aspirations.



A farewell letter

After a four-year period of trans-national collaboration between twelve partners, the Erasmus + programme CLASS has been concluded.

It was only in 2017 that partners first set out to create a new interdisciplinary computational linguistics Master programme for the Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan Universities. And now the programme is already running in seven Asian Universities (four from Uzbekistan and three from Kazakhstan respectively) through the use of blended learning.

The most challenging phase of the programme was perhaps setting up the curriculum. Content was defined by the National Standards of the two Asian countries, while all the institutions involved, provided content for all modules of the programme.

For the NLP module, content was provided by ENU and KazNU; for the Applied Linguistics module content was designed by SamSIFL, KSU, TSUULL and UrSU. Finally, for Computational Technologies module, NUUZ worked along side KSU, UrSU, TSUULL and ENU.

A number of NLP tools has been developed by Asian partners NUUZ TSUULL and UrSU: among them a Lexicon stemmer, a Sentiment and a Morphological analyzer, a Thesaurus and a Morphological parser.

A number of new publications in the form of e-books has also been delivered by KazNU, ENU, SamSIFL and UrSU. Throughout the duration of CLASS, partners have also produced a series of video rollers to disseminate the programme's results as well as a Special Session Low Resource Language Processing LRLP 2020 that has been awarded the Best Special Session Award by KazNU.

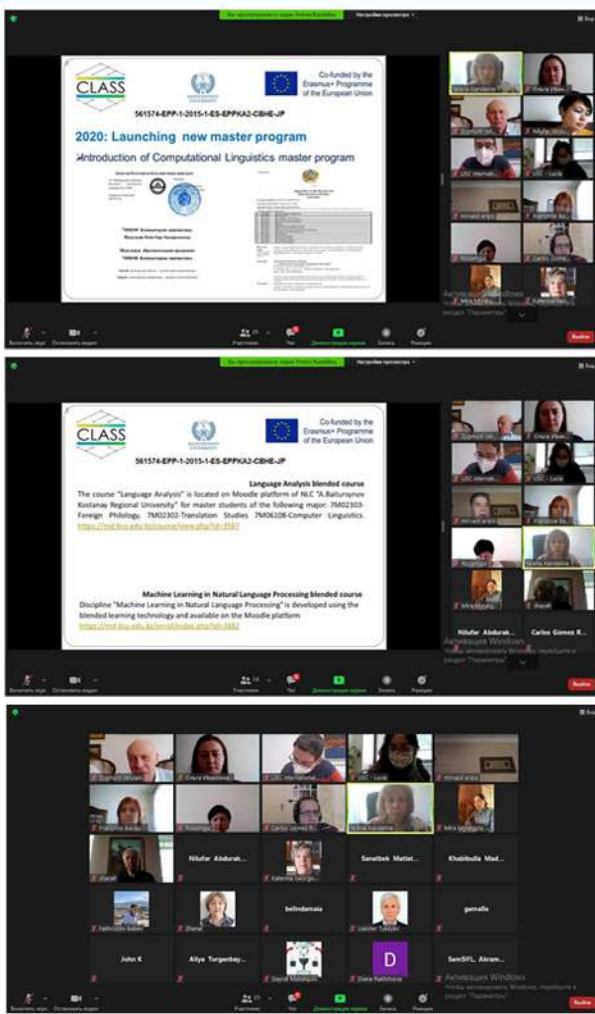
During the academic year 2019-2020 fifteen students attended the programme. The number increased in the following academic year 2020-2021 to fortyseven.

Although some issues have been raised that require further elaboration in the future, an equal number of opportunities has emerged as well. The programme's end marks a full circle of productive collaboration and exchange between all partners for now and hopefully, for the years to come.



We regret to not having one last image of the partners together, but here is a selection of our group photos from past events

Final (online) meeting, March 25, 2021



Due to COVID restrictions and travel bans, the final meeting of the programme was carried out online. Partner institutions were fairly represented with a total of thirty-four participants.

The meeting was coordinated by members of USC, the leading partner of the programme. A systematic overview of all CLASS activities and outcomes was conducted to validate that all Working Packages (WP) were fully implemented and especially WP2 which corresponded to the Master curriculum.

One after the other, all Asian partners presented the actions they carried out in regard to the necessary agreements they made for enrollments and official accreditations as well as the programme's future sustainability.

Special mention was made for activities related to teachers' training in the light of the new NLP tools developed for CLASS and the new publications made available to support them. Finally, many partners discussed the measures they took towards in regard to the necessary adoption of blended learning tools. Furthermore, partner institutions discussed possible schemes for future collaboration and the Master programme quality assurance and evaluation.

CLASS Webinar, April 8

Professor Zygmunt Vetulani from AMU, the Leader of WP3, organised and coordinated a webinar to discuss CLASS "Deliverables & Outcomes" as well as "Formal and Legal Issues." AMU's Agnieszka Vetulani-Cegiel discussed "Copyright protection" and Belinda Maia (UoP) discussed "IP practice" offering recommendations for final reporting. The webinar was followed by thirty people who also participated to the discussion held at the end of the session.



UNIWA | CLASS Evaluation Survey

Last March, UNIWA launched a short survey to evaluate CLASS partners' understanding and appraisal of the programme's results and dissemination processes.

Almost one third of the partners replied to the survey offering their insights on a series of questions related to the programme's relevance in their country; the level of cooperation they think they have reached with their regional partners and the European partners respectively; the programme's impact on them and finally, UNIWA's coordination of the programme dissemination through CLASS website and social media accounts.

Survey answers indicate a high level of satisfaction for the programme's relevance and its capacity to strengthen cooperation between regions. Same level of acceptance applies also to the programme's impact on the countries involved and the collective effort between EU and CA partners.

Partners highly appraised programme dissemination tactics and CLASS forms of communication for the programme's results.

Universities of Urgench and Santiago de Compostela to create joint educational programmes

The Embassy of Uzbekistan in Madrid organized a videoconference between the Rector of Urgench State University Bahrom Abdullayev and the Vice-Rector of the University of Santiago de Compostela Víctor Arce Vázquez, during which the parties discussed issues of further expanding cooperation between the two higher education institutions.

At the meeting, the parties emphasized the results of the joint work achieved in 2019, such as the visit of the delegation of the Spanish university to Uzbekistan in March last year, as well as negotiations with the leadership of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Following the meeting, the parties agreed to create joint educational programs, increase the quota for the exchange of students and professors within the framework of inter-university academic mobility, as well as study the issue of opening a branch of the University of Santiago de Compostela on the basis of Urgench State University and the possibility of organizing online Spanish courses for Uzbekistan students.

The Spanish University of Santiago de Compostela and Urgench State University have been collaborating for more than 10 years within the framework of Erasmus +, Erasmus Mundus and Tempus projects. During this period, a Cultural, Scientific and Pedagogical Convention on exchange of teaching staff, researchers and students was signed between the University of Santiago de Compostela and Urgench State University, within which two teachers of Urgench State University studied at the Master's program.

In addition, Urgench State University has established partnership with the University of Santiago de Compostela within the framework of the ECCUM project (Establishment of Computing Centers and Curriculum Development in Mathematical Engineering Master program) and CLASS (Computational Linguistics Master program) of the Erasmus + program.

The article was originally published in UZA in June 2020 and is available in the following address: <http://uza.uz/posts/38258>



Students of the University of Urgench discuss their ideas and opinions about the CLASS Master Programme in Computer Linguistics



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWkivzLp7M&ab_channel=CLASSERASMUSProject



Roundtable discussion: ensuring sustainability of Erasmus + projects

On October 16, 2020, as part of the 2020 Erasmus Days celebration, a round table under the title "Ensuring the sustainability of Erasmus + projects through the bilateral partnership of Urgench State University and A.Baitursynov Kostanay Regional University" was held.

Participants of the meeting exchanged best practices for the implementation of Master's degree programs "Mathematical Engineering" & "Computational Linguistics" in the framework of the implementation of ECCUM & CLASS projects to ensure their sustainability. Members of the meeting also discussed the prospects for organizing virtual academic mobility and agreed on academic exchange in the second semester of this academic year.



Online conference between UrSU and UNIWA

On July 3, 2020, an online conference was held between the University of West Attica in Greece and Urgench State University, both consortium members of the CLASS project. In the online conference, members of the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Athens also participated. The conference focused on the development of cooperation between universities and the collaboration in the field of education and science.

University of Western Attica was represented by Mr. Georgios Ioannidis, Dean of the Engineering School, Mr. Savas Vasiliadis, Head of the Electrical Department, Mr. Georgios Priniotakis, Head of the Industrial Design and Production Engineering Department, Mr. Dimitris Alexakis, Head of the Civil Engineering Department, and Mr. Ioannis Chronis, Representative of the Electrical and Electronics Department.

Urgench State University was represented by Rector Bakhrom Abdullaev, Vice-rectors Zafar Ibragimov, Gayrat Urazboev and deans of the faculties Muzaffar Kurbanov, Otabek Shikhov. All representatives of the universities shared detailed information about their institutions and the respective educational opportunities currently available.



EDITOR'S END NOTE

We take this opportunity to thank all of you who have contributed in providing us with information for our newsletter. This has been a collaborative effort and we would not have made it without you. On behalf of UNIWA editing team, we wish you all the best in your future projects.