

Title of example of practice: A unit on CLIL issues for student teachers in multilingual contexts

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Institution and initiating department/faculty

(i.e. where example of practice takes/took place):

Faculty of Language and Literature, Humanities, Arts and Education (FLSHASE): Formation pédagogique

Departments/faculties in which initiative implemented/to be implemented:

Formation pédagogique: Secondary School Teacher Education

Abstract

(QA question: What are/were you trying to do?)

A specific CLIL unit (four 2-hour seminars) is introduced in initial teacher education for all teachers of non-language subjects.

The overall aim is to raise awareness of the role of language(s) in the teaching and learning process in a multilingual context. Plurilingualism is looked upon as a special asset for cognitive, communicative and cultural competences and not merely as an obstacle to progress and achievement. Teachers learn to recognize and create classroom situations that foster appropriate use of L2 and the development of reading, writing and oral skills for the learning of subject matter.

In a multilingual and multicultural educational context, such as Luxembourg, it is important to perceive languages as reflecting different cultures, and notably cultures of learning. Languages also help express personal development; in a CLIL form of subject learning, L2 becomes indispensable for higher order thinking skills as well as for metacognition and reflection on one's own learning strategies and processes.

Moreover, student teachers, who are usually themselves at a C1 (sometimes C2) level in the language(s) they use for instruction, are given a chance to enhance their own language competence, not through language courses but through practice and tasks that incite reflection on the challenges of reading, interacting, writing in more than one language.

Hence, this unit hence seeks to ensure greater quality in teacher education through systematically addressing language issues as inherent in any bi- or multilingual context: selection of course material, analysis of language dimension in learning objectives, special needs of heterogeneous learning groups, evaluation of outcomes, interaction in the classroom, methodology and flexibility, ...

At the end of the unit, student teachers, already in charge of their own classes in secondary

education, choose personal experiences to make a presentation which integrates conceptual knowledge, practice and reflection.

Background – contextual issues giving rise to the initiative

(QA questions: Why are/were you trying to do it? / What are/were the aims and objectives?)

The rationale for this re-focussing of a module of teacher education on L2 related issues is twofold. The programme of teacher education is indeed subjected to the expectations of the Ministry of Education and the University of Luxembourg.

Both are interested in an enhancement of quality through a greater emphasis on content and language integrated studies. In recent years, the Ministry of Education has taken a special interest in language issues in education (*Language Education Policy Profile 2005-2006*, in cooperation with the Council of Europe). Though teaching and learning in foreign languages have a long tradition in Luxembourg, the need to deal more consciously and systematically with this aspect has been increased through growing numbers of non Luxembourgish students in primary and secondary education (on average 40%) and the pressure to boost the quality of learning in general, which is believed to be strongly dependent on students' language competence.

It is obvious that to achieve better learning outcomes teachers have to be prepared to face the challenges of teaching in a foreign language. To have competent teachers, it is just as important to have lecturers, teacher educators and mentors in teacher education, who can adequately train student teachers. This is a key principle of the *Plan d'Action 2006-2009 : Réajustement de l'enseignement des langues*.

On the other hand, the University of Luxembourg considers multilingualism as one of its main assets and would like all degree courses to be at least bilingual. This accounts for its interest in ways of achieving quality development for all its study units on both content and language levels. It has recruited various international specialists of multilingualism. Thus Dr Sabine Ehrhart and Dr Michael Langner have recently been attached to the department of secondary teacher education and help coordinate the module on approaches to learning and teaching. For both of them, it is important to foster an interdisciplinary and CLIL-based approach for both language and subject teachers through a new focus on education, methodology and research. Their respective fields of expertise in multilingualism are ethnolinguistics, language ecology of the classroom, neuro- and psycholinguistics and language didactics.

The renewed interest in CLIL issues concerns both student teachers and teacher educators/ lecturers. Efforts for quality improvement target the development of relevant study material, the focus on a systematic analysis of multilingual classroom practice and tools for student teachers' self analysis and self-evaluation. Learning outcomes are formulated in terms of student teachers' ability to link theoretical input with an analysis of their own practice.

Parallel to this, research is planned, which should have an impact on the quality of teacher education. It will fuel school projects and practitioner research projects. A first study will focus on the evaluation of language acquisition and learning through content and interaction.

Description of activity or initiative

(QA question: How is/was the activity/initiative implemented?)

The unit on CLIL for all student teachers of non linguistic subjects is mostly inspired by a European Socrates-Comenius 2.1 project: "CLIL across Contexts: A scaffolding framework for CLIL teacher education" (2006-2009), coordinated by the University of Luxembourg. All the information is available on the project website <http://clil.uni.lu>, with translations into 7 languages. It proposes a portfolio-based approach, encouraging student teachers to take on responsibility for their own learning. In the seminars, exchange is considered to be particularly important for a dual-focussed approach as CLIL is. The aim of dialogic exchanges is to give teachers an opportunity to present their experiences, to give explicit accounts of their experiences, justify choices as well as taking into account their listeners' perspectives so as to enhance and consolidate their reflective stance. Teacher educators may choose among the 8 areas of CLIL teacher competences which the project framework has identified and

described from various interrelated perspectives (knowledge, values, teaching skills, ...). A collection of teacher activities for CLIL provides additional material for training sessions.

The seminars are also an opportunity to raise student teachers' motivation for improving their own already fairly advanced competence in a second or third language, mostly in a perspective of lifelong learning. This attitude is promoted through a bi- or multilingual approach (code-switching, documents in various languages, plurilingual exchanges): gradually more emphasis is being put on a systematic reflection on the process of studying in two or three languages.

Despite a high level of competence in at least two (foreign or second) languages, student teachers often have a (strong) predilection for one language, but will have to do their teacher education and later teach in two languages. Moreover, there may be some divergence between passive and active skills, as well as a preference for one register, e.g. spoken/ informal or academic/ written language. A project-based approach favours students' personal involvement and as most CLIL issues are practice related the seminars encourage experiential learning. All this is essential for a reflection on language in use and language development.

Evaluative comments

(QA questions: What are/were the outcomes? What is/was the impact? Is/was the activity/initiative successful? How do you know whether or not it works/worked?)

The initiative has been successful and will be further developed. An extensive module on teacher competences for multilingual contexts is presently being developed. A cooperation in this field with other universities is planned.

Students' and teacher educators' attitudes have changed; a lower emotional reluctance to work and study in 2 or 3 languages can be noticed. CLIL principles are recognized as an important part of teaching and learning processes at all levels.

The number of student teachers' critical reports (*pièces-produits*) and pedagogical theses on CLIL related issues has increased. They focus, among other aspects, on the student teachers' need of self confidence for teaching in CLIL classrooms, on the importance of adapting language to learners' needs, on the necessity of meaningful interaction and the adaptation of available L1 material for L2 learners.

Advice to others

Best ways in our eyes to do it will include:

- Learning about CLIL by doing CLIL
- Cooperation between language and subject specialists
- A change of paradigm: consider L2/L3 not as an obstacle, but as an opportunity for professional development.

Reflection/any other comments

QA question: Is/was that the best way to do it? Why/why not? What improvements or adjustments are needed?

The participation in international projects has been a powerful means to receive attention for CLIL at an institutional and national level.

We have also managed to overcome a certain reluctance to deal with language quality in teacher education by linking the problem with general issues of learning outcomes.

To reach all those who are concerned and to ensure greater quality in practice, it will be crucial to "educate the educators", mostly by a close cooperation of language and subject experts.

In many ways this is a good time in Luxembourg to get support for language quality measures: with a fast growing internationalization of the population learning processes are becoming more and more complex. Plurilingual and intercultural competences are much discussed but neither at school nor at university level are there any satisfactory criteria or guidelines for the evaluation of courses, materials or performance.

What we are looking forward to is criteria for quality assurance of CLIL at university level, which could also be used to ensure the quality of teacher education programmes that aim at integration in the Bologna process (MA-level).

Further details

e.g. web links; relevant references/publications; alternative contact names [OPTIONAL]

<http://clil.uni.lu> : a Socrates COMENIUS project that triggered interest in CLIL, also in HE

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