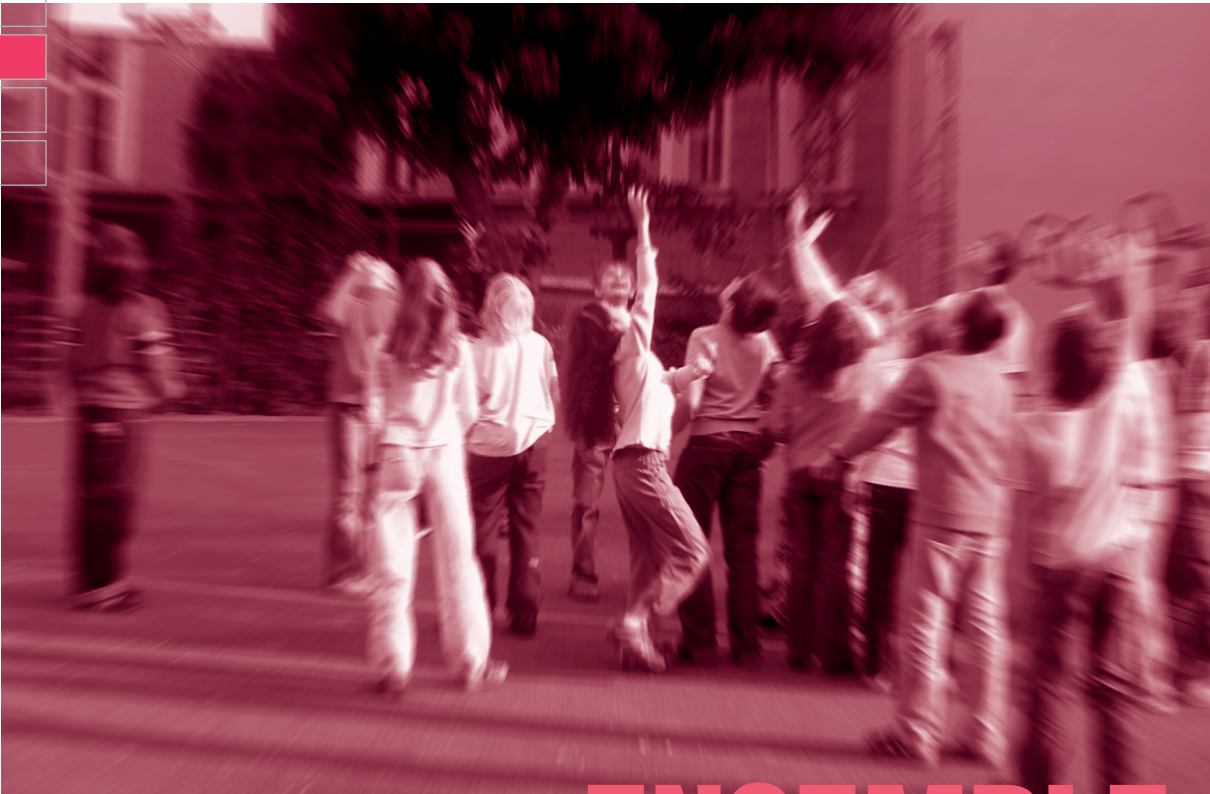


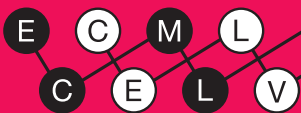
Promoting linguistic diversity and whole-school development

Edited by Antoinette Camilleri Grima



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Promoting linguistic diversity and whole-school development



European Centre for Modern Languages
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Geographical spread of the case studies presented in this publication : 1) Mgarr, Malta, 2) Pajala, Sweden, 3) Plasencia, Spain, 4) Cottbus, Germany, 5) Braşov, Romania, 6) Budapest and 7) Miskolc in Hungary, 8) Graz, 9) Birkfeld in Austria and 10) Didenheim, France.

Chapter 1

Introduction – Promoting linguistic diversity in school

Antoinette Camilleri Grima

The international context

The Council of Europe, through the efforts of the Language Policy Division in Strasbourg and the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, stresses the importance of societal multilingualism and of individual plurilingual competence, as paths towards social cohesion. The Language Policy Division produced a “Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe” in 2003¹ (Beacco and Byram, 2003) (henceforth referred to as the “guide”). Europe as a whole, and the member states of the Council of Europe are multilingual, and have taken a stance to promote plurilingualism and linguistic diversity.

This movement is not simply a top-down one. The principle of cultural and linguistic homogeneity of the nation-state has been brought increasingly into question by national and ethnic minorities. For centuries the process of making “one language, one state” an accepted reality was validated on the basis that it was necessary for establishing social and political cohesion within the nation-state. Many minority groups, however, are now no longer prepared to pay the cost for this (May, 2003). We believe that the broadening of the language choices in educational policies in European states would reflect better their cultural and linguistic demography, as well as fulfil the desires of the speech communities concerned.

Within this context, it is important that all those involved in language education work collaboratively in order to understand existing school profiles, and to formulate and implement policies that support plural characteristics at the school level. This can be done in several ways. As explained in the guide, it is necessary to examine, and to develop, language policies that are conducive to an education for plurilingualism. Such policies should be founded upon an updated perception of language competence. Furthermore, policies need to be put into practice through an appropriate organisational set-up that includes alternative formats of language education provision. Some background work is already being carried out at European and national levels. But ultimately it is within the school, at the chalk face, that the necessary innovations need

1 All references to the guide within this publication are based upon the version produced in 2003. A revised version of the guide was however published in 2007.

to take place. As the different contributions in this publication illustrate, the promotion of linguistic diversity is a question of whole-school development.

Whole-school development

Given the decentralisation of power from the state to the school in most European countries (Townsend, 1994), it has become necessary to highlight the role of the school in promoting a culture of plurilingualism. School development planning and policy formation have become important features of shared responsibility and of democratic life in schools. School effectiveness can be evaluated according to the ways in which the goals of the system as a whole, including the European vision of democratic citizenship, are balanced against the goals of individual schools and individual students. In this way schools can evaluate their efficacy as agents of leadership and change in the community.

Leadership means sharing responsibility with others through community building. For the school this means, first of all, the need to create a sense of community within the institution itself; and secondly, it denotes a need for sharing values and accomplishing goals as part of the larger community.

The school can be viewed in terms of its internal realities, as well as its external positioning in a locale or region. First of all, the school can be viewed as an organisation (*Gesellschaft*) where relationships are contractual; where everyone seems to be acting for the good of the other, whereas in reality everyone is thinking of themselves and trying to bring to the fore their interests in competition with others.

The school as a community, on the other hand, is a place where *Gemeinschaft* emerges from the sharing of a common habitat and a unity of mind. This refers to a bonding together of people that results from their pursuit of a common goal, a shared set of values, and therefore a strengthening of the “we” identity. According to Sergiovanni (1994) the answer lies in building *Gemeinschaft* within *Gesellschaft*, given that in modern times the school has been solidly ensconced in the *Gesellschaft* camp with unhappy results. It is time that the school was moved from the *Gesellschaft* side of the ledger to the *Gemeinschaft* side. It is time that the metaphor for school was changed from “formal organisation” to “community”. As a community, the school would be in a better position to build bridges with its partners, as we hope to show in the rest of this work.

The Whole-school language profiles and policies (ensemble) project of the ECML

This publication is a result of the ECML project Whole school language profiles and policies. The subtitle “ensemble” was chosen to illustrate that everyone has to pull in the same direction. In musical terms, “ensemble” refers to a combination of a group of players performing together, in a co-operative spirit. Similarly, school administrators, teachers, learners, parents, researchers, experts, and the community at large need to work together as partners with the aim of fostering plurilingualism. This project sought to identify ways in which the different partners are working together in a number of schools in different parts of Europe, and can therefore serve as examples for others.

The project consisted of three phases. In the initial phase the team members sought to (i) understand the implications of the guide for everyday realities in schools; (ii) identify a number of issues that are particularly relevant to whole-school approaches; and (iii) prepare case studies that illustrate how schools in different parts of Europe are implementing plurilingual approaches in interesting ways – thus illustrating some of the issues identified in the guide in tangible ways. The second phase was that of the central workshop which took place in Graz in December 2005. At the workshop, the team members and a number of participants shared their experiences of how linguistic diversity is being promoted in their own context. They also developed a number of tools that could help other schools embark on whole-school projects. The third phase was that of post-workshop development during which a small number of networks developed, shared material and carried out exchanges.

The results of the first phase of the project are presented in this book. They are in the shape of case studies, grounded in research and practice, and are further illustrated through PowerPoint presentations on the CD-Rom. On the other hand, the case studies prepared by workshop participants are found on the CD-Rom. The CD-Rom also includes the tools that were developed as part of the project, which can help schools reflect on the development of plurilingual policies. A summary of the workshop and the actions undertaken by the networks are also presented on the CD-Rom (see Chapter 6).

The case studies

The case studies presented in this publication discuss the various contributions that different partners can make to the school:

Chapter 2

Parent power: parents as a linguistic and cultural resource at school

Andrea Young and Christine Helot

Chapter 2 shows how parents can be invited into the school to make a valid linguistic and cultural contribution.

Chapter 3

The Sorbian WITAJ project and the role of applied linguistics in the development of materials

Madlena Norberg

Chapter 3 identifies the specialised role that applied linguistics plays in the promotion and development of lesser used languages, as a way of safeguarding the plurilingual capacity of minorities.

Chapter 4

The growth of a bilingual school: a principal's perspective

Elisabeth Fleischmann

In Chapter 4 the focus is on the head of school who has a crucial leadership role for school development.

Chapter 5

Ready, steady, go! The teacher as participant in school language policy

Antoinette Camilleri Grima

Teachers are important contributors to the whole process of valuing all languages, as underlined in Chapter 5.

The case studies presented on the accompanying CD-Rom provide further testimony and examples of whole-school approaches:

A case study from Malta (ppp²/The role of the head teacher in school development (chapter³))

Noel Calleja

In his PowerPoint presentation (ppp), Noel Calleja describes how Maltese and English function as instructional languages in a bilingual primary school. Then, in another chapter, he describes the important role of the head teacher in promoting and implementing a vision for plurilingualism, and describes how he attained this in his own school.

A case study from Hungary (ppp)/Challenges and opportunities of bilingual education (chapter)

Dora Kovacs

Dora Kovacs focuses on the process and the decisions involved in the establishment of a balanced bilingual curriculum with possibilities for plurilingual development.

A case study from Spain (ppp)/Social and economic considerations in setting up a new bilingual programme (chapter)

Luis Grajal de Blas

Luis Grajal de Blas describes a number of background societal features that interact with the type and quality of linguistic innovation in school.

A case study from Romania (ppp)/Project work for plurilingualism (interview)

Gabriela Hurghis

Gabriela Hurghis highlights project work and learner-generated materials as a pedagogical tool for plurilingualism.

Diversifying the language curriculum (interview)

Wolfgang Pojer

Wolfgang Pojer describes how a lower secondary school took the lead in transforming the language curriculum and in diversifying the language teaching options.

Let us begin with the youngest (chapter)

Leena Huss

Leena Huss' chapter presents an unusual initiative whereby one teacher, who acted also as community leader,

2 'ppp' refers to entries in in the section on the CD-Rom entitled 'Workshop'.

3 'chapter' refers to entries in the section 'Case Studies'.

introduced a language revitalisation programme in early childhood education.

Using a foreign language as a medium of instruction (chapter)

Johanna Kapitanffy

Johanna Kapitanffy offers a critical appraisal of a bilingual school programme in Budapest and raises several questions about the implications for similar programmes elsewhere.

Inside the school, the head of school and the teaching staff are in a position to create a sense of community, a *Gemeinschaft*, both with those inside and outside the school. The case descriptions of Calleja, Grajal de Blas, Pojer and Hurghis, among others, are examples of this.⁴ It would be futile for a school to organise language education with the aim of fostering plurilingualism if this were to provoke negative attitudes from any of the partners. Everyone has a part to play, and each part must be played in synchronisation with the others, in a common spirit. Camilleri Grima (Chapter 5), for instance, highlights the role of the teacher and their professional development as a path to this sense of togetherness, and Norberg (Chapter 3) explains the role of experts in the development of minority language programmes, where it is essential that experts and teachers work together.

The added value in school leadership comes from the sense of meaning, inclusion and democracy experienced by one and all. Relations with the community are a basic function of a modern school's management (Tianping, 2003). As a basic principle, efforts should be made to strengthen a school's communication and co-ordination with its external partners. It is through this type of school leadership that schools can "model" acceptance and respect, and not only reflect plurilingualism, but actually highlight it and make it visible in a positive way. It is our aim, in presenting these school profiles, to illustrate how this challenge has been taken up by some schools. A case in point is that of Tornedal (Huss) where the whole community supported language revitalisation and co-operated with the school as if it were their own project.

The guide provides a number of varied scenarios for the organisation of plurilingual education. It looks in detail at both social and linguistic factors in decision making, and in stimulating and managing a new culture of plurilingualism. A diversification of languages on offer in educational establishments is recommended, and is illustrated here in the case studies offered by Young and Helot (Chapter 2), Norberg (Chapter 3), Huss and Pojer. The guide also discusses a possible diversification of teachers' roles, the decompartmentalisation of languages as subjects, and longitudinal co-ordination of

4 The contributions presented on the CD-Rom are referred to here by the author's surname. The case studies in this book are referred to by chapter.

education and language provision as ways of implementing an education for plurilingualism. These issues are illustrated in the presentations of Hurghis, Calleja, Kapitánffy, Grajal de Blas and Kovacs. Other suggestions are put forward in the guide, for example with reference to content in language education, assessment and learner autonomy, and some evidence about how this takes place in practice can be found in the chapter by Fleischmann (Chapter 4). There are other ways and means of promoting plurilingualism. References are made in each contribution to the relevant sections in the guide.

The examples in this publication are located in different parts of Europe (see map). They represent a range of sociolinguistic contexts as well as different whole school policies for valuing languages. For instance, the case studies from Hungary (Kapitánffy, Kovacs), Malta (Calleja), Spain (Grajal de Blas), and Austria (Fleischmann, Chapter 4) have chosen the path of bilingual education as a first important step to plurilingual competence. The case studies from Sweden (Huss) and Germany (Norberg) highlight the importance of language revitalisation in minority communities, while the interviews with Pojer (Austria) and Hurghis (Romania) illustrate the kind of varied efforts that schools are willing to make in order to promote plurilingual competence.

These case studies deal with three fundamental questions:

- a. How can schools act as leaders in ascertaining continuity between home and school in those cases where pupils already possess more than one language?
- b. How can value be given to all languages?
- c. What kind of issues do schools have to tackle in implementing changes in favour of linguistic diversity?

a) Ascertaining continuity between home and school

One of the experiences of linguistic impoverishment that many children experience occurs when their home language is absent inside their school, and possibly even devalued in the education system of their country of residence. Although it is normally healthier for a child to experience linguistic continuity between home and school, many children in Europe and elsewhere face the opposite. Since “cultural discontinuity can be the source of considerable stress for children and their families” (Ramsey, 1998: 65), this kind of stress should be reduced either by the home taking over some responsibility for ensuring that what goes on in school is “revised” and “experienced” at home; or by the school taking greater care to reflect the children’s linguistic and cultural practices. The onus normally rests on the school since at home the family is probably experiencing similar stress to the child.

These case studies illustrate how diversity has been made visible inside schools in very positive and profitable ways. Sometimes internal and sometimes external relations have had to change and a sense of community (*Gemeinschaft*) has been built in the process.

This is also an important way of fostering plurilingualism because the linguistic resources already existing within the community are strengthened through the school.

One primary school in Didenheim, in Alsace, France (Chapter 1), takes up the challenge of eradicating racism by choosing to work in terms of a whole school approach. The instigators are a group of teachers who involve a good number of parents, invite them into the school, and get them to contribute in an organised and meaningful way. The teachers become learners of different languages and cultures existing in the community but normally absent inside the school, alongside the pupils.

In the promotion of Sorbian (Chapter 2), the school responds to the need of the Sorbian community to revitalise its language. The community was not in a position to take up the challenge by itself. On the other hand, the school, being an organisation where languages are traditionally “studied”, responds by providing the right habitus for the promotion of Sorbian culture and the development of the Sorbian language.

Similarly, the revival of Meänkieli (Huss) has brought together school and community in a new way. In this case, change is initiated mainly by a community leader, also a teacher, who struggles to revive the language with preschool children at two particular preschools. The community, in turn, responds to this initiative by supporting the use of Meänkieli by the children in determined ways.

In Hungary (Kapitánffy, Kovacs), market forces that put financial and educational pressure on the school, on the one hand, and educational developments (similar to those in other countries), on the other, contribute to the creation of a new concept: teaching non-language subjects through a foreign language. Parental demand was growing for better language education, especially in English, and the schools described here undertake the enterprise by creating Hungarian-English bilingual streams.

The Maltese context (Chapter 5) exemplifies how the teacher is a major stakeholder in the educational process. Teachers not only carry along with them to the classroom their own metaphors of language use and learning, but they are also prepared to participate in school development planning in order to improve the learning environment within the school. This chapter runs parallel to the reflection in the guide (Beacco and Byram, 2003, p. 64) about what might be considered the “ordinary” linguistic repertoire of a European adult who has gone through secondary school, as well as the explanation of social representations of languages (section 3.1), and illustrates how teachers carry their linguistic baggage to the school experience.

b) Giving a sense of value to all languages

It is not at all a question of majority or minority languages. The social status of a language; the number of its speakers; their percentage in a given population; whether it is a native or an immigrant language; or a colonising or a colonised language are not matters under discussion. All languages have value for their speakers, and the effort of schools is not tied to any other criterion.

The languages represented here belong to different language families: Meänkieli is related to Finnish, and like Hungarian it belongs to the Finno-Ugric family; Lower Sorbian is related to Polish, a Slavonic language; Romanian is a Romance language; Maltese is a mixed language of Semitic origin with Romance and English strata; English belongs to the Germanic group; Alsatian is a Germanic French dialect; a wide variety of languages are included in the school project in Alsace in order to give them equality of treatment irrespective of their status in society.

The social status of the languages included in the projects varies greatly. The Didenheim project comprises: immigrants' languages like Arabic, Turkish and Polish; major foreign languages like Japanese; as well as the local Alsatian dialect. Sorbian and Meänkieli are native, ethnic languages barely surviving under the oppression of a majority language. Maltese and Hungarian are national languages. English is a "second" and "foreign" language in Malta and Hungary respectively. Any language is valued as long as its presence does not impose itself threateningly upon the rights of speakers of other languages. This threat does not surface in any of the contexts described here. The large-scale presence of English in schools in Malta and Hungary, for example, is justified on the basis that it is fulfilling one of the needs of the community (for further discussion see Wright, 2004). Furthermore, research confirms that bilingualism can serve as an effective stepping-stone to plurilingualism (Cenoz, Hufeisen and Jessner, 2001). It seems clear that the schools described here intend bilingualism to be an additive experience.

A range of school types are presented varying from a small primary school in Alsace to large secondary schools in Hungary, Austria, Romania and Spain; from preschool classes in Sweden to teacher education in Malta. School size, type or level is not important. Any language diversity programme can be implemented in any school or language institution.

The method adopted to introduce innovation can be very different. For instance, in the case of Sorbian, immersion is taking place in the minority language. In the case of Hungary, immersion is taking place in the foreign language, English. The Austrian schools represented here excel in the quantity and quality of foreign language provision. In Didenheim, the school opted for exposure to a vast range of languages and cultures, and although each language is minimally represented this approach had a great impact on the pupils who speak these languages at home. In the case of Meänkieli and Sorbian there is an intensive effort to revitalise languages, which, although at present are in a threatened position, seem to be succeeding in regaining some vitality.

c) School issues

The guide presents a number of possible scenarios as to what can be done in educational organisations to motivate plurilingualism. These case profiles describe work in progress, and look at the opportunities as well as the challenges that stem from the realities that could either make or break such efforts.

Each author in this publication focuses on a different aspect so that collectively the case studies cover a range of theoretical and practical issues. Many such concerns are likely to emerge in any school that wants to implement an innovative plurilingual programme.

Young and Helot (Chapter 2) describe parental involvement and how this captures the community “out there” as a useful source for valuing difference. The question of a school’s relationship with parents is not a simple one and there are various models of co-operation that schools can adopt (Leroy and Manning, 1992). In this case, from a total absence of parental participation, the parents become the main source of educational and linguistic input. In the end everyone benefits: the parents themselves because they become more interested and directly involved in what happens inside their children’s school; the teachers acquire intercultural competence and skills; and the pupils start to view education, and each other, in a new, more positive light.

Norberg (Chapter 3) looks more closely at the linguistic work that is needed for revitalising a lesser-used language within a mainstream school programme. The applied linguist has to solve a number of problems in the process of creating teaching materials not only for the language as a subject, but also for its use as a medium of instruction, in a situation where classes run parallel in two different languages. This is a matter of language planning, namely corpus planning, that includes processes such as elaboration and terminological modernisation.

Huss presents a bottom-up approach where the broadening of language provision at school (in this context at preschool level) is welcomed both inside and, eventually, outside the school. There is often a fear in schools when it comes to implementing innovation (White et al., 1991). In this case such fear has been restrained given the small-scale trial in two schools, in addition to the fact that the schools actually volunteered to participate.

The bilingual schools in Hungary, Spain and Austria had a number of decisions to make before and during the implementation of the new programme. Some of the important issues in language policy making discussed here are very similar to the ones listed in Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), namely, which subjects are going to be taught, by whom, to whom and how. Kapitánffy explains the process that leads to decision making, and the resulting structure of the programme. Kovacs highlights the language decompartmentalisation process and the relevance of the bilingual programme to tertiary education. Grajal de Blas explains the social context within which this experiment takes place. Fleischmann (Chapter 4) reports the process from the point of view of a school administrator. The important role of the head teacher as a leader with a vision is also illustrated by Calleja.

Teacher education and teacher-related variables are discussed by Camilleri Grima (Chapter 5). The teacher is a crucial partner in the implementation of innovation since its success will largely depend on the perceptions held by the teachers. The most important lessons in a school occur at critical learning moments, during interaction between teacher and students. It is necessary to ensure that the teachers' voices are heard on all issues that impact on language learning and experience. Similarly, teacher education has to face the challenges posed by innovations carried out in schools: "So that the people adopting the innovation can come to terms with it, they will almost always need retraining" (White et al., 1991: 6).

Conclusion

A very strong message comes across from the case studies, and it can be summarised in the following way:

- in each instance of innovation and in the promotion of plurilingualism there are individuals who are working hard to realise their dream of linguistic diversity and plurilingual competence;
- these activists, through their enthusiasm, manage to enrol the support of other members inside and outside the school;
- together they build a sense of community and work toward the "solution of a problem": encouraging plurilingual competence;
- their success is the sum of everyone's efforts together – "ensemble".

In creating new linguistic profiles in language education at the schools described here, we are participating in a new paradigm of school leadership whereby pupils, parents and the local community from being excluded, controlled and forgotten become actively involved in language endeavours (Hopkins, Ainscow and West, 1994). Similarly, teachers move on from being simply the executors of education programmes to becoming participants in drawing up, implementing and evaluating school policies. The guide provides a very detailed explanation as to why and how innovation for linguistic diversity can be attained. The examples presented in this book are an authentic illustration of how some of these ideas are being realised in different contexts; and what successes and challenges they present. We hope that these readings will stimulate thought, and will serve as a springboard for schools to take up the European quest of building communities that are ever more inclusive, meaningful and democratic.

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Chapter 2

Parent power: parents as a linguistic and cultural resource at school

Andrea Young and Christine Helot

Introduction

Early foreign language learning has become an integral part of the primary curriculum in numerous European education systems. Consequently, many primary teacher education programmes now prepare their trainees to teach a foreign language, usually a mainstream European one. Whilst this is undoubtedly a step in the right direction as far as promoting good classroom practice for early language learning is concerned, this development is nevertheless restricted to the teaching of one “foreign” language and culture.

Given that primary school classrooms are becoming increasingly multilingual and multicultural throughout Europe, it is somewhat of a paradox that whilst promoting the learning of a foreign language at the primary level, the growing number of bilingual/bicultural children present in our classrooms are often overlooked (Helot, 1997; Vermes and Boutet, 1987; Martin-Jones and Romaine, 1986).

Trainee teachers in France are the product of a traditionally monolingual monocultural education system and have not often been confronted with a wider variety of languages and cultures until they step foot in the classroom. How can they be made aware of the educational value of this potential linguistic and cultural classroom resource?

One possibility as to how to tackle the question of sociocultural and linguistic pluralism would be to approach it from within the walls of the school, at grass-roots level. School-based projects can be tailor-made to match local requirements and to include local resources, be they human or material. Another advantage to developing home grown solutions to meet local needs is the dimension of empowerment (Cameron et al., 1992) engendered by such an approach. Participants in school-based projects, be they teachers, pupils, parents or local community members, set their own agendas and take their projects in the directions they want them to go. This generally results in extremely rewarding and relevant outcomes for all concerned.

In this case study we will focus on the impact of parental participation in a language and cultural education project carried out over a three-year period in a primary school in Alsace, France. By inviting parents to participate in the project the teachers were able to concentrate on co-ordinating the pedagogical activities and attaining their

objectives while knowing they could rely on parents' knowledge about languages and cultures with which the teachers were mostly unfamiliar.

Furthermore, by including and acknowledging the languages and cultures of families living within the local community, the teachers were also able to build a number of intercultural and linguistic bridges between the home and school environments of their pupils and thus laying the foundations for a more tolerant and open society.

The Context

The Ecole de la Sirène is situated in Didenheim, a small village on the outskirts of Mulhouse, a large industrial town in Alsace, north-eastern France. As a border region, neighbouring Germany and Switzerland, Alsace has inherited cultural and linguistic elements from both French and German cultures. In addition to this dual identity, the region has seen successive waves of immigration over the years due to its industrial and economic development (the Italian stonemasons, the Poles who came to work in the potash mines, the *Maghrébins* from North Africa and more recently the Turks). The school has a small population of 84 pupils, 37% of pupils are recorded as other than of French origin: Arabic: 10.7%, Turkish: 9.5%, Polish: 4.7%, Portuguese: 2.4%, Italian: 2.4%, other: 4.7% plus another 4.7% who come from Alsatian-speaking homes. (Alsatian is the term used to refer to the local Germanic dialects still widely spoken, albeit by a mainly ageing population, in Alsace.) The Turkish children in particular were experiencing difficulties with the French language, the medium of instruction, and the Turkish language classes at school (ELCO – *Enseignement des langues et cultures d'origine*) did not answer their cognitive needs as far as their L1 was concerned since very few links were made in these classes with the French curriculum.

It was difficult for the teachers to discuss matters with the Turkish parents who avoided entering school premises because they were not comfortable speaking French and they felt estranged from French school culture. Furthermore, the Turkish ELCO teacher, employed by the Turkish Government to teach Turkish to Turkish children in French schools on a weekly basis, did not accept invitations to collaborate with the regular French school teachers in a bid to help the Turkish children with their linguistic difficulties.

ELCO classes were also in place for Arabic and Polish at the school, but these classes were only attended by a minority of pupils. Furthermore, pupils were usually required to leave their regular classes in order to attend ELCO classes. Consequently, they missed certain lessons and ended up being regrouped according to their supposed origins which is a form of segregation and totally contradictory to the republican principles of the French education system.

For the majority of children at the school, their only contact with a language other than French was during foreign language classes (German or English) for approximately one

and a half hours per week. This was another problematic area as, after a series of peripatetic German teachers had passed through the school, pupil motivation to learn German was at an all time low.

The school clearly needed an inclusive language policy which would allow it to both acknowledge and share the language resources already present within the local environment. Such a local initiative would have to work within some kind of officially recognised framework in order to gain institutional acceptability and support. However, the various nationally recognised provisions in place for language teaching (Helot and Young, 2001) at the school seemed to be working against the promotion of languages and cultures and hindering accessibility rather than providing children with a range of linguistic and cultural exposure. Moreover, as in most schools in France, an institutionalised language hierarchy imposed by the top-down curriculum (Helot and Young, 2003) was in place within the school, with the national language as the main priority, high status, mainstream European languages at the top of the pyramid and the low status languages of immigration and regional “dialects” at the bottom.

A project is born

At the start of the school year 2000, following a number of racist incidents at school (involving some pupils bullying and taunting the Turkish-speaking children), the teaching staff of the Ecole de la Sirène decided to develop an innovative language and cultural awareness project for the first three years of primary education (see Table 1).

| Name of class | Pupil age |
|---|------------------|
| CP (Cours préparatoire) | 6 |
| CE1 (Cours élémentaire, première année) | 7 |
| CE2 (Cours élémentaire, deuxième année) | 8 |
| CM1 (Cours moyen, première année) | 9 |
| CM2 (Cours moyen, deuxième année) | 10 |

Table 1: Primary school classes in France

The objectives of the project were initially defined by the teachers as:

- “Il s’agit d’une sensibilisation, un contact avec une autre langue.
- La dimension culturelle du projet connaître l’autre: (fêtes, traditions, géographie, costumes ...).
- Faire un pas vers l’autre: apprendre à le connaître, rectifier les idées fausses ...”.

*Compte-rendu de la réunion de
préparation entre enseignants, parents
d’élèves et le conseiller pédagogique du
7 octobre 2000.*

“to bring the children into contact with other languages and to sensitise them to the use of languages, to familiarise the children with other cultures through the presentation of festivals, traditions, costumes, geography ..., and last but not least to promote the acceptance of differences, to learn about others and to attempt to break down stereotypical misconceptions.”

*Minutes from the school project
meeting,
7 October 2000⁵*

Although the teachers were responsible for taking the initial steps in setting up the languages and cultures school project, right from the outset, local representatives from the education community (teachers, parents, local authority language advisers and university researchers) were invited to participate in meetings and discussions and to work collaboratively. This co-operative approach was new to all concerned and proved to be most productive, opening up new dimensions to the school project, enriching exchanges and furthering reflection for all concerned.

It was decided to send a letter home to all parents explaining about the project and requesting those who were willing and able to participate on Saturday mornings (there are regular school classes in France on a Saturday morning). Although all French schools organise parental representation on school bodies through parent teacher associations, these associations are not always accessible to everyone, particularly those who do not speak French. For many parents therefore parental participation at school is generally limited to accompanying classes on outings and lending a hand at the end of year fête. Indeed, permission must be granted by the local school inspector to allow any person from outside school to enter the classroom. As the project had been officially approved by the authorities, the school was able to invite parents to participate and, to the delight and surprise of the teachers, offers of help abounded, allowing 18 different languages and cultures to be presented over the three-year period. Not all offers of help came from native speakers. For example, the parent who presented Japanese was French, but had visited Japan on several occasions and had learnt to both write and speak Japanese later on in life. For some of the parents, the language and culture they wanted to present was that of their parents, but many parent participants were native speakers and had grown up in the cultures and countries they

5 All subsequent quotations originally written in French have been translated by the authors into English.

talked about. This personal attachment to the languages and cultures was quickly perceived by the children who commented on it during interviews.

“Ça m'a plu que les gens viennent présenter leur langue plutôt que la maîtresse, parce qu'ils viennent du pays dont ils parlent.”

CE2 pupil

“I liked it when people came to present their language, rather than the teacher, because they come from the country they talk about.”

CE2 pupil

Parents and teachers collaborated closely, both in the planning of the classes and in their delivery, the parents providing the linguistic and cultural knowledge and expertise, the teachers suggesting the pedagogical approach and supporting the parents in the classroom.

Regular feedback meetings, to which participant parents, teachers, school language advisers and university researchers were all invited, were also a strong feature of the project. These meetings allowed those parents who had just finished presenting their language and culture to share their experiences with those who were about to begin, in the presence and with the guidance of teaching professionals.

We would like to point out here that our role as researchers consisted entirely of observing and recording proceedings. We had heard about the project by chance and had asked permission to attend classes and meetings and to film the children, but had deliberately decided to take a non-interventionist stance, only answering questions and providing information when asked about a specific point. Our reason behind doing this was that we wanted to observe the process of empowerment, recording how teachers find their own solutions to challenging pedagogical situations and identifying how academic research can be linked to their professional needs. To this effect we also conducted individual interviews with parents, teachers and pupils at the end of the project.

A variety of activities were undertaken by the parents during these classes including: learning about the geography and history of the countries concerned, tasting and learning about specialities from different culinary traditions, learning to sing short songs with actions, reading traditional tales from bilingual books, learning traditional dances, trying on traditional costumes, watching home-made videos depicting a wedding ceremony or school life in the country in question, learning how to introduce oneself, greet and say “please” and “thank you” in context, as well as basic vocabulary such as colours or fruits.

The parents proposed the content for the lessons and the teaching staff suggested ways of presenting this to the children in as interactive a way as possible, either during the planning sessions or during the class itself. Given that the children involved in the project were aged 6 to 8, many activities had to be adapted to their level of development. For example, the younger ones enjoyed and excelled more in the repetition of new sounds and the singing of songs, whereas the older pupils asked more

questions concerning cultural and linguistic particularities and proved to be extremely curious and perceptive. For example, they asked the following:

“C'est drôle comme le vietnamien a plein d'accents. Pourquoi il y a des points en dessous et des accents au-dessus ?”

“Pourquoi la mariée ne sourit pas ?”

“Pourquoi est-ce que l'alsacien est un dialecte et pas une langue?”

“Pourquoi est-ce que les Vietnamiens n'ont pas la même couleur de peau?”

“Est-ce que le français est une langue? ”

CE2 pupils

“Why are there so many accents in Vietnamese? Why are there dots under and accents over the top?”

“Why is it that the bride does not smile?”

“Why is Alsatian a dialect and not a language?”

“Why do the Vietnamese not all have the same colour skin?”

“Is French a language too then?”

CE2 pupils

To train or not to train?

Some of the questions raised by the children were dealt with easily by the parents of the languages concerned. For example, the bride must look sad because she is leaving her family to join her husband's and out of respect for her parents she must appear unhappy about this. Other issues, such as difference in skin colour, were explained by the teacher. But difficulties arose when the teachers were faced with precise questions of a linguistic nature such as the definition of a dialect. It was during these moments that the teachers turned to the researchers for advice and that the group meetings became key moments in the process of empowerment (De Mejia and Tejada, 2003). The discussion of issues such as how bilinguals use their two languages, why is Alsatian referred to as a dialect, etc. contributed to the development of the participants' knowledge about language, which in turn they communicated to the children at school.

When asked during interviews if they thought they would benefit from specific training courses about language and culture, two out of the three teachers expressed their satisfaction with the arrangements already in place.

“Disons que, on s'est quand même bien reposé sur les parents. Nous ce qui nous a permis de mener à bien le projet, c'est votre présence, la présence de [nom du conseiller pédagogique] aussi parce qu'on avait chaque fois une dimension extérieur parce que quand on est dans le

“Let's say we relied heavily on the parents. What helped us to run a successful project was your presence, the presence of [name of local education authority pedagogical advisor] too because there was an outside perspective because when you are in a project,

projet, submergé, nos corrections, nos machins etc. on n'arrive pas toujours à clarifier des choses, prendre du recul et je crois que ce que vous avez fait, vous avez eu un rôle primordial qui était important et vraiment on a apprécié, si si si vraiment et se sentir soutenu, avoir des aides, des informations extérieurs chaque fois des doc. C'était une dimension qui était importante ... c'était un projet formateur, vous voyez ce que je veux dire? Sans qu'on aille se renfermer dans un stage ... pour nous c'était beaucoup mieux d'avoir le terrain, enfin, d'avoir ce qu'on a vécu là.”

Enseignante CE2

overwhelmed, with our corrections, our whatever it is etc. you can't always manage to see things clearly, to take a step back and I think what you have done is to play an essential role which was important and we really appreciated that, yes, yes, yes really and to feel supported, to have help, outside information, documents every time. It was a dimension which was important ... we learnt a lot from the project, do you know what I mean? Without having to go and shut ourselves off in an in-service training course ... so for us it was much better to be in the classroom, at the chalk face, well to experience what we experienced there.”

CE2 teacher

Once again, having to reflect upon linguistic and cultural issues at the local level seems to provide the teachers with the most effective way of finding their own answers to their own practical problems. At the chalk face, bottom-up solutions are preferred to top-down directives. However, this does not mean to say that official ministerial support for such endeavours is superfluous, especially not in such a centralised country as France where teachers are expected and used to implementing top-down directives. These directives can support teachers in their efforts to legitimise a more plurilingual approach to language and cultural education.

Winds of change?

France has a strong republican tradition of centralisation and is well known for its “one nation, one language” model. According to French law and the French Constitution, the French language holds a central position in French society, reaffirmed by the 1994 Toubon law (Law 94-665, 4 August 1994, Ager, 1999: 10):

The language of the Republic by virtue of the Constitution, French is a fundamental element of the personality and heritage of France. It is the language of teaching, work, commercial exchanges and public services.

In everyday life, one of the effects of this law is that anything written or spoken in any language other than French has to be accompanied by a translation into French. Therefore, for example, an advertising billboard with a slogan written in English has to also show the translation of the slogan into French. In 1995, the then Minister for

Education, Bayrou, stated in the new curriculum (*Le Nouveau Contrat Pour l'Ecole*): “Priorité absolue à la langue française. La maîtrise de la langue française, orale et écrite, est la première des priorités ...” (“Absolute priority to French. The number one priority is mastery of French, spoken and written”) and in 2001, yet another Minister for Education, Jack Lang, insisted again on the central role of the national language for the purposes of integration.

It comes as no surprise that most French parents aspire to mastery of the French language for their children. In recent years, following the development of the European Union, there has also been increased parental demand for greater linguistic competence in other mainstream European languages. However, this broadening of linguistic horizons has not been extended to other languages, especially those at the bottom of the language hierarchy. With no official national recognition of plurilingual competence, many families from ethnolinguistic minorities have suffered and are still suffering from the lack of recognition accorded to their own mother tongues and from their inability to pass on their languages to their children within such a prevailing climate of assimilation. Marie-Rose Moro, an ethno-psychiatrist who works with ethnic minority patients in a Parisian hospital writes:

“S'il y a un dénominateur commun dans la plainte de tous nos patients c'est la non-reconnaissance: ils ont le sentiment de n'avoir pas de place. Ils disent que leur savoir est nié et que d'ailleurs ils ne peuvent même pas le transmettre sans nuire à leurs enfants.”

Moro, 2002a: 48

“If there is a common denominator underlying the complaints of all our patients, it is a lack of acknowledgement. They feel like they do not belong. They say that their knowledge is dismissed and that they cannot even pass it on to their children without disadvantaging them.”

Moro, 2002a: 48

One of the parents we interviewed at the school also referred to this phenomenon:

“... ma mère me parlait berbère et on lui parlait berbère, mais il y a un moment, c’est vrai, elle nous a dit euh bon maintenant je ne veux plus que vous parliez berbère, parce que c’est vrai que à l’école, quand on allait à l’école, il y avait des confusions, alors elle nous a dit, vous arrêtez et c’est dommage je trouve, franchement, je le regrette maintenant ... alors qu’à l’époque je pensais que c’était une sous-culture, peut être que c’est le système scolaire qui nous faisait penser aussi, les gens et tout qui nous faisaient penser que l’arabe ce n’était pas ...”.

Parent berbère

“... my mother used to speak Berber to me and we would speak Berber to her, but quite a while ago, yes, she told us err right from now on I do not want you to speak Berber any more, because it was true that at school, when we went to school, we used to get things mixed up, so she told us to stop and I think it is a shame, really, I am sorry now ... although at the time I thought it was a subculture, perhaps it was the school system that made us think that too, people and everything who made us think that Arabic was not ...”.

Berber parent

Such negative attitudes towards plurilingualism are perpetuated in the younger generations, albeit often subconsciously. Although the 6-year-old pupils in Didenheim certainly had no personal experience of being punished for speaking Alsatian at school, as was the case after the Second World War in Alsace when it was “chic de parler français” (Vassberg, 1993), the children displayed embarrassment and discomfort during the first language and culture session focusing on Alsatian. One girl actually crawled under the table when she was asked to repeat something in Alsatian. Was this because it was the first language and culture class? Or were the children manifesting the traces of deeply rooted, traumatic experiences shared by the Alsatian-speaking community and which had somehow been transmitted to its younger generations?

The idea that French national identity can be reinforced through the teaching of a model of French, which is “identical” for all French citizens (Fantapié, 1979: 211-212) and through the negation of any other linguistic varieties which might be spoken at home, still finds resonance in the discourse of many primary teachers in France today. At best the fact that a child may speak a language other than French at home is of no consequence, nor of any concern to many teachers. But at worst, the “absolute priority” (Lang, 2001) of the French language for all pupils in the French national primary curriculum, coupled with the monolingual vision of many teachers that knowledge of another language may “interfere” with mastery of the national language, frequently results in teachers actively discouraging parents from speaking their heritage language with their children at home. Concerning this question, the teachers in Didenheim admitted that their beliefs had changed fundamentally during the course of the project:

“cette année le projet, mais également le fait de tout ce qui a été mis en place au niveau de cette école, on se rend compte de l’importance de maîtriser sa langue maternelle avant d’acquérir quoi que se soit d’autre, donc oui mon opinion évolue là-dessous oui.”

“this year, with the project, but also due to everything which has been put in place in this school, you realise the importance of mastering your own language before trying to acquire anything else, so yes, my opinion has changed concerning that subject yes.”

CEI teacher

The publication of the new national curriculum by the ministry in 2002 brought fresh hope. For the first time reference was made to children who do not have French as their mother tongue (MEN, 2002a: 126; MEN, 2002b: 90). However, they are only given a passing mention and the terms used (Varro, 2003) to describe them do not echo the positively connoted terminology, such as bilingual pupils, used in some countries.

In addition to acknowledging the existence of plurilingual pupils, the new directives also lend official support to initiatives such as the Didenheim project, by encouraging teachers to familiarise their pupils with linguistic and cultural diversity, by valuing the languages of pupils in their classes and by occasionally inviting native speakers of these languages into the classroom (MEN, 2002a: 129; MEN, 2002b: 92). What the Didenheim project has done and continues to do is to put these directives into practice.

“On fait sortir les bons côtés ... Je crois que là on essaie justement de prendre les différences, de les mettre en relief, mais les bons côtés de ces différences, et ce que cela peut avoir d’enrichissant ... et puis il y a tout ce qu’on vit en commun en fait ... les enfants sont riches de leurs expériences, de leur culture personnelle, mais tout est mis en commun pour construire une histoire commune à la classe.”

Enseignante du CEI

“We try to bring out the positive elements ... I think that what we are trying to do here is to look at differences, to focus on them, but on the positive elements of these differences and the enriching nature of them ... and then there is everything that we experience together as a group ... the children are full of their own experiences, their own personal cultures, but everything is brought to the table and shared.”

CEI teacher

Although without parental participation this project could never take place, it is the teachers who are the key initiators. As Lüdi (2000) writes:

It is most often teachers who represent the decisive motor for linguistic diversification with their enthusiasm, their engagement, their curiosity and their willingness to contribute in a professional manner to improving the teaching and learning of languages

...

In effect what the teachers in Didenheim are doing is recognising the parents' cultural and linguistic capital. This capital is no longer in the wrong currency (Gewirtz et al., 1995), but is converted into shared and valued classroom wealth.

Coming of age

Following three years of observation, recordings and evaluations, we can safely assert that the children from Didenheim, their teachers, participating parents and the researchers have all travelled far along the road of linguistic and cultural awareness. The children manifest great motivation and enthusiasm towards language learning and know about and refer to a far wider variety of languages than they ever would have done before the project started.

The parents, whose role was central to the project, are grateful for the opportunity to talk about a subject dear to their hearts and about linguistic and cultural competences which they often feel to be undervalued or ignored.

“... pour cette maman donc il s’agissait de l’arabe, j’ai parlé avec elle dans le contexte aussi politique, elle m’a dit que ça lui avait fait du bien de présenter en fait sa culture effectivement, présenter un autre côté en fait de sa culture ... ça la valorisait je crois et elle avait besoin et manifestement ça a été quelque chose de riche pour elle aussi.”

Enseignante du CE1

“... for this mother then, it concerned Arabic, I spoke with her about the political context too, she told me that she had enjoyed presenting her culture in fact, yes, presenting another side in fact to her culture... it made her feel valued I think and she needed it and quite obviously it was something enriching for her too.”

CE1 teacher

Consequently, both they and their children feel recognised and accepted by the school and are less apprehensive about entering its precincts. It is the possession of a valued skill or competence which gives parents the confidence to participate in a school-based activity (Sallis, 1988) and which can lead to improved parent-teacher relations. A change in the behaviour of the Turkish mothers has been particularly remarked upon by all parties. Whereas before these mothers would never set foot on school premises and entering into any kind of dialogue with them was difficult, now they can frequently be found after school hours chatting with teachers, one of their number acting as an interpreter about how to help their children progress at school and how they themselves can make a contribution to school life. It should be remembered that for many of these parents school in their native land was often a very short-lived experience and that consequently entering a place of learning in a country whose culture is not always understood and in whose language they cannot express themselves freely is a somewhat daunting prospect.

The teachers talk of developing their own linguistic and cultural knowledge (Young and Helot, 2003) and experiencing heightened curiosity:

“Oui, oui ... j'étais passionnée par le langage des signes, l'arabe aussi, c'est très très enrichissant pour nous.”

Enseignante du CE1

“Yes, yes ... I was fascinated by sign language, Arabic too, it is very very enriching for us.”

CE1 teacher

“Une ouverture énorme quoi, envie encore plus d'aller à la découverte d'autres langues, d'autres pays. Une curiosité démultipliée. J'étais déjà curieuse, mais je le suis encore plus.”

Enseignante du CP

“It is a great broadening of the mind you know, I feel even more like going in search of other languages, other countries. My curiosity has greatly increased. I was curious in the first place, but I am even more now.”

CP teacher

They also claim to better understand the linguistic and cultural difficulties faced by those of their pupils who are not native speakers of French and have noticed their Turkish pupils shining in class, safe in the knowledge that they can outperform their peers in some areas.

“... ils n'ont plus la même place dans l'école. Rien qu'à leur niveau à eux quoi, le fait de, qu'on valorise leurs mamans, qu'on valorise leur culture, leur langue ... l'année dernière quand on a fait turc ... ils étaient très fiers.”

Enseignante du CP

“... they are no longer viewed in the same way at school. Even just at their own level you know, the fact that their mums are valued, their culture is valued, their language ... last year when we did Turkish ... they were very proud.”

CP teacher

As researchers, we marvel at the ways in which generosity, empathy and respect, combined with the sharing of expertise and knowledge, have contributed to the success of the project. Parents, teachers and pupils have effectively participated in a shared learning experience or an “educational partnership” (Cummins, 2000) in which participants empower and respect each other, maintaining a fine balance of power to the benefit of all and not an imbalance of power in favour of the professionals (Vincent, 2000). We also feel that school-based, grass-roots projects are more likely to have an impact and to stand the test of time than top-down policies which often remain on the printed page rather than put into practice. The Didenheim project is an example of good practice which shows how teachers can find their own solutions to their own problems and how asking parents to contribute their own knowledge can be most beneficial for the whole school community. Indeed the chief inspector for languages, based in Paris, has heard about the school initiative and cited it as an example of good practice. Today,

the project itself is no longer simply a project, but has been integrated into the school curriculum thanks to the timely and appropriate appearance of the ministerial directives and the approach's proven success.

As for the racist incidents, it would be nice to be able to write that they are a thing of the past, but unfortunately for a small minority of children, the influence of views held at home cannot be combated through school projects alone. School may contribute to reducing racism by educating children to be tolerant citizens and this may make a difference in some cases, but we cannot fool ourselves into believing that this works for everybody, for, as Moro (2002b: 181) writes:

Racism is not inescapable but it lurks within each one of us, individually and collectively, in a more or less active way. Therefore there is a real need to spot it, to track it down, and to learn to decentre ... What is necessary and a never-ending process is to decolonise oneself Racism is fundamentally a form of violence against people which should be eradicated not with inefficient finer feelings but with audacious ideas, pedagogical innovations, respect of parents' cultures by schools, new modes of prevention and care ... a reflection which integrates real obstacles rather than denying them.

Conclusion

The project has quite obviously been a wonderful success story at the local level and a concrete example of how to put into practice the directives contained in the new national curriculum documents concerning language education (MEN, 2002a; MEN, 2002b).

However, we would like to raise two important issues which have come to light during the course of this project. The first concerns the need to inform all participants about the objectives of such programmes. The notion of plurilingual competence has only been recently defined and needs to be explained to teachers, parents and pupils.

“Etre plurilingue ne signifie pas maîtriser à un haut degré un nombre impressionnant de langues, mais s’être créé une compétence d’utilisation de plus d’une variété linguistique, à des degrés de maîtrise non nécessairement identiques et pour des utilisations diverses (participer à une conversation, lire ou écrire des textes etc.)”

*Beacco et Byram, 2003: 38
(version française)*

“Being plurilingual does not mean mastering a large number of languages to a high level, but acquiring the ability to use more than one linguistic variety to degrees (which are not necessarily identical) for different purposes (conversation, reading or writing, etc.)”

Beacco and Byram, 2003: 41

The Didenheim project is an illustration of an alternative approach to traditional language learning and it is important to point out to all involved in such a project that learning about languages is not the same as learning a language. As defined by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, education for plurilingual awareness refers to education “destinés à éduquer à la tolérance linguistique, à sensibiliser à la diversité des langues, et à former à la citoyenneté démocratique” (Beacco and Byram, 2003: 16 (French version)), “whose purpose is to educate for linguistic tolerance, raise awareness of linguistic diversity and educate for democratic citizenship” (Beacco and Byram, 2003: 20).

The second issue to which we would like to alert readers concerns the question of how to integrate education for plurilingual awareness into the curriculum, particularly when most curricula today promote early foreign language learning and this inevitably means only one language, which in most European countries is English. How can we work towards such rich awareness raising programmes being included in our national curricula?

A whole school approach to language education could provide some answers. A carefully thought out school timetable which allocates sufficient time to language education in its broader, more inclusive sense, linking it with traditional subject areas such as geography, history, literacy, music and art, could affirm its place in the curriculum as a pivotal subject or bridging subject (as first intended by Hawkins, 1987), with its objectives firmly rooted in citizenship education.

The Didenheim project has shown how the combination of children’s natural curiosity, teachers’ pedagogical expertise and parents’ linguistic and cultural knowledge and experience can be combined to render a home-grown education for plurilingual awareness programme accessible to the whole school community. In the words of a Berber mother:

“... l’ouverture de l’esprit ... c’est important ça pour les enfants je trouve ... c’était en fait le but principal ... l’ouverture vers l’autre, la tolérance, plus de tolérance, ce que je n’ai pas connu quand j’étais à l’école.”

Parent berbère

“The opening of minds ... that is important for the children I think ... that was the main goal in fact ... opening up to others, tolerance, what I did not encounter when I was at school.”

Berber parent

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Chapter 3

The Sorbian WITAJ project and the role of applied linguistics in the development of materials

Madlena Norberg

Background

The Sorbs, one of four indigenous minorities in Germany, live in south-eastern Germany in the *Land* of Brandenburg (Lower Lusatia) and in the Free State of Saxony (Upper Lusatia). The national centres are Cottbus in Lower Lusatia and Bautzen in Upper Lusatia. The Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe recognises two Sorbian languages – Upper and Lower Sorbian. Upper Sorbian is more like Czech and Lower Sorbian is similar to Polish (Charta, 1998). All Sorbian speakers are bilingual in Sorbian and German. For historical, political, religious and economic reasons, the language situation in Upper and Lower Sorbian speaking areas is different. It is only in the Upper Sorbian region that families still speak Sorbian and use it with their children. In the whole Lower Sorbian area we note that, as Fishman (1991: 366) explains, the “intergenerational mother tongue transmission”, the transmission of the Lower Sorbian language from parents to their children no longer takes place. Today, only the older generation speaks Lower Sorbian as their mother tongue, while the middle generation has a fairly passive and in some cases even an active knowledge of the language. Altogether there are approximately 12, 000 speakers of Lower Sorbian out of a total number of 67 000 Sorbian speakers (Elle, 1991; Norberg, 1996).

This chapter will focus on the revitalisation of Lower Sorbian in Cottbus, Lower Lusatia. The importance and relevance of minority languages is not overlooked in the guide (Beacco and Byram, 2003). In fact, various types of minority language groups are listed in the context of “the severity of the recognition problems” for such minorities and the resulting problems (p. 16). The promotion of minority languages as described in this case study, therefore, falls squarely within the plurilingual project of the Council of Europe.

The WITAJ project

Sorbian has been established as a foreign language in school in the Lower Sorbian speaking area since the 1950s. Although Sorbian is an indigenous language, school

authorities classified it as a normal foreign language at school. It used to be taught up to three hours a week, in the morning or afternoon, outside the teaching schedule. The children who took part in this teaching programme sometimes regarded it as a burden, and as a practice it could not produce the desired results. Although the Sorbs demanded a change in this teaching system, they found it impossible to carry out any changes in the socialist GDR. After the fall of Communism and Germany's reunification in 1990, the local education authority started to allow some changes on a trial basis. This encouraged Sorbs to try a new way of teaching the Sorbian language. Following the example of language maintenance efforts by other minorities (Hinton and Hale, 2001) and especially inspired by the successful language revitalisation DIWAN method of immersion in Brittany, France, Sorbian activists established the Sorbian language revitalisation programme WITAJ (Welcome) in Lusatia in 1998.

The idea of WITAJ is to maintain and if possible to revitalise the Lower Sorbian language through educational institutions: kindergarten and school. In day care, children experience socialisation through Sorbian, and later on in school they attend an immersion programme where Sorbian becomes the language of instruction in several subjects (bilingual education). This means that the WITAJ Sorbian bilingual education plan starts with a preparatory phase in day care, where children acquire, above all, passive knowledge of Sorbian, and where they learn to react to Sorbian requests and to answer with several words or several phrases, but make only limited active use of the language. At school, through the use of Sorbian as the teaching language, the productive abilities of the children are encouraged; the learners come into the active phase of language acquisition and learn to communicate in Sorbian. In school, the Sorbian language is used consistently by the teacher, however, the children are allowed to answer in their mother tongue, when they cannot express themselves in Sorbian.

At the time of writing this paper (early 2005), 155 children in seven day care centres attend this project and 84 children in four primary schools take part in bilingual German-Sorbian school programmes. It is worth noting that the project is expanding and it is expected that more day care centres and schools will offer Lower Sorbian bilingual education in the coming years. Besides the new programme of bilingual teaching, Sorbian is still taught in schools in Brandenburg in traditional forms: as a social language (*Begegnungssprache*) (one hour a week without assessment practices), as a voluntary foreign language (three hours a week with assessment) and as a compulsory foreign language at the Sorbian grammar school. This traditional form of teaching takes place in 29 schools with 1 517 children participating. However, except for the Sorbian grammar school, the lessons are still held outside the school timetable.

Bilingual teaching takes place according to the principle of teaching through two languages "equally" across a school's timetable (Baker, 1993; Zydatiř, 2000). For this purpose the Sorbian-German bilingual schools compiled a special curriculum. Bilingual teaching starts in year 1 with 35% of the time dedicated to Sorbian (seven hours out of twenty regular hours a week), which continues through year 2. The aim of teaching in the first two years is for children to learn to read and write Sorbian. The subjects taught in years 1 and 2 in Sorbian are: four hours of Sorbian reading and

writing, two hours of mathematics and one hour of arts. After the second year, bilingual teaching increases in years 3 and 4 to 42% of the curriculum time through the addition of a subject known as topics (general knowledge). In years 5 and 6 two new subjects are taught in Sorbian: music and physical education.

For the bilingual teaching programme the classes are divided into two groups: one group follows the ordinary German curriculum and the WITAJ group goes to another room where they follow the same programme as the German children but through the medium of Sorbian.

The production of learning materials for bilingual teaching

At the beginning of the project, a Sorbian School Society was formed. This society's members acquainted themselves with theories of learning, prepared the information required and kept close contact with the parents. However, the society was unable to cater for all the requirements of this project and in 2001 an institution was established with the aim of handling the project in a professional way. The WITAJ Language Centre (WITAJ-Spachzentrum) has its main office in Bautzen and a second office in Cottbus. The centre is financed by the Sorbian Foundation and is also supported by the public purse. The centre is responsible for all Sorbian bilingual education in Lusatia which includes organisation of courses, teacher qualifications, the preparation of the teaching materials, and the evaluation of the project.

One of the basic necessities to get the bilingual programme working was the production of learning materials. Before the Sorbian programme started, there was already a lot of Sorbian teaching material from the traditional Sorbian courses. The problem was, however, that these books and worksheets were not suitable for bilingual teaching. They were only useful for the teaching of vocabulary. A very important consideration in this immersion bilingual programme is that the WITAJ group forms part of the mainstream class and needs to cover the same content as the other children. The question, in fact, was not about what material, but how to make the Sorbian books as equivalent to the German ones as possible. This was necessary because we wanted the children taking part in bilingual education to get exactly the same knowledge as the rest of the class. This was meant to ensure that no language group would be disadvantaged in terms of quantity and quality of teaching. For both languages the same official curriculum for the relevant subjects is valid. For this reason the textbooks for Sorbian teaching are developed in parallel to the German books. The Sorbian materials are licensed equivalents of the German books with a certain incorporation of Sorbian realities. The Sorbian textbook series *Mója cytanka*, for instance, is based on the German textbooks *Mein Lesebuch* for primary level from the Klett publishing house, and the Sorbian books on mathematics *Drogi licenja* are based on the books *Rechenwege* published by Volk und Wissen.

The choice of teaching material in German schools is generally free and depends upon agreement within the school. Due to the limited financial resources afforded to the project, and the still restricted number of participants in Sorbian bilingual education, it was not possible to cater for a free choice of learning materials in Sorbian. It was not realistic for our centre to produce and finance several textbooks for one level in one subject. This explains why the Sorbian books, according to the initial idea of the WITAJ Language Centre, had to be used in the respective subjects in all schools with Sorbian bilingual teaching as so to speak “comprehensive materials”. But the centre realised that this was not so easy in practice since different schools use quite different books. It was therefore necessary to find a common approach together with school bodies, schools and teachers, in the sense that those schools offering Sorbian bilingual teaching had to agree to use the German books which had already been translated into Sorbian. This sometimes leads, of course, to intensive discussions and also requires that explanations be given to parents.

How was the first textbook produced? The first bilingual teacher at the first bilingual school was a teacher of traditional Sorbian with many years of teaching experience. At the same time as this teacher was working with the first group of bilingual pupils, a younger Sorbian teacher accompanied her and learned from her. Together they prepared working materials including the first textbook *Mója fibla* (primer). The first books were written by teachers since no one outside the classroom was in a position to fully appreciate the learning situation in these groups. Later, the centre took over the role of developing and producing the much needed material in very close co-operation with the teachers. Now after four years of existence, the centre has prepared books and a huge quantity of worksheets in every subject of bilingual teaching for up to class 5.

In addition to the ordinary subject books, several supplementary materials have been produced for use as “self-study-materials”. These include modern audiolingual as well as audiovisual teaching materials such as computer games, computer learning programmes, Internet sites, children’s books and picture books, videos about Sorbian history and culture, CD-Roms and CDs with Sorbian music. This additional material is very important, because pupils do not have sufficient contact with Sorbian native speakers to support their studies in the Sorbian language. Due to the lack of such input it is necessary to produce “self-study-materials” which addresses this deficiency by providing learners with dialogues or monologues from Sorbian native speakers or good Sorbian speakers. Where such materials cannot be produced by the language centre or by the teachers, it is possible to obtain a lot of spoken material from the archive of the Lower Sorbian Radio station. As far as video films are concerned, it is possible to use local TV station productions in Lower Sorbian. In future it will also be necessary to make, for example, talking books or sound storage media for theatre plays and other literary or artistic genres.

All this material is not only important for teaching but also for the recapitulation phase in the afternoon at school (Hort). Formal schooling in Germany ends some time between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. Children may remain at school voluntarily for Hort until 4 p.m. and 4.30 p.m. during which time they can do their homework, take part in

certain activities or play, and are supervised by school personnel. At the WITAJ school, Sorbian is spoken during Hort. The use of Sorbian is recommended for after-school activities in order to increase the pupils' opportunities to be exposed to Sorbian, and also for taking part in Sorbian cultural and musical life, literary events, theatre plays, church life, political activities or society arrangements. Additionally, there are museums, exhibitions, scientific conferences and public language courses which can be visited or attended. At a receptive level the learners can read books, listen to the radio, watch television or choose from a wide range of video cassettes. These oral and audiovisual media provide learners with the opportunity to listen to native speakers even if they speak a regionally-accented variety.

Language elaboration for the production of teaching materials

The main condition for developing educational material is to have a well-codified and accepted standard language. The development of a standard language depends on non-linguistic factors such as language status, educational system, media and literature production; as well as linguistic factors such as phonetic, morphological and lexical codification of the language and the development of glossaries. Research about the language has to be carried out. In a minority language situation it is not easy to fulfil such conditions. In the 1950s about 20 Sorbian institutions in the areas of education, culture, media and research were established (Mětsšk, 1963). They made it possible for research and related work in the linguistic field to take place; a prerequisite for language development. For example, between 1975 and 1996 the Sorbian linguistic atlas was published in 15 volumes. This atlas includes Upper and Lower Sorbian linguistic descriptions. In 1976 a Lower Sorbian grammar, Lower Sorbian orthographic recommendations, and several smaller vocabulary lists were produced. In 1999 a comprehensive Lower Sorbian-German dictionary was made available.

In 1970 a special Language Commission at the Sorbian research institute in Bautzen started working on the development of a standard Sorbian variety. Until the fall of communism in the GDR, this commission supported analogous and co-ordinated development between Upper and Lower Sorbian. But because of the differences between Upper and Lower Sorbian at every linguistic level it was, in fact, not realistic to have such a language policy. Native speakers of Lower Sorbian also rejected this Sorbian variety which had been substantially influenced by Upper Sorbian. After 1989, following the revitalisation programme of the Lower Sorbian language, a new Lower Sorbian Language Commission was able to emancipate itself from the domination of Upper Sorbian. In 1994 the new Lower Sorbian Language Commission started a reform of the Lower Sorbian standard language with the target of adapting the standard (school) language to local dialects – the spoken language. This reform included phonetic changes, some morphological regulations and above all the replacement of Upper Sorbian vocabulary with Lower Sorbian equivalents. The Language Commission was of the opinion that all unnecessary Upper Sorbian influence was to be

exchanged for Lower Sorbian elements at every linguistic level. New Lower Sorbian words should, hence, only be created in line with Lower Sorbian linguistic derivational patterns. In 1991, a branch of the Sorbian Institute for Linguistic Research was established in Cottbus to focus specifically on the Lower Sorbian language needs.

The Lower Sorbian speech community accepted and appreciated this new language development. This initiative also aided the positive response received for the bilingual teaching programme. Since the establishment of the Lower Sorbian branch of the Institute for Linguistic Research, all teaching material for traditional Sorbian teaching, all material for bilingual Sorbian education, radio broadcasting in Sorbian, writing in the Lower Sorbian newspaper, etc. adhere to the new orthographic and grammatical rules. And of course the WITAJ Language Centre pays a great deal of attention to this matter in its textbook production. In this sense it has carried out an intensive corpus planning project in the Lower Sorbian language at the same time as starting the bilingual teaching programme. This relatively well codified standard language serves as the linguistic basis for the production of all teaching materials.

Apart from the aforementioned new regulations, the lexical treatment of Lower Sorbian was in great demand by all those working on the production of teaching materials. To follow the recommendations for word formation is one thing, but to create new lexical items is another. And here the question was often raised as to whether the Sorbian language, being a minority language, was able to adequately fulfil the lexical demands required by bilingual education.

Kloss' (1978) *Ausbauqualität* (development quality) model of written languages was useful in this debate. From his model it is possible to recognise how well a written language has been developed and for what domains it possesses the required vocabulary and where a special lexis should be created. For the Sorbian standard language – and I think this could be similar to other minority situations – the domains of use were analysed as in Figure 1.

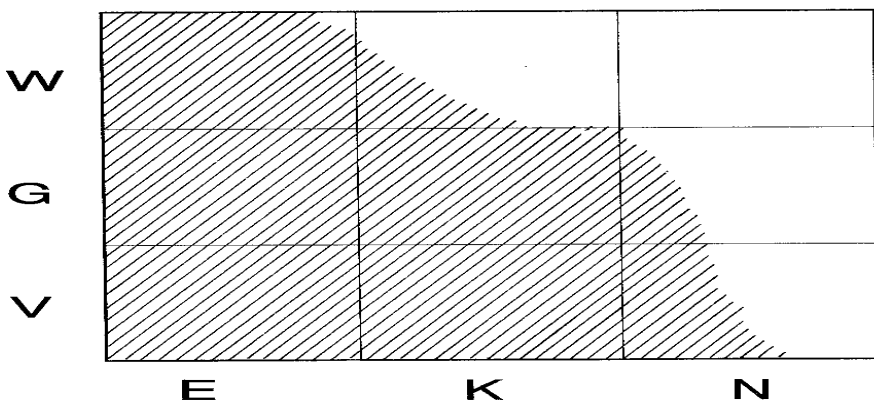


Figure 1: The *Ausbauqualität* model for the Sorbian standard language (Elle, 1992: 43)

Fields of application:

- V ordinary prose (primary school level)
- G advanced prose (secondary education level)
- W scientific prose (university level)

Opportunities for development:

- E personal subjects (themes from the language community's own way of life)
- K politico-cultural subjects (themes from the arts and social sciences)
- N scientific subjects (themes from scientific and technological domains)

From this model, we can deduce that in the following areas the lexical basis is almost complete:

Ordinary prose = ordinary texts (primary school level);

Advanced prose = advanced texts (secondary education level);

Scientific prose, on the whole = scientific texts (university level);

Personal subjects (themes from the language community's own way of life);

Politico-cultural subjects (themes from the arts and social sciences).

However, the vocabulary of science subjects (themes from scientific and technological domains) is still very limited in Sorbian.

This means that as far as the primary level is concerned, the Lower Sorbian written language offers a rich lexical basis for use in textbooks. Even for most subjects at secondary level the vocabulary exists. But for the future, the vocabulary for bilingual education in science subjects and, to a lesser extent, for some politico-cultural themes has to be produced. The most important point at this stage is not to give in to the idea that these subjects are impossible to teach in Sorbian. On the contrary, bilingual teaching is giving the opportunity to develop the Lower Sorbian lexis for the necessary functions and use in all domains. This will, in turn, enhance the prestige and status of Lower Sorbian. Linguistic development in Sorbian and its application in teaching are two processes that support each other. For instance, the inclusion of mathematics in the Sorbian curriculum has prompted vocabulary development which will, in turn, be acquired by the teachers, the pupils and, I am convinced, even by a lot of other people too. Through the use of the arts and social sciences lexis in our textbooks, this genre and its range of vocabulary in Sorbian will be strengthened. In parallel to this there is already a demand from the producers of the materials, the teachers and the pupils to create word lists and special terminological dictionaries. Special studies on the vocabulary of mathematics, social science, computer terminology, physical education and teacher communication in the classroom have already been produced. A glossary for religion and ethics is in preparation. This is being developed partly by the teachers, together with the Sorbian educational institutions. The team of the Sorbian Research

Institute in Cottbus is producing a modern Lower Sorbian Internet dictionary, specialising in the use of Sorbian verbs but also including a lot of vocabulary, phrases and speech examples on several themes and communication situations. For teachers and learners it is already possible to go online and download parts of the dictionary, or to get in touch with the authors.

There is no doubt that the production of learning materials, both for Sorbian bilingual teaching and for use in general, should be a well planned, systematic, continuous but also a differentiated process. It has to be carefully co-ordinated at all levels and at the same time it has to cover all the material needed. Moreover, the demand for teaching materials has to be in agreement with school bodies, the education organisers and most of all the teachers. This does not only concern the standard teaching material such as textbooks, vocabulary lists, etc., but also the huge amount of working material in the form of exercises of all kinds, and other teaching aids.

Since 2000 a lot of material for Sorbian bilingual teaching has been produced. Yet, teachers feel that they have to carry a psychological and practical burden both when standing in front of the children and when preparing lessons. In spite of all the help made available to them, they sit every day and prepare their lessons with great creativity and imagination. They have a limited selection of materials, unlike their colleagues who teach in German. They have to think out the material, prepare it, make it work linguistically, hand it over for proofreading and then also do the layout. It is a pity that for this extraordinary amount of work bilingual teachers are not compensated in accordance, neither by the school authorities nor by the Ministry of Education.

I also think that it would be a good idea if all the teachers of the same subject could exchange views and materials. It would be an advantage for everybody to collect a copy of all prepared materials from the teachers in one place, for instance at the WITAJ Language Centre, to share with other teachers. It would also be good practice to organise regular workshops where teachers exchange materials, inform themselves about new materials and have brain-storming sessions about teaching. Another good idea, I believe, would be to share views with other minorities, or with other schools that offer bilingual teaching in a low status language in order to exchange organisational strategies and to identify common ground on which to build new teaching methods and materials.

During an interview conducted with one of the authors involved in the production of Lower Sorbian teaching materials at the WITAJ Language Centre, further information concerning the production of teaching materials was uncovered, such as:

- there are very few people who have the linguistic and didactic competence to produce materials. Thus, due to the isolated way in which the teachers work, the study materials are not always co-ordinated well enough;
- the parallel use of German and Sorbian books in one class, for example in mathematics determines *de facto* the content of material and in this way also the

language of the Sorbian books, except in the book of social sciences where some Sorbian regional knowledge was added;

- the teachers are not native speakers and have to learn the language first; consequently, they sometimes find themselves in situations where they are unable to explain the content well enough;
- it is extraordinarily demanding for a teacher to teach a language that is stigmatised, and not every teacher is mentally prepared to handle such situations;
- with regard to the children, priority must be given to rapid language competence development, because often the Sorbian language competence of the pupils is not equivalent to their intellectual competence.

The production of teaching materials is, moreover, not only a question of the materials needed today, but it is also necessary to think ahead to a time when the bilingual pupils now in primary schools with growing knowledge of the Lower Sorbian language will enter grammar school or professional training or university. Then there will be a need for more general reference books, such as Lower Sorbian school grammars and a Lower Sorbian academic grammar, which were produced for Upper Sorbian in 1980. The Lower Sorbian-German dictionary of 1999 represents a good basis for understanding Lower Sorbian texts, but offers only limited help for active use of Lower Sorbian in speaking and writing. There is a need for the production of a German-Sorbian dictionary. The systematisation of vocabulary for specialised subject matter should be carried out in order to produce good terminological dictionaries. There will also eventually be a need for a dictionary of synonyms and a dictionary of phraseology. As children in bilingual education develop autonomous learning strategies and techniques, which are essential for language acquisition, such reference materials will support them as they continue their studies independently.

In this context it is also necessary to have qualified teachers specially trained for bilingual teaching and for the preparation of materials. The WITAJ Language Centre caters for these needs by providing special courses during which teachers learn about methods of bilingual teaching; improve their competence in the Sorbian language; acquire knowledge about Sorbian history and social science; and receive practical training in the use of auxiliary language materials such as dictionaries, grammars, pictures, texts, statistics, graphics and special terminology. They also develop their competence in subject-related interaction strategies (for example, asking strategies), and how to produce learning materials as required.

The teachers themselves, however, often ask for a description of the curricula of bilingual teaching (*Rahmenlehrpläne*) and didactic advice in relation to the bilingual subjects they teach (*Stoffverteilungspläne*). Such recommendations should correspond to theory and be integrative, which means that the subject content and the aim of language teaching should be linked. Recommendations should not only be linguistically oriented, nor should they only emphasise subject-didactic questions; they should represent a balanced co-ordination of both aspects. The outcome of the learning

process also needs to be clearly outlined, that is to say target-language competence in all its composite parts together with subject competence. Moreover, “intercultural learning” should be accorded a special place within the curriculum, since this is not only a question of language itself but it is also directly connected with the subjects and the content of teaching.

Conclusion

The WITAJ language revitalisation programme raises a variety of issues that extend from negotiations with school authorities, preparations in schools, teacher qualifications, the production of teaching materials, motivating parents, and carrying out research and evaluation of the work.

In addition to the concerns of bilingual teaching, the revitalisation of the Lower Sorbian language is in itself a part of a whole – the planning of the development of the Lower Sorbian language. Planning is necessary for everything that takes place from day care to the end of compulsory education and, where possible, to further/higher educational institutions or professional training. There are many language development needs and much still remains to be done especially in the context of bilingual education. It is necessary to consider new ideas and methods in language acquisition and language development.

Indeed, if any lesson is to be learned from this project in the framework of the Council of Europe’s plurilingual approach, it is that we are “making ‘ordinary’ representations of languages and language teaching more sophisticated” (Beacco and Byram, 2003: 70). Not only are we creating a favourable context for plurilingualism to catch on, but we are actually doing so by introducing a threatened language into the school curriculum. Furthermore, Sorbian is not simply taught as a language, but is also being provided with a range of functions that elsewhere are being offered to an international language like English. The fact that there are a growing number of students who are voluntarily choosing to attend bilingual programmes in Sorbian and German is very reassuring.

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Chapter 4

The growth of a bilingual school: a principal's perspective

Elisabeth Fleischmann

Introduction

In order for the relevance of plurilingual education to be recognised, it is important to know what opinions on language issues are held by head teachers ...

Beacco and Byram, 2003: 73

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a head teacher's perspective on the issue of implementing change in favour of a plurilingualism project. It outlines the process that one particular school has gone through, and how it has evolved as a dynamic institution.

The Graz International Bilingual School (GIBS) was founded in 1991 as the first Austrian secondary state school with a thoroughly bilingual programme in German and English. The school is situated in Graz, the second largest city in Austria and the provincial capital of Styria. Currently, the school has 430 students enrolled, aged between 10 and 18 years and distributed over eight form levels, each level consisting of two parallel classes. The staff consists of 48 teachers including four newly qualified teachers. Between five and eight native speakers of English support the English environment within the school.

Although there is a special focus on English as a medium of instruction, it is important to point out that the students' mother tongue in this school is not always German. In fact, students belong to 29 different nationalities and therefore the school's environment is multicultural. For those students whose first language is other than German, this programme already offers two additional languages, German and English. Furthermore, other foreign languages like French and Spanish form part and parcel of the curriculum, and educational travel to native speaking countries is an important activity in the school.

Since its idealistic beginnings in the early days of bilingual schooling, innumerable hours of hard work and teacher-student-parent co-operation have paid off for GIBS in many ways. The school programme encourages a high level of language competence that has already been publicly recognised with awards from the Styrian regional government as well as ESIS (Europäisches Siegel für Innovative Sprachinitiativen). The staff is highly committed and their team spirit strong, which naturally is felt

directly by the students. Parents recognise the opportunity that GIBS offers: last year GIBS received over three times as many student applications as could be accepted.

Some six years ago a full renovation of the school buildings was completed including the installation of the numerous modern facilities necessary for our programme. This renovation serves also as a tangible symbol of the transition of the school from its initial, pioneering phase into an established growth phase.

The staff admits that the current school spirit must not be taken for granted, rather it must be tended daily with great care. Our programme has evolved as well, reflecting the experiences we have had as a school for which no blueprint exists. In order to better understand the particular character of GIBS, it would be useful to take a look at its social and pedagogical context.

The Austrian policy for foreign language education

In 1992, following grass-roots pressure, the Austrian Ministry of Education launched a ten-year national CLIL/EMILE project, “English as a medium of Instruction”, for special topics and cross-curricular activities. Increased efforts were also made to integrate into the curriculum visits and exchanges with schools abroad. The project successfully provided the initial start-up support and is now being reduced in scale allowing schools to continue this approach on their own.

Before 1990, there were less than ten schools with bilingual courses throughout the entire country. In 1999, there were reportedly 54 *Hauptschule* (for 10-14 year olds, some 4.1% of the total number of this type of school), 56 *Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule* (10-18, 26.8 %) and 59 *Berufsbildende Höhere Schule* (14-19, 31.9 %). In 2002 it was estimated that there were about 200-250 secondary schools involved. The target language is predominantly English with some 3% doing it in French.⁶

There is no national standard curriculum for bilingual secondary schools in Austria. Although the curricula are extremely heterogeneous, the national Ministry of Education does not interfere. While the system allows GIBS to enjoy a high degree of curricular liberty, one disadvantage is the resulting lack of common ground with other bilingual schools.

The Austrian Educational Law (SCHUG, section 16/3) gives every school the right to establish a foreign language as the working language for the sake of higher proficiency if requested by the teacher-student-parent community. At GIBS, English is the language of instruction and communication between students and staff. Practically every subject, naturally with the exception of German and the other foreign languages,

6 Marsh, 2002, p. 91 and 93.

is taught in English. In year 7 (age 17), history is taught entirely in French, thus expanding the programme to a partly trilingual one. Native speaking French and Spanish co-teachers supplement class instruction. Latin remains very popular among the students. In all other legal dimensions, GIBS initially follows the national Gymnasium curriculum. In recent years, however, school autonomy has allowed for specialised improvements within the permitted framework. So every upper secondary school can form its own school profile.

GIBS continues to be the only Austrian state school whose programme is thoroughly bilingual at all levels as opposed to school programmes that offer the option of bilingual classes in a certain number of subjects or for a certain period of time. It is our experience that this uniformity encourages an English atmosphere more than a partial bilingual programme. The presence of English native speakers among the staff, as teachers and as part-time co-teachers, supports this English-speaking environment.

From the very beginning, the school has been popular among parents and children from Graz and the surrounding area. Due to its prominent reputation in the region for promoting language competence and internationality, the Graz City Council and the regional government of Styria also consider the school to be an important asset to the character of the region and to the numerous international companies.

School profile

The following is an excerpt from the GIBS mission statement:

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Language proficiency: | Teaching, learning and communicating in several languages |
| International character: | Encouraging respect for cultural diversity |
| Personal responsibility: | Developing autonomy and team qualities through taking responsibility for one's actions |
| Discovery learning: | Using a wide range of learning strategies to acquire skills and academic knowledge as a basis for lifelong learning |
| Critical thinking: | Developing critical awareness and constructive ways of dealing with criticism of oneself and the world at large |

All of the didactic principles of the GIBS programme, as well as the in-service training for the staff, are closely related to the goals listed in the mission statement.

In the mission statement, language proficiency is listed as the first objective of GIBS. It is intended that students achieve a near-native competence in English. They should be

able to use the language successfully in both their personal and professional life. By using English in non-language subjects, students acquire a wide range of subject-related target language terminology which prepares them well for their future studies and/or working life. Most students reach a high level of proficiency in French and Spanish as well.

The second objective of the mission statement is international character, which GIBS encourages in three ways. First of all is the mastery in itself of international languages. Secondly, GIBS offers diverse in-class and extra-curricular initiatives that enable students to become familiar with different cultures, for example: teaching the cultural and historical backgrounds of respective countries where the target languages are spoken; workshops focusing upon certain aspects of a particular country; and inviting people from various foreign countries to speak with the students. Thirdly, GIBS invests a great deal of time and energy into organising home-to-home exchanges with students and schools from America, France, Switzerland, Ireland, Great Britain and Canada, and we are continually seeking to broaden our contact base. GIBS has also been involved in several EU projects.

We have found that such activities encourage a student's sensibility for intercultural understanding and communication skills. One of the most important principles at GIBS is that we are all committed to showing respect to those who come from other cultural backgrounds. After all, there are 29 nationalities represented at GIBS. In whole school projects, pupils of nationalities other than Austrian or British/American are involved in, for example, teaching their peers some phrases and giving other information about their own languages. This is carried out in two-hour workshops as a means of valuing their roots and at the same time extending the foreign language awareness of all students. These students are also involved in school celebrations through the presentation of their own cultural background. These are ways of acknowledging all the different cultural backgrounds as a resource.

Personal responsibility, discovery learning and critical thinking are objectives encouraged primarily by the interaction between each teacher and each class as a whole, as well as between each teacher and each student as an individual. Naturally, certain rules need to be upheld in order to maintain a productive learning environment within a group. Ideally, though, each student learns to develop both a sense of personal responsibility for one's own actions as well as the ability to anticipate the positive or negative consequences of this interaction with classmates and teachers upon their own academic assessment.

Report cards and standardised grading systems are indispensable within today's academic world. Discovery learning is our expression for ways in which our teaching methods encourage this genuine interest within each student and prepares them for lifelong learning. Similarly, critical thinking is an ability that cannot be demanded from students, with encouragement it will grow step by step, year after year. The emphasis on these methodologies cannot be underestimated. In fact, the guide itself dedicates a number of sections to issues like assessment (section 6.8) and autonomous learning (sections 6.5.1.1 and 6.5.1.4) as these are central to the successful implementation of a coherent approach to plurilingualism.

The GIBS curriculum

To fulfil requirements for the final examinations, students have to collect at least 84 credits altogether (22 additional language credits to the core language credits, 16 science credits to the core science credits and 14 humanities credits to the core credits in humanities) in years 6, 7 and 8. (One credit counts for 1 weekly period per quarter and students have to fulfil the requirements of the courses as described in the coursebook.)

The following table outlines the GIBS curriculum:

| | Forty-five minute periods | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|
| Compulsory subjects | Y 1 Age 10/11 | Y 2 | Y 3 | Y 4 | Y 5 | Y 6 | Y 7 | Y 8 |
| Religious Education | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| German | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2 |
| English | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2 |
| French | - | - | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2.5 | 3 | 1.5 |
| Latin/Spanish | - | - | - | - | 3 | 3.5 | 3 | 1.5 |
| History | - | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Geography | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1.5 | 1 |
| Mathematics | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Biology | 2 | 3 | - | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 | - |
| Chemistry | - | - | - | 2 | - | - | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| Physics | - | - | 3 | 2 | - | 2 | 2 | 1.5 |
| Psychology | - | - | - | - | - | 1.75 | 2 | - |
| Computing | - | - | - | - | 2 | - | - | - |
| Music or | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1.5 | 1 | 2 |
| Art (chosen in years 7 and 8) | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1.5 | 1 | 2 |
| Crafts | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Physical Education | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

Pedagogical measures developed by the staff to facilitate content- and language-integrated learning (CLIL)

GIBS teachers, like all Austrian teachers of secondary academic schools, *Gymnasien*, are certified to teach two subjects. Because of the particular programme at GIBS, most teachers are qualified to teach English and a second subject. Therefore they are also familiar with the special needs of learning English as a second language, and with integrating content and language into the class in a manner appropriate to the particular age group of the class. Nevertheless, the bilingual standard at GIBS requires that students achieve a primary language competency in English. GIBS is fortunate to have staff members who are committed to improving not only their own English skills but the methods by which they encourage English fluency and at the same time subject knowledge among the students. Four such methods are: an intensive learning phase for year 1 students; cross-curricular projects; cross-curricular elective courses; and co-operation between language and non-language teachers through weekly meetings.

When most students come to study at GIBS they have had relatively little primary school instruction in English. In general, Austrian grade school years 1 and 2 offer one period (fifty minutes) of English per week in the form of playful exposure, which means that students are confronted with English integrated for approximately 10 minutes into each school day. During years 3 and 4, one period is again offered, but it can be considered as a subject in itself.

At GIBS, from the very beginning of year 1 onwards the language of instruction is English in the form of “flexible monolingualism”. This means that teachers employ English, yet make allowances for students who might not comprehend everything by offering, if necessary, a translation in German. The first three months of year 1 (age 10) take the form of an intensive phase of language acquisition. Under the co-ordination of the English teacher, each and every subject contributes in different ways to broaden the students’ vocabulary and communication skills. From around Christmas onwards, all students have reached a level of language competency enabling them to participate in all classes in English. Following this intensive phase, linguistic preview exercises for other subjects are provided in the English class when required.

Parents and teachers who are unfamiliar with bilingual instruction at this age are often surprised that non-English-speaking children can learn so much English so quickly without the laborious study required by most adults when learning a foreign language. The following list shows the distribution of the 2005/06 intensive phase topics:

Religious Education 2

Introducing each other; personal data: name, place of birth, etc.; Friendship-relationship (basic vocabulary); St Francis, Noah’s Ark; animals; Christian symbols (basic); describing churches and other public buildings; there is/are; present simple; questions, negation.

English 4

Greetings; introduction; colours; school things; classroom expressions; family; hobbies; daily routine; time; alphabet; possessive pronouns; possessive “s”; plurals; prepositions; present simple; questions, negation; going to; to be; like; don’t like; likes, doesn’t like; past tense.

Geography 2

Where are you from? village, town; provinces of Austria; countries and nationalities in Europe; continents and oceans; compass points; landscape words; things in the sky; weather seasons; present simple questions, negations; prepositions (some); comparison; predicting.

Biology 2

animals; human body; movements of animals; present simple; questions, negation; like/don’t like; likes/doesn’t like.

Music 2

Will practice what is taught in other subjects if possible; raps; alphabet revision (rhythm games); likes/doesn’t like; like/don’t like; animal parts; alphabet.

Visual Art 2

Art tools (language on how to use tools); art vocabulary and theory (elements of design, colour, line, shape, shade, etc.); parts of the body; family members; animals (action words and environment); calendar: time, seasons, holidays; in your house: furniture, shapes; physical description.

Crafts 2

Tools and materials; decorating paper (colours); animals; finger puppets; Christmas decoration; Christmas cards; alphabet; past tense descriptive adjectives.

Physical Education 4

Practise what is taught in other subjects if possible; movement of the body; numbers; movements of animals.

Active English 2

How to arrange your learning environment; tips for studying; support English language: communication at school; classroom expressions; numbers 1-100; calendar: seasons, months, days of week, time; descriptive adjectives; support biology, geography; focus on listening and speaking; animals; Christmas party posture.

The table below provides an outline for the cross-curricular projects in year 1 (2005/06)

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Cross-curricular topic</i> | <i>Subjects involved</i> | <i>Teacher responsible</i> |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| September/October | Family relations | RE, German, E, Art, AE | Franz |
| October to March | Animals | Bio, PE, Art, E, AE, RE, Crafts | Roland |
| January | Rainbow sticks | Crafts, Music | Erika |
| October | Human body, posture | Bio, E, Music, PE, Art, AE | Evi R. |
| December | Puppets | Crafts, Music, AE | Evi R. |
| January | Fractions | Music, Maths | Laurie |
| February | Biology talks | Biology, AE | Manfred |
| March | Scale | Geo, Maths | Imelda |
| April | Living spaces | Geo, Bio, E, PE, AE | Doris |
| April | Stories, legends, storybook | E, Music, Art, RE, German, AE | Christa |
| May | Natural disasters | Geo, E, Maths, Art, RE | Imelda |

Key:

AE: Active English; Bio: Biology; E: English; Geo: Geography; PE: Physical Education; RE: Religious Education.

A broad range of diverse teaching methods are employed to ease the learning process for the children. One must remember that most year 1 students will be encountering entirely new subjects, concepts and topics in an unfamiliar foreign language. The new Austrian curriculum recommends the implementation of projects and cross-curricular teaching methods. Cross-curricular teaching projects are most useful to support the

acquisition of new vocabulary and language structures by looking at topics from different angles. Thus, the most important vocabulary and structures are automatically practised over and over again. This method has proven itself at GIBS over the past fourteen years to be very successful. Further methods include workshops, task sheets, portfolios and response journals, which tend to reinforce learning strategies and study techniques as well as learner autonomy.

The school offers an elective course system for years 6 to 8. While upholding the principle of general education (*Allgemeinbildung*) in the Austrian school system, the course system allows students more freedom to pursue their particular interests and in-depth study. Students can select courses which are useful for their proposed academic and professional careers. Among these elective courses there are a number of courses that are cross-curricular, namely those dealing with the same topic, and language integrated at the same time, namely those focusing on English specific to the subject, and therefore having several positive side-effects with regard to language acquisition and subject matter learning.

GIBS pilot project and final examinations

As mentioned above, there is no national standard curriculum for bilingual schools. Neither is there a standard regulation applying to bilingual final examinations. However, every school does have the option to submit a pilot project proposal.

In 1999, GIBS received permission to initiate a pilot project with regard to the school leaving examinations (*Reifeprüfung*). This permits GIBS students who are native speakers of English to request assessment in English as their first language and German as their first foreign language. Other Austrian bilingual schools have since adopted this regulation as well. Nevertheless, students have to prove their fluency in both languages. They have to take English and German final examinations. They can, however, decide whether it should be a written or oral examination.

In addition, a new general regulation concerning the final oral examinations allows all students to choose a supplementary question (*Ergänzende Schwerpunktprüfung*). Since every student needs to demonstrate a special focus in the oral final examination, this recent regulation allows the students to take, for example, an English oral examination in Geography and thereby fulfil the needed requirements. They can naturally select this option only if their language skills are far above average. Austrian authorities are in the process of introducing the level descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as national standards.

When students graduate from GIBS they receive a certification from the school confirming that the student has taken an examination either orally or written concerning a particular subject in the English language. Because the Austrian school system lacks a standardised bilingual programme, this certification cannot claim to

have national, official status. Nevertheless, because of the reputation that GIBS has been able to foster, such a certification certainly does help students who seek admission to universities or *Fachhochschulen*.

One of the main concerns of the school is the high number of applicants that cannot be accommodated (two thirds of the applicants have to be rejected). Therefore the school is forced to select from the applicants on the basis of personal interviews, bilingual upbringing and primary school record. The selected students naturally benefit in general from this system, finding themselves in a class with like-minded and eager to learn classmates. One inevitable disadvantage to this system is that GIBS has been accused of being elitist, an opinion which we neither like nor encourage. Instead, we are currently in search of more space for an additional parallel class of students.

As mentioned before, GIBS invests enormous time and effort in establishing contacts with other high schools abroad in order to promote home-to-home student exchange programmes. This can be a very difficult and frustrating endeavour. Establishing contact with interested schools can take months of investigation and letter writing from staff members, an extra-curricular activity for which there are not always enough resources. We have also had the experience of other schools dropping contacts, usually due to budget restrictions. Nevertheless, the school continues to pursue this opportunity, considering the home-to-home student exchange as an indispensable part of the language learning process.

Another significant aspect of the school is the enthusiastic spirit among the staff. All staff members are united under the principle that successful conflict management begins with the ability to address potential problems promptly, openly and with respect to all parties concerned. Team co-operation between language and non-language teachers as well as between teachers and native speaker co-teachers has been one of the cornerstones of the successful GIBS programme.

Before the beginning of each year, the staff spends a weekend together brainstorming and engaging in various workshops related to the upcoming year. During the school year, GIBS members of staff get together for an intensive one-and-a-half-day seminar tackling important pedagogical topics and reinforcing the open and trusting atmosphere among the staff, which forms the basis of fruitful co-operation and commitment. Weekly staff meetings help maintain the continuity of contact among teachers, giving them a regular forum for voicing potential issues as well as the opportunity to discuss methods and ideas. Tried and tested teaching materials are accessible to every teacher. New and young members of staff receive support from more experienced colleagues.

Principal's recommendations

In my view, whether or not a strong language programme can be introduced within a school depends very much upon the priorities and focus of the school, its staff and principal. Austrian schools are invited by the ministry to develop a specific profile for the school. It lies within the responsibility of the school community council to decide on the particular direction the school should take when establishing a specific focus for the upper secondary school. Within the framework of the Educational Law in Austria, the principal, together with the staff, parents and students can decide upon this direction. The current staff qualifications need to be taken into consideration, of course.

If a principal considers a strong language programme meaningful for the school then the next step is to form a lobby to support this idea. The initial vision can emerge originally from a teacher, a parent or a student, yet success will inevitably necessitate strong support from many members of all three groups (teachers, parents, students) involved.

The principal must also be prepared to provide motivation for the teachers who will be given an additional workload as a result of establishing a bilingual programme. The programme will require continual promotion and improvement as the particular needs of teachers, students and parents become apparent through each school year.

Between 1991 and 1999, the GIBS bilingual programme was evaluated by the Centre for School Development (Zentrum für Schulentwicklung). The results were positive, particularly concerning the quality of the pedagogical programme and the school atmosphere. External evaluations are encouraging and useful means of proving the advantages of such programmes. Between 1999 and 2002, the evaluation continued focusing upon the elective course system. These results also revealed a positive assessment of the bilingual programme by students.

The co-operation between teachers, students and parents to establish and maintain a bilingual programme demands an extraordinary degree of determination and hard work from all parties involved, yet they in turn will be the ones who will also benefit from this co-operation.

We have begun to consider the option of increasing the number of foreign languages offered by the school. The school would like to introduce a Slavonic language to the curriculum, thus diversifying the languages offered. This clearly shows how bilingualism can be successfully used as a stepping-stone to plurilingualism.

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Chapter 5

Ready, steady, go! The teacher as participant in school language policy

Antoinette Camilleri Grima

Introduction

Teachers have a key role to play in language education. It is each and every teacher, as much as it is each and every learner, school administrator and any other person present on the school site, that contributes to the mosaic of language and cultural wealth in a school. It is also the collaboration among these key stakeholders, as well as the influence of other, normally considered “external” agents, such as parents, regional and/or national authorities, experts in linguistics and pedagogy, that provide a linguistic context to what goes on in a school.

This case study focuses on the teacher. It takes a longitudinal perspective by looking at the teacher as someone who, in the process of growing up from child to adult, participates in the linguistic and cultural practices of their society. In the process, they inherit, as well as formulate, language attitudes and beliefs – hence get “ready”. Subsequently teachers go through a relatively short but intensive period of maturation and formal studies leading to a teaching qualification – hence, get “steady”. As qualified teachers in school they act consciously or unconsciously; they take decisions and may or may not be expected to justify them; they participate in a most direct manner in the linguistic and cultural education of the learners in their care – hence, “go”.

In what follows, an individual teacher’s personal narration, a real life history that touches upon a number of significant issues is presented in three parts: first her own life as a pupil; second, her experience as a student teacher, and third, her professional life as a teacher in primary and secondary schools. A number of salient features are identified as they emerge from the narrative, and as they indicate what we might like to pay attention to in our work.

The intention of this longitudinal approach is to get away from the idea that what happens in the classroom is bound solely by its walls at any particular moment. This description sets out to illustrate how just one actor, the teacher, carries with her a whole baggage of habits, attitudes, philosophies, gathered and reformulated throughout her life, and of which she is often unconscious, but which have a very immediate bearing on the linguistic, pedagogical and other choices she makes that can open or close a

child's world to further language learning and intercultural competence (for example, Probyn, 2001; Morris, 2002).

This is the biography of a teacher I shall call Angela. I have known her personally for many years. We had lost contact for a while until we met up again at the school where she is now teaching, and where I was visiting. We had an initial conversation; and then a second one a few hours later when she presented me with a signed copy of her newly published book. As we spoke I realised that in our "exchange of notes" we were touching upon the very basic principles that guided our practice. I therefore asked her for a more formal interview from which the extracts below are taken. This is an ethnographic description; it is also representative of a good number of teachers' personal histories, and of their day-to-day concerns in Maltese schools. By choosing Angela's story I hope that some of the realities within which language learning takes place in Malta will be illustrated, and some bridges to the international scene can also be built.

Getting ready! The sociolinguistic background

My name is Angela. I am 45 years old and I teach French in a secondary school for girls of higher academic ability known as junior lyceum.

I am single and live in the village of my birth where I was brought up in a small farming community, located in the north of Malta. The whole surrounding environment is very rural, and close to a number of beaches where a large hotel dominates the skyline.

We always spoke a dialect of Maltese at home. As there is no primary school in my village I had to take a school bus early on, together with the other village children, to the nearest primary school, situated in a tourist and multicultural town about 5 km from home. All my relatives live in the same village and I can say that my first language is a dialect of Maltese, and that I was extensively exposed to standard Maltese when I started primary school at the age of 5. Most of the other children in my class spoke a dialect, but all I can recall from my early school days is that during lesson time we spoke standard Maltese. It was not too difficult to get used to it, although sometimes I remember we were corrected by the teacher, and occasionally we asked her how to say this or that in the standard variety.

When I moved on to secondary school there was even less space for the use of dialectal Maltese. Some of my classmates were native speakers of standard Maltese and some of the expressions I used, as well as some of my intonation patterns, were cause for ridicule by some of my peers. However, this did not matter very much to me. I always came 'top of the class' in Maltese!

Both at primary and secondary school we had foreign children in class and they spoke only English with us and with the teachers. I liked to speak English to them even though I never learned much about their cultural background, and apart from their nationality, everything else about them remains a mystery to me. One of the foreign girls I got to know best was Canadian, and she used to talk to us about learning French in Canada –

which sounded very strange to us then as we thought that Canada was an all English-speaking country! When I think about it now I start to wonder whether she had some influence on my choice of French as my main subject of study later on.

As a child I used to read books both in Maltese and in English. During the long summer holidays, I remember going through one reading craze after another: first for the whole series of Ladybird books, then for Enid Blyton as a teenager, and later on for autobiographies.

I started to acquire some Italian during my last year in primary school and I watched Italian television programmes for children. For the first two years at secondary school we had an Italian lady teaching us and this helped me a lot to feel confident learning the language. When I was 13 I chose French as my second foreign language. The teacher was Maltese, but she was very good. After I obtained an 'A' at the end of secondary school, I decided to continue studying French.

Let us leave Angela's narrative for a moment, and look at some of the issues that arise out of her story so far.

The first window she opens gives onto the multi-dialectal panorama of the Maltese language. Standard Maltese is a superposed variety for a good part of the population. In almost every town and village a different dialect is spoken by the local population. Although no statistical data are available about the number of dialect and standard Maltese native speakers, there are studies about the phonetic, phonological and sociolinguistic features of a number of dialectal varieties. Angela learned a fundamental sociolinguistic lesson quite early on in life: there is a diglossic relationship between dialectal and standard Maltese; you need to adjust the language you use according to where, when and with whom you are speaking (Ferguson, 1959).

Secondly, as tourism is the major industry in Malta, with hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions occupying an established place in people's lives, and with the crowding of tourists experienced throughout the year, the exposure to foreign languages cannot be underestimated. The population of Malta is just under half a million, and over a million tourists visit yearly. English is the main language of tourism, with about 50% of tourists coming from Britain. English has other local functions in the media, in education, in business and so on. European languages such as Italian, German and French can be heard regularly. Multilingualism, although not directly pertaining to the Maltese population which is relatively homogeneous, is an international reality experienced on a daily basis. Maltese is the national language, sharing the status of official language with English. Since Maltese became one of the working languages of the European Union in May 2004, at the moment that Malta became a member of the EU, the status of Maltese as a language has been enhanced. This has also given a boost to the self-confidence of the Maltese-speaking people as they feel that their language is valued, and has gained recognition and utility beyond the shores of Malta.

Education is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16. Most children attend Kindergarten prior to the age of 5. At the end of compulsory schooling, at age 16, a range of post-secondary courses are offered. Entrance to university is subject to a

number of passes at “Advanced” level examinations which students sit for after two years of post-secondary study. Table 1 shows the main stages of the Maltese education system.

In education, English is not only taught as a subject with twice as many periods per week as Maltese, but it is also used as a medium of instruction in some subjects starting from primary level. The national curriculum recommends the use of Maltese as a medium in the teaching of five subjects; English for the rest; and the foreign language itself in the case of foreign languages. The most popular foreign language chosen in the first year of secondary school at the age of 11 is Italian (56%), followed by French (35%), German (8%) and Spanish (1%). Students can opt for a second foreign language at the age of 13, and this time Spanish (18%) follows Italian (56%) in popularity (this information was provided by the Education Division in 2002).

| <i>Age</i> | <i>Stage</i> | <i>Entry</i> |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| 3-5 | Kindergarten | By date of birth |
| 5-11 | Primary school, years 1 to 6 | By date of birth |
| 11-16 | Secondary school, forms 1 to 5 | There are 2 types: Junior lyceums which accept students of a higher academic ability, and area secondary schools which take students who do not sit, or who fail, the junior lyceum entry examination |
| 16+ | Post-secondary, a range of vocational, academic, medical and other schools | By entry criteria, normally based on examination passes and a school-leaving certificate |
| circa 18 or maturity (23+) | University level | By entry criteria |

Table 1: The Maltese (state) education system

According to the National Census Data collected in 1995, 76% of Maltese people are bilingual in Maltese and English, and a good number of them are trilingual (see Table 2).

| <i>Languages</i> | <i>Population 324 386</i> | <i>% of total</i> |
|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Maltese | 317 311 | 97.82 |
| English | 246 157 | 75.88 |
| Italian | 118 213 | 36.44 |
| French | 31 945 | 9.85 |
| German | 6 807 | 2.10 |
| Arabic | 5 955 | 1.84 |
| Other | 5 769 | 1.78 |

*Table 2: Languages spoken by the Maltese population
(Central Office of Statistics, 1995)*

On the whole, the dialectal variation in Maltese, the bilingual nature of the country and the exposure to foreign languages all contribute to a positive attitude towards plurilingualism by the Maltese.

Another pertinent comment here relates to the fact that the teachers' own home language backgrounds and their language experiences as pupils at school are two significant variables contributing to the current (often unconscious) language choices they make in the classroom. Research has established that a number of background variables are relevant to teachers' choice of language medium in the classroom, namely a teacher's home language, age, education and training (Camilleri, 1995). This means that teachers who speak English with family members, or who were educated in "British" schools or colleges are more likely to teach through English when compared to the younger generation of teachers trained at the University of Malta. These are some of the factors that influence the use of Maltese, English and code switching at the chalk face, regardless of curriculum recommendations.

On a negative note, Angela mentions in passing that although she had foreign peers in class she learned almost nothing about their culture. Sergiovanni (1994) also makes this point and notes that normally students have an intense interest in knowing about one another's cultures, but receive very little of that knowledge from home or school. In fact, while it is not uncommon to find at least one foreign student per class in Malta, the cultural and linguistic wealth these students bring with them to school is normally ignored. It is pertinent to note that Angela herself wonders whether her friendship with the Canadian girl had an indirect influence on her choice of French as a subject for further studies, while she regrets not having learned anything about the cultural background of her other foreign classmates.

On a positive note, Angela mentions the experience of learning Italian from a native speaker. Recently the presence of native speaker teachers and of foreign language aides has increased through programmes such as Socrates/Comenius and this brings a more authentic language experience into the school. Another important development in schools and in teacher education is the success of visits to the target language country for foreign language students, student teachers and teachers. Every year the number of students and educators who visit the foreign “target-language” country for short stays or for longer study/work periods is increasing. In this way, intercultural competence does not remain a theoretical subject at university, but becomes a concrete experience. This is part of the process of developing the “global teacher” (see various contributions in Steiner, 1996).

Getting steady! Teacher education

Angela continues:

When I finished secondary school at the age of 16 my intention was to continue with my studies at tertiary level. No one in my family had qualified beyond secondary school, but they all encouraged me to go on. I wanted to study French. The first thing I did was to enrol for classes at the Alliance Française, where I got access to resources during the summer, and where I could practice French. I also chose French, Maltese and English as my main subjects in the sixth form.

On obtaining my Advanced Level qualification, it was time to take a university degree. I would have liked to do a BA in French, but at that time the BA course was not available, and I could only follow either law or education. My knowledge of French was useful for both, but in the end I chose to do education. It was the profession I was most familiar with.

It was a five-year course, with long periods of teaching practice every year. Unfortunately, I always got to do teaching practice in a primary school and had no opportunity to teach French. However, during one of the summer breaks I attended a course in France for teachers of French as a foreign language. This was a most useful experience in every way. Besides, I also chose French as a topic for my dissertation.

When I graduated with a B.Ed. (Hons.) it felt like I had reached the sky!

Teacher education is a key factor bearing on teachers’ linguistic and pedagogical performance throughout their careers. Angela’s story raises a number of points in relation to the contribution that teacher education makes to school language policies and practices.

First of all, the extent to which student teachers follow a career path that matches their preferred choice is significant. Unfortunately, some teachers simply seem to fall into the profession by force of circumstance. This clearly affects their motivation, commitment, and professionalism. In Malta, for instance, there are significant variables

that give way to this, such as gender: (i) teaching is very attractive to females possibly because it runs parallel to their mothering role and the perceived “comfortable” school hours; and (ii) socioeconomic background: as a majority of teachers come from lower social strata and a teaching career is the family’s stepping stone to a higher social and educational forum (Camilleri Grima and Mallia, 2002). Furthermore, given that students are required to have lower entry qualifications to an education or an arts degree in comparison to other courses in, for example, medicine, this also means that lower qualified students choose the teaching profession for the simple reason that this is their only way to obtain a university qualification. As a result, the choice of teaching as a career is not always lived to the highest possible commitment.

The deployment of teachers has been difficult over the years. Within the state sector, which caters for about two thirds of students, there is a centralised system in place for employing teaching staff. State schools are not yet allowed to choose their own teaching staff, and from a centralised position, teacher deployment most often becomes an exercise in gap filling, rather than in providing the “right teacher for the right school”. In the past this has largely meant that teachers like Angela who had been trained to teach in a secondary school were placed in primary schools where the demand for teachers was much greater. Now we are experiencing the reverse of the problem: more teachers are graduating than are in fact needed. Even the best teachers can remain unemployed with the consequence that all their training, motivation and professionalism gained in the course of their studies and teaching practice seem to get lost.

Teacher education needs to change continuously in response to factors like research, new realities in schools, and the growth of ICT in education (Camilleri Grima and Fitzpatrick, 2003). The world that educators have to deal with is changing very fast and this has a direct bearing on teacher education. At present an intensive pre-service period is followed by very minor in-service provision. What are needed are much better links with practice and with practitioners, right from the beginning, and much stronger theoretical enquiry and substantial time for reflection on the job. Several developments in educational theory point to this need for change in teacher education, namely, the growing importance of portfolios, the application of theories related to reflection-in and on-action (Schön, 1983), learner autonomy and the idea of the teacher as a learner, the emphasis being placed on differentiated learning, and above all upon the rapidly changing social and cultural environment in schools. The *European Profile for Language Teacher Education* (Kelly et al., 2004) provides lists of items that could serve as guidelines for the improvement of teacher education, such as:

- a. structures, for example the integration of academic study with practice;
- b. knowledge and understanding, for example the development of a critical and enquiring approach to teaching and learning;
- c. strategies and skills, for example the adaptation of teaching approaches to the educational context and the needs of the learners;
- d. values, for example training in the diversity of languages and cultures.

Go! Practising teachers

Angela continues:

When I graduated I was happy indeed! I was employed as a primary school teacher in a town not too far away from home. I settled in quite quickly, although it took me a while to get used to the idea of parental 'interference' in teachers' work, and to the pressure for academic success imposed on 8 and 9 year olds. The pupils were streamed on the basis of examination grades and I taught the middle stream for four years in a row. My job was satisfying on the whole. I experimented with, and invented, teaching material. I taught the children to sing and to play. I tried hard to learn to listen to parents!

In the meantime I continued to pursue my interest in the French language. I enrolled for an M.Ed. course and again wrote my dissertation about the teaching of French in Malta.

After I graduated I asked to be transferred to a secondary school where I could teach French. In fact, during the following academic year I moved to the junior lyceum for girls where I am still teaching.

In the French Department we get on well together. We discuss the students' progress and the teaching materials; we prepare tests and exams as a team; and we share our resources and ideas. I attend in-service courses for teachers of French regularly, and recently I contributed to a national project on learner autonomy in the area of French pedagogy.

Staff meetings for the whole school are held regularly, and we are expected to participate in school development planning. Each of the teachers has been assigned to a group. I am part of the curriculum team. As a teacher of French I feel slightly marginalised since only Maltese and English have cross-curricular functions. However, I try to take an interest in the discussions, and I have also shared some games and software for language development with the Maltese and English teachers.

Outside my work timetable I have taken a keen interest in literature and enrolled in local and international poets' societies. Recently I won a foreign competition for a poem I wrote in English. I have just published my first book of poems in Maltese.

Some criticism is sometimes directed towards university teacher courses in that newly qualified teachers, once in full employment, start facing realities for which they were not prepared. These can range from a high workload that does not allow them to plan and to reflect about their teaching; examination pressure on learners and teachers; the demeaning attitude of colleagues especially towards new teachers; lack of appreciation for their work, and so on.

Furthermore, the teacher's relationship with parents is often questioned. Parental involvement in schools in Malta is largely reserved for fund-raising, and apart from a parents' day and an open day once a year, parents only come to school in relation to matters of discipline. Such links between parents and schools fall within the first two types of Leroy and Manning's (1992) five major types of parental involvement. In order to be more efficient, and have a healthier sense of community, the other three types of parental involvement are to be encouraged: parental assistance to teachers in

schools; parent-initiated activities at home in co-ordination with children's class work; and parental involvement in decision making for school improvement. Both parents and teachers would probably need to be "trained" for these kinds of collaborative initiatives. After all, "multicultural and environmental issues are wide-ranging and complex and can only be adequately addressed if parents and teachers work together" (Ramsey, 1998: 8).

While Angela was struggling with her daily classroom preoccupations, she kept her interest in French alive and enrolled in a part-time postgraduate course in education. In this way she was in a stronger position when she applied for a transfer to a secondary school. To tie in with her previous comment about teaching practice in a primary school, we could probably safely remark that it would have been much more beneficial both for her professional development, as well as for an improved provision of language education, had she been allowed to better synchronise her studies with her teaching, both as an undergraduate and as a postgraduate student. Reeves, Turner and Morris (2003) explain how in current UK policy, for instance, increased attention is being given to the use of continuing professional development as a mechanism for reforming and redefining the professionalism of teachers in the schools' sector.

Finally, as a teacher of French, Angela again faces both heartening and disheartening experiences. On the positive side she gets on well with a committed and active group of colleagues. Within the French Department all is well. However, when it comes to a whole school approach, as in preparing a school development plan, Angela faces some problems. While she tries her best to contribute as part of a team, she feels left out because French has no cross-curricular bearing. So far, within the existing institutional structures, there does not seem to be an opening for a diversified approach for language education, as is suggested, for instance in the guide (Beacco and Byram, 2003). French is perceived as a subject and has no role to play outside the fixed slots on the timetable. Furthermore, when teachers are required to participate in whole school planning and decision making with no guarantee that their ideas will be acted on, they feel manipulated (Court, 2003), with the result that they may lose heart and no longer participate enthusiastically.

Probably without realising it, Angela is partly making up for her feelings of marginalisation at school by looking for fulfilment elsewhere. She discovered her talent for poetry and has succeeded in finding a high degree of satisfaction through it. She has plenty to contribute as a teacher: but could it be that her abilities are meeting with some frustration on the school site due to an unfriendly institutional set-up? Carol Vincent (2000) finds that most teachers do not see themselves as particularly powerful individuals, even if their professional knowledge and their location within a school puts them in a "superior" position in relation to parents and other community members. It could be that part of the solution to this frustration lies in greater self-awareness on the part of teachers in terms of their leadership role in schools, in addition to better opportunities for involvement that will substantially and concretely improve their participation and contribution.

Conclusion

Over the last few years, the Maltese educational system has made some strides forward, and some decisions have been taken that can serve as stepping stones for further development. For instance, the national curriculum published in 1999 was a milestone in Maltese educational history. First of all it took shape following a long process of consultation on a national scale. Parents, teachers, teachers' organisations, experts and the general public were provided with opportunities to contribute to the process. As a document it treats many important and topical issues, such as inclusion, education for life, and the development of citizens in a democratic environment. Bilingualism and language education were among the most controversial topics discussed. This raised awareness in the country about language has, among other things, brought teachers together within and across schools to express their views and reflect upon the matter. Above all, the curriculum obliges schools to regularly update their school development plans. Now that a disposition for participation has been created, it needs to be adopted so that teachers' contributions can be felt beyond the classroom.

In summary, this chapter has highlighted the following:

- language pedagogy does not depend only on what the teacher does in the classroom; it is affected by the whole baggage that the teacher (and other significant players) carry with them from the past to the present, and from outside the school into the school;
- schools can capitalise upon the presence of students who speak other languages, and who have other cultures, as sources of learning for the whole school;
- there is a need for collaboration between institutions providing teacher education and deployment agencies so that the best use can be made of the teachers' competences;
- teacher education needs to continually respond to, and be proactive, in relation to changing school environments;
- teachers and parents require preparation for working together more closely and collaboratively;
- structures and procedures such as school development plans should engage teachers in reflecting and acting; and in feeling that they are making a valid and welcome contribution.

It is necessary to empower teachers. In order to make a positive contribution the teacher needs to reflect about where they have come from, and where they want to go. After becoming "aware" the teacher can then "engage" with other partners, take a "principled stand" with regard to linguistic diversity and "model" democratic values.

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Chapter 6

Summary and Dissemination

Antoinette Camilleri Grima

Summary

A number of themes run across the various school profiles presented here and in the CD-Rom, from which a number of lessons can be learned. They are summarised as follows:

1. The promotion of linguistic diversity is a question of whole-school development. As many partners (learners, teachers, parents, experts, administrators) as possible need to be involved and enthused by the aims and objectives concerned. In this way the school becomes a community within which everyone works towards a common goal.
2. There are many ways of promoting plurilingualism in school. The starting point, or trigger, could range from the revitalisation of a dying minority language, to the implementation of English, a powerful international language, as medium of instruction. The particular direction taken in any one context depends on a myriad of factors, such as the social, cultural and linguistic context, the desires of learners and their parents, the type and quality of school leadership, teacher preparation and enthusiasm, and community support. In the end, it is hoped, that whatever initial steps are taken, they will serve as a solid base for further development, and for the promotion of a more democratic and plurilingual environment.
3. A bottom-up approach is to be encouraged and in some contexts it seems to be essential for the long-term success of plurilingual education. All the case studies presented here show how it was actors in the field, such as head teachers and teachers, that instigated the change and who therefore had the enthusiasm to see it through successfully.
4. Implementing innovation in language education is a long-term process. In each of the case studies, the process has taken a number of years to gain in strength and continues to evolve and grow. One must not embark on a large project overnight, but must plan slowly, treading carefully and gaining the support of as many partners as possible.
5. The guide is a useful document for schools and it helps them understand better all the issues involved, as well as widen their horizons as to the possibilities for school

improvement in the areas of plurilingualism and plurilingual education. The guide needs to be made more accessible to schools.

The CD-Rom and dissemination

In order to encourage and support other schools who wish to embark on similar whole-school projects, more material is presented on the CD-Rom. The CD-Rom is divided into four sections. Section A is dedicated to the project workshop. It includes all the plenary presentations dealing with different items from the guide, the case studies of the team members and of the workshop (PowerPoint presentations). It also includes the bibliography. Section B includes an additional number of case studies that were developed apart from the workshop in the course of the whole project, and are written in the form of chapters. Section C includes the tools that are aimed at helping school leaders work their way through school profiling, policy making, staff development, material development and for taking up other initiatives favouring plurilingualism (see below). Section D presents the work generated in the post-workshop phase by two networks.

The tools

The tools presented on the CD-Rom can help schools reflect on their current attitudes towards and levels of plurilingualism. The item entitled “A summary of practices” provides an overview of what the workshop participants said was being done in their schools at the time. This could be used by the reader to answer the same five questions themselves and also to compare their answers with those provided by the international group of participants.

Furthermore, six tools were developed for use by schools:

a. A document entitled “Why develop a whole-school language policy?”

This is a blueprint to help interested parties to develop, write and implement a language policy for their school. A whole-school language policy enables a school to have a shared philosophy on all aspects of language education. This document identifies the “what” (aims and strategies) and the “how” (asking, doing reflecting) of developing a school language policy. It supports the process with ideas on how to draft, refine, disseminate, implement and monitor a new language policy for the school.

b. A blueprint on “How to create a school language profile”

This is a model for gathering data relevant to the development of a school language profile. Its aim is to draw attention to some details that might

otherwise be overlooked. At the same time it is intended to allow for comparison between schools. Having a school language profile is seen as an initial step to developing a whole-school language policy. This blueprint is divided into six sections: (A) general information; (B) student population; (C) teachers; (D) the curriculum; (E) language within the school; and (F) language background. Each section refers to the relevant issues explained in the guide. Furthermore, a number of appendices offer ideas about how to go about collecting language information about the school.

c. An outline plan of “Strategies for school development”

This document helps the reader identify and analyse facts relevant to the process of whole-school profiling and planning. Relevant issues include resources, risks, tasks, time frames and a consideration of the results expected to be achieved. While the case study prepared by Elisabeth Fleischmann illustrates this process in detail, the tool presented in the tools section of the CD-Rom can be used by anyone interested in seeking to develop their own strategies for school development.

d. “A road map for staff development”

Teachers are an important resource in creating a plurilingual and pluricultural environment. As already mentioned, staff development is also a necessary requirement. This tool lists a large number of ideas for staff development. These are divided into four categories. The “elementary” type of in-service training often does not cater for a whole-school approach or for an in-depth study of school-specific issues. However, these are the most common staff development activities and must not be overlooked or underestimated. “Research-based” activities are more sophisticated and call for a serious commitment on the part of teachers. “Hands-on” experiences need to be institutionalised to be successful as the teachers would need to act in a supportive environment. “Advanced” staff development initiatives are intended to bring about change in various ways. They require a collective effort and can be successful in schools where a strong sense of community is felt.

e. “A mind map for material development”

Material development is another area of relevance in plurilingual approaches. It touches upon important issues such as teacher preparation, the need for linguists to produce textbooks together with teachers, financial considerations, language planning (activities of elaboration and corpus development), translation and other problems. This document is an eye-opener to anyone who might think that introducing a new language to the school curriculum is a straightforward matter, especially when the language to be introduced is not used in education already.

f. A list of products and processes entitled “Lakes and rivers”

This is an encouraging list of ideas on how to implement plurilingual approaches starting with the more tangible and visual aids. “Lakes” are static and hereby denote end-products such as welcome signs, exhibitions and letters in different languages, especially in those languages represented in the school and spoken in the homes of pupils. “Rivers” are flowing, evolving, and include activities like special cultural and language evenings, adult education initiatives, exchanges and projects. There are many ideas to choose from in this section, and any school in any circumstance should be able to find a few relevant and interesting ideas.

Conclusion

This publication is a dissemination tool in itself and can be used by schools for a number of purposes. On the one hand, it makes some of the ideas, explanations and recommendations in the guide more easily accessible to the practitioner. By seeing how some of those recommendations are being put into practice in schools, it is hoped that more and more schools will be encouraged to follow suit. This will serve the aim of “inspiring” others. On the other hand, there is some original material, the tools in particular, that can be used according to the particular needs of schools. These should serve a more “practical” purpose, that of providing outlines, guidelines and ideas to try out. This work is mainly intended for use by head teachers, teachers and school councils as a springboard for action in their own schools. The reader is invited to skim and scan all the material, to be inspired by it and to share it with many others.

Contributors

Antoinette Camilleri Grima studied at the University of Edinburgh where she graduated with an M.Sc. in Applied Linguistics and a Ph.D. on bilingual education. She has published several articles and books amongst which are: *Bilingualism in Education. The Maltese Experience* (1995), and the edited volume *Transcending Monolingualism* (2003, with Leena Huss and Kendall King). At the University of Malta, her teaching, research and publications include work on intercultural competence, learner autonomy, and language pedagogy. She has lead two teams that have produced attainment targets for Maltese as a first language at primary and secondary school levels, and has authored books and produced distance learning courses for the teaching of Maltese as a foreign language. At the ECML she has acted as a team member in the areas of intercultural competence and learner autonomy, and has also co-ordinated a number of projects on syllabus design and bilingual education. Some of this work is available in the form of Council of Europe/ECML publications.

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ENSEMBLE

Promoting linguistic diversity and whole-school development

Promoting linguistic diversity and whole-school development

Edited by Antoinette Camilleri Grima

The Council of Europe stresses the importance of societal multilingualism and of individual plurilingual competence as means to social cohesion. Why this is important and how it can be achieved are explained in the Language Policy Division document “Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe”. Ultimately, it is within the school, at the chalk face, that the necessary innovations need to take place. The case studies presented in this publication are an authentic illustration of how this is being realised in different contexts; and what successes and challenges it presents.

By bringing these innovative language education programmes and school profiles to the fore, we are participating in the creation of a new paradigm of school leadership whereby pupils, parents and the local community, instead of being excluded, controlled and forgotten become actively involved in language endeavours. Similarly, teachers can move on from being simply the executors of education programmes to becoming participants in drawing up, implementing and evaluating school policies. This work is intended to stimulate thought and to serve as a springboard for more schools to take up the European quest of building communities that are ever more inclusive, meaningful and democratic.

The Council of Europe has 47 member states, covering virtually the entire continent of Europe. It seeks to develop common democratic and legal principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals. Ever since it was founded in 1949, in the aftermath of the second world war, the Council of Europe has symbolised reconciliation.



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