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Submitted by Michel Candelier

The introduction of language awareness into the curriculum Janua Linguarum – The Gateway of Languages

Project 1.2.1

<i>Co-ordinator</i>	<i>Michel CANDELIER, University of Maine, France</i>
<i>Co-animators</i>	<i>Mercè BERNAUS, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain</i> <i>Ingelore OOMEN-WELKE, Pädagogische Hochschule, Freiburg, Germany</i> <i>Christiane PERREGAUX, University of Geneva, Switzerland</i> <i>Janina ZIELINSKA, University of Warsaw, Poland</i>
<i>Network representatives</i>	<i>MARTINE Kervran, IUFM d'Orléans-Tours, France</i> <i>Anna MURKOWSKA et Magdalena SZPOTOWICZ, University of Warsaw, Poland</i> <i>Artur NOGUEROL, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain</i>

Completed stages

Two meetings with all the partners took place in Graz in 2002: the first 8-10 March, and the second 13-14 September 2002.

A three month fellowship in Graz (from October to December) was allocated to a student of didactics ("maîtrise" French as a Foreign Language) bilingual French-English. This person is in charge of updating and diversifying the content of the project website as well as the translation (mainly from French into English) of articles, reports and didactic documents.

During 2002, the partners have successfully carried out the following tasks:

- continuation of the diffusion of the approach, mainly in educational circles: more than 60 presentations in public seminars and symposiums, writing and diffusion of articles in specialized journals (approximately 25), and sometimes in the popular press. It should be stressed that this diffusion was extended outside the boundaries of the countries already involved (productive contacts with the Minister of basic education of the Belgium French-speaking community), or in some parts of the remote European territory: French-speaking Guyana;

- production of 90 teaching materials, essentially for primary education. In part, it is a matter of adapting the existing teaching materials to the various national contexts (especially stemming from the Evlang programme). However, many materials are completely new productions (about sixty, that is to say the 2/3 of the productions);
- organisation of training sessions / consciousness-raising of teachers: more than 130 sessions, pre- and in-service training, involving more than 1,100 teachers or future teachers;
- implementation of activities in the classrooms, mainly at primary school level (approximately 870 classes, that is to say more than 23,500 pupils), for a duration ranging from a few sessions to several months. It should be stressed that 600 of these classes (that is to say 17,250 pupils) are in Greece where the experimentation is an official project of the Ministry;
- production and validation of evaluation tools intended for the compared observation of the insertion conditions of the approach in the sixteen European participating countries (4 new original tool sets: teacher diary, classroom observation, teacher questionnaire/interview, parents questionnaire/interview) and adaptation of these tools to the various contexts;
- use of the tools during an “experimental wave” of three months (October-December) with the teachers (about 700 teachers for the “diary”, and about a hundred for the questionnaire or interview), with 900 parents and with about sixty classes (for the observation). (NB: this wave replaced another one initially planned from January to June, which had to be postponed because of a delay taken in the creation of some of the complicated tools);
- use of a tool developed in 2001, intended for the gathering of pupils’ initial representations: gathering done with approximately 19,000 pupils (17,000 of which, in Greece), completed by a gathering of final representation with 7,000 pupils (6,000 of which , in Greece);
- definitive concept of the project’s publication related to the assessment of the programme (published by the ECML in August 2003);
- contacts with the authorities in charge of education, in order to gain recognition of the approach and the activities: language awareness is now part of the Portuguese and Finish school curricula. The discovery of languages spoken on the national territory is now part of the French curricula. In Greece, the Ja-Ling experimentation is implemented by the Ministry’s Institute for pedagogical research;

Reminder: a complementary financing was obtained within the scope of Comenius (European Union), which involves eleven partners. The working plans of the new Ja-Ling-Comenius programme and the Graz network were harmonised so that there would be a unique integrated working plan for the two projects.

Midway Results

The products currently available are the following:

- approximately 150 teaching materials and five evaluation tools sets, in various languages (produced during the first two years);
- the website based on the ECML server (<http://jaling.ecml.at/>):

New articles (especially in English), evaluation tools as well as teaching materials available for everyone (one material per participating country, in the original language, and a presentation of the other materials with an invitation to ask for them to the authors – part of the site under way) have been put on the website. The assessment of the Evlang programme (leading up to the Ja-Ling programme) can also be found on this website.

- The website of the French team (<http://www.jaling.fr.st>) already set up in 2001, continually updated and offering teaching activities. The Catalan website is now in service. It offers teaching activities which can be downloaded (<http://dewey.uab.es/jaling/>).

Co-ordinator's evaluation

Teething problems associated with the approach, and revealed as a problem by the 2001 report, continue of course to slow down the involvement of some educational authorities in an active support to the project. Nevertheless, there is a real improvement.

The Comenius-Ja-Ling programme now enables activities to be financed for the partners who went on to become members. However, the money arrived relatively late to some teams, and the year was therefore disturbed by the lack of means.

Initial problems encountered in Hungary due to an inadequate partnership have since been solved thanks to the trust that was given by the ECML. We now have two very motivated new partners, who managed to adapt well to the general calendar.

It is unfortunate that the various delays, essentially due to the complexity of the produced tools, shortened the evaluation period for the majority of the dimensions to be studied. Nevertheless, it seems that the quality of the work will in fact not be affected.

Recommendations

As for the previous year, the members of the network are pleased with the support given by the ECML, and they have no particular recommendation to make.

Brief survey of the next stages

The data collected in the evaluation framework will be gathered in January 2003 (during a meeting financed by the Comenius fund) and analysed before March 2003 (people in charge of each domain have been designated). The data will be discussed during a meeting of the network's steering group with their integration in the publication in mind (that will be 150 pages long). The meeting will take place from March 13th to 15th in Graz. This meeting will also allow the preparation of the project diffusion workshop, which will take place in Graz, April 24th to 26th.

The publication's manuscript will be given to the ECML for the first of May. In the publication, there will be a description of the specificities of the various contexts in which the Ja-Ling experiment took place, as well as the attained results relative to the integration of the approach in the curricula: language awareness and existing programmes, effect of the context on the insertion possibilities, appropriation of the approach by teachers. A part will be dedicated to the study of pupils' representations and initial attitudes towards languages, and another one will present some aspects relative to parents' attitudes towards the approach. The impact of the approach on the linguistic policies of various countries will be exposed, and an appendix will offer extracts of the teaching materials. Other materials will be presented *in extenso* in a CD-Rom that will come with the book.

The Janua Linguarum programme will continue until September 2004 within the scope of the Comenius programme. To this effect, the experimentation devoted to the evaluation will continue for a complementary wave until June 2003.