

## Report

### Workshop No. 1/2000

#### Project 1.2.1:

### **The introduction of language awareness into the curriculum**

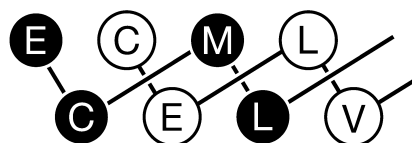
(Graz, Austria 29 February - 4 March 2000)

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## 1. Why launch a programme to introduce language awareness into the curriculum?

First of all, what do we mean by “language awareness”?

We mean an approach which brings every pupil into contact with a broad range of different-status languages, and links discovery activities with them. The aim is to give pupils a positive attitude to language diversity (including minority, immigrant and regional languages) and help them to develop metalinguistic skills which they can then apply to language learning (at school and outside).

This approach, in which schools assign an educational function to languages they do not teach, is not really new. It was first advocated in Great Britain in the 1980s<sup>1</sup> and has since, sometimes with adjustments and under different names (*éveil / ouverture aux langues / au(x) langage(s)*, *language awareness*, *Sprachaufmerksamkeit*), been the subject of experimental schemes on various scales, mainly in primary schools. This applies particularly to Switzerland<sup>2</sup> (the EOLE programme), Germany<sup>3</sup> (also in connection with the European Union Comenius programmes) and France<sup>4</sup>. Since 1997, the EVLANG programme, supported by Socrates/Lingua, has brought together schools in five European countries. Some five hundred classes are involved, and the aim is to assess the skills acquired by pupils after a one-year or eighteen-month course<sup>5</sup>.

Advocates of these schemes all make the same point at starting: various processes, such as migration, globalisation and European integration, are making our societies increasingly multilingual and multicultural. This is a real challenge for schools, which are expected, not only to develop their pupils' language abilities, but also to give them positive attitudes to otherness and difference, and teach them to cope with diversity.

In spite of some recent positive developments, these pioneers also agree that current approaches to language teaching do not allow schools to do these things effectively, although many pupils - because of their wide-ranging origins - experience diversity as soon as they start school.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Eric Hawkins. *Awareness of language: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press (1984).

<sup>2</sup> See, inter alia: Jean-François De Pietro (ed.), *Ouverture aux langues: concepts, expériences, idées didactiques*. (issue no.2/99 of the journal *Babylonia*); Christiane Perregaux, *Esquisse d'un nouveau monde*, in Jacqueline Billiez (ed.), *De la didactique des langues à la didactique du plurilinguisme, Hommage à Louise Dabène*, Grenoble: CDL-Lidilem (1998), pp. 291-299.

<sup>3</sup> See for example Ingelore Oomen-Welke, “...ich kann da nix!” - *Mehr Zutrauen im Deutschunterricht*. Freiburg (1998).

<sup>4</sup> See Louise Dabène, *L'éveil au langage, itinéraire et problématique*, in *L'Eveil au langage*, Notions en Questions ENS ST Cloud - LIDILEM (1995).

<sup>5</sup> See Michel Candelier, *L'éveil aux langues à l'école primaire, le programme européen EVLANG*, in Jacqueline Billiez (Ed.), *De la didactique des langues à la didactique du plurilinguisme, Hommage à Louise Dabène*, Grenoble: CDL-Lidilem (1998), pp. 299-308.

They feel that the multilingual approach, which they recommend and practise, helps to prepare children better for life in linguistically and culturally diverse communities. The aim is to take diversity of languages, including languages represented in the classroom and normally ignored or even concealed, as a datum and work on it. Language diversity becomes the focus of learning activities which help pupils to develop the skills we mentioned earlier.

At this stage in its development, they felt the time had come to publicise this approach more widely and try to give language awareness a bigger place in the curriculum (hence the project's provisional title: DifCurEv), from kindergarten to the end of secondary education. In principle, all the traditional school subjects are covered, though a special effort is made to generate synergies between language learning activities, in the hope that this will increase their effectiveness and diversity.

## 2. Aims of the programme over the next three years

The programme of activities for 2000-2002 proposed by the ECML in 1999 seemed to provide an adequate basis for devising schemes along these lines. Once the DifCurEv project had been approved by the ECML officials, and its implementation discussed, its aims (the **results expected**, when it was completed in 2002) were defined as follows (extract from the document introducing the workshop circulated by the ECML in January 2000):

- a. tested and validated **curricular plans** for introduction of the “language awareness” approach in certain areas of education, from kindergarten to the end of secondary school<sup>6</sup>;
- b. **teaching resources** (teaching and learning materials), for use in implementing these plans, and developing and adjusting them later;
- c. **knowledge** of ways (learning processes, teaching activities) in which the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired by learners through language awareness activities can be put to use in general language courses;
- d. 2-3 **booklets** and a **multimedia** product, for use in disseminating the curricular plans and knowledge referred to under a) and c);
- e. **development of know-how** by teachers, education officers and researchers taking part in the project, to serve as a basis for wider dissemination and subsequent extension of the project.

The workshop held in Graz from 29 February to 4 March 2000, covered by this report, was the first stage in the process leading to these results.

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<sup>6</sup> At the workshop, it was decided to include the beginning of university studies.

### 3. Aims of the workshop

The workshop's two main aims, set out in the specification, were: to present the "language awareness" approach and launch the DifCurEv project (discussion of objectives and division of participants into networks).

These aims were embodied in a programme<sup>7</sup>, the main points of which were set out as follows by the co-ordinator on the first morning (29 February):

1. Group work was to alternate with sessions of a more theoretical nature, at which past schemes would be described, or specific aspects of the recommended approach be put forward for reflection and discussion: "the objectives of language awareness in terms of skills", "language awareness and language learning strategies", "language awareness and education for citizenship", "language awareness and the curriculum";

2. The following sequence was adopted:

- all day Tuesday and Wednesday morning: introduction to methods and materials used in the language awareness approach, and also a few first principles (in presentation form: "Using the languages existing in the classroom", "Motivation and attitudes", etc.);
- Wednesday afternoon: work in small groups on the usability, in specific national contexts, of existing teaching materials (for what particular objectives, at what level, with what alterations, etc.);
- Thursday morning: complementary presentations, aimed at intensifying discussion of the aims of the approach and putting it in a more general language teaching/learning context, while helping to structure things already learned by the participants;
- Friday: after an introductory talk on prospects for introducing DifCurEv-type activities into the curriculum, (group) planning of projects on the basis of official programmes and curricula and the perceived aims of the approach; setting-up of networks and devising of work plans for each (aims, partners, timetable);
- Saturday: discussion of work plans and organisation of future work; evaluation of workshop.

Participants were invited to contribute on various aspects of the approach, if they wished to do so, and were asked to suggest names for the project which would de-emphasise "awareness" (i.e. first-step) activities.

The overall purpose of the workshop, as presented to participants, was thus to give them information on a new approach and then devise projects on this basis. Some feared that the project phase might prove difficult, and the programme was accordingly adjusted on Friday

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<sup>7</sup> The programme actually followed, which differs only slightly from that sent to the participants beforehand, is appended.

afternoon, the (main) aim being to “refocus” the projects which each network and participant was expected to launch. As we shall see later, the experimental and methodological modesty of these projects, and the narrow range of their target groups, were emphasised.

To be able, in the fifth part of this report, to evaluate the workshop’s success in achieving its aims, we now need to summarise the work done. The various types of activities (presentations, group work, plenary discussions, etc.) might have been described separately, but it seemed far better to take them “as they came”, highlighting the various stages on the path. We shall not observe a strict chronological order, but shall try to show the logic of the group’s forward movement, with its pauses, hesitations and breakthroughs.

## **4. The workshop**

### **4.1 Initial contact**

Once the workshop had been opened, and the organising team introduced, a first **monitoring questionnaire** was circulated to the participants. This was the first of three, and the reason for them was the following:

Since the aim was to introduce a mixed international group to an approach which is still new to most people, keeping track of participants’ thoughts, expectations and reactions was - far more than with any other training activity - an essential part of the workshop’s method. The only way of getting reactions from everyone, even those who said little in public, was to look for answers in writing, encouraging people to speak out and say exactly what they thought. Originally, the organisers had intended to ask for reactions at the beginning and end of the workshop, and once along the way, but a second way-stage review proved necessary on the Friday evening.

The first questionnaire (Appendix IIIa) asked participants why they were at the workshop, what they expected from it, and how they thought they could contribute to it.

The answers - presented to the group by Ingelore Oomen-Welke on the afternoon of the same day (Tuesday) - showed how widely expectations differed. Most wanted to learn a better way of teaching modern languages, some were interested in European co-operation in their field, and others were anxious to share their expertise with others. The organising team tried to take account of these wishes when it set out to establish what the workshop was - and was not - attempting to do. Personal experiences were always welcome, however, and every effort was made to allow the participants to present them during the workshop.

Completion of the first questionnaire was followed by a **getting-to-know-you** exercise. This is an unavoidable part of any programme and, to make it livelier, it was divided into two stages (devised and organised by Janina Zielińska). The first took the form of a cocktail party (during the coffee-break), during which each participant was asked to put questions to two strangers. Afterwards, at the plenary session, everyone introduced the people they had talked to.



The general co-ordinator, Michel Candelier, then described the **workshop's objectives**. His presentation largely corresponds to what was said in sections 1, 2 and 3 of this report, and so will not be reproduced here.

#### **4.2 Introduction to procedures and materials relating to language awareness**

Tuesday morning ended with a group activity (one French-speaking, three English-speaking groups), in which the participants **experienced a "language awareness" situation** (devised by Ingelore Oomen-Welke) **"from the inside"**. They were told to introduce themselves to one another and then ask "Do you like Graz?" in their own language [see list of questions in Appendix IIa]. The questions were then written out, in each of the languages used, on a strip of paper and displayed on the wall. Without prompting, the participants then started trying to guess (and/or explain to one another) the words and grammatical forms used in each language. They enjoyed showing others this previously hidden side of themselves, found the other languages interesting, and became aware of the various ways in which the same message could be expressed. This gave them an idea of how schoolchildren feel when asked to perform this kind of activity in the classroom.

**Discussion of the "Do you like Graz?" activity** early that afternoon obviously focused on new features which participants had noted in unfamiliar languages, but it also sparked a first fruitful exchange on the frequency of multilingual situations in the classroom, the usefulness of this approach in cases where one language is looked down on, and potential effects on immigrant children. Leaving aside one or two comments which were more concerned with language learning, the discussion showed that the main point of the approach - raising awareness of diversity - had been generally grasped.

The participants were reminded of the image of themselves which their **replies to the first questionnaire** (see above) had projected, and were then divided into three groups, taking it in turn to attend three **workshops**, at which **teaching materials** used with schoolchildren in language awareness activities were presented:

- a. **Ingelore Oomen-Welke** described activities based on pupils' first and family names [cf. Appendix IIb). Names can be the starting point of many intercultural and language comparison activities. Phonetically, names in one language can resemble words in another. The original meaning of some names is still perceptible and children enjoy explaining this to classmates who do not know their language.
- b. **Martine Kervran** (a French participant and member of the current EVLANG team) presented extracts from "*Little Red Riding Hood*" (a teaching aid produced by the EVLANG Team, Paris V), with covers in some ten languages, and showed how this kind of material could be used to raise cultural issues.
- c. **Mercedes Bernaus and Christiane Perregaux** presented "Globe Trotters" (an activity devised by the EVLANG team in Barcelona).

### 4.3 Introduction to/explanation of a few basic principles

On Wednesday morning, two presentations clarified certain aspects of the procedures and materials covered by the workshop:

**Ingelore Oomen-Welke:**  
**“Use the languages in the classroom”**

[For full text, see Appendix Ia]

Outline of content:

Europe and its schools are multilingual. Languages play a vital role in constructing identity, and this makes it important to increase the prestige of the languages of bilingual children and broaden the limited linguistic horizons of monolingual children. This project aims to find ways of making awareness of one’s own and other languages part of a process which gives children a better knowledge and understanding of language and languages. It suggests ways of overcoming teachers’ fear of losing control if they allow children to use languages they do not speak themselves. This fear blinds them to the role which pupils’ native languages can play in language learning. They should see their pupils as language experts, with useful contributions to make.

There are seven suggestions for teachers. These are backed with examples taken from the classroom, and extracts from class discussions and interviews with teachers. The suggestions are: don’t be afraid of foreign languages; recognise (pupils’) language awareness; listen to children’s suggestions; bring in other languages; compare languages and texts; compare everyday expressions; make use of children’s intellectual curiosity concerning language and languages.

The results of this approach are discussed, including strictly educational aspects (active pupil participation, teacher’s role, etc.).

**Mercedes Bernaus:**  
**“The role of attitudes and motivation in the introduction of language awareness into the curriculum”**

[For full text, see Appendix Ib].

Outline of content:

Lambert and Gardner have shown the importance of the emotional element in language learning. This is why influencing attitudes to languages and their speakers in a positive sense is important when language awareness is being introduced into the curriculum. Motivation, too, can be important when the aim is to make learners aware of the multilingual and multicultural aspects of our societies.

Various definitions and theories of “motivation” and “attitude” are then given, and Gardner’s “socio-educational model” (1985) is specially emphasised.

Gardner's tests have provided some of the ingredients of the tests used for evaluation of the EVLANG programme. The data collected on pupils' motivation and attitudes in the initial test are then outlined.

(NB. The second part of the presentation took place on Thursday morning).

#### **4.4 Applicability of the approach in specific contexts - discussion**

This discussion started on Wednesday morning with a **review of the workshops at which methods and materials had been presented** (held late on Tuesday afternoon). The animators asked the participants whether the approach could be used for young learners in their own countries, and what the levels, aims and obstacles would be [Appendix IIc].

The discussion showed that the participants thought the approach actually or potentially suitable for various categories of learner (from young schoolchildren to teachers in training), and were becoming more aware of its value in the intercultural field. Various obstacles, both political (the rise of nationalism and contempt for minorities) and practical (the need to prepare materials and find room in curricula and timetables) were mentioned. The participants suggested some solutions to these problems - setting up small-scale experimental projects to start with and aiming at cross-disciplinary integration later.

The next stage, late on Wednesday morning, was **free examination of teaching materials**. The participants were given forms [Appendix IId], on which they could note the main features of the materials examined, and again enter personal comments on their suitability for use with pupils in their own countries.

This was an essentially personal activity, and results were not pooled.

#### **4.5 Introduction to, and explanation of, problems relating to the production of language awareness teaching materials**

When the workshop was being planned, the group sessions on Wednesday afternoon were originally seen as offering a further opportunity for collective discussion of ways in which the methods and materials presented could be used. At the end of the first day, the progress already made by the participants suggested that they might well find this topic (applicability again) and approach (based on existing items) too limiting. The aims of the group activity were accordingly redefined as follows:

To work out together the main features of teaching materials (new or adapted from existing materials) which would be equally suitable for a certain category of learner in all the participants' countries, at a school level and for a purpose agreed by all of them. Through this activity:

- to become aware of the various stages in devising language awareness materials and the conditions which must be satisfied in doing this;
- to prepare groupings (possibly provisional) with a view to the networking activities scheduled for Friday and Saturday.

In the end, therefore, the group activities focused on a **project for the production of teaching materials**.

On the basis of proposals made by the participants at the plenary session late on Wednesday morning, five groups were set up and spent the afternoon on this.

When the groups came together at the end of the afternoon, it turned out that the progress they had made (and, of course, the topics they had chosen) varied greatly. One had focused on principles governing use of the approach in teacher training. The others had really got down to devising materials on the following themes: comparing colours, meals, birthdays, the face, and inviting a foreigner to one's home. Appendix IIe contains the material produced by the group which worked on the face.

#### **4.6 The aims of language awareness - fuller discussion**

Michel Candelier started by systematically describing the aims of language awareness, which he divided into two categories: developing language learning skills, and developing the ability to live in a multilingual and multicultural society. Each of these aspects was then dealt with more fully in a further presentation: Janina Zielińska made a connection between the language learning aims of language awareness activities and learning strategies, while Michel Candelier highlighted links between the ability to live in a multilingual and multicultural society and the Council of Europe's ideas on democratic citizenship.

##### **Michel Candelier:** **"The aims of language awareness"**

[For full text, see Appendix Ic].

##### **Outline of content:**

The theoretical and definitional framework for the work at present being done on the aims and objectives of language awareness under the EVLANG programme is that of goal-centred teaching, supplemented by more recent work in the educational sciences. The concept of "skills" is taken from Perrenoud.

A reference table of objectives is currently being worked out within the EVLANG programme. Mr Candelier tries to show how some of these objectives help learners to acquire two basic skills - *the ability to live in a multilingual and multicultural society* and *the ability to learn languages*.

He lists and discusses *aptitudes, attitudes* and *knowledge* relating to each of these skills, targeted by EVLANG materials already in classroom use.

**Janina Zielińska:**

**“Language awareness as a factor in the development of modern language learning strategies”**

[For full text, see Appendix Id]

Outline of content:

There are many definitions and typologies of language learning strategies. One of the most sophisticated typologies (Oxford, 1990) divides them into *direct* strategies (*mnemonic, cognitive and compensatory*) and *indirect* strategies (*metacognitive, affective and social*).

In a table, these sub-types of strategy are matched with some of the EVLANG objectives, clearly showing the links between them.

An activity based on EVLANG material (*Little Red Riding Hood*) is used to show how pupils are prompted to apply a whole range of strategies in performing the tasks assigned to them.

Teachers who want to help pupils to become more autonomous when learning languages must respect certain principles and pass through certain stages, which are also outlined.

The concept of *plurilingual and pluricultural competence*, which is used in the Council of Europe’s *Common European Framework of Reference*, is compared with language awareness.

**Michel Candelier:**

**“Language awareness and language policies: constructing ‘Democratic citizenship’”**

[For full text, see Appendix Ie]

Outline of content:

The Council of Europe’s “Modern Languages Project Group” is trying to connect modern language teaching with education for democratic citizenship. Seen in this light, “modern languages” can no longer mean “foreign languages” only.

On the basis of Audigier’s attempt (in a Council of Europe publication) to define the key abilities needed for full exercise of democratic citizenship, and decide what schools must do

to foster them, one can identify the potential contributions of language teaching in general and a language awareness-type approach in particular.

This is done in respect of such abilities as: *knowledge of current affairs, the ability to participate in public debate, and positive acceptance of differences and diversity.*

In these three cases, the “added value” of language awareness is clearly apparent.

#### **4.7 First way-stage review of progress**

By late Thursday morning, the first stage of the workshop, essentially aimed at information gathering and discussion, could be considered over. The time had come to take stock of what had already been learnt. A **second questionnaire** was accordingly distributed to the participants, containing the following question:

*“Quel a été mon gain d’expertise? / What expertise did I gain?”*

Appendix IIIb details the replies. The plus-points most frequently mentioned were motivation for the project, the impact made by the cross/multi-disciplinary nature of the approach, and - as often at such meetings - the interest aroused, over and above the workshop’s own subject, in comparing notes with experts from other countries.

These replies seemed encouraging, both for the approach and for the organising team.

#### **4.8 Introduction into the curriculum**

Late on Thursday morning - before the half-day break - a few minutes were spent reminding participants of the aims of the second part of the workshop, and specifically explaining the concept of “introduction into the curriculum”.

Using two intersecting lines, horizontal and vertical [Appendix IIIe], Michel Candelier explained that the whole aim of bringing the new approach into the curriculum was to **pursue its objectives in all school grades (vertical axis) and across the whole range of subjects (horizontal axis)**, from pre-school right through to the first year of university. In their group work on Friday and Saturday, the participants would not be expected to devise a continuous curriculum, but to focus on one area in the space formed by the two axes and devise an educational activity for that area.

Christiane Perregaux’s presentation on Friday morning returned to the question of introducing the new approach into the curriculum and showed how this might work in practice.

**Christiane Perregaux:**  
**“Multilingualism and the curriculum”**

[For full text, see Appendix If]

Outline of content:

This presentation is based on experience gained from work at present being done for the French-Speaking Swiss Committee on Teaching Methods (COROME). It tackles the curriculum from three angles: 1) the importance of socio-linguistic analysis of the site; 2) connecting the official school curriculum with language awareness approaches; 3) areas to be covered (based on the six “classic” areas pinpointed by Hawkins in 1987).

A table is given, showing a proposed language awareness curriculum, based on the official school curriculum of French-speaking Switzerland. It covers the period from kindergarten up to the ninth year of compulsory schooling.

#### **4.9 Preparing curricular projects and establishing networks**

**Five groups** worked on this and produced projects during the second half of the Friday morning session.

Two of the projects had to be dropped later. One concerned a “portfolio” for five to eight year-olds, tracing their various experiences of language, and the other was a teacher training project on language awareness for the Language University of Moscow. The first was insufficiently focused on language awareness, while the second would have involved only one person.

The three other projects were taken up again by the Saturday working groups (thus giving rise to “group action plans”, i.e. networks - see below). They were:

- a **project for schoolchildren between the ages of 6/7 and 10**, which set out to bring the approach into a broad range of subjects (languages, natural sciences, music, art, etc.);
- a **project for schoolchildren 8 or 9 years old**, which also adopted a cross-disciplinary approach, but connected with the basic and in-service training of (general subject) teachers, with a view to devising and implementing launch activities;
- a **project for secondary school pupils** (14-16 years-old), based on a comparison of the languages of young people in different countries.

(The organisers had assumed that this work would refer closely to official school curricula. In the event, this was not generally possible, since only ten or so participants had brought along the necessary official documents).

When the projects were discussed in plenary session and the three-year timetable set for the programme was considered (cf. introductory document on the workshop, sent to participants

and posted on the ECML website), the participants had **serious doubts concerning the feasibility of the work** they were expected to do in their own countries.

The ECML's programme co-ordinator, **Joseph Huber**, reminded them of the Centre's expectations and offered **advice on organising projects** and planning their implementation (suitability to context and abilities of partners, clear definition of roles and stages, measures to ensure that communication between partners is maintained, etc.).

The workshop co-ordinator tried **to explain more clearly exactly what was expected** of the networks in terms of:

- **scale of projects** (a small part of the curriculum, implementation in a few classes only);
- **expertise needed** (the product of co-operation between people with various skills, since no one person can, or should, have all the skills required);
- **timetable** (the aim was merely to prepare the project by June 2000, ensuring that the foundations needed for its implementation were laid).

#### **4.10 Second way-stage re view - "hopes and fears"**

After a comprehensive plenary discussion, in which all the participants described (often with some feeling) the problems they expected to meet in their own countries, it was generally felt that hopes and fears might usefully be put in writing. It was accordingly decided that way-stage comments would again be invited, although the original plan had been to do this only once. The intention was to review these comments the following day, allowing the participants to proceed on more solid ground.

It was not surprising that this became necessary at this point, since the group work had shown the participants exactly what they would be expected to do later in their own countries.

Appendix IIIc details the hopes and fears they expressed. Most of the fears concerned practical problems (lack of time, resources, or even experience in running projects of this kind, teacher involvement, etc.), but individual abilities in this area and steps to validate the scheme were also sources of anxiety. More unexpected were comments on the top-down aspect of the project, which some participants saw as imposed and were therefore slow to accept. It was felt, however, that this problem could be worked on, and many participants trusted teachers' - and their own - ability to adapt to the project's requirements. There was a strong feeling that support would be needed, and a number of possible sources, including members of the steering group and various associations, were identified.

General discussion of the comments next morning gave the whole group a chance to tackle individual anxieties together, and the work then proceeded in a far more relaxed and confident atmosphere.



#### 4.11 Preparation of action plans for networks - setting up networks

Appendix IVa contains the presentation chart for **network action plans** (“Action Plan for Groups”), which each of the four groups set up on Saturday morning was given. Beforehand, the internal and external structure of the networks had also been explained (cf. general description of networks in Appendix VIb).

Of the four networks (referred to hereinafter as networks I, II, III and IV, in accordance with the scheme outlined in Appendix VIb)<sup>8</sup>, two are concerned with projects for primary school children, one with secondary schools, and one with the training of primary school teachers. In all cases, aims embody aspects relating to both attitudes and skills: positive attitudes to / interest in / curiosity concerning languages and cultures (with, for some groups, a special emphasis on wanting to learn languages and/or acceptance of speakers), listening skills, understanding of language phenomena (particularly via a comparative approach covering several languages), cognitive strategies useful in language learning, certain types of knowledge underlying these skills, and knowledge of the diversity of the world’s languages<sup>9</sup>. Some additional objectives will have to be worked out to suit national contexts. A broad range of school subjects will be involved in all cases. Two groups selected existing teaching materials (presented at the workshop) as a starting point, another decided that it would adapt the materials presented, and the last (the group proposing to launch a secondary school project on the language of young people) will probably devise its own materials from scratch.

Dovetailing the approach with official national curricula was generally seen as a task for each participant after the workshop. Three groups decided that one to three classes per country would be involved in the experiment, and the fourth was to take a final decision on this in June.

A **standard form for the presentation of action plans in individual countries** was also drawn up and sent to the participants just after the workshop [cf. Appendix IVc]. This uses the headings of the Action Plan for Groups, adding sections for the organisational work completed or planned in the country concerned. Each network member was asked to complete the form once by 30 April (and send it to the network animator), and again for the network meetings in June (reflecting progress made by that date).

The network meeting was scheduled for 29 June-2 July. On the basis of the national reports submitted at the end of April, the network animators were to prepare a progress report on network activities by 15 May.

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<sup>8</sup> Appendix IVb also contains a typical working group report - that of the network I group.

<sup>9</sup> Group III set its objectives with direct reference to the lists provided at Thursday morning’s presentation on objectives.

#### **4.12 Themes discussed at the participants' suggestion**

A number of themes were presented by the participants (orally or in writing) or raised specifically at their request.

The participants' presentations (given on Thursday) centred on personal experiences relating to language awareness (Marie Fenclova, Czech Republic, Filomena Martins, Portugal) or provided information on specific aspects of language teaching (Roumania Ivanova, Bulgaria: "Language learning in Bulgarian schools"; Anna Murkowska, Poland: "Grammar as choice").

The role which the language awareness approach might play in the education of Roma/Gypsy children was discussed on Saturday afternoon.

#### **4.13 Final assessment**

Two assessment questionnaires were completed by the participants at the end of the workshop:

- a brief, four-point questionnaire, forming the last part of the monitoring process arranged by the organising team [see Appendix III d for questionnaire and answers];
- the "usual" ECML questionnaire, the results of which are set out in Appendix III e.

The main results of this assessment are discussed in the next section.

### **5. Intentions and achievements: outline assessment**

As was seen in Section 3, the workshop set out to do two things - introduce an approach (language awareness) and launch a project (i.e. set the participants to work in networks).

To help us to gauge, as objectively as possible, the extent to which these aims were realised, we can look at what was actually done, and at what the participants thought of it.

The networks were established and, although their programmes were not completely decided, their aims were all the more realistic for being really set only when some considerable doubts had been overcome (on Friday afternoon). This does not mean that each and every one of the promised participants will genuinely get to work, but the networks seem solid enough to survive a few future defections.

The existence of the networks - and the texts produced at the various group sessions - show how well the participants assimilated the approach.

The participants' overall satisfaction level is also very respectable, since 13 of the 22 who completed the ECML questionnaire were satisfied or very satisfied, and seven were reasonably satisfied. Their verdict as to whether the workshop matched their needs was very similar.

As for willingness to join in future activities, answers to the last two questionnaires show that most participants are keen to publicise the approach and pass on information about it to colleagues. They also confirm the interest roused by the approach, which many were encountering for the first time.

At the outset, the workshop faced a number of problems. First of all, it had to be set up quickly. This was not just a matter of the organisers' convenience. Language awareness is a new approach, and some countries know nothing or little about it. For this reason, finding participants suited to the theme and able to build on it later - always difficult when time is short - became, in some cases, a matter of pure luck. It is true that the animators themselves were able to make some suggestions on participants, but the interest which nearly all of them took in the work is genuinely surprising - and a tribute to the inherent attractiveness of an approach which even the less well informed seem to find convincing. None the less, this situation may have helped to make some participants feel that the workshop had a "top-down" quality, and that they themselves were simply cogs in a system which they could (or would) not help to build.

Another problem was the lack of material on language awareness in English. This is simply the way things are, and the situation is certain to improve as time goes on, but it caused major difficulties for many participants - in spite of the good will shown by everyone, participants and animators, in trying to overcome them.

The doubts expressed on Friday afternoon concerning the feasibility of completing the network activities within the set time-limit probably had a lot to do with these problems (particularly the short time available and the participants' prior interest). These doubts were probably inevitable and, worrying though they were for the animators, it is finally a good thing that they should have been brought into the open.

In the same way, the fact that most participants said, in their answers to the questionnaire, that they would have liked more time for group work is a good sign. One may wonder, of course, whether the time set aside for presentations could have been substantially cut, and justice still done to the need for information/exposition, but wanting to work together is very much in line with the workshop's final aim - the setting-up of networks.

The fact that participants wanted to see real classroom situations, if only on video, is another positive sign. For reasons of time, this was not done at the workshop (and will not be done at the first network meeting in June). Circulating videos within the networks might well be the answer.

There were, it must be said, some organisational errors. The time limits set for each activity should certainly have been enforced more strictly, particularly during plenary sessions. In the end, trying not to upset speakers is probably only a short-term consensus strategy.

The animators deserve a more personal comment - which is important, in view of the effort they put into the workshop. The participants' comments show that their work was, on the whole, very much appreciated. This applied both to their expertise in the field covered and - with occasional criticisms on specific points - their ability to run workshops of this type to everyone's maximum satisfaction and benefit.

At the end of the workshop, there was a general feeling that something new had emerged - a new project which still lacked a final name, but already gave great hopes of helping schools to prepare tomorrow's citizens for life in a multilingual, multicultural world.

## **6. Appendices available**

The following appendices are available from the ECML and on its website at [www.ecml.at](http://www.ecml.at).

Appendix 1:	Presentations	57 pages
Appendix 2:	Further teaching materials	10 pages
Appendix 3:	Monitoring of participants and assessment	5 pages
Appendix 4:	Materials relating to network activities	15 pages
Appendix 5:	Bibliography	8 pages
Appendix 6:	Points for practical evaluation	3 pages