



A travers les **L**angues et les **C**ultures **A**cross **L**anguages and **C**ultures

Establishing a framework of competences to support plurilingual and pluricultural approaches

Project description

Updated 24 July 2006

Co-ordinator: **Michel Candelier**, Université du Maine, Le Mans, France

Project team: **Antoinette Camilleri Grima**, University of Malta, Malta
Véronique Castellotti, Université F. Rabelais, Tours, France, or
Muriel Molinié, University of Cergy-Pontoise, France
Ildikó Lörincz, University of Western Hungary, Győr, Teacher Training Faculty, Hungary
Franz-Josef Meissner, University of Giessen, Germany
Anna Schröder-Sura, University of Giessen, Germany
Artur Noguero, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain
Jean-François de Pietro, Institut de recherche et de documentation pédagogique, Neuchâtel, Switzerland

This project is supported intellectually and materially by the Institut de recherche et de documentation pédagogique, Neuchâtel (Switzerland) and the international association EDiLiC (Education and Linguistic and Cultural Diversity).

1. CONTEXT

The project is at the very heart of the "major paradigm shift" to which the ECML's second medium-term programme aims to contribute: "The trend towards an overall concept of language education which integrates the teaching and learning of ALL languages in order to tap potential synergies." (see *Call for proposals*).

This orientation, which is still novel for many language teachers and experts in the field of didactics, results from the work which led to the drawing-up of the *Common European Framework of Reference* during the 1990s. It represents one of the key means for implementing *Plurilingualism*, which is the response put forward by the Council of Europe to the challenges of diversity and social cohesion.

Language teaching, if it is to make any headway towards plurilingualism, has to develop "plurilingual and pluricultural competences" in learners which, again

according to the *Common European Framework of Reference*, does not consist of “a collection of distinct and separate competences to communicate depending on the languages” but rather of one “*plurilingual and pluricultural competence encompassing the full range of the languages available*”.

If the learner is to be encouraged to acquire such an ability and to add to it continually (lifelong learning) he or she has to be assisted in acquiring “transversal” competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes). These are general competences (about linguistic and cultural facts in general) as well as the ability to build on abilities acquired with one particular language or culture (or certain aspects of one particular language or culture) to gain easier access to another language.

Such skills, which ensure the necessary *synergies* between the learning phases, can only be developed within the framework of what we may call “*pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures*”, i.e. learning approaches which implement activities involving several linguistic and cultural varieties. Such is the case for the *intercultural approach* in its various dimensions and for three more language-oriented teaching approaches, namely the *awakening to languages (language awareness)*, *intercomprehension between related languages* and the *integrated teaching and learning of the languages taught* (during the school curriculum and beyond).

Their differences aside, pluralistic approaches form part of the “*prospect of a form of general language education*” (Common European Framework, page 130). They contribute towards developing

- an interest in languages and cultures;
- curiosity about these languages and cultures;
- the learner’s confidence in his or her own learning skills;
- competences in observing/analysing languages, regardless of the languages concerned;
- an ability to perceive the languages in the complexity of their links with cultural variations and to handle those variations;
- the skill of relying on an understanding of a phenomenon in one language or culture to understand more fully – by analogy or contrast – a phenomenon pertaining to another language or culture...

In keeping with what the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* (Council of Europe, 2003) defines as *plurilingual education*, they can also encourage the development of positive representations and attitudes not just towards languages and their diversity but also towards those who speak the languages and their cultures.

Today there are many theoretical and practical studies on each of the various pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures. But there is no common framework of reference for competences able to provide an overview of the competences required or show how each approach can contribute to their development. That is the remit of the present project.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

General aims

- To provide a structured and hierarchical set of competences (skills, attitudes, knowledge) that can be developed through pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures;
- to facilitate the elaboration of curricula setting out a genuine progression in the acquisition of these competences;
- to facilitate the co-ordination between the approaches themselves and the co-ordination between the approaches and the learning of a particular language (“conceptual” co-ordination, for didactic research; co-ordination within the curricula);
- to enhance accordingly the approaches (in particular to combat the idea that approaches such as language awareness and intercomprehension are merely “sensitisation approaches”);
- to complement and perfect existing tools such as the European Framework of Reference or the Portfolios.

Specific objectives

- a. Overall assessment of existing resources (theoretical and reflective studies, curricula and teaching programmes, teaching materials, research and innovation reports, etc.);
- b. A precise a priori description of the characteristics of the intended “reference framework of competences” product, taking account of the potential readership (curriculum designers, textbook authors, didactics researchers and innovating practitioners, teacher educators, teachers);
- c. Annotated four-language glossary (English, French, German, Spanish) of the relevant key words;
- d. Initial (partial) draft of the reference framework;
- e. Second draft submitted to representatives of the target readership for approval;
- f. Initial version of the complete reference framework (in four languages: English, French, German, Spanish, subsequently in other languages, in particular Catalan and Maltese); as approved by the workshop participants.

A complementary project is envisaged for the production and dissemination of the expanded product (hypertext, CD-Rom, accompanying brochure).

3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The final product is to consist of a hypertext for CD (also available on a web site) with a brochure of around twenty pages explaining its use, and featuring only the main categories of competences.

The overall document (available in four languages: English, French, German and Spanish) will consist of

- a hierarchy of competences (initially subdivided into “knowledge”, “skills” and “existential competence”, then within each of those three categories into main contents categories, themselves subdivided into increasingly detailed categories);
- for each of the items obtained (regardless of their hierarchical level), an indication (by means of colour coding and symbols) relating to
 - the levels of learners to which it can be applied first and foremost;
 - the approaches (intercultural, integrated teaching and learning, intercomprehension, awakening to languages – language awareness) likely to promote its development (to a greater or lesser degree).

For some items (probably only at intermediate or lower levels), there will also be

- examples of teaching activities used for targeting the competence concerned.

Wherever indications are available, the extent to which existing experience allows a prediction of whether the competences offered can actually be achieved at the specified level will also be noted.

The document will be accessible using choices corresponding to the two types of indications above. For example: selection of all the competences aimed at by the intercultural approach/selection of all conceivable competences at the level of “kindergarten learners”, and combinations of those two choices.

4. ACTION PLAN

2004

January to September

Team members: First working contact (email, collaborative work on the web). Research and exchange relating to resources, the form they take and how they are used. Production and first trial of a prototype analysis grid of resource documents. First discussion on the characteristics of the glossary.

17-18 September

Meeting of the project team. First assessment of information relating to resources and their use, distribution with a view to the development of a first draft. Pooling of reactions to the grid and its use, collective trialling of the grid and development of a definite version. First decision relating to the details of the frame of reference, the glossary and the collective bibliography.

October 2004 to December 2005

Team members: Collect competences from resource documents with the help of grid. Ongoing development of the glossary and the bibliography.

2005

18-19 December

Meeting of the project team. Revision of the bibliography (resource documents). Collective scrutiny of each others' descriptors ("grids"). Decisions made on categories to be employed in the grids. First attempt at compiling grids of collected data and using tables in Word to create a hierarchy of descriptors. Different aspects of the compilation process allocated to each of the experts.

December 2005 to May 2006

Team members: Revision and streamlining of bibliography of documents to be analysed. Completion of grids for an initial group of documents not yet analysed (leading to a "first wave" of grids). All grids compiled into a table and different thematic areas of this table allocated to individual team members. Analysis of tables: establishment of hierarchies of descriptors based on the entries present.

2006

21-22 May

Meeting of the project team. Organisation of work to expand grids for the second wave and of translation work. Examination of partially completed hierarchies, harmonisation of approach and process (procedure, form).

May to September

Team members: expansion of a second wave of grids. New compiling into tables. Tables shared out amongst team members and worked on (descriptors and hierarchies of descriptors, to be integrated into a single unit with those already obtained for the first wave of grids).

6-7 October

Meeting of the project team. Final harmonisation of descriptors and hierarchies from both sets of grids. Decisions about their submission to representatives of the target readership. Final decisions on product to be presented during the workshop, product to be delivered at the end of the second Medium-term Programme and perspectives for finalisation project to be proposed for the 3rd MTP. Organisation of June 2007 workshop.

September 2006 to June 2007

Team members: Preparation of the version for the workshop. To be prepared in five languages: (EN, FR, DE, ES + CAT).

Members of workshop team: Preparations for the dissemination workshop.

2007

March

Translation meeting planned at ECML. Four team members will be able to take part.

28, 29 and 30 June

Three-day **Central ECML workshop**. Three team members and participants: one representative of each member state of the partial agreement.

Presentation of the reference framework and collation of feedback.

Introduction to the theory (pluralistic approaches and their linkage with Council of Europe tools). Examination of proposed reference framework (in 5 languages):

discussion groups on contents, use and desired supporting materials; collation of feedback regarding presentation and understanding of framework.

Workshop to be preceded by a one or two-day meeting of the workshop team (who will also discuss preparation of the version of the framework to be made available on the ECML website in 2007).

Profile of participants

- Persons with responsibility for language curricula/programmes (if possible, for all of the languages within the relevant education system)
- Teacher trainers
- Textbook authors

Preferably people already familiar with or interested in so called pluralistic approaches (integrated language learning, intercultural approaches, intercomprehension between related languages, awakening to languages (awareness of language)).

July to September

Team members: drawing up of the version of the reference framework to be made available on the ECML website in 2007.

5. LANGUAGES

The project's working languages are French and English. German will also be used among certain team members. Simultaneous interpretation (English – French) will be provided at the central workshop. Participants in the workshop are expected to speak one of these languages fluently and to understand both. All additional language competence is welcome.