

Second medium-term programme of activities 2004-2007

### **Project A3 - LDL**

### **Linguistic diversity and literacy in a global perspective**

### **Central workshop report 3/2005**

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The report is accessible in English and in French on the ECML website: <http://www.ecml.at>

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## **Aims**

The aims of the project were to

- to raise awareness, stimulate and encourage research in the field of materials development for L1 and multilingual education, including guidelines for materials development and work with such materials;
- to foster an intercultural dialogue and exchange of experience and developments between European and African countries;
- to examine the educational and cultural aspects of the management of mother tongue literacy in African countries and of migrant/minority language literacy in European societies.

Therefore at the central workshop we concentrated on

- expertise in the area of design and production of materials for mother tongue based bi/multilingual education in primary schools and relevant teaching strategies, as well as
- on examples of good practice in the field;
- on criteria for materials development.

## **Participants**

Participants came from the European member states and from 9 African countries. The workshop regrouped experts working in the field of linguistic diversity, particularly in teaching and learning issues for children who speak either non-dominant, regional and lesser used languages or more recently arrived minority languages. Some of the participants were based at universities or other research and training institutions, others at schools. A large group also represented ministries or educational authorities.

## **Literacy and linguistic diversity in a global perspective**

In the introductory speech Neville Alexander, the director of the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) (University of Cape Town), underlined the necessity of promoting cultural and linguistic diversity reminding us that all languages are depositories of knowledge and constitute the only possibility of access to valuable indigenous knowledge that reaches far back into history. He emphasised that the valorisation of the languages present in society is a precondition for democratic development and empowerment, for economic growth, for social cohesion and access to information and to education. Therefore, African languages and lesser used languages respectively need to follow a process of intellectualisation.

## **Linguistic diversity in African languages**

Adama Samassekou, President of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) (Bamako, Mali), explained the decisions of ACALAN to implement a plan of action aiming at promoting the development and use of African languages in all domains as well as individual plurilingualism. He referred to the experience in schools in Mali with the method of 'convergent pedagogy'. An approach that combines mother tongue based bilingual education with community involvement and project-oriented learning.

## **Crossing continents: initiatives in recognizing bilingualism and heteroglossia**

Brigitta Busch, Institute of Linguistics (University of Vienna, Austria), and Viv Edwards, Professor of Education at the University of Reading (UK), presented examples of North-South co-operation in the development of bi- and multilingual education. Viv Edwards drew attention to the central role of parents in language transmission and presented the Twf project, a highly innovative approach which promotes the benefits of bilingualism to parents and prospective parents in Wales using modern market strategies to challenge myths about bilingualism. The booklet '6 good reasons for raising a child bilingually' was being adapted for the situation in South Africa.

Brigitta Busch showed that due to mobility and migration classroom situations often were not only multilingual but also highly heterogeneous and heteroglossic (e.g. different varieties of pluricentric languages). She presented examples of teaching and learning materials based on 'multivariety approach', i.e. a broad range of languages in use allowing for difference and variation. One example is the manual *Pogeldi*, a school book for Bosnia and Herzegovina or the multivariety picture dictionary which unites Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian and different varieties of German in one single book, another is the stories collection *Ikhubalo lika Madiba* which brings the Nguni languages of southern Africa together in one book.

## **Case Studies in dual medium teaching and biliteracy**

Etienne Sadembouo of the National Association of Cameroonian Language Committees (NACALCO), University of Yaounde (Cameroon), showed how in a country like Cameroon with extreme linguistic diversity, multilingual education can be implemented. Parting from a monolingual postcolonial school system, transitional multilingual education has begun in pilot schools where mother tongue education and teaching and learning in a second and later on a third language alternate. In this so-called bi-vectorial system, basic knowledge and identity/cultural issues are mediated through the mother tongue whereas other cultural issues, science and technology is introduced through the official language(s), i.e. the former colonial languages.

Carole Bloch, early childhood specialist at PRAESA (Cape Town, South Africa), presented a range of experiences with bi-literacy in Western Cape schools. Creating a language rich and print rich environment in the schools and the family homes is a central concern. Pilot projects involving different classroom strategies as interactive writing and free reading in all languages present in the classroom were carried out successfully. Carole Bloch emphasised the need for adequate teacher training. The presentation was illustrated by a video produced

for motivating parents and teachers to foster biliteracy and to use African languages more consciously.

### **Design issues in multilingual publishing for children**

Publishing in non-dominant or lesser used, regional and immigrant minority languages means finding solutions to compensate the usually low print runs. Viv Edwards showed several possible solutions such as adapting texts from other languages, producing different language versions, or publishing multilingual texts. In multilingual publications design, decisions have important implications for the status attributed to particular languages: the order of alternation (one language always before the other) and typographic features such as font size, weight and colour can make one language seem more important than another. Brigitta Busch showed a case study of bilingual school books in Austria between 1850 and today: design issues were related to how school policies dealt with minority languages in the classroom. In recent years, there has been an increasing tendency to make the image an integral part of the text and not a mere illustration.

### **Awareness raising**

Prince Kum'a Ndumbe III, NGO AfricAvenir (Douala, Cameroon), presented his project of promoting African languages through popular awareness raising in the city of Douala, where the linguistic situation due to mobility and migration is very complex and diverse. Through a series of dialog forums, African palavers, story telling and school competitions African languages are promoted among a large and general public. Proposing popular leisure time activities in African languages considerably helps to increase their standing in the eyes of the younger generation.

Michel Candelier, Université du Maine, France, presented a paper entitled "All languages at school! Language awareness in a global perspective". He spoke about the project on language awareness carried out within the first medium term programme of the ECML named 'Janua linguarum' and showed effects of the application of a language awareness curriculum which valorises the linguistic resources children bring to school with them in Guyana.

In three workshops the following topics were debated:

#### ***Literacy and linguistic diversity***

- Main challenges in relation to literacy and linguistic diversity in the different countries

*Presence or absence of standardized language(s), availability of materials, hesitation about the viability of local/minority languages, training issues.*

#### ***Approaches to bi- and multilingual education***

- Main approaches to bilingual and multilingual education in different countries
- Challenges and controversies in this area

*Bi-/multi education involving L1, trilingual education, bilingual education involving high status languages (e.g. English, French); approaches: immersion, dual medium, different*

*models of delivery; funding for multilingual education; teacher training; terminology development in local/minority languages.*

***Multilingual materials development, awareness raising and networking***

- Availability of bi-/multilingual materials in the different countries
- Economic viability of materials in 'small' languages
- Examples of raising awareness for other languages in school and in the community
- Initiatives to promote multilingualism, materials development

**Networking and ways forward**

Ayo Bamgbose, Professor emeritus of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, summarized the results of the central workshop and identified areas of future activities. In order to further pursue the objectives which have been the focus of the workshop, it will be necessary to intensify current efforts, experiment with new strategies and learn from experiences elsewhere. In particular, the following steps are suggested on the level of linguistic diversity in education:

- Intensification of language development efforts and simplified computer-based strategies of production of language teaching materials.
- Generalization and dissemination of results from existing projects and possible adaptation in comparable situations.
- Local and regional workshops for trainers of language educators.
- Support for ACALAN's Plan of Action with regard to compilation of language policies, comparison and adaptation of instructional materials and promotion of African languages.
- Activities promoting language awareness and linguistic diversity in education.

The team members will compile a publication comprising texts on the main topics debated at the central workshop as well as shorter vignettes presenting models of good practice in multilingual education and materials development in African and in European countries.