

Developing Teachers of Modern Languages to Young Learners (TEMOLAYOLE)

Project description

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This project is carried out in cooperation with the ECML and the above institutions.

1. CONTEXT

Recently the teaching of modern languages to young learners has become an integral part of widely spread practice in Europe and beyond. This is the reason why various projects at ECML have focused on this topic over the last decade.

Consensus has been achieved on the advantages, on the basic principles of teaching modern languages at an early age, and on the types of materials, tasks and assessment practices. However, no attempt has been made to explore how effectively these findings are integrated into teacher training programmes and implemented in actual classroom practice. TEMOLAYOLE will contribute to this area by implementing a research and development project.

Although a lot of effort has been put into actually teaching young learners and training their teachers in Europe, comparable data are not available on either the processes or the results. It is known that in a number of European countries there is a shortage of teachers, or of teachers who are appropriately prepared to deal with the target age group. Also, although learners tend to start earlier, teaching in the long run is often less effective than expected. Presently it is unclear what happens in early start programmes, how good practice - including assessment and self-assessment - is implemented and what young learners can do.

The appropriateness of time and focus of the proposed project is further supported by recent discussions commissioned by the European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture concerning language skills indicators. There is a need to identify what the realistic achievement targets may be for early language instruction along the levels defined in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEFR) and how early language programmes may contribute to plurilingualism and lifelong learning.

The project involves several target languages, among them languages less widely taught in Europe: English, French, German, Greek, Italian, and Spanish.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

General aims

The TEMOLAYOLE project aims to involve teacher educators and their in-service trainees over a period of four years. Our aim is to develop, pilot and implement an innovative programme for teachers of modern languages to young learners to promote plurilingualism, to encourage systematic collection and analyses of classroom data and reflective practice.

Specific objectives

The project will establish a network of teacher educators who wish to integrate classroom observation focusing on good practice and assessment into their in-service teachers' professional development in different target languages (English, French, German, Greek, Italian, and Spanish). The project includes a central workshop with teacher educators from all the member states of the ECML, a series of expert meetings and continuous networking via email, an international regional conference, and an edited volume on the outcomes.

3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Expected outcomes are described in terms of processes and products. The series of activities proposed in the project will result in the following products:

1. A flexible syllabus will be developed and piloted in a few educational contexts. This syllabus will be later adaptable to pre- and in-service teachers' needs and distance or on-site programmes. Also, some innovative tools and techniques for computer-based distance-learning will be developed at the University of Umea in order to facilitate in-service training for teachers outside university areas and also in order to reach new target groups for teacher training to meet the shortage of properly trained teachers in many countries. The expected users are: teacher educators of pre- and in-service teachers.
2. New tools will be developed: structured and piloted observation schemes, questionnaires, and interviews for teachers and teacher educators to reflect upon, evaluate and where necessary, improve their own practice. The expected users are: teacher educators and researchers.
3. A network of researchers on teacher education will be established and maintained over the four years. The expected users are: teacher educators as researchers.
4. Structured research data will be collected on good practice, assessment practices, and what young learners can do along CEFR criteria in young learners' classrooms.
5. The proceedings of an international conference (regional event) will become available in 2007 for teacher educators involved in the project, other teacher educators in different programmes, researchers, pre- and in-service teachers, decision makers, testing experts, and test administrators.

6. An edited book will be published on research findings for dissemination.
7. Some research projects will be made available on the web or CD or in print.

4. ACTION PLAN

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January to June

Preparation of materials and activities for central workshop in June/July.

23-24 January

Preparatory expert meeting for five team members:

- to share views,
- to discuss issues
- to design tasks and
- a questionnaire for potential participants in the June-July central workshop to gather data on teacher education programmes, curricula, syllabi, teachers' needs, and national priorities.

29 June – 3 July

Central workshop at ECML in Graz.

For teacher educators involved in curriculum design and implementation for early language instruction at higher education institutions in European countries.

Participants:

Participants include the five members of the project team and one participating member from teacher education institutions from each country of the partial agreement responsible for training teachers of young learners. Participants should have the right, opportunity and willingness to contribute to the development of a new syllabus and to implement innovative ideas.

Content areas:

Team members present findings on data collected for the central workshop. Team members involve participants in an overview of the issues based on filled in questionnaires. All participating representatives will present their curriculum and syllabus. Focus will be first on currently used curricula, syllabi, content, procedures, and needs. A comparison of curricula and syllabi along questions like the following: What do the programmes involve? How are theory and practice combined? How can in-service teachers be characterised? What are their needs in terms of methodology and language? What is the role and place of school practice in the curriculum? What instruments (published materials, realia, etc.) are used for what purposes? What research is available on YLs? What are the achievement targets? What levels do learners actually achieve?

August – December

Follow up activity:

A synthesis of results; participants in the workshop are expected to participate in the design of a new syllabus with team members and in the work of a new network of participants formed in the workshop. Synthesis will be based on data collected before, during and after central workshop. Contact with all participants will be maintained by email and through ECML's TEMAYOLE website.

3-4 December

Network meeting

Participants:

Team members and active members of network formed in central event.

Aim:

Discussing the first version of syllabus and designing a second version of the syllabus to be piloted in the fall.

2005

Follow-up:

Expert feedback on module from all ECML countries and other stakeholders. Expert feedback will be required from all participating member states; then, team will finalise syllabus for piloting.

September - December

Piloting syllabus for one semester in volunteering institutions (including Universities of Pecs, Umea, Zagreb, and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and Kildare Education Centre) We leave it open in case some can't. Their role in the meeting in January is to benefit from the pilot phase in the institutions where the piloting takes place.

Discussion and evaluation of feedback on pilot; guidelines on how adaptation of syllabus and secondary products need to be updated. All these activities will happen on the internet (email and ECML's TEMAYOLE homepage) with all participants in the pilot phase.

2006

27-28 January

Network meeting

Participants:

Members of the project team and one participant of pilot phase from members of teacher education institutions from participating countries including in-service teachers in teacher education programmes.

Aims:

To finalise updated version of syllabus and instruments before we make them available to a wider audience to use in their institutions in fall 2006. Syllabus will need to be implemented in the target languages in which the participating in-service programmes train teachers. We also need to discuss feedback on uses of syllabus and to prepare for the conference and the publication of papers.

1-2 September

Expert meeting - conference organisation

September – December

Updated syllabus becomes available for implementation in all volunteering institutions and on the TEMAYOLE website.

2007

1-3 February

International conference involving other sponsors, e.g., ELTeCS, teachers' associations, and participating universities. The venue will most probably be at one of the universities of the team members.

Participants:

all members of the project (including team, participating members from teacher education institutions from each country, volunteering in-service teachers involved in the project in teacher education programmes at participating institutions, teacher educators, pre- and in-service teachers and researchers applying to open call.

As this event will hopefully attract many more participants from all over the world, we hypothesise that participation fees will cover part of the costs.

June – October

Editing volume on TEMOLAYOLE.

Summer

Editing meeting for preparing the publication.

November

Publication of book by ECML.

December

Evaluation of TEMAYOLE project

Dissemination:

As every year more participants will be involved in the project, this design will partly take care of dissemination of the results. Apart from involving teachers, educators, decision makers and researchers, we will make all materials available on the internet; the conference will serve as an event where outcomes can be shared with an international audience; and the publication of papers will make both the syllabi for various target languages and studies on their implementation available to a wide audience. As a result, participating teacher educators/researchers will develop and refine research questions, tools, procedures, assessment framework for project; participating teachers will work and reflect on classroom research projects; teachers' awareness and practice will improve; teachers' self-confidence will be enhanced; language teaching to young learners will be more appreciated as a professional activity; and a network of participating teachers will be established.

5. LANGUAGES

- The working languages of the project are English and French. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided for ECML workshop only. Participants are expected to communicate in writing and speaking in English throughout the project, and in English and a language shared by participants in the ECML workshop.