DEVELOPING LANGUAGE AWARENESS IN SUBJECT CLASSES

7th CEFR SIG Meeting, May 2018, University of Bochum

Marita Härmälä, Finnish Education Evaluation Centre
Eli Moe, University of Bergen
Language skills for successful subject learning: CEFR-linked descriptors for mathematics and history (2012-2015)

• For raising awareness of the language-related aspects and the importance of language in constructing knowledge in non-language subjects
• For setting language objectives in lessons
• For use as assessment criteria (formative and summative)
• For gauging the language level used by teachers in subject classes and adapting it accordingly

Marita Härmälä, Ealta 2018
Developing language awareness in subject classes 2016-2019

• Team:
  - Marita Härmälä (Finland); Artashes Barkhanajyan (Armenia), Jérôme Béliard (France), Eli Moe (Norway), Susan Ballinger (Canada)

• Aim:
  1) tools for recognising students’ language needs in different school subjects
  2) examples of language supportive teaching materials

• Data gathering:
  - Questionnaire (https://www.ecml.at/ECML-Programme/Programme2016-2019/languageinsubjects)
  - Workshop in Graz November 2017
  - Network meeting October 2018
  - National seminars, workshops, school visits

Marita Härmälä, Ealta 2018
Languages at school

- Everyday language vs. academic language (Cummins 1970)
- Language of schooling (Schleppegrell)
- CLIL
- Subject specific language:
  - genres, text types
  - ways of thinking, talking, writing
  - grammatical structures, concepts
  - language functions
  - etc.

Marita Härmälä, Ealta 2018
Example: math and history

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chronological order</td>
<td>Not connected to time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change: causes and consequences</td>
<td>No emotional content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facts, interpretations</td>
<td>Exactitude (e.g. definitions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Historical empathy: to step into other people’s shoes (Rantala 2015)</td>
<td>Worded problems: challenging both languagewise and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mathematically (Barbu &amp; Beal 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Implicit logical relationships (Schleppegrell 2007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A1/A2 Basic User

B1/B2 Independent User

C1/C2 Proficient User

Marita Härmälä, Ealta 2018
Situations where L2 speakers have language-related difficulties (Härmälä, Moe, Béliard, Barkhanajyan 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During whole-class discussions</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During group work activities</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During pair work activities</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On written assignments</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During social interactions (at break time, etc.)</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During oral presentations</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My L2 students do not face language-related difficulties</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marita Härmälä, Ealta 2018
Scaffolding techniques that respondents use
(Härmälä, Moe, Béliard, Barkhanajyan 2017)
Finnish National Core Curriculum (2014): good skills at the end of 6th grade

History: The student is able to
- **describe** changes and **tell** why change is not always the same as progress
- **broadly describe** causal relationships for some historical phenomena
- **explain** with some examples why the same phenomenon or event may be interpreted in different ways
- **present a story by explaining** the event or phenomenon from the point of view of different actors

Marita Härmälä, Ealta 2018
What is ’to describe’ on different proficiency levels and in different subjects?

A2: Can describe events and activities in a simple list of points.

B1: Can pass on information and briefly describe events, observations and processes. Can describe how s/he is thinking when solving a task in a straightforward way. Can briefly describe a visual representation (a graph, a figure, a table, a drawing etc.) pointing out important features.

Mathematics, history, science, music, physical education?

Marita Härmälä, Ealta 2018
Defining language goals

**Functions**
- Can describe causal relationships of a class society
- Can ask questions
- Can answer questions

**Structures**
- Cases in Finnish
- Wh-questions
- Past tense
- Conjunctions

**Vocabulaire**
- In 17th century, at the beginning of, gradually, all the time
- what, why, when?
- To become something (translat.)
- because, even though...

-> The student is able to describe factors connected to the origins and consequences of a class society by using different temporal constructions and conjunctions such as in 17th century, gradually; because, even though...
Challenges / Next steps:

Challenges:
• to get more subject teachers involved
• to illustrate how to define the language goals for different proficiency levels

Next steps:
• develop tools and teaching materials to help subject teachers to get started (Platform)
• to continue promoting cooperation between teachers and other persons involved

Marita Härmälä, Ealta 2018
THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?
References: