



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR PLANNING LANGUAGE-SENSITIVE TEACHER EDUCATION:

4 - HOW CAN MODULES IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES BE DESIGNED TO PREPARE TEACHERS FOR LANGUAGE-SENSITIVE EDUCATION?

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Building block 4

HOW CAN MODULES IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES BE DESIGNED TO PREPARE TEACHERS FOR LANGUAGE-SENSITIVE EDUCATION?

What is the purpose of this Building block?

This Building block offers guidelines for teacher educators who are developing and adapting teacher education modules to include language-sensitive aspects. Both curriculum planners and teacher educators may be involved in ensuring that language-sensitive elements are covered in teacher education modules, in order to foster students' awareness of language sensitivity during their studies and to promote students' critical understanding of the role of language and language sensitivity in different subject areas.

Who is this Building block for?

- teacher educators (pre-service and in-service) at all levels and for all subjects
- curriculum planners and curriculum developers for teacher education

To use this Building block, some familiarity with language-sensitive education is recommended. Stakeholders with little background in language education are invited to cooperate with colleagues more experienced in this area.

The main objectives:

- to stimulate reflection on the integration of language-sensitive aspects in modules for teacher education;
- to familiarise users with steps that need to be taken when creating or adapting a module in teacher education designed to prepare (future) teachers for language-sensitive education.

CONTENTS

- A. Introduction** – contains a definition of how we use the term 'module', as well as information and tasks on how different kinds of modules can prepare teachers for language-sensitive education.
 - B. Examples of modules** – contains a presentation and activities based on course descriptions of three teacher education modules.
 - C. Reviewing a module to incorporate or strengthen language-sensitive elements: Questions for a quick start** – contains a brief summary of the Building block in the form of six questions.
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A. Introduction

What is language-sensitive education?

To review or create teacher education modules for language-sensitive education, it is useful to consider and agree on a definition of the term. The definition offered below can serve as a starting point:

The term ‘language-sensitive education’ describes an inclusive approach to teaching any subject: teachers help their learners to deal with the language demands of learning tasks so that, whatever their language and/or social background, all learners can make the most of their education.

For a more detailed discussion of what language-sensitive education involves, users are invited to refer to [Building block 1](#).

What do we mean by modules?

This Building block is about modules in teacher education. We understand ‘*module*’ as a part of a teacher education curriculum which can consist of one or more courses; often, the two terms are used synonymously, such as a first year module/course on pedagogical psychology, an introductory module/course on applied linguistics in one’s fourth or fifth semester (term), or a subject specific module on the teaching methodology of a given subject, such as geography, the language of schooling, or a foreign language. Modules often span one or two semesters and are typically the responsibility of one or more teacher educators. These educators can often decide on aspects of the content and the methodology they use, and perhaps the module’s overall content. They may work on their own or share responsibility for a module with colleagues.

While most examples in this Building block are geared towards initial teacher education, they are also relevant and helpful when addressing language-sensitive education in in-service / continuing professional development (CPD) contexts.

What typical kinds of modules are there in teacher education, and how can they contribute to language-sensitive education?

There are two main ways in which language-sensitive education can be catered for in teacher education modules:

- teacher educators can **review and adapt** an existing module to include aspects of language and language sensitive education;
- teacher educators can **create** one or more new modules that focus specifically on language-sensitive education.

To consider the options in more detail, it is useful to start with an overview of the modules in one’s teacher education curriculum. Table 1 below illustrates a range of typical modules in a generic teacher education curriculum for teachers of one or more subject(s) in obligatory schooling. The three columns cover three subjects: geography (which is used here as an example of a subject other than languages), the language of schooling, and a foreign language. The rows are organized by traditional areas of professional competences, based on the notion of “teacher professional knowledge” (Shulman, 1987), and contain indicative titles of teacher education modules.

	Subject other than languages (e.g. geography)	Language of schooling as a subject	Foreign language
General pedagogy and psychology modules	Introduction to educational studies/pedagogy, introduction to learning psychology, educational psychology, special needs education, general methodology (e.g. classroom management), ...		
Subject modules	Physical geography, human geography, technical geography, ...	Linguistics, literature, cultural studies, ...	Linguistics, literature, cultural studies, ...
Subject-specific methodology modules	Geography teaching methodology, geography teaching practicum, ...	Language of schooling teaching methodology, language of schooling teaching practicum, ...	Foreign language teaching methodology, foreign language teaching practicum, ...
Your ideas			

Table 1: Examples of teacher education modules for three subjects

Most teacher education curricula contain modules covering general aspects of pedagogy, psychology and related disciplines, which in many cases are offered to (future) teachers of various different subjects. The modules concerned with specific subjects and disciplines are organized in different forms. In many contexts, teachers complete a higher education degree in one or more subjects (e.g. a Bachelor or Master's degree, usually depending on the target level of teaching they aim to qualify for) before studying to become a teacher in a teacher education department, or even a different university. In other contexts, the subject/disciplinary modules are offered within an institution that specializes in teacher education. A broad offer of subject modules is a characteristic component of curricula for secondary teachers, while they may be less prominent in primary education, especially for teachers who will teach all subjects across the curriculum. The modules concerned with subject-specific methodology and teaching practice are intended to build on the competences that students have acquired in general pedagogy, psychology and also subject-specific courses and to 'distil' and 'channel' these competences into the specific professional competences required by teachers, whatever subject they teach.

Discussion questions

- a) To what extent does the above categorization of disciplines and modules correspond to your context? Could you think of further subcategories of modules (further rows in the table), or alternative ways of categorizing and visualizing the content and the target competences of teacher education? If so, which ones?**
- b) Consider the modules in the first row ('general pedagogical knowledge'). In what ways can they contribute to language-sensitive education?**

Commentary

General theories of learning often incorporate language and communication because language is important in most psychological and educational theories, and is also a key aspect of ‘general didactics/methodology’, including classroom management, students counselling, interacting with parents, resolving problems and dealing with conflict, etc. For instance, in developmental psychology, the extent to which language and cognitive development is intertwined can help teachers to appreciate the importance of using appropriate levels of language to support classroom learning. Moreover, the importance of safe and supportive learning environments, a topic with important implications for classroom management, influences how teachers should cater for learners who need specific support and scaffolding to feel comfortable participating in class.

In recent years, some teacher education institutions have also introduced modules with a specific focus on the language dimension of learning. Examples of module titles are ‘Communication in education’, ‘Language education’ or ‘Applied linguistics for all teachers’. Often, the focus is on the learning of the language of schooling, but also on other languages, such as home languages and foreign languages. Tables 3 and 4 in section B below illustrate two such modules.

- c) *Now consider the subject of geography, or any other subject of your choice other than languages. What kind of subject-specific (e.g. geography) module would you create or adapt to include a focus on language sensitivity?***

Commentary

The answer will probably depend on the number and content of the existing modules. In modules with a focus on content knowledge, an explicit focus on the terminology and text types associated with the subject is likely to help future teachers understand the language dimensions of the subject and thus provide a basis for language-sensitive teaching of the subject. This implies that, in the tertiary teaching of all academic disciplines, students should be familiarised with the language dimension of the specific discipline. In subject-specific methodology modules, (future) teachers can engage with concrete teaching and learning strategies for their subject. They learn about the typical discourse functions of their discipline and how to scaffold their learners’ learning of (for example) important geographical concepts. The exact choice of topics will depend on various aspects, including the amount of time available and of course the discipline itself. To define competence aims, the competence descriptors in the Profiles in [Building block 6](#) are a useful starting point.

- d) *Table 1 also contains modules of two language subjects, the language of schooling and a foreign language. How can these modules contribute to language sensitivity? What are some possible pitfalls?***

Commentary

Some contributions to language sensitive education and some pitfalls are summarized in table 2 below:

<i>How these modules can contribute to language-sensitive education</i>	<i>Possible pitfalls to avoid</i>
Focus on a range of topics and competences related to language and cultural awareness	Narrow focus only on some aspects but excluding others, for instance overemphasizing language structure at the expense of language use in discourse and text
Focus on metalinguistic and metacultural aspects of education and of the subjects involved	Narrow focus only on specific subjects or disciplines
Focus on beliefs related to language and language ideologies (e.g. prescriptivism, linguicism)	Avoiding engaging with ideological debates on language issues
A pluralistic view of a range of languages and varieties relevant for learners and learning	Focusing only on one or few languages and varieties (such as the standard variety of the language of schooling, or a single foreign language) in an isolated way; Lack of coordination between the curricula for different target languages, which may result in redundancy for teachers who study more than one language

Table 2: Possible contributions of language subject modules to language sensitivity and possible pitfalls

B. Examples of modules

This section contains three examples of secondary school teacher education modules concerned with a) the language of schooling in teaching, b) the profession-specific language competences of teachers of various subjects, c) an introduction to the academic discipline of linguistics for future teachers. The modules are exemplified by means of their course descriptions.

Below in **Table 3**, there is a short description of the module “Slovene for teachers”, which is offered to future secondary school teachers at the University of Ljubljana. The content includes various topic areas, ranging from information on the status and use of Slovene to various communicative strategies in the target language. It is offered as an optional (elective) course to future secondary school teachers of a range of subjects other than languages.

Further down in **Table 4** is a description of the module “Profession-specific language competences”, a module offered to future secondary teachers of all subjects at the St. Gallen University of Teacher Education. One key aim of the course is to highlight the role of language as a key means of teaching, as well as an instrument that both represents and constructs the subject matter in different disciplines.

Table 5 contains an account of the module “Introduction to Linguistics”, also from the St.Gallen University of Teacher Education. It is part of the curriculum for future lower secondary foreign

language teachers. It approaches a range of linguistic sub-disciplines from a multilingual perspective, to equip teachers with competences for plurilingual and intercultural education.

You are invited to read the module descriptions in Tables 3-5 with the following questions in mind:

- 1. Do the courses described below cover language-sensitive education in a way that could be useful in your context?**
- 2. Which topic areas from these courses would you consider incorporating into the module(s) that you are reviewing / revising?**
- 3. Which profession-specific aspects do you think are missing, and how could they be embedded?**

Course title	Slovene for teachers
Course content	Role and position of the Slovene language; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slovene as the language used for communication in the pedagogical process - social and functional types of language use; - Relational speech; politeness and pragmatic clarity criteria for selecting means of expression to create relationships in the classroom; - Cognitive speech: a relationship between statements and illustrative material; description; narration; explanation; justification; - Expression of logical relations with linguistic resources; - Communication – language – text; - Preparation of teachers’ oral presentation in the classroom; advantages and disadvantages of auditory transmission; - Pronunciation and rhetoric; - Principles of practical stylistics; - Conducting a conversation and participating in a discussion; - Forming and asking questions of different types and complexity; - Reading and writing formal texts (e.g. correspondence with the ministry and parents); - Characteristics of scientific and popular science texts; - Writing a professional text; - Language manuals, corpora and other electronic resources and their use; - Active listening strategies; - Strategies for teaching reading; - Guiding students in the preparation of oral presentations and participation in discussion; - Guiding students in the writing of a professional text.

Table 3: ‘Slovene for teachers’ module, University of Ljubljana

Course title	Profession-specific language competences
Course aims	The aim of the module is to encourage teacher trainees to use language professionally and consciously in job-related contexts, so that they in turn can support their students in gaining awareness of the importance and use of language and communication in and beyond the schooling contexts.
Course description	<p>The module addresses three perspectives to language in the classroom:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Language competences in the language of schooling (here German) which enable teachers to pursue their profession ○ Language-sensitive teaching of all subjects ○ The language of schooling as a reflection tool available to all students <p>The course consists of the following five sub-modules, which are primarily based on the most common discourse functions performed by teachers and (eventually) learners in the classroom:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers' language skills needed specifically for teaching German as a second language 2. Providing definitions and giving explanations [exemplified below] 3. Naming and describing, reporting and narrating 4. Arguing, judging and evaluating 5. Simulating and modelling <p>The learning aims can be achieved asynchronously, i.e. the sub-modules can be taught to different study groups in any given order.</p>
Transfer to other modules	<p>This module is an example of a course which can be transferred to various other teaching contexts and adapted accordingly, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Adaptation to teacher education for primary or even tertiary level · Adaptation to contexts with different languages of schooling (other than German)
Specific example: Giving explanations	<p>In the sub-module 'providing definitions and giving explanations', students learn, among other things, to describe the importance and functioning of explanatory processes in teaching and to adapt and apply quality features of explanations to subject-specific contexts. As part of this focus, they are given the task to prepare a 3-minute explanation on any topic of interest from any subject matter. In the following session, they engage in intensive group work in which each student presents their definition to the other group members. . Group members then give each other critical feedback as to whether they could follow the explanation, whether the chosen topic became clear and what could be improved. In a second step, the groups study the criteria of good explanations provided by Leisen (2013, p. 29, "Kriterien guten Erklärens") and then re-assess the explanations according to these criteria, which include, for instance, providing orientation at the beginning of the</p>

	<p>explanation, using well structured, simple language and avoiding vagueness. This group exercise allows students to reflect on which aspects they naturally embed in their explanations and which they need to pay more attention to.</p> <p>Source:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leisen, J. (2013). Trägst du noch vor oder erklärst du schon? <i>Naturwissenschaften im Unterricht. Physik</i>, 24(135/136), 26-32.
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Table 4: Module on ‘Profession-specific language competences’, St. Gallen University of Teacher Education

Course title	Introduction to Linguistics
Course aims	The aim of the course is to familiarise students with key areas of linguistics that are most relevant for a language-sensitive approach to foreign language teaching. These include aspects such as language structure (e.g. phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics) as well as language use (e.g. pragmatics and discourse analysis). The course highlights the relevance of linguistics for language teaching methodology, especially for the pluralistic approaches described in the <i>Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches</i> , such as awakening to languages, intercomprehension, the intercultural approach, and the integrated didactic approach.
Course description	Basic skills in a range of linguistic sub-disciplines are developed with a focus on multi- and plurilingualism and cross-linguistic phenomena, as well as phenomena relevant to teaching or language learning. The introduction to areas such as morphology, syntax, pragmatics and discourse analysis focuses on examples from French, English, Italian and further languages (especially prominent home languages in the local context) and on language use in intercultural contexts.
Transfer to other modules	First and foremost, this course is targeted at future teachers of foreign languages. The subject matter is also relevant to immersive or CLIL teaching of other subjects.
Specific example: Intercomprehension and morphology	Amongst other aspects, the course introduces the concept of “intercomprehension”, specifically focusing how our knowledge of words formation (morphology) can support us in our aims to understand related languages. For example, acknowledging frequent endings of nouns in one language (bound morphemes, suffixes), such as the English <i>-ity</i> as in <i>sensitivity, ability</i> , etc., may assist the process of understanding related patterns not only in French (<i>-ité</i> in nouns such <i>normalité, continuité</i> , etc.) but also in other languages. Recognizing linguistic regularities at all levels of languages (language structure, but also language use) is an important competence which students should be made aware of.

Table 5: 'Introduction to Linguistics', St.Gallen University of Teacher Education

You are also invited to refer to [Building block 3](#) for further examples of teacher education modules.

C. Reviewing a module with a view to incorporating or strengthening language-sensitive elements: questions for a quick start

The following questions aim to guide the practical process of reviewing and/or creating a module (or a course) based on language-specific contents. Think of the detailed programme for one of the courses you (co-)teach, or are involved in planning:

- a) *What is the main topic of the module?*
- b) *Where would the module fit into Table 1 above?*
- c) *Who is responsible for the module? Who will be involved in the review and the redesign?*
- d) *Which parts of the module (if any) already contain elements relevant to language-sensitive education? What aspects are addressed and for what purpose?*
- e) *In what way do you need to adapt your module to increase the attention to language-sensitive education?*
- f) *What help and advice would you need from your colleagues during this review?*

For topic areas that may be relevant when reviewing and/or creating teacher education modules for language-sensitive education, you can refer to descriptors in [Building block 6](#) and the [List of elements for language-sensitive teacher education](#).

References

- Leisen, J. (2013). Trägst du noch vor oder erklärst du schon? *Naturwissenschaften im Unterricht. Physik*, 24(135/136), 26-32.
- Shulman, Lee S. (1987). Knowledge and Teaching. Foundations of the New Reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57, 1-22.



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