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## **Whole language policy Additional thoughts on a prototypical model**

Britta Hufeisen

### **1. Preliminary thoughts**

In this article, I would like to present my thoughts on how European institutional plurilingualism (L1 + 2) that exists on an individual basis and to date remains an official objective might be introduced systematically and reflected, implemented and promoted in school-based educational institutions (cf. also Bausch et al. 2004 and 2008). In my attempt to demonstrate how this works, I will use a prototypical whole language policy, which implements the idea of curricular plurilingualism by means of consistent use of bilingual instruction of content subjects, as well as supporting measures. These thoughts are a continuation of the ideas I initially discussed in 2005 (2005a), returned to in 2008 and have now refined. I have presented the theoretical language acquisition foundations required to understand these ideas in a separate publication. They are based on my revised factor model 2.0 for describing multiple language learning (cf. Hufeisen in press). I am aware that it is quite likely that my ideas about a whole language policy will never be put into practice, because far too many administrative hurdles exist, because too many skeptics – especially parents, who generally think that such proposals are simply too much for their children – will be armed with counterarguments, and because it seems to contain too much that has never been heard of before (see below). Be this as it may, I consider the basic notions to be relevant, because they may possibly initiate other ideas that can actually be put into practice and because they make sense in terms of economics (cf. de Cillia et al. 2003).

## **2. What is a whole language policy?**

A whole language policy (WHP) as I conceive it creates a framework for planning in which the representatives of the respective languages (e.g., the teachers) communicate among themselves and the representatives of the language and content subjects can work together. The focus and the objective are on integrating various aspects of (institutional) language learning in order to harness synergies of language learning (cf. also Hufeisen/Neuner 2006a and b), such as grammar terminology, planning and teaching content, and learning strategies. A whole language policy fosters curricular plurilingualism in the educational institution of the school and the language education of all learners, whether with or without a migration background, whether monolingual or bilingual or whether they are already growing up truly plurilingually (plurilingual > 2).

However, it can only be put into practice in educational and school settings in which learning more than one foreign language is intended in the first place and is feasible in terms of scheduling. In countries where learning a second foreign language or more than two foreign languages is virtually impossible for educational policy-related, economic or organizational reasons or cannot occur due to the lack of (adequately) trained teachers, few people are open to the idea of a whole language policy. It remains to be seen whether the countries in which foreign language learning is limited will recognize that learning just a single foreign language (usually English) does not go far enough for educational policy-related reasons alone and most likely, also for economic reasons (cf. Fandrych/Hufeisen 2010).

## **3. What are the goals of a whole language policy?**

The goals of a whole language policy include

- taking into account the existing individual plurilingualism(s) of the learners that they already bring with them into the institutional context and including it in the everyday school setting,
- which means making learners aware of their individual plurilingualism(s) that often already exist(s) and pointing out the value of this to them, even if these are languages that are spoken

by only small numbers of speakers, are less well known or are not usually learned at school,

- promoting the planned curricular plurilingualism(s),
- raising the awareness of teachers (of language subjects, as well as of content subjects) regarding questions related to all aspects of plurilingualism, multiple language learning, teaching plurilingualism and language learning in general,
- systematically creating and promoting awareness of language(s) and language learning awareness across languages,
- presenting (foreign) language learning strategies across languages and systematically, trying them out and having them used,
- involving intercultural aspects in all subjects and illustrating them,
- exploiting synergies of multiple language learning in order to save time,
- facilitating the learning and teaching of (foreign) languages, and
- systematically integrating individual and societal plurilingualism in all subjects.

#### **4. What is the background of a whole language policy in terms of educational policy?**

Implementing a whole language policy involves securing adequate space and time in curricula and timetables for first, second and (more than two) foreign languages. It also involves securing German as a second language within German-language schools and securing German as a foreign language at schools in non-German-speaking countries. Currently, curricula in various countries are increasingly undergoing modifications that reduce the number of foreign languages, schedule fewer hours for foreign languages, no longer require foreign languages to be learned and, often enough, leave the foreign language to be learned at English. In many cases, the reasoning given is that the hours freed up can be used for other, purportedly (more) important subjects, such as economics or computer science (cf. Fandrych/Hufeisen 2010). The whole language policy and the connection of regular content subject learning with (foreign) language learning as presented below do not require more hours, which invalidates the argument that no hours are available.

## **5. Using three new paradigms for foreign language teaching and one that is not so new?**

In the methodology used to teach plurilingualism on the one hand, and language teaching/learning research on the other, models have been presented in recent years that attempt to use teaching methods and other methodologies to connect existing plurilingualism and the targeted plurilingualism by abstracting from monolingual foreign language teaching methodology, which does not focus on the other (foreign) languages of the learners. Important input in this area was derived particularly from the areas of the typical second foreign languages, which are often at risk of being eliminated and no longer offered for scheduling or pragmatic reasons. This is especially true for German as a foreign language, which must constantly defend itself against the accusation that – compared to other foreign languages? – it is complicated and difficult to learn and, as a result, pupils do not like learning it and rarely choose to do so. Apart from the fact that other subjects such as physics or music, which also have their own legitimacies, would never have to deal with this accusation, ways and means have to be found for learning German as a foreign language (GFL) in order to show learners and their parents why it is worthwhile to start and to learn this language despite all the justified or even unjustified reservations. This often occurs in the context of models for plurilingualism teaching methodology. Three of these models will be discussed briefly below.

### **5.1. Tertiary language teaching methodology**

Tertiary language teaching methodology, which developed in the late 1990s, harks back to the GFLaE (translated abbreviation for German as a second foreign language after English as a first foreign language (DaFnE)) project conducted by the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, Austria. The project aimed to develop teaching/learning materials for target groups learning (beginning to learn) German who had already learned English. The learning of German was not to start over at an imaginary square one but rather was to build on the learners' existing English skills, involve their existing foreign language learning strategies and, in so doing, make German seem easier and quicker to pick up since synergies were used (cf.

Hufeisen/Neuner 2005). This idealistic project, which actually should be given credit for indicating the particularities associated with second foreign languages, had to struggle against numerous unanticipated hurdles:

- not all teachers were able to or wanted to include English in the GFL instruction,
- the prior experience with and in English may possibly have not been positive enough to make it suitable for transfer into the GFL classroom,
- for the learners, the perception of transferability from one foreign language to the other seemed to outweigh what was linguistically verifiable (especially with regard to the respective L1). In fact, English was not always perceived as being close or similar.
- the previous English skills could not be easily and certainly not automatically transferred to the GFLaE learning process. It was found that more targeted and specific guidance is required in order to apply and use this transfer knowledge (cf. e.g., Marx 2005 or Kärchner-Ober 2009).

### **5.2. Plurilingualism teaching methodology**

Parallel to the development of tertiary language teaching methodology, a plurilingualism teaching methodology developed (cf. e.g., Doyé/Meißner 2010), which was not so closely linked to specific sequences for language learning but rather focused on the existing cases of plurilingualism in the classrooms, whether they involved the languages taught at school or those in individual learner language repertoires. Teaching materials (e.g., Behr 2005) were created that included many popular languages and worked with them in an entertaining manner. The learning objectives for this method involved less specific increase of communicative competence in individual languages, but rather raising awareness of the languages and establishing and enhancing learning strategies for specific foreign languages and those which promote awareness. This type of concept requires teachers and learners who are at ease and open, such as can certainly be found in many places. However, catalogues of learning objectives that are language specific and, in some cases, focused on individual languages, prevent ideas for teaching plurilingualism to be implemented on a more widespread basis. It remains to be hoped that

despite this, these methods will continue to exist for a long time and can be developed further as because they constantly adopted by teachers and learners who can and want to work with them.

### **5.3. Receptive plurilingualism**

A third concept presented here addresses the receptive aspect of plurilingualism and refers to the development and promotion of skills concentrating on simultaneously learning to read foreign-language texts in several languages of one language family. Possible ways to do this have been presented in the publications for EuroComRom, EuroComGerm and Slavic intercomprehension (Klein/Stegmann 2000, Hufeisen/ Marx 2007, Tafel 2009). Similar ideas have already existed in concepts that are lived such as the Scandinavian “semicomcommunication” (according to Haugen 1966), in which all of the speakers in the discourse use their own (mainland) Scandinavian language and are understood by each of the other partners in discourse. Other concepts include model concepts that are nearly impossible to put into practice or seldom practiced, such as that of the *polyglot dialogue* (Posner 1991), *plurilingual communication* (Clyne 2003) and *receptive multilingualism* (ten Thije/Zeevaert 2007, cf. also Marx/Hufeisen 2007). Common features of the concepts are their focus on comprehension, reading, listening and systematizing the respective target language(s) rather than achieving productive skills that are at the same high level across the board. While some teachers use this didactic concept, it can only rarely be integrated systematically into the regular institutional setting or even be modified for use in school instruction, because the current standards and curricula do not allow this type of focus to be set. However, it has provided important stimuli for textbook concepts and has also provided ideas for teaching and other methodologies (cf. S. Klein 2004).

### **5.4. Integrated content subject and language learning**

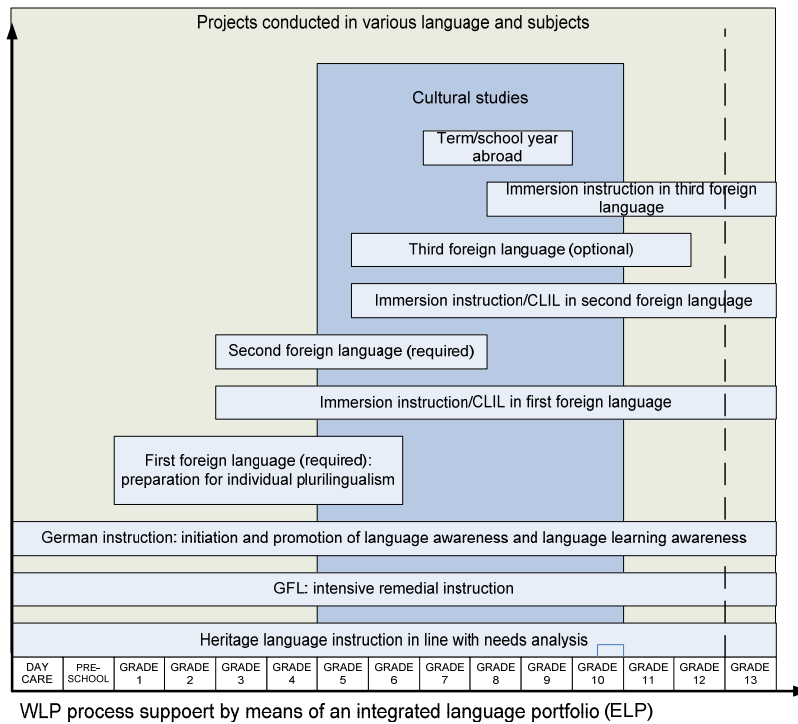
A whole language teaching policy draws on all of the concepts presented above and lends them a consistent structure of Content and Languages Integrated Learning (CLIL). This approach, which is known as bilingual instruction, or in the context of German schools abroad, as German language content instruction (deutschsprachiger Fachunterricht = DFU) has been introduced in a number of countries

and educational domains and could be put into practice relatively quickly (cf. Haataja 2005 and 2009). The risk that certain bilingualism(s) may simply be additive can and must be countered by the consistent inclusion of approaches for teaching plurilingualism as described above and by implementation of subjects such as cultural studies.

## **6. What does a whole language policy look like?**

In the graphic of the whole language policy envisioned here, the learning years from preschool to high school graduation have been placed on the horizontal axis. On the vertical axis, the languages and the points at which they are learned/taught are presented, i.e., the graphic should be read like a graph from the lower left to the upper right.

The basic idea of this model is that the lingua franca (here: German) is learned and taught throughout the entire period the learner attends school, whether as the first language, second language or first, second or xth foreign language. The remedial instruction offered by intensive classes in German as a second language (GSL) or similar structures should be available up to the point at which students who have needs in this language can communicate in German as a lingua franca as equal partners and use the language on a practical basis, at the levels of everyday language, or BICS, and at the levels of the language of education, or CALP, (cf. Gogolin 2003, 2004; Cummins 2000). These structures should be organized like an old-fashioned “paternoster” elevator. Learners get in and keep learning until they have achieved the skills they desire and need to interact in the language that are appropriate for their age. At that point, they exit the metaphorical “paternoster” and join their regular classes. In tandem with remedial instruction, the learners must have the opportunity to continue developing the ability to interact in their respective first language(s), thus providing them with a solid foundation for all subsequent language learning (cf. Brizič 2009, as well as the article in this volume). These conditions must be met before structured foreign language learning can begin.



**Fig.1. Whole language policy**

In this model, which refers to the situation with German as lingua franca and second language and provides for instruction in German as the first language and German as the second language, instruction in a first foreign language begins in the second grade and is learned and taught for four years (I am deliberately leaving the number of hours open at this point, but assume that “intensive” instruction cannot be achieved with only one or two hours). After two years of intensive learning, bilingual content instruction is initiated in at least two content subjects in this foreign language and the lingua franca German. After two more years, instruction in this first foreign language is ended and is continued exclusively in the bilingual content instruction. In so doing, it must be ensured that the concepts that are dealt with are also penetrated in German in order to enable sociopolitical communication on a discursive level.



The second foreign language begins in the fourth grade and is learned and taught for four years as a school subject before it is ended. Here too, after two years of intensive instruction, this language becomes the language of communication in at least two other subjects that are not the subjects of the first foreign language. They are subsequently learned and taught in the lingua franca German and the second foreign language. Here too, it must be ensured that the learners are familiarized with the concepts in both German and in the second foreign language and are able to discuss and reflect on them.

In the model presented above, the third foreign language begins in the sixth grade and is also learned and taught for a total of four years in intensive foreign language instruction before it is ended as a subject. After two years, it is used in at least two other content subjects that are then taught and learned bilingually from that point on. These are different content subjects than those that are already learned and taught bilingually in the first and second foreign languages. As with the other CLIL subjects, here too, it must be guaranteed that the L1 concepts are conveyed.

Parallel to this, efforts can be made to include the languages of origin in the CLIL subjects or to dovetail the instruction in the language of origin with the other subjects such that the learners also learn to interact in the particular language or origin with respect to the concepts that have been studied.

In an ideal world, the language learning development process could be continued and fourth and fifth foreign languages could be introduced. In the final version, all subjects – except German – would be learned and taught in the lingua franca and a foreign language. Since the foreign language instruction in the foreign languages in question always ends after four years, flexibility is created and hours are freed up for additional foreign languages. This weakens the argument against teaching more foreign languages because there is not enough time for them in the timetable. In this type of school, it is necessary and even quite natural that the teachers collaborate across subjects and languages as described above and are dependent on each other, create cross-connections that allow learners to discover parallels and support them in their (increasingly more independent) language learning. - The

fact that this type of model requires teachers who are not only capable of teaching in two subjects (and are certified to do so) but have also learned to teach these subjects bilingually goes without saying and will not be discussed in more detail at this point.

In order to avoid reducing the language classes to their communicative and utilitarian function, an additional, new subject that might be referred to as *intercultural studies*, for example, addresses topics such as literature, culture and the world of politics and economics, using source texts in the original language or in translation. All learners spend at least one term at a school that operates in one of the foreign languages they have learned and, in so doing, experiences genuine immersion.

Besides organizational aspects, as described above, the borders between subjects and school years are crossed – as often as possible – for interdisciplinary and crosslinguistic projects. This allows complex and relevant sociopolitical topics to be addressed, such as *climate (change), war and peace, violence, alcohol, scientific and economic development, future of the individual and society, preconditions for achieving happiness or career* from all essential perspectives of the subjects in a way that is serious and in-depth, as I observed at a comprehensive school in Sweden (cf. Hufeisen 2005b). For each topic, different subjects will most likely have to be included at different degrees of intensity, for different age groups and different languages.

## **7. Conditions and consequences for German as a subject**

In the section below, I would like to discuss several aspects of a whole language policy that are worth mentioning for the individual components and learners in question.

### **7.1. Conditions and consequences for German as a second language**

In German-speaking settings in which German tends to have the character of a second language, this means that German as a second language is an absolute requirement for every whole language policy, whether it is initially in the form of remedial one-on-one instruction (which should not be threatened and/or perceived as a punishment, but should be offered and viewed as real encouragement if it is to be effective) or (ideally) in the form of an intensive GSL class in which GSL learners receive additional instruction until they can be integrated into their regular classes on a permanent basis and be successful learners there.

Another precondition for German as a second language involves close connections to German as a native language or close cooperation with the teachers of these subjects. For instance, it is imperative for them to agree on common grammar terminology in order to avoid confusion. They may consider what kinds of mentoring can be established among groups of learners, what projects can be jointly carried out that require talking about the language in order to talk about the content. This in turn means networking with teachers of the other (foreign) language subjects.

Networking with all content subject classes is self-evident, because GSL is GSL in all subjects and not just in GSL class (cf. Leisen 1999, 2003 and 2010). For teacher training, this means that GSL should not just be limited to supplementary or special master's degree courses or to future teachers who have a background in German language and literature. They are not the only obvious partners of GSL. Instead, a GSL module should be required for all students of all subjects (see more on this topic below).

Teachers who are already working in the classroom should be given the opportunity to attend continuing education courses in order to learn about German as a second language, the associated foreign perspective and its intercultural dimension for their respective (content) subject.

## **7.2. Conditions and consequences for GFL**

The discussion below does not refer to the whole language policy depicted in Fig. 1, but rather to a model in which German is one of the foreign languages. Particularly in countries in which it is not possible to continue pure German instruction or even start learning German, programs such as Content and Language(s) Integrated Learning in German (CLILiG) appear to be realistic options for preserving German and other second foreign languages (cf. e.g., Lindemann/ Andreassen 2008 and Lindemann 2009).

In this context, however, the focus is generally on various questions in need of resolution that cannot be answered with a blanket statement, but only with reference to a specific country or a certain school/institution:

- Are there enough teachers qualified in both subjects – either through a combination of teachers or covered by a single teacher?
- Are there enough teaching and learning materials or can they be acquired?
- Can the concepts communicated in the national language definitely be included?
- Is the preservation of the local/national language itself guaranteed?

## **8. Conditions and consequences for learners**

In the section below, several essential and useful aspects are mentioned that arise for learners when their learning is based on a whole language policy:

- Learners gather all the respective languages and their personal intercultural principles in their own interlinguistic portfolio (cf. Ballweg 2010).
- Learners become aware of their general intra- and interlingual language learning strategies and techniques and are encouraged to apply them to all instances of language reception and production in all languages.
- Learners have a single, common vocabulary notebook or a single common set of vocabulary flash cards for all languages of their respective individual language repertoire.

- Learners keep a grammar notebook for all the different languages in which they write down phenomena specific to individual languages, for example, in certain colors. All general rules are written in blue in the majority language and the language of instruction, while green is used for examples and usage tips for German, red for French, etc.

## **9. Conditions and consequences for teachers**

In the section below, several essential and useful aspects are mentioned that arise for teachers when their teaching is based on a whole language policy:

- L1 and L2 teachers prepare crosslinguistic learning.
- All (foreign) language teachers in a group, an age group, a class level, or a school work together, keep each other informed, develop concepts and lesson plans together.
- All (foreign) language teachers agree to use the same grammar terminology.
- All teachers at one school look for project topics in order to have students work on them in groups with participants from different school years, languages and subjects.
- Email projects or exchanges might take place with groups that have different language backgrounds.

## **10. Conditions and consequences for future teachers**

In the section below, several essential and useful aspects are mentioned that arise for future teachers when their teaching and their own learning is based on a whole language policy:

- All (foreign) language students must (should) learn more about language acquisition theory and plurilingualism during their studies (this may appear to be a trivial, obvious point, but it is mentioned here because there are still pertinent courses of study in which these aspects are not covered).
- All students must (should) learn something about the way their (regular) subject is learned from the foreign perspective and how it must be taught.
- All teachers who teach two subjects must (should) have the opportunity to learn something about CLILiG.

- All of the points mentioned above assume that the teachers have had the opportunity to undergo pertinent training in terms of their subject matter and teaching methods in the first place and, for instance, do not meet their teaching requirements just by virtue of the fact that they have a German language background or they happen to speak German because of some part of their personal history.

### **11. Some open-ended questions about the method used to teach plurilingualism**

These considerations give rise to various questions that we also addressed in the panel discussion during the meeting, on which this article is based. They include the following questions:

- How can the awareness and acceptance of plurilingualism be raised in society and in educational institutions?
- How should/could a plurilingualism module be integrated into basic teacher training?
- For German-speaking countries: How should/could a GSL module be integrated into basic teacher training?
- How can L1 skills in migrant languages (especially of the 90 smaller ones) be maintained/supported (and not just the bigger languages of origin such as Russian or Turkish)?
- What research with respect to plurilingualism should be stimulated (and how)?
- What are the most important questions this research should address?
- One of these questions certainly involves finding out the level of L2 competence required for it to

- serve a basis for transfer.
- Do we need separate methods for performing research on learning multiple languages? If so, what should these methods involve? Can they be derived from other established methods by expanding them, or do we need very specific, dedicated methods, such as those that are used for models for depicting plurilingualism?
- How relevant is the subjectively perceived degree of difficulty of languages in this context?

These questions will continue to occupy us in the coming years as we perform research and address the aspects related to teaching methods on the topic of plurilingualism and its implementation, either hypothetically or in realistic curricula.

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