

to informing the development of such policies (Tong & Goh 2008). The Singapore team has already established a databank of language policy documents which they have categorized into six groups: (i) newspaper articles (854); (ii) monographs (19); (iii) book chapters (64); (iv) journal papers (69); (v) government press releases (46); and (vi) public speeches of senior officials (69). The next step is to set up an electronic databank, accessible to other researchers. The focus of the second stage of the data bank is on Chinese language education in Malaysia.

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## The Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages

The European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), a Council of Europe Partial Agreement based in Graz, Austria, has been serving the community of language education

professionals in its 34 member states for over 15 years now. This unique intergovernmental centre, integrated within the Council of Europe's Department of Language Education and Policy<sup>1</sup>, offers concrete approaches to the issues and challenges facing Europe's multicultural societies in a period of intensive change and mobility.

The Centre has successfully completed two large-scale medium-term programmes of activities, comprising more than 50 projects, coordinated by international teams of experts and directly involving over six thousand language professionals in Europe and beyond, with the impact reaching as far afield as Canada and Japan. *Empowering language professionals* is the overall objective of the current, third, programme of ECML activities, to be concluded in 2011. At present (November 2010), 23 international project teams established by the Centre are finalising their work on developing practical approaches and tools for language education.

The Centre's projects are organised within four-year programmes. The second medium-term programme (2004–07) grouped 22 projects under the title 'Languages for social cohesion – language education in a multilingual and multicultural Europe'.

The Centre's third medium-term programme (2008–11) entitled *Empowering language professionals: Competences – Networks – Impact – Quality* encompasses 23 different projects and addresses the following four thematic areas:

- A. Evaluation and assessment
- B. Continuity in language learning
- C. Content and language integrated education
- D. Plurilingual education<sup>2</sup>

In 2008, the programme content and concept, together with four projects selected from the programme, were presented to the readers of *Language Teaching* by Susanna Slivensky, the Head of Programmes at ECML, and the project coordinators<sup>3</sup>. Four more projects from this programme are presented in more detail below. The programme will come to a conclusion in September 2011 with a large-scale international conference in Graz, at which the outcomes of the programme will be presented and disseminated to a wide professional public in Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Within the Directorate General for Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport (DG IV), this department includes the secretariats of the Language Policy Division, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Strasbourg and the European Centre for Modern Languages.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the projects in the ECML's current medium-term programme see [www.ecml.at/empowerment](http://www.ecml.at/empowerment)

<sup>3</sup> *Language Teaching* 41.3: p. 435–443.

**Empowering language professionals: Current ECML projects****Assessment of Young Learner Literacy, linked to the CEFR (AYLLIT)**

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The AYLLIT project (<http://ayllit.ecml.at>) was launched by the ECML in 2008, with the overall aim of producing material that teachers can use to establish the reading and writing level of young learners (YLS) between 9 and 13 years; the material will ultimately be linked to the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001). The project was motivated by four principal observations:

1. Teachers of languages in primary schools in Europe are generally not language specialists, and require particular support in assessment (Hasselgreen 2005)
2. The CEFR was originally designed for adults and has six levels, which represent a lifelong span. Only the lower levels (up to B1) appear to cater for the cognitive maturity of younger pupils, and these levels need to be adapted to the actual language-use situations of these learners. To reflect progress, intermediate stages need to be defined.
3. ECML's Bergen Can-do project (Hasselgreen 2003) contributed to adapting the CEFR to lower secondary school pupils, through surveys of what learners and their teachers believed they could do. A follow-up study was considered necessary to identify features of learners as they progress through upper primary school.
4. Literacy is fundamental to lifelong learning, and the pleasure of reading story books, once discovered, plays a major role in literacy development.

In studying YLS longitudinally over a two-year period, the project has the following specific aims:

1. To develop a tool for teachers to use to judge whether a child is able to read a particular story text and to produce guidelines and benchmarks to assist teachers in linking YL story books to CEFR levels.
2. To develop a set of general descriptors of writing, illustrated with benchmark written products, representing a range of levels/sublevels on the CEFR. Guidelines for using the material for assessment and feedback will also be produced.

Teachers and pupils from 5th–7th grade classes in Norway, Lithuania, Spain and Slovenia took part in the project. Material developed in a preliminary phase in Norway was piloted, and regularly reviewed and adapted by the team. The children in the four countries wrote to each other at regular intervals, carrying out writing tasks drawn up by the team. The written language produced by individual children, and assessed using the descriptors, was a rich

source of data, and enabled us to distinguish features which seemed to mark the transition from one sublevel to the next. A number of story book series (notably Penguin Young Readers), across a range of levels, were selected for reading by all the classes. A method adapted by the team from that developed by Clay (2000) was implemented, so that teachers could recognise which reading texts were at an acceptable level of difficulty for a child.

At a workshop held in September 2010, the material and methods were presented and further refined. A serious attempt was made to validate the CEFR-linked descriptors for writing and the guidelines for placing story texts on CEFR levels. Considerations of how the material may work for languages other than English were also addressed. In 2011, the results of the project will be published in the form of a handbook for teachers, in which the methods and materials developed in the project will be presented. The main body of the handbook will explain to teachers how to use the materials and follow the methods worked out in the project, for the benefit of themselves and their pupils.

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**The European Framework for CLIL Teacher Education**

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The European Framework for CLIL Teacher Education (EFCT – <http://clil-cd.ecml.at>) is a conceptual tool for guiding the professional development of CLIL teachers. CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is a dual-focused approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language. The framework provides a set of principles and ideas for designing CLIL professional curricula.

CLIL programmes differ widely from country to country in their organisation, content, intensity and choice of languages, and there are corresponding differences in how teacher education providers design and implement teacher training and development programmes. The EFCT aims to serve as a transnational conceptual tool for supporting the development of theoretically-sound educational practice in CLIL contexts. It is not intended as a prescriptive template.

The framework focuses on universal macro-level competences of CLIL educators so as to be adaptable in different countries. It serves as an evidence-based blueprint outlining the overall knowledge and specific competences required for teaching and learning through CLIL. An introductory section describes the key functions of curriculum design, which are also considered relevant for the purposes of teacher professional development. Comment is included on some of the challenges faced in the development of the EFCT. Overall, the main challenge facing teacher education curriculum development in CLIL is its integrative nature. This applies to all levels of education from primary to tertiary, vocational to adult. CLIL seeks to teach two subjects in one – a content subject and a language – while content subjects and additional languages are usually taught separately. Teachers are often trained to teach one subject – a content subject or a language – so teachers who intend to undertake a professional development programme in CLIL may lack training in teaching either a language or a content subject. The EFCT outlines the competences that can support teachers in achieving sufficient expertise in both content and language, so that the integrative nature of CLIL can be successfully implemented. As a macro framework, the EFCT does not focus on the range of content subjects that are taught in educational systems, or on specific vehicular languages, but rather on the competences necessary to teach content subjects and an additional language in an integrated manner.

There are two major sections in the EFCT. One describes the target professional competences that the CLIL teacher is expected to acquire or further develop during a development programme. These cover aspects such as personal reflection, the core features of CLIL, content and language awareness, CLIL pedagogy and assessment, classroom management, and the development of learner autonomy. The other section describes the non-sequential components of professional development modules for approaching, implementing and consolidating CLIL practice. These modular components link directly to the target professional competences provided and cover aspects such as situating CLIL, adopting action research, examining good pedagogy, focusing on CLIL practice in the school context, designing classroom CLIL curricula, interweaving the psychological and pedagogical aspects of teaching, accessing and adapting CLIL learning resources and environments, operating as an evidence-based practitioner, using assessment for learning, and networking through communities of CLIL practice.

The EFCT has been developed through the ECML and has involved widespread consultation with educational experts in Council of Europe member states and other countries. It is available through the ECML in English, French and German.

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### The DOTS project: Developing Online Teaching Skills

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The use of online tools in educational settings has become ubiquitous, yet effective online teaching requires very specific skills. To provide teaching professionals with an opportunity to develop such skills in a language learning context, the DOTS project (<http://dots.ecml.at>) was launched with support from ECML. The team is currently creating an online resource in the form of a Moodle workspace populated with bite-size training activities. Through these activities, teachers and trainee teachers of languages who want to extend their teaching into online spaces can develop and enhance their skills. The training materials are by no means limited to technical information and advice, but aim to increase the pedagogic quality of online language teaching. The training kit will provide self-training materials and worksheets that can easily be integrated into existing language teacher training programmes. Communication tools will also be integrated to make the workspace an interactive platform for communication as well as a resource for training materials. This will include forums dedicated to different topics, wikis for collating examples of good practice, and links to other online training spaces. The materials and tools are suitable both for relative novices with basic computing skills and for more advanced users who want to exchange their views and share their expertise on online language teaching.

The bite-size training materials will be presented in a searchable form, with sorting criteria including level of ICT skills of teacher and students, a variety of tools or applications, and language. As a unique feature of this workspace, the materials will be available in various languages including English, German, Spanish, Catalan, French and Croatian. Sequences of training activities will also be suggested, including a basic explanation of the tool, reasons for using it in language teaching, best practice pedagogy, and suitable tasks for the language classroom. Each sequence ends with reflective tasks leading to interactive exchanges on the workspace.

The project is based on socio-cultural and constructivist pedagogic principles (for more information, see Stickler et al. 2010: [http://eurocall.webs.upv.es/index.php?m=menu\\_00&n=news\\_16#dots](http://eurocall.webs.upv.es/index.php?m=menu_00&n=news_16#dots)), using the concept of experiential learning to help language teachers explore the potential of teaching with ICTs.

From the start of the project, the DOTS team have worked in collaboration with participants at the workshops organised by ECML, incorporating their ideas and suggestions into the workspace and encouraging teachers to try out the skills acquired during the workshops in their own practice. The project was given the opportunity

to publish its initial findings in an online journal (*Teaching English with Technology* at <http://iatefl.org.pl/call/callnl.htm>). Matching the unique working methods of DOTS, the team invited workshop participants to make contributions that reflected their own experiences with online teaching. Following the evaluation of the online activities by participants at a workshop in March 2011, the bite-size DOTS activities will be finalised and published in two ways: first, as an offline resource presented on a datastick and second, as an online resource in the Moodle workspace with the opportunity for shared reflection through online communication tools and shared best practice via (wiki) uploads.

We hope that the online workspace, containing contributions from workshop participants and users of the training activities, will eventually develop into an online community of practice, where more experienced teaching professionals can share strategies for developing online teaching skills and where novice users can also take part and receive support. The project team's future plans include:

- expanding the list of technologies (e.g. mobile technologies) and different online environments (e.g. Second Life);
- exploring new pedagogical aspects (e.g. teacher development through reflective activities, cultural appropriateness);
- examining the collaborative element (e.g. linking with existing online repositories);
- investigating policy and assessment issues.

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#### Majority language instruction as a basis for plurilingual education – *Mehrheitssprachenunterricht als Basis plurilingualer Erziehung (MARILLE)*

Coordinator: Klaus-Börge Boeckmann (University of Vienna, Austria)  
Team members: Eija Aalto (University of Jyväskylä, Finland), Andrea Abel (Accademia Europea di Bolzano, Italy), Terry Lamb (University of Sheffield, UK).

This project is unusual as an ECML project in that it explicitly does not deal with foreign or second languages. Our working term 'majority language', used in the project title, denotes a language variously referred to as a 'national' or 'official' language, a 'language of instruction' or a 'language of education' in Beacco & Byram's 2007 report ([http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/guide\\_niveau3\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/guide_niveau3_EN.asp)), but that has recently been termed a 'language(s) of

schooling' in the 2009 project of that name by the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division ([www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Schoollang\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Schoollang_EN.asp)). Such a language is usually the native language of a majority of pupils in a country, but not necessarily in an individual class or school, where many other native languages might be represented.

We are focusing on classrooms where the majority language is taught as a school subject, such as Swedish in Sweden, German in Austria or English in Ireland. Teachers of this subject have generally been trained for monolingual mother tongue teaching and are challenged by the increasingly diverse linguistic backgrounds of their students. On the one hand, they have to provide many pupils from other language backgrounds with L2 support to help them develop sound skills in the language of instruction for other subjects, and enable them to make use of this language as a learning tool. On the other hand, the majority language classroom has to respect linguistic diversity and must be integrated into a plurilingual education concept in which all subjects (language specific or not) contribute to the development of pupils' plurilingual repertoires (see the Council of Europe's website, [www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic)).

The project examines majority language teachers' strategies for dealing with these challenges and the ways school systems have found (such as school organisation, curriculum development or teacher training) to support them in a range of domains. MARILLE (<http://marille.ecml.at>) concentrates on secondary schools, taking existing material for the primary level into account. The project has taken what could be termed a bottom-up approach, relying to a large degree on contributions from the project participants in the ECML member countries to generate results in four main areas:

- As a first step, we have identified PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS which deal with (plurilingual) majority language teaching in a national or regional context. Networks can be a first contact point for teachers looking for help and they can also be asked to disseminate MARILLE's results.
- We have also collected a significant number of RESOURCES which might be relevant for plurilingual majority language teaching and are presenting them on our website, grouped under the headings 'Resources for teaching', 'Academic references', 'Websites' and 'Other resources'. They can support teachers looking for inspiration – some are ready-to-use classroom activities – and offer the potential of transfer to other contexts.
- As we want to be as explicit as possible as to what a plurilingual majority classroom looks like, we are presenting a number of PRACTICE EXAMPLES (deliberately not called 'good' or 'best') suggested by participants from various countries. These examples include classroom videos, teaching materials and classroom activities, each supplemented with a template providing information about the context in which they were developed and their specific aims within the general objective of fostering plurilingual education in the majority language classroom.
- The fourth area draws the ideas behind the resources and practice examples together in a set of PRINCIPLES or STRATEGIES to manage change towards plurilingualism in the majority language classroom for agents at all levels of the school system, with the main objective of empowering teachers to deal constructively with the new challenges. An important aim is to show that the 'traditional' contents of majority language curricula such as 'analysing language' or 'developing literacy skills' can be targeted just as well with a plurilingual approach as with traditional monolingual approaches.

In the next phase of our project – although there will be continuous development in all project areas – the main focus will be on the formation of these principles, with the help of project participants from various countries. The principles can serve as guidelines for teachers, teacher educators, school administrators and other agents in the school system.

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