

ECML Project B.1: Intercultural Communication in Teacher Education Workshop Report National Training Event Austria Graz, November 11th-12th, 2005

CONTEXT

The Austrian NTE took place at the ECML premises and was a “joint venture” of the ECML, the ÖSZ (Österreichisches SprachenKompetenzzentrum) and the “Verein EFSZ”. Martina Huber-Kriegler and Anna Grigoriadis functioned as local organizers and presenters, Gerlind Vief-Schmidt from Stuttgart as ECML travelling expert.

The scope of the two-day event under the title “Interkulturelle Kommunikation in der LehrerInnenbildung – ein interdisziplinärer fächerübergreifender Ansatz” was supra-regional in the sense that teachers from three Austrian provinces (Styria, Carinthia, Burgenland) were invited to come. Another special feature of the group of participants was that they came from **various school types** (grade school (“Volksschule”), secondary modern school (“Hauptschule”), highschool (“Gymnasium”) and higher vocational school (“Höhere Bundeslehranstalt für wirtschaftliche Berufe”) and were **teachers of different languages**, too: German as a L1 and a L2, Croatian, Slovenian (Bilingual Gymnasium), English and French! One teacher was a maths and sports teacher from a secondary modern school whom we welcomed very much since we also want the issue of language and culture awareness to be spread to teachers of all subjects – considering that ALL subjects in school are taught via language!

As far as we know this teacher training workshop was innovative for Austrian standards what the diversity of backgrounds and target groups was concerned. Traditionally teacher training in Austria is very strictly targeted to one specific school type only and also to one target language only – and getting to know teachers from “across the fence” was one of the things participants appreciated most about the workshop. This diversity caused some extra organisational efforts (e.g. different authorities needed to be contacted for teachers to get one day off) – but we are very proud we could provide this unique opportunity for exchange for all of us!

Since all of the presenters and participants spoke German as a first or second language it was German that was used as workshop language – in combination with examples in English and French and other languages.

CONTENT

Friday morning started with a warm welcome to the participants from Adrian Butler, Director of the ECML, Ursula Newby, managing director of the “Verein EFSZ” and Dagmar Heindler, managing director of the ÖSZ, who also outlined the greater scope of dissemination activities of ECML results in Austria and the role this particular event could play in it.

After organisational details of the workshop had been clarified, Anna Grigoriadis facilitated some ice-breakers so participants had an opportunity to meet each other. The last activity – collecting greetings in as many languages as possible – brought forth an impressive number of expressions shared among the group and

presented to all of us on pin board. Following the coffee break some time was used to give all participants a chance to present themselves, their teaching background and motivation to attend, in combination with relating interesting anecdotes about some personal intercultural experience they had had. This round we found really enlightening since it made clear to all of us what special accumulation of diverse personalities and competencies we would be able to tap on during the seminar.

The next time slot was dedicated to clarifying the terminology and some key terms and concepts which Martina Huber-Kriegler took over. After lunch, which was sponsored by the Verein EFSZ and very much appreciated by the participants, Nicolas Kravic gave our group a short tour of the ECML resource center. Participants were very impressed with the collection and will certainly pass the word to colleagues and friends.

The afternoon's main point on the schedule were the two parallel workshops facilitated by Anna Grigoriadis and Gerlind Vief-Schmidt. Ms Grigoriadis presented cross cultural language projects which had been carried through in her Graz based secondary modern school with a very diverse pupil population (about 50% of her students have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds). Five topics were presented (first names – family names; history of script; language – means of communication with language comparisons, games, and background information about languages in general) and supplemented by examples from the KIESEL-series (published by ÖSZ) and the JaLing project which Ms Grigoriadis took part in.

Ms Vief-Schmidt spoke about reflecting language in intercultural contexts by making use of texts either by authors with migrant backgrounds or by discovering the “cultural loading” of well-known texts like “The little prince” by Saint-Exupéry or some fairy tales. She also presented various materials for different age groups which had been created in the scope of a Comenius project she had directed. Ms Vief-Schmidt's presentation, which also included activities for the participants, focused on cultural images contained in proverbs and sayings and on ways of confronting stereotypical contents with real-life encounters between pupils, students and teaching staffs of different cultural backgrounds in their own countries. She also talked about exchange activities carried out in and between Poland, Portugal, France, Wales and Germany – and the consequences these exchanges had on teaching “Landeskunde” interculturally.

Furthermore she raised participants' awareness of traditional stereotypes in literature through the choice of appropriate de-stereotyping literature (children's, youth and adult literature), the use of texts / songs, related ‘cultural talk’ and comparisons between cultural aspects of young people's language. The list of topics touched upon also included verbal and non-verbal cross-cultural comparisons of rituals around the concept of politeness and contents related to our respective cultural heritage(s) – e.g. the role of money, etc.

Martina Huber-Kriegler concluded the day by informing the group about the history of project B1 and the results of its predecessor project (“Incorporating Intercultural Communication in Teacher Education”), followed by an introduction to “Mirrors and Windows”. To give participants a taste of the kind of activities suggested in M & W, they got a selection of tasks from each unit to play through. A short feedback session about the day around the question of applicability of the presented concepts and materials finished off the official schedule. Most participants, however, and all presenters met downtown for a joint dinner and more socialising.

Saturday morning Ms Huber-Kriegler gave an impulse for discussion under the title of "Reflecting Culture". The keyword "culture" was circled in an association activity and enhanced through the "iceberg cultural metaphor". She continued to exemplify the connection between language and culture and the implications of an integrated language & culture education concept for Austrian schools with examples for developing metalinguistic competence. A very lively discussion about the possibilities of applying the language and culture education concept (as published in Josef Huber, Martina Huber-Kriegler, Dagmar Heindler (Hg.)(1996) **Sprach- & Kulturerziehung: Element eines neuen Schulsprachenkonzepts**. alle: Zentrum für Schulentwicklung, BMUKA, Bereich III, Graz: BMUKA) followed, including many hints and references by the participants to already existing initiatives in different schools.

A very practical example of integrating cultural aspects into language teaching was presented by Gerlind Vief-Schmidt in the form of a video which showed different cultural communication patterns of standard situations connected with the concept of politeness and ways of analysing them to raise awareness among students. This way stereotypical assumptions about representatives of certain cultures could be easily addressed and discussed.

The second half of the morning was again dedicated to the materials workshops by Ms Grigoriadis and Ms Vief-Schmidt in the two subgroups (as above).

The time after the lunch break was used to form small subgroups to discuss the practical implications of the concepts presented in everybody's individual context. Discussions were very lively and the plenary summaries afterwards yielded an impressive number and variety of suggestions for application.

Participants found that the presented materials could be well used and adapted or supplemented in their respective professional fields. Several participants related their experiences with using artistic-creative aspects of working with language and culture. Moreover, the possibilities of functioning as a multiplier in one's respective teaching staff to initiate further training (i.e. SCHILF – [Schulinterne Lehrerfortbildung](#)) were mentioned by many participants.

Another aspect discussed was the need for public acknowledgement of multilingualism and its speakers in a community and very interesting examples of the potential "return value" of housing people of diverse backgrounds were related (i.e.: multilingual labelling of vending machines, official buildings, translating menus in restaurants...) One L1-teacher of Croatian background had mentioned this as one small example of how she felt that she could express her gratitude to the community that had accepted her as a refugee and had given her the chance to start a new life.

During the last plenary session dedicated to evaluation and feedback, all workshop participants expressed the wish to get further information on the topic and to have possibilities of networking with other teachers who already work with different aspects of language & culture education. Everybody especially welcomed the idea of interdisciplinary teacher education which also crossed barriers between school types and target age groups – also one form of "intercultural learning" within the country and one professional group that is traditionally kept very separate. Some teachers also felt the workshop had reassured them personally and professionally to continue working towards the goals outlined in the seminar. We then passed out an evaluation

questionnaire for even more detailed feedback and asked participants to mark their personal impressions on the “course thermometer”. We are happy to say that both the formal and informal feedback we received was outstandingly positive.

Graz, Stuttgart,

Martina Huber-Kriegler
Anna Grigoriadis
Gerlind Vief-Schmidt



Anna Grigoriadis

Martina Huber-Kriegler

Gerlind Vief-Schmidt

National Training Event Austria
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Workshop Information

Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Organizer: Martina Huber-Kriegler, Pädagogische Akademie Graz • ECML expert: Gerlind Vief-Schmidt, Johannes-Kepler-Gymnasium, Bad Cannstadt, Stuttgart • Presenter: Anna Grigoriadis, HS Dr. Renner and Pädagogische Akademie Graz
Cooperating Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ÖSZ (Österreichisches Sprachen Kompetenzzentrum) • Bm:bwk - Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kunst Österreich • Verein EFSZ
Venue	ECML-premises, Nikolaiplatz 4, 8020 Graz
Date	November 11 th -12 th , 2005
Training Design & Participants' Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-day workshop (Friday – Saturday) <p>Invitation via ÖSZ-multipliers in 3 Austrian provinces for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teachers of traditional “school languages” (English, French, Latin, German as L1, Slovenian as the language of one autochthonous Austrian minority) • teachers of “new school languages” (= “mother tongue teachers”): Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian • teachers of German as a L2 (“Interkulturelle BegleitlehrerInnen”) • teachers of other subjects • teachers from ALL school types
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness for the necessity of incorporating intercultural communicative competence into language teaching; • Raising awareness with a view to networking and dialogue between the different school types • Encouraging intercultural learning also at early stages of language learning

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting a variety of already existing materials for language and culture teaching at different levels • Exploring various possibilities for using literature in ICC training • Disseminating the results of ECML projects in the field • Making the ECML and its resources better known • Encouraging the participants to design their own ICC materials suitable for their teaching practice and environment
<p style="text-align: center;">National Context in which seminar took place</p>	<p>The seminar was advertised in three neighbouring Austrian provinces – Styria, Carinthia, Burgenland - and was held in the ECML premises to ensure that participants can make use of the ECML resources in a more direct way in the future. The seminar was supported organisationally and financially by the ÖSZ (the Austrian authority responsible for the dissemination of ECML results within the country) and the Austrian ministry of Education as a pilot project in this form. The Verein EFSZ was kindly offering to provide the seminar rooms and the catering service for the participants.</p> <p>So far dissemination efforts had concentrated on providing information on websites and / or distributing publications. This NTE tried to open a more direct path to reaching practitioners in different sectors of the educational systems.</p> <p>As outlined above the seminar used an innovative integrated approach to teacher education and the positive results may give an impetus for further efforts in this direction.</p>