

Workshop 5 – Medium of Instruction

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The objective of the workshop was described as follows:

Adoption of a second/foreign language as medium of instruction is increasingly commonplace in European higher education. This workshop examines the consequences and opportunities of this phenomenon with respect to the scale, quality, and breadth of language learning amongst undergraduates. The intended outcomes will comprise strategic and developmental issues which could be the basis for cooperation within the HELP network and for European projects

An introductory presentation was held by David Marsh (University of Jyväskylä, Finland) on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), why CLIL is a part of ENLU, and why the workshop would focus on 'medium of instruction'. (See separate briefing document for information.)

David Marsh arranged the workshop to discuss, in particular, the following questions:

1. Is it possible that good subject teaching methodologies used in CLIL (in primary/secondary education) could be more extensively used in higher education?
2. Is it possible and desirable to have teaching staff tested for their ability to teach through a second language?
3. Are higher education language specialists sufficiently familiar with the use of ICT, in particular E-learning?
4. Is there sufficient support available in HEIs for professional development? What would be the content and scope of such training?
5. How should CLIL be used in a more structural and systematic manner with regard to second-cycle programmes?
6. How can language specialists use the momentum of curricular changes in order to promote CLIL?

OUTCOMES

The workshop raised the following issues and agreed that **CLIL methodologies should be promoted and used more systematically in higher education.**

Some participants, however, articulated doubts whether it would be too ambitious a goal to provide education for *all* HE students in an additional language.

What is needed:

1. Persuasion and awareness-raising exercise

- Generally with regard to CLIL
- In particular with regard to teaching methodologies
 - Teacher centred to student centred*
 - Facilitator of learning instead of fountain of wisdom (not a sage on the stage, but a guide on the side)*
 - Also, new and more interactive approaches to teaching, learning and assessment are needed*
- HEIs
 - Language policies need to be installed, language culture to be developed*
 - Even small steps lead into the right direction*
- Teaching staff (non-language)
 - Language teachers should provide convincing arguments for colleagues to use CLIL*
- National authorities
 - Importance of language learning and its quality provision*
- Students
 - Benefits of studying in a foreign language.*
 - Providing necessary framework conditions for them*

2. Co-operation

- Within HEIs
 - *Take advantage of capacities of both teaching staff and students in order to address the dominance of English;*
 - *With regard to the languages used as methods of instruction, different approaches should be sought depending on the diverse circumstances, profiles and needs of HEIs and students;*
 - *Existing online language courses and tools should be used by subject providers and language specialists to develop new course material;*
 - *Stimulating interdisciplinary research on language pedagogical features should be put in practice*
- Between educational sectors

Co-operation with secondary education is crucial since multilingualism cannot be started at the level of higher education alone. Therefore interfaces with other levels of education are needed

3. Challenges

- Qualifications for staff are necessary. This assumes quality assurance, which suggests that staff competences should be tested; that is, assessing the teacher's capacities for teaching a subject in a foreign language. Change of attitude is indispensable.
- More funding is needed

4. Areas for Actions

The following items were discussed as areas for potential actions:

- Development of a transversal test scheme for teaching disciplinary content in a foreign language
- Development of methodologies descriptors (best practice examples) for CLIL in individual disciplines based on an analysis to serve as flexible guidelines
- Development of a professional development programme; specific competences are required
- Strategic programme management
- Provision of E-learning options

5. Recommendations for Projects

Discussion of the Action Areas and the need to stimulate greater awareness led to the workshop proposing 5 lines for projects:

1. Awareness project:

- To stimulate awareness of teaching/learning methods;
- To encourage staff development to train for teaching through other languages;
- To identify competences that need developing;
- To construct a methodologies descriptor of good practice (CLIL involves change teaching methods);
- To stimulate a professional development programme for language specialists, who do not always have requisite qualifications for education through an additional language;
- To build up awareness among language specialists of how to give support to specialist teachers;
- To stimulate methods that use of sources from other languages within programmes in the HEI's main language of instruction.

2. Qualifications & testing project:

- To create transnational testing criteria about how to teach a discipline through another language (discipline-specific)

3. ICT project:

- To develop a descriptor for internet-based methodologies for teaching/learning through an additional language
- To make university teachers aware of good e-learning practice and methodologies in CLIL contexts (discipline-specific)
- To make good e-learning methodologies and practice accessible to teachers over 40!
- To stimulate the learning of languages other than English as they are under threat of elimination from curricula;
- To deliver learning of additional languages (L3, L4, etc.) through virtual learning environments

4. Assessment project :

- To develop processes and procedures to assess the linguistic competences of students who complete programmes through the medium of an additional language (CLIL);
- To investigate how existing criteria (e.g. CEFR) could be interpreted within a CLIL HE environment

5. Strategic programme management project:

- To coordinate the top-level policy needed to manage the requirements for degrees (versatility of language approaches).
- To manage the transitional policy from previous education (allowing students a continuation of the experience of secondary CLIL in HE – perhaps via ICT);
- To stimulate policy development to promote other languages in HE (as both competences and as instructional media);
- To stimulate policy development to introduce students to CLIL;
- To stimulate HEIs to make additional language programmes credit-bearing, and counting towards degree programmes; Finance: use sources from other languages within existing learning approaches.

The workshop also suggested a sixth project line on research:

6. Research project:

- To investigate how factors influencing the effectiveness and efficiency of the medium of instruction (methodologies, and ICT delivery means) with respect to different generations (teachers are often older and use means of communication that differ widely from those familiar to the students).

The recommendations would need to be thoroughly worked out to turn them into realizable projects within realistic timeframes.