



Network project for the decentralised and centralised dissemination of TNP3 results and outcomes

## **SYNTHESIS REPORT “NORTH” (SUB- PROJECT 3)**

### **Consultation and collaboration between universities and other sectors of education**

#### **1. Aims and Issues of the Subproject**

Subproject 3 of TNP3 has focused on a new concept in language learning and teaching. It has dealt with issues concerning areas where the different sectors of education meet and interact, i.e. where communication and cooperation take place between different actors/players in language learning and teaching. They are junctions, where on one hand different levels of language education interact and where on the other hand different players, i.e. decision-makers and language providers, both on the vertical axis of formal language education and on the horizontal axis of other language providers or language learning opportunities (could) meet. We were interested in the modes, effects, issues and structures, i.e. if and how teachers at different levels, learners, stakeholders and any other partners cooperate and communicate with Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in order to ensure the common goal of enhancing and improving language learning and multilingualism in a life-long-learning (LLL) perspective.

**Rationales for the New Concept:** In spite of the fact that the learning of languages is generally acknowledged to be a life-long process par excellence and in spite of the various instruments being developed and actions undertaken on the European level to ensure more effective, transparent and comparable language learning results Europe-wide (e.g. CEFR and ELP), language specialists working in the different sectors of education are largely unaware of each other, as are the different sectors of education, the decision-makers and other providers. The goal of the subproject was to look into the practices and experiences of successful interlinking, to detect and analyse the needs and possibilities, where cooperation is not yet in place and could bring about synergetic effects, and to demonstrate, how communication between the different players would benefit both learners, institutions and countries in order for their citizens to attain the goal of mastering at least 1+2 languages. This goal is tied up with general European endeavours: the raising of employability through mobility, the creation of social cohesion, and the fostering of the European dimension.

**General Themes and Aims:** Three main issues are at the very heart of the subproject's activities, reports, analyses, and recommendations:

- Facilitating the continuity of language learning (and teaching) by making it more coherent and efficient, a goal to be attained by removing obstacles for a smooth progression and transparent and efficient learning paths.
- Making space and enhancing motivation for learning more languages, encouraging and enhancing multilingualism and attaining the European goal of every citizen speaking at least 2 foreign languages. Fostering individual and collective language-awareness processes in the life-long-learning perspective.

The new perspective ties up with the orientation towards outcomes: particularly in language learning the outcome of the learning process must be competence, i. e. the ability of applying knowledge. This is of primary importance for the individual learner and for professionals in language teaching. With every step of his path towards multilingualism the learner should be able to check the stages of competence reached, and accordingly should be able to choose from a large set of offerings to continue efficiently and without unnecessary delay in the direction set and with the language(s) he/she decides to learn or improve. In order to ensure such a transparent, efficient, individually diverse, therefore satisfactory linguistic progression, professionals from diverse sectors of the language industry and decision-makers are expected to step out, talk to one another and by concentrating on the outcomes of learning processes, optimize the results of their common endeavours. Such an approach will result in raising the awareness for learning languages and making European citizens see the advantages of knowing more languages as well as the need to take them up at different stages of their life.

**Role of HEI in this Process:** One of the main objectives of the subproject was to identify the role of HEI in these processes. As HEI occupy a central position in the process of life long learning, both in terms of provision for the language learner and of producing the human resources needed for language education, they should take the lead in designing language learning scenarios encompassing the whole spectrum of language learning. We wanted to find out how HEI might step in, take up, stimulate and initiate activities encouraging and involving contacts.

## **2. Outline of the Activities and the Course of the Subproject**

In the course of work on the subproject the following main activities were carried out and the following results achieved:

**Stage 1:** Introduction, clarification and identification of relevant issues concerning the concept of interface: decisions on the structure of the national

reports dealing with the mapping of existing and needed contacts and interaction, reports on possibly existing examples of good practise. Product: National Reports (NR) and questionnaires on existing interaction on the national level.

**Stage 2:** On the basis of the national reports a synthesis report (SR) was produced, discussed and evaluated; it was used as a reference paper for the production of a questionnaire in a Europe-wide survey. The questionnaires were translated and a list of respondents was produced. Products: Synthesis Report (SR), workshop reports, questionnaires in 11 languages.

**Stage 3:** On the basis of the information gathered recommendations and proposals were formulated and discussed in workshops. Products: Consultation results, recommendations and proposals, Final Report.

For concrete examples of interaction and solutions, please consult the NR, the SR, the workshop reports, the Southampton reports on teacher training, and the extensive Final Report on the TNP3 website.

### **3. Mapping of Interfaces**

In order to make the NR comparable and to get a clearer overview of the various kinds of overlap, the different sectors of education and the various foreign language (FL) teaching providers were structured into a system of co-ordinates. The vertical axis represents the three (or more) levels of the formal educational systems, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. The horizontal axis brings together all the other formal or informal language providers, such as adult education institutions, foreign cultural institutes, language schools and private language institutions as well as distance and e-learning organisations.

### **4. Results of Consultation**

As described in the Synthesis Report the general outcome of the survey is that on the vertical axis the interface between HEIs and Secondary Education plays the most important role. This interface includes teacher training, with teachers in secondary education acting as mentors, in-service training, cooperation in research and in developing teaching and assessment methods. Little is done, however, to encompass the full circle of FL learning and teaching. In early LL for example there is little cooperation between HEI:s and language providers, so this is an urgent need. Another area in need of developing is the LLLL-concept. The horizontal axis describes existing cooperation between HEIs and language providers outside formal education. The most prominent areas here are Foreign Cultural Institutes, e.g. the Goethe Institut, Alliance Française, Distance and E-learning and internal organisations, such as EUROCALL, COIMBRA, LINGUA, AILA etc. The Northern European and Baltic states are no

exceptions here as they follow the same pattern, both on the vertical and the horizontal axis.

## **5. The Nordic Region and the Baltic States**

The countries of the Nordic Region and the Baltic States have some characteristics in common. They are all relatively small, their national languages are all less widely used and taught, and they are all situated in the periphery of the continent. In order for these countries to be active members of the international community and be competitive on the global scene there is a strong need for foreign language and intercultural skills. Here HEIs must and do play a central role but to what extent cooperation with the different sectors of education and with other language providers is in place and can be developed also depends on factors outside the educational system. Such factors are for example national language policies, the allocation of resources for teacher training, in-service and specialist training, the general attitude in society and on the labour market to the needs of language and cultural skills, especially in more than one FL, and the recognition of the common European goal that every citizen should master 1+2 languages, i.e. mother tongue and two FL, up to level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference.

### **5.1 Interface Structures in Existence**

The following data are based mainly on the Finnish and Swedish NR, as well as the Finnish, Swedish and Estonian questionnaires.

#### **5.1.1 Vertical axis**

Central to the area of FL learning and teaching is the concept of language policy. A general language policy refers to the official status of the language(s) spoken in a specific country, whereas a FL policy outlines the framework for FL planning and provision. In Finland, with its special language situation, work has been going on since the early 70s to establish a theoretically based framework for languages. In Sweden *Svenska Språknämnden*, the Swedish Committee for Language Planning and Language Care, established in the 1940s and concerned with Swedish and the Nordic languages, has recently changed into The Swedish Language Council, and has now a much wider perspective, namely to look after the rights and care of all languages spoken by Swedish citizens. This is a clear recognition of the fact that Sweden has changed into a multilingual and multicultural community. The recently established *Myndigheten för skolutveckling* (the Authority for School Development) supports and assesses quality development in all areas. One important project is the development of materials for teaching Mathematics in immigrant languages.

As for FL policies Finland takes the lead, as at secondary level two FL are compulsory, 40% of pupils at lower secondary stage and as many as 80% at upper secondary stage take two optional FL. Polytechnic and university degrees include requirement of proficiency in the other national language as well as in two FL. However, a one-sided language choice is still a problem and the Ministry of Education has set a target to increase the learning of German, French, Russian, and Spanish. With an average of 2,4 FL learnt Finland is second, behind Luxemburg, in Europe with Denmark as No. 3 (1,9) and Sweden as No. 4 (1,7). In Finland an example of good practice in the area of interfacing is the project (KIEPO= Finnish Lang. Education Policies), which was launched in 2005. The project team includes representatives of HE:s and all sectors of language learning from pre-school to secondary level. It aims at establishing updated goals for language education policies. Among these goals are the promotion of multilingualism in terms of LLLL. Some HEI:s in Finland, e.g. the University of Jyväskylä, are also working on their own language policies.

In Sweden a second FL is (theoretically) compulsory at lower sec. level and to various degrees at upper sec. level, depending on the specific orientation, but a second FL is not part of general entrance requirements for tertiary level studies, which leads to many pupils opting out of FL. A relatively new trend is that universities and university colleges offer beginners' language courses in order to provide students with the necessary qualifications for FL studies at tertiary level, an issue that is much debated and questioned by educational authorities. In some HEIs work on regional language policies has been initiated and are underway in Umeå. It is an ambition for the Department of Modern Languages at Umeå university to introduce a general policy for the university to have all official documents in English reviewed by experts before publication. Work on this is progressing. An aspect of a language policy is that 20% of all students graduating from Umeå university should have spent part of their studies abroad. A pilot project has been initiated by the Department of Modern Languages, Umeå university, offering a course (7,5 ECTS) in Intercultural Awareness for all outgoing students. The first course is being offered in March-May 2007. It is envisaged to be compulsory for all outgoing students.

In vocational training language learning varies a lot in different diploma programmes. While it is clearly on the increase in Finland, this is not the case in Sweden, where FL learning is limited to English, both at secondary and tertiary level. Even in international business communication, a second FL is rarely required. However, many students take FL additionally at tertiary level as they realise that this gives special qualifications for the labour market.

A well working Swedish concept for initiating and supporting interfaces between HEIs and the educational system is the concept of regional networks, e.g. at Karlstad University and at Umeå University. Cooperation mostly concerns in-service teacher training. These networks are based on regular sessions with

permanent groups of teachers and university staff. The seminars are aimed at providing a basis for exchanging ideas, reflecting on teaching practices, as well as support and inspiration. The underlying ideas of this type of in-service training are that teachers should be involved on a long-term basis and that they should actively contribute with ideas and experiences. Furthermore, they should be trained to observe and reflect on their own teaching practices from a metaperspective as well as be prepared to develop methods and change attitudes. In the north of Sweden there is a particularly strong need for regional network seminars, as this part of Sweden is sparsely populated with extreme distances to travel for in-service training organised by the in-service training division at Uppsala university, which has a nation-wide responsibility for the nationalisation of schools. Regional Development Centres support the establishment of contacts between HEIs and the world of work.

One important interface to be developed is classroom research, which is carried out in cooperation between HEIs and primary or secondary education. There is up to date some co-operation including shared funding in the area of action research in FL education between schools and HEIs in Sweden. There is a growing interest in this form of cooperation which should be extended.

Both in Finland and Sweden the CEFR forms the basis of FL curricula and assessment criteria all through the educational system, from primary to upper secondary level, but this important instrument has still not been implemented enough, as teachers are neither familiar with its general concepts nor well enough trained and motivated to use it to its full potential. Training programmes have been set up but this is not enough. There is a strongly felt need that resources should be allocated for in-service training aimed at applying the CEFR and the Language Portfolio as instruments for course planning and assessment and in order to guarantee coherence and cooperation in FL teaching and learning.

A special form of language teaching that is widely applied in Finland, at least in major locations, is immersion. It is frequently started at kindergarten, and the languages available are primarily Swedish and English. Cooperation between staff at HEIs and immersion kindergartens is well developed, as universities provide in-service training and conduct surveys on children's adoption of language(s). This is an exception as there is normally very little or no cooperation between HEIs and pre-elementary educational institutions. Immersion is, however, not limited to the pre-elementary level.

### **5.1.2 Horizontal axis**

In all the three countries cooperation between HEIs exists in the area of distance and E-learning. Advanced technology has facilitated the development of virtual universities, e.g. in vocational training, where curricula and course

materials are customized for each course. In future HEIs are expected to expand their chargeable services by offering various language courses that have been customized according to customers' needs.

Following a decision by the Swedish Government of 1 March 2002 the Swedish Net University was set up with the aim of facilitating the accessibility and volume of ICT-based distance learning in HE. In order to run the project, the Swedish *Net University Agency* was started, whose task it is to coordinate the wide range of courses and education given by the universities and university colleges involved. The Net University is planned to be a strong brand name for Swedish distance education provided by HE institutions. For more information see [www.myndigheten.netuniversity.se](http://www.myndigheten.netuniversity.se)

In Finland and Estonia third universities offer language courses for adults, while in Sweden all HE is available on the same terms to all age groups who have the necessary qualifications.

In all three countries FL media such as films, television and printed media are used for FL teaching at all levels. In Sweden and Finland foreign films are not dubbed, which gives the audience plenty of opportunities to hear authentic pronunciation and intonation. A less onesided offer of Anglo-American products would give even better opportunities.

An example of interfaces between FL and other subjects in Sweden is Content and Language Integrated Learning and Teaching (SPRINT=*Språk- och innehållsintegrerad inlärning och undervisning*). In 1999 this was present in around 4% of all compulsory schools and more than 20% of upper secondary schools. The target languages are English (75,5%), German (8%), French (7%), Spanish (4%), Finnish (2%), Other (4,5%). The principal subjects integrated with these languages are Social Science, History, Music and Mathematics. SPRINT is used with different ages from young children to adults, and with all sorts of different ability groups. On one of the national programmes in upper secondary education, the International Baccalaureate Programme, which is offered in 13 major cities with a total of app. 1200 students, all subjects except Swedish and foreign languages are taught through English.

## **5.2 Needs and Recommendations**

In all three stages of the subproject a number of needs were identified and solutions were formulated. The main needs of the North European and Baltic states, as they come across in the NR, are the following:

- More coherent cooperation between the different actors, i.e. authorities, HEIs and other institutions of formal FL teaching in curriculum development, entry and exit qualifications, assessment tests, and accreditation.

- More cooperation in formulating FL policies. Such policies must stress the need for a greater diversity of FL learning and teaching. Both in Finland and Sweden the number of pupils learning more than one FL has increased over the last ten years but the duration of studies has decreased considerably, which means that fewer and fewer learners take intermediate and advanced courses. In Sweden the number of students in HE training for teaching other FL than English has decreased dramatically, which in the long run leads to a loss of FL competences nationwide.
- More resources for FL teaching in HE have to be allocated to fill in the gaps in knowledge and skills that students lack but require for academic studies in FL.
- In-service training for FL teachers must be organised on a regular basis, be better funded and take into account new findings in language acquisition and didactics. The implementation of the CEFR and the Language Portfolio is an important part of in-service training but takes time and effort and thus necessary resources must be allocated.
- More research in joint projects involving different sectors of the educational system, e.g. in the area of language acquisition or didactics. HEIs must take the initiatives but state and municipal funding is a necessary condition.
- Greater diversity of FL in vocational and adult education as well as in languages for specific purposes. More dialogue and joint action between HEIs and institutions of adult education. Implementation of the Europass.
- More facilities for early LL and more coherence in FL language learning and teaching all through the educational system. Communicational functions of language and a vision of language as a socio-cultural phenomenon should be emphasised. Specialist knowledge and skills must be required for teachers in early LL.
- More cooperation between HEIs. The relative independence of institutions that characterises the Swedish HE system can be an obstacle, as there are no national curricula nor regulations concerning the contents and organisation of courses and course programmes. Thus, there are nationwide many different traditions, cultures, and concepts, which are difficult to bring together in order to initiate cooperation. Obstacles for cooperation can also be the system of financing HE and the cutting of grants for teaching and research, as institutions have to look for measures to make them competitive rather than cooperative.
- Closer contacts between HEIs and representatives of working life.
- Language technology should be taken into account more widely and be further developed.

