SYNTHESIS REPORT "SOUTH" (SUB-PROJECT 3)

Languages as an Interface between the Different 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 endeavors: 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, optimise the results of their common endeavors. 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 national reports, the synthesis report, the workshop reports, the Southampton reports on teacher training, and the extensive Final Report on the TNP3 website (http://web.fu-berlin.de/tnp3).

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 countries of South Europe are no

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

5. The Southern Region and the Mediterranean States

The countries of the Southern Region and the Mediterranean States have some characteristics in common. They all are with the exception of Malta and Cyprus relatively large; their national languages are rising in importance and interest, perhaps except French. For a long time the countries with romance languages were known to be rather resistant to the spreading of foreign languages and multiligualism, "monoglot mentality" has prevailed for centuries. But this seems to have changed in the last decade or even less, somewhere, as in Spain, even in record time. 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 labor 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 Italian and Maltese NR and questionnaires, the Spanish NR update that however does not refer to the interface issues but gives a good picture of the rapid and over-all development and some information gained at the conclusion conference on the French situation, especially about the new national language policy.

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 all countries of the southern region there are some national language policies in place, dealing especially with the official language(s) and the minority languages, if they are not already regulated by law. FL policies on the national level might not be the rule, but mostly since 2000 there are quite a number of promising initiatives on the regional level or in special sections of FL education. Thus in France new curricula for all modern

languages in France at all levels from 2002 to 2006 were designed, in 2004 a national debate on education was held and in 2005 the *Law on guidance and curricula for the future of School* and the *Decree concerning the teaching of modern languages in France* were adopted. According to this law the first foreign language is taught to all pupils from age 7 from 2007. The second foreign language will be gradually introduced for all students from 12 (second year of junior school). The local educational authorities decide about the diversity and continuity of the languages offer from primary school to the end of secondary school. In Malta in May 2001 a report entitled *A National Language Strategy* has been issued and has served as a basis for discussion among different stakeholders. Because of its specific language situation Malta favors and enhances bilingual education in Maltese and English from the very start to HE. FL are introduced on the secondary level. In Italy the Ministry decides at national level which languages are offered; for all education levels. They are English, French, German and Spanish (the latter two feature less frequently on the curriculum). Additional impetus to the learning of languages in Italian schools has been given by the *Progetto Lingue 2000*, the Italian government measure aimed at overhauling the teaching and learning of modern languages in Italian schools. With its emphasis on the importance of forming student groups with the same language level and interests, smaller groups and flexible timetabling and its adherence to Council of Europe language learning guidelines, it has tried to redefine language curricula vertically in the Italian primary and secondary education system, from nursery to high schools, with the aim of organising a syllabus in terms of learning objectives and competences which can be verified and certified. In Spain the impetus for changing the attitude towards FL is recent and came from a number of universities. They reacted to the changed socio-political situation, especially the large number of immigrants and the poor results of European surveys, making it clear, that L2 competences are very low. As a result the Conference of Spanish Universities (CRUE) has taken the lead in language learning enhancement. They intend to change initial teacher training for language teachers, enhance learning FL for the graduates of all disciplines, promote bilingual/trilingual programs in compulsory schools on the primary and secondary level and provide for remedial programs for immigrant students. All these planned or partly implemented changes in language ideology and policies are a clear recognition of the fact that Southern countries have changed into multilingual and multicultural communities. Nevertheless as some critics of these developments (e.g. in France) point out, still not enough is being done to enhance multilingualism, to encourage and promote an equal treatment of FL and to empower speakers of different L1.

Little is known about the cooperation and communication between the different sectors of education in the frameworks of centralised national policies, even if they offer a great opportunity for the different sectors of education to talk to one another and to decide together on language issues and the redesigning of

curricula. While Spain with its university initiative seems to be an exception from other countries, it is not specified how cooperation will be implemented. There is a lack of data also on university FL policies in the region as well as on national, regional or local consultation bodies that tend to be excellent connecting tools between the educational sectors.

In general an increase of collaboration between HEI and the levels of the formal educational sectors could be detected: the higher up on the educational ladder a school type is the better are the chances for regular or occasional cooperation. Thus the pre-elementary sector is still very much detached from HEI even if opportunities to collaborate in the field of very early language learning have been taken up in some research initiatives. On the primary level the situation differs from country to country: Malta detected close cooperation between HEI and primary schools in curriculum development, assessment, staff-cooperation, in-service training, research and policy developments, while in Italy there seems to be none. France and Spain are beginning to improve matters, especially with single initiatives and projects (e.g. the Didenheim-Project for language awareness). Here, as our subproject tried to point out in several recommendations, HEI have to take the lead and find ways of putting initial training into place that has been developed by several partners, create appropriate in/service training, prepare materials, especially also in the field of e-learning, where cooperation already exists and make communities aware of the language issues to be taken up in different ways.

In Spain cooperation has begun in the *state-funded action-research teams on bilingual education*, where the Regional Government of Andalusia has launched a four-year Plurilingualism Promotion Plan to establish a 400-center bilingual school network (2004-2008). On initiating the plan, policy makers attempted to bring together stakeholders involved in the language industry, including sectors that had traditionally few or no links with state education (Foreign Cultural Services, foreign universities and research groups). Local universities have been charged with starting research projects in bilingual education, for which assessment, monitoring and advice was needed. The University of Almeria is looking into ways to apply the European Language Portfolio in Primary and Secondary Schools, the University of Huelva is currently developing in-service training software for bilingual schools, University Pablo de Olavide is setting operational guidelines for the integration of language and subjects curricula. The six remaining universities of Andalusia are also tasked with different research lines.

Close contacts between HEI and school teachers traditionally exist in the secondary educational sector as universities usually train teachers, they might organise different forms of inset-training, they cooperate via mentoring students in pedagogical practice or provide resources. In Malta, probably because of the country's size and limitations in human resources, cooperation between the university and SEI is close except in the field of materials and resources; in Italy

in contrast cooperation seems scarce except in the field of e-learning where projects could be identified and portfolio-implementation. Nevertheless it is expected that the huge diversity in the Italian formal educational system will get more unified because of competition and similar requirements. This might bring about some need for communication and cooperation between HEI and other formal educational sectors.

In Spain the situation is rapidly improving: Of special interest here is that the new Bologna-inspired programme-framework will allow for a proper initial training scheme for language teachers. Following the ECTS the next academic year 2007-2008 will see the first edition of a Master of Teaching for Secondary Education. This will represent the first serious attempt at a solid model for initial training for language education professionals, with a 60 to 120 credit course devoted to teacher training. The extent to which this is a milestone can be appreciated if one considers that the existing initial teacher training scheme is still dictated by a pre-democratic law of 1970, a meagre two-month course disconnected from regular university structures. Not known is, however, the extent of cooperation and communication in curriculum design, in-set training and other possible areas of collaboration between the sectors in this innovative initiative.

In France initiatives seem to be mainly initiated through governmental regulations, the new law and curriculum implementation documents; an investigation into the role of HEI in these top down changes is still missing and will certainly detect many forms of cooperation between the sectors due to university stimuli. The teacher training programme for renewed practises concentrates according to the report given at the Rennes conference on enhancing quality by focusing on aural comprehension and oral production, the possibility of creating language groups that are different from class groups and intensive language sessions in the school year, developing access to multimedia resources in all schools, working in closer collaboration with language assistants etc. International strategies for language teacher training are also being developed, i.e. a four-week trainee exchange programme for Initial Teacher Training with the UK.

It seems that the CEFR and the portfolios are gaining ground in the Southern countries: assessing all language skills with relevant criteria in accordance with the CEFR, the introduction of Portfolios at different levels, often in cooperation with HEI, especially when research has to be done on these tools, is being taken up in many regions, e.g. in the Andalusia Project. In France policy is aware of the need for creating interfaces between primary and secondary school, general and vocational high-schools, the role of HEI in these processes seem to be yet undefined. In the Plurilingualism Promotion Plan in Andalusia the CEFR has been used to adapt the curriculum and lay down the assessment criteria and the use of the European Language Portfolio is widespread both as a school tool for students' self-assessment and language awareness practice and

to cast light on the ever controversial issue of teacher's language competence. As for the European competence levels, European standards and certificates are required from teachers for participation in refreshment courses, international mobility programs – a B2 level certificate is mandatory here- and access to bilingual schools – where vacancies can be filled on condition that teachers can satisfy the C1 level required.

5.1.2 Horizontal axis

The increasingly individualized approach to teaching and learning, the demand for a broader range of languages offered and the diminishing financial means in HEI prompt task-sharing with external language providers. In Italy some HEI accept certificates from other language providers such as foreign cultural institutes, language schools etc. Even if data on the horizontal axis with its extensive dispersion, the large variety of FL providers, and, moreover, with the irregularity of cooperation, were extremely difficult to gather, there seems to be quite a large variety of cooperation going on in the field of informal education. HEI make large use of cultural institutes' offers, they foster student mobility, they cooperate with local and regional bodies, communities and sometimes also other stakeholders to motivate young and older people to learn languages. Nevertheless coordination of assessment criteria, of exit and entrance qualifications, as well as of curricula according to tools developed within the EU/EC are not yet enough widely used. Collaboration with producers of teaching materials, e-learning and other resources within HEI that in general up to now have worked only on an individual level would make FL learning more efficient, stimulate autonomous learning, guarantee smoother progression, and benefit all parties involved. More and more HEI themselves offer language courses for adults, either for immigrants or for interested parties.

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 South Europe, 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.
- 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 HE system in the Southern region, esp. in Italy, has been observed as 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.

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