Four ways to develop language skills in all subjects[1]

Becoming proficient in "academic" language can be accelerated through convergent work in all school subjects. Moreover, the acquisition of the language of schooling contributes to the appropriation of the school culture, thus reinforcing the acceptance of the school and its codes. Language is not only a means of communication: it is also used for the construction of knowledge and the development of understanding. Combining "language" and "disciplinary culture" is a major challenge.

Developing "language-sensitive teaching" helps highlight the importance of:
- language in different subjects (being aware of the influence of language on learning);
- emphasising the linguistic dimension in practice (explaining the linguistic issues or expectations of a task or activity).

Track 1: Develop language specifications at the school level

A set of specifications can serve as a guideline for coordinating the approach to language teaching within a school. It could include the following elements:
- a declaration recognising the importance of the language dimension in all subjects;
- a description of the relationship between language and learning as a basis for understanding the importance of language in all subjects;
- a description of the general attitude towards language that is encouraged within the school;
- a negotiated glossary of essential language terminology that students must acquire to facilitate their ability to speak the language;
- a concerted approach to assessment and feedback in all subjects, including how to deal with spelling errors, grammar, etc.
- examples of concrete teaching strategies that can be used in all subjects to facilitate language learning, especially for the most vulnerable pupils and pupils for whom the language of schooling is a foreign language / second (linguistic minorities, migrants, etc.)
- an inventory of the main language uses (work instructions, language registers, discourse skills, oral interaction, etc.) to encourage teachers from all disciplines to take a common approach to language that can be adapted to the context of their subject.

Track 2: Facilitate student language work in all disciplines

For this, it is necessary to explain the following:

Text genres	The linguistic / discursive-cognitive function	Subjects' specific literacy
- the type of text to be produced (report, journal, essay) and the specific characteristics according to each disciplinary culture - the expected discursive genre (describe, explain, tell, argue) with regard to disciplinary culture (present, report, demonstrate, "protocol", etc.) - the challenges of reading a document and the different reading strategies to be mobilised according to the type of document to be processed (press article, technical report, speech, etc.), internal context characteristics (vocabulary, grammar, structure etc.) and external (author, purpose, addressee, etc.)	- the link between cognition (construction of knowledge) and language: explain, argue, hypothesise, compare, etc. are fundamental tasks for understanding in all subjects - get students to explain their intentions before performing an activity or task and afterwards to do the same through a reflexive / metacognitive perspective	It encompasses the following skills: - explaining the meaning of a sentence, a passage or an entire text; - communicating and negotiating knowledge - reflecting on the acquisition process, learning outcomes and their personal and social uses; - applying knowledge in new contexts; - participating in the life of the social and scientific community; - transfering generalisable knowledge, skills and attitudes.

[1] The elements advanced in this tool have been largely extracted from "A handbook for curriculum development and teacher training – The language dimension in all subjects", *2016. Jean-Claude Beacco, Mike Fleming, Francis Goullier, Eike Thürmann, Helmut Vollmer, with contributions by Joseph Sheils. Council of Europe ISBN 978-92-871-8456-6.*

Track 3: Take stock of the language issues in subject-classes

Steps	Cognitive-discursive strategies	Plurilingual contributions and subject-specific linguistic cultures
1. **Preparatory or general interaction** ➔ Basic preparation for participation in the course and the willingness to discuss the content ➔ Negotiation of meaning: identify and assimilate	- Identify the typology of documents - Distinguish the type of text / speech - Assimilate the terminology	- Assimilation of the disciplinary culture according to the specificity of the tools, the documents and the academic language of the discipline - Accessibility of subject content through languages or expressions in certain languages - Language families, transparent words, etymology
2. **Collect and process information** ➔ Acquiring new knowledge ➔ Integrating into learner's existing knowledge	- Undertake research - Extract relevant information - Exploit this data	- Use of various sources of information - Take account of different readings of the same information according to specific cultural contexts - Compare various ways of presenting information
3. **Valuing and sharing knowledge** ➔ Preparing for assessment ➔ Assessing: communicating results and negotiating meaning	- Report, summarise, tell, describe - Explain, present the results of an individual or collective work - Argue or follow a process	- Proper communication in connection with instructions - Pragmatic communication according to a subject - Appropriate communication with regard to the linguistic culture of the discipline

Track 4: Train teachers to scaffold

"Scaffolding" is to provide students with phased and temporary linguistic support. For this, there are various techniques:
- **explain** a new concept using a concept map
- **make comparisons** with one language and one culture / another language and culture
- highlight certain terms to **develop a metalanguage**
- **provide examples of relevant scaffolding and explain them; ask students to note the particular aspects / characteristics of the use of the language**;
- **highlight the forms of use of the language corresponding to specific cognitive-linguistic functions** (e.g. define, describe, explain, evaluate, argue)
- **communicate / negotiate knowledge**, i.e. questioning students to clarify their ideas and to explain their interpretation of things or to question their opinions;
- use **different ways of representing ideas and concepts** in a complementary way (e.g. visuals, diagrams, organizers, highlighting, different media and technologies);
- provide **feedback** that aims to improve literacy in the discipline.

More generally, it is necessary to develop an institutional approach
1) to language education: thematic teaching, project pedagogy and grouping of subjects into broader disciplines
2) an explanation / exploitation of the link between language in all subjects and language as a subject, in particular on the "contextualisation" of the use of languages.
⇨ A proposal could be to train trainers specialised in disciplinary literacies.