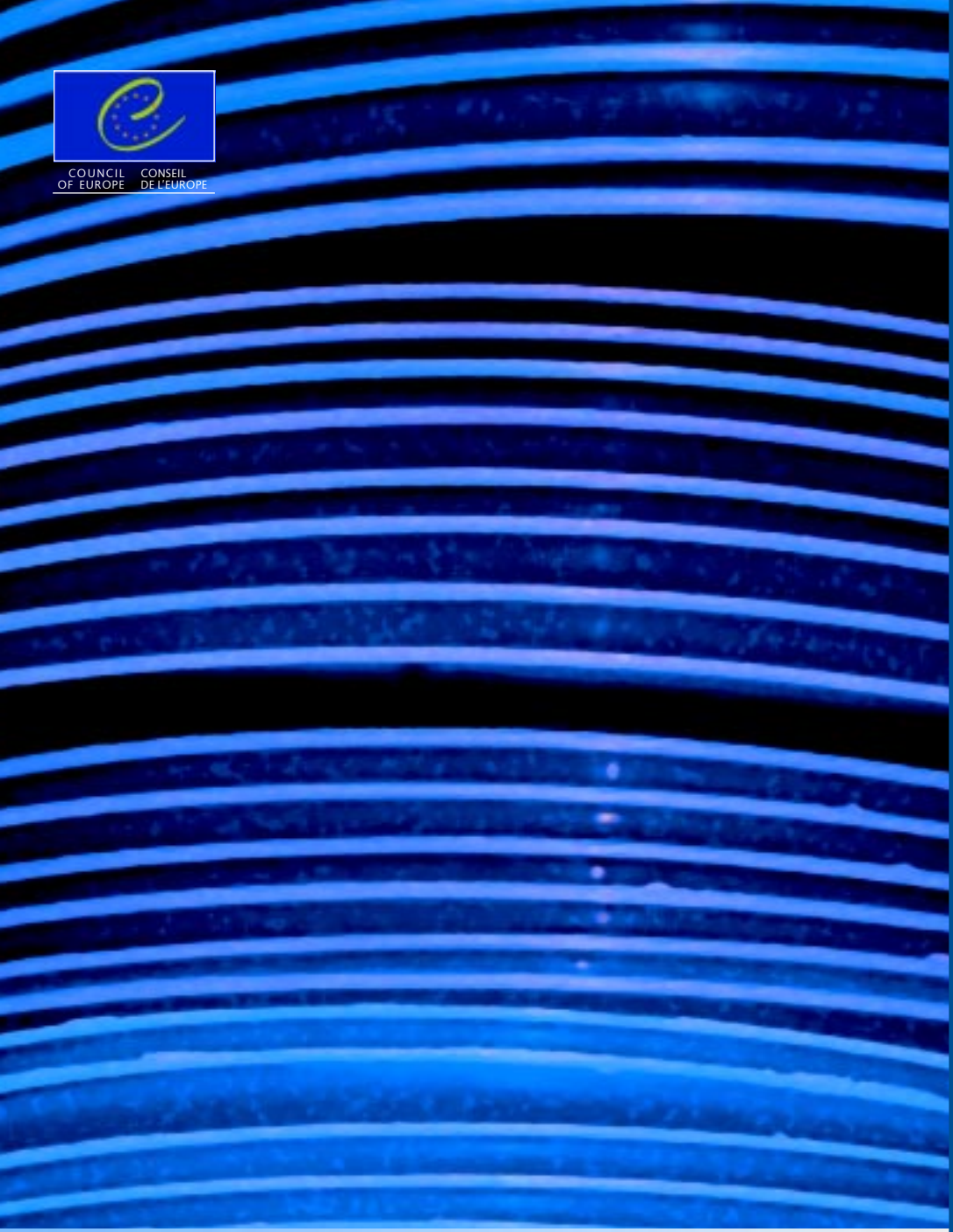

COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

The organisation of innovation in language education

A set of case studies

Frank Heyworth

European Centre for Modern Languages
Centre européen pour les langues vivantes

The organisation of innovation in language education

In 1994, upon the initiative of Austria and the Netherlands, with special support from France, eight states founded the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) as an Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe. It was to become "a forum to discuss and seek solutions to the specific tasks and challenges that face them in the coming years and which will play a decisive role in the process of European integration". At the time of writing, thirty-three states[1] subscribe to the Partial Agreement. Following a successful initial trial period (1995-1998), the continuation of the activities of the Centre was confirmed by Resolution (98) 11 of the Committee of Ministers.

The aim of the Graz Centre is to offer – generally through international workshops, colloquies and research and development networks and other expert meetings – a platform and a meeting place for officials responsible for language policy, specialists in didactics and methodologies, teacher trainers, textbook authors and other multipliers in the area of modern languages.

The organisation of innovation in language education – A set of case studies is edited within the framework of the first medium-term programme of activities of the ECML (2000-2003).

The ECML's overall role is the implementation of language policies and the promotion of innovations in the field of teaching and learning modern languages. The publications are the results of research and development project teams established during workshops in Graz. The series highlights the dedication and active involvement of all those who participated in the projects and in particular of the group leaders and co-ordinators.

1 The 33 member states of the Enlarged Partial Agreement of the ECML are: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", United Kingdom.

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Introduction

This collection of case studies is intended to explore the nature of innovation in language education. It deals with the *content* of innovatory practice – accounts of projects which have researched and implemented new approaches to organising language teaching and learning – and the *process* – what factors have made some innovations successful? Why have some not had the anticipated effect.

It draws very largely on the work of the first medium-term programme of activities of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz from 2000–2003. A number of the co-ordinators of different projects have described their projects and have reflected on the working methods and the implementation of their work. In this way it gives an account of the significant contribution which the medium-term programme has provided.

The work is in four parts:

1. A study of innovation done in the context of project 1.1.1 "The organisation of innovation in language education: A set of case studies" of the ECML
2. a collection of case studies, with introduction and comments by the editor
3. an analysis of a set of questionnaires in which the authors reflected on the process of innovation
4. a conclusion drawing the consequences for future policy and innovation in the organisation of language education.

I. A study on innovation in the organisation of language education

I. A study on innovation in the organisation of language education

Frank Heyworth

Introduction

1. The scope of the study
2. The background – European policies on language education
3. Principles of innovation and organisation
4. The organisation of language education & Some organisational variables affecting innovations
5. The organisation of innovatory projects

Introduction

> Dès lors, l'expérience montre bien qu'il convient d'aborder l'innovation à l'envers, en disant: les actes naissent de l'espoir d'être entendus. Ce n'est pas de leur production qu'il s'agit, mais de l'écoute qu'ils rencontrent. La plante pousse quand le terrain lui est favorable.[1]
>
> Thierry Gaudi, De l'Innovation, 1998

Formula of readiness for change:

C = (abd) > x

C = change, a = level of dissatisfaction with the status quo, b = clear or understood desired outcome, d = identified practical first steps to achieving the desired outcome, and x = the cost of changing

This preliminary study is to be seen in the context of the medium-term programme of the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz beginning in the year 2000. The mission of the Centre is to contribute through workshops, networking and commissioned research to promoting, in co-operation with the Language Policy

[1] Thierry Gaudin, *De l'innovation,* 1998.

Division in Strasbourg of the Council of Europe policies with regard to language education. In other words, its mission is to stimulate focused innovation in language education. This can be achieved through the exploration of new ideas and the development of original educational concepts, but also depends on efficient realistic organisation of language education. The study seeks to identify issues related to educational organisation and to look at innovative ways of implementing new ideas and objectives.

Innovation can be defined as "planned or managed change" and successful innovations are unlikely if attention is not paid to the ways in which they can be managed. And it must be recognised that innovations frequently remain at the project stage and are never integrated into normal practice. There is usually resistance to proposals for change and teachers frequently view new ideas – especially if they are introduced without proper consultation and involvement – as "fads" which will go away once the initial enthusiasm has been worn down.

By deciding to select issues of organisation and set-up of language education as one of the two foci for its medium-term plan, the Centre has recognised the importance of making sure that educational innovations are soundly based in practical reality and need proper management. Any discussion of change in language education cannot restrict itself to consideration of what is desirable, but must address the questions of whether a proposal is feasible (and useful) and, if so, how it can be organised in the most economical and efficient way possible.

This preparatory study examines the organisational issues raised by the planning and management of change and the organisational aspects – the use of time, location, human resources, materials etc. – of innovatory projects. The emphasis is on change within institutions, but issues related to the planning of national and regional language education policy are also examined.

From time to time in the study, there are sections which offer opportunities for readers to reflect on the points raised and on their possible relevance to their own situation.

1. The scope of the study

The brief proposed by the ECML was the following:

- to identify key questions related to the organisation of language education to be resolved in order to facilitate the implementation of the policies promoted by the Language Policy Division and the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe;
- to identify innovative approaches in the organisation of language education as examples of good practice in the implementation of these policies;

- to provide the basis and starting point for a workshop held in November 2001 in Graz, which was designed to contribute to the carrying out and functioning of a medium-term (four year) programme of workshops, research and development projects, international networks for the ECML;
- to propose "meta" procedures and processes which the ECML can use to carry out ongoing evaluation of the success and achievements of its four-year programme.

The topics of the study include:

- the organisation and set up of language education at a macro level – how states and regions organise their language education and how it is organised within whole institutions – schools, universities, adult education institutions etc.;
- the organisation at a micro level – within institutions in the classroom, the self-access centre, in distance learning and other learning formats – with specific emphasis on the integration of the teaching of first, second and foreign languages in the institution's work;
- the organisation of language education at different periods of the lifelong learning process;
- the most efficient use of resources to achieve learning objectives;
- the implications of the innovative approaches to organisation of language education identified in the study for initial or in-service teacher training, together with the identification of innovative approaches to the organisation of teacher training itself.

The study will deal with practical organisational issues rather than with questions of policy and is a preliminary one designed to pose questions, to indicate, with appropriate examples of good practice, pathways for development and experimentation. Although it will deal with some issues at a macro level of organisation in countries and regions, the main emphasis will be on the implementation of innovation at an institutional level. It is planned to add to it in the light of the experience gained over the three-year period to provide a more comprehensive document which will provide practical guidelines on the options open for efficient organisation of language education.

The study examines the two related questions:

- how can language education best be organised to make language education more effective? and
- how can innovatory projects be organised in a way that optimises the chances of success?

2. The background – European policies on language education

The policy and aims of the Council of Europe with regard to language education

The Council of Europe, through the activities of its Language Policy Division in Strasbourg over the last thirty years and the work of the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz since 1995 has had a profound effect on the learning and teaching of languages in Europe.

Here is a summary of some of the important features of its policy:

The Modern Languages Projects

The Council of Europe's work in modern languages has been developed through a series of related projects. A project is essentially a medium-term plan with target groups, themes, objectives and working methods. Earlier projects first established patterns of international co-operation (1962-1971), then developed basic educational and linguistic principles (1971-1976), piloted these in many contexts (1977-1981), and supported their application to the reform of language teaching in many member countries (1982-1987). The previous project: "Language learning for European citizenship" concluded in 1997. The current project "Language policies for a multilingual and multicultural Europe" began in 1998 and will conclude in 2001.

Aims and objectives

The previous Project of the CDCC modern languages programme "Language learning for European Citizenship" was one step in a purposeful, dynamic, coherent programme, the general aim of which was to assist member states in taking effective measures to enable all citizens to learn to use languages for the purposes of communication as a basis for improved mutual understanding and tolerance, personal mobility and access to information in a multilingual and multicultural Europe.

The objectives of the Project were to assist in the development of policies and the implementation, on the basis of common principles, of reforms in progress, and to promote innovation in language teaching and teacher training, in particular by developing:

- new and broader definitions of objectives to enhance communication and intercultural understanding at all levels of language learning
- teaching and learning methodologies designed to develop learners'ability to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries, with special reference to "earning to learn" the use of new technologies and mass media, bilingual education and educational links and exchanges

- programmes for the initial and in-service training of teachers, covering their professional knowledge and skills as well as intercultural attitudes and understanding
- a Common European Framework of reference for language learning and teaching to facilitate the comparison of objectives and qualifications across member states
- a European Language Portfolio for reporting learners' inguistic and intercultural achievements and experiences in a transnationally comprehensible manner and in a lifelong language learning perspective – teacher training and classroom materials (including multimedia) for different educational sectors
- specific activities in support of the efforts of new member states to renew and intensify language teaching.[1]

The mission assigned to the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz is a complementary one. It aims to:

- contribute to the implementation of language policies
- promote innovation in the field of language learning and language teaching

and its strategic aims are to:

- emphasise practical aspects of language learning and teaching
- promote dialogue and exchanges among the different agents involved in the activity
- train multipliers in the field
- help the creation of networks and give support to research projects linked to the centre' programmes

Its focuses include:

- autonomy in language learning
- the introduction of new communication and information technologies and the promotion of "earning to learn"and lifelong language learning
- promotion of intercultural understanding
- the education and training of modern language teachers and curriculum reform
- the dissemination of the results of the Centre's work and the creation of effective follow-up networks.

[1] From the Council of Europe Internet site: http://www.coe.int

In recent times the emphasis of the Council of Europe's work in languages has been increasingly on the development of principles by which language policies can be elaborated and put into practice; plurilingualism and pluriculturality are seen as necessary elements of European citizenship. As a consequence questions of organisation – teaching language competence rather than individual languages will have to mean innovation in the use of time in schools and the harnessing of out-of-school learning.

3. Principles of innovation and organisation

Organisation

What do we understand by organisation?

Like innovation, organisation in language education requires definition. It involves the management of logistic variables – on a simple basis taking steps to make sure that the teacher and the learners are in the same classroom at the same time, equipped with appropriate resources for study, within a suitable framework. In other words, it involves providing a proper learning environment for an effective learning community.

Among the logistic variables which affect the organisation of language education are issues related to:

- **time** – When does language learning take place? Is it intensive or extensive? how is the teacher time available best distributed? How can the learner time be organised to maximise language exposure and language activity?
- **place** – Where does language learning take place? Can the authenticity of the learning be enhanced by organising it outside the classroom? Can multimedia resource centres be established to provide varied input and practice teams? What is the role of field and project work and exchange programmes?
- **channel** – How is the language learning experience transmitted? What are the possible variants of the traditional teacher to learner input pattern? What is the role of the Internet and of other new media?
- **content** – What is the content of the language learning? Is language learning enhanced by learning other school subjects in the language? How are the logistical problems in doing this resolved? How can language learning for academic, vocational and professional purposes best be organised?
- **people** – How are teachers timetabled? Who is involved in the learning process? How are first language informers to be employed? What is the role of exchange programmes? Of cross-border and neighbour language learning programmes? Of school links and pen-pal exchanges?

- **resources** – How are the resources available – in people, time, equipment, place, media – best organised for effective language learning?

There is an additional non-logistic over-riding set of variables which is determined by the **general approach** to language education and education in general. This would include factors like centralisation and decentralisation, control and creativity, educational choices relating to focus on form or on communicative skills.

Decisions on these issues are taken at different levels of power and authority; overall decisions on the time available for language teaching in state schools are taken at Ministry of Education level; teachers in most contexts can take initiatives on the way the available time is used.

What are the grounds on which decisions regarding organisational issues can be taken? The following principles usually influence decisions, either explicitly or implicitly:

- utility – Is the innovation useful for some clear purpose?
- feasibility – Can the innovation be implemented?
- economy – What will the innovation cost? How does this compare with the cost of alternative possible ways of organising the activity?
- acceptability – Will it be accepted by the various players and stakeholders?
- measurability – Can its effect be assessed?
- opportunity cost – Comparison of the effect with other possible actions?
- sustainability – Can the innovation be repeated without special resources? Can it be implemented in normal as well as project circumstances?
- manageability – Can the innovation be implemented with the management resources available?
- impact – How does it effect language learning success? Does it contribute to the process of beneficial change?

All of these factors affect the general organisation of language education as well as innovatory projects – in budgetary and logistic planning, in management of implementation, in communication, in staff management and in the assessment of results. They apply at a macro level in the implementation of language policy and at a micro level within institutions or departments.

Language education

For the purposes of the study, language education is taken to include not just school and classroom language learning activities, but also other organised forms of learning – intensive courses abroad, work experience programmes, exchange programmes,

distance and individual learning, learning from the Internet … t includes the organisation of pluri- and bilingual education and the whole age range from early language learning to adult education.

4. The organisation of language education

Organisation at a macro level

In the public sector, language education takes place in the context of the overall educational system, and is determined by the overall policy aims of the nation or region. The organisational aim is to establish the conditions in which these aims – usually expressed in fairly general terms (e.g. every child should learn at least one foreign language) – can be made operationally effective.

This involves managing a relatively complex system of variables and organisational decisions, among them:

Decision	Organisational factors
The definition of curriculum	▪ How specific should the aims be? ▪ How prescriptive should they be / how much initiative should be left to institutions / to teachers?
The choice of language to be learnt	▪ Who defines what languages are to be learnt? ▪ What provisions are made for parental choice? For learner choice? ▪ Is provision made for the heritage languages of migrants? – inside the school curriculum or outside school?

The time allocated to language learning	▪ How much time is allocated to the first language? To the second language? ▪ How is the time distributed? x hours per week? or in more intensive periods? ▪ At what age does language learning begin?
The content of language education	▪ How is the content of the language education defined? ▪ Does it include provision for the teaching of subject areas in the foreign language? ▪ Are these evaluated to assess both subject learning and language learning? ▪ Are intercultural competencies taken into account in the definition of the content of language teaching?
The provision of teachers to the schools	▪ What steps are taken to ensure an adequate supply of teachers? ▪ Are demographic factors taken into consideration to plan future needs and organise training courses? ▪ Does the supply of teachers for particular languages correspond to the demand?

The provisions for INSET (in-service education for teachers)	▪ Is there adequate provision for INSET throughout teachers' areers? ▪ Is there co-ordination of the content of INSET courses to change in demand or to meet curriculum and technological change? ▪ Is there adequate provision for the re-qualification of teachers of languages for which the demand has declined?
The choice of resources used for language education	▪ Are the coursebooks and other resources defined centrally or is the choice left to the schools? ▪ How is the allocation of resources decided on? – e.g. the usefulness or otherwise of language laboratories, self-access centres, computers for language learning?
The allocation of resources to language learning	▪ Are budgets allocated to schools or is there a central purchasing system? ▪ Is there an overall system for managing the use of scarce resources? e.g. self-access centres shared among different institutions.

The evaluation of language education	▪ Is there clear definition of the target outcome for language learning at different steps in the educational cycle? Are these expressed in terms of communicative competence? ▪ Are there clear systems for placing learners in classes of appropriate levels? Or is mixed ability teaching a tenet of the educational approach? ▪ Does the evaluation system include diagnosis of needs at entry point, feedback on progress during the course and certification of achievement at the end? ▪ Who is responsible for assessment and certification? – the teacher? the institution? the central authority? an independent examinations board? an international examinations board?
The management of quality	▪ Are there systems for assuring and controlling the quality of the language education provided? ▪ Is this done by a system of self-assessment? by ministry inspectors? by an outside quality control scheme? ▪ Are clear criteria for quality defined? Do they take account of client needs and wishes (clients could be parents, children, institutions of further education, future employers etc.)

These are only some of the factors to be taken into account in the organisation of language education. It will be seen that the different factors cannot be taken in isolation but must form part of a coherent system – the number of hours allocated to a language cannot be increased without making properly qualified and trained teachers available in the institutions which need them etc.

The decisions to be taken involve the application of the principles of organisation. The principles of utility, opportunity cost and feasibility affect the broad decisions on educational aims – how useful is language learning in comparison with all the other useful aims that an education system can set itself? What kind of learning outcomes are feasible in the context of the overall resources available for schools?

Many of the decisions involve choices between centralisation and decentralisation, between control and coherence set against initiative and creativity. There are many examples of systems of language education where ministry declarations are not put into practice, because they have not taken steps to ensure the involvement and commitment of those who are responsible for implementation or its acceptability to the various "clients" involved.

Many initiatives are successful in a pilot phase because of extra resources and innovatory motivation, but are not sustainable without the extra effort involved. And, of course, the cost and affordability of education systems – organising the best use of scarce resources is the central concern of all those in charge of the macro organisation of language education.

Some organisational variables affecting innovations

It is fundamental to the development of communicative language learning requires that learners undertake authentic "communicative" tasks in "communicative" situations and that they develop fluency as well as accuracy. A traditional classroom is not the ideal place for this kind of learning activity; the environment is artificial and restricted, the number of fluent speakers of the language usually limited to the teacher, the logistics of classroom functioning make it difficult to provide real use of the language for all the members of the class. Because of this many of the recent innovations in teaching have been ways of varying the organisational parameters of classroom teaching to provide opportunities for more communication in a more genuinely communicative setting.

Time – One of the major concerns in the organisation of a process is the management of time – How can goods be produced more quickly? How can a service be rendered more efficiently? "Time and motion" studies were the basic instruments in early work in the development of factory production processes.

Language learning in schools competes with other subject areas for precious curriculum time; the standard two or three lessons spread through the week is very little in comparison with the aims of acquiring communicative competence. The dispersion of lessons through the week is often thought to mean that a lot of learning is followed by a great deal of forgetting with the following maths lesson chasing away the knowledge acquired, so the organisation of time is central to many innovatory projects.

The fundamental organisational questions in this area are:

- How can we find more time for language learning?

- How can we use the time we have more effectively?
- Is time used best extensively – spread out over a long period – or intensively in concentrated chunks?

How can we find more time for language learning?

The additional time gained for language learning is not the only reason for the adoption of bilingual education and content-based language learning, but being able to do two things at once is an important element in their approach. Much of the research on some kinds [1] of bilingual education has sought to find out whether the gain is a genuine one.

Do learners in bilingual classes acquire more and better language skills than they would otherwise? In most projects the answer is clearly yes. Do they learn the subjects as well as they would have done in their first language is a more contentious question. Reports on the Canadian bilingual projects show very positive results, but other projects report a reductive element in subject teaching when not all the class has full linguistic competence. Rosamond Mitchell, for example [2] reported a high incidence of narrow factual questions in the Gaelic language teaching in a Gaelic / English bilingual project in the Western Isles of Scotland. In the report on the Graz workshop 18/97 [3] observation at a bilingual school raised the problem that the exposure to language in several subjects (implicitly the increased learning time) meant that in the upper secondary school the students' language skills had outstripped those of their subject teachers.

There are a number of other ways in which innovatory projects have sought to gain additional time for language learning – or, at least additional language practice:

- the development of self-access centres available for learners to use in their free time
- the use of pair and group work in class to change the balance between teacher talking time and learner practice time
- the development of field work and project work to encourage out-of-class language activity
- defining what learning can best be done in the classroom and what can be done individually and outside classroom time. The availability of foreign language through radio, television and the Internet makes it increasingly possible to spend less time on the input of language and more on its practice and use.

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1 The term "bilingual education" is used to cover a variety of different educational formats – from schools with additional language learning, to schools teaching some subjects in a foreign language, to those where there is a full parallel education in two languages.

2 In *Evaluating second language education*, ed. Alderson and Beretta.

3 Glen Ole Hellekjaer, *Redefining formal foreign language instruction for a bilingual environment*.

How can we use the time we have more effectively?

Most school language learning is extensive – a relatively small number of weekly hours spread over the whole year, typically between 80 to 160 lessons (i.e. from two to four lessons a week for 40 weeks) in a school year. The same pattern applies to most adult language learning done in the learner's place of residence. Is this the best way of distributing the time available? In many contexts this has proved to be a relatively unsuccessful way of using time to teach languages. Everyone is aware of situations where learners come to the end of six or seven years of language teaching with very low language competence at the end. This is especially true in the case of the second or third language learnt at school. Single period language lessons of 40 to 50 minutes are probably better adapted to a grammar input methodology than they are to task-based activities which may require longer chunks of time to be developed and suffer from the interruptions between lessons.

Would it be more effective to split the time available into, say, four intensive periods of 20 lessons during the year? There would be clear advantages: the language learning time would be seen as an "event" rather than routine; it would be easier to give clear focus on objectives to be covered during the intensive sequence of time; concentrated projects or tasks could be completed more effectively. It would also give more time for tasks involving extensive language production. Nevertheless, there would be formidable organisational obstacles to be overcome – teachers are employed over the whole school year and it is convenient to spread the timetable in regular blocks; organising language teaching in intensive blocks of time could only be done on a large scale if all the other subjects accepted the same system, and, while this might be beneficial, it would be difficult to convince both subject teachers and administrators. Barbara Hinger's study addresses this question directly. Nevertheless, it would be useful for the ECML to initiate pilot projects to test and evaluate the effect of more intensive use of time.

It would equally be of interest to do some systematic research on how classroom time is used and to analyse the effectiveness of the different elements. In an interesting study, Steven Ross [1] used a coding scheme to plot the use of classroom time in English teaching in Japanese upper secondary schools, with a broad classification into time spent respectively on form-focused and message-focused activities. A number of hypotheses were made broadly expecting that students who were subjected to form-focused teaching would develop more accuracy and those where the concentration was on message would develop better fluency. The hypotheses were not, in fact, borne out by the results of tests but similar experiments seeking to compare different ways of organising and using classroom time would be of considerable interest.

For example, Ross writes: "The results of the comparisons of classroom focus and content imply that pair work leads to more practice time. However, contrary to recent claims about the omnipotence of pair work, there is no strong evidence to suggest that

[1] In *Evaluating second language education*, ed. Alderson and Beretta.

pair work which is limited to the manipulation of 'canned' language in the form of dialogues and non-communicative routines will eventually result in general fluency..." It is clear that much research is needed to determine what uses classroom time should best be devoted to.

The concepts associated with time management have received very little attention in teacher training and in the use of classroom time and their application would also be of use and interest.

Place

A second main variable in the organisation of language teaching concerns the location of the learning process. A traditional classroom is not necessarily the best environment for communicative, task-based language learning – frequently it is shared with other subject areas and the arrangement of the desks is often designed for frontal teacher input rather than collaborative work. Although much can be done with posters and decoration to create the atmosphere of the foreign language speaking environment it remains an artificial location.

An important feature of many innovatory language learning projects involves taking the learners out of the classroom and putting them into contact with speakers of the language they are learning – in as authentic a situation as possible. Examples include:

- the use of multimedia self-access centres
- cross-border exchange visits between schools as part of projects to learn the language of "neighbours"
- language learning in the community
- school trips and exchanges
- distance learning of all forms, including Internet learning

The organisational consequences of changing the location of the learning activities are manifold. Moving learners involves the organisation of travel, sometimes of accommodation, covering insurance; moving the resources to learners involves management of technology, equipment, choice of media...

Channel

The issue is to find the richest and most efficient channel to bring the language to the learner. In most European classrooms, the main channels used are probably still the teacher, her voice, the coursebook, the chalkboard, a cassette recorder and photocopies. Many of the media innovations are concerned with exploiting other channels of communication, principally electronic ones – the Internet, e-mail, the telephone, video and audio recordings.

The opportunities opened by the new media are enormous, but pose major organisational questions – Internet access is mainly individual or in small groups; handling its use with small classes is not easy. Computers are usually shared with other subject areas and time online, although becoming increasingly available, is a precious commodity in many countries. The richness of the information available can diffuse the focus of learning and there are important issues concerning what parts of language learning can best be done in an instructional format and what is best left to acquisition and exposure.

Content

Learning something else at the same time as learning the language; learning the language through learning something else. Both of these are major elements in innovatory language projects supported by the ECML. The essence of the communicative approach is that language teaching should be about something – Peter Medgyes [1] in 1986 ironically described the challenge facing Communicative Teachers:

> Given that real life conversations embrace, in theory, all human knowledge and experience, communicative teachers must be extremely erudite and versatile people. In contrast with the well-defined subject matter of traditional foreign-language teachers, Communicative Teachers' great encyclopaedic learning is accompanied by a desire to share their knowledge with others, while being open and modest enough to gain information from any source, including their own learners.

The reports on the various workshops on bilingual schools highlight the contrary problem – the difficulties experienced by subject teachers to cope with teaching their subject to students learning the language at the same time.

The development of intercultural learning and pluriculturism is a major aim of European language policies and the development of intercultural awareness is a major element in the content of language teaching; knowledge of the culture of the target language and comparison with the learners' own experience is a natural topic for a language class. To do this well requires the development of new skills for language teachers. If intercultural awareness and knowledge is to go further than anecdotal facts about culture it will be increasingly necessary to include the techniques of ethnography in the range of skills required by language teachers and to develop activities resembling the enquiry methods of ethnographers in language project and field work activities. They also need to develop general communicative skills in the language taught and their own competence in intercultural communication.

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[1] Rossner and Bolitho (ed.), Queries from a communicative teacher, in *Currents of change in English language teaching*, 1990.

Celia Roberts [1] raises some of the issues in a description of innovative project work during the year abroad of an advanced language course for university students. The theoretical background for doing this seriously needed to be drawn from anthropology and sociology rather than applied linguistics – "Ethnography is a theoretically driven description and analysis within a comparative perspective" but it is not obvious that such theories are the concern of language educators and Roberts suggests that it is more a question of using ethnographic tools – using fieldwork methods and tools for inquiries whose purpose is the joint one of developing linguistic competence and intercultural knowledge and skills.

These concerns seem to me to be central to the development of significant progress in the link between language learning and the promotion of pluriculturism. There is need for evaluation of how effective it is to do two things at once – are languages learnt better because they engage the interest of the learner in a "real" task? Is doing it through language learning the most effective way of achieving progress in intercultural skills and awareness? Is explicit teaching of interculturism possible – or is it "caught not taught"? In the case of the university students described in Roberts' case study:

> What counts as cultural learning? How would cultural learning influence their (the students) notions of themselves as cultural beings and as communicatively competent? Both in the interviews and in the ethnographic projects (our core data) students showed that they saw "culture" not as some body of knowledge waiting prone to be discovered but as a new way of seeing and knowing. This epistemological shift was like turning a searchlight on the local and everyday world – both their own and that of others – so that, perhaps for the first time, they saw themselves, and others, as cultural beings.

There are organisational consequences involved in the development of content-based approaches to language learning in general and to intercultural learning in particular – the organisation of teacher training, the place of field trips and project experience, the language support required …

People

The questions "who teaches languages?" and "who do learners learn from?" do not automatically have the same answer. Many innovatory projects are based on bringing together learners and people they would not meet in the traditional classroom. The aim is a dual one – to give opportunities for authentic communication and to promote language learning through exposure to the language.

These include *face to face* meetings with:

- native speakers brought to talk in the classroom

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[1] Rea-Dickins and Germaine, Language and cultural issues in innovation: the European dimension, in *Managing evaluation and innovation in language teaching*, 1998.

- very fluent non-native speakers of the target language
- native speakers met outside the classroom in field work and project work
- other language learners encountered during exchange visits
- class exchanges as part of cross-border language experiences
- exchange visits to the countries where the language learnt is spoken
- school years abroad

and *distance* meetings through:

- class projects – by post or Internet – with learners in other countries
- individual correspondence through penfriends etc.
- media exposure to music, film, television – where multi-channel sound and choice of languages is more and more common.

Resources

Multimedia learning centres, self-study centres are designed to complement or replace classroom learning by providing access to language through a range of resources. Early development of self-access centres in the 1970s saw them fulfilling the following roles in the language learning process:

- remedial work providing opportunities to study points dealt with in class at the learner's own pace
- practice designed to automatise responses learnt
- reinforcement of what is learnt in the classroom by repetition of work done with the teacher
- consolidation of classroom work through the availability of more exercises of the same type used in the classroom
- extension of learning through the provision of opportunities to explore new language, new texts
- meeting individual and specialised language learning needs by making special purposes material available
- providing a bridge to the language environment through informational materials about the country and culture concerned.

It was thought that resource centres provided an opportunity for equalising learning with second chance study opportunities for slower learners. It was also thought that learning from a range of media would enrich and reinforce learning.

Since these early developments – which were based mainly on a structural view of language learning – and concentrated on providing opportunities for drills and practice the emphasis of language training has shifted towards the development of communication skills and fluency and there has been a similar shift in the use of media resources for acquisition and for access to authentic language. This has led to increased emphasis on self-directed learning and the development of self-access or multimedia learning centres.

There is still a need for systematic research into what elements of language learning are dealt with in the classroom with teachers and where media resources can be employed most efficiently. The balance between the use of the different resources available – in the learning institution and outside is one of the key questions for the organisation of language training.

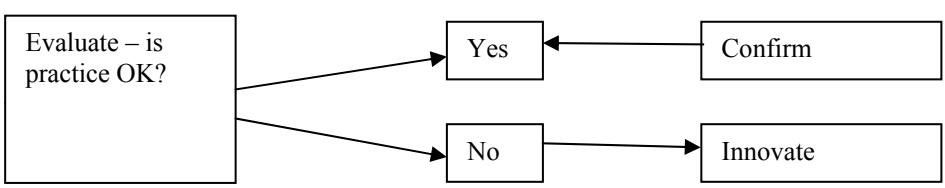
Conclusion

Change in language teaching is concerned with change in educational beliefs and principles. Implementation of change almost always involves the manipulation of organisation variables – using time, resources, location of learning, channels or content differently. Because language learning / teaching is systematic and because it takes place within a broader educational system, modification of the variables usually affects other parts of the system.

Innovation

What do we mean by innovation?

We started with the useful working definition that innovation is "planned or managed change". It is thus differentiated from natural development or trying out a good idea. The planning element in innovation means that it should always be preceded by evaluation of the need for change. The following diagram illustrates the basic process [1].



In fact the decision to innovate is more complex; change requires effort, resources and cost, so the issue becomes "is the need for change so great that it is worth the effort involved?" This has been expressed in the following formula:

[1] Rea-Dickins and Germaine, *Evaluation,* 1992.

Formula of readiness for change:

C = (abd) > x

C = change, a = level of dissatisfaction with the status quo, b = clear or understood desired outcome, d = identified practical first steps to achieving the desired outcome, and x = the cost of changing

In education – and perhaps in language education more than other fields – trying out a new idea is often seen as a good thing in itself, to refresh the teaching / learning process, to avoid routine and to stimulate bored teachers and learners. There is certainly some use in this, but it frequently leads to random innovation never being brought into the mainstream of language education. In the study, we will examine how the process of innovation can be organised so that there is more chance of it being institutionalised.

Does language education need innovation?

It isn't easy to decide what is innovatory in language learning – what is radically new in one environment is standard practice in another and is being challenged or abandoned elsewhere.

It may be helpful to look at innovation in the light of Kuhn's theories of paradigm change [1]. Although Kuhn was talking about scientific change and was wary about the applicability of his theories to social sciences, it is still useful to consider whether language education is in a period of "normal" scientific progress or in a period of "crisis". Kuhn describes a paradigm as a set of principles and rules broadly accepted by the scientific or professional group involved in a field of activity. During periods which he defines as "normal", scientific activity is concerned with refining the principles and rules, developing new instruments to apply them more effectively and using them to resolve problems and "puzzles". In periods of crisis, the accepted rules and principles seem no longer to provide a reliable basis for continued activity – in scientific research they no longer explain the observed facts satisfactorily; typically new discoveries propose a new paradigm which usually meets great resistance, but, once accepted, becomes the norm which is elaborated and developed. Kuhn defines these moments as scientific revolutions.

Where do we stand in the field of language education at the end of the 20th century? Many people would consider that the revolution in linguistic theory prompted by Chomsky's work and the profound change in approaches to language learning and teaching prompted by the development of communicative approaches to language teaching are in the process of being assimilated, refined and elaborated and that we are therefore in a period of "normal" scientific progress.

[1] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The structure of scientific revolutions*, 1970.

On the other hand, to take just one example, research in second language acquisition is casting very serious doubts about the fit between teaching and learning. Peter Skehan, for example:

> The belief that a precise focus on a particular form leads to learning and automatisation (that learners will learn what is taught in the order in which it is taught) no longer carries much credibility in linguistics or psychology.[1]

In a report on "programme-defining evaluation in a decade of eclecticism", Steven Ross [2] describes experiments designed to check hypotheses about the kind of learning that accompanies different methodological approaches:

> No evidence was found to support the position that focus on form results in greater accuracy. Nor was there any clear evidence found to support a pair work-centred method that assumes pair work practice will lead to more fluent speech. The most direct match of process-to-product found was between the incidence of listening input and the development of listening skills in the post-tests.

The movement to replace the methodological paradigm PPP – present, practice, produce – by various forms of task-based learning brings up a large number of uncertainties – "puzzles" in Kuhn's terms – about how languages are learnt and how they should be taught. Krashen's input theory similarly raises serious challenges to conventional teaching methods and a strong case could be made to say that at least in the area of teaching methodology, there is strong dissatisfaction with the present paradigm and a search for a new one to replace it.

Nevertheless, most language teaching still mainly takes place in very traditional ways, especially in schools. Learners learn in a class-group with one teacher in a classroom for a limited number of hours per week and with resources limited to normal classroom equipment. The foreign language is the subject "label" for the class. Schoolchildren learn either one foreign language or take "first" and "second" languages. Evaluation is often based more on accuracy than fluency or ability to communicate.

In the study I will take variations on this traditional pattern as a convenient definition of innovation. In terms of organisation, change usually involves modifying one or more of the variables of this traditional pattern – by making teaching more intensive, by using resources for self-accessed learning, by teaching other subjects in the language, by organising learning outside the classroom …

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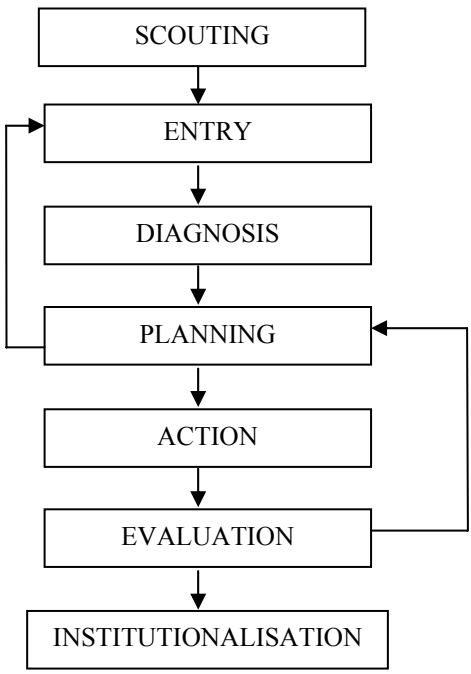
1 In *Challenge and change in language teaching*, ed. Willis and Willis 1996.

2 In *Evaluating second language education*, ed. Alderson and Beretta.

The process of innovation

How is innovation to be managed to increase the chances of successful change? This question has been studied more thoroughly outside the field of education and management of change in industrial contexts has been described as requiring the following steps [1]:



Scouting = determining readiness for change, identifying obvious obstacles, and observing. It involves a passive diagnosis of the situation to size up costs and benefits of intervention, with the aim of finding the entry points for initiating a change. In a language teaching context this would involve steps like a self-assessment process, a focused period of class observation, staff meetings etc.

Entry = determining who will be responsible for implementing the innovation and negotiating a "contract" defining the expectations of the change manager and agreeing on the contributions to be made by each.

[1] In *Organisational behaviour*, Kolb & Frohman.

The main issue to be defined concerns the power or authority to implement the proposed changes. The main sources are:

1. hierarchical authority
2. expert power – e.g. the prestige of a consultant
3. coercive power
4. trust-based power – the informal influence that flows from collaborative problem definition and solutions)
5. common vision power – influence which taps into a shared common vision for the future.

Identification of the point of entry for implementing change is not easy in learning institutions, especially in the public sector, regulated by national curricula, ministry inspectors etc. Top-down points of entry make change easier to implement in theory, but in practice it is necessary to involve the whole of the school community to effect real change.

Diagnosis = a collaborative effort to:

- define the problem, which involves defining where in the system the focus of change will lie and its relationship with other parts of the system
- identify of the forces that promote and resist change; in most situations there are coexisting pressures for change and resistance to it. Alternative strategies for dealing with this include increasing the pressure for change, neutralising the resistance to it or trying to convert a resistance into a pressure for change. Change is seen as a dynamic process where equilibrium between opposing forces for stability and change need to be balanced
- define the goals and the outcome
- identify resources, including the human resources and their motivation, abilities and commitment.

This kind of diagnosis is more specific than the scouting mentioned above and more directed towards looking at the processes by which change can be implemented. There will always be legitimate resistance to proposed changes and a systematic approach to balancing the gains and losses of change is often neglected. Language teaching has often suffered from an excess of superficial innovation without underlying real change. Realising that schools and educational activities are part of a system and doing proper diagnosis is important.

Planning = once the outcomes have been defined alternative change strategies can be chosen. These can be classified in terms of the influence system or the organisational

subsystems to which the intervention is addressed. Six organisational subsystems are defined as:

1. the people subsystem – can be influenced by training, meetings, seminars etc.
2. the authority subsystem – including formal and informal leadership roles
3. the information subsystem – which is equally both formal and informal
4. the task subsystem – includes the nature of the tasks and the technology used to accomplish them
5. the policy / values system – the norms and values of the organisation – what type of behaviour is valued, how conflict is handled
6. the environmental system – including the internal physical environment and the external environment – expectations, budget constraints etc.

All of these subsystems are, of course, present in schools and there is tension, sometimes creative between, for example, the authority, people and information subsystems. In discussions on change it is important to recognise the different subsystems and to take them into account. Any teacher can remember changes proposed through the formal authority subsystem being thwarted by informal resistance to the changes.

Action = the activities involved in implementing change. In a language teaching environment these can include the introduction of new resources or new techniques and methods; the training of staff to use the new approaches; the adoption of new coursebooks or a new curriculum; the reorganisation of timetables. "No matter what the changes are, there is likely to some *resistance to change*. This resistance, when it occurs, is often treated as an irrational negative force to be overcome by whatever means; yet, in some cases, resistance to change can be functional to the survival of a system. If an institution tried every new scheme, idea or process that came along, it would soon wander aimlessly, flounder and die" [1]. Resistance helps ensure that plans are thought through carefully and the consequences of change anticipated.

Evaluation = is an integral part of the change process. It is not just the final outcomes which need to be evaluated, but the intermediate task objectives that have been set during the planning phase, which itself continues during the whole action phase since plans are frequently modified to take account of the results of the ongoing evaluation activities. The results of the evaluation determine whether the proposed innovation is adopted as common practice (institutionalised), abandoned or returned to a renewed planning stage. Key questions include – what is evaluated? with what measurements? for whom? by whom?

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[1] From Lawrence, *How to deal with resistance to change*, Harvard Business Review, 1954.

Institutionalisation = the integration of the innovation into the institution's normal practices. In most dynamic organisations, this does not mean a return to rigidity and lack of change as there is a continuous process of self-assessment and improvement.

The innovatory process has also been described as a process of *unfreezing* – a period of stress tension and a strong need for change; *moving* – relinquishing former practices and testing out new approaches and values; and *refreezing* – when new approaches are adopted as the norm or completely rejected.[1]

This process of consolidation and integration of innovation into normal practice is often neglected and is often difficult to achieve. Projects are usually carried out with extra resources in time, commitment and money. That an innovation works well in project conditions does not mean that it can automatically be transferred into the institution and specific plans for training, providing resources, on-going evaluation have to be made.

Most educational innovation is not analysed in such systematic terms and in the study we will try to apply these principles to some current projects supported by the Council of Europe.

Pause for reflection

Readers may wish to clarify their own views in relation to the present state of language education in their own environment:

Is there general agreement on principles and practice regarding the overall approach to language education?	
If so, what are the main developments designed to improve the techniques with which these common principles are applied?	
Or are there questions, doubts and puzzles which challenge established paradigms and see likely to lead to radical change in principles and practices? What are these issues?	
What research or innovations do you see as likely to contribute to resolving these fundamental issues?	

[1] Lewin, *Frontiers in group dynamics – Human relations*.

Pause for reflection

Readers may wish to apply the points raised in this section to innovations they are involved in. The following table provides a framework for doing this.

Description of the innovation	
Desired impact	
Organisational variable to be applied	**Description of application**
Organisation of learning time	
Location of teaching and learning activities	
Channels of communication	
Content of the language learning activities	
People involved in the language learning activities	
Organisation and use of learning resources	

The organisation of innovatory projects

"It won't work." "See, it isn't working." "I told you it wouldn't work."

These reactions are typical of the healthy scepticism with which innovatory projects are viewed by teachers and others. This, from a report on a curriculum development project in Britain is typical:

> The problems include: lack of co-ordination; lack of institutional or departmental support with the pioneers feeling very much alone; and a lack of fit with the curriculum materials currently used. The most frequently cited barrier was the lack of time, currently blamed upon the educational upheaval in the UK following a new system of examining at age 16, and the implementation of an Education Reform Act bringing widespread changes to curriculum and educational organisation. At such times, avoiding avoidable curriculum development could be viewed as a reasonable strategy.

Many innovatory projects remain at a project stage without having deep or lasting influence on general practice. They frequently require special effort and special resources – which often makes the innovations difficult to sustain in more normal circumstances. Change in general prompts resistance and determination and persistence are required to take an innovation through to completion. Proper attention to getting the organisation right increases the chances of doing this. No innovation will work without the sustained commitment of the people involved and the management of the organisational variables can influence the acceptance or refusal decisively.

> The stark reality is that innovations fail more times that they succeed mainly because the process of implementing innovations continues to be downplayed or overlooked. [1]

Among the factors which influence successful innovation are:

- motivation
- involvement
- communication
- commitment
- realistic evaluation
- institutionalisation

[1] Michael Fullan, *Successful school improvement*, 1992.

Motivation

No project can be successful without the motivation of those concerned. There are numbers of well-known theories of motivation which generally try to give a simple and usable framework for action – Maslow's hierarchy of needs, for example. Most of the theories note the crucial function of a feeling of self-worth and achievement in motivating people to act.

Expectancy value theories assume that motivation to perform various tasks is the product of two key factors: the individual's expectancy of success in a given task and the value the individual attaches to success in that task; self-worth theory claims that the highest human priority is the need for self acceptance and to maintain a positive face; goal theories propose that human action is spurred by purpose, and for action to take place, goals have to be set and pursued by choice; self determination theory, and the accompanying intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivational paradigm, maintains that the desire to be self initiating and self regulating is a prerequisite for any human behaviour to be intrinsically rewarding, and therefore the essence of motivated action is a sense of autonomy.

The common thread is that people are motivated by opportunity to choose, to be autonomous, by the expectancy of success. This means that those managing innovatory projects must make sure that there is consultation, participation and ownership of the project for those involved in them. Top-down projects, where the decision to innovate is outside those who have to implement it, must pay special attention to organising opportunities for the involvement and power to influence of those concerned.

In the introduction to a study on the motivation of those involved in long term projects – language learners in the classroom, for example – Dörnyei and Ottó [1] point out that motivation requires sustained "executive" motivation as well as the initial impetus to choose to undertake an initiative.

During skill training, goal accomplishment proceeds slowly, as the individual develops an understanding of the task and proficiency in skills relevant to performance. "… Continued task practice (i.e. persistence) is necessary to yield improvements in task performance. But for practice to have a positive effect on performance, additional motivational mechanisms are required to sustain attention and effort over time and in the face of difficulties and failures."

In other words, complex contexts like those in implementing an ambitious project reduce the role of the motivational influences associated with the initial decision to pursue the goal, and highlight the importance of motivational influences that affect action during goal implementation. Dörnyei considers that effective executive motivation requires commitment and this cannot be achieved without action plans – good intentions are not enough:

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[1] Zoltán Dörnyei and István Ottó, *Motivation in action: A process model of L2 motivation*.

> Adding commitment to a goal is a crucial step in the motivational process but it is not sufficient in itself to energise action if the goal is not translated into concrete steps the individual needs to take. Thus, a final necessary step in generating a fully operational intention is to develop a manageable action plan which contains the necessary technical details regarding the planned action, namely the action schemata (i.e. concrete behavioural guidelines such as subtasks to implement, and a number of relevant attainment strategies to follow) and the time frame or start condition (i.e. temporal specifications regulating the actual timing of the onset of action, e.g. a concrete time – "I'll get down to it tomorrow" – or a condition – "I'll do it when I have finished this"). Although a plan of action does not have to be completed before initiating an act – it may be (and usually is) finalised while acting – there must be at least a general action plan before one is able to act at all.[1]

Thus, planning and control of the logistics, with overall and subsidiary deadlines, is vital to maintaining executive motivation throughout the life of a project.

Involvement

Three organisational models for innovatory projects have been described, as follows [2]:

The research, development and diffusion model

The innovation is "top-down" and initiated by "experts", developed centrally and then diffused to those who will implement it. This is the common pattern for innovations decided on by ministries of Education and as a result of political decisions. Research projects can also influence decision making, either to encourage or put a brake on change – for example, the negative results of research into language learning in English primary schools in the seventies slowed down the development of early language in learning there.

The social interaction model

Innovation with an emphasis on user involvement with collaboration among teachers, trainers, administrators.

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1 Zoltán Dörnyei and István Ottó, *Motivation in action: A process model of L2 motivation*.

2 From: Rea-Dickins and Germaine, *Evaluation*, 1992.

The action research model

A "bottom-up" approach initiated by teachers analysing and evaluating practice and initiating change as a result of this.

All three models have advantages and uses; in major projects the different phases of the work are likely to use variants of all three. It is nevertheless clear that innovations will be adopted much more smoothly and effectively if those implementing them are involved, preferably from the start of the process. In a report on a Scottish curriculum development project using computers, the problem was stated as follows:

> It was realised that the project would have to provide development strategies which influenced teacher behaviour in a number of ways:
>
> (1) which could relate to the current problems facing them rather than presenting new problems;
>
> (2) which would ask teachers to relate to their career development in a positive way, to see themselves in the future operating in a different way to the way they were currently operating – a self needs identification;
>
> (3) which helped them to see themselves as part of the school's organisational climate, and be aware of the opportunities and constraints offered by their work in their school;
>
> (4) which offered a range of examples of practice which might serve as a 'travel guide' to a variety of destinations;
>
> (5) which offered a multiplicity of pathways (in content, level and modes of delivery) for professional development.[1]
>
> This emphasises the need to see innovation in the context not just of the immediate project but in the context of the total working environment of those involved and in the developmental needs of all concerned.

Commitment

For innovations to get beyond the stage of being desirable, those involved must at some point commit themselves to the project:

> Believing that a goal is desirable and reachable does not automatically force an individual to act. The individual must choose to put his or her judgement in action; accordingly, 'goal commitment' is an important goal property. Commitment making is a highly responsible personal decision and it entails a significant qualitative change in one's attitudes.

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[1] Ordon and Entwistle, *Report on the Scottish Microelectrics Project*, 1982.

Commitments may involve staking interpersonal prestige and even material resources on that goal. Commitments may also entail forgoing other possible goals or pastimes, along with the rewards that might have attended them. In short, these cases involve placing contingencies on oneself.

It needs to be noted here that changes in schools typically dictate that they meet goals set by inspectors, administrators or politicians. Thus, instead of a voluntarily initiated project we often find content and objectives set externally for the project and, therefore, achieving commitment can be seen more as a process of persuasion and communication. Adding commitment to a goal is a crucial step in the innovatory process but it is not sufficient in itself to promote effective action if the goal is not translated into concrete steps the individual needs to take.

So commitment to concrete action plans over a sustained period of time is required to implement a change process. This commitment will not be generated unless there is at the same time a shared set of values, a vision of the ultimate worthwhileness of the innovation.

Building commitment to change

- Allow room for participation in the planning of the change
- Leave choices within the overall decision to change
- Provide a clear picture of the change, a "vision" with details about the new state
- Share information about change plans to the fullest extent possible
- Divide a big change into more manageable and familiar steps; let people take a small step first
- Minimise surprises; give advance warning about new requirements
- Allow for digestion of change requests – a chance to become accustomed to the ideas of change before making a commitment
- Repeatedly demonstrate your own commitment to the change
- Make standards and requirements clear – tell exactly what is required in implementing the change
- Offer positive reinforcement for competence; let people know what they are achieving
- Look for and reward pioneers
- Help people feel compensated for the extra time and energy change requires

- Avoid creating obvious "losers" from the change (but if there are any, be honest with them early on)
- Allow expressions of nostalgia and grief for the past – then create excitement about the future.

Communication

Successful implementation of innovation requires a proper communication policy. Case studies of successful implementations [1] show the crucial effect of two factors – good communications during the process of implementation and school support for the innovation. It has been shown that implementation is especially difficult in the initial stages where theoretical proposals have to be translated into practice. A lack of clarity about an innovation has been seen as the main reason why many innovatory projects fail.

"The literature abounds with examples of innovation case studies which did not clearly articulate the goals of the innovation, did not specify the means of implementation, and used language outside the teachers' frame of reference." [2] There are numbers of studies of the implementation of curriculum change where teachers believe they are following new "communicative" principles, but in fact have changed their teaching practices only superficially. This has been defined as "false clarity" and contrasted with "painful unclarity" where an innovation is rejected because teachers are completely unclear about either the principles or the desired outcomes.

In the evaluation of a Greek project implementing a new communicative curriculum, it was found [3] that although teachers thought they were applying a new curriculum – and administrators thought the innovation was successful – in fact they tended to find ways of reproducing a more grammar-based teaching with imported exercises.

In a study of innovations in Scottish secondary schools, Brown and McIntyre [4] state:

> where planners have not made their interpretations explicit and have not developed their concepts there is a danger that either teachers will have no idea what was intended and ignore some aspects of the innovation, or they may misunderstand their intentions and react with disfavour... explicit detailed descriptions are not enough; the curriculum planners must further negotiate the meanings ensuring that teachers both attend to and understand them.

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1 J. Hamilton, *Inspiring innovations in language teaching*, 1996.

2 Kia Karavas Doukas, Evaluating the implementation of educational innovations: lessons from the past, in *Managing and evaluating innovation in language teaching*, ed. Rea-Dickins and Germaine, 1998.

3 Kia Karavas Doukas, Evaluating the implementation of educational innovations: lessons from the past, in *Managing and evaluating innovation in language teaching*, ed. Rea-Dickins and Germaine, 1998.

4 Factors influencing teachers' responses to curricular innovations, Research Intelligence, 1978.

Those planning innovation need to formulate a clear communications policy which includes: regular meetings to discuss progress and identify practical problems; open feedback channels between those managing and those implementing an innovation; ways of modifying the original proposals to take into account the feedback provided by users.

Realistic evaluation

Evaluation should be an integral part of any innovatory project and should be part of the initial planning. It is important to decide the purposes of evaluation – is it to be a judgment of the success of the project, after its completion and to lead to decisions on whether to continue or abandon the innovation? Or is it to be process-oriented and feed into the decision making and implementation of the new ideas all throughout the life of the innovation?

It should not be expected that even an evaluation of a project carried out by "outsiders" will provide completely objective assessments of innovation. Those who commission the evaluation and those who carry it out are influenced by the environment as much as those doing an innovation – by the realities of policy making, budgets, by changing priorities. Nevertheless a realistic framework for evaluation, formulated at the outset of the project contributes to clarity of purpose and realism in both aims and assessment.

The following framework for evaluating educational projects has been developed by Charles Alderson [1]

Project Structure	Indicators of Achievement	How indicators can be quantified or assessed	Important assumptions
WIDER – i.e. on a national level – what are the wider problems with which the project will help?	What are the quantitative ways of measuring, or qualitative ways of judging whether these broad objectives have been achieved?	What sources of information exist or can be provided cost-effectively?	What conditions external to the project are necessary if the immediate objectives are to contribute to the wider objectives?

[1] In Alderson and Beretta, *Evaluating second language education*, 1992.

IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES – What are the intended immediate effects on the target group or institution? What improve-ments or changes will be brought about by the project?	What are the quantitative ways of measuring, or qualitative evidence by which achievement and distribution of effects and benefits can be judged?	What sources of information exist or can be provided cost-effectively? Does provision for collection need to be made?	What are the factors not within control of the project (e.g. availability of staff and resources) which are liable to restrict achievement of the immediate objectives?
OUTPUTS What outputs (kind, quantity, by when) are to be produced to achieve the immediate objectives (e.g. new curriculum implemented, people trained)?	What are the sources of information?	What external factors must be realised to obtain planned outputs on schedule?	
INPUTS What materials / equipment or services (people trained etc.) are to be provided at what cost, over what period, by whom?	What are the sources of information	What decisions out of the control of those managing the project are necessary for it to be carried through?	

The distinction between quantitative evaluation and qualitative assessment is important; recent developments in project assessment have emphasised the change from a concentration on measurable outcomes to a more descriptive approach designed to feed into the development process and to provide information that used to take decisions all along the change process. For this to happen, evaluation and assessment need to take account of all the stakeholders in the change process – administrators, teachers and learners – so that evaluation is action-oriented rather than judgmental. "We find a greater democratisation in evaluation and the more active involvement of many of those who are affected by the innovation being evaluated." [1]

[1] Rea-Dickins & Germaine, *Managing evaluation and innovation in language teaching*, 1998.

Institutionalisation

The final step in the process of innovation is institutionalisation (or adoption) when a new idea becomes part of normal practice. In a language education context, this can happen at different levels:

- changes in programmes – curricula, syllabi or materials
- changes in teacher and learner behaviour – new approaches to learning, new methodology and activities
- logistic changes – new timetables, reorganisation of where learning takes place, use of new resources and media
- changes in beliefs and principles – profound changes in the educational paradigm.

It is frequently difficult to pin down whether and at what point changes of a radical kind have been institutionalised – education is complex and the adoption of a new curriculum, for example, does not necessarily mean that the changes in approach, principle and practice have been integrated into the classroom. The metaphor of the change process as being one of *unfreezing / movement / refreezing* is a useful one and both educational institutions and language teachers should beware of the trend towards continuous change where nothing ever becomes established enough to have lasting effect.

Conclusion

Innovations have most chance of success if:

- the desired outcome is clearly defined at the outset and communicated to all involved
- it is realised that resistance to change is inevitable and that people's concern about them are legitimate and real – "all change produces fear of the unknown, ambivalence and anxiety"
- the planning stage takes into account the views and concerns of those involved and takes account of their input
- it is recognised that the involvement and commitment of the participants stem from real partnership and ownership – the power to influence what is happening
- innovation takes time and long-term commitment
- attention is paid to maintaining not just initial choice motivation but long-term executive motivation to see the project through
- it is realised that real change means a change in attitudes and beliefs as well as in working practices

- there is enough flexibility to modify plans in the light of the reactions of the users and the evidence of results
- that at some point there is the decision to institutionalise – or to abandon – the innovation so that institutions are not in a state of continuous change.

Pause for reflection

At this point readers may wish to analyse innovative projects in which they have been involved in the light of the principles applied to the change process. The questionnaire may prove a useful guide for their analysis:

Analysis of change processes	
Were the desired outcomes of the change defined? What were they?	
What kind of changes were sought – in awareness, attitude, methods, syllabus, resources etc.?	
Were the assessment / evaluation procedures decided on at the outset of the project? Were they to be carried out after the event or during the project?	
What was done to make sure that the goals of the project were communicated clearly to all concerned? What was done to organise feedback and action taken as a result of it?	
What steps were taken to involve all the stakeholders in the project?	

What steps were taken to assure the commitment of those involved in the process?	
Were the resources required for the innovation clearly defined? Were they available?	
What was undertaken to get the support of authorities and the institutions concerned? Was this support received?	
What part of the project was “top-down”? What was “bottom-up”?	
What was the actual outcome of the innovation? Was it adopted and institutionalised?	
What organisational elements were involved in the innovation? How well were they managed?	

Discuss, say, three things that, if done differently, would have improved the success of the project.

II. The case studies

Case study 1:
ECML Project 2.7.1.: Quality assurance

Laura Muresan

This case study is an account of a project in the ECML medium-term programme. It is an excellent example of how a co-operative structure can provide high levels of involvement and motivation. The project's source was in a workshop on quality held in Graz in 1998 which led to the creation of a number of national associations to promote quality in language education. The product of the project is a CD-Rom which provides a coherent concept for quality management – a continuum from self-assessment, to internal institutional quality assurance, to external certification and accreditation of quality.

ECML Project 2.7.1 on "Quality assurance and self-assessment for schools and teachers"

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Reflecting on the project process

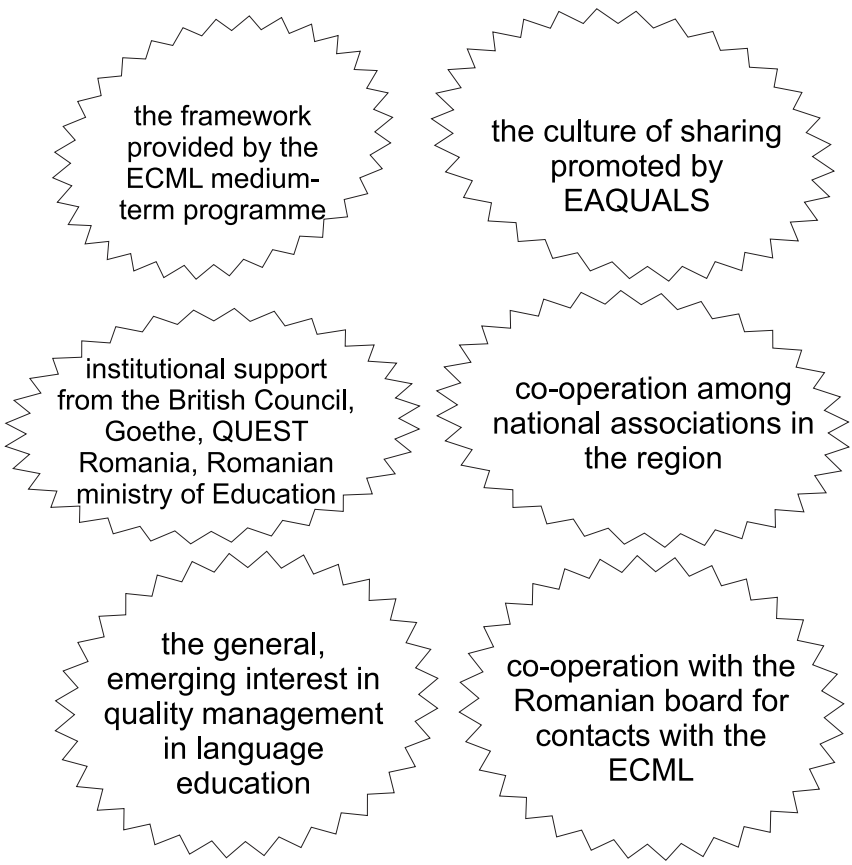
'Disclaimer'

Something that may be considered 'innovative' by us because we have thought of it and are doing it for the first time is maybe hardly an innovation to others. It is, therefore, hard to speak about 'innovation' in relation to a project, unless we differentiate between innovation in absolute and innovation in relative terms.

Preamble

The idea of the Project on "Quality assurance" was part of a process – initiated through the ECML Workshop 17/1998 on "Quality concepts", co-ordinated by Frank Heyworth; with impetus added through the ECML/ELTeCS Workshop in Sofia,

Bulgaria in 1999, and networking within EAQUALS (the European Association for Quality Language Services) and among FL professionals in Romania and in the region. Reflecting on this, we could regard the whole context as a 'favourable constellation', as suggested below:



The project process

'Projects have a life of their own'

Since this project was designed to involve a great deal of co-operation among institutions and individuals at international level and since it refers to a field as dynamic as quality management, **the process** itself (observing its unfolding and learning from this) was one of the expected outcomes, alongside with the project end-product.

Process outline

a. Analysing needs perceived in this field, designing the project objectives and outlining the project stages by the project team

b. Contributing to the selection of participants to the regional workshop

c. Applying for matched funding (writing additional project proposals in application for funding to cultural institutes)

d. The sequencing of interlinked project events

e. Activities in preparation for the events and in their own right, working towards achieving the project outcome

f. Communication and networking with / among project participants, with other institutions and professionals

g. Activities generated by the project.

In what follows, these project stages and aspects will be taken one by one.

a. Needs perceived and project objectives

Needs perceived during the initial ECML workshops (organised in 1998 and 1999) as well as through networking at various levels:

- in some countries there are no formal systems for external control in language education, while internal quality assurance is often left to the individual initiative of institutions
- especially in the public sector, the attitude to class observation and inspections is still very much influenced by the traditional view
- FL professionals from one sector seem not to get very often to exchange experience with fellow professionals from another sector within the same national context – hence the importance of providing an international context for this purpose.

The project objectives in response to the above needs were developed by the co-ordinating team in several steps, which included a preparatory meeting at the ECML in Graz already in the project design stage, as well as consultation with the ECML Head of programmes and the Romanian representative on the ECML Governing Board.

The main project objectives include:

- promoting quality assurance in language learning, teaching and assessment in the public and private sectors
- addressing issues related to the development of appropriate models for quality assurance, analysing both generic and country-specific aspects

- adapting and disseminating systems and approaches developed at European level and in different national contexts

The 'innovative' aspects in relation to these objectives consist in working towards:

a) getting FL professionals from the **public** and the **private** sectors (representing different FLs and different institution types, including cultural institutes) to share expertise and to speak **the same language** when it comes to quality assurance in language education

b) transferring expertise from one sector to another (e.g. from the private sector to the public sector, especially in countries still in transition)

c) exploring the **unity in variety** existing in the region, in relation also to European standards, aiming, thus, to contribute to a higher profile of the region.

The "vision"/ the expected outcome of the innovation:

Contributing to

- a more coherent and consistent approach to quality assurance across borders in the region
- the setting up of a network of FL professionals with expertise and interest in quality assurance in language education.

b. The selection of participants to the regional workshop

In order to achieve the project objectives, the co-ordinating team contributed to the selection of participants, liaising for this purpose with different institutions in different countries, e.g. with the nominating authorities and / or the British Council offices in several countries in the region, with the national associations (where appropriate), as well as with former participants in the 1998 ECML workshop, asking them for support in identifying relevant participants from their countries.

In Romania, the country hosting the regional ECML workshop, the selection process involved liaising with the nominating authority in the Ministry of Education, with the directors of the British Council, the Goethe Institute, the French Institute in Bucharest, the Romanian representative on the ECML Governing Board, as well as with professional associations, namely QUEST Romania and FL teachers' associations.

This involved informing all the parties concerned of the project objectives and expected outcomes, as well as pre-workshop correspondence (mainly via e-mail or fax) with both the nominating authorities and the national delegates in the initial Workshop.

c. Applying for matched funding and support for the regional workshop

- Approaching cultural institutes for support
- Writing a proposal also to ELTeCS for matched funding, in order to involve participants from more countries in the region.

As a result of this, the regional workshop was supported by the Goethe Institute Munich and Bucharest, by the British Council through ELTeCS (covering the costs for three participants from Estonia, Russia and Yugoslavia), by the British Council offices in several countries, the British Council Bucharest, the French Institute Bucharest.

Partners supporting this ECML event included:

- the Romanian Ministry of Education and QUEST Romania, as local organisers
- PROSPER-ASE Language Centre and the Academy of Economic Studies, as hosting institutions
- EAQUALS and the national associations for quality assurance in the region (NYESZE Hungary, OPTIMA Bulgaria, PRIMA Croatia, PASE Poland, YALS Yugoslavia).

d. The sequencing of interlinked project events

- Regional workshop in Bucharest, Romania – September 2000, attended by 35 participants from 15 countries (including the co-ordinating team and the ECML representative)
- Networking meeting in Graz – July 2001 – attended by 10 experts
- Central workshop in Graz – June 2002, attended by 30 participants representing 25 countries (including the co-ordinating team and three experts who had participated in the two previous events and had been actively involved throughout the two year period).

Within the framework of ECML medium-term programme, this type of sequencing, i.e. starting the 3-year project with a regional workshop, might be seen as an innovatory aspect, since most projects usually start(ed) with a central workshop, followed at a later stage by regional events for dissemination purposes.

Another aspect worth mentioning: although the first workshop was initially intended as a 'regional' event, addressing first of all quality issues in Central Eastern Europe, it turned into an international event through the participation of professionals also from Western Europe from countries such as the Netherlands and Finland. Process-related aspects of the project events included:

- incorporating the 'experiential dimension' both in the regional workshop in Bucharest and the central workshop in Graz; this consisted mainly in taking a

'global approach' to the event, integrating the time and space outside the workshop room(s) so as to create a proper forum with networking atmosphere, and to this contributed the social programme, as well

- building in a self-reflective component from the very beginning – a procedure successfully introduced already at the ECML Workshop on "Quality concepts" in 1998; this was linked with feedback loops throughout the workshops, which allowed for more flexibility in a participant-oriented approach
- involving the project-participants in the decisions taken during the different project events and stages, especially re the project outcome; e.g.
  - at the regional workshop: deciding together on action plans for the editing stage
  - at the network meeting: consultation on the contents and the structure of the project outcome and deciding together on editing a CD-Rom instead of a book, as initially planned
  - at the central workshop: piloting and evaluation of the CD-Rom by all the participants, who then contributed suggestions for enhanced accessibility, as well as additional case studies for inclusion in the project end-product
- encouraging a team-spirit to be taken further, e.g. throughout the stages in-between events; thus, it was possible to build in an additional event, prior to the network meeting in July 2001 (as shown below, in the next section).

e. Activities in-between project events

The main activity was that of editing the project outcome, the CD-Rom. Apart from editing proper, this involved also encouraging a team-approach to the editing of materials and communication with the contributors, most of them participants in the initial workshop. In addition, it included:

- the carrying out of surveys concurrently in several countries, within the framework of comparative studies to be published on the CD-Rom;
- involving also other contributors to the CD-Rom, both institutionally and at individual level
- involving a computer-specialist/web designer, who received a three month fellowship at the ECML (February – April 2002) for the design of the project website, to be then turned into a CD-Rom; the web designer participated in the preparatory meetings (February and April 2002) and then, as an expert, in the central workshop (June 2002); she continued work on the CD-Rom as an expert (May – September 2002), staying in close contact both with the ECML webmaster and the co-ordinating team

- carrying out the translation of materials (from English into French and from French into English) in Romania, as a project within a project; the team of translators includes participants in different ECML workshops, who are both experienced translators and language educators with a professional interest in quality issues.

f. Communication and networking

Communication within the wider project team has taken various forms:

a) component and facilitator of the editing activity

b) updating on project developments, sending materials about the different stages to all project participants

c) networking.

It was carried out mainly electronically. The project also had a discussion forum on the ECML website but, unfortunately, this has not been used very much. Instead, a lot of the messages were exchanged as group messages with the help of the ECML webmaster, especially during the first project year. During the second year (i.e. after the network meeting in 2001) it became more and more focused and editing oriented.

Networking has been a significant component of consolidating 'a network of professionals with expertise and interest in this domain'. As such, it could be seen as a motivating factor, on the one hand, and as one of the expected project outcomes, on the other. It included communicating with the workshop participants also about other thematically related issues, finding and using also other opportunities for staying in touch and meeting in smaller groups. Thus, at the Budapest conference of the Hungarian Association, in early May 2001, one third of the project members participated and had an informal meeting to discuss editing issues before the network meeting in Graz, in July 2001).

Some of the project participants also embarked together on new projects, which are thematically linked to the ECML project, referred to below in the next section.

In addition, communication included informing and liaising with other staff not initially involved in the project, e.g.

- giving presentations on quality assurance issues in the institutions represented in the project, to staff members who had not initially participated in the regional workshop (e.g. at the Goethe Institut in Bucharest for the network of German cultural centres, and at the French Institute in Bucharest, for the Alliance Française network)
- participating in the ELTeCS project on collaborative quality assurance, initiated by OPTIMA Bulgaria, working together with the members of OPTIMA and YALS who had not been involved from the very beginning in the ECML project

- participation of project members and additional staff members in the regional Inspectors' forum organised at the NYESZE conference (Budapest, 2001), where the issues discussed included collaborative aspects of quality assurance across Central and Eastern Europe, in co-operation with EAQUALS.

g. Activities generated by the project

a) dissemination of project ideas & results

b) initiation of other projects as an off-spring of the ECML project.

Here are some examples of activities:

a) Steps taken to disseminate project results

   - the project website / the ECML website
   - the CD-Rom
   - the central workshop at the ECML in Graz, June 2002
   - conference presentations
   - publishing articles in professional journals in different countries
   - dissemination by the project participants through the networks they belong to, thus reaching members of different networks, e.g. the EAQUALS network, the networks generated by other European projects, ministry representatives, teacher trainers, etc.

b) Examples of how project ideas have been taken further

   - at the level of regional co-operation, the ELTeCS project initiated by OPTIMA (the Bulgarian Association for Quality Language Services) re co-operative quality assurance through joint inspections (partners: the Romanian Association QUEST, the Croatian Association PRIMA, the Yugoslav Association YALS)
   - at national level, in Romania, for instance, there is growing interest in transferring the expertise developed within the national association QUEST to the development of a quality system in the public sector (QUEST representatives invited to participate in ministry conferences and national seminars on quality management).

What are the main achievements of the project as a process?

Content wise:

- The exchange of experience and awareness raising to the complexity of issues related to quality assurance
- growing interest in quality assurance countries and contexts that were not initially included in the project
- the initiation of other projects that are thematically linked to the ECML project.

At a personal and inter-personal level:

- Personal and professional development for those involved; it has been a great learning experience (intercultural learning; 'cross-professional' learning, e.g. while negotiating meaning and editing options with the web weaver)
- the team spirit, personal and professional contacts, which contributed to a good extent to the fostering of a professional network.

What were the main challenges?

- The editing stage, due to slight imbalances among contributions from participants in the networking stage (public vs. private sector/national quality schemes)
- the diversity of contexts itself (a *strength* in the regional workshop stage, turning into *challenge* in the editing stage)
- the TIME factor (sometimes!).

What is the expected impact in terms of organisational changes proposed?

- Consistency of approach to FL teaching, learning and assessment within an organisation, a school, an association
- introducing / fostering self-assessment as a valid procedure and instrument both at individual level and at institutional level (as internal quality assurance)
- organising the teaching process so that it meets learner needs
- stimulating a culture of sharing at institutional, national and regional/international level for the purpose of fostering and improving quality standards in language teaching and learning.

Case study 2:
ECML Project 1.3.3: ICT and young language learners: organisational and process aspects

Mario Camilleri and Valerie Sollars

This project illustrates the innovative use of new technology to stimulate communication among young children. It uses the resources of the Internet to extend the boundaries of the classroom to create an international story-telling community – the organisational variable of the place of learning. As in the study on quality, the project successfully mobilized participants in a number of countries and, by stressing ownership and involvement, managed the complex logistics successfully.

A. Context

Although ICT has been formally accepted as a viable technology in most educational institutions worldwide, it is generally felt that its effect on pedagogy has been at best superficial. In many cases, the technology is used in a passive/receptive mode (what Papert would call 'the computer programming the child'), and its communicative and expressive potential goes largely untapped. The primary aim of this project was to encourage the expressive and communicative use of the Internet in teaching 2L/FL to young learners (specifically 8- to 10-year-olds) by creating and maintaining an online community of learners who could share language experiences.

Children in participating classes from the member states of the ECML used the WWW to publish stories, poems, letters etc. In order to focus the children's language activities, a story line involving the travels of a number of fictitious characters was developed, and a website relating the adventures of these characters was set up, together with a simple Web tool which enabled teachers and children in the participating classes to contribute stories and other material to this site. It was hoped that the children's contributions would reflect their diverse cultural backgrounds, which would serve to enrich language learning.

B. Theoretical rationale of the project

Good practice in the teaching of young learners requires that all learning takes place in a meaningful context. Children need motivation to carry out an activity and be aware of the purpose for doing it. If language teaching and learning are going to lead to communication, children must have:

- a need to communicate
- a community in which communication occurs
- a common interest shared among members of the community.

This project was an attempt to use the WWW, with its integration of text and graphics, to create an environment supportive of these broad pedagogic principles in the teaching of 2L/FL.

C. Planning

The project team met in Graz in December 2000 to work out the details of the project. Principle among these was the storyline which was required to hold everything together. The storyline had to be sufficiently detailed to motivate the children, yet sufficiently open-ended to allow the children to develop it in any number of ways. It became evident early on that the central character of the story had to be as culturally neutral as possible. The project team came up with a storyline concerning the travels of a group of 4 'stars' around Europe. The travel aspect would allow for cultural variety and give children in the various countries the opportunity to 'host' each star in turn and show it around their school, town and homes.

Because the project was meant to span a whole academic year, the project team was concerned that interest might flag unless the story allowed sufficient variety to ensure that children would not go off it after a few weeks. This was partly done by having 4 different characters instead of one central character, each with its own particular characteristics – one had an artistic inclination, another was the sporting type, etc. This not only injected variety but also made it possible for the teacher to develop different themes in the course of the project and so offer more scope for integrating the project into the curriculum. The visual aspect of these characters also had to be considered carefully to avoid stereotyping and to enable children to better identify with the characters – thus the sporty type happened to be big, one was bespectacled, etc. All were gender neutral (which caused some problems in producing the French version of the story). Even minute details such as the colour of each star had to be planned carefully – for example the team was very careful to avoid having a 'red' star because of the connotations that has in parts of Europe.

Given the young age of students targeted by the project, there was concern that a purely virtual scenario would fail to sufficiently involve the students to generate the required motivation and momentum for a year-long project. Consequently, it was decided that the 'star' characters would be given physical form in the shape of soft toys. Moreover, having the children create the soft toys themselves would serve both to involve the children more in the project (giving them an enhanced sense of ownership) as well as offer more scope for integrating the project into the primary school curriculum. By grouping participating schools in fours, stars would travel a circuit – leaving the originating school at the beginning of the project, and moving from school to school eventually returning to their home base at the end of the project. In the meantime, children would be hosting stars coming from other schools, as well as following the adventures of their own stars on the website by reading postings from other classes and hopefully emailing the children hosting their star.

The Web tool – an ASP site with an ADO database backend – was designed with ease of use and simplicity in mind to encourage children to use it with no or minimal supervision. Since language correctness was known to be an issue, a feature was included to allow teachers to correct the children's language productions even after these had been posted on the site. It was hoped that this safety net would encourage even the more traditional language teacher to allow students a degree of freedom and autonomy. Besides facilities to allow children to post their writing and pictures, the Web tool also included features designed to foster and support an online community – a web page for each participating class, a teachers' forum, email links to the author of each posting to encourage children to respond to each others' writing, etc.

The tool was hosted on the ECML's own web server. Because of its interactive nature, with children uploading images and stories onto the server itself, the Web tool caused some security concerns among the ECML's technical staff. In the end it was decided to create a separate domain for the project to isolate the project site hosting the tool from the official ECML site on the same server.

In retrospect, the planning phase was perhaps too concerned with the logistics of the project, and not enough with the pedagogic issues. This was partly because the logistics appeared overwhelming and so commanded the most attention, and partly because we did not wish to impose any particular teaching method beyond the broad constructivist principles implicit in the project's objectives.

D. Action

The implementation of the project consisted of a pilot phase and a main phase. The pilot phase, involving six classes (in Malta, Spain, Hungary and Poland) and lasting 3 months, was intended to:

- trial the Web tool in French and in English and iron out any design and programming problems which came to light
- produce a corpus of postings which could be used for training teachers participating in the main project phase
- find out how children would receive/welcome the idea of stars as characters
- monitor how children and teachers communicated with each other via the web
- review the postings which children included on the web (from the language perspective).

Another issue which could only be marginally assessed by the pilot study concerned teachers' ability to incorporate the star project within their regular curriculum and class contact time. Since the pilot started in late February/early March, the participating pilot teachers couldn't have planned to incorporate this project from the beginning of the scholastic year. Also, to save time, the initial set of soft toys were created by the ECML Head of programmes rather than the children themselves.

A handbook describing the use of the Web tool was prepared and distributed to teachers participating in the pilot phase. This, together with some email support when technical problems cropped up (not often), proved sufficient. Non-technical support was provided by the project team members, with each pilot teacher assigned to the care of one member.

The main project phase started in September 2001 with a 5-day workshop in Graz. Prior to the start of the workshop, the project team and the ECML agreed that workshop participants had to have a very specific profile. Rather than policy makers or education administrators, participants were to be practising teachers who already had some basic skills in using the Internet and had access to Internet in their classroom or school. Participants with such a profile were crucial for the success of the project.
It was essential to get the actual participants to Graz, rather than a policy maker/intermediary who would go back and report to a colleague what s/he is expected to do. This was crucial for a number of reasons, namely:

The social perspective: One of the outcomes from the pilot study indicated that teachers never used the forum or communicated with each other in any way and tended to work in isolation. Meeting up in Graz for a week would go some way towards bringing down these barriers of speaking to virtual teachers or children and putting faces to names.

The hands-on perspective: It was imperative to ensure that participants would leave Graz feeling confident that they knew what their commitment to the project was, they had the necessary technical know-how and assistance, and a realistic framework about how the work would develop over the scholastic year. From this perspective, the workshop was compulsory for two main reasons:

- during the week, participants were assigned tasks which forced them to try out the various facilities available on the web (posting messages, posting graphics and images, using the teachers' forum)
- because they had to commit themselves to a circuit made up of 4 countries, they had to design a timetable to accommodate for the different school calendars, varying IT provisions and language teaching contexts prevalent in each of the countries.

An ownership perspective: Assuming that success in achieving desired goals depended on ownership, another task involving the workshop participants focused on the preparation of a compendium of tasks and ideas which children could develop once particular stars were visiting their classroom. The team did not want to impose particular activities to be done with the children since participating, practising teachers would obviously have more experience and ideas related to language teaching with young learners. They would also be familiar with the working conditions and the expectations of pupils, parents and other members of staff in their own schools and countries. They would also be in the best position to decide how to incorporate the project within their existing curricular demands.

The "I can do it" perspective: It was anticipated that several participants would have had limited, if any experience of integrating ICT in language teaching programmes. The ICT and language teaching scenarios would be as varied as the participants themselves! There are countries with permanent access to the use of computers and Internet as a result of having computers in the classrooms as opposed to other countries where use of computers and Internet access is limited to weekly timetabled slots in a computer lab. There were teachers who are purely language teachers, coming into contact with groups of children for short weekly lessons in contrast to class teachers who are responsible for the same group of children, 5 days a week for the entire school day and the whole range of subjects taught at primary level. There were teachers who had to rely on colleagues' support and assistance (especially the IT staff) and others who could function independently. Coming to Graz also offered the participants the opportunity to meet the teachers who had participated in the pilot phase. The pilot teachers were invited to the workshop so that potential participants could hear about first-hand experiences and consequently convince themselves about the work which could be achieved via the project.

One concern voiced by some participants at the end of the workshop suggested their fear of being left to flounder once back in their countries. To ensure constant support, each member of the team was responsible for a circuit. In addition, participants were specifically instructed to contact the two co-ordinators if technical assistance was required or administrative difficulties arose at any stage of the project. Moreover, participants were invited to provide addresses of authorities in their country who they wanted to inform about their participation and from whom support was being requested.

The availability of the teachers' forum on the website provided another avenue of communication among project team members and participating teachers. It was agreed that the forum could be used to share methodological ideas and discuss constraints and difficulties. In this way, everybody would be invited to provide suggestions of ways in which similar issues were sorted in different classrooms/contexts.

E. Evaluation

The project is currently (June 2002) in its evaluation phase. Besides the evaluation questionnaires sent out to the participating teachers, the online teachers' forum could provide valuable insights into the way teachers managed the process of implementing this innovation with the various educational setups of the ECML member states. The following are some salient issues which emerged from the project:

- Technical problems and problems with computer- and Internet-access in participating schools were few. We believe that making the project requirements very specific to the nominating bodies from the very beginning, together with the ECML's support in helping participating teachers overcome bureaucratic obstacles, paid off handsomely.
- Teachers from the various participating countries generally worked very well together. Most of them had been participants at the workshop in Graz – we believe that without this initial social contact it would have been much harder to maintain the sense of community over the Internet.
- At the start of the project, following the September workshop, there were 6 circuits each made up of 4 countries. Five were meant to operate on the English website and one circuit was using the French website. Circuits which were more successful than others included teachers who were not only present in Graz but solely responsible for teaching language. Individuals who were not in Graz or who participated directly in the workshop and thought they could do the project alongside other educational commitments and responsibilities they have in their educational establishments/institutions seem to have been the ones who contributed least.
- Judging by the stories, poems, images and other postings to the website (as well as the teachers' own feedback) there can be little doubt that the children were very enthusiastic about the project. Motivation was uniformly high and the momentum was generally maintained except possibly for the last few weeks of the project (from around Easter). An evaluation of the effectiveness of the project will not be attempted – we believe it would be simplistic to expect a quantifiable effect which can be unequivocally attributed to this project.
- It proved harder than expected to maintain the online learner community. It appears that in most cases participating classes ignored each others' output and it

was rare for children to receive any form of response to their postings. This robbed children of the sense of audience – it must have seemed to them that there was no one 'out there' reading their stories.

- Although a pedagogic handbook, similar to the technical handbook issued to teachers, was not provided, it seems that teachers across the different countries shared similar ideas about activities they could do with the children. There seem to be some basic topics which were favourites across cultures. In addition, the characteristics of each star were broad enough to allow teachers a varied range of activities.
- From the language perspective, the teachers feel that not only was this an innovative way of teaching a foreign language to young learners but it has been a way of stimulating children to practise the language in a meaningful context as well as stirring their interest and enthusiasm for wanting to use the language. Children are reported to have been keen on finding out about different life styles, cultures, customs and traditions.

Case study 3:
ECML Project 1.3.2: Information and communication technologies in distance language learning

The educational use of ICT in teacher education and distance language learning – opportunities, challenges and ways forward

Daphne Goodfellow

Project description 1.3.2

Daphne Goodfellow's case study deals with two major questions related to the organisation of innovation:

- How can distance language learning be made effective? Potentially it can break down the constraints of time, place and channel.
- How can you combine pedagogic and technical know-how? It is rare for the two to be combined in the same person, and there are many examples of leading edge technology using stone age pedagogic design.

The case study illustrates again that personal contact and involvement are keys to successful innovation and emphasises the difficulty of implementation beyond the project group.

Project co-ordinator:	Daphne Goodfellow, France
Expert team:	Gunther Abuja (Austria) Anne-Brit Fenner (Norway) Cecilia Garrido (UK) Daphne Goodfellow (France) Zoltan Poór (Hungary) Danièle Geffroy Konstacky (Czech Republic) Seppo Tella (Finland)

A. Context

A Think Tank was held from May 31 to June 2, 2001 to identify areas of priority in the integration of Information and Communication Technologies into Distance Language Learning (DLL) in the coming years.

Six major problem areas were identified during the 3-day Think Tank:

1. the disparity between material writers and computer experts
2. the lack of objective criteria to assess the efficiency of a given ICT tool to achieve specific learning objectives
3. the lack of objective evaluation of what exactly is learned with the help of ICT tools. Learning outcomes need to be formulated and recognised by all the stakeholders to reflect new modes of learning
4. the isolation of teachers, teacher educators, material writers and curriculum/course designers in this new sector. This does not allow them to profit from sharing their successes and failures
5. the lack of tried and tested teacher-educator courses for ICT in distance language learning
6. the lack of provision for speaking practice and socialising (the latter is needed to prevent a drop in learner motivation over time) between individual learners in distance language learning programmes in general. This may be even more pronounced when ICTs are the primary learning tools and environments.

B. Aims and objectives / Expected outcomes of the project

Five areas of activity were proposed by the ECML for the ongoing project, based on ideas put forward by Think Tank participants. These activities will be initiated in the upcoming workshop and continued during the remainder of the project:

1. collection of selected bibliography and webography on ICT in distance language learning
2. collection and presentation of case studies on the integration of ICT in distance and other types of language learning and in teacher education
3. evaluation of existing tools for ICT in (distance) language learning
4. design, development and piloting of a teacher education course module for the use of ICT in teacher education and (distance) language learning

5. the use of an interactive platform (Basic Support for Collaborative Work, BSCW) for the exchange of ideas and experience, and the sharing of resources between teacher educators in different European countries.

The anticipated benefits

This project will draw on the experience of participants from a wide variety of backgrounds, who together will contribute to the development of avenues that will help achieve the full potential of the use of ICT in distance language learning and teacher education.

C. Profile of participants / people involved

The central workshop will welcome the participation of teachers and teacher educators with special interest, knowledge and/or experience in the use of ICT for distance language learning and/or teacher education. They should be prepared and in a position to actively participate in and contribute to the ongoing project, which begins with the workshop in June 2002 and ends in August 2003.

Prior to the nomination of participants it would be helpful if nominating authorities and subsequently potential participants could ask themselves the following questions:

1. The participant as a representative of his/her country:
   - How well does he/she know the situation with respect to ICT in DLL and/or teacher education in his/her country?
   - Will he/she be able to contribute information for discussion and exchange during the workshop?
   - Will he/she be able to disseminate the information gathered at the workshop to others in his/her country?

2. The participant as an individual:
   - What is my experience in this field? What will I be able to share with other participants? What do I want to learn from this experience?
   - Am I committed to actively participating in the project after the workshop?

NB: In the specific field of ICT in distance learning, two questions arise:

- Is it indispensable that the participant has *considerable* previous experience of using ICT in the classroom or in teacher training?
  The answer is **no**, but if the participant has no previous experience, he or she will

feel disadvantaged given the limited length of the workshop and how much ground will be covered.

- Must the institution concerned already possess adequate facilities?
  The answer is **yes**, **at least to a limited extent**: if the knowledge acquired during the workshop is not put into practice immediately, it will inevitably be lost. Successful networking depends on access to ICT.

Case study 4:
ECML Project 1.2.3: Incorporating intercultural communicative competence in pre- and in-service language teacher training

Ildikó Lázár

Ildikó Lázár's case study underlines the importance of research in innovatory developments. The increasing importance of intercultural competence in language education requires understanding of what these competences are, and development of teacher skills and competences. The significant achievements of the project are testimony to the success of international co-operation, though the case study also presents some of the difficulties and frustrations.

Project co-ordinator: Ildikó Lázár

Co-animators: Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pedich (Poland)
Rafn Kjartansson (Iceland)
Liljana Skopinskaja (Estonia)

1. Aims, rationale and short description of the project

Currently, intercultural competence is not necessarily included in the curriculum in most teacher training programmes in Europe. However, it is obviously of great importance to increase intercultural understanding, and incorporating intercultural communicative competence in teacher training programmes would have a beneficial multiplying effect in this field. Therefore, training teacher trainers to accept and disseminate this approach should probably be the first step in the process everywhere in Europe.

In order to encourage teacher trainers, mentors and language teachers in general to shift the focus from teaching only lexical and grammatical competence to emphasizing, teaching and practicing intercultural communicative competence in their classrooms it is important to familiarize them with the theory and practice of ICC and to identify the organisational conditions for incorporating these components in the curricula in teacher training institutions.

In the year 2000 our team (Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pedich from Poland, Rafn Kjartansson from Iceland, Ildikó Lázár from Hungary, and Liljana Skopinskaja from Estonia) carried out quantitative and qualitative research to investigate how culture is dealt with in the English language classroom at present and how teachers view the role of culture in language teaching.

The central workshop (April 2001) and the regional event (September 2002) were designed so that our presentations should inform the participating teacher educators about the current status of teaching culture through language and that the interactive group sessions should give them practice in intercultural communication training in a profitable way.

As a follow-up to the central workshop, the national delegates formed six networks to continue the research and development started by the original team of animators. The focus areas are research on teachers' perception of intercultural communication, ICC course design, materials development, assessment of ICC and teaching materials evaluation.

The final outcome of the project will be two publications: one is going to be a collection of the articles on the work done by the networks, and the other one is going to be a coursebook on ICC for trainee teachers.

2. Co-ordinator's personal motivation and involvement

My very initial interest in researching intercultural communication comes from a bad case of culture shock I went through in the US just after graduating as a teacher of English and French from Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary. It was an extremely upsetting feeling especially because I had just been qualified as a teacher of English. I knew a lot about English literature and morphology, American history and sentence syntax, but I could not communicate with the people around me without major misunderstandings. Since then I have always emphasized the role of culture and cultural awareness in my English teaching and teacher training work.

In 1999 I was lucky to be invited to a workshop on reflective teaching at the ECML. The reason why I was chosen to be the Hungarian participant was that the original national delegate had fallen ill the week before the workshop. This was at the time when the ECML first announced its call for proposals for the first medium-term programme of activities. Since I already had a clear idea what I would like to research, I managed to convince some of the participants there to join me and apply for a project at the ECML.

Within the framework of Project 1.2.3 of the medium-term programme of activities of the ECML, I have also been conducting research to find out how much and what exactly teachers of English teach to their students about culture at primary, secondary and tertiary level. The results of the study (conducted in Estonia, Hungary, Iceland and

Poland) seemed to show that the English teaching syllabi at primary and secondary schools are extremely exam-centred. And since exams do not usually test either cultural knowledge or intercultural communicative competence, teachers mostly focus on skills needed for taking the exam: grammatical and lexical competence. Another finding of the questionnaire study was that although culture is a neglected element in the language lesson, teachers who have spent a longer period of time abroad or participated in intercultural communication training incorporate activities with a cultural focus significantly more often than those who have not. A follow-up qualitative study conducted in the same four countries indicated that in most cases teachers do not even seem to be aware of the need for cultural elements in English classes. Or if they do, cultural activities are confined to the occasional Beatles song, a picture of Big Ben or the Christmas pudding recipe once a year.

3. Achievements

The achievements of Project 1.2.3 have been the following so far:

- a quantitative study on the frequency of culture-related topics and activities in the language classroom and an analysis of whether this frequency is influenced by the teachers' former training and/or their immersion in foreign cultures
- qualitative research on teachers' perception of ICC
- a successful central workshop on the topic for 25 national delegates
- 18 of the original 25 national delegates to the workshop still very actively involved in R&D over a year after the central workshop in five networks
- tangible results already produced by the five networks:
    1. the nearly finished manuscript of an ICC textbook for trainee teachers
    2. a comprehensive textbook evaluation grid
    3. an ICC course designed for in-service teachers
    4. sample tests for assessing ICC
    5. qualitative research on teachers' views on ICC in 11 countries.

4. Organisational and other problems and difficulties

There have been several problems and difficulties since the beginning of this project, and some of them were probably due to my lack of experience in project and innovation management. I had never co-ordinated big projects and rarely held

workshops for so many teacher educators. This is why I appreciated that the ECML invited me to participate in Workshop No. 6/99 on "Innovative approaches to the organisation and set-up of language education" at the beginning of my project in 1999. This is where I learned a lot about the importance of a systematic approach to project management, the use of management techniques like the SWOT analysis, and the need for constant evaluation of the goals and results.

Other problems to solve as the project progressed and grew bigger included differences in working style and pace among the team members. This was made even more complex when the workshop participants formed six networks and suddenly I was trying to co-ordinate the work of nearly 30 people. Obviously, there were even more significant differences now in attitudes to a project like this. Some of the people who had been nominated to participate at the central workshop had very different expectations from the project, e.g. the need to give presentations at every meeting, to publish about anything at any cost, free trips in Europe, etc. Some of the differences in their attitudes to work have been of course personal, but some were cultural, which was interesting to explore given the nature of this project.

Naturally, a large number of people with different professional backgrounds from different countries will always have to work harder to avoid intercultural misunderstandings and to harmonize goals and working styles in a successful way. Nonetheless, I feel that some of the delegates were not always the right people for long-term commitment in educational change.

We have also had technical difficulties. E-mail communication is a lot of help in a large project when it works. However, in Central and Eastern Europe it does not always work. At the beginning of the project I did not have a reliable connection and did not have a mail processor. Writing a letter to four people meant writing the same thing down four times. Although there has been a lot of progress in this field in our part of Europe in the last couple years, many of the participants still have problems sending and receiving attachments and so on.

Another difficulty in connection with e-mail communication is that people also have different electronic working styles. Some answer quickly and in detail, some take a long time to respond and forget about some of the issues that need to be decided upon. This, of course, is not just an Eastern European problem. Sometimes I found it impossible to keep all threads together because there were always four or five people who failed to answer and one or two who misunderstood my question and gave irrelevant answers.

A third difficulty with working via e-mail most of the time is that it is very difficult to produce something together even if the people involved answer quickly and to the point. Our Network 3, for example, is writing a coursebook on ICC and all the five people in the group have only met twice. We had about two days to raise issues and brainstorm ideas at the central workshop in April 2001, and then three of us met for two days at the meeting for spokespersons in Budapest in December 2001 (one participant came at his own expense!) and then the whole group met again for a second

time at the network meeting in Graz in May 2002. In the meantime, we were exchanging dozens of attachments with the different units and bits of units and suggestions for amendments via e-mail. I feel that in our case, and perhaps the other networks feel the same way, it would have been very useful to meet more regularly. The possibility to come together and discuss the projects in person one or two more times between April 2001 and May 2002 would also have kept up the participants' motivation and commitment better.

Another motivational issue is the annual fee for those co-ordinating the work of the networks, which was only introduced this year in our case on a trial basis. I feel that if the co-ordinator, the co-animators and the spokespersons had also been given an annual fee last year, they would have all taken the work more seriously. My impression is that the reason why two of the networks were practically dysfunctional and had to be merged and then assisted to become functional again was partially due to the fact that their spokespersons were not motivated enough financially and otherwise. It is easy to feel committed when you meet and discuss issues together in Graz, and then it is easy to go home and forget about your commitment due to other urgent tasks and responsibilities at your institution.

Finally, sometimes I have had the impression that the scope of my project is too large and unmanageable. School leaving exams at secondary level and graduation requirements for language teachers are very different in each country, they only resemble in that they are difficult to amend or change. It is also very difficult to negotiate with the authorities and make changes in the national curriculum in your own country, not to mention other countries.

Despite all the problems and difficulties I feel that my project has been successful in a lot of ways and that it is a worthwhile experience for all those involved. I am grateful to the staff of the ECML because they have always been extremely helpful in solving both logistical and professional problems.

Appendix

The team

Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pedich is a graduate of Poznan University, with a PhD from Warsaw University, both degrees in the field of American literature. She is currently employed at Bialystok University and part-time at Warsaw University. She teaches American literature to undergraduate students, and graduate courses in American literature and intercultural competence in teaching English as a foreign language. Her main interest is incorporating intercultural awareness in pre-service and in-service teacher training.

Rafn Kjartansson is an English teacher in Akureyri, on the north coast of Iceland. He graduated with an M.A. Hons. in English Language and Literature from the University of Edinburgh in 1967 and completed a diploma in the teaching of English as a Second Language at Leeds University in the following year. He has taught English at junior college in Akureyri since 1968 and at the University of Akureyri since 1987, in the faculties of teacher education and business management. Rafn is currently enrolled in a distance education programme at the University of Manchester, for the degree of MEd in ELT. Among Rafn's main interests is English as an International Language, especially with regard to attitudes to "foreign accents" and acceptable standards of pronunciation for the use of English in international situations, as well as the inclusion of intercultural studies in English teaching, especially at university level.

Ildikó Lázár has been an assistant lecturer and teacher trainer at the Department of English Applied Linguistics of Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, Hungary since 1994. She teaches English Language Practice and Academic Writing as well as a Methodology Foundations course and an Intercultural Communication elective course at pre-service level. She is also a PhD student in the Language Pedagogy PhD Programme of the same university. Her main research interests are incorporating intercultural communication in language teacher education and the assessment of intercultural communicative competence. Having received support from the ECML, Ildikó and the team conducted an international questionnaire study to see how culture is dealt with in the EFL classroom in the four countries. The results of this survey as well as a follow-up qualitative study to investigate possible reasons for the lack of cultural content in foreign language teaching were in focus during the central workshop in Graz.

Liljana Skopinskaja has a degree (PhD) in FLT methodology from St Petersburg Pedagogical University (1988). She is a senior methodologist of the Faculty of Philology at Tallinn Pedagogical University since 1989, supervising students' teaching practice in English, German and French at secondary and upper-secondary schools. She is also a teacher trainer and curriculum developer at PRESETT and INSETT levels since 1989, giving lectures on various aspects of FLT methodology. In terms of term paper and graduation thesis supervision she has dealt with such methodology topics as the status of culture teaching in Estonian secondary schools; aspects of raising cultural awareness in the instruction of young learners of English at primary school level; the problems of EL textbook evaluation, selection, adaptation and supplementation, etc.

Case study 5:
Fostering innovation in language teaching at Austrian universities

David Newby

David Newby's case study deals directly with the issue of innovation – how can university language departments be encouraged to innovate? It examines the difficulty of organisation and management of change in environments which are more used to individual academic freedom. It also introduces the vital question of quality assurance – innovation for its own sake is of no value. The work specifically is linked to integrating the work of the European Centre for Modern Languages with the development of innovation in universities.

Introduction

In this case study I shall outline a project initiated by the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the aim of which was to support innovation in the teaching and learning of foreign languages at Austrian universities. This project is not concerned with the direct implementation of specific innovative teaching methods as such, but with attempts to create an organisational framework and structure in which innovation is fostered. The full title of the project is 'Disseminating the work of the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe at Austrian universities'. Since this is a somewhat unwieldy title, I shall use the portmanteau label UNIDISS.

Background

In the autumn of 2000 I was asked by the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture to set up and co-ordinate a project which focused on language teaching departments of Austrian universities. The project had two separate but related aims:

a. to disseminate relevant aspects of the work of the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (ECML) at Austrian universities

b. to set up a forum of university language teachers and to take measures designed at helping to improve the quality of foreign language teaching.

As a teacher of English at Graz University and as a co-ordinator of several ECML workshops and projects, I was able to contribute my own hands-on experience of both these areas. The UNIDISS project was to last from the beginning of January 2001 to the end of November 2002 and was to focus on four universities: Graz, Innsbruck, Salzburg and Vienna. I was assisted in my work by Dr. Isabel Landsiedler, the director of the Language Centre of Graz University, who was employed on a part-time basis for the duration of the project as a researcher and administrative assistant.

In commissioning the UNIDISS project, and committing considerable financial resources, the Ministry of Education was recognising two elements relating to university language teaching:

- the considerable potential of the work of the ECML, with its seat in Austria, to contribute to innovation, but at the same time the need to provide a more structured framework for disseminating the work of the ECML within Austrian universities
- the changing nature of modern language teaching and the need for innovation and qualitative improvement in university language teaching.

The target group of this project were teachers of foreign languages who work within university departments of the Faculty of Philosophy (Arts) at the four universities in question. Their language teaching comprises three types of programmes:

a. General language courses in philological departments *(philologische Institute)* for students who are taking a university course leading to a master's degree in the language in question, with the option of an additional teacher training component. These departments offer a variety of languages; our project limited itself to teachers of European languages – English, Romance languages, Slav languages.

b. Schools of Translation and Interpretation Studies *(Institute für theoretische und angewandte Translationswissenschaft – ITAT)*, which provide both general language courses and a professionally oriented training. Upwards of fifteen languages are offered at these institutes in Graz, Innsbruck and Vienna.

c. Courses in German as a foreign language *(Deutsch als Fremdsprache – DAF)* offered by Institutes of Germanic Studies at Graz and Vienna and also by Schools of Translation and Interpretation Studies.

Altogether more than 400 teachers are employed to teach languages at the four universities – it is not possible to give an exact number due to the varying contractual conditions.

It is probably true to say that the overall standard of teaching is very mixed, ranging from good communicatively-oriented classes to overfilled classes employing fairly traditional methods. A relatively large number of native speakers are employed in many institutes.

One factor which doubtless has a negative effect on the quality of language teaching is the separation that exists in the 'mindset' of Austrian universities between research-oriented 'theory' (literary studies, linguistics etc.) and practice (language teaching). This is reflected in the fact that university research posts are extremely rare in the areas of language teaching and teaching methodology. An indirect consequence of this is that research and innovation in language teaching has not been afforded a great deal of focus and this in turn has led to the fact that language teaching at universities has not always been in step with modern developments elsewhere.

A further consequence of the 'practical', as opposed to theoretical, status of language teaching is that this discipline is poorly represented among the upper echelons of the university career structure – professors, senior lecturers etc. Due to the somewhat hierarchical nature of the Austrian university system, this means that specialists in language teaching are inadequately represented in decision-making processes. Heads of language teaching departments are likely to be specialists in literature or linguistics and whilst they may be well disposed to language teaching, they do not necessarily possess the expertise to develop an overall strategy for language teaching within a modern university system. It is for this reason that the UNIDISS project not only addressed the question of quality improvement, but also concerned itself with influencing decision-making processes.

Devising a strategy

In order to devise a general strategy for implementing the aims of the project, a small 'Expert Panel' was set up to act as a planning and advisory group. This consisted of six specially invited language teachers and researchers, whose task it was to meet periodically and provide know-how and advice. In selecting these experts is was important that:

a. all four universities should be represented

b. all language groups should be represented

c. all types of institution (philological departments, ITAT, DAF) should be represented.

At our initial meeting in March 2001, a list of problem areas within university language teaching was drawn up together with accompanying actions to be carried out within the framework of the project. Some of these were as follows:

	Problem	Action
1.	Lack of co-ordination between university language teachers; no professional association	Establishment of a forum
2.	No clearly defined profile of university language teaching	Survey amongst teachers; publication of results and recommendations
3.	Insufficient information about work of ECML and inadequate dissemination	Improvement of dissemination structures
4.	Low status of language teaching within universities	Awareness raising and lobbying
5.	Poor knowledge management and innovation dissemination; patchy quality of teaching	Framework for disseminating innovation within universities; focus on quality

Measures for raising quality

Various measures were taken to provide a basis for qualitative improvement. Principle among these were the following:

1. Establishing a network: the language teachers' forum

Part of the project brief was to create a 'forum' of language teachers. Since in Austria there is no professional organisation for university language teaching, it was important to establish an organisational structure and an efficient communication network. Rather than attempting to set up an official body, which would have required both time and considerable administrational effort, it was decided to invite selected language teachers to co-operate with the project. The organisational model that we chose operated on three tiers:

1. Project co-ordinators, responsible for strategy, organisation and co-ordination
2. Members of the 'Expert Panel' (see previous section) to act as advisors
3. A 'Contact Person' in each institute at all four universities. All information would be channelled through the contact people, who in turn would have the task of disseminating this information to their colleagues.

In setting up this model it was hoped that a) all universities, institutes and language would be integrated into decision-making processes b) the flow of information within

the project would be optimised. Communication was by e-mail and later through our UNIDISS website.

The purpose of the forum was not only to function as a communication network; in addition, it was to serve an important 'empowerment' role by providing a voice for university language teachers and a framework in which they could express and utilise their expertise.

2. Establishing a profile: the university language teaching survey

Since the overall aim of this project was to foster qualitative improvement in language teaching, it was important at the outset to identify some of the needs of language teachers and the problems that existed within the Austrian university system so that these could be tackled in a systematic fashion. To this end, it was decided that a questionnaire should be sent out to all language teachers to obtain a picture of various aspects of university language teaching related to our project. This was drawn up by the project co-ordinators in consultation with the expert panel and distributed by email to all language teachers at the four universities. It was further hoped that this survey would represent an important step in drawing up a profile of university language teachers.

The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions relating to the following areas:

1. The contractual conditions of university language teachers
    - these vary considerably among teachers, many being employed on a part-time basis without any contractual framework
2. The European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML)
    - how well the ECML's activities are known among teachers
    - which of the Centre's activities and topics are considered most relevant by teachers
3. A profile of the work of language teachers
    - status; teaching subjects (FL, methodology, linguistics, literature etc.); research activities (academic articles, conference presentations etc.); participation in projects, organising exchange programmes etc.
4. Professional development
    - in-service courses attended, needs and wishes for future development

5. Innovation

   - examples of innovation in the teachers' own work or within their institutes; this was particularly relevant at the time the questionnaire was circulated since new curricula were in the process of being designed at all universities

6. Infrastructure and resources

   - facilities, technical equipment, resource centres, student numbers in courses

7. Wishes, ideas and suggestions

128 teachers returned the questionnaires, which represented 32% of those who received it. The data were evaluated and the results summarised in a report by Isabel Landsiedler. Copies were sent to all departments, to university authorities and to the Ministry of Education; public presentations of the findings were held at Graz University and at the concluding conference.

The importance of the survey for the UNIDISS project lay in the following points:

- The profile of the current work of university language teachers provided the basis for proposing suggestions for changes.
- Insights into how the dissemination of the ECML's activities could be improved provided useful feedback for the nominating and disseminating authorities in Austria.
- Content areas and examples of innovation would form the focus of future professional development and for follow-up projects.
- Information about infrastructural aspects would serve as a source of lobbying to improve teaching and learning conditions at universities.

3. Disseminating the work of the ECML

The relationship between the ECML and university language teaching was examined on two levels: firstly, concerning how well the ECML as an institution was known by teachers and second, in which ways the work of the ECML could support innovation within Austrian universities.

As far as the former was concerned, the questionnaire revealed that university language teachers were not well informed about the Centre and its activities: almost 90% stated that they knew virtually nothing about the ECML. Since this was an administrational aspect, it was decided that the task of publicising the ECML and providing information about its activities should be taken on by a parallel, more general dissemination project currently being carried out by the Österreichisches Sprachen-Kompetenz-Zentrum (ÖSPK) under the co-ordination of Dr. Dagmar Heindler. The work of disseminating

content and expertise would, however, be incorporated within the future activities of the UNIDISS project.

Content dissemination followed two main paths. The first consisted of a UNIDISS website, which provided commented links to ECML publications and activities and which also advertises related events. This was supplemented by occasional events organised by the Austrian Association of the ECML, at which visiting experts to the ECML gave talks or workshops to local teachers. Since this form of dissemination was, however, purely an information source, its potential for directly fostering innovation was likely to be limited. The second path to dissemination required our project to become actively involved in knowledge management and professional development.

4. Knowledge management: the 'Think Tank' project

At an early stage, we realised that merely channelling information about the ECML would not necessarily facilitate innovation. In order to have an impact on university language teaching, the topics dealt with by the ECML had to be incorporated within a framework of in-service training offered by the universities.

In the course of the survey and in discussions with the expert panel, it had become clear that a variety of innovative measures and projects had been, or were being undertaken within Austrian universities. These, however, tended to represent the work of individuals working alone or in co-operation with outside institutions (EU, ECML, other universities etc.) but not at an institutional level. As a result, many language teachers were not informed about these activities and did not benefit from the expertise and insights resulting from this innovative work. Clearly, in order to maximise this considerable, but rather disparate, expertise a framework was needed in which all language teachers would be able to have access to these insights. Moreover, this framework needed to have the official sanction and support of the university and its infrastructure if it was to operate in both a bottom-up and top-down direction. In April 2002 the project co-ordinators therefore approached Professor Ada Pellert, Vice-rector of Graz University with responsibility for teaching and professional development, with a proposal for a programme for disseminating innovation among language teachers. This programme was named the 'Think Tank', although the term 'Action Tank' would in hindsight have been more appropriate. The Think Tank had the following main short-term aims:

1. to take stock of innovative measures in the area of language teaching at Graz University
2. to create a platform and structure for disseminating good practices and creating synergies among language teachers.

In the long-term it was hoped that the resulting structure would influence language policy at our university and would create the basis for an extensive programme of

professional development among language teachers. Vice-rector Pellert agreed to implement our proposal and a three-phase model was drawn up, as outlined below:

Phase 1: Setting up of an expert group consisting of language teachers working in innovative projects at Graz University (the 'Think Tank')

In April 2002 a group of six experts was invited to form the Think Tank. Their areas of expertise represented those identified as being of special interest to university language teachers in the survey described above and also reflected some of the main foci of the work of the ECML and the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe. The 'bundles' of topics selected were:

- Common European Framework of Reference, Levels specification, DIALANG project
- European Language Portfolio and learner autonomy
- Intercultural awareness and competence
- Materials development for university language teaching
- E-learning, distance learning.

The think tank also drew up a plan for a professional development programme.

Phase 2: Taking the decision-makers on board

As stated earlier, in university institutes which teach languages, responsibility for strategy and decision-making lies in the hands of departmental chairs or heads of department, who are in many cases non-specialists in language teaching. It was for this reason that heads of departments were only incorporated into this second phase, once a proposal had been worked out by the language teaching experts. It was, however, vital to take them on board at this stage as their support was essential if the programme was to be implemented. In October 2002, a meeting was therefore called by Vice-Rector Pellert which was attended by both language-teaching experts and decision-makers, at which the programme for professional development was outlined and accepted by all parties. The heads of department were requested to appoint 'multipliers' from their department, who would attend the forthcoming workshops and who would disseminate the results to their colleagues.

Phase 3: Implementation

The basis of implementation was a series of five professional development sessions, spread through the winter semester 2002, in which members of the Think Tank conducted workshops on the designated topics. These were attended by multipliers

representing each institute. The workshops were located within, and financed by, the in-service development programme of Graz University, rather than being part of the UNIDISS project so that they would have the official 'stamp' of the university. Each workshop had the aims of informing participants about innovative measures concerning the selected topic and providing examples of good practice and also of encouraging language teachers to become more involved in these areas. It is hoped that in the following semester, two follow-up projects will be initiated: one with the aim of compiling a Language Learning Portfolio for Austrian universities and the other of developing materials for e-learning.

The Think Tank model can be seen as a 'project within a project', representing an attempt to use the UNIDISS framework as a launching pad to concrete measures for fostering innovation and effecting change. This model was presented at the closing conference of the project and it is hoped that it will be extended to other Austrian universities.

5. Effecting change: the closing conference

At the end of September 2002 a two-day conference was held at the ECML in Graz to conclude the UNIDISS project. The title of the conference was 'The quality of learning and teaching of languages at Austrian universities'. This was attended by language teachers representing all university institutes participating in the project, by officials of the Ministry of Education, by deans and vice-rectors of various universities and by representatives of the ECML. In addition, ten participants from universities in central European countries were invited by the ECML, who contributed to the organisation of the event. The main aims of the conference were:

1. to obtain an overview of new developments in language teaching at Austrian universities
2. to draw up a profile of university language teachers
3. to consider ways of supporting innovative forms of language teaching and learning
4. to draw up recommendations to official bodies (ministry, university authorities) concerning university language teaching in the future.

The emphasis throughout was on quality management and improvement and to this end Frank Heyworth was invited to hold the keynote speech on this topic. In addition to presentations of innovative measures and projects, a panel discussion between experts and decision-makers was held and delegates drew up concrete proposals for supporting innovation.

Conclusion

At the time of writing, it is too early to say how effective the UNIDISS project will be as the measures proposed in the course of our project have not yet been fully implemented. Moreover, the concluding report has not yet been delivered to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. My final comments are therefore preliminary impressions, rather than conclusive results. The importance of the project seems to have lain in the following areas:

Forum

The project has helped to establish a forum and platform for language teachers at Austrian universities and has laid the basis for improved networking. The survey and the concluding conference were important steps in giving a voice to expertise which had not previously been given due attention.

Decision making

The project seems to have gone some way to enabling language teachers to overcome the hierarchical hurdles which have tended to prevent them proposing a framework for improving language teaching and fostering innovation. In particular, a structured dialogue with heads of departments, university administrators and ministry officials is important if the expertise that language teachers possess is to be used effectively. It is hoped that this will in turn contribute to a more coherent policy on language teaching.

Quality of language teaching

The issue of quality is one that has been insufficiently addressed at university level, but which lies at the core of the UNIDISS project. It has to be admitted that due to various factors the quality of teaching is extremely patchy. On the one hand, as centres of excellence, universities provide the potential for high quality language teaching and research, for which there is abundant evidence within our universities. On the other hand, the relatively low status of language teaching within universities, the poor contractual conditions of many teachers, the lack of expertise and structure within some university departments, the low interest in innovation and professional development among some language teachers, poor resources and facilities – all these factors have a negative influence on quality. Our project has attempted both to raise awareness in the importance of quality and to foster improvement by proposing structures such as the Think Tank. Moreover, by focusing on topics which represent the core of the activities of the ECML and of the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, it is hoped that the considerable benefits of having the ECML located in Austria will be better utilised.

Appendix

Details of UNIDISS project

Project commissioned by: Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur

Project co-ordinator:	Dr. David Newby, Universität Graz
Project administrator and researcher:	Dr. Isabel Landsiedler, Universität Graz
Expert panel:	Dr. Ursula Stachl-Peier (Graz) Dr. Barbara Hinger (Innsbruck) Dr. Christine Noe (Wien) Dr. Martin Kaltenbacher (Salzburg) Mag. Gudrun Götz (Graz) Dr. Wolfgang Stadler (Innsbruck)
Austrian dissemination co-ordinator:	Dr. Dagmar Heindler, Österreichisches Sprachen-Kompetenz-Zentrum/ZSE III
Duration of project:	January 2001 – November 2002
Participating universities:	Universities of Graz, Innsbruck, Salzburg, Vienna

Members of 'Think Tank' of Graz University:

Vice-rector Ada Pellert (initiator), David Newby (co-ordinator), Norbert Berger, Gudrun Götz, Isabel Landsiedler, Edith Matzer, Ursula Stachl-Peier

Links/addresses

UNIDISS project website: www-gewi.kfunigraz.ac.at/unidiss/

UNIDISS email: unidiss@gmx.at

Austrian dissemination co-ordinator, Dr. Dagmar Heindler (Österreichisches Sprachen-Kompetenz-Zentrum): www.zse3.asn-graz.ac.at

Austrian Association of the ECML / Verein Österreichisches Fremdsprachenzentrum in Österreich (Ursula Newby): www.ecml.at/efsz

Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur: www.bmbwk.gv.at

Case study 6:
ECML Project 1.2.5: Odysseus – Second language at the workplace. Language needs of migrant workers: organising language learning for the vocational/workplace context [1]

Chris Holland

Chris Holland's case study examines the needs of migrant workers for whom successful language education is an essential feature of professional success and of social integration. The workplace is also usually the place where languages are studied and the role of the teacher changes – s/he also becomes a consultant helping with practical problems of integration and linking languages to vocational training. The study again emphasises the importance of personal relationships in the success of projects and the difficulties of maintaining impetus when participants are separated by distance and culture, and where the organisation for implementing innovation is not always present.

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Background

The idea for this project was informed by the practitioners in the field in the lead countries named in the bid application, Germany and the Netherlands. Dott. Matilde Grünhage-Monetti, researcher at the Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenen-bildung in Frankfurt, Germany, is a teacher trainer in foreign languages, German as a second language for adults, and intercultural issues. Andreas Klepp, is a teacher of German as a foreign and second language and a literacy teacher at the Volkshochule Braunschweig in Germany. He is also a teacher trainer in Germany and abroad of

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German as a foreign and second language, and of literacy for adults. Annet Berntsen, University of Amsterdam, ITTA resigned and was later replaced by Elwine Halewijn. Both Annet and Elwine are teachers, researchers and teacher trainers of Dutch at the workplace.

For the bid applicants, the language needs of migrants in the workplace was an important issue that needed exploring so that better provision could be developed to serve the needs and interests of their own organisations and the countries they live in. They were aware that most European countries host migrant/ethnic workers who live and work in the host countries for a number of reasons, and who intend, or are obliged to stay there permanently or for a long period of time. The bid applicants knew that a large number of migrant/ethnic workers had had no formal vocational training and that if they had received it in their home countries, it is often not recognised in the host countries. They were of the opinion that differences in learning cultures are important factors to be considered when establishing provision.

In this context the development of communicative and linguistic skills is not only an important prerequisite for successful integration at the workplace – socially and professionally, but it also contributes substantially to the ability to hold a job, to retrain, and to finding other employment. Specifically, the bid applicants wanted to know how to improve the communicative and linguistic skills of migrant workers who lacked formal vocational training at the workplace, and how to promote the expertise of teachers and course designers so that they can set up vocationally-oriented courses and improve the quality and efficiency of existing courses**.** The project's action plan began with the intention of developing a preparatory study of the issues in order to get an overview of the status quo in the area of workplace/vocationally-oriented second language teaching in Europe. From there it intended to adapt existing instruments for assessing second language needs at the workplace with an emphasis on communicative tasks, and to collect and analyse a few samples of authentic spoken and written "scenarios" at the workplace in English, in order to show how to integrate needs assessment with actual workplace practice. Questionnaires on second language provision were circulated to the participants who were appointed by the respective national agencies. The return of the questionnaires was not particularly high. This was partly due to the short time between appointment by the national agency and the first workshop. A further explanation lies probably in the fact that quite a number of participants were not working in the field of second language and had no direct access to the required information.

Lancaster joins the project

In 2000, I was the Associate Director of the national, government funded Workplace Basic Skills Network, based at Lancaster University. Towards the end of the first year of project, I was contacted and invited, as the British representative for workplace

language, to join it. I was interested in how the project could inform participating and non-participating European countries, not only about language provision, but also about literacy provision in the workplace.

I attended the first workshop in June 2000, hosted by the ECML in Graz, and comprising representatives from twenty-one countries, all with varying experience of workplace language and/or literacy provision in the workplace. The countries represented at this meeting were: Austria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, the Slovak Republic, Switzerland and the UK.

Some representatives, such as those from the Netherlands, the UK, Norway, Germany had a depth of experience in workplace language provision. Others such as the colleague from Spain, a country in which the issue and the provision are emerging, have some experience in the field, but most colleagues did not have any. The first workshop enabled all participants to share their experience and expertise in language teaching for adults, and to learn from each other about workplace policy and provision. Those of us with experience to share, gave presentations to the group as a whole. We were well resourced for this meeting, with translators in English, German.

Since participants were distanced by language, geography and culture, it was important to find ways in which they could develop strong collegial and friendship bonds. The ECML organised group dinners and outings, the co-ordinators brought people together in subgroups to work on aspects of the project, paying a great deal of attention to inclusion of those countries who lacked experience of workplace language provision. Some very experienced researchers and/or trainers felt restrained from sharing their experience where representatives new to the area had requested information, but the ECML and the co-ordinators felt that it was important to develop solutions from the group as a whole. This type of heterogenity is to be found in many trans-European meetings and was expected, at least to a certain extent.

During the second year, Annet moved to new employment and her place was filled by Elwine Halewin, of the ITTA. This second general network meeting (September 2001) was attended by 23 participants**,** some taking the place of those no longer able to attend from their countries, and others providing a fresh input from a new participant country. This was seen as both valuable (some experienced colleagues, wider contribution and dissemination) and difficult (some new members did not have workplace language experience either in terms of policy or practice in their countries; all had to be brought up to 'speed' with the project).

The Executive Director of the ECML, Michel Lefranc, and Josef Huber, Head of Programmes, both emphasised the importance of the network, and stressed the importance of working toward a concrete product in 2002. Josef Huber recommended completing a few things in a thorough way rather than risking unfinished products. He therefore asked the participants to come to feasible decisions and reasonable time planning. We were able to consolidate objectives and decide on a product, which

should be a publication including as far as possible input from as many countries as possible represented in the group.

I delivered two presentations about the role of the teacher as a consultant in in-company courses and about my PhD research on power relationships at the workplace. They stressed the fact that a language course in a company should never stand-alone but should take into account the company's organisation. This has implication for the teacher's professional profile and role. The teacher has to consider the company as a whole system when planning, delivering and evaluating a language course.

Elwine Halewijn discussed the setting of aims in in-company language courses and stressed the fact that the company's aims should be taken into account when setting the aims of the course, as well as the linguistic aims and the educational aims of the providers. She also dealt with research for measuring the results of language provision at the workplace. She gave background information including the results of the evaluative research of a training project with cleaners at the Free University of Amsterdam.

During this second meeting, we found that issues that were just below the surface in the first meeting, were raised and explored. This was partly due to the fact that many of us knew each other better, and partly because new members needed clarification of goals. Again the ECML hosted the daytime meetings, this time in their new premises in Graz. Our work continued beyond the formal meeting hours, into the convent where we were all staying. It is a tribute to the co-ordinators that when decisions made up until this point were challenged, they were flexible enough to revisit original aims and objectives and to change direction where it was felt necessary. We finished by setting up seven network groups, each with responsibility for completing a section of the book, and each headed by a co-ordinator.

In the later half of 2001, I resigned my post at Lancaster University and moved back to New Zealand, but continued to work with the project. Because we were all separated by many miles, much of the development of our work had to be conducted by email. This, despite advances in technology, was difficult for all of us, and probably each of us spent many hours clarifying each other's intentions, requests, suggestions etc. before work could be continued. I was invited to join the network groups' co-ordination team again in April 2002.

It had been arranged that by this time, several tasks would have been completed, such as the development, dissemination and return of a survey, the completion of a glossary, and some work towards drawing implications for practice from the results of the survey. Partly for the above mentioned reasons, and partly because people were trying to do this work as an unpaid extra to their normal workloads, deadlines were not able to be met, and the 2002 meeting had little concrete development work from which to go forward. However, we found that this co-ordination team was able to go forward in another, very important way.

Contributions that were coming through from the wider group reflected different theoretical approaches to the work, and a spontaneous discussion among the network groups' co-ordinators at the April meeting 2002 followed this realisation. It became apparent to us that we had not ever discussed our own theoretical perspectives, and the strong political implications of this work.

We allowed time to work out where our approaches converged and diverged. The result was not only a greater clarity around goals and means of achieving those goals, but greater trust between participants. Thus it was an unexpected but invaluable part of the work. With such distances and time issues to overcome, we needed to have an agreed theoretical approach and strong group trust. We discussed whether it would have been better to have had this discussion at the beginning of the project. Matilde is aware that the "delay" in clarifying such fundamental issues may have slowed down the process for a few very experienced colleagues who have invested a lot of energy in the project and who are doing most of the work. It would not have been of much use in a large group of people with very different academic and political backgrounds and different command of the working languages. It was felt that a discussion on theoretical approaches at the outset of the project would have been meaningful only to some participants. An honest discussion on "political" issues like our position as professionals acting in a context of power relations is possible only if there is mutual trust and people feel free to speak up. The participants are sent by their national agencies and are in a certain way representatives of their countries, which may have created difficulties for some. I would be interested to see what would happen if a project ***started*** with trying to get clear about co-ordinators' and participants' perspectives, before development work began.

Although time was invested in such a discussion, we now had the confidence that we could edit each others' work without offence, and this meant that work could be passed around and improved much more quickly.

We made another discovery during this meeting. The variation in experience of the field by participants had definitely held up progress. While we valued such a wide input, we realised that the need for outcomes was as important, and that in future we might construct a project group differently.

We have until September to complete the project, and still we are waiting for contributions to come in from participants. We have repeatedly invited them to contribute, making clear that participation on the final meeting depends on completion of their contributions. This is unfortunate for the wider group, as some of the reason for their inability to make a contribution comes from their lack of experience with workplace language and literacy, and this needed to be addressed at the outset.

Much of the final work will be carried out by the co-ordinators themselves. This is a problem both for those of us who are self employed, as funds do not cover our contribution very adequately, as well as for those who are employed but have to work for Odysseus outside their working time. However, we are committed to providing a useful and important resource for the field that can be accessed via the web by any of

our European partners as well as other interested parties. Additionally, in September 2002, a presentation workshop in Graz is planned, at which there will be presentations on developments, experiences and results.

The Graz event will begin with a two-day meeting for the network groups, where there will be a round up the work done so far, a discussion of remaining questions and the finalising of decisions (mainly concerning remaining work, publication, etc). This will be followed by a two day event for new invited representatives from National and European policy makers, representatives of the social partners and where possible of migrants organisations, as well as relevant expert adult educationalists. We aim to ensure that representatives of the countries that did not participate in the project, are invited. The co-ordinating team will present the project and its issues setting the political, economical, social and academic frame.

The difficulties encountered during the work, as outlined here, will also be thematised and their nature (technical, academic, political etc) defined and stated. Points arising from the discussion with the participants of the workshop will be integrated into the final product.

In 2003 two regional workshops in two strategic geopolitical European regions are planned. Envisaged are:

- a regional workshop of the German speaking countries: DACHL in Bonn, 13-17 February 2003, which will exploit the fact that the four countries in question share the same language
- a regional workshop in Spain, following an explicit invitation from the national agency.

Their aims are to develop and pilot different types of regional workshops and to disseminate in a more intensive way the results achieved and the insights gained by Odysseus, and possibly to initiate cross-language co-operation groups beyond the regional level. Invitations will be extended to adult educationalists in charge of (second) language policies, but also policy makers, stakeholders, the social partners and migrant organisations in the target countries.

Our "Odyssea" has proved so far a challenging and enriching experience but also dispersive and energy consuming. An honest evaluation at a structural level should identify the nature of the problems identified, i.e. mainly the mismatch between invested resources and tangible, immediate outputs (publication). Are they able to address the project (due to the issue, the personality of the co-ordinators, the composition of the group, etc.)? Which criteria, support and monitoring mechanisms can be applied in the future to ensure a more effective investment of resources?

Despite the questions issues raised by this project, we believe participants have been able to bring together and share new, important and useful information for European countries developing language provision for migrants.

Case study 7:
Innovations in language learning

Anne Stevens, Open University, United Kingdom

The last two case studies come from outside the context of the ECML medium-term programme of activities; they are, however, directly relevant to the implementation of innovatory approaches (the British Open University has been a forerunner in distance learning projects) and the study of an important question related to the efficacy of intensive use of learning time as compared to the traditional extensive courses.

Anne Steven's study recounts how the Open University has extended its activities to language learning which was initially not considered a propitious domain for distance learning – it was though that personal contact and face to face teaching was a prerequisite. The study shows how the learners' needs have been taken into account and how the social elements of learning can be maintained if the organisation and resources are made available.

Background

The Open University (OU) admitted its first students in 1971. It is the UK's largest University with over 200,000 students delivering courses in some twenty disciplines and it represents 21% of all part-time higher education students in the UK. Courses from the OU are available throughout Europe and in many other parts of the world. At undergraduate level no entry qualifications are required. Over one third of people starting these courses have qualifications below conventional university entry requirements with nearly all students enrolled on a part-time basis, of whom some 70% remain in full time employment during their studies. Students can enter at the age of 18, but two thirds are aged between 25 and 44.

By the 1980s the University had decided that a curriculum without modern languages was incomplete and unbalanced. Its proven success across a wide range of disciplines had demonstrated that sound pedagogical principles of open and distance teaching could be applied to many areas of study. In 1991 this experience influenced the decision to introduce languages into the curriculum. The new courses would create a fully integrated additional subject area within the undergraduate curriculum. The courses would be offered on the same open basis as other subjects and would be fully operational across all regions in the UK and Europe from the start.

The initial reticence in starting courses in modern languages was rooted in an inherent apprehension as to the suitability of open and distance learning for language study. This was linked to uncertainties as to whether the by then well established, but rigorous methodologies could indeed be applied to the teaching of languages. Could it succeed given the complexity of delivering teaching, learning and testing through supported open learning within such a multi-skilled subject area? There were however by now examples elsewhere of successful distance teaching in languages and this gave the final impetus for development to start.

The task was then to learn from and build on that wide experience, and to apply a varied and rich experience of language teaching and learning to the production of the new language courses. Many of those original reasons behind the reluctance to present language learning by adapting existing systems of the Open University's organisation and structure were exactly those now faced by the team as they inaugurated the first courses.

First stages

In organisational terms the tasks were approached inevitably in chronological order of need, but always with an ever vigilant eye on the next steps in the process in order to ensure that the many parts of this complex jigsaw would finally piece together.

The starting point for all the learning is the material. The University has an alliance with the BBC to produce the audio and visual elements and, where appropriate, to broadcast television and radio programmes either as a supplement to the teaching or at times as an integral part of the learning. The first decisions therefore were how and when to use these media, together with the more traditional elements of print in order to maximise learning opportunities. Experience showed that the budgets as well as pedagogical judgements determined some of that balance. Video, and especially broadcast material, is very expensive whilst audio is relatively easy to produce and economic. Print is essential to all of the materials for the home learner. The format and style of the printed material influence the learning in fundamental ways and investment in design and layout pay dividends but again pose the challenge of balancing considerations of economy and pedagogy.

The organisational structure and the design of the courses are intended to allow access to learning to be as open as possible. For this reason the media used in conventional courses is text, audio and print, each of which is readily available to the home-based learner. Similarly the style of the text and the language of the teaching is aimed to communicate effectively with a wide audience. It has to be both accessible to the inexperienced learner and to present a sound structural basis to the learning.

The need for specialist input into these decisions was apparent and the tradition of including key individuals with specialist knowledge and skills in the development process became standard practice within the teams.

In terms of media, it was decided after such interventions, that whilst video would play an integral part in the courses, broadcast material would be limited in order to allow for a greater variety of audio material and a higher investment in print. The video material is produced first in order to plan its structure and to build the other elements around this resource. This also ensures that the video is fully integrated into the learning pattern. The team therefore has to design the whole structure from the start and to plan the video specifications within the entire structure of the course.

The first French course

It was decided to integrate the various media and to introduce new learning in as many varied formats as possible. It was also decided to carefully balance the use of authentic recordings and the studio recorded language. The overall aim being to provide a structure through which the student progressed towards an acceptable level of mastery of each topic area in a range of styles and modes of language appropriate to an adult speaker of the language.

Once the balance of media was decided and the relationships between them defined, the process of writing specifications began. Issues such as the value and role of video to a lone learner, the time, place and purpose of audio recordings, making the text the 'leading media' all raise sets of interesting issues. Many of the questions are pertinent to all language learners and to the organisation of any study outside the conventional classroom.

Experience from other disciplines shows that students value the print and audio elements above the others, for reasons of ease of use and sheer practicality. For the language learner they form the portable and therefore personal element of the hardware. The video is static and therefore tends to be limited in its use and often inaccessible in domestic situations. Such considerations have led to the original highly integrated format of the various media to be modified in order to take account of these conditions. The circumstances of the learning as defined by available time and place have guided much subsequent development. The learner needs to know before starting to study what equipment is needed, the time allocation of the section as a whole and those of individual activities. Learners need to organise their study in line with personal lifestyles and circumstances.

Whilst the video and any broadcast material adds value and 'prestige' to the learning, they are limited in their value to the lone learner. The audio is the key element in terms of personal practice and the development of productive spoken skills. It was given particular attention in order to test and evolve imaginative and creative learning opportunities and a diverse range of practice material. This medium can be applied to a wide range of uses and inputs. It supplements the authentic material by providing additional material for those who can use it; it can also provide semi-scripted studio recordings providing different listening experiences for different learning purposes.

The exercises and tasks can be designed to suit many purposes in the learning. They can be graded and varied to provide motivating and varied programmes. Students can use them to improve either fluency or accuracy at any time. By timing their inputs to the spoken parts, they can evidence for themselves improvements over time and the benefits of study practice. The ability to monitor and access evidence of progress is one of the most important elements in the teaching cycle.

Integrating the teaching and learning process

The programmes have to comply with the standards set for higher education study and the outcomes and exit levels must be comparable with similar courses in other higher education institutions. The balance between ensuring the full range of skills development whilst introducing sufficiently new and challenging content is a major issue in developing the materials.

The curriculum structure and the definition of the exact role of each within the course were developed in detail. Categories of learning input were developed comprising assumed learning from previous knowledge, elements to be learned for assessment and key to the core of the course, elements for recognition and passive knowledge which were not to be specifically tested etc. Each is defined for each skill area. Any key learning must be not only adequately covered but also presented in ways that provided opportunities for the learners to self-test and to revise and consolidate as they moved through the course. An end of course test being an essential element of OU study for accreditation purposes.

Evidence showed that adult learners were likely to seek perfection in each task at each stage. In fact the structure differentiated between priorities and the students had to learn to deal with elements of the language in varying importance depending upon the point in the course of study. This is normally handled and managed by the classroom teacher but in supported self study the learner has to engage in this process and manage it efficiently otherwise the study time will become over-burdensome and progress will not be maintained. These issues and that of presenting sufficient range of content whilst ensuring appropriate pace and progression through the materials are without doubt the most complex areas in the development.

Materials that are designed for use by learners at home, working in the main without the presence of a teacher need to be clearly understandable and easily worked through. Any problems of clarity in study instructions or guidance indicate a weakness in the structure and will ultimately undermine the learning process. Balancing and integrating the media and covering the curriculum through different tasks and activities is a complex process.

It soon became apparent why all developments at the OU are made through the course team structure, the experience and views and criticisms of others underpin the quality

assurance through the development process. As many people as possible read and criticise the material as it is produced. They range from team members to staff in other disciplines to external critical readers. At each of the three drafting stages the materials are tested on groups of potential learners and the materials are adapted as a result of this process.

Structuring the teaching

The content provides the vehicle for the learning. The essential learning is the embedding of the structure and use of the language. This is what ultimately will be tested and assessed. The assessment content encapsulates that essential learning and the process defines both the overall standard and the exit level of the course. Students who study on a part-time basis have to apportion their time carefully and are aware of this, often organising their study around the demands of the assessment. In other words the learners are surviving the course within the context of their everyday lives by working to the essentials. Research shows that they are quite anarchical apparently in their study habits. In fact they work to personal plans directed at succeeding in the assessment and not necessarily at covering the content in all its complexity.

However, the subject matter itself must be of inherent interest if they are to move on. The courses are designed to be presented over a period of about six years so that topicality is not possible and subjects are chosen which generally have an enduring interest. The learning is organised on a monthly cycle with some form of assessment after every four weeks of learning. The teams decided to take this as the organising unit of the topics of study. Currently each month is focused on a different topic or aspect of contemporary society. This works well in terms of variety across the eight months of study but is heavy in terms of vocabulary and general lexis required as each topic is treated from different aspects through the various media.

All teams, and especially new disciplines at the OU, engage in a programme of formal developmental testing of their material whilst in production. This process demonstrated that, as expected, a wide variety of texts and exercises were beneficial and most particularly that learners required considerable time to work through their new learning. The tests demonstrated that the heavy emphasis on content led to an imbalance between the allocation of study time and the learning priorities, the students could not work through the materials in the recommended times.

Timings are a key part of OU materials. The courses are designated in terms of hours of study per week. The study hours in turn define the academic value of the course in ‘points’ that count towards an undergraduate qualification. For the home learner it is essential if they are to organise their learning that they have a realistic and accurate idea of the study time required for the various parts of the course. For the team it is essential that they develop accuracy in allocating the time to learning tasks, this becomes an organising principle around which pedagogical priorities are decided. It

was apparent from the early testing that the urge to impart vast amounts of content was not allowing sufficient time for skills development during learning. In fact a huge amount of the content had to be dropped at this stage. The challenge of balancing the content and the skills development is on going and student experience continues to inform the process through feedback and comments on course materials.

The role of the learner

The students need clear information and guidance as what is to be tested and what they need to know, learn and practise in order to succeed in their study. The more able can include additional content, practice or tasks and activities according to choice. The judgement as to what they should cover is achieved through sound pedagogical structures that ensure that individuals can define their own learning needs and hence their learning, through the materials. The structures, design, content and pedagogical underpinning work best when the learner has an understanding of the rationale and process in order to exploit it most effectively to meet personal needs.

The transfer of this responsibility to the learner is a key aspect of open and distance learning and any form of autonomous learning. The acquisition of these skills and understandings is structured into the courses in parallel with the teaching of the language.

It became clear that learners would need to develop two different sets of skills – those associated with the language and additionally study skills specifically allied to language study such as using the dictionary, learning to skim read, listening for the general meaning and detail etc. Furthermore the students would develop these by self-study and they had therefore to be integral to the overall learning process. The learners had to be made aware of that process with explicit explanations not only of activities and tasks in the material but also of the reasons for working on them. Only with such a clear understanding of the learning process can learners make judgements and decisions for themselves with regard to their own study.

The ability to fashion a personalised learning programme, to develop routines and patterns to meet personal needs is essential. The materials, though carefully and rigidly structured, are a learning resource for the student who must use them effectively and adapt them to needs. The ‘needs’ have a two-fold basis. On the one hand those of personal priorities, such as a desire to improve spoken skills and on the other the needs of the course, to successfully complete the assessment and gain the qualification. Students may decide to concentrate on the former at the expense of the latter. The motivation to fulfil personal learning goals rather than to attain formal success is sometimes pre-eminent. Such a decision is left to the student but it should be taken knowingly. Compared with other disciplines, language students display anomalies in their behaviours in that currently over 20% of language students choose not to take the formal qualifying assessment, a higher percentage than in other disciplines. Learners

continue to study through the three courses in the programme. This pattern may say something of the motivation of many language learners in that they see languages as a tool for life and not always as a skill requiring formal qualifications.

Whatever the choice of the students, the better they understand the process, the more effective will be their learning. For them an active involvement in and an understanding of the learning process will enable them to engage in and control the process. It is essential that learners are aware of their needs, can set priorities appropriately and allocate time in order to maximise their efforts. Learning, and especially home study, is based on self-discipline and a sound study routine. The material has to allow the time for the 'teaching through print' both to be worked through and, more importantly, internalised and acted upon if the student is to proceed effectively and to become an efficient learner. Experience showed not only that distance learners need to actively develop these skills but that they need to apply considerable time to them within their studies as they are largely working independently.

Organising the learning

Learners come to this method and mode of study for a wide variety of reasons, but not because their learning intentions are different from those choosing more traditional teaching. Evidence drawn from potential and actual learners shows that motivations and expectations of those studying through supported open learning are just the same as those of any other language learner. The desire to speak and communicate being uppermost. It falls then to the academics to devise learning methods that will enable these outcomes to be met through the new methodologies, not to modify the outcomes.

The sound advice, help guidance and encouragement given by any good teacher are essential in promoting the learning. The skills are attained through study of the texts, working through the activities, study practice and tutor feedback. A balance of language skills is presented month by month through the course. A typical pattern could involve the new topic being introduced via the video. This being a difficult medium for self-study, it is usually used for gist comprehension and cultural aspects. Although activities are usually included, it is not a key teaching medium. The teaching points are introduced via authentic or authenticated material, which may be textual or audio. A range of exploitation is used which include comprehension and separately productive language activities. The learner is aware at each point what is being practised and the intended outcome.

Where productive speaking is involved this is normally practised via various activities and the student encouraged to record their efforts and to listen and compare either with the original or with their earlier work. The role of the personal log can be important at this stage. It is helpful for learners to record not only progress but their feelings about their work if possible, including their views on their performance but also on where

they feel they can improve. Given the range of the skills covered it may be some time before a similar activity is again worked on. Immediate impressions give the most informative perspective on their learning. They also help when they next come to a similar piece of work and they can compare from evidence rather than memory. Normally the progress made is considerable and this acts as a highly motivating factor.

The approach involves the learner in active engagement. At each stage they are encouraged to monitor their progress in different skills, log their progress and keep a work record. This should include not only performance aspects but also affective factors such as how they coped with the learning, the time they invested and whether they followed the teaching guidelines. Only by keeping records in this way can progress be acknowledged and comparisons with later performances be compared.

From these records learners begin to establish their personal learning patterns, identifying weaknesses and strengths and gradually learning to develop techniques to overcome difficulties and allow sufficient time for practice in these areas of language acquisition.

Productive writing is dealt with in similar ways with guide writing being used in practice work and model writing, not answers being provided. The feedback, which comprises corrected or completed activities with considerable feedback written in a style to emulate the teacher speaking directly to the learner, is important part of each textbook.

Reading and listening texts are dealt with in more traditional ways and lend themselves well to self-study. Learners working through the OU programmes become proficient at these skills and well used to judging their performance from their results, rather than just the score that they gain for their work.

At the end of each topic and series of activities, normally lasting four weeks, the student is required to carry out an assignment. The final week in each topic is dedicated to revision and consolidation to prepare for the assessment. During this week the assignment itself takes considerable time and so little if any new learning can take place at this point.

The assignments vary across the courses but increasingly are not based on a single skill but comprise multi-skilled activities. Normally they include a reading or listening test on which productive work is based and the task derived. An assignment usually involves a number of different tasks and activities, which tests the core learning from the unit for the month.

The completed assignment, including any audio recordings is sent to the tutor who marks the work and gives written and recorded feedback. The marks are recorded centrally and regionally as part of the student record. The marks count towards the course assessment elements in the overall result. Feedback needs to be rapid and the turn-round time for the marking and feedback is about two weeks. The tutor may well offer additional feedback via telephone or a tutorial if one is organised when the students can obtain more feedback and explanation on their work.

The personal records form an important part of their work and study plan but the more formal assessments are also very important. They are the measure by which the learner knows whether their personal performance is in line with expectations from the course team academics and whether they are measuring up to the expected external standards.

A range of approaches to preparing learners is used. A mix of computer marked assignments (CMAs) and tutor marked work is used. This differentiates between multiple choice exercises often based on reading or listening generated material although involving a mix of skills and purely productive output marked by the tutor. Increasingly self-marked assessments (SMAs) have been introduced to replace the CMAs. This allows the learner to carry out an assessment of learning in private. They do the work without feedback beyond the guidance provided as to required or expected performance levels and this has proved very helpful learners. For those trained in coping with their learning issues this form of feedback is immensely valuable. For the less confident learner, it provides the occasion for self-testing in private and, if preferred, to choose to self-improve without the intervention of a tutor or any direct feedback.

Each successive course team has further developed these techniques. Current courses include elements such as booklets and tapes dedicated to practice in specialist skill areas such as reading or vocabulary building or listening material. This enables the learner who has identified such a weakness to improve and focus on that aspect in isolation from the rest if needed. These additional dimensions to learner choice within the programme are much appreciated.

The feedback from any such learning must be clear and easily understood and learner perceptions need to be managed sensitively. Guidance on the quality of work, study and learning techniques and not just ‘scores’ are needed buy the learners. Progress and the process itself may often be more important than the outcome itself. Not scoring full marks or complete understanding should not be seen as failure. Positive perceptions of progress and realistic expectations are important in positive learning. Progress must be evident and if possible measurable by the learner. Difficulties and problems must be seen as a positive part of the learning process, not barriers and reasons for non-continuance of studies.

The learning process must then involve reflection by the learner on the process itself and also on the development of a personal understanding of individual learning pattern preferences and strengths and weaknesses.

The students of the OU are adults, who typically tend to work to achieve perfection in their learning and high scoring results. Learners often want to work on a task until they are completely satisfied with their work. This may be particular to learners within open and distance learning but is a feature of many adult learners and may account for typically high drop-out rates from part-time study classes. The OU courses have excellent retention records and part of the reason for this may well be because students have a deeper understanding of the study process and so are less daunted by the challenges of the language learning process. A key part of retaining the students resides

in the approach of 'teaching through assessment' whereby the learners are aware that the assessment, whatever the form, is an important part of the learning and it serves to assist them in pin-pointing weaknesses and areas for further development. They begin to learn that the message from the work may well be more important than the mark itself. It is often far more beneficial to move on and practise those skills again later.

The material is written to try to meet all of these individual needs and learning patterns. New teaching is introduced in several ways and in different modes in order to cover individual preferences. The astute learner will be aware of this and will economise to suit personal needs in relation to what is learned and how it is achieved. The learner will become efficient at predicting the time needed to cover new work and to complete tasks and assessment but these skills are developed not inherited. All of the learners say that they had no special experience or background in such learning techniques prior to studying with the OU.

The issues of pace and progression through the curriculum must take this learning into account. Over the years this is the aspect which perhaps above all other has moved forward. The general recognition of the time it takes a learner to embed new learning, to practice new skills and become an efficient learner are recognised and the 'learning curve' across the length of the course adjusted accordingly.

Teaching the courses

The learners receive their materials some weeks prior to the start of the course. By this time they have been notified of their personal tutor and assigned a local study centre. The tutor will have made contact to introduce him/herself and to inform the students about tutorial arrangements. Students in languages receive around twenty hours of face to face contact with their tutor over the eight months of the course. They are distributed in a range of ways but often through a series of one-day schools. The tutor is responsible for the face to face tuition but also for providing guidance and help required by the students. This is usually by telephone but may involve home visits in exceptional circumstances. The tutor offers a mix of academic and personal guidance. For part-time learners, personal circumstances can often impinge on their learning and they need advice or, sometimes, special circumstances, in order to complete their studies. The tutor plays an active part in all of these areas. The degree to which they are called upon varies greatly and they have to adapt to the need of the various students in their study group.

For the materials and the approach to succeed, the tutors and their managers have to be trained and developed to work in the new learning environments and to have a thorough knowledge of the material and the expectations of the learners.

Staff development is seen as essential. The University already had extensive training available to new tutors (Associate Lecturers). Such were the special skills in the

language field that prior to launching the first courses, the team produced a staff development pack comprising video, audio and printed material which was provided to each new member of the teaching staff. They were encouraged to discuss their teaching in groups if possible in order to come to the tutoring with a clear understanding of their role in the learning.

The teacher has direct contact with every student in his or her group through the marking of assessment and providing feedback. It is very important that this is positive, helpful and encouraging. It is also essential that marking be carried out to standardised procedures and norms. For this reason new tutors' work is monitored regularly through the first year. Marks are compared across groups and individual student progress monitored. The monitor provides feedback to the tutor so that the tutor goes through a process not dissimilar from that of the learners. In addition, the staff tutors visit the tutors, for whom they are responsible in their region and visit all tutors over the year, providing feedback on the group work. More recently peer assessment has been trialled and this proving successful and for many groups more practical and helpful as the experience within the system grows and develops.

Staff tutors located in one of thirteen regional centres throughout the country takes on responsibility for overseeing this work and for staff development programmes. They also organise the venues for the study centres where individual groups will hold their tutorial sessions throughout the year.

Regional centres are responsible for all of the administration and organisation of the teaching. As a new subject area, they too had to be inducted into the needs of languages including the apportioning of appropriate study centres where listening and speaking activities could be properly carried out. The administrative and support structures are provided through the regional centres. The staff oversee the delivery of the teaching and deal with any problems or queries that arise. The centre is responsible for allocating the approved course budgets for teaching in accordance with course team requirements and adapted to suit local needs. The varied and often dispersed location of students leads to a wide variety of delivery patterns, influenced by local circumstances.

The regional centre is the local point of contact for the students and an important point of information and a link to the Central University campus.

Support and guidance

A guiding principle of the OU is that its courses and programmes are open to anyone, there are no pre-course entry conditions or test. Individuals make an assessment and choice of their study routes though there is plenty of guidance available for those who want some help. The cohorts of students are therefore very mixed in every possible way. Their language learning experience varies from the formal to the informal experience of the language. Their formal knowledge can be grammatically based or

derived from some spoken experience. Their ages, interests and social groupings may be quite different. Endeavouring to establish a course that will 'work' across such a diverse group and keep the interests of everyone is complex.

Pre-course advice and guidance available through regional centres describe the courses in terms of standard school achievements. In fact the entry and exit levels of the courses are developed in relation to other frameworks such as the Council of Europe and National Language Standards. They describe the realistic study time involved and the expected outcomes. Realistically if learners are to assess their readiness for particular courses, they need to test their ability against trial pieces of work. To this end, sets of diagnostic material have been developed. Their format has varied over time, and they now comprise a number of written tests as well as a taped material. The purpose is to allow individuals to assess their likely success by working through the battery of short tests and self-scoring from their results. If they need advice it is available through their regional centre on an individual basis.

For potential students who wish to take up study and are beyond the level of the first course but for qualification reasons need the full three courses to be accredited, a system of accrediting prior learning (APEL) is available. This is proving practical for the learners and useful for the teachers. As a result, learners are more finely differentiated within the course, which in turn makes the teaching easier for the teacher who already deals with mixed ability groups.

The system allows learners to undertake a series of tasks provided in the form of a pack and this together with the final course assessment can enable them to gain credit for the course without the full teaching programme. In this process the learner assesses for him/herself suitability for APEL. As a fee is involved it is important that candidates pass the assessment. To enable them to make a fair judgement of their skills they are provided with a range of materials. The diagnostic material for each of the three courses with the feedback, an assignment typical of the beginning and the end of the course is also included. From this and, if required, some personal guidance a judgement is made. To date the system is working well and in organisational terms is economic as the assuagement marking and the final assessment are designed to coincide with standard course to reduce costs and organisational systems.

Even those who then decide to embark on language learning may be reluctant to return to study, lacking confidence or experience. For these students a 'warm up' pack was developed. This fulfils the role of providing a revision of basic language structures and also some experience of supported open learning and provides some experience of self-study. It is very informal and designed to provide an enjoyable introduction to the language. These packs, although providing no tutor support, have proved invaluable to new learners and have been much welcomed. They also often form the basis of short revision courses delivered in adult education language classes around the country.

The University invests much in such guidance and counselling and preparatory packs, as it is to the advantage of everyone, teachers and learners alike to recruit suitable

students to courses on which they have shared expectations and on which they can reasonably expect to succeed.

Assessing the learning

The assessment varies across the courses but comprises two elements; the course and examination based elements. All four skills are covered and the approach has changed from discrete skill testing to mixed skills testing based on the model used within the assignments in the course.

Learners receive a profile of their performance as well as a final result. The profile indicates how they perform in each of the skills areas – determined from the assessment framework and the result in one final mark derived from a combination of course and examination assessment.

The courses are delivered at three levels and the first course at 'Level One' no longer includes a formal examination but finishes with a final assignment that is designed to incorporate a major part of the core work of the course. The other courses still include a formal examination. Both systems include an oral examination. This is carried out in groups of between three and five candidates and includes tasks ranging from a short formal presentation to group discussions. The format varies slightly across courses but the structure is the same. The aim being to ensure that students are tested in a situation where they communicate with others and use their language in an unfamiliar setting, both prepared and spontaneous in nature. The assessments are recorded to allow for monitoring and double marking of a sample of tests for moderation purposes.

Each course appoints an Examination Board that is charged with overseeing and finally moderating the results. To date the pattern of results has remained fairly consistent. The pattern across the first course having changed most markedly over time perhaps as the pool of potential learners diminishes and students come to the course with less experience of language learning. Over 13 000 students have to date studied the first French course. This starts at a level somewhere beyond basic school level and so has already reached a large number of potential learners who wish to continue their study.

Lessons learned from experience

The work of our students is perhaps highlighting a number of important issues for all language teachers, not jut those working with adult part-time learners studying through open and distance teaching methods.

The first key aspect is the transfer of the responsibility for learning to the learner and how to manage this process. The learner training required and the time involved in

acquiring the skills should not be underestimated. Allied to this shift is the role of the teacher, which is not just different from that within a conventional setting but it also varies across the life of a course of study. As the learner adapts to the new setting and becomes more skilled, the role of the teacher varies. It can be academic counsellor, facilitator of learning, manager, adviser as well as actual teacher. Staff have to be sensitive to these issues and recognise that as the learners takes charge they will decide as and when they require teacher intervention.

The aspects related to study time and organisation, pre-eminent in OU study, reveal the true complexity of acquiring intrinsic skills for learning. These lessons are pertinent to all learning and should affect the ways in which we design and structure the curriculum.

The quality assurance processes that are built into the OU courses with many different people reading and criticising the material represents a major investment but one which is essential if the resulting materials are to be worked by a varied audience of students.

In time the OU will have to vary its provision both in the form of its courses and the modes of delivery. Currently it is looking at ways of introducing greater flexibility into its curriculum and courses. To date shorter courses in languages, based on the one-week residential school experience are in progress and proving popular and practical for learners. These developments, together with the potential or technology-based applications, to complement such provision will no doubt be important in the near future as more home learners have access to computers.

The advent of new technologies whose evolution in pilot formats runs parallel to the traditional developments described here will change the face of provision in the future. They present solutions to many of the traditional problems such as the public nature of a performance based subject and the need for constant practice. The diverse range of skills and associated activities can also be dealt with effectively within the new media.

The technologies offer efficient and economic solutions to many of these issues and in language learning terms address many of the key issues encountered by learners. As the provision becomes more widely available in the home setting this will no doubt be a major influence on future provision.

Whatever the format of those future courses, the accumulated experience of teaching and learning derived from the more traditional media and the lessons learned will be relevant and valuable. They will provide an informed basis for all such developments, whatever the format.

Case study 8:
Intensive and extensive approaches to learning Spanish

Barbara Hinger

Intensive versus extensive courses: Does time distribution in school context make a difference in foreign language acquisition?

1. Introduction

The study focuses on the role of time distribution in formal language learning settings and argues for the validity of intensive language courses. The hypothesis that an intensively distributed input accelerates the development of foreign language acquisition at various linguistic and motivational levels will be proven by various analytic instruments. To test the hypothesis a comparative study of two groups of Spanish learners, an intensive one and an extensive one, was carried out in an Austrian school context.

Data referring to morphosyntactical (Pienemann 1998) and pragmatic aspects (House 1996, Wurnig 1998) in learner language production were elicited by oral dialogues between the learners followed by an interview with the researcher. Data concerning the receptive skills of listening and reading were elicited by standardised tests which lead to the certificate examination DELE – *Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera*, *Certificado Inicial*. The individual motivation factors follow the analysis established by Gardner (1985) in his *Attitude/Motivation Test Battery* (AMTB), whereas group motivation will be analysed within the framework of small group research (Weldon *et al.* 1993).

2. Overview: intensive courses

Intensive courses are generally defined as courses which provide learners with at least twelve hours of instruction per week, and can therefore be considered the opposite of traditional formal language learning settings, or so-called extensive courses, which usually provide learners with far fewer hours of input per week.

In the 1970s and 1980s intensive courses were introduced in countries like the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany at both school and university levels to facilitate language learners' progress in the target language. In the methodological framework of a communicative approach to language learning, intensive courses offered a suitable context for training communicative skills, while at the same time providing a so-called "bain linguistique" or a sense of being immersed in a foreign language environment for at least a few hours per day (Hawkins 1988, Sprissler/Weinrich 1972). However, introducing intensive language courses on a large scale was not due to a methodological issue but rather to a need in a very specific context: during the second world war the United States and Great Britain needed qualified spies with a perfect knowledge of a foreign language as soon as possible (Carroll 1965, Helbig 1973, Lett/O'Mara 1990).

Another tradition of intensive language courses can be found in countries with a bilingual context, such as Canada, the country with the largest contemporary experience in intensive and immersion programmes. Both course types are accompanied by research programmes which lead to methodological questions such as the value of form-focused instruction versus a mere communicative approach in intensive courses (Spada 1997, Lightbown/Spada 1994).

3. Research design

A systematic comparison of two groups of Spanish-learners, one intensive, one extensive, was conducted. A class of 18 Spanish learners aged 16 and in their second year of learning Spanish was divided into two by voluntary decision of the learners. The number of participants was the same in both groups. Both of the groups can be considered, despite voluntary decision, relatively homogeneous in terms of morphosyntactical and pragmatic complexity of their learner language, but they are quite heterogeneous in terms of where Spanish was found in the individual order of language acquisition. Although according to the curriculum Spanish was the second foreign language for all learners in the intensive group, Spanish was L3 for four learners and for another four L4, whereas for one learner Spanish was his L5, Polish being his L1, German his L2, English his L3 and Latin his L4. In the extensive group there were three learners for whom Spanish was their L3 and six for whom Spanish was their L4. Some of the participants started to learn Italian as a third foreign language after one year of Spanish instruction. Both groups were therefore multilingual ones, a situation not uncommon in the school context in Austria.

Language biography of the learners [1]:

Extensive Course	**L1**	**L2**	**L3**	**L4**	**L5**
2 learners	German	English	Spanish		
1 learner	German	English	Spanish	Italian	
2 learner	German	English	Latin	Spanish	
4 learners	German	English	Latin	Spanish	Italian

Intensive Course	**L1**	**L2**	**L3**	**L4**	**L5**
4 learners	German	English	Spanish		
2 learners	German	English	Latin	Spanish	
2 learners	German	English	Latin	Spanish	Italian
1 learner	Polish	German	English	Latin	Spanish

In order to keep all external factors as similar as possible, except for time distribution as the one in question, both groups were given the same input by the same teacher using the same teaching materials and the same language method based on a communicative approach including form-focused exercises and metalinguistic explanations, concerning morphosyntactical but not pragmatic aspects of language. The same input was presented to them in the same amount of time, but distributed differently: the quantity of one semester of Spanish as second foreign language (48 hours in total) was presented to the extensive group in the traditional three-hour-per-week course, whereas the intensive group was provided with a twelve-hour-per-week course twice for a period of two weeks respectively[2]. Intensive course 1 took place at the beginning of the semester; intensive course 2 two months later. The break of eight weeks in between was due to a pragmatic-organisational decision based on the assumption that a consecutive four-week intensive course would have been too risky because it would result in six months without any input for intensive learners before taking up Spanish classes again the next school year (see table "research design").

The learner language domains studied were the morphosyntactical and pragmatic aspects in spontaneous speech production and the development of the foreign language reception (global listening and global reading skills) as well as individual and group

[1] The chronological classification of learner languages established by Hufeisen (1998) is followed here. In contrast, Williams/Hammarsberg (1998) suggest a classification according to the importance of the actual language use for the learner.

[2] As it was impossible to introduce the intensive course into the regular timetable, it took place in the afternoon after regular school had finished. Nevertheless, the study was supported in a very helpful way by school administration, colleagues and parents as well as by the Austrian Ministry of Education.

motivational factors. Because of the research setting, differences which might arise are necessarily due to either internal factors of language acquisition or to the one differential external factor of time distribution.

4. Morphosyntactical and pragmatic development of the learner language

4.1 Morphosyntactical development

Processability Theory established by Pienemann (1998) was chosen as a theoretical framework as well as an instrument of analysis. The basic assumption of Processability Theory relates back to the ZISA study (Meisel/Clahsen/Pienemann 1981) and asserts that predictable and ordered stages of learner language development depend on learners' psycholinguistic processing abilities. Processability Theory is restricted to the domain of processability of morphological and syntactical structures and describes the interlanguage development of these domains as a hierarchical process which arises from the fact that the procedure of each lower level is a prerequisite for the higher one, implying an implicational hierarchy.

As a linguistic basis for the formal description of the developmental stages, lexical-functional grammar (Bresnan 1982) as unification grammar is assigned. The psychological basis of Processability Theory relies on language processing, as was pointed out in Levelt's (1989) speech production model, which suggests as key points a conceptualizer, where "the intention a speaker wishes to realise" is chosen, and a formulator, where this "message is converted into ... speech" (De Bot 1992, 4). The "essential mediator between conceptualisation and grammatical ... encoding" is the lexicon where morphological and syntactical information of words is stored (Levelt 1989, 181). This lexical hypothesis assuming language production as a lexical-driven process is the point of contact between Levelt and lexical-functional grammar.

The five procedure levels predicted, as well as the learner language structural outcomes for the stages and the respective Spanish language structures, are as follows.

Processing procedures	**L2 Structural outcomes**	**Spanish morphosyntax**
stage 5: subordinate clause procedure	main and subordinate clause	subordinate clause (conjunction plus time and/or mode unification)
stage 4: inter-phrasal procedure or S-procedure	inter-phrasal information	"inter-phrasal morphemes": explicit subject-verb unification, object marking (preposition "a", clitic pronoun)

stage 3: phrasal procedure	phrasal information	"phrasal morphemes": feature unification in nominal phrase, verb marking
stage 2: category procedure	lexical morphemes (no information exchange)	"lexical morphemes": noun: plural and gender marking restricted verb marking
stage 1: word/lemma access	'words' (no information exchange)	invariant forms: (single constituents), chunks

Di Biase (1998, 1999), Hinger (2001), Pienemann (1998)

The theoretical framework postulated by Processability Theory serves also as a valid analytical instrument with the following observational categories:

Sign	Categories
+	context is produced: (sufficient) evidence of rule application
(–/+)	context is produced: insufficient evidence of rule application
(+)	context is produced: formulaic use or echo-effect
(–)	context is produced: evidence of non-application
–	no evidence: no linguistic context is produced

Di Biase (1998, 1999), Pienemann (1998)

These observational categories describe the acquisition of a specific structure from its first emergence to its full employment based on the Processability Theory which argues that the crucial factor which indicates the beginning process of a determined stage is the emergence of a specific language structure assigned to this stage [1].

According to the predictive framework of Processability Theory, acquisitional stages as indicators of the internal linguistic system cannot be altered by other factors. However, in various studies Pienemann (1998) was able to show that instruction may be

[1] Processability Theory is able to trace "every step in the development of … the grammatical forms and their functions from the first emergence of the most modest … systematicity to the full use of the target language system" (Pienemann 1998, 149). By "redefining the acquisition (of a form) as the first appearance of a form in IL [Interlanguage]" (Larsen-Freeman/Long 1991, 283) Processability Theory marks a radical change in language acquisition research assigned already by the ZISA group (Meisel/Clahsen/Pienemann 1981).

beneficial for language acquisition if it targets a learner's next developmental stage. In this context, Pienemann postulates his Teachability Hypothesis as a subset of Processability Theory and predicts that:

- stages of acquisition cannot be skipped through formal instruction
- instruction will be beneficial if it focuses on structures from 'the next stage'.

(Pienemann 1998, 250)

Results of a comparison of the development of morphological and syntactical structures between learners in natural settings and learners exposed to instruction showed that the development of the latter was faster (Pienemann 1984, Ellis 1989). Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that if "the learner is at a stage of acquisition directly prior to that of the new material" (Johnston 1995, 19) and is in this sense "ready" to go on to the next stage teaching interventions may accelerate acquisition.

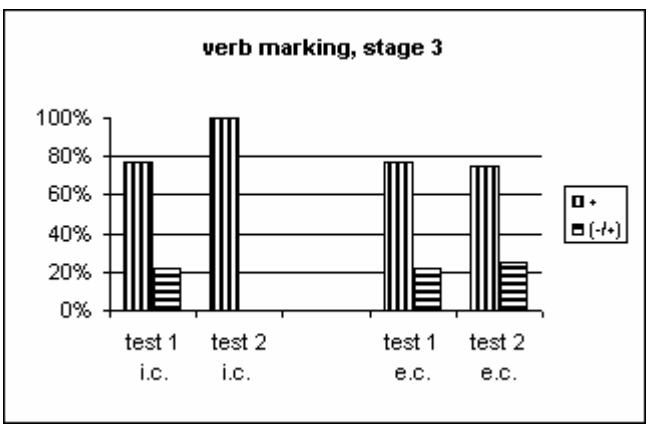
In addition to Pienemann, other linguists such as Peltzer-Karpf and Zangl provide similar findings assuming that the speed of language acquisition depends on internal factors as well as on the "quantity and quality of the input" (Peltzer-Karpf/Zangl 1998, 170). These assumptions led us to formulate an acceleration hypothesis for intensive learning settings postulating that intensively distributed input accelerate the morphosyntactical development of learner language.

4.1.1 Data analysis

The analysis of this learner language domain is based on spontaneous speech data elicited at four points in time: at the beginning and at the end of intensive course 1 as well as at the beginning and end of intensive course 2 and, after the same amount of time respectively, in the extensive course (see table "research design"). This article will, however, exclusively focus on the two data sets concerning intensive course 1 and the respective set in the extensive course because referring to the data of intensive course 2 would require a discussion of the language loss occurred between the end of intensive course 1 and the beginning of intensive course 2, an interesting point for discussion in itself, but beyond the scope of this article (Hinger 2001).

At the beginning of the study, learners had already acquired language structures up to stages 1 and 2 and were processing structures assigned to stage 3. In both groups, some of the learners could produce either the context of language structures assigned to stage 4 (interphrasal procedure) or a formulaic use, whereas stage 5 structures were not observed. According to the Teachability Hypothesis, learners in both groups should be "ready" to go on acquiring stage 4 and stage 5 specific structures.

The analyses of the development of five learner language structures according to the Processability Theory[1] indicated for four of them better results for learners in the intensive course than for those in the extensive one. The only case for which a better result was indicated in the extensive course was with a stage 3 structure, namely feature unification in nominal phrases. One example may be sufficient here to illustrate the higher acceleration of the learner language in the intensive setting. At the beginning of the study verb marking revealed similar results for learners in both groups: 22% of them showed insufficient evidence of rule application and 77% indicated sufficient evidence. After the period of intensive course 1 all learners in the intensive group indicated sufficient evidence of rule application whereas the learners in the extensive group showed insufficient as well as sufficient evidence regarding this structure (test 2 intensive course: + 100%; test 2 extensive course: (-/+) 25%, + 75%):



In conclusion, intensive course 1 accelerates the learner language in the areas verb marking, object marking, feature unification between explicit lexically expressed subject and verb and subordinate clauses, whereas the learner language development of the participants in the extensive course outperforms the intensive group only as far as the feature unification in the nominal phrase is concerned.

We are tempted to claim that intensive language learning settings in general may accelerate the acquisition of morphosyntactical structures. Therefore, we possibly may claim that not only instruction in general but also specifically intensive instruction supports an acceleration of acquisition, assuming that it affects the psycholinguistic processes. Hence, we equip Pienemann's Teachability Hypothesis with the additional

[1] Namely, verb marking and feature unification in the nominal phrase, both assigned to stage 3; object marking by clitic pronouns or the preposition "a", feature unification between the explicit lexically expressed subject and the verb, all assigned to stage 4; subordinate clauses marked by a conjunction plus feature unification between the main and the subordinate clause concerning tense or mode, assigned to stage 5.

factor of time distribution in instruction. We might extend this hypothesis to include the view that not only does instruction accelerate acquisition, but intensive instruction accelerates acquisition, whereas extensive instruction does not.

4.2 Pragmatic development

As classroom and second language research on pragmatics have not yet provided a satisfactory explanatory framework to relate descriptive data to theory the present study is restricted to the description of certain pragmatic aspects of the learner language. Hence, the pragmatic development is based on parameters established by House (1996) and Wurnig (1998). Three aspects which refer to the illocutionary part of the speech act are to be observed here:

- the modality of speech acts, indicated by downgraders and upgraders in order to modify a specific speech act
- the use of gambits as speaking and listening signals, indicated by uptakers, clarifiers and appealers
- the responsitivity as an indicator of non-responsive answers and responsive answers (which take into account the content as well as the intention of the speaker).

The following tables illustrate the different language features and their Spanish realization:

Speech Act Modality

Downgrader	Spanish examples
Politeness marker	por favor
Hedge	bastante, más o menos, en cierto modo, de alguna manera
Understater	un poco, no mucho, sólo un poco, no ... exactamente
Downtoner	solamente, sólo, posiblemente, quizás, probablemente
-(“minus“) Committer	pienso, creo, desde mi punto de vista, me parece, para mí, supongo
Forewarner	puede que sea ..., puede ser un atrevimiento, pero
Agent-avoider	se + 3^{a} person singular; 3^{a} person plural; uno

Upgrader	
Overstater	absolutamente, completamente, indudablemente
Intensifier	realmente, de veras, de verdad, en realidad, creo que sí
+("plus") Committer	estoy seguro, obviamente, evidentemente, está claro
Lexical intensifier	swearwords

Gambits		Spanish examples
Uptakers	Receipt	sí, vale, de acuerdo, tienes razón, perfecto, pues, ¿sí?, aha, hmm, uhum
	Exclaim	perfecto, increíble, no me lo puedo creer, no me digas, de verdad, es muy interesante, muy bien, sí, claro, claro que sí, ¿no?, qué lástima
	Go-on	
Clarifiers	Cajoler	pienso que, creo que, sabes
	Underscorer	mira, escucha, fíjate, el problema principal es, la cuestión es, pero ... es que
Appealers		¿vale?, ¿de acuerdo?, ¿estás de acuerdo?, ¿o no?

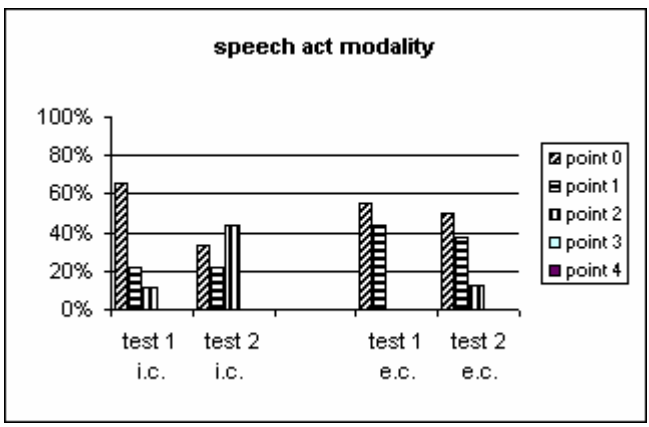
Subsequently, the frequency, but not the accuracy, of these aspects is observed and rated according to a scale from 0 to 4 points:

Analysis criterias:

point	0	1	2	3	4
modality	almost no case (0–2)	very few cases (3–5)	few cases (6–10)	some cases (10–15)	many cases (+15)
gambits	almost no case (0–5)	very few cases (6–10)	few cases (11–20)	some cases (21–30)	many cases (+30)

Responsi-tivity		many non-responsive answers (+20%)	some non-responsive answers (10–20%)	few non-responsive answers (5–10%)	very few non-responsive answers (–5%)

Results show that learners in the intensive course outperform their peers in the extensive one in two of the three analysed aspects, namely modality and gambits, whereas responsitivy does not show a significant development in none of the two course types. The development of speech act modality may be sufficient here to illustrate the higher acceleration of the learner language in the intensive setting:



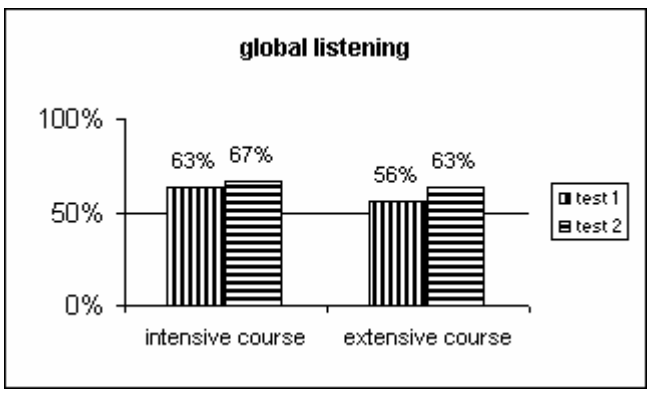
Again, the best results are obtained by the learners in the intensive course. In this regard, we are tempted to suggest that intensive language classroom settings may provide more occasions for conversational practice and, subsequently, for speech act interactions than extensive language classes.

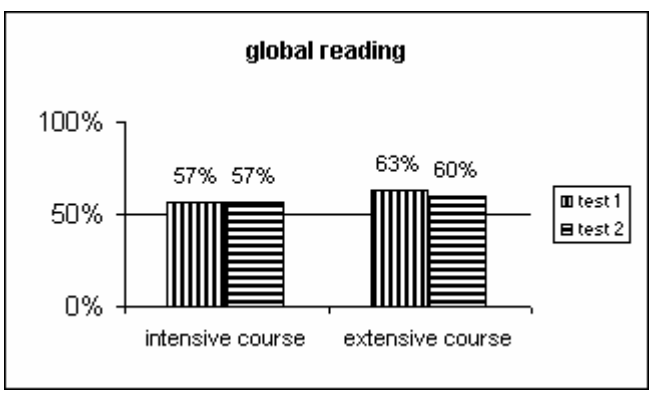
Taking into account the results of the morphosyntactical aspects of the learner language as well as the pragmatic ones, it can be concluded that the development of the oral learner language production is clearly accelerated in most of the analysed aspects in the intensive course, whereas the extensive settings show a slower development. In addition, the better results concerning morphosyntactical and pragmatic development of the learner language in the intensive course are linked to two factors: the faster development of the learner language of some learners on the one hand, and the better results of so-called bad language learners on the other hand. Especially, bad language learners do not improve their learner language to the same extent in the extensive course as they do in the intensive course (Hinger 2001).

5. The development of the receptive skills

The development of the reception of the target language was observed in two areas, namely global listening and global reading skills. As to data elicitation, standardised test formats were used: in the framework of the certificate examination *Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera* (DELE), offered by the *Instituto Cervantes* and the University of Salamanca, the tests referred to the *Certificado Inicial de Español* (CIE) (Baralo *et al.* 1994).

The results are the following:





We see that neither in the intensive course nor in the extensive one does the global reading development seem to change at all over the period of observation. Global listening increases only insignificantly, although slightly more in the extensive course than in the intensive course. In conclusion, we may state that the results indicate no considerable development of the two receptive skills observed here.

Comparing the development of the learner language production and the reception of the target language, we may conclude that the development of the production of the learner language, in both the morphosyntactical and the pragmatic areas, shows significantly better results in the intensive course than in the extensive one, whereas in none of the two course types are significant changes detected in the development of the receptive skills.

6. Motivation factors

6.1 Individual motivation

Individual motivation factors are analysed according to Gardners *Attitude/Motivation Test Battery* (AMTB) (Gardner 1985). Two areas are taken into account: the attitudes towards the language course and the attitudes towards the Spanish teacher. The students assessed their attitudes towards the two fields by filling out a Lickert scale questionnaire based on the Austrian school marking system at three points in time in the extensive course and at five points in time in the intensive course (see table "research design").

In this regard, the study shows that individual motivation factors develop in a similar manner in both course forms. Hence, individual motivation increases in the intensive course as well as in the extensive one (Hinger 2001, 195ss.). The positive results seem to be due to the smaller group in both courses. As noted above, one class of 18 pupils was divided into two groups of nine for the experiment. Studies in small group research confirm these findings by pointing out that in general small groups raise individual motivation.

6.2 Group motivation

Although group cohesion does not seem to be a widespread research interest in Foreign Language Acquisition, there is one study which focuses on it. Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1994) were the first to investigate group factors in foreign language classrooms by eliciting results from questionnaires which indicate the attitude of the individual learner towards the group, hence pointing out an individual perspective of group factors. The questionnaires are based on categories developed by small group research which usually is interested in areas like economics, aviation or military where teams of few members have to fulfil relatively demanding tasks.

Assessing group cohesion by questionnaires means taking into account the personal and individual perception of each learner of what is going on in a group. Hence, group cohesion is analysed through the eyes of the individuals who form the group and is based on the retrospective view of the group members. In this sense, group cohesion is seen as an individual phenomenon. If we consider group cohesion as a process which

happens between group members during their performance in the group, then group cohesion is more likely to be seen as a group phenomenon rather than as an individual phenomenon. Subsequently, the indicational factors of group cohesion cannot be measured by questionnaires, but rather data have to be gathered directly, while the group process is going on. Again, methodological frameworks established by small group research can give us a hint.

As Weldon *et al.* (1991 and 1993) pointed out, group cohesion could be analysed by studying the communication group members build. The underlying assumption is that language can arouse emotion, stimulate enthusiasm, and build confidence in one's ability to meet a goal. Language, then, is able to build up a sense of efficacy among group members, arouses their emotions and inspires them to action.

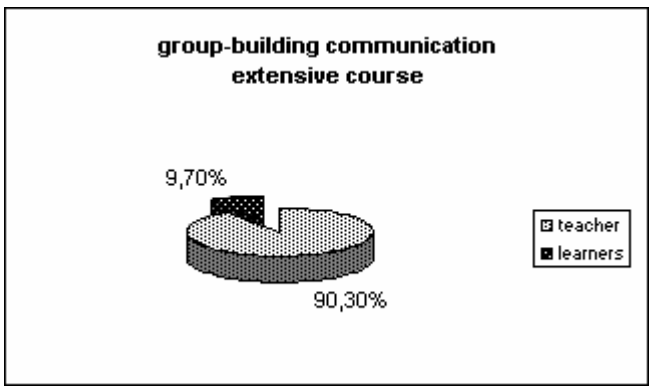
Weldon *et al.* (1991) refer to this language as morale-building communication. Instead, I would like to introduce the term "group-building communication". Results from small group research (Weldon *et al.* 1993) show that only in cohesive groups morale-building or group-building communication takes place, whereas in non-cohesive groups no such communication will be found. Therefore, it seems to be useful to analyse whether group- or morale-building communication is established in both learning settings. Both groups, the intensive one as well as the extensive one, are observed directly in their classroom by means of tape recording and observational remarks in order to complete the tape records. According to Weldon *et al.* (1991, 557) two types of utterances should be observed:

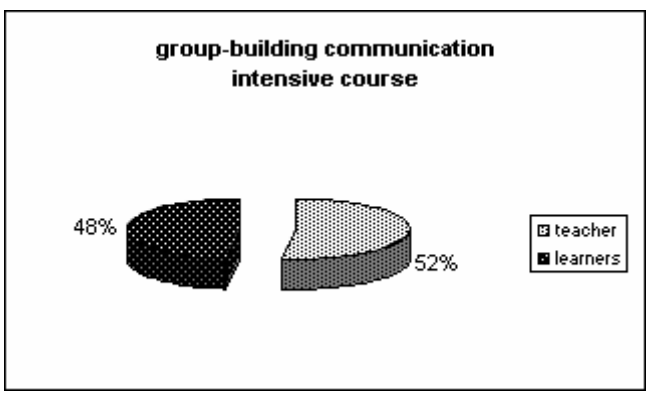
- statements about a group member's or the group's ability to perform well, including positive and negative comments
- language designed to increase arousal, such as that used by charismatic leaders to inspire others.

Group-building communication was measured by the number of utterances (Weldon *et al.* 1991, 560) made in the classroom. Because, according to Nunan (1989), classroom interaction is an activity in which the participants' roles are asymmetrically distributed and the social relationships in this unequal situation are reflected and re-affirmed in the discourse, as Kasper (1997) pointed out, the utterances are differentiated and measured according to two types of speakers: the teacher and the learners.

Consequently, it is hypothesised that group cohesion in a foreign language classroom is defined by group-building utterances made amongst the equal participants in the group who are the learners themselves. The number of peer utterances and their relationship to teacher utterances serve as an indicator of group cohesion. The hypothesis to be postulated is: the higher the degree of group-building communication made by peers in relation to group-building communication made by the teacher, the more cohesive is the learning group.

If we take a look at the results we see that in the extensive group 90,3% of all group-building utterances are made by the teacher whereas in the intensive group only 52% are made by the teacher:





In other words, in the intensive group almost half of all group-building utterances are expressed by the learners whereas in the extensive group only 9,7% of the group building utterances are made by the learners. These results indicate clearly that the intensive group shows a much higher degree of cohesion than the extensive one.

In conclusion, whereas the relationship between teacher and learners remains teacher-centred in the extensive group, group dynamics in the intensive group allow for significantly more learner-centred classroom communication. To put it differently, classroom culture (Breen 1985) in the two corresponding groups is quite different. As a result, the subjective and the social image of a group member is positively enhanced in the intensive group [1]. In addition, results of research in social sciences tell us that the

[1] Clément *et al.* (1994, 442) followed that "good classroom atmosphere promotes student involvement and activity while moderating anxiety and promoting self-confidence."

more time a group spends together, the higher is the possibility that the group members will co-operate and appreciate each other (Mitschka ^{2}1999, 55).

7. Conclusion

First of all, we have to take into account that the project presented here is based on a small-scale study and that its results, though suggestive, must be considered with caution. Nevertheless, we have seen that time distribution makes a difference. The results suggest that an intensive learning setting may accelerate foreign language acquisition as to morphosyntactical and pragmatic learner language domains in spontaneous speech production whereas global listening and reading reception do not show a significant development, neither in the intensive nor in the extensive course. As to motivation factors, while individual motivation increases in a similar manner in both course types, group motivation is clearly higher in the intensive course setting than in the extensive one.

Could these affect multilingual language learning? If schools want to contribute to the creation of a multilingual society – a political aim stated again and again by the European Union – intensive language phases in the regular school curriculum seem to be one possibility, not only because learners in intensive settings could outperform those in extensive ones, but also because this kind of setting permits the acquisition of more than one foreign language in a short amount of time by providing learners with continuous access to a foreign language.

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III. Questionnaires on innovation

The contributors were asked to fill in a questionnaire about the process of innovation, using the criteria of the study found in the first section of this collection. Readers may wish to use it as guide to their own planning and assessment of innovatory projects:

European Centre for Modern Languages
First medium-term programme

Innovations in the different projects
A questionnaire on the organisation of innovation

1. The background

Title of project, focus area, brief objectives	
Professional details about the project co-ordinators	
Information on the target sector of the project (primary, secondary schools, adult learners, teacher education, etc.)	
The profiles of the target language learners (age, previous language learning, learning objectives, exams taken etc.)	
What is the main innovatory aspect? (e.g. new concepts developed; new technology used; re-organisation of the use of time or place)	

2. Description of the innovations in the project

Describe the aims of the innovation	
How was the innovation initiated? (based on a project study, in initiative in workshop, existing project etc.)	
Why was the innovation undertaken? (learner dissatisfaction, identification of problem, wish for variety, time and resources available etc.)	
Can you describe the "vision", the desired outcome of the innovation?	

The outcomes

What assessment criteria did you set for judging the success (or not) of the project?	
Has the innovation become institutionalised? (i.e. part of the normal operating of the institution)? If not, do you think it will be? What factors might influence this?	

The organisation of the innovation

Does the innovation lead you to propose making organisational changes in any of the following areas?

The use of time (e.g. teaching in intensive blocks, instead of extensively)	
The place where language learning is undertaken (e.g. learning outside the classroom, exchange visits etc.)	
The people involved in the language learning process (e.g. use of informants, tandem learning, team teaching)	
The channels and media used (e.g. Internet learning, distance learning, video conferencing)	
The content of the learning (e.g. content based language learning, learning through other subjects)	
The use of resources (e.g. independent learning in self-access centres etc.)	

The process of innovation

What steps did you take

To inform those taking part (please specify who these are – the language learner, the national delegates in a workshop etc.) in the innovatory project?	
To involve them in the decisions taken during the course of the innovatory procedures?	
To motivate them for commitment to the innovation?	
To inform and communicate with other staff not initially involved in the innovation	
To communicate the outcome of the innovatory project?	

Problems and achievements

What do you consider the main achievements of the innovation in the project?	
What were the most difficult problems / issues to be resolved?	
What would you do differently if you started a new innovation?	
What steps have been / are being taken to disseminate the results and achievements of the project?	

Anything else?

What else would you like to say about your innovation or about innovation in language education in general?	

The responses to the questionnaires

The responses to the questionnaires provided an illuminating set of insights into the process of innovation, and especially into the pleasures and pitfalls of co-ordinating international projects.

The main points raised by the project co-ordinators can be summarised as follows:

- It has been possible to make significant contributions to language education in projects in the context of the kind of international co-operation engendered by the medium-term programme of the European Centre for Modern Languages. The impact seems to be greatest – or the most easily measured – when there is a "product" of some kind; the website of the language awareness project, the CD-Rom on quality resources, the network of Austrian universities described in the case studies are good examples of this.
- The introductory study describes a systematic approach to innovation; the case studies and the questionnaires show a much more human, improvised way of working. The process is an emerging developing one, where discussion of the issues leads to the exploration of ideas, to the trying out of different possibilities, to a gradual consensus around developing project objectives. On the other hand, where the principles have been tried out, they have been found to provide a useful guide.
- It is difficult to sustain the impetus of a project when the team members are spread out in a number of countries and when they are involved in the project in addition to carrying out their normal duties. Although e-mail and the Internet make communication easier, they cannot replace regular face to face meetings and the personal and social contact they foster.
- Projects seem to work more efficiently if they are linked to a strong regional base, and if they can feed into existing networks and draw on their resources and expertise.
- The work of the ECML works well because the project co-ordinators and facilitators give an enormous amount of commitment and involvement in their work; the reward is the sense of achievement and the generation of networks of enriching and fulfilling personal and social contact.

The completed questionnaires are stored in the ECML and can be consulted (with the permission of the respondents) for research purposes.

IV. Conclusion

Key questions for the implementation of projects in language education

The four parts of this book have drawn to a great extent from the work of the medium-term programme of the European Centre for Modern Languages; we have seen that its format of projects, which include workshops, training, publications, the development of websites and other resources, can make important contributions to innovation in language education. As a conclusion to the study, it is appropriate to explore how what we have learnt from the experience of the last four years can serve to help the centre optimise its contribution.

How can the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz best contribute to the successful implementation of innovation and change in language education? It is clear (1) that its role is to stimulate change in the directions which the Council of Europe's policy seeks to promote (2) that it cannot itself implement innovations, which are the role of the governments, institutions and individuals who are involved in workshops, networks and studies. It does, however:

- raise awareness of issues to be faced
- analyse problems and identify good practice
- make known successful initiatives in one environment so that they can be tried out in others
- establish networks for sharing experiences and common approaches to issues
- commission studies to contribute to the expertise available to implement innovations
- through workshops, enable participants to develop knowledge and skills which facilitate the implementation of innovatory projects
- promote international co-operation and disseminate the results of innovation through workshops and R & D networks.

The influence of the centre is effective at a number of different levels – some of the workshops have been at the level of ministries and of government language policy, some for teacher trainers, for administrators, for researchers or for teachers. It may be true to say that this has meant that the effect has sometimes been somewhat diffuse and random and that it has been difficult to establish clear definitions of the precise objectives of the workshops and of the impact of the follow-up activities.

The breadth and range of topics dealt with and the variety of potential results (see appendix 1) – these have been defined by me on the basis of the reports – is an impressive contribution to language education and a major achievement for the first years of the centres' activities. In order to optimise the impact in the future the centre itself has already raised a number of issues:

- Have the activities a clear enough focus? Is the impact of the workshops cumulative or dispersed?
- Is there clear enough definition of the desired level of responsibility of participants so the right people attend?
- How can the follow-up activities to workshops be organised so that what is learnt is really applied and disseminated?
- How can networks co-operate successfully after the first enthusiasm of the workshop has disappeared?

Other issues which will need to be taken into consideration include:

- How can the activities of the Centre integrate the processes as well as the content of innovation in language education?
- Can more emphasis be usefully placed on the organisational elements of innovations supported by the centre?
- Can European projects for implementation of language education policy be initiated in an organised and systematic way?
- Can project evaluation systems be introduced so that there is a more accurate analysis of the effect of the centre's activities?

These issues all concern the processes by which the ECML promotes the implementation of Council of Europe policies. It will also be important to identify the issues relevant to the content of these policies. What kind of innovations are required to turn good intentions into reality? We will take three keystones of Council of Europe policies as examples:

Language policies for a multilingual and multicultural Europe

New and broader definitions of objectives to enhance communication and intercultural understanding at all levels of language learning

This implies a much fuller integration of intercultural elements in language education than is at present the case. It will be easier to define the objectives than to create the organisational conditions in which implementation will be possible. Broader objectives

probably will require more **time** for learning – or at least a different set of priorities for using the time – and one way of gaining this could be through combining language learning time with **content**-learning time. Studies of bilingual school initiatives have shown how effective they can be, but important issues regarding the effectiveness of subject teaching and the training of subject teachers remain to be resolved. It will take determination at national policy levels and large scale **resources** to make a major impact.

Intercultural understanding presumes contacts which can be achieved through further development of exchange programmes of all kinds – i.e. a systematic approach to extending the range of **locations** in which learning takes place. Exchange programmes do not automatically enhance intercultural understanding and development of the approaches integrating ethnographic methods of enquiry, even for young learners may be worth exploring seriously.

A Common European Framework of reference for language learning and teaching to facilitate the comparison of objectives and qualifications across member States

The Common European Framework is a major contribution to the field of language education with a very comprehensive, non- prescriptive description of the choices open to language educators when they select policy, objectives and methods. The European Scales of Reference provide a set of descriptors of language competence which could – if adopted throughout Europe – become a cornerstone of co-operative efforts to harmonise curricula and attestation of achievement.

However, for the Common Framework of Reference to have as much practical impact and influence as it deserves, a number of organisational problems have to be solved:

- The document is bulky, not always easy of access or of understanding. The User Guides are helpful in making access to the content easier, but there is probably a need to develop training modules in order to enable as many teachers as possible to benefit from the richness of the contents.
- Can successful implementations of the framework be identified and used as examples of good practice to avoid the same work being done several times over? Would it be possible to produce an implementation handbook as a complement to the user guides?
- Crucially, can the vision of European-wide harmonisation of a descriptive framework for language education be communicated so that the political will is generated for large-scale implementation?

A European Language Portfolio for reporting learners' linguistic and intercultural achievements and experiences in a transnationally comprehensible manner and in a lifelong language learning perspective – teacher training and classroom materials (including multimedia) for different educational sectors

The European Language Portfolio is being piloted systematically in a number of countries and its development has shown many of the features of a well-organised innovatory project. The vision and objectives have been communicated in a clear declaration. There have been pilot applications in a number of countries involving decision-makers, administrators, schools, teachers, teacher trainers and the learners of different ages. The definition of the project has been flexible and the experiences gained during the pilots has been fed into the project and modified it in important ways – the need for different kinds of portfolio for young children, secondary schools and adults, for example. The basic concepts have been addressed and balance sought between the process uses of the portfolio for motivating and giving value to language learning and the product – a portfolio which can contribute to mobility for students and workers in Europe.

The European Language Portfolio has been launched with brio as part of the European Year of Languages in 2001, to establish and **institutionalise** it – taking it to the last stage in an innovatory project. There are still organisational problems to be resolved:

- How many languages does it have to be in to be understood across language frontiers and therefore useful for mobility?
- The logistics of keeping and filling in a portfolio over a number of years?
- Is control and supervision of the accuracy and reliability of its contents feasible? by whom?
- Its cost – can the finances be found to produce it on a European scale? Can countries with other more pressing demands on funds available for educational development find or get access to the resources needed to implement it?
- Can the task of providing training and in-service training in its use be harmonised so that this is done in the most effective and economical way possible?

Its adoption and institutionalisation would cause a genuine change in language education – by the establishment of common, communicative descriptors for the evaluation of language achievement throughout Europe and this would have a backwash effect on setting goals and defining the content of language teaching.

V. Some proposals for research and development

It would be worth considering the following proposed lines of research and development designed to make sure that the organisational factors related to innovation in language education are taken into account:

- commissioning a research study to evaluate more systematically the impact of activities supported by the ECML, specifically:
    - following up in detail the effect of the activities which form the two focuses of the medium-term programme for the years 2000 to 2003
    - exploring the ways in which networks can be successfully formed and maintained

- applying this to the development of planning documents for workshops and studies to aid in the production of:
    - clear statements of the intended outcomes of proposed innovations
    - project planning including the steps taken to communicate project goals: ensure involvement and commitment of participants
    - statements at the outset describing how the project is to be assessed and evaluated
    - analysis of the organisational variables to be taken into account
    - definitions of how decisions on institutionalisation would be taken

- developing a guide and training pack on "managing innovatory projects in language education" to be made generally available, but specifically for the use of those involved in the ECML's activities.
    - follow this with workshops specifically designed to provide training and help in the management of long-term innovatory projects
    - commissioning research and organising workshops designed to explore in more detail how issues related to intercultural development in language education can be resolved, especially to establish the links with non-linguistic disciplines like ethnography and sociology
    - identifying examples of good innovative practice in the organisation of education and producing a collection of these as contributions to a guide to the organisation of language education.

I consider that development on these lines could considerably increase the impact of the Centre in Graz, by acknowledging that its activities are designed to promote change effectively and that this means serious consideration of and systematic action to meet the challenge of change and the justifiable resistance it will always meet. It would also face the fact that real change involves all the categories of participant and efforts have to be made over a long period.

At the outset to this study I emphasised its preparatory nature. I have tried to raise issues and clarify them and to propose possible lines of development rather than solutions. The importance of innovatory processes and their management became more and more evident during the writing of the study.

Successful innovation needs above all the long-term commitment of the people concerned and this cannot be achieved without the participation of the people involved at all levels – from policy makers to administrators to teachers and learners. This commitment is gained through clarity of vision and communication of this. It is maintained through flexibility, readiness to listen and change in the light of the concerns of those involved. Effective implementation usually involves the manipulation of organisational variables – which often affects the whole of an educational system.

Change is never purely administrative and neutral and organisational change engages people's feelings.

"The best thing we can do is help ourselves and others manage the unsettling emotions from change" [1]

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Appendix 1

Title of workshop	Level of intervention	Desired Impact
Development of language policy		
1. East meets west: unity in diversity	National / regional governments	Development of co-operation in language education development
2. Introduction to language policy; methods of analysis and evaluation of fields of intervention	National / regional governments	Development of analytical instruments for organising and evaluating language policy
3. Implementing and managing European Educational Projects	Project leaders / administrators	Exchanges of experiences and development of skills necessary for successful implementation of European projects in a multilateral environment
Use of new media in language teaching		
1. Audiovisual methods and language teaching – exploitation of videograms	Institutional	Communicating approaches & methods for successful use of media resources
2. Computers in the FL classroom	Administrators / teachers	Awareness raising
3. Media, multimedia and training. How to manage innovation in educational systems	School managers and trainers	Development of approaches to implementing the use of new resources
4. Multimedia (and hypermedia) in FLT – nature, role and impact	Administrators / teachers	The organisation of resources for learning
5. Action-oriented media education in FLT	Administrators / teachers	Awareness raising on the organisation of the use of media

6. Individualised teaching of English and French and resource centres	Administrators / teachers	The organisation of the use of resources to individualise teaching
Development of intercultural approaches to language education		
1. Theme based foreign language teaching – integrating language culture and content	Administrators /teachers	Exploration of issues regarding the content of language teaching activities
2. Language and cultural awareness in language learning / teaching	Administrators /teachers	Exploration of issues regarding the content of language teaching activities
3. Developing intercultural communicative competence in FLT curriculum planning and policy	policy makers / administrators	Development of approaches to intercultural learning at policy level
4. Languages and Learning in multi-cultural schools – creating a network for a teacher training curriculum	teacher trainers / teachers	Organisation of co-operation in a teacher training context and in relation to multicultural development
Exploration of principles of language teaching		
1. Syllabus definition and evaluation of proficiency in upper secondary education – diversity and harmony in objectives and approaches to assessment	Administrators / teachers / evaluators	Exploration of principles, development of co-operation and coherence between syllabus definition and evaluation
2. Establishing principles and guidelines for publishers and authors of FL textbooks	Authors / publishers / teachers	Development of co-operation between users and suppliers of coursebooks

3. Approaches to teaching modern languages in border areas	Teachers / administrators / teacher trainers	Development of innovatory approaches to pluriculturism and the organisation of the places in which language training takes place
4. Content and language integration in vocational and professional education	Teachers / administrators	Development of approaches to specialised language learning requirements and the organisation of the content
5. Learner types and learner strategies	Trainers / researchers / teachers	Application of research findings on learner types and strategies to teaching situations
6. Child development and early foreign language learning – implications for curriculum design, materials and methodology	Administrators / researchers/ curriculum planners	Application of research findings to the planning of language education
7. Evaluation, adaptation and production of modern language textbooks in lower secondary education	Administrators / teachers / trainers	Organisation of the use of resources and evaluation of their effectiveness
8. Promoting learner autonomy in the adult language classroom	Teachers / adult educators	Exploration of approaches to classroom teaching
9. Language learning and teaching for non-specialists at university level	University teachers	Exploration of the links between content and language learning
The management of language education		
1. Quality in modern language teaching	School managers / inspectors	Application of quality management techniques to language teaching

2. From nomination to dissemination – how to achieve more efficient dissemination of ECML activities	Policy makers / government representatives / ECML managers	Exploration of the management and organisation of ECML's activities
3. New trends in foreign language learning for Bosnian & Herzogovian language multipliers	Inspectors / trainers / administrators	Planning of innovatory projects for a country developing its language education activities
4. Media, multimedia and training. How to manage innovation in educational systems	School managers and trainers	Development of approaches to implementing the use of new resources
5. Implementing and managing European projects	Administrators / researchers / policy makers	Exchanges of experiences and development of skills necessary for successful implementation of European projects in a multilateral environment
Teacher training and education		
1. A reflective model of language teacher education	Teacher trainers	Application of research and innovation in approaches to training
2. Understanding teacher development for primary schools	Teacher trainers	Exploration of concepts for improvement of INSETT
3. Insett provision for FL teachers within national career structures	Administrators / teacher trainers	Organisation of provision and resources for INSETT

4. Minorities; language teaching and in-service training	Policy makers / administrators	Organisation of provision of language education for specific groups of learners
Innovative teaching approaches		
1. Alternative paths to language learning: linguistic psycho-dramaturgy	Teachers / trainers	Dissemination of an innovatory approach to language education
2. Inventing to learn	Teachers / trainers	Dissemination of simulation and story-telling approaches to language teaching
Bilingual education		
1. Redefining formal foreign language instruction in a bilingual environment	Administrators / language planners	Analysis of issues related to defining policy and curriculum in a bilingual context
2. Aspects of teaching methodology in bilingual classes	Teachers / teacher trainers	Analysis of teaching methods applied to a specific situation
3. The implementation of bilingual streams in ordinary schools – process and procedures – problems and solutions	Administrators / language planners / teachers	The organisation of bilingual education
4. Bilingual schools in Europe	Administrators / language planners / teachers	Dissemination of information about approaches to bilingual education

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The organisation of innovation in language education
A set of case studies

Frank Heyworth

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It draws very largely on the work of the first medium-term programme of activities of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz from 2000-2003. A number of the co-ordinators of different projects have described their projects and have reflected on the working methods and the implementation of their work. In this way it gives an account of the significant contribution which the medium-term programme has provided.

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