

FINAL DEGREE PROJECT

***Foreign Language
Learning Policies at
Pre-school***

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TITLE

Foreign Language Learning Policies at Pre-school

ABSTRACT

This project is a summary of the progress occurred in the last two decades regarding the insertion of Early Foreign Languages Learning from the Pre-school

First of all, I provided an overview of the situation in Europe, the several existing movements, educational policies and agencies. Then, I focused my attention on Spain and the recent education laws of our country, and I finally wanted to offer a vision of the situation in Castilla y Leon, because it is the pioneer community to propose early language learning from three years and it is very advanced compared to other communities of this country.

KEYWORDS

Plurilingualism, Pluriculturalism, Early Foreign Language Learning, Educational policies and Pre-school

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AIMS

With the present work, I want to reflect I reached several aims, as a Pre-school¹ teacher and as a Foreign Language Teacher.

The first ones are reflected on the Teaching White Book (April 2004).

Cross curricula or Transversal Competences

Instrumental

1. Capacity for analysis and synthesis
2. Capacity for organization and planning
3. Knowledge of a foreign language
4. Skills related to field of study
5. Ability to manage information
6. Troubleshooting
7. Decision-making

Personal

1. Working in an international context
2. Recognition of diversity and multiculturalism
3. Critical thinking
4. Ethical commitment

Systemic

1. Self-learning
2. Adapting to new situations
3. Knowledge of other cultures and customs
4. Initiative and entrepreneurship
5. Concern for quality

General Competences

¹Pre-school is the term used by THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL in the DECISION No 1720/2006/EC

1. Ability to understand the complexity of the educational process in general and the teaching-learning processes in particular
2. Solid scientific-cultural training and technological

Knowing to do

1. Respect for cultural and personal differences of students and other members of the educational community
2. Ability to analyze and question the concepts of education arising from the research and curricular proposals of Educational Administration
3. Design and development of educational projects and programming units for adapting the curriculum to the sociocultural context
4. Ability to promote independent learning of students in the light of the objectives and content of the corresponding own educational level, developing strategies that avoid exclusion and discrimination
5. Ability to organize teaching in the context of epistemological areas using an integrated disciplinary knowledge, transversal and multidisciplinary educational level appropriate to the respective
6. Ability to promote the quality of the contexts (classroom and school) in which the educational process is developed so as to ensure the welfare of students

Knowing to be

1. Have a realistic image of myself, acting according to my own convictions, take responsibility, make decisions and possible frustrations
2. Taking the ethical dimension of enhancing teacher in students an attitude of critical and responsible citizenship
3. Commitment to enhance the academic performance of students and their progress in school, as part of a comprehensive education.
4. Ability to assume the need for continuing professional development through self-evaluation of own practice

General competences for Early Years Teachers

To know

1. Promote the incorporation of children learning a foreign language functional

2. Knowing language development at the stage of early childhood education and instructional design strategies aimed to enrich communication skills
3. Knowing the basics linguistic, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic and didactic learning of languages and be able to assess their development and communicative competence

The second ones are reflected on the CLIL Cascade Network (CLIL Cascade Network 1999)

Program parameters

Defining CLIL

1. Can explain how CLIL is related to and differs from other language and content learning approaches
2. Can name the various types of CLIL programming options and describe their characteristics
3. Can articulate the key elements of the CLIL approach
4. Can describe the benefits of CLIL
5. Can describe common misconceptions about CLIL

Adopting an approach to CLIL

1. Can describe common misconceptions about CLIL
2. Can define ways of ensuring program goals are addressed in a balanced manner
3. Can draw on the experience of others

CLIL policy

Integrating CLIL into the curriculum

1. Can describe how CLIL links to the national or regional curriculum

Target language competences for teaching CLIL

Using Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

1. Can communicate using contemporary social registers

Using Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

1. Can read subject material and theoretical texts
2. Can use appropriate subject-specific terminology and syntactic structures
3. Can conceptualize whilst using the target language

Second Language Acquisition

Knowing second language attainment levels

1. Can use the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages as a self-assessment tool
2. Can call on the CEFR to define language targets in the CLIL class

Interculturality

Promoting cultural awareness & interculturality

1. Can select and adapt authentic material from different regions or countries
2. Can articulate key cultural parameters associated with the CLIL language

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LANGUAGE

Language is very close to our subjectivity and it helps us to define and understand our world as well: it enhances the development of thinking.

Following a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council, December 18, 2006:

“The educational system plays a major role in providing language competences for all pupils. So, approach to language is therefore needed, as embodied in the concept of Languages in Education - Languages for Education. The plural word

“languages” recognises a fundamental commitment to the concept of plurality as a significant part of the theoretical underpinning which drives the vision. Education systems must be able to handle the different types of plurality which reflect those that exist in the wider society, ranging from a diversity of languages, cultures and social groups to different values and priorities.”

Language means almost everything to young children, it is not only the sound that builds up their world, but the part of the communicative process that will turn into his or her thoughts. For them, any task develop with someone is a language, just like jumping, playing, eating, sharing moments

To get a correct teacher training, it is necessary to support and to promote the mobility, because the perfect way to learn a language is been inserted on the real context.

I based my work in two authors mainly: Lev Vygotski and Bruner.

The first author, Vygotski, in his book *Thought and Language* (1986), make emphasis on “the inter-relationship of language development and thought, establishing the connection between speech and the development of mental concepts and cognitive awareness.” He defined his language’s theory with four stages: Public Speech, Private Speech, Inner Speech and Verbal thought. Vygotski believed inner speech is developed from external speech by a gradual process with children able to "think out loud," so thought develops through social interaction.

Vygotski (1987, p. 57) said:

“Language starts as a tool external to the child used for social interaction. The child guides personal behavior by using this tool in a kind of self-talk or "thinking out loud." Initially, self-talk is very much a tool of social interaction. Gradually, self-talk is used more as a tool for self-directed and self-regulating behavior. Because speaking has been appropriated and internalized, self-talk is no longer present around the time the child starts school. Self-talk "develops along a rising not a declining, curve; it goes through an evolution, not an involution. In the end, it becomes inner speech". That is why teacher’s language is so much important, because the public language used by her will become firstly the public language used by children and then, their private speech.”

The second author, Bruner, focused his work on early language acquisition and his theories are based on Noam Chomsky and Vygotski. Bruner proposed (1983):

“Social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition in general and language in particular. He emphasized that children learn language in order to communicate, and, at the same time, they also learn the linguistic code. Meaningful language is acquired in the context of meaningful parent-infant interaction, learning “scaffold” through the child’s Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) which points to the whole of the culture into which the baby is born.”

CLIL AS A HEADING LANGUAGE POLICY IN EUROPE

Having it all in mind, is really important begin learning foreign languages at the Foundation Stages (first years at school are called on this way in European countries), and it must be into an integrated way, learning not only a language but also a culture. Bilingual schools (or CLIL schools) are the perfect setting for this kind of learning.

CLIL schools (Content and Language Integrated Learning schools) are having a real fast development in Europe. They try to integrate language teaching and subject learning. It promotes children to acquire knowledge defined by the curriculum and also develop their competence in a foreign language.

Bilingual education is a dual-focused teaching and learning approach in which the mother tongue and the second language are used for promoting both content mastery and language acquisition to pre-defined levels. On it, it is essential managing the affective side, creating a secure learning environment.

According to CLIL Cascade Network (1999), a synthesis of good pedagogy and good CLIL practice for enriching learning environments for our students is the following:

- Making it real: They help students to apply learning in the here and now, creating opportunities for meaningful contact and communication with speakers of the CLIL language.
- Planning learning and progress as well as sharing progress with students: Teachers articulate on daily basis content, language and learning skills outcomes in cooperation with students. They also guide students in analyzing achievement of learning outcomes independently, with other students and with teachers, and work to set new outcomes. Finally, teachers organize formative assessment of content, language and learning skills, aimed at improving learning and learner autonomy.
- Reflecting on practice: Teachers reflect on their own practice, articulate this with colleagues and others, and make changes so that their teaching is constantly adapted to students' needs.
- Cooperating for program consolidation: Teachers contribute to planning ways of working with program to improve students' learning.
- Engaging students: Teachers actively seek to identify what is relevant for students and fuse this with learning activities.
- Stretching thinking: Teachers support students in identifying their current knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- Managing the affective side of learning: Teachers together with students create a climate where all students actively participate without the fear of making mistakes, developing skills to manage emotions and social interaction.
- Managing language: Teachers make input comprehensible by using a wide variety of strategies

- Systematizing integration: Teachers agree amongst themselves on ways of building learner cross curricular competences including learning skills, higher order thinking skills and interculturality.

Among the different studies promoted by the Council of Europe, the focus on the development of CLIL teachers' competences would be a guide for the present work. In the official site (CLIL Cascade Network 1999) of this research group we can find, among many other interesting information and resources, the CLIL teachers competence arcade, where all the teachers can verify their command of the competences a CLIL teacher should have.

The whole grid with all the competences is on appendix, page 1.

It makes a difference between Underpinning CLIL, which are the essential competences to laying the foundation for establishing and maintaining a CLIL program and Setting CLIL in Motion, which are the necessary competences to CLIL implementation. All of them are important but, focused on my work, I paid more attention to the first ones, because they are the foundation and the basis for starting to work, step by step.

There are also some of them which refer to language and non-verbal language. These would include, thinking of Pre-school teachers, the importance of paralanguage, associated to tone and pitch but also to the different stress patterns in the specific discourses we might use with our young learners

COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK

The Common European Framework is the result of over twenty years of research. It provides the basis for the elaboration of language programs and curriculum guidelines across Europe, and it is available in 39 languages. The European Framework of Reference tries to break down the barriers among the different educative systems.

It offers a common source of support giving objectives, contents and the methodology, enhancing international cooperation on the field of the languages. And

also describes foreign language proficiency at six levels: A1 and A2, B1 and B2, C1 and C2.

The CEFR gets the purpose of the Council of Europe: “Achieve a bigger unity among its members” and aspire to its goal “adopting common action in the cultural field”.

As well, the CEFR aspire to

“Adopt an action-oriented approach, describing language learning outcomes in terms of language use and has three principal dimensions: language activities, the domains in which they occur, and the competences on which we draw when we engage in them. CEFR divides language activities into four kinds: reception (listening and reading), production (spoken and written), interaction (spoken and written), and mediation (translating and interpreting), and finally it provides a taxonomic description of four domains of language use – public, personal, educational, professional – for each of which it specifies locations, institutions, persons, objects, events, operations, and texts.”

It also defines five skills: listening, reading, spoken interaction (reciprocal communication between two or more people), spoken production, and writing. (Appendix, page 10)

The CEFR’s points out several guidelines about the scales of foreign language proficiency:

“They are accompanied by a detailed analysis of communicative contexts, themes, tasks and purposes as well as scaled descriptions of the competences on which we draw when we communicate. This helps to explain why the CEFR is increasingly used in teacher education, the reform of foreign language curricula and the development of teaching materials.”

Council of Europe member states carried out a survey between May and September 2006² (Appendix, page 11). The purpose of the survey was

² *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the development of language policies: challenges and responsibilities* Strasbourg, 6 – 8 February 2007: Language Policy Division

“To gather information about the use of the CEFR at national level in as many of the 46 member states of the Council of Europe as possible. The CEFR was mostly useful in terms of levels, scales and descriptors and for defining the language proficiency of teachers. Better cooperation at international level was requested, leading towards more standardized, comparable and compatible outcomes for pre-service teacher training courses. It offers main lines and suggestions on resources and teacher training. It must always be adapted to the requirements of particular contexts.”

In 2007 the Council of Europe organized an intergovernmental forum on “*The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the development of language policies: challenges and responsibilities*”. This gave countries an opportunity to debate a policy about the CEFR in Europe and the use of its proficiency levels.

There is a strong relation between CEFR and ELP, as the former one has the function of linking policies to real life. Every student/learner would have this document, as a personal document to be able to reflect upon his/her language and culture learning experience.

EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO

In Spain, the European Language Portfolio (ELP) was a project led by the Ministry of Education, but nowadays has been disseminated by the “Organismo Autónomo de Programas Educativos Europeos” OAPEE. Following the recommendations of the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe to coincide with the European Year of Languages in March 2001 constituted a National Committee for the development of a European Language Portfolio for use in Spain. On November 7th, 2003 were validated the three models: the PEL for students of 3-7 years, the PEL for students of 8-12 years and the PEL for Secondary Education, NVQ and High School (12-18 years). Many countries in the 47 Member States belonging to the Council of Europe already have a validated PEL (about 90 models) Spain was the first Member State to have a model for early age PEL.

At the beginning, the “ELP was developed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe to support the development of learner autonomy, plurilingualism and intercultural awareness and competence, to allow users to record their language learning achievements and their experience of learning and using languages”. (Council of Europe)

The ELP was first proposed at the Rüşchlikon Symposium in 1991 together with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. It is designed to mediate to learners, teachers and schools, and other stakeholders the ethos that underpins the CEFR: respect for linguistic and cultural diversity, mutual understanding beyond national, institutional and social boundaries, the promotion of plurilingual and intercultural education, and the development of the autonomy of the individual citizen.

In 1997 the Council of Europe published the second draft of the CEFR together with a collection of preliminary studies that explored how the ELP might be implemented in different domains of language learning. From 1998 to 2000 ELP pilot projects were conducted in 15 Council of Europe member states and by three INGOs. In 2000 the then Education Committee of the Council of Europe established the ELP Validation Committee with a mandate to receive draft ELPs and determine whether or not they were in conformity with the ELP Principles and Guidelines, also established by the Education Committee.

In 2001, the European Year of Languages, the ELP was launched at the first European ELP Seminar, held in Coimbra, Portugal. By December 2010 116 ELPs had been validated, from 32 Council of Europe member states and 6 INGOs/international consortia (a complete list is appended to this document). ELPs have been designed and implemented for all educational fields: primary, lower and upper secondary, NVQ, adult.... In his report for 2007, the Rapporteur General estimated that “2.5 million individual ELPs had been produced/distributed. Although 584,000 learners were estimated to be using an ELP, however, the average number of copies in use per validated ELP model was only 6,600: evidence that sustained use of the ELP on a large scale in individual member states remained elusive.”

The reports prepared by the Rapporteur General, the impact study carried out on behalf of the Validation Committee, and the eight European ELP Seminars held

between 2001 and 2009 confirm that the ELP has proved itself an innovative and practical tool. It embodies a set of principles – reflective learning, self-assessment, learner autonomy, plurilingualism, intercultural learning – which stimulate good practice in a multitude of educational contexts and help to develop skills of life-long learning. These principles challenge traditional beliefs and practices, however, and this helps to explain why the adoption and implementation of the ELP has still not reached the levels hoped for when it was first launched.

While celebrating the ELP’s success, it is important to recognize that Europe’s linguistic fabric has changed beyond recognition since the ELP was first conceived in the early 1990s. At that time the emphasis was still mainly on second and foreign language learning, as the ELP Principles and Guidelines remind us. Now, largely as a result of new waves of migration, “natural” plurilingualism has become an increasingly common phenomenon in many European societies, and this challenges us to find new ways of extending the reach of the principles that underlie the ELP. It seems appropriate, for example, to adopt a portfolio approach to the development of competence in the language of schooling, whether or not it is the individual learner’s home language, and to focus more closely on languages learnt outside school. This does not necessarily mean expanding the scope of the ELP as such, for to do so would risk making it unwieldy. Finding a solution to this challenge is one of the tasks that confront the Languages in/for Education project, which seeks to promote plurilingual and intercultural education for all.

In April 2011 an online registration process, everything based on the principle of self-declaration, replaced the validation and accreditation process of ELPs. The website designed for this purpose provides step-be-step instructions on how to develop an ELP using generic elements developed by the Validation Committee. These generic elements were shaped by the accumulated good practice of the past ten years. They should allow educational authorities, institutions and organizations to assemble their own high-quality ELPs without committing themselves to a major developmental effort. The registration process is managed and monitored by the secretariat of the Language Policy Division, which defines it as:

“A document in which those who are learning or have learned one or more languages can record and reflect on their language learning and intercultural

experiences. Its main aims are to help learners give shape and coherence to their experience of learning and using languages other than their first language; to motivate learners by acknowledging their efforts to extend and diversify their language skills at all levels; to provide a record of the linguistic and cultural skills they have acquired (to be consulted, for example, when they are moving to a higher learning level or seeking employment at home or abroad)”

In an ELP all competence is valued, whether it was gained inside or outside formal education. In addition, “it belongs to learners and it conforms to a common set of Principles and Guidelines that have been approved by the Committee of Ministers to Member States concerning Modern Languages”. ELP is closely related with the CEFR because students assess themselves in relation to the proficiency levels defined by this organization.

Following Council of Europe:

“The European Language Portfolio was conceived as a companion piece to the CEFR, a means of mediating its communicative, “action-oriented” approach to learners. It is a personal document comprising three obligatory components:

- A *language passport* that captures the owner’s linguistic identity, summarises his/her language learning and intercultural experience, and records his/her self-assessment of second/foreign language proficiency. At its centre is the gradually accumulated recalled of the learners self-assessment in the foreign language.
- A *language biography* that provides a reflective accompaniment to the ongoing processes of learning and using second languages and engaging with the cultures associated with them.
- A *dossier*, where the owner keeps work in progress and concrete evidence of L2³ proficiency and intercultural experience. In pedagogical context work in progress.

³ Following the European terminology (CEFR), L1 is the mother tongue, L2 the first foreign language and L3 and following the second foreign languages taught.

The ELP can support the development and exercise of learner autonomy in three ways. First, when “I can” checklists reflect the demands of the curriculum, they help learners (and teachers) to plan, monitor and evaluate learning over an academic year, a term, a month or a week. Secondly, the language biography is explicitly designed to associate goal setting and self-assessment with reflection on learning styles and strategies, the cultural dimension of language learning and language use, and the learner’s developing plurilingual repertoire. Thirdly, when the ELP is presented (at least partly) in the learners’ target language, it can help to promote the use of the target language as medium of learning and reflection. All of these features support pedagogical approaches calculated to promote identity building in multilingual and multicultural environments and development of reflective self-awareness that plays a central role in education for democratic citizenship.”

The European Language Portfolio has two functions. On one hand has a pedagogical function, because it is designed to make the language learning process more transparent to the learner and foster the development of learner autonomy. This function is associated with the Council of Europe’s commitment to education for democratic citizenship and lifelong learning. For educating people to be democratic, teachers must help them to develop the skills of reflective self-management. They have to think critically about the situations in which they are and about themselves and their skills.

On the other hand ELP has a reporting function, because it provides practical evidence on L2 proficiency and intercultural experience through self-assessment.

ELP’s key features

1. Designed to promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, and it helps both schools and parents to teach languages to children.

2. Values all language and intercultural learning, whether it takes place in formal educational context or outside them.
3. Self-assessment is carried out against the metric of the Common Reference Level of the Common European Framework (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2)

The learner engagement with the ELP is it raises language awareness, raises learning awareness, supports the development of learners' capacity to manage learning through self-monitoring and self-assessment, leads to growth in learners' confidence and helps to develop learner autonomy in a transparent and consistent way.

Using ELP involves several learning outcomes, such as develop learners' ability to identify individual learning needs and course demands, which means learning to learn. With this tool, language learning becomes more focused and more relevant for each individual, and with the growth of awareness and knowledge learners are increasingly empowered. Also, with the growth in their ability to self-monitor and self-assess, learners become more confident. Finally, learners develop learning skills that they can transfer to other learning domains

With the ELP, we can check out the level of our pupils in the different skills defined by the Council of Europe:

Listening

1. The pre-school child is able, at the descriptive level, to understand a verbal task or instruction (and show the fact by responding adequately to it)
2. The pre-school child is able, at the descriptive level, to understand a question intended for him/her (and show the fact by answering / responding adequately to it).
3. The pre-school child is able to understand a verbal account, e.g. a picture book and/or story intended for his age group.
4. The pre-school child is able to understand informative statements intended for him/herself or his peers (and show the fact by reacting/responding adequately to them).

Speaking

1. The pre-school child is able to answer questions intended for him/her at the descriptive level and in a communicatively adequate manner.
2. The pre-school child is able to talk spontaneously, if asked, about subjects of interest to him/her in a communicatively adequate manner.
3. The pre-school child is able to restate an item of information or a story intended for pre-school children in such a way that the content comes across comprehensibly.
4. The pre-school child is able adequately to seek help from others

Reading

1. The pre-school child is able adequately to link meaning to written symbols or written language intended for pre-school children (and show the fact by a verbal response or through action).
2. The pre-school child is conscious of various functions of written language (and shows the fact in his use of, or response to, written language).
3. The pre-school child develops a basic insight into aspects of written language (and shows the fact by his responses to books, letters or short written sentences).
4. The pre-school child is motivated to find out the meaning of written texts (and shows the fact by inquisitive/positive responses to books, letters or written sentences).

Writing

1. The pre-school child is able, with adult help, to set down his own messages in a primitive “written” version.
2. The pre-school child understands what the different functions of writing are.
3. The pre-school child is aware of the most important conventions of written language.
4. The pre-school child is motivated to learn writing him/herself.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE POLICY

The Council of Europe's main aim is "to create a common and democratic area throughout Europe, ensuring respect for its fundamental values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law; equal dignity and mutual respect; gender equality; combating the barriers that prevent intercultural dialogue; and the religious dimension."

The Language Policy Division's developed a project called Languages in Education/Languages for Education. This organization defends that:

"From the perspective of social inclusion and social cohesion, the integration and education of children from migrant backgrounds is one of the biggest challenges facing Council of Europe, and this challenge is transversal. Any adequate attempt to respond to it must take account of the full range of curricula and all varieties of linguistic competence and communication."

The Council of Europe's policy defends that:

"On the linguistic integration and education of children and adolescents from migrant backgrounds reflects the organization's view that integration is a two-way process. The same view underpins the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue which defines social cohesion as "*the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding polarization*" (2008, p. 88.), and integration as "*a two-sided process and as the capacity of people to live together with full respect for the dignity of each individual, the common good, pluralism and diversity, non-violence and solidarity, as well as their ability to participate in social, cultural, economic and political life*" (2008, p. 88)."

The White Paper has

"Transversal implications for school education, in particular the development of an intercultural dimension across the curriculum, but especially in "*history, language education and the teaching of religious and convictional facts*" (2008, p. 90). It provides a larger policy framework for the elaboration of approaches to language education that promote a positive attitude to linguistic diversity and support the development of pupils' linguistic repertoires and their capacity to interact with people from other languages and cultures."

The Language Policy Division fosters

“The development of effective skills and competences in the language(s) of schooling. According to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, language education should aim to provide learners with plurilingual and intercultural competence, understood as “*the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures*” (1993, p.55).”

This argument assumes that everyone can be plurilingual. Education, should look for ensuring the development of the plurilingual competence as it searches to promote the development of the rest of hi or her abilities. According to this argument, the development of plurilingual and intercultural competence within a multilingual and multicultural educational framework is one of the foundations of democratic coexistence.

The White paper also assumes that

“Policies to promote the linguistic and educational integration of migrant children are most likely to succeed when they are developed as part of an overall integration policy that respects Council of Europe values. There are five policy approaches: providing for democratic governance of cultural diversity; promoting democratic citizenship and participation; learning and teaching intercultural competence; creating spaces for intercultural dialogue; and engaging in intercultural dialogue in international relations. Each of these approaches has direct relevance for schooling. The first two refer to its political and social context, the third to the importance of developing inclusive curricula, the fourth reminds us that the school itself should be a site of intercultural dialogue, and the fifth refers to the benefits that accrue from international links and student exchanges. The Language Policy Division’s project Languages in Education/Languages for Education is concerned with all the languages that are present in educational contexts: the language of schooling; regional, minority and migrant languages; foreign languages. Several researches demonstrate that the more languages the individual can speak, the better. Access to literacy in two languages benefits cognitive development and also enhanced awareness of and improved competence in their first language, increased potential

for enriching cultural experiences, development of cognitive processes, increased self-confidence and self-awareness.”

The Council of Europe supports several campaigns about Foreign Language Learning, such as Piccolingo. It is aimed to provide techniques of work, in particular at parents, and looks for creating awareness about that children who start learning languages at early years will, confidently, approach foreign languages and cultures. Through it, mothers and fathers will realize about its importance because (among other benefits) bilingualism at Early years allow find communication easier, learn and memorise through play , learning to be open-minded, feel comfortable anywhere, increase their chances of finding a job, find foreign cultures alluring.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

There are several educative programs, which promote relations between European countries: Comenius, Erasmus, Grundtvig, Leonardo da Vinci and eTwinning. All these programs are controlled and pushed forward in Spain by the OAPEE.

I focused my attention in COMENIUS and ETWINNING, because these have the most important repercussion on the school environment.

The first one aims to reinforce the European dimension at Early Years, Primary and Secondary education, promoting mobility and cooperation among schools. This program gives structures finding frameworks for school partnership. Once we have a Comenius project up and running, you can make use of e-Twinning throughout the entire cycle. It belongs to schools competence.

The second one is an initiative of the European Commission to promote collaboration among schools in Europe through the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies). It is a perfect tool for project management. This program offers educational and technical assistance to teachers, it develops monitoring and evaluations of projects, it publishes educational and pedagogical materials and it organizes professional development workshops as well.

Professional of the non-university-contexts can participate in this program, just logging in the web page. It belongs to Comenius program, so from e-Twinning platform

you can look for Comenius Partnership partners. e-Twinning is a flexible tool for developing ICT communication. A effective communication is essential to develop successfully the Comenius project. This program provides a safe working environment for both students and teachers. Even you can make of this environment a public space, sharing your project outcomes with a wider community of teachers and pupils all over Europe. It belongs to teachers' competence.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES TEACHING IN SPAIN

The current situation in Europe (we are living an integration process in the whole community) claims bilingualism as a key component on the citizens formation, being English the language of reference. Bilingual education is also the present movement all around Europe, being its framework the international cooperation, the plurilingualism and the intercultural integration. Some countries extended this kind of education from Primary Education, but others offer it from the Foundation Stages: Belgium, Spain, Italy or United Kingdom. The time for teaching the new language depends on the country, because the majority of them are free to set their own rules. In Spain there are also several differences about the number of lessons or hours per week among the different regions or localities, but all of them include early start from the first course in Pre-School. In Castilla y Leon 1996, 2000 generalized the 1st curriculum for Preschool.

BILINGUALISM AND CLIL

Nevertheless we might distinguish two kinds of bilingual schools: British schools and CLIL schools. The main difference between them is that the first ones follow the 80% of the British curriculum and the teachers are native, but the second ones are ruled by the current Education Law in Spain. Teachers must be Foreign Language Teachers at Early Years (in this case), possessing teaching and methodological skills and also have a good knowledge of the foreign language: they must submit the certificate of advanced knowledge of the target language, level B2 of the Council of Europe Common

European Framework of Reference for Languages. They also have to write syllabus and memories, create curricular materials, participate in projects related with the bilingual section and, summing up, do whatever they can to develop the program satisfactorily.

All knowledge building in the school context involves working with language. Teacher's role is not only to develop communicative abilities but also to encourage thinking about the language, verbal creativity and an appreciation of creative work in the language (literature). Enhancing and broadening learners' language repertoires and improving their command of discourse genres is one of the goals of plurilingual and intercultural education.

The right to quality education therefore includes the right for children attending school to gain practical experience of discourse genres whose command is necessary for personal development and the exercise of critical citizenship. It is also the function and responsibility of education systems to familiarise pupils who go through them with discourse genres having a social, professional or practical relevance, and especially with those involved in societal choices and those produced by the scientific communities. The inclusion among the goals of education of both democratic citizenship and the knowledge society means giving children attending school the language resources needed for membership of and participation in different communities of practice.

This focus on language, which is essential for structured subject teaching leading to scientific literacy, should not make us forget, because of the relatively technical issues involved, that school is responsible for providing all learners with solid experience of scientific knowledge: such knowledge is necessary for their understanding of the world and their personal and social life, where ignorance is always a big handicap. Access to scientific culture and the diversity of knowledge depends on an awareness of languages, discourse genres and texts, which should be shared as widely as possible; so all citizens may develop an awareness of them.

LOGSE (Ley Orgánica General del Sistema Educativo) was published on October 1990. This law shows several similarities with the linguistics policies in Europe, defined by the Common European Framework of Reference. It does not enhance the Foreign Language Learning at Early Years, it begins at Primary Education, and in fact one of the main innovations of this law was to introduce at the third course the foreign language learning with specialist teachers.

With LOE (Ley Orgánica de Educación), foreign language learning became more important. The government developed a program called “Programa integral de aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras (2012-2020)”, which was the first one with this features published on Spain and its aim was to improve the knowledge of the foreign language (English in the most of the cases) and its culture. The government realized Spanish people in general and children in particular show a big lack in the field of the foreign languages, so this program was really necessary because nowadays, knowing several languages is not just a value-added but a real necessity for being ready for the economic, social and educative challenges.

The general aims were six, and they had to be got in no more than ten years.

1. To get all students at the end of post-compulsory secondary education achieve in a first foreign language (preferably English) proficiency level equal to B1 based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)
2. To expand skills in a second foreign language in Primary Education and Secondary Education, getting a level equal to A2 of the CEFR
3. To reinforce the development of language skills in NVQ making a special emphasis on learning languages with specific aims.
4. To strengthen the development of foreign language skills in Higher education and accredit a level of proficiency in a second language appropriate to field's necessities
5. To promote language learning in adult people
6. To make Spanish people aware of the importance of the foreign language learning and take measures for the creation of a social environment supportive of this learning.

The financing for the proper development of the program went up to 89.419.459 euros, in 2009, stating as outstanding

- Students' helps (64.398.989 euros)

- Teachers training (21.356.470 euros)
- Programs of foreign language assistants (3.664.000 euros)

The program is divided in three big phases

- First phase: 2011-2012
- Second phase: 2012-2015
- Third phase: 2016-2020

During the first phase, the levels of reference in a foreign language in Primary and Secondary education must be established, as well as the teachers' levels. It is very useful to incorporate CEFR levels to the teaching practice, primarily as a reference for both planning and evaluation of teaching and the assessment of foreign language skills developed by students, but it is not appropriate to associate the rating decisions and promotion, especially in the compulsory stages.

So, the actions associated with the reference levels for students are to regulate an accreditation at the end of Secondary Education of foreign language level reached by students, as reference levels of the Council of Europe (A1 and A2), to make a diagnosis of the current level of foreign language students through the European Indicator of Language Competence and to set, in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities, a target of increase at least one level the current level in language proficiency.

Primary education teachers should be able to express themselves in a foreign language at level B1, and also the students of this degree. Secondary education teachers, to access to the proper master, must have the same level. The secondary education teachers who want to teach a foreign language through other subjects must demonstrate a proficiency level equivalent to B2.

The actions associated with reference levels of teachers are to set that all new teachers have to accredit level B1, and the ones who teach their subject in a foreign language, level B2, to pose as a target for 2020 that all teachers who will teach their subject in a foreign language, have accredited C1 level of reference.

Finally, during this year the government wanted to support new mobility programs for students and teachers, especially in English. It was necessary to increase the number of grants aimed at this objective.

Bilingual schools' criteria and features have several differences among the different Autonomous Communities, so it could generate discrimination problems. In terms of linguistic competence, pupils who do not learn in a bilingual environment have disadvantages with regard to the pupils who do it.

Education Ministry cannot regulate the teachings in every single community, so it is necessary to reach an agreement among all of them, setting some minimum basis.

Therefore, the associated actions to the plurilingual teaching are:

1. To reach an agreement which establishes the common basis in relation to the plurilingual schools
2. To advance the signing of agreements with other countries to increase the offer of bilingual teaching and obtaining double qualification.
3. To analyze and disseminate integrated curricula's results and to make decisions between the Ministry and the Communities about language teaching, following quality and realism criteria.

Actions Aimed to Students

1. Accompaniment Program

Co-financing with the Autonomous Communities to support children on the Early Primary Grades which belong to no-bilingual schools. It takes place outside school hours and in small groups, to improve their English level. This credit should help about 800 centers and 64.000 children.

2. Linguistic Immersion in Spain

There are five kinds:

2.1 Linguistic Immersion in English Holiday Camps

Attendance of students individually working English language focused in oral expression. It lasts two weeks. It coordinates English language

classes and funny activities such as playing games, sports... these activities will be used as oral learning situations.

2.2 Linguistic Immersion along the School Year

It lasts for one week, at it takes place in the first term. It consists of two groups of 25 pupils in the last course of primary education from different Communities. They will go with two teachers, one of them, the English teacher. Its aim is to foster and encourage the use of the language in communicative contexts bigger than the allowed by the school environment.

2.3 Helps for Bachelor's Students

One week Linguistic Immersion courses in different seats in Spain.

2.4 Portuguese Language and Culture Course

It works with Portuguese teachers in Early years, Primary Education and Secondary Education.

2.5 Budget for University Students: Grants

Linguistic Immersion courses for one week in different seats of Spain organized by Menendez Pelayo University (UIMP)

2.6 Official Language Schools (EOI) as an identity element in Spain.

3. Study Stays Abroad

3.1 Stays Abroad

The government will finance the stay of 3.200 secondary education and Bachelors students for courses abroad, in order to acquire or develop communication skills in foreign languages in the modalities of comprehension, oral production and interaction. They also will finance stays of 246 students in European Union schools (Comenius), for students to stay for a period between 3 and 10 months in schools in another European country, living with a family.

3.2 Helps for English courses abroad destined for young people

English courses abroad with a minimum of three weeks and 15 hours per week.

3.3 Helps for German or French courses abroad

3.4 Helps for French courses in France on July

Actions Aimed to Teachers

1. Training abroad

1.1 Initial training

- Support for teachers and students of the Degree to improve their English following an English language course abroad with a minimum duration of twelve weeks and 20 hours per week.
- Exchange of students of the Education Grade through agreements with Spanish and British universities across the Training and Development Agency.

1.2 Continuing training

- Increase training in foreign languages as well as financial support for the stays in other countries, aimed to teachers of non-linguistic areas, so they will reach at least level B1 of reference.
- Study stays abroad. Grants to Foreign Language Teachers for making courses abroad in order to improve their intercultural and linguistic competence.
- Linguistic and cultural immersion courses in France and United Kingdom: European classrooms.
- Helps for Comenius and Grundtvig training. It aims is to encourage participants to improve their practical skills and knowledge in teaching issues / advisory / management and to reach out to school education in Europe and promotion of multilingualism. Comenius training activity will focus on European issues on the subject and profile of trainers and participants.

- Grundtvig visits and exchanges are destined to the training of adults' teachers.
- Exchanges among teachers in other European countries
- Grundtvig Assistantships. Finance a stay of 12-45 weeks to teachers and other trainers (37 applications) related to adult education working in adult education organizations in another European country.

2. Training in Spain

Agreements signed with the British Council as well as recognized Training Centers for teachers training.

Reinforcement System Actions

1. Conversation assistants. Increment of the number of assistants in order to improve students' language proficiency, especially oral skills.
2. Visiting teachers. Selection and hiring, for a limited period of time, of foreign graduates to teach in bilingual centers. These teachers will not replace Spanish teachers.
3. Virtual platform. Fostering collaboration among teachers for sharing materials and resources developed specifically for bilingual teaching⁴.
4. Dissemination in the educative centers about programs developed by the European Union, coordinated in Spain through the OAPEE

4.1 Comenius

4.2 Leonardo da Vinci Program: fostering the exchange of good practices and the promotion of foreign language learning

⁴ A perfect example of it is the BEP platform by Junta de Andalucía.

- 4.3 Learning Gundtvig associations among at least three organizations involved in adults education in different European countries so teachers and students collaborate in the development of one or more topics of interest allowing, a reinforcement in language practice selected as a common working language.
5. Study visits. Focused on the people responsible to make decisions in education to make contact with the realities of education in the European countries, through visits in an European language promoting the political and educational cooperation. Participants represent European countries as part of the Lifelong Learning Program (LLP). Four of these visits deal with teaching, learning languages and multilingual education and the acquisition of educational skills through knowledge of languages.
 6. Senior Volunteering Projects, to cooperate and allow senior volunteers over 50 years to collaborate in another European country in any activities nonprofit immersion for a period of 3 to 8 weeks which reinforce and increase their personal, language and social skills.
 7. Promoting the participation of teachers in working in international projects and by strengthening the role of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) of the Council of Europe. The Centre's role is to carry out the implementation of language policies and promoting innovations in teaching and learning languages through the participation of experts in meetings, networking meetings, seminars, preparatory meetings and workshops to include a representative from each state.

General Actions

This program includes general actions with the aim of reaching to the educational community and the whole population.

1. Strengthen and upgrade the program That's English (through the E.O.I.s), renewing materials and teaching methods to impart through online training.

2. Promote the use of documents such as the European Language Portfolio and Europass, planning and recording instruments of language learning in relation to the academic and professional development and mobility of students at European level⁵.
3. Dissemination and promotion of various programs of the Council of Europe as the European Label for innovative initiatives in language teaching, etc.
4. To favor the issuance of shows and movies in their original language in the media

Monitoring and assessment

All those programs and initiatives are controlled through three types of commitment:

- Coordination and Monitoring Committee. Its role is to unify criteria within the Ministry, to give coherence to the actions, integrate and coordinate information on the development of the program and assess the effectiveness of the results. It is intended an internal assessment, developing program proposals, in order to redesign, if necessary, the actions planned for future years.
- Working Group of the Foreign Language Learning Education. It is composed of representatives from the Ministry of Education and representatives of the Autonomous Communities appointed by the members of the General Education Committee. It is responsible for assessing the effectiveness of actions implemented in the autonomous

⁵ We can find all the necessary information on the Junta de Castilla y León web page.

regions and performing those actions as requested by the Conference of Education.

- Joint committees' conventions. In order to monitor and evaluate the results of the implementation of actions, from contributions by the State and the Autonomous Community, joint committees will be formed whose composition will be determined in the agreements signed for this purpose. These Committees will support the interpretation, enforcement and evaluation of the results of the implementation of the agreements signed with each Community

On the Article 66 of the Organic Law 10/2002 of 23th December on the Education Quality, it is reflected the necessity of establishing educative projects for developing the linguistic level.

In Spain, the first Autonomic Communities which decided to implant foreign language learning at Early Years were Castilla y León and Asturias. This last community has worked really hard on this field. Then, it was implanted on País Vasco and Andalucía, and every single community did it on their own way. Within the different projects developed in Spain about Early Foreign Language Learning is important to note the “Congreso Internacional de Adquisición de Lenguas Extranjeras en Edades Tempranas” Oviedo, September 2001. On it they concluded that language learning has to have a real context, and be taught in a natural way, so teacher need to know that and put it into practice. They must know the curriculum and strategies for teaching: the first step for getting the best education is the formation. País Vasco and Navarra have a different curriculum from the European one.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES TEACHING IN CASTILLA Y LEÓN

I focused my attention at Castilla y León. This community designed a Plan for Teacher Training in Foreign Languages, which is based on solving all teachers' needs

about it. This plan is flexible to adapt to different situations and it propose an adaptation through self-evaluation. Because of LOE, the Junta de Catilla y León required from a teacher to have a CLIL profile to be a linguistic assessor, that means that a good professional must have the suitable profile.

The plan is based on distinguish three dimensions of competence within the linguistic-communicative competence, ad different levels inside them all. These dimensions are the next ones:

1. Didactic Dimension

- a) Areas related with the integration on several languages at school (L1, L2, L3...) within the curriculum and its influence in the learning-teaching process.

2. Linguistic-Communicative Dimension

- a) Areas related with training skills in different language of L2, as well as theoretical and cultural aspects that a L2 means.

3. Professional development Dimension

- a) Areas related with the ethical aspects and social and professional relations, having in mind the importance of the foreign languages nowadays.
- b) Areas related with the use of ICT for the personal and professional development as a learning tool through a constant actuation of didactic resources.

Crossways to all of them it is contemplated the professional attitude dimension. Each dimension is defined in areas, aims and descriptors.

The European Training Programs must be present in the itinerary of teacher training, understanding that are those activities as participation in sectorial and cross-cutting programs of the Lifelong Learning Program (Comenius, e-Twinning, or visits of study), assistance and / or participation in conferences and workshops at national and international institutional and other exchange programs

The program defines three teachers' profiles depending on if they prefer to acquire the linguistic-communicative competence or develop/improve their methodological and linguistic capacitation, following their teaching profile:

- No-specialist teacher who wants to develop his/her linguistic capacities
- Specialist teacher in foreign languages
- CLIL teacher

Also, Castilla y León defined some indicators in each dimension, and they have been organized about the development level.

- Basic (A1 and A2)
- Middle (B1)
- Advanced (B2)
- Excellent (C1 and C2)

On this way, all teachers are integrated in these linguistic stages. They have an instrument of Self-assessment of linguistic and communicative competence, where the indicators are divided into four levels and the internal sublevels. This allows teachers to determinate their situation, their training needs and what is the way forward, their learning path.

The training is organized on itineraries, defined as coordinated sequences of different activities, which will allow teachers to reach the defined levels. It had been defined three big routes, coinciding with the three profiles of teachers and also it had been designed a training schedule for centers with bilingual section. Each profile is sequenced in 6 sub-levels in accordance with the guidelines of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR)

There are two important events, which occur at the same time as a temporal coincidence: the Common European Framework of Reference appears and at Castilla y León, foreign language learning at early years becomes more important. And on the ORDEN EDU/6/2006 of 4th January it is regulated the creation of bilingual sections on the public schools at Castilla y León.

In order to understand the importance of language in school education across the whole curriculum, we have to identify and summarise the basic tenets on which Language Across the Curriculum rests. These are (cf. Corson 1990, 74):

1. Language develops mainly through its purposeful use (domains to be broadened)
2. Learning (often) involves talking, writing, shaping and moving (normally in reaction to perceptions)
3. Learning often occurs through speaking or writing as much as through shaping and moving
4. Language use contributes to /is a pre-requisite for cognitive development
5. Language is the medium for reflecting on learning, for improving it, for becoming (more or less) autonomous as learners.

There is a strong connection and so many similarities between ELP 3-7⁶ and Castilla y León's curriculum. Both make emphasis on the importance of starting at Early Years enjoying recognizing the different languages around us and creating a social identity, respecting the other languages and the other cultures. It is very important children to use not only Spanish language but also English language for expressing their ideas, feelings and experiences.

It is very important as well to give enough importance to the non-verbal languages and all that includes (paralanguage, pitch, emblems...), working it through the production of written or oral messages based on images in order to provide information, assist in the description of real events, participate in a game, rhyme or song and play a role in the storytelling, whenever they deal with familiar stuffs and have a predictable script.

In Pre-school, they must know some communicative strategies for understanding different situations, pay attention, listen, respect turn talking... and also as a mediator for regulating the behavior, developing learning strategies and autonomous thinking.

Finally, children must recognize and value individually their progress in the field of communication, through self-assessment and establishing little challenges.

⁶The curricular concretion proposal in Foreign Language Learning in Castilla y León

CONCLUSION

Ever since this new perspective of plurilingual and pluricultural society became part of our guide lines in Europe, the European Union is living a situation of change, in which interculturality is something present nowadays, so we have to reflect it in our classrooms, because our schools' real aim is to create good citizens, ready for the real world and the real situations in it.

Most of the European countries have reached a similar level about interculturality and plurilingualism. It had been written several educative policies about that, and successively they have become competent in this field.

Also, the European Union in general realized about the importance of begin learning foreign languages at early years, because in this moment of your life is both mind and physiognomy are ready to this. Children's mind has no limits.

Methodologies must be related with children's interests, always focused on them, because on this way they will feel interested. They must experiment through their bodies, interacting with their reality. TPR (Total Physical Response) is a perfect methodology in the Foundation Stages, because it uses the body as the main element in the language learning, developing actions through it. It is very important to make it funny for them.

The most important thing is to learn it looking for true aims and always into a real context, explaining the "here" and "now", just like we learn our mother tongue. It is very important as well to define the actions they or we are carrying out.

However in Spain we have not still got this level. Schools teach foreign languages at Early Years, but in general they are focused on a very traditional methodology, performing activity sheets too much simple and easy for children, inhibiting their learning capacity.

Castilla y León has been pioneer proposing early foreign language learning and using excellent resources such as "My First Portfolio". But most of the English teachers

are not consent about the necessary change in the education and the importance of showing children the world which surround them, with the reality that it entails.

The most important advantages of being bilingual are the next ones:

1. Bilingual children develop more their brain, which means that they become smarter because they have to have a good command of several structures and more vocabulary. They can change their mind easily and take decisions faster as well.
2. Language is a useful tool for controlling our mind, so if a child has the ability to speak more than one language, he/she wil develop his/her thinking skills. They will get a more logical mind, being able to reason. They will get also a better communication understanding people's points of view and being able to interact with their world, because they understand more cultures.
3. Knowing several languages, allow children to get better social relationships and understand some behaviors.
4. Bilingual children encourage their empathy and they are able to manage with problems in a better way.
5. People who dominate more than one language, have more opportunities for finding a job, because they are able to move easily around the world, so their opportunities have no limits.

At schools we have to foster not only bilingualism but pluriculturalism. Language and culture are necessary joined. Pluriculturalism is not the co-existence of several cultures but the interactions among them all, respecting the differences, improving our world and pushing up tolerant minds. We must integrate all members in our society, beginning at school of course, maximizing our social, linguistic and communicative strategies.

In the last two decades, there was many improvements both at European and national level, but we still have a long way to go. The strong crisis we are going through

in recent years has practically eliminated all grants, and lack of money has provoked itself the lack of means and resources to make this project go on and to keep on growing up as it should.

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8ffdbbc5a7b5&visor=WAR_cms_tools_contentId=5d1e2cd3-7f0f-4601-84bc-8ffdbbc5a7b5&visor=WAR_cms_tools_backUrl=%2Fweb%2Fcentro.ies.renacimiento.madrid%2Forganizacion%2F-%2Fetiqueta%2FtagCloud%2FChVRgIfZjFO1%2Fpap%3Bjsessionid%3DB19E0E41A99B8CE19AD2122D16CB8199%3Fp_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dmaximized%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p_p_col_pos%3D1%26p_p_col_count%3D2%26tagCloud=WAR_cms_tools_INSTANCE_ChVRgIfZjFO1_showAll%3Dfalse&bookmarks=false&tags=false&print=false&backMessage=none

(Consulted on April 9th, 2013)

-Revista en prácticas bilingües y plurilingües

http://issuu.com/practicaseneducacion/docs/revista_bilinguismo_muestra

(Consulted on June 20th, 2013)

-Expert's opinions about ELP

<http://www.piccolingo.eu>

(Consulted on June 22nd, 2013)

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