

# SPEAQ

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## PROJECT REPORT SPEAQ YEAR 2 PARTNER PROJECTS

**Institution: University of Innsbruck**

**Institutional coordinator: Christine Lechner**

**Title of project: Enhancing collaboration procedures within the Middle Module at the IMoF through co-operations in the area of assessment & cross-curricular networking**

### SUMMARY

#### **Provide a short description of the project**

The collaboration project focused on enhancing quality of courses run within the “Middle Module” at the “Innsbrucker Model für Fremdsprachendidaktik” through professional collaboration. The project included two strands:

- a) A transparent framework for assessment of Middle Module courses
- b) Establishing a framework for co-operations in CLIL between language & natural science didactics

The work on a transparent framework for assessment proved to be the starting point & main area of development. The actual product is an assessment template to be trialled across courses in the Winter Term 2013-14. A vital element of the project has been the process & the discussions between teaching staff, teaching staff & quality manager & quality manager & students.

The intention of the second element was first and foremost to set up discussions and to work out a way forward for the future.

## BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

### **Why was this project chosen for implementation (out of the potential projects initiatives identified by your institution in the SPEAQ first year activities)?**

Impressions gained during the Year-1-data collection & focus-group stage pointed to the assumption that connecting quality circles for quality enhancement in a concrete & structured way is a new approach for most of those involved.

On the one hand, the common feature of all discussions with students was the surprise at being asked and the supposition that it would be beneficial to include different perspectives in developmental processes. On the other hand, until the initiation of the project the Quality Manager appeared to have little visibility within the department – both to students & teaching staff without managerial functions.

As from September 2012, the IMoF has been incorporated into the newly founded School of Education, which comprises departments for Pedagogy & Teaching Practice, Languages Didactics & Didactics for Natural Sciences. Thus, a range of co-operative processes are being developed and the timing for collaborations is highly appropriate.

### **What immediate needs did the project answer?**

Co-operations between IMoF staff on teaching and assessing have been established over the past decade and are generally intensive being one of the reasons for the high quality and reputation of the department.

However, within the Middle Module co-operation is more difficult due to the variety of courses and the fact that many members of staff work on external contracts. There had been little structured specific exchange between course leaders although it was felt by many teachers for some time that course requirements vary very much from course to course. Few structured opportunities to compare, increase transparency and to regulate were in existence.

Thus, both the Assessment scale strand (as described in detail below: Activity) & the developing co-operations between language & science didactics were opportune.

As above, the formal link between languages & science didactics is very new as the SoE was only founded at the beginning of the academic year 2012-13. The framework for inter-departmental co-operation will be a very good opportunity to move forward.

Rationale: Research has shown that problems encountered by learners in science classes are often language-based difficulties. However, new language-sensitive approaches to L1-subject learning are not yet satisfactorily accommodated within teacher education.

Over the past two decades approaches (e.g. CLIL) and methodologies have been developed to overcome such problems, although this awareness and these insights are rarely accounted for satisfactorily in science teacher education programmes. There is a strong current trend in Austria, e.g. as developed and disseminated through the Austrian Languages Competence Centre in Graz, to work on language-sensitive approaches to L1 language learning based on CLIL research<sup>1</sup>.

CLIL courses within initial teacher education programmes traditionally hail from language departments and, far too often the links to subject methodologies are sporadic stemming from chance encounters.

Core & Link: “Reading, writing, hearing, and especially talking science are a large part of what professional scientists do.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CHAWID Project (Für eine chancengerechte Wissensvermittlung in Deutsch als Unterrichtssprache: [http://www.oesz.at/OESZNEU/main\\_01.php?page=014&open=12](http://www.oesz.at/OESZNEU/main_01.php?page=014&open=12))

<sup>2</sup> Wellington, Jerry and Osborne, Jonathan, Language and Literacy in Science Education. Forward Jay L. Lemke. Open University Press (2001).

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**OBJECTIVES****Indicate aims (as bullets)**

- A better understanding of processes
- A usable overview assessment grid allowing for variation according to nature of course
- A mid-term plan for co-operations in the field of CLIL between languages and natural science department
- To develop a course encompassing both scientific & linguistic learning for future teachers.
- To approach the design joint courses held by science & language methodologists (L1 & L2)

**Were the objectives set achieved? If not, why not?**

Yes. However, it will be vital that the initiatives are sustained.

## ACTIONS/ACTIVITIES

**Describe the actions completed and provide photos from any of the activities, if available**

Strand A:

- i. Numerous meetings between SPEAQ project co-ordinator, head of unit & Middle Module co-ordinator to start up processes & design a template for the assessment tool.
- ii. Interviews with individual students to ask about what they felt should be assessed in courses & which criteria they would choose for assessment of a presentation or end-of-term paper.
- iii. A meeting between SPEAQ project co-ordinator, Middle Module co-ordinator & Quality Manager to plan staff meeting. The QM was able to report on similar processes going on in other university departments; Quality Management is the hub for knowledge about such processes, which often remain only known to those involved or shared by chance. Again, teaching staff were unaware that the QM might be the person to ask about how to approach such a process.
- iv. Staff meeting.
- v. Student meeting involving student representatives.

Strand B: meetings between the head of science didactics & CLIL teacher. Exchange of sources, starting point for a course to be set up from Autumn 2014 starting with observational visits to seminars and input.

Aim: to develop a course encompassing both scientific & linguistic learning for future teachers.

Objectives:

- To establish a working model between science & language learning & teaching
- To design joint courses held by science & language methodologists (L1 & L2)
- CLIL theories – CLIL practice
- An opportunity to explore language in learning in depth

Rationale: As above (Context), research has shown that problems encountered by learners in science classes are often language-based difficulties. Over the past two decades approaches (e.g. CLIL) and methodologies have been developed to overcome such problems, although this awareness and these insights are rarely accounted for satisfactorily in science teacher education programmes.

On the other hand, CLIL courses within initial teacher education programmes traditionally hail from language departments and, far too often the links to subject methodologies are sporadic stemming from chance encounters.

Furthermore, new language-sensitive approaches to L1-subject learning is not yet satisfactorily accommodated within teacher education.

**Choose one activity and detail as an illustrative case study/example of the work carried out in the institution**

Step-by-step involvement of different levels.

The process to engage staff, quality management & students in the design of an assessment format has been extremely interesting and dynamic. The first step was to agree on a working model (i.e. who should speak to whom) with head of unit & module co-ordinator. As the staff meeting did not take place until the end of May, there were preliminary discussions with individual students about their views on assessment, what should be assessed & what should be included in scale. At the staff meeting it was agreed by all that such structured collaboration should take place more often. Much of the meeting was taken up by an important exchange on approaches to assessment and discovering common criteria, which meant a slight change in the overall time planning as the intention had been to look at the scale in detail. Participants agreed that it would be a very interesting experience to hold the next meeting together with students. The face-to-face meeting was followed by an e-mail discussion bringing in further aspects. The next step was a meeting with student representatives all on initial teacher education degree courses for languages run by the Quality Manager. Opening discussions were broad bringing in a variety of issues concerning the organisation and running of courses, and leading on to the assessment issues. It was seen that discussions must continue about detailed formulations and also as to whether all bands should include descriptors. However, the principle of a transparent form of assessment bringing in student opinion was met with overall enthusiasm as it certainly provides a clear basis for feedback and lays down expectations. Student representatives were adamant about being including in the next round of discussions.

Example: the rôle of language in assessment of didactics courses. This has been a point of discussion for a number of years with no definitive solution in sight. During preliminary discussions with individual students all agreed that “communication must work”, i.e. all students spoken to agreed that it is not satisfactory when fellow students hold presentations that are difficult to follow due to linguistic deficiencies. Therefore, course tutors should not accept “incomprehensible” presentations etc. On the other hand, it is not the job of the methodologist to “teach” language and if there are deficits the cause and solution must be looked for in the subject departments. This correlated with staff views and is reflected in the scale as then shown to the student representatives who agreed that this point is well integrated.

**Did you cover all activities planned for? If not, why not and where are you at? Are there intentions to complete the activities not covered in the future?**

In general it can be said that activities were covered. As above, the process proved complex mainly due to a lack of time for discussions, which are deemed to be central to the work of lecturers.

**Please provide a summary of the feedback regarding the activities from the stakeholders participating in your partner project**

Surprise by students at being asked. (Interviews on aspects of presentations that should be assessed).

- i. Presentation
  - 1. Being able to speak freely/ not learnt/ not read
  - 2. Structure
  - 3. Layout
  - 4. Presentation skills (Body language, enthusiasm, eye-contact)
- ii. Content
  - 1. Application of theory
  - 2. Engaging examples – activities
  - 3. Lesson plan
  - 4. Reflection - EPOSTL
- iii. Language
  - 1. Communication has to work
  - 2. Language courses should be responsible
  - 3. Appropriate subject language

Focus group: interest in project & international communication, interest in ESU & complaint that only students in the eastern capital have the opportunity to become involved. Delight at the attempt at transparency by staff.

Teachers on the middle module courses very pleased that such a meeting was called. Surprise about the rôle/ existence of the quality manager.

**DELIVERABLES**

**Describe the deliverables produced, i.e. podcasts, worksheets, blogs, wikis, interactive quizzes etc. (and provide as annex)**

**Include the list of deliverables you are annexing**

- a) Scale

**Were the deliverables anticipated achieved? If not, why not.**

- a) Yes. However, more direct contact between quality circles would have been desirable (see below)
- b) The process has been set in motion & plan will follow. However, a more precise structure would have been desirable.

**Please provide a summary of the feedback regarding the deliverables from the stakeholders participating in your partner project.**

Students representatives on scale:

- The existence of assessment criteria is very good in itself
- It is very good that the scale is transparent and available to both staff and students
- In student experience feedback given to students after presentations works fairly well and is useful. This more precise format has the potential for quality assurance and quality enhancement for the future
- It is to be hoped that the initiative will lead to content-based discussions between staff and students, i.e. around such important and much discussed issues as the weighting of language competences in methodology courses and also on precise formulations

Course students on scale:

- Very good! Excellent that teaching staff are willing to work in this transparent way and also to share developmental processes with students
- It must be made completely clear what is expected in the different areas, e.g. reflection. Perhaps examples could be provided.

Course students on prospect of CLIL co-operations:

- I would sign up for a qualification course immediately

**IMPACT****Describe the impact the project has had.**

The assessment format has brought a common goal for teachers. Developments and discussions will continue beyond the project period.

There is evidence that co-operations between subject and language specialists must take place to develop quality CLIL. Through the project the first steps have been set in motion.

**Did the project have the impact envisaged? If not, why not.**

On the level of setting dialogues and processes in motion, definitely! Implementation is a slow process.

**Please provide a summary of the feedback regarding the impact from the stakeholders participating in your partner project**

Transparency in the assessment of students is very important & although the scale in progress appears to be rather general, it is definitely a step in the right direction. Needs to be concretised for each course, different purposes.

Students should be asked before & during processes

Quality is about motivating teachers with great in-depth knowledge, teachers who convey that they enjoy teaching, teachers who are understanding and ensuring that all courses include these elements.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### **Describe ways you evaluated the activities and the outcomes**

Through discussions with those involved, through measuring developments against the opinions of those involved.

Opinions from main target group, i.e. students, are the central issue in this case. All students interviewed and student representatives expressed interest and pleasure at discussions being opened. There are still many questions about the sustainability of involvement.

Secondly, through discussions it emerged clearly that staff see a need for more intensive & focussed co-operation. The process was certainly set in motion although, it was evident that there is never enough time to conclude in a satisfactory way.

Thirdly, the project was welcomed by quality management as another way to meet agendas.

### **How did the project address the quality assurance agenda of your institution?**

The university is committed to the fulfillment of the aims set down by Bologna Process and quality assurance is deemed to play an essential role. Quality assurance is based around the fundamental issues of status quo in relation to aims, obstacles in achieving aims and which steps and measure are necessary to overcome obstacles and achieve aims.

The concept is based on the quality circle Do-Check-Act.

The SPEAQ project can be seen as a measure.

High-level management sees transnational research projects as essential to achieve quality in research, especially for smaller countries such as Austria. Projects must meet needs, which in turn must be based on concrete evidence.

The highest impact is where there is impact on study programmes and the degree of practical input for the University.

Impact depends on the appropriateness of partnerships.

Sustainability means transformation and not only transaction. Development means improvement, change & rethinking.

### **How did the project connect the three quality circles and with what effect?**

The most significant outcome in this connection was to increase the visibility of quality management to students and teaching staff not involved in management processes. The activities of the first year brought teaching staff and quality managers into dialogue with the second year activities. Prior to activities student representatives were well aware of quality management structures. However, other students involved in SPEAQ activities were surprised to hear that such structures and people exist.

### **What were the major difficulties encountered?**

The main problem was simply the time factor, i.e. all teaching colleagues approached about activities expressed interest spontaneously. There was unanimous agreement that such processes would be essential to development, but enormous difficulties finding a time to meet due to pressures of day-to-day work and also pressures caused by more or less constant on-going restructuring.

**What kinds of constraints or impositions affected the implementation, if any?**

As above, no opposition to the initiative was encountered, but merely difficulties finding time to exchange on ideas and progress.

During meetings with both teaching staff and student representatives it was voiced frequently that dialogue between student representatives and teaching staff on such a specific issue of course development would be a matter of vital importance, but not realised to date. Facilitation through quality managers would seem to be an excellent way forward.

**DISSEMINATION**

**Describe dissemination methods applied/envisaged and provide photos from any dissemination events, if available**

The project is always mentioned in term staff meetings. Through the activities staff involved became aware of what the project is really about. Students involved are now well aware.

Dissemination via folder to the head of SoE, who, in turn, brought the project to the notice of the Rector.

The project was disseminated to all members of the IMoF at an institutional event in mid-September.

**Please provide a summary of the feedback regarding the dissemination from the stakeholders participating in your partner project**

Interest in outcomes

**CONTINUATION/MULTIPLICATION/EXPLOITATION**

**Describe continuation/multiplication/exploitation plan, if appropriate.**

The process to collaborate on assessment will definitely continue. The scale will go into trialing in the Winter Term. The process will obviously not stop there but continue.

Strand B: courses should start in September 2014.