



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

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SPEAQ

PROJECT REPORT SPEAQ YEAR 2 PARTNER PROJECTS

Institution: University of Jyväskylä

Institutional coordinator: Anne Räsänen

Title of project: Towards CLIL/ICL competence – Enhancing pedagogical and interactive skills of non-native content teachers teaching through English

SUMMARY

Provide a short description of the project

The project was implemented within the staff development programme in Teaching Academic Content through English (TACE) (programme details in Annex 1). TACE is one option (i.e. English-medium instruction) in the overall university pedagogical qualifications required from teaching staff at the University of Jyväskylä. The overall aim of the annually repeated TACE programme is to develop the intercultural communication and university pedagogical competence for using English in multimodal teaching, learning, counselling, and assessment situations in participants' own fields and practices. The programme itself follows a CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)/ICL (Integrated Content and Language) approach of addressing issues specific to both the language and the teaching of the discipline. Interactive contact modules are integrated with distance tasks of developing own understanding of, and skills for, promoting the learning of multilingual and multicultural student groups. The learning platform used allows for a versatile use of interactive media as a support and documentation system for building personal and group portfolios for the future. The programme includes eight flexible modules and the total covers 10-15 ECTS credits, depending on the extent of the development project carried out by the participant. The details of the TACE programme and the expected learning outcomes are in Annex 1 (see also <http://jyutace.info/>).

The section selected from the TACE programme to serve as an institutional SPEAQ project covered the four last months (January - April 2013) of TACE started in May 2012. This section included the development of an individual teaching portfolio including e.g. teaching philosophy, course plan following ICL, implementation and evaluation of the course (by teacher and students), and the reporting of the whole procedure using the LANQUA Toolkit framework. In addition, sharing blogs and reflections was continued on the platform.

The main purposes of the institutional project were

- to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in international, English-medium Master's programmes by engaging teachers in reflective practices personally and together with their colleagues and students;
- to create a continuing portfolio of good practices to be shared with colleagues and other stakeholders and to reflect disciplinary preferences and approaches; and
- to establish informed and well-working intercultural pedagogical approaches to teaching through English in a multilingual and multicultural classroom.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Why was this project chosen for implementation?

The University of Jyväskylä has a relatively well developed quality enhancement and assurance system for teaching and learning. In addition to individual teachers asking for feedback for their personal development purposes, there is an electronic system used at course, programme, department and faculty level, institutional level student barometer procedure for feedback from first year, third year, and fifth year students, regular internal audits including self-assessment and collegial assessment, etc. The student union has its own annual system (called Complaints week). Each discipline has its own appointed quality enhancement manager and group, the institution has a steering group, etc. All groups have student representation. In addition to this, the professional labour unions and other agencies survey the quality of teaching and learning among graduates already in the workforce. All this information is distributed to the relevant bodies within the university regularly. However, what is missing - also according to the quality director - is a systemic joint dialogue across disciplines in terms of the quality of operations and activities and a staff parameter (in preparation in fact). The TACE programme offers a good opportunity for interdisciplinary considerations, involving actual teaching staff in the dialogue and development of international programmes, which are in operation in all faculties and departments and therefore also very much a quality issue discussed in the quality groups. Sharing concerns and practices during TACE clarifies what issues are of utmost importance for teachers, students, quality groups, and departments, and what procedures for quality enhancement at all levels should be followed and how responsibilities for quality outcomes could be shared.

What immediate needs did the project answer?

On the basis of all the feedback and other survey information the project wanted to address

- staff concerns about their skills in dealing with intercultural and multilingual student groups in a language that is not their native language (both Finnish and international teaching staff)
- student concerns about the expertise of their teachers in cases where non-native speaker issues are evident in the language of instruction.

In these cases teachers have to be confident enough pedagogically, interculturally, and linguistically to manage the situations, as they are top-level experts in their disciplines.

OBJECTIVES

Indicate aims (as bullets)

At the interdisciplinary level:

- establish shared, informed and effective reflective practices related to teaching and learning through a foreign language

At the pedagogical level:

- develop the skills needed in using more versatile and interactive teaching methods, interculturally sound supervision and research guidance, and harmonization of instructions given e.g. for written assignments, theses, and teamwork across disciplines

In terms of communication skills:

- enhance staff confidence and competence in managing teaching and interaction through English in an intercultural context

At the institutional level:

- share the responsibility between all stakeholders for quality outcomes and processes promoting the internationalization of our university.

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

The objectives described above are not one-off issues but need continuous attention and development. In terms of this short-time project, however, positive steps were taken in all aspects and in this respect the objectives were achieved, as is evident in the evaluations and outcomes.

ACTIONS/ACTIVITIES

Describe the actions completed

Although the actual institutional project was timed for the four final months of the TACE programme 2012-2013, the SPEAQ workshop using the dialogue sheet was conducted during the very first session in April 2012, and its outcomes reported in the first year report.

The TACE group involved in the institutional project included both Finnish and international (non-native English speakers)(18 total) who are teaching in English in international Master's programmes. Some of them also provide courses to international Erasmus students. They represented all seven faculties of our university and, therefore, both "soft" and "hard" disciplines. There were two contact sessions (January and March) of 4 hours to discuss and make decisions about the final assignments to be done. These included the following:

- Updated blogs on reflection assignments
- TACE teaching portfolio (content as agreed jointly) (described below)
- Report on own course development and its implementation and involvement of students, using the LANQUA Toolkit procedure and structure in the report.

The final contact session ended in a group evaluation of the TACE programme. Individual evaluations were documented in the personal blogs and in the report.

Choose one activity and detail as an illustrative case study/example

Most participants involve their learners in course development and evaluation of learning and teaching by asking them for a learner log/learning diary/learning journal/portfolio - these assignments are usually done on the Optima platform. However, in many cases few explicit instructions are given for the format or even purpose, which is very confusing for international students in particular, as they are often not familiar with or experienced in this type of reflection or assessment. Therefore, we did an activity in January in small groups to clarify e.g. the differences particularly between a "portfolio for learning" and "portfolio of learning". The groups had to consider the differences between these two types of portfolio in terms of who decides, the teacher or the student or both, on the following, and what might be the role of the portfolios in quality enhancement and joint reflective practices.

WHO DECIDES ON:	PORTFOLIO OF LEARNING	PORTFOLIO FOR LEARNING
▶ Purpose?	▶ To demonstrate learning and learning process	▶ To record own goals and best outcomes, understanding the process
▶ Selection of content?	▶ Student selects content and structure according to given guidelines	▶ Student selects and assesses and decides on the structure etc.
▶ Time allowed?	▶ Teacher assesses according to specific criteria	
▶ Structure?		
▶ Assessment?		
▶ Orientation in time?	▶ Past to present	▶ Present to future
▶ Audience?	▶ Student(s) and teacher(s)	▶ Student(s) and teacher(s)
▶ Ownership?	▶ Student, monitored by teacher	▶ Student

This group work led the group to consider their TACE teaching portfolio and Toolkit report. As a (learner) group they decided together what they thought the portfolio should include in order to function as a shared document for TACE -type teaching and learning. They listed the following as the core content:

- ▶ Reflection on personal goals and their achievement
- ▶ Description of what you learnt
- ▶ Teaching philosophy for teaching through English
- ▶ Pedagogical working methods and samples related to TACE
- ▶ How to deal with new challenges from TACE
- ▶ Changes in assignments and their instructions given to students
- ▶ Dealing with students' language and other problems
- ▶ Feedback on the TACE programme and how to get feedback
- ▶ Possible future goals, possible co-operation and coherence
- ▶ Individual focuses

As regards the teaching philosophy, then, the group thought that it should answer the following questions:

GENERAL

1. What are your goals for student learning? What knowledge, skills, and attitudes are important for student success in your discipline/subject?
2. What teaching methods do you use? Why are these methods appropriate in terms of your goals for student learning?
3. How do you know that your goals are being met? What sorts of assessment do you use? Who is involved in the assessment?

TACE CONTEXT IN PARTICULAR

4. How does student identity and background affect your teaching?
5. How does teaching through English affect your teaching?
6. How is your teaching philosophy different when teaching multilingual and multicultural student groups?

The whole idea of the activities in general was to give the content experts structured opportunities to become aware of how they can involve their students more systematically in quality enhancement and successful learning by giving them the responsibility to decide on issues related to integrated content and language learning. Thus, only a minimum of research-based input was given by the TACE trainers, and most of the "content" issues across the whole programme were shared and agreed upon jointly by the participants. In other words, we saw our role as that of a facilitator, guiding the process through specific activities that covered the main issues involved in teaching and learning through a foreign language in a multilingual and multicultural classroom and in integrating content and language in the context in a way that produces quality outcomes.

Did you cover all activities planned for?

Yes.

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

Group feedback was given by small groups during the final session in March, but as it concerns the whole programme only the feedback concerning the institutional project is included here.

In general, the participants appreciated the interactive approach, discussions, and sharing most. To share issues and plans and practices in an interdisciplinary group and learning from each other were seen as the greatest benefit. Blogging was also appreciated as a new experience for many, but also seen as confusing and time-consuming. The final report written according to the LanQua Toolkit framework was also seen as a useful way to organize and structure the report and the reflective practices.

Participant voices (extracted from the participants' Toolkit reports and blogs):

"During our TACE-sessions I learned to value a lot an interactive technique used by TACE teachers. As we discussed some topic, the teacher listed ideas of the students on the slide. And these ideas remained as "answers" and there was no list of "the correct answers" that the teacher had prepared. In my opinion this method of participation gave us as students the feeling that our experiences are valuable and "accurate"."

"Participating in the TACE course has provided me an excellent opportunity for reflection about my pedagogical methods, share practices and learn from other peers."

"Class discussions were invaluable to share practices about how to manage intercultural groups or specific challenges coming from the group dynamics; how to assess students' progress; how to provide constructive feedback. TACE provided the possibility to learn from the teachers' way of teaching, other participants' experiences, and provoked own interest in finding information about the topics. I expect all this to have an impact on my future teaching."

DELIVERABLES

Describe the deliverables produced

The deliverables of the project include personal reflective blogs, descriptions of activities, courses, instructions on assignments, teaching portfolios and Toolkit reports, but all of them are confidential and placed on the learning platform which is restricted to TACE participants only. (See descriptions in Annex 1)

Were the deliverables anticipated achieved?

Yes.

Summary of the feedback regarding the deliverables

Group feedback was given by small groups during the final session in March, but as it concerns the whole programme only the feedback concerning the institutional project is included here.

Participant voices (extracted from the participants' Toolkit reports and blogs):

"Blogging also fostered the interaction with other peers who could comment on previous reflections."

"Blogging was a very new and challenging experience for me. Before this, I thought I liked sharing my reflections on the issues discussed in the class. However, I was surprised about myself how shy I used to get when it was time to post something on my Wordpress. I think it would be interesting to use blogging in my future teaching!"

"I have never formulated the goals of the course for content and language. As a student, I used to skip the goals of the course when reading a course description. As a teacher, I cared only about those goals which are directly related to the expected outcomes. Thus, trying to formulate the goals for the course was an interesting experience to me."

"I have never tried to write my teaching philosophy. Probably the current draft of my teaching philosophy is far away from the final and finished product, but at least I have a draft to continue from when needed. It was an interesting and useful experience. Also, throughout the TACE process, I improved the instructions on how to write a learning log and an essay. Probably it is still far away from perfect, but at least I managed to modify the descriptions based on the hints from TACE teachers and course participants."

IMPACT

Describe the impact the project has had/ Did the project have the impact envisaged?

As was already stated, the objectives described above are not one-off issues but need continuous attention and development. In terms of this short-time project, however, positive steps were taken in all aspects and in this respect the objectives were achieved and the impact was even more than what was envisaged, as is evident in the evaluations and blogs. As the participants are in most cases also members of the programme quality groups, they have a clear voice in promoting quality enhancement at their departments. Moreover, the final reports show that they have already started similar procedures with their students. However, the most rewarding part of the whole process was being able to share and discuss related issues in interdisciplinary groups, as expressed by practically all participants, which can be seen as having had a clear impact at collegial level. This was also the key rationale for the institutional project.

Summary of the feedback regarding impact

Group feedback was given by small groups during the final session in March, but as it concerns the whole programme only the feedback concerning the institutional project is included here.

Participant voices (extracted from the participants' Toolkit reports and blogs):

"Overall, I have enjoyed the TACE modules, and I believe that my students will also benefit from my participation. I have updated the learning outcomes I use in my courses so that they not only include content but also language skills"

"I understand the importance of having the students interact with the course content in different ways so they can develop critical thinking."

"My teaching philosophy is now strongly based on the reciprocity of student–teacher relationship. In addition to feedback and reflections with my students, and most importantly, my own self-evaluation and learning from mistakes is the most useful tool in improving my own teaching. Thus, I understand teaching as a reciprocal process also between my own teaching and learning: Although I am a teacher, at the same time I am a learner of how to teach."

"Most likely a large part of the teaching is about repeating our own past, how we have been taught and how we learned. As we have learned through the LANQUA Toolkit exercise, the adaptation and modification is likely to be easier if there are tools: structure and model. Development and change require reflection and self-awareness."

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Describe ways you evaluated the activities and the outcomes

As is clear from the above, most of the evaluations of activities, outcomes, and the whole process came from the interaction with the participants. What was left for the trainers was commenting on the blogs and reports, observing actual teaching sessions and providing feedback on them, and monitoring that everybody had understood what had to be done - keeping in mind that disciplines are different, their pedagogical preferences are different, and their quality assurance and enhancement approaches are also different.

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

One of the concerns and development prospects of the institutional quality group has been the lack of interdisciplinary dialogue on issues that are shared, even though there is a diversity of approaches. For this the project and the LANQUA Toolkit offered a structured way of bringing together staff with various backgrounds.

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

Although the project was focused on teachers, they were also TACE "students", and they adapted practices used with their own students, and by way of being members of departmental development groups, the three quality circles were connected. As there will be a national audit of university teaching and learning in less than two years, all departments have to do self-assessments and peer assessments and include the three quality circles there. Having used the Toolkit framework and the SPEAQ workshop are valuable experiences and adaptable for the reports that need to be provided.

What were the major difficulties encountered? No difficulties, as the institutional project was part of a larger process.

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

Only timetable constraints for the participants, overcome by using the platform and by regular blogging.

DISSEMINATION

Describe dissemination methods applied/envisaged

The SPEAQ project poster and the flyer including the institutional projects of the partner universities were presented in the poster sessions of three international conferences:

- 1) April 10-13, 2013, ICLHE (Integrated Content and Language in Higher Education) conference, Maastricht University (some 130 participants);
- 2) May 3-5, 2013, in Jyväskylä at the annual summer school of applied language studies, titled Multidisciplinary Perspectives to Language Learning (some 80 participants);
- 3) September 13-15, 2013, in Helsinki, at the 26th Communication Skills Workshop, titled Identity explored: Language centre, language professional, language teacher, language learner (some 80 participants, mainly from Nordic and Baltic language centres).

Local dissemination:

- 1) Flyers distributed to TACE participants and departments and quality committee
- 2) Regular reporting internally at the Language Centre (staff meetings, steering committee, website, news)
- 3) Informal dissemination

The poster proposal has been accepted for the next AILA conference, to be held in Brisbane in 2014.

CONTINUATION/MULTIPLICATION/EXPLOITATION

Describe continuation/multiplication/exploitation plan.

TACE is an annual programme and a new group started in April 2013. The same basic approach, activities, and assignments will be used, adapted on the basis of the feedback from the project group and the needs and preferences of the new group. Similar to the project group, the new group is international and interdisciplinary, which makes it possible to accentuate the benefits listed in the feedback and evaluation received and draw closely on the principle of shared quality enhancement.

Annex 1

TEACHING ACADEMIC CONTENT THROUGH ENGLISH (TACE) - MODULE DESCRIPTIONS

MODULE	TOPIC	DATE
Module 1	Orientation and formulation of learning outcomes for aligned teaching Principles of teaching and learning through a foreign language, assessment forms (Distance assignment: study of own teaching/observation, blogging)	March-May
Module 2	Managing intercultural and multilingual groups Intercultural communication in the classroom, academic practices (Distance assignment: design of surveys, blogging)	August–December
Module 3	Spoken English for interactive teaching (optional or integrated throughout) Workshops to improve pronunciation and communication skills (Distance assignment: Proficiency assessment and self-assessment)	
Module 4	Teaching through presentation – interactive lecturing Principles of interactive lecturing and engagement of learners (Distance assignment: videorecording of lectures/observation, blogging)	November–December
Module 5	Small group teaching methods and learning tasks Collaborative and co-operative methods, PBL, and project-based tasks (Distance assignment: videorecording or observation of group work management, blogging)	November–December
Module 6	Use of New Learning Environments (ICT-enhanced teaching) Using technology and social media in teaching and counseling (Distance assignment: own project, blogging)	September–March
Module 7	Guiding research and academic writing Promoting research skills and writing through tasks and instructions (Distance assignment: own project, use of ICT and portfolios, blogging)	September–March
Module 8	Evaluation and assessment and an optional development project (5 credits) Versatile assessment forms for learning outcomes, e-portfolio compilation Development project of own teaching: design, implementation, reporting (Distance assignment: presentation of project and teacher portfolios)	March (–May)

Programme managers:

Anne Räsänen & Kirsi Westerholm

Training team 2012–2013: Marlen Harrison, Josephine Moate, Anne Räsänen, Kirsi Westerholm, Weldon Green

Expected learning outcomes:

On completion of the TACE programme, participants are expected

- to understand the special features and requirements of teaching and learning through a foreign language
- to have increased their own competence and confidence in interactive, written, and educational use of English
- to know how to survey and monitor the special needs of a multilingual and multicultural student group and how to attend to cross-cultural critical incidents
- to be able to analyse and assess the linguistic and cognitive requirements of their own discipline and its content to be taught
- to be able to design and assess versatile learning tasks that enable both individual and collaborative knowledge construction and active language use at the conceptual level needed
- know how to structure and illustrate lectures through an interactive approach and guide small group work so that learning is possible at various proficiency levels
- know how to instruct, guide and assess students' academic and research communication and how to give constructive feedback on it.

