Minutes of the meeting

Wednesday 5 April: Welcome dinner hosted by Cornelsen Verlag

Thursday 6 April:

09.00-09.30: Welcoming words by Cedric Sherratt (Cornelsen), Preben Späth (EEPG) and Harald Thiel (Cornelsen).
09.30-10.30: Cedric Sherratt (Cornelsen) presented developments and opportunities in the filed of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), also defined as bilingual education. Two types of CLIL are valid, one meaning teaching a language which is recognised as a minority or majority language in a country (e.g. teaching German to immigrants in Germany); the other type (which is the one in focus in this conference) deals with the teaching of a language which is officially seen as a foreign language in the
country in question (e.g. teaching English to German pupils). Cedric Sherratt gave an overview of the current situation of bilingual teaching in the European Union. CLIL is defined as teaching a subject matter (e.g. History or Geography) in/through a foreign language.

In most countries English is the most widely chosen foreign language in bilingual education. The main reasons include the greater mobility in Europe, the better standards of English (which is in some countries even taught from grade 1), and the increased demand for more competencies where general language competence is not enough, and finally the requirement of discourse competence in subjects and specialist areas. In this context one should consider the aim of the EU that every citizen in Europe should master two (foreign) languages in addition to the mother tongue. In tables published by Eurydice Cedric Sherratt showed which kinds of aims were indicated from the different countries regarding the introduction of CLIL (e.g. socio-cultural aims, language-related aims, and educational aims). The subjects used for CLIL in most countries include History, Geography and Social Science, Sciences, and artistic subjects. As regards the obstacles for implementing CLIL on a larger scale the main problem is reported to be the shortage of qualified teachers (who master e.g. English and Biology) and the lack of appropriate learning materials. Finally Cedric Sherratt gave an overview of the situation in Germany (with its 16 different states!). In Germany in total CLIL is taught at 196 schools (as real bilingual teaching as a stream), more than 120.000 pupils nation-wide receive bilingual teaching (of English). There are two models: the first one is a real bilingual class (called stream) where the whole class is engaged in learning subjects in and through the foreign language all the time. The other model is called the modular way, where parts of a subject are taught via the foreign language within the existing curriculum for the subject in question. The most popular and widely used subjects for bilingual teaching (in both models) are History, Geography, Politics/Civics, and Biology. CLIL has been implemented for more than 20 years in Germany, and from a publisher’s view it was pointed out that you would normally have to choose between revising existing textbooks and developing new materials from scratch – the last model being relevant in most cases (click here to see the presentation).

11.00-12.30: The participants present the situation of CLIL/bilingual teaching in the individual countries.

Velta Matisane (Zvaigzne ABC Publishers) described the CLIL situation in Latvia as being far behind the German situation. Since Latvia gained independence in 1991, the Latvian language has become the official language of the state used among people speaking different languages. The transition period from 1991-2004 has been determined by the Government so that bilingual teaching/learning can be introduced in secondary schools in 2004. In the organisation of the pedagogical process CLIL dimensions and focuses, i.e., culture, the environment, the language and content dimension, have been applied while teaching/learning Latvian. The most popular in English teaching/learning process are subject-based content devising approaches which imply both integration in terms of the content and integration of the method proposing the development of the student’s attitudes and needs as an essential part of education. Student’s needs to develop intercultural communication skills, build intercultural knowledge and understanding have already been included in the national textbooks for English studies.

Attila Hajas (Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó) told that CLIL has been around in the Hungarian educational system since the 1980’s. Target languages in CLIL include first and foremost EN, but to some degree also ES, DE, RU, FR and IT. It was stressed that in the bilingual schools the so called normal teaching of subjects is also carried out. Another feature of the Hungarian system is the number of schools for the different minorities living in Hungary. Here the rule is that CLIL is only used in two subjects in total (History and Geography). Also in Hungary there is a lack of qualified teachers, on the other hand the Ministry and other relevant bodies are positive towards the CLIL idea, but are not so willing to offer the resources (i.e. money) needed. Finally Attila Hajas presented the World Language Programme, a specific Hungarian initiative which has initiated bilingual education on a larger scale using the modular approach of CLIL, i.e. not dedicated CLIL classes, but classes learning certain subjects at certain times (as modules). An important obstacle for the development of materials for CLIL is also that the state offers no support for that kind of development, which seems necessary because the market is so limited (still) that a publisher can hardly obtain any profit by developing and selling such materials (click here to see the presentation).

Selja Saarialho (Otava Publishing Company) first explained that there has been some development in the role of CLIL in Finland. Today 5.7% of the schools in Finland organise CLIL teaching in either streams or in modulars, whereas this number was 11% ten years ago. One reason for the decrease is probably in the lack of qualified teachers. In Finland teachers of EN normally will have a qualification in one other language, and not History, Biology or Geography. This may change somewhat in the near future, however. Also there is a shortage of relevant teaching materials, mainly due to the fact that the publishers see no possibility to make profit by developing materials for this limited market. On the other hand CLIL is certainly growing at
Most cases native speakers, but there are also quite many Slovakian teachers with final exams in both a bilingual schools all subjects were taught using the bilingual language are mainly History and Culture. The implementation of CLIL in the traditional sense. This means that the market is very small and does not offer any opportunity for profit for a publisher. Many of the teachers in CLIL are native speakers who have been invited to the Czech Republic.

Saskia Kossak (Veritas Verlag) explained that the Austrian situation is similar to the German one in that CLIL has been in use for many years and that the CLIL approach is still behind most of the foreign language teaching in Austrian schools – in the modular way which means that the language (i.e. English in grades 1 to 4 for example) is taught through the subjects (like History and Geography). After grade 5 the authorities directly encourage the implementation of CLIL, but the problem is the lack of guidelines for the teachers as to how to go about CLIL and also there seems to be no money available for the necessary implementation of CLIL based projects. In addition Saskia Kossak explained there are actually some real bilingual schools in Austria. As regards teacher qualifications it is normal in Austria that teachers finish their education with qualifications in one foreign language and either History or Geography. However, the combination English and Biology (which is really needed for CLIL) simply does not exist. From a publisher’s point of view it is as in other countries obvious that the market is too small to make CLIL publications profitable. On the other hand supplementary materials (for modular use of CLIL) are not only produced by Veritas, but also sold with some profit. As an example a booklet with few pages in EN is used as a supplement to the teaching of History in DE.

Elisabeth Reizer (Gyldendal Undervisning) compared the Norwegian situation regarding CLIL with the Austrian one. Some bilingual projects are running now (15 schools have been selected to introduce CLIL) and have been doing this for more than 6 years now. The target languages for CLIL in Norway are EN in the first place, but also DE and FR. The subjects where CLIL is used include History, Geography, Math and Religion. There are actually teachers in Norway with exams in both EN and Math. As regards materials there are no specific books for CLIL, in some cases books are imported from Great Britain or the USA and then supplemented by glossary lists. The attitude towards CLIL is very positive; for example the students explain that CLIL to them means learning two subjects at the same time. Also they feel much better prepared for university studies or studies abroad when they have taken CLIL education. The main obstacles for a wider implementation of CLIL are the lack of financial support from the authorities and the lack of language competence of the teachers in the ‘hard’ subjects.

Odeta Venckiene (Alma Littera/Šviesa Publishers) based her presentation on the Eurydice report on the situation of bilingual education in Lithuania. A genuine CLIL project (which Alma Littera/Šviesa is involved in along with the British Council) has started in 2002 and will be evaluated next year. The CLIL approach is being implemented in 35 schools across Lithuania with EN as the target language in 31 of the schools, while 2 schools offer FR and 2 schools DE as the target language. The subjects taught through the foreign language are mainly History and Culture.

Maria Tarabkova (Didaktis Publishing House) pointed out that there are many bilingual schools in the Slovak Republic, covering the following foreign target languages: EN, DE, FR, ES and IT. It was stressed that in these bilingual schools all subjects were taught using the bilingual perspective. The teachers of CLIL are in most cases native speakers, but there are also quite many Slovakian teachers with final exams in both a
foreign language and one of the ‘hard’ subjects. As for materials the ‘native’ course books or textbooks are considered too difficult from a language perspective – and they are also often rather expensive. This means there is certainly a need for state support to develop suitable materials for CLIL.

14.00-15.30: Wolfgang Biederstädt (Cornelsen) presented the practice of bilingual teaching in the classroom: A summary of fifteen years CLIL experience
Wolfgang Biederstädt gave a presentation of CLIL in practice from teaching secondary pupils in bilingual classes in Cologne, 67% of the pupils being girls, 33% boys. The pupils for the CLIL classes are selected at the end of grade 4 based on their language and reading abilities – and the wishes of the parents. He first presented the basic principles of CLIL regarding the material (texts, pictures, maps etc.), the tasks (describing, explaining, discussing etc.) and the support (general support being vocabulary, speech functions and subject specific support being classroom discourse, study skills). A more detailed description of the interrelationship between these three main aspects of CLIL were presented and discussed. As an example Wolfgang Biederstädt presented how a lesson in Geography is managed in a bilingual class (please see the presentation for details). Next the contents of some exemplary bilingual books used in CLIL classes in Germany were presented. An important aspect is the difference between the modular approach where CLIL is only used at certain times in the class, and on the other hand the bilingual stream, where lessons in Geography, History and Politics are exclusively done in English. It was also stressed that the stream model needs more lessons allocated to the class than other ‘normal’ classes (details in the presentation). Finally it was pointed out that as regards competencies in listening, reading and writing, several surveys have shown that pupils of bilingual classes have higher scores than pupils from non-bilingual classes (click here to see the presentation).

16.00-17.00: Discussion of CLIL issues and summary of the day
Before the discussion Cedric Sherratt (Cornelsen) presented the new project ‘Hello Europe’ to be published by Cornelsen in 2007. It will be a youth guide to Europe and the EU, and the product will include a workbook (64 pages), access to on-line information (web links, video clips, maps etc.) and a CD-ROM with information and guidelines for the teacher. It is intended that this product be used as a module of 4-6 weeks in CLIL classes (click here to see the presentation).

In the following discussion several topics were introduced. Among the topics were the need for qualified teachers for CLIL teaching, the need to determine exactly what is being tested/evaluated in all the tests taking place across Europe today (not only PISA). Another issue was the question of authenticity in texts from the target culture (i.e. UK or USA), what exactly does make a text authentic - can texts from coursebooks be authentic at all?
One relevant question was also: Is CLIL an approach for the elite? Could one imagine CLIL for everybody? A final point was the fact that it is certainly more demanding both for students and teachers to participate in CLIL learning activities.

Friday 7 April

09.00-10.30: Christiane Kallenbach (Cornelsen) presented the program WordMatch that includes two CD-ROMs (one for beginners, the other for intermediate) for German speakers learning English. The playful program is inspired by the famous Solitaire program (part of Windows since the ‘900’s). The characteristics of the cards have been substituted by the words of German and English, which must then be matched by the user. There are 7 levels of increasing difficulty (based on frequency lists). Furthermore the user can select to be tested in one of more out of ten topics (e.g. leisure time, family, sports, school etc.). The participants all received copies of the CD-ROMs – which are being sold in ‘normal’ bookshops at €9,95. Other languages are in preparation.

Cedric Sherratt (Cornelsen) followed up the giving away session by offering the participants to take away all the books they wanted from a selection of more than 10 books from Cornelsen being used in bilingual education in Germany. After this session everybody’s bag was almost too heavy to carry back to the hotel!

11.00-13.30: Visit to a CLIL History lesson in the 10th grade of the Gustav Heinemann School in Berlin.
When arriving at the campus we were welcomed by the head of the school, Karl Pentzlehn, then offered a 30 minute ‘guided tour’ on the premises. We could feel the open and friendly atmosphere of the school, where famous politicians and celebrities are frequent guests. The students have live connections with
schools in the USA, Australia and Japan, they often make art exhibitions and theatrical performances. At noon we were invited to attend a History lesson in the 10th grade. As the topic was the revision of the post WWII Germany, with the help of cartoon of those times, the students could give a detailed picture of the post-war situation. We could see a good example of CLIL where the content (history) and language acquisition could help each other in a fruitful way. All along the lesson the teacher could mobilise the students in group and project work, and the students could efficiently make use of what they had learned before. The openness of the students as well as their bright ideas and versatile way of approaching the problems also reflected the general atmosphere of the Gustav-Heinemann School, which is on the whole student-oriented, liberal and efficient.

15.00-16.00: Summary and looking ahead. All participants agreed that the conference had been a success in showing the status of CLIL in most European countries and in presenting CLIL in theory and practice. It was agreed, too, that CLIL is growing in many countries, but also that it is not necessarily an approach to be offered the whole population in a country – there is some elitist about it. Finally it was concluded that the future of CLIL in most countries would lie in the modular approach, because the stream model is costly and very demanding for both students and teachers.

As for the next meeting of this network it was suggested that the following topics be considered for further discussion:

- Evaluation of levels in languages, methods to assess the competencies, including self-assessment.
- Standard assessment (national and international) e.g. PISA. Is there a relation between the PISA tests and the actual teaching and learning processes in the schools?
- Joint ventures, i.e. adaptation of textbooks from one country to the other – what are the possibilities and what are the caveats?
- Multimedia in language learning – what are the connections between DVD/CD-ROM based learning and access to and use of on-line materials?

Friday evening Cornelsen Verlag offered all participants to attend an excellent performance of the world famous musical ‘Cabaret’ – which was a breathtaking experience to finish the conference with.

On behalf of all participants I wish to thank all colleagues at Cornelsen, first and foremost Cedric Sherratt, for their big help to make this meeting another successful one in the series of EEPG Language Network meetings.

Preben Späth