

Second medium-term programme of activities 2004-2007

Project D2 – TEMOLAYOLE

Developing teachers of modern languages to young learners

Central workshop report 3/2004

(Graz, Austria, 29 June – 3 July 2004)

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**REPORT ON THE “TEMOLAYOLE” WORKSHOP HELD AT ECML
BETWEEN 29 JUNE AND 3 JULY 2004:**

**HOW FAR PARTICIPANTS GOT
WITH DEVELOPING A RESEARCH PROJECT FOR TEACHERS
OF MODERN LANGUAGES TO YOUNG LEARNERS**

The five-day workshop was the first major event in the life of the four-year TEMOLAYOLE project (for more details see project website at www.ecml.at/mtp2/TEMOLAYOLE). Participants included five members of the project team (Marianne Nikolov (coordinator), Jelena Mihaljevic Djigunovic, Gun Lundberg, Tanya Flanagan, and Marina Mattheioudaki) and representatives from teacher education institutions from 22 countries. Many of them are responsible for training teachers of young learners in pre-service programmes, others in in-service programmes, some of them in both, whereas one of them was a classroom teacher of young learners. Most of them claimed to have the right, opportunity and willingness to contribute to the development of a new syllabus and to implement innovative ideas.

On the first day of the workshop 22 participants registered (including an observer for the day to be replaced by a latecomer from the second day). After Josef Huber's (Deputy Executive Director / Head of Programmes) warm welcome and introduction to ECML, the team introduced the aims, expectations, the schedule for the 5-day workshop of the TEMOLAYOLE project, and the four-year project plan. A short overview of data and issues based on filled in questionnaires was also presented stating that the majority of participants were ideally placed for future networking.

In the next phase, groups were formed according to participants' major roles played in pre-service or in-service teacher education and the target languages and the language used in discussions. Presentations were made in these groups on the tasks set for the workshop based on materials asked for prior to arrival, including a short description of the educational context, the teacher education curriculum, the place, status and content of the syllabuses for teachers of modern languages to young learners.

Participants were expected to present their curriculum and syllabus to their group. Discussions were to focus on currently used curricula, syllabuses, content, procedures, and needs. They were asked to compare curricula and syllabuses along the following questions:

- What do teacher education programmes involve?
- How are theory and practice combined?
- How can in-service teachers be characterised in your context?
- What are their needs in terms of methodology and language?
- What is the role and place of teaching practice in the curriculum?
- What instruments and materials are used for what purposes?
- What research is available on young learners?
- What are the achievement targets?
- What levels do learners actually achieve?

As participants needed longer time to introduce their contexts and the materials they brought with them, the afternoon was also devoted to finding answers to these questions. Some

colleagues brought huge files with plenty of documents, while others prepared handouts and formal presentations. Many of the documents were written in the participants' first language, so a lot of clarification questions were put forward. Although the discussions were meant to focus on a variety of questions, they tended to remain holistic in nature, as participants found many details extremely interesting and needed to find out more about the national contexts. Few materials were brought on bibliography and research. In all the four groups it was hard to direct talk to the actual questions, as participants showed genuine interest in many other areas than those suggested by the list.

As a result, group discussions continued in the afternoon along the general points discussed in the morning, and clarification questions on them, rather than the criteria suggested for the afternoon session. All groups had lively discussions and participants were extremely interested and active. Therefore, the focal points meant for the afternoon workshop were given as guidelines along which groups were to achieve a synthesis of information gained from the workshop sessions for the second day. Groups worked on their preparation of group presentations in plenary until quite late. These focal points included:

- common features across countries;
- features specific to national contexts;
- strengths and weaknesses in each country.

On the second day of the workshop groups presented their findings from their discussions. It was clear that a lot of work had been put into the short summaries which raised a number of further questions. The first part of the afternoon of the second day was devoted to short input sessions delivered by the five team members. The focal points were the following:

- Teachers' and learners' motivation;
- Autonomy in teaching and learning;
- Authenticity and Content and Language Integrated Learning;
- Assessment of processes and outcomes;
- Reflective practice.

During the second part of the afternoon participants discussed the issues related to the presentations and their relationship to their specific institutional contexts.

On the third day participants continued their work in four groups focusing on ideas explored on the previous day. Interestingly, all groups voiced their wish to go back to a more descriptive discussion of the syllabuses and other materials brought to the workshop. As there was a lot of interest in the actual content areas in the curricula and syllabuses, the morning was devoted to in-depth explorations of such questions. Participants found these content points the most exciting and their discussions took longer than originally envisaged. They seemed to be more involved in the exchange of ideas along their own needs than in the more analytical approach promoted by the team members. The lively group discussions continued in the second session of the morning and allowed groups to transfer what they found out into areas/components in the draft syllabus at a later stage. Similarly to the previous day, content areas were considered a high priority and less attention was paid to techniques, tasks for students, readings, and assessment instruments. During the afternoon participants explored Graz.

The fourth day was devoted to group work on what participants accomplished on the previous day. Although the small groups were to be rearranged, only a bigger group split up into two smaller ones, while the others decided to continue in their original groups. Focal points for the follow-up presentations included: methodology course content; practicum; bibliography; task

types for students; assessment tasks for courses. Each group presented their findings in plenary in sessions of 15 minutes followed by questions. During the afternoon sessions groups reflected on what participants had brought with them in the light of discussions in the workshop. They also started to design the draft version of a future syllabus they would expect to be able to implement fully or partly in the long run. Some tried to identify the most appropriate readings to be covered in a course for teachers of young learners. Towards the end of the day all groups worked on the computer to prepare their presentations for the whole group on the last day.

In the first two-hour block of the last workshop day each group presented their drafts prepared on the basis of their discussions and the guidelines they received on day three. They distributed a short handout including the guiding headings from previous input and workshop sessions as well as presented their documents orally. There was a lot of agreement on the actual content points, though the way of organisation and the sequence of the items varied. Most of the efforts had been put into what content areas a draft syllabus should contain. Less emphasis was put on other items on the list of ideas concerning task types, suggested readings, and instruments. The latter was thought to be of less importance at this stage. A number of new items were added to useful websites.

The last session of the day focused on discussions of suggestions on how the project should continue and how participants envisaged their roles. This last session was followed by the oral and written evaluation of the 5-day workshop. After this Adrian Butler, Executive Director of the ECML, said good bye to all participants and the project team evaluated the workshop and updated the schedule in the light of the results.

As a follow up to the workshop, an article was written and appendices were added. This long document was sent to all participants. The most important outcome of the workshop is a draft of what participants considered to be essential to include in a syllabus. As a follow up, participants volunteering to continue networking will submit their own components of the syllabus along clearly defined criteria by the end of October 2004.