Plurilingual School and University Curricula

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Abstract

This contribution introduces plurilingual curricula as a development tool geared both to linking up the curricula of individual languages and fostering cross-linkages between language and content subject curricula. This approach represents a solid fundament for tertiary language didactics and can also supply a common foundation for school and university language learning policies and relevant school-university cooperation projects. The principle underlying (genuinely!) plurilingual university courses based on research and featuring a doubly multilingual didactic approach is explored. This is followed by discussion of the scope and design of a new research project accompanying the implementation of a plurilingual curriculum at a school in Liechtenstein.

Keywords: Plurilingual Learning Policy; Doubly Multilingual Languages Didactics; Plurilingual Whole School Curriculum; Factor Model of Multiple Language Learning

Аннотация

Данное исследование представляет многоязычные учебные программы в качестве инструмента развития, направленного как на увязку учебных программ по отдельным языкам, так и на поощрение перекрестных связей между учебными планами по языку и предметному содержанию. Этот подход представляет собой прочную основу для дидактики языка высшего образования, а также может обеспечить общую основу для школьной и университетской политики изучения языка и соответствующих проектов сотрудничества школы и университета. Исследуется принцип, лежащий в основе (действительно!) многоязычных университетских курсов, основанных на исследованиях и использующих двуязычный дидактический подход. Затем следует обсуждение масштабов и дизайна нового исследовательского проекта, сопровождающего внедрение многоязычной учебной программы в школе в Лихтенштейне.

Plurilingual School and University Curricula

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we introduce a broadly defined plurilingual learning policy that can both support the teaching and learning of tertiary languages in schools and universities and supply conceptual underpinnings for school-university cooperation projects. We explore the principle underlying (genuinely!) plurilingual university courses utilizing a doubly multilingual didactic approach, following the principles of tertiary language didactics as well as targeting plurilingual proficiency, before going on to discuss research-based curriculum and course development in the context of our new research project at a school in Liechtenstein.

Our first example of a plurilingual curriculum illustrates the advantages of a research-based plurilingual curriculum in the university context. Drawing on a multilingually oriented needs analysis, we show that multilingual communication situations require different and additional competences vis-à-vis monolingual communication in foreign languages. This is significant for curriculum development; monolingually oriented language curricula can evidently only partially meet these competence needs. Our second example describes a research project designed to support and track the implementation of a plurilingual curriculum in a school. This cooperation project linking a school and a university is an example of productive dialog between school-based and university-based stakeholders and for a conceptual link between a school and a university project.

PRINCIPLES OF PLURILINGUAL CURRICULA

The Model

Plurilingual curricula in both schools and universities have been conceived in response to the necessity and the desire to erode the monolingual habitus, enable fair multilingual and multicultural learning communities (see Gogolin, 2005). They avoid creating English only environments (without abandoning English), and equip learners with strategies for learning more language and more languages more effectively and efficiently—with the objective of not only reaching the European L1 + 2 target (Commission of the European Communities, 2005). They also foster the ability to use more languages, to juggle them, switch between them readily, use them in ways that are appropriate to specific contexts and situations. Learners become aware of all this and capable of influencing these processes and making them fertile for content subjects.

Plurilingual curricula are, to begin with, a component in educational policy development at schools and universities, one that is highly relevant for diverse education providers catering for varied age groups at various qualification levels. Schools in Western countries have already been confronted for some time (and this will continue in the immediate future) with the challenges involved in enrolling, teaching and integrating refugees, and this means that additional heritage languages and cultural traditions now need to be taken account of in subject curricula. Universities are in a similar position. They are also increasingly pursuing greater internationalization

strategically and striving to open up their institutes to participants from beyond national borders, not only to ensure that research and researchers can move freely and to promote intensive scholarly exchange, but also with the aim of enticing more so-called international students to complete at least part of their studies at the institution. All too often, universities in this position fail to break free from the paradigm of English. University staff frequently assume tacitly (or even expressly!) that candidates who lack skills in the national language(s) spoken at a university must necessarily have mastered English to a level enabling them to successfully take programs provided through English. This assumption is often wide of the mark. Not all refugees who are interested in or are already pursuing degree programs have a grasp of English. Quite a few of them have instead learned French. Having learned French as a prior foreign language, for example, or having been taught through the medium of French is often much more helpful for learning German (as the environmental language and the language of a university) than prior knowledge of English (Bartelheimer et al., 2017, 2018; Fischer & Hufeisen, 2010, 2012).
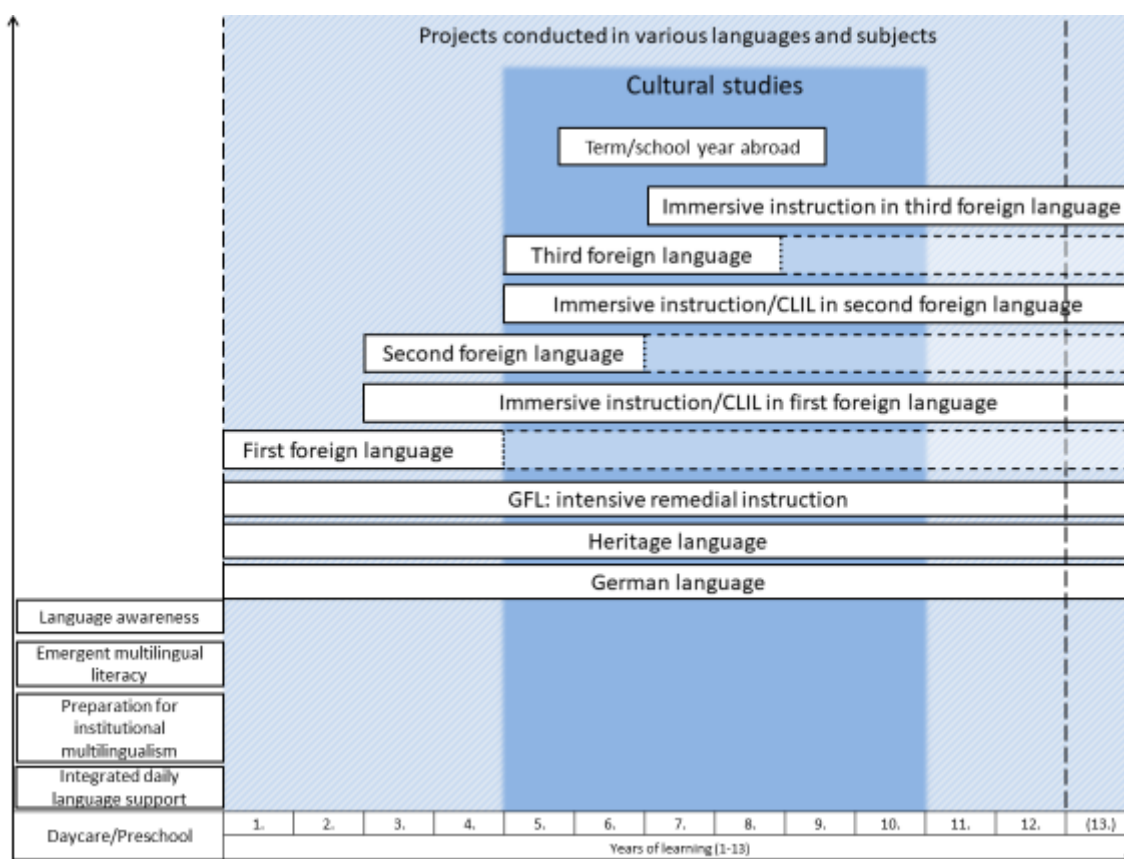

Figure 1. Plurilingual whole school policy (taken from Hufeisen, 2018a, p. 142)

At the next level, plurilingual curricula are a useful planning tool. How and where can languages and subject content be linked? What cross-linguistic and cross-disciplinary content is particularly suitable? What cooperation paths do teachers need to bestride? In schools, the process can be relatively straightforward. Options can include

the bilingual teaching of content subjects, consistent translanguaging, and project weeks that take in multiple subjects and languages, ideally in work groups from various classes and ages. This is fundamentally also true for university-based learning in subject-oriented language and communication courses flanking students' core subjects. It bears recalling in this context that for example, double degree programs at German universities that also lead to degree awards by Italian universities naturally integrate the learning of Italian into the respective programs and ideally also provide some program-specific courses taught in Italian, for example by rotating visiting lecturers from Italy. Students taking a degree in Finland that incorporates the languages of French and German may naturally travel to countries where these languages are spoken and use them to communicate, so that English is not the main language they need while there.

The heritage languages of refugees and of other people with migrant backgrounds can be systematically integrated into a prototypical plurilingual curriculum in several different places: learners who are recent arrivals should be offered both intensive training in the community language and language maintenance opportunities that enable them to continue developing their heritage language(s) and culture(s). Culturally sensitive educational practices support the development of multilingual identities. Culturally sensitive bilingual and multilingual identities can thus form, and with them the ability to operationalize and assess facts, developments, and processes in all the languages in one's personal repertoire which are of significance in specific contexts (see the concept of the dominant language constellation proposed by Aronin, 2016; 2019; Lo Bianco & Aronin, 2020) in a fashion that allows speakers to consciously make appropriate communicative choices.

The ongoing integration of specific heritage languages into the subjects taught can be achieved by systematic language teaching and translanguaging (see Dietrich-Grappin, 2017); this ensures that concepts acquired are also accessible via the heritage languages. This can be flanked by political decisions to provide for and support heritage languages as curricular foreign languages in response to need and demand and to afford non-heritage speakers opportunities to learn these languages.

At the most concrete level of actual teaching and learning, finally, all the languages present in a specific learning group are included in teaching— both in situational, improvised ways and in a planned and systematic fashion. In the third part of this contribution, we will examine specific examples at this level (see also Hufeisen, 2019; and Hufeisen & Schlabach, 2018).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The ideas on plurilingual curricula discussed here and the original prototype (Hufeisen, 2011; 2018a; Hufeisen & Jessner, 2009) have the factor model of multiple language learning 2.0 (Hufeisen, 2018b; Hufeisen & Jessner, 2019) as their theoretical basis. With its foreign language learning factors, this model highlights the interactions between foreign languages that make learners more practiced with each new foreign language and allow them to perfect their learning strategies and to recognize and exploit the potential of the affordances at their disposal (Kordt, 2018a; 2018b). From the acquisition of an L3 on, these affordances are particularly well developed and permit

learning that uses synergies not present before this point. Herdina & Jessner, 2002, in their Dynamic Model of Multilingualism, define this as the "M-factor".

The concept of bridge languages, familiar from the debate on intercomprehension, is also interesting from the perspective of language acquisition theory in this regard. Genetically related languages appear to act as a helpful bridge to additional languages, making for a deeper and more intensive learning process and supplying strategies that make receptive communication easier (EuroComRom, Klein & Stegmann, 2000; Slavonic Intercomprehension, Tafel, 2009; EuroComGerm, Hufeisen & Marx, 2014). This approach has been successfully applied and researched in both second level teaching/lower secondary education (Kordt, 2015) and university language courses (Behrend, 2016). However, its main focus has been on language contexts—albeit with texts taken from other fields and in principle from any field—and less emphasis has been placed on cross-disciplinary learning and on combining the teaching and learning of languages and content subjects, or on content and languages integrated learning. In addition, little research on the application of this approach to language families other than those mentioned above has appeared.

School leavers who have experienced multilingual and multicultural schools are likely to expect to encounter equally open and plurilingual learning environments in the next phase of their education or training. The following section takes a closer look at one project from each level.

PROJECTS

One university-based project and one school-based project pursuing related research-based plurilingual curriculum development approaches are introduced in this section. Both projects involve education providers that are open to adopting innovative approaches to language teaching (moving beyond monolingually oriented courses) and to developing and delivering wider curricular changes.

Plurilingual Business Communication at Turku School of Economics

Background conditions for language learning

Languages have traditionally been a strong priority at the Turku School of Economics (TSE) in Finland. The Finnish economy is, after all, strongly globalized and enterprises need staff who can communicate with business partners in multiple languages. This requirement is reflected in the learning goal that graduates should be able to communicate in multiple languages by the end of their programs. In addition to the two national languages, Finnish and Swedish, students also learn two foreign languages (selected from English, German, Spanish, French, Russian, Italian, Chinese and Japanese) in language and business communication courses that mostly cover topics of relevance to their studies. Most of these language courses are still monolingually oriented and lay foundations for other courses of the type described below that act as a necessary supplement to these monolingual courses by transcending and overcoming the limitations of multiple monolingualism.

Language needs analysis

The development and design of the plurilingual courses has been based on a didactically oriented language needs analysis conducted using a research instrument with a proven track record in language for specific purposes (LSP) teaching (Huhta et al., 2013). The language needs analysis, conducted by Eeva Boström and Joachim Schlabach, has been designed to examine and capture the competences and skills needed for successful communication in multilingual settings. The focus on empirically determined competences in future working environments is a central step in the development of competence-oriented language curricula. An online survey of 214 graduates of the International Business program who now work in international business contexts provided a starting point. The study initially set out to ascertain the extent to which plurilingualism is relevant for professionals in enterprises that operate internationally and to identify competence descriptors that are relevant for fostering plurilingual proficiency. TSE graduates routinely use two, three or four languages simultaneously at work, although the specific language combinations vary; combinations involving English are common. Their attitudes toward multilingualism are generally very positive. They almost all enjoy handling multilingual situations and believe that multilingualism promotes efficient communication. Most of them reject the statement that mastering English alone is enough. They believe that switching languages is a distinctive feature of plurilingual communication and being able to switch fluently between languages is a key skill. Typical challenges include the difficulty of finding the right word and interference between languages, especially between closely related languages and languages users have lesser proficiency in. Plurilingual affordances can be drawn on to overcome these challenges. The respondents give some indication of the challenges and opportunities they experience in multilingual situations. The search for the right word, for example, can be rapidly circumvented by code switching, brief switches into another language. Transfer between closely related languages helps people understand utterances in languages they have not learned. And mediation makes it possible to resolve comprehension issues by providing descriptions or explanations in another language (see Schlabach, 2017 for a more detailed account).

The main result of this analysis has been that the learning objective of plurilingual proficiency can now be defined, with teaching and learning praxis at the TSE in mind, as follows:

> Plurilingual proficiency describes the skill of communicating in three or more languages and includes language switching, code switching, mediation and transfer as integral components. These cross-language activities form the bridge between the different languages used. They can be taught and learned as skills and deployed as communicative strategies in multilingual situations (Henning & Schlabach, 2018, p. 119, our translation).

The development of "MONI courses"

On the basis of the needs analysis and consideration of relevant models for learning multiple languages (see, *inter alia*, Hufeisen, 2010, 2018b), a new language

subject was created at TSE, *Monikielinen yritysviestintä | Multilingual business communication* (see also www.utu.fi/tse-multilingual). The courses in this subject are those language learning offers which basically have two or more languages as their learning content and also employ them as working and teaching language. These courses are geared more to bridging the gap between languages than to additively developing new skills in each individual language. Multilingualism is the prerequisite for and the objective pursued in these courses, and the approach adopted is doubly multilingual: students connect the multiple monolingual competences they have acquired prior to taking the course and acquire plurilingual skills and strategies as they practice using multiple languages at the same time. Tried and tested approaches in multilingual didactics such constructing and using transfer bridges (see for instance Hufeisen & Marx, 2014) and fostering multilingual awareness (see Allgäuer-Hackl 2020) are deployed to help learners build on skills they have already acquired in several individual languages by networking them. However, learners also develop the skills needed to cope with complex tasks demanding the use of two, three or more languages in realistic multilingual situations. Several can-do statements offering a peek into this didactic laboratory are listed below. These specific individual learning objectives link day-to-day teaching practice with the wider goal being pursued.

The can-do statements below represent a selection of the descriptors used in a bilingual German/Swedish course:

- *Language switching:*
  Can switch fluently between the languages of German and Swedish in a conversation.
  Can speak Language A while giving a presentation that has slides in Language B.
- *Code switching*:
  Can switch to another suitable language for a small part of an utterance (a word or group of words), for example to cope with difficulties in finding the right word.
- *Mediation*:
  Can give an oral summary in Language B (German, for example) of audio content heard in Language A (Swedish, for example) or written content in Language A.
  Can use language B to interpret and describe reliably the main information on a complex chart in language A and additionally take questions in language C.
- *Transfer*:
  Can recognize linguistic similarities in, say, German and Swedish texts and use them to boost their comprehension and their active production (cf. Hufeisen & Marx, 2014).

Assessment

Designing assessment procedures for plurilingual learning content poses a challenge. As a rule, assessment criteria are derived from the can-do statements and supplemented by qualitative characterizations of fluency (e.g., hesitant or fluid language

switching), communicative success (e.g., the mediation succeeds in few/some/all aspects) and flexibility (e.g., an activity could be tackled spontaneously/after preparation) so that various levels can be depicted in a grid. All courses at TSE are continuously evaluated and developed further. Individual aspects are examined in research conducted in parallel with the courses.

Evaluation at TSE has established that the plurilingual courses work well and that students value the opportunity to boost their communication skills in two or three languages with the minimal time investment a single course demands. It appears that the conventional monolingual orientation of teaching and the pursuit of monolingual interaction can be overcome. Plurilingual courses are, however, a product in need of explanation. As they break with the familiar pattern of learning one language at a time, their usefulness may not be immediately apparent to students browsing through lists of language courses. This needs to be countered by promoting these courses actively. Experiences to date have demonstrated, however, that students are quite open to the idea of courses fostering plurilingual and efficient communication and that skeptical or nervous reactions are more likely to come from language teachers who may feel uneasy at the prospect of integrating additional languages into their teaching. Further courses featuring new language combinations and different subject matter are already in planning and will include some low-threshold introductory courses (see Kursiša & Schlabach, forthcoming, for more details).

The language subject *Multilingual business communication* is now part of the general range of language and communication courses provided at TSE. It has been formally incorporated into the curriculum as a complementary subject. The project described in the next section is, by contrast, still at an early stage in its development. It is, again, a curricular development project that expressly includes a research component. It also aims to incorporate approaches pioneered in and experiences gained from the university project.

Plurilingual Competences for the Plurilingual Curriculum at the *formatio Privat Schule*

The school development project that has begun at the *formatio private school* in Triesen in the Principality of Liechtenstein aims to introduce a plurilingual curriculum, initially in the secondary school *Oberstufengymnasium*, the branch of the school covering the final four years of secondary education, and later in the school as a whole. A cooperation project with *Technische Universität Darmstadt (Germany)*, *formatio·plurilingual·digital*, is supporting this implementation process and undertaking concomitant research. The research project outlined below sets out to secure the lasting success of the new curriculum and its delivery by investigating and ascertaining the plurilingual competences that are relevant for plurilingual learning within the school's plurilingual curriculum. Background parameters with an influence on the school's development and the scope and design of the concomitant research are introduced below and will be followed by a discussion of the outlook for the implementation of the new curriculum.

The background

Successful school development projects are implemented at the individual school level and appear to be especially effective when teaching staff and school management are involved in decision-making processes, the administrative and organizational parameters are conducive to achieving change, and the process includes training directly linked to teaching (Rolff, 2007). The background situation at the *formatio private school* is largely favorable for successful school development. With its location in the Principality of Liechtenstein, the school is embedded in a society and an economy structured around international exchanges. As a private school, the school is flexible but also compelled to compete against other schools. It follows that it has every reason to strive for continual quality improvement and make ongoing adaptations to meet the changing expectations of pupils and stakeholders. Unlike public schools in Austria and Germany, this private school enjoys more freedom to shape its own curriculum. Its small size makes it organizationally agile and flexible. The school draws on various syllabi and examination requirements at different educational stages and fulfills certain curricular and examination requirements (including the Austrian *Central Matura* as a school leaving examination, for example), not least in order to retain its status as an Austrian school abroad (*österreichische Auslandsschule*) in Liechtenstein. In the principles referenced on the school website, the school places emphasis on an open-minded outlook and mutual respect, a learning environment free of fear, a focus on performance, and entrepreneurial thinking and action (http://www.formatio.li/ueber-uns/prinzipien.html).

Regarding multilingualism, specifically, it is noteworthy that the school has focused on languages since its foundation. From primary school on, the entire school is bilingual (German and English) and three further typical tertiary languages (French, Spanish and Latin) are added as students progress to upper secondary education. Language teaching is supplemented by international exchange programs and external language certificates. Various other languages or language varieties, such as regional dialects or the heritage languages of students with migration backgrounds, play various roles. The introduction of cross-linguistic teaching tools including team teaching, bilingual lessons, a common grammar terminology, and a multilingual vocabulary has already begun.

The school development project *formatio·plurilingual·digital* is quite an extensive reform program and seeks not only to introduce a plurilingual curriculum, but also to incorporate the delivery of twenty-first century competences following the VUCA paradigm (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity, see Mack et al., 2016). The project is funded by the school maintaining body and coordinated by school management. The teachers at the *Oberstufengymnasium* level are actively involved, as is an external coordinator of continuing professional development who organizes concomitant training. Research into the success factors that are relevant for the school development project is being pursued based on the evaluated approach at TSE (see above) from multiple angles with a strong focus on the introduction and ongoing development of the plurilingual curriculum.

Research design and the role of language needs analysis

The research project accompanying the introduction of the plurilingual curriculum at *formatio* has started with a systemic analysis of the given parameters and is proceeding on the basis of two assumptions that will be discussed below with reference to the university development project already presented above and to the specific conditions at the school. Organizational change in school development projects has been shown to be more likely to succeed when the project scope and design is adapted to match local organizational conditions (Rolff, 2007). The question thus naturally arises as to how well the categories of the plurilingual curriculum match the categories of the school curriculum teachers are already working toward? Do the approaches taken in the university project and introduced in section 4.1 above offer any pointers as to how a better fit to local conditions could be achieved? In the specific context of schools, it can be assumed that tests and examinations at the conclusion of school careers influence schools, teachers, learners and teaching. In light of this washback effect (McKinley & Thompson, 2018; Stadler & Hinger, 2018), the question presents itself as to how a curriculum oriented toward processes and language policy considerations can also incorporate categories and suggestions at the product level of learning objectives and examination formats. This category level is one of central importance for schools. The *formatio private school* has a strong performance orientation and students acquire competences that are documented through the Austrian *Matura*, a competence-based school leaving examination. Against this background, the conclusion has been reached that the project design should ensure that the results of plurilingual learning can be documented in pupils' final examination results to ensure the successful introduction of the curriculum oriented toward plurilingual learning and enable its delivery to be sustainable over time.

The research project thus needs to develop learning objectives based on the given learning conditions that can lead to a qualification being awarded at the end of the plurilingual curriculum. As the school is performance-oriented and values entrepreneurial thinking and action as well as a cosmopolitan outlook, the design used at the Turku School of Economics appears to provide an obvious model. The preparation of a plurilingual needs analysis adapted to local and regional conditions constitute a logical departure point. The results of needs analyses can serve as a basis for curriculum development, not least because of their usefulness for defining learning goals and objectives (Brown, 1995) and specific can-do statements describing these objectives in greater detail. It is envisaged that a needs analysis capturing and describing the effective plurilingual competence students will require in their anticipated living, learning, and working environments will facilitate the introduction and anchoring of plurilingual competence as a powerful concept. An investigation targeting former and current students, parents, stakeholders in regional enterprises and organizations, and experts in the field of schools development and plurilingualism is expected to yield a plurilingual profile for graduates from the school that can then be used to didactically elaborate a definition of plurilingual proficiency and establish a learning goal. Several research questions could be pursued in this context, for instance:

- What multilingual situations will the graduates of the school encounter in their current or future living, learning and working environments?

- What language competences do they need to handle these situations effectively?
- What are the competences that could support their future learning, both generally and specifically in relation to learning additional languages?

The study is being guided by the expectations of stakeholders in the cooperation project, the results of previous research on multilingualism in the region (Lavric, 2008; Lavric & Bäck, 2009; Lüdi et al., 2016), and the work mentioned above. Regional studies have indicated, among other results, that situations encountered at work and during education and training often involve plurilingual communication and that this can take quite diverse forms.

Implementation

The introduction of a new plurilingual language subject is currently being prepared. It will initially be introduced in the *Oberstufengymnasium*, a stage at which all the individual languages have already been introduced. The main emphasis in this subject will be on networking the individual languages in multiple competence domains: knowledge (*savoir*), skills (*savoir-faire*), attitudes (*savoir être*) and learning skills (*savoir-apprendre*) as general competences of language learners or users (Council of Europe, 2001). The planned learning content reflects plurilingual strategies such as those reflected in the EuroCom models (Hufeisen & Marx, 2014; Kordt, 2018a) and such proven multilingual teaching approaches as encouraging reflection on languages and language learning and fostering metalinguistic and interlinguistic awareness (Allgäuer-Hackl, 2020). These approaches will be supplemented by content designed around situations involving plurilingual language use with the goal of developing plurilingual competences derived from the plurilingual profile.

With the plurilingual profile and the descriptions of plurilingual competences from the language needs analysis as a fundament, can-do descriptors for various plurilingual activities and strategies can then be tailored to topics chosen by teachers and didactically elaborated for use in the delivery of this plurilingual language subject. The next step will be to supplement these descriptors with qualitative characterizations and recast them as assessment criteria that can, in turn, be used to design assessment procedures both for continuous assessment in the new language course and for its final assessment as an extra subject complementing the *Matura* examination.

THE WIDER OUTLOOK

Both projects described here demonstrate how the traditional model of providing multiple monolingually oriented language learning opportunities can be transcended and a plurilingual curriculum that considers all the languages present and provides plurilingual learning offerings can be put in place. The first project, as a university project, was already anchored in an establishment with the ambition to continuously redevelop its curriculum on the basis of research. Language courses accompanying students' core university subjects also have the advantage of being largely unrestricted by syllabus requirements, textbooks and other didactic constraints.

Plurilingual approaches have also been employed in CLIL-courses for engineering students. At Tampere University in Finland, a hybrid course (incorporating both contact

and online teaching) is offered for advanced learners of German from various technical disciplines which uses both German and English, and even Finnish and Swedish to a certain extent. The pedagogical focus in this course is on the reception and production of specialist subjects, which the students process by alternating languages and mediating meaning using both German and English. Instructors use various methodological approaches, such as preparing course material to improve receptive skills with the aid of DeepL (an online translation service), while productive skills are practice during plurilingual workshops (described in detail in Rehwagen, 2020).

The second project enjoys a similar degree of leeway and is also supported by research, not least the concomitant research enabled by the cooperation project linking this school development project with a university. The formatio private school could be characterized as belonging to the efficiency type—unlike most state schools, which can more usually be categorized as belonging to the bureaucratic type (Schmid et al., 2007). As such, it is autonomous and open to outside influences and can be expected to implement the plurilingual curriculum successfully in its entirety. It appears highly likely that the project will prove successful and sustain this success over time, not least because of the concomitant research component, and that it will thus be able to serve as a pilot illustrating how plurilingual curricula could, with adaptations, also be introduced at other schools.

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