

## WORKSHOP REPORT

DATE 11 APRIL, 2014

### Conclusions

#### Information contributed by participants:

##### Language teaching and learning: quality

- The difference between learning and teaching, must be considered as a guide to learning
- Learning a language usually arises from necessity in the broadest sense, mother tongue, emigration, survival, etc.
- Often, the teaching is initiated by 'the other', for example students are taught French at school, but have no immediate purpose for its use.
- Motivation is central to teaching and learning
- Ownership is also a key component to motivation
- Formal and informal settings must be balanced for all language learning
- The case of educational funding in Ireland is not very equitable, thus everyone just looks out for themselves. The conclusion of this is that 'those who pay play'

## Foreign Language learning in Ireland (the case of French language)

- Ireland, is the sole country in Europe where learning a foreign language is not compulsory as part of the national curriculum
- Dublin has the third biggest Alliance in Europe after Paris and Brussels
- 4000 students per annum learn French in one of the 5 Alliances in the country
- There has been a drop of 12% in a 11 year period in the number of students taking French at Leaving Certificate (25 600 students in 2013 ie 48.4%; German: 12.6%; Spanish: 9.3% and Italian 0.3%)
- The Alliance has experienced a sharp drop of enrolment after 2010. A plateau effect between 2011 and today was followed by another drop in the demand for general courses in our premises in Kildare street.
- At the same time, the Alliance has seen a 25% increase for Corporate language course following a strong marketing campaign on the importance of French as a key language for business.
- In summary, it seems that the public has changed drastically after the fall of the Celtic Tiger. In accordance with this, the Alliance is adapting its offer to the audience needs that went from a leisure like training (for personal reasons) to a more business orientated learning experience.

## Language learning and ICT : innovation

- ICT integration into education is still quite a challenging task for many educational organisations, especially in the primary and secondary schools and to some extent in third level institutions.
- The main challenges faced by centres are their 'readiness' to integrate ICT into teaching and learning in terms of:
  - Having policies in place
  - Involvement of all interested parties
  - Vision and Leadership
  - Training and CPD
  - Infrastructure
  - Technical support
- Training and CPD (Continuous Professional Development) has proved to be one of the most effective ways of integrating ICT. A carefully designed training course based around the needs of staff and organisations as well as individual needs gives quite good results. Although this process can be slow, a group and one-to-one based approach can yield great results in equipping staff with the knowledge, expertise and confidence in using ICT tools for teaching and even for everyday life. An individual who has ICT skills within the organisation/s can be an important asset to the organisation. While integrating ICT in teaching might appear as though it requires significant human resources, the 'return on investment' can be quiet high.

- The main obstacle in ICT integration is the resistance of some staff, mainly due to fear and lack of confidence in using technology. One way of overcoming this issue is working with those individuals towards solving their reticence. Another way is concentrating on the other staff, who are early adopters of ICT, and can demonstrate how they do it and what they achieve in teaching and learning through real life examples. Their example could encourage interest in other staff members.
- In terms of ICT and languages, the scope is huge and the list can be quiet long. Language is an area with huge potential of development through ICT, whether it is visual, aural or oral, the tools here are endless. Starting with ordinary everyday PC usage of standard applications through to online resources, interactive resources to personal digital devices like tablets and smart phones. Once the teacher or the student have a good understanding of the IT tools and how to use them, they can adapt them for their individual teaching and learning needs.

Two examples from a secondary school in Dublin, Ireland, could illustrate the advantage of integrating IT into teaching:

- 1) A science teacher created podcasts with her teacher notes and slides using Apple's Keynote and she uploaded to iTunes, in order to help students that had difficulties writing or seeing the projector screen. By listening to the voiceover the notes and seeing the slides on their laptops they were able to catch up with the other students.
- 2) A Spanish language teacher with very little usage of ICT in her teaching heard about the previous example and after a short training adopted this

method in her teaching and created assignments where students needed to create homework via Podcasts (recording their voice and creating slides based on specific topics). Students had to create those and then critically assess themselves by hearing and seeing themselves (video also was recorded). This helped them see what their spoken skills were as well as the written and grammar skills. Moreover, students also learned how to create slideshows and podcasts, which taught them some ICT skills.

3) Another example was provided by an English teacher. He asked students to write poems via tweets and Twitter which were limited to 140 characters. In order to do this, students had to be very inventive and creative. They were also asked to share and re-tweet their own poems and those of other classmates. In this way, students not only learned poetry and history of poetry but also as they carried research they learned social media skills and enhanced their capacity to share.

- There is good/innovative practice in schools but the teachers aren't "broadcasting" their efforts/achievements or looking for ELL recognition.
- Innovation can take many forms and they are not all "digitally" based. However, social media allows to keep up-to-date with current thinking on a range of topics worldwide.
- Twitter might be used to schedule discussions on a range of topics relevant to participants across a geographically dispersed audience.

Participation in webinars also provides this opportunity. Twitter allows for a "stream of consciousness" while Webinars tend to be "show and tell" events. There is no reason why the two systems couldn't be used simultaneously/concurrently. The most successful digital events usually involve a presentation followed by Q&A discussion.

- It was clear from the NELLIP event that there is still a perception that using IT in an educational context is perceived to be "risky" from many points of view. There is a technical risk (it doesn't work). There is teacher reputational risk (I might come across as a clown as I can't turn on the PC). It doesn't help the student pass the state exam.
- Acknowledging the risks is important but it should also be noted that the benefits to the learner can be far more empowering. Even if a project goes pear-shaped, the lessons from failure can be far more useful than doing nothing at all.
- The lessons of "failure" are very powerful (and especially in a language learning context).
- It would be useful to video record the ELL presentations, which could then be shared to wider audiences. I thought both participants workshop highlighted the rewards and benefits very clearly that attaining ELL status accrued to them personally and professionally. The elevation of their status, thereby giving them a greater chance to implementing/innovating further within their respective organisations.

### Recommendations: Promoting European Language Label

- (1) Using digital tools will allow those from outside of Dublin to participate in the workshops organised by NELLIP
- (2) Attendance at teachers' conferences and other national teaching events could help to promote Nellip/ELL.
- (3) NELLIP could benefit from the creation of a LinkedIn group and a twitter discussion forum either locally or internationally.
  
- (4) Primary, second and third-level sectors already have their own "platforms" (conferences, events, associations). If NELLIP is to develop relationships with these mainstream groups, the project needs to make itself known (by possibly participating at these events initially) and show teachers how to participate in ELL.