



“The Impact of the European Language Label on Quality in Language Learning”

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Report



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Report on NELLIP Round Table

On Friday 16 November 2012, in the framework of the International Conference “ICT for Language Learning – 5th Edition” held in Florence, the Round Table “The Impact of the European Language Label on Quality in Language Learning” took place. The Round Table was organized in the framework of the NELLIP project, the Network of European Language Labelled Initiatives, funded by the European Commission - Lifelong Learning Programme – KA2.

The Round Table was organized into four thematic sessions:

- 1) The role of the European Language Label in fostering quality in language education
- 2) Multilingualism, analysis of the current state of the art in Europe and role of the European Language Label.
- 3) Innovative language learning approaches based on new technologies, how the European Language Label supports them.
- 4) 2012, European Survey on Language Competences, Analysis of its results and plans for future actions in the framework of the European Language Label.

Lorenza Venturi, the manager in charge of the European Language Label at Indire, Italian National Agency for the Lifelong Learning Programme, moderated the Round Table on “The Impact of the European Language Label on Quality in Language Learning”.

Lorenza Venturi opened the Round Table introducing the European Language Label.

Lorenza Venturi explained that the European Language Label was originally designed to encourage new initiatives in the field of teaching and learning languages, to reward new techniques in language teaching, to spread the knowledge of their existence and thereby promote good practice. Encouraging high quality in language learning, the European Language Label plays a key role in recognizing, rewarding and giving national and international profile to projects that are innovative and effective in motivating language learners and highlighting new possibilities and new ways for teachers to support language learning. In her speech, Lorenza Venturi briefly explained the recent activities carried out in the framework of the European Language Label with a specific focus on the European Language Label of the Labels Awards’ official ceremony held in Limassol (Cyprus) on 27 September 2012. On this occasion, five projects, which had shown outstanding performance in promoting the teaching and learning of languages, were awarded the first “European Language Label of the Labels Awards”. Representatives for three of five of the awarded projects attended the Round Table. They are:

1. CMC_E Communicating in Multilingual Contexts meets the Enterprise (Italy)
2. EuroIntegrELP. (Romania)
3. EuroCatering Language Training (Belgium)





Thematic area 1: The role of the European Language Label in fostering quality in language education

The first thematic area was opened by **Richard Rossner**, representing EAQUALS, the association of language education providers which is itself dedicated to fostering and developing quality in the field. EAQUALS is one of the partners involved in the NELLIP network.

Richard Rossner began by reminding participants of the objectives of the NELLIP project, focusing on the fostering of quality in language education projects. He then referred to definitions of quality in the literature which see quality as a customer judgement. In language education it is the learners as customers who will consciously or unconsciously decide whether a learning experience is high quality and meets or, even better, exceeds their needs. Quality in language education includes enabling learners and teachers to achieve positive outcomes such as better preparation for the world of work, professional development for teachers, greater awareness, positive attitudes to diversity etc. Some ways of doing this include, for example: moving beyond the walls of the classroom and the covers of the textbook; bringing youngsters and adults into situations where the language really needs to be used; forging new opportunities for communication and understanding in the local community and internationally; building on the ideas of others; promoting plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. The research done by those working on the NELLIP project so far indicates that a large majority of projects receiving the Language Label across all sectors have fostered and contributed to higher quality in one or more of these ways. Thus the Language Label fosters high quality by recognizing and rewarding projects that are innovative and effective, and by highlighting new possibilities and new ways for teachers to support language learning, and for learners to develop their skills.

The second speech was given by **Alan Bruce**, Director of Universal Learning Systems, an international consultancy firm specializing in research, education, training and project management. Universal Learning Systems is one of the partners involved in the NELLIP network.

According to Alan Bruce, there are several factors that explain the contemporary emphasis placed on quality in language training and teaching. Determining quality has to do with standards, outcomes, methods and attainments. It also addresses the strategic purpose of language education, the need for multilingualism and the necessity to ensure standards amid an "ICT tsunami". Above all, quality is about maintaining standards as we move on from traditional linear learning models in a dysfunctional world. There are also intangible elements that determine quality within teaching initiatives: trust, reliability, ethical norms, equity, integrity and openness. The European Language Label represents a tool, identified at European level, designed to guarantee a quality standard level in language acquisition and teaching. Alan Bruce focused on the possible impact of quality standards and norms on the European Language Label. In particular, according to the expert, the European Language Label needs to address variations in national standards, lack of common criteria and strategic dimensions of the ELL in promoting targets. The Label could also play a key role in identifying specific needs of non-traditional learning groups, promoting cultures of multilingualism in a rising tide of xenophobia, and enhancing integration and diversity. Despite those potential strengths, Alan Bruce underlined some of the risks and weaknesses in European Language Label





operation: lack of funding for results' sustainability; the need for enhanced linkage to employers and labor market needs, ICT requirements and the need for innovative community engagement.

A key challenge for quality in the ELL is the lack of systematic research on potential benefits and inadequate linkage to sustainable outcomes. According to Alan Bruce, "focusing on these elements in a strategic manner, may allow European Language Label current weaknesses become potential future strengths".

Thematic area 2: Multilingualism, analysis of the current state of the art in Europe and role of the European Language Label

Carmen Argondizzo, Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Calabria, opened the second thematic area with a speech focusing on multilingualism. Carmen Argondizzo represents the CMC_E project that was recently awarded the "European Language Label of the Labels Awards" in Limassol (Cyprus).

According to Carmen Argondizzo, multilingualism is a key feature of Europe and the benefits of knowing foreign languages are unquestionable: language skills not only facilitate studying, travelling and working around the world, allowing intercultural communication and integration, but they are also an asset in meeting the new economic and professional challenges of the European Union. These important aspects, together with the awareness that belonging to Europe is a feeling which should be deeply rooted in all Europeans but especially in the younger generations, led to the creation of the CMC_E project, which involved a partnership of 6 European universities, including the University of Calabria. The CM_E partnership used the advances in ICT to create an online course which provides innovative, interactive and dynamic multilingual materials aimed at meeting the professional language needs of university students, in-service workers and enterprises. Carmen Argondizzo showed how this prize encouraged the European partnership to further implement language activities.

The second speech of this thematic area was given by **Gemma Delicado**, Professor at the English Department at the University of Extremadura and member of the research group GEXCALL. University of Extremadura is one of the partners of the NELLIP project.

Gemma Delicado analyzed three cornerstones related to multilingualism in Europe and the role of the European Language Label. The topics addressed were: European policies on multilingualism; the impact and inventiveness of the European Language Label; the Spanish and Portuguese case. According to Gemma Delicado, in order to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with better jobs and greater social cohesion, Europe has invested in Mobility, Flexisecurity and Multilinguism. For that reason, European programs to support studying and professional training were created. Programs are Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, and Grundtvig and, of course, the European Language Label.





Gemma Delicado focused on Spain and Portugal where the ELL has been recognized among the teaching community since the 90s. There, the ELL priorities have been related to Language learning based on the new technologies, Multilingual Classrooms, Immersion programs and Language and Culture Bilingual Sections. Gemma Delicado talked about interviews done to project coordinators in order to define the ELL's impact in both countries. Such impact was described as: Confidence in the undeniable ability of the project to improve and develop language learning and teaching. Thanks to the award many projects have become available to the wider teaching community. The award has served to help improve educational institutions in danger of marginalization, has served to convey to the educational community the importance of such initiatives for universal education, helped to motivate the innovative work of teachers. The main recommendation Gemma Delicado gave was to foster the teaching of languages using global methods that are able to react to universal needs and to motivate teachers to continue to transfer knowledge to enrich perspectives.

Thematic area 3: Innovative language learning approaches based on new technologies, how the European Language Label support them

This third thematic session was open by a speech given by **Giorgia Costalonga**, senior expert in the planning and management of European projects focusing in particular on the areas of foreign languages with ALTE Certification, training and culture. Giorgia Costalonga works in IAL Friuli Venezia Giulia, a training company dealing with European projects design, training and sustainable local development.

In her speech, Giorgia Costalonga presented one of the projects realized by IAL Friuli Venezia Giulia, which was awarded the European Language Label, "TKT - Content and Language Integrated Learning". The project has been selected among the Italian Best Practices. It was a specialist 70-hour course held in English, designed for 25 teachers/neo-graduates/language assistants who are involved in CLIL programmes, interpreters, translators, teachers of English as an Academic language (EAL), and teachers of subjects other than language who have to conduct the lesson in English. It conforms to the criteria laid out in the European Profile for Language Trainers, and supports the EU report "Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training" Indicators and the "Conclusions or the European Council on Creativity and Innovation in Education and Training" -in which there is an explicit reference to the key role of education systems like the "Triangle of Knowledge". In tight collaboration with these TKT-CLIL courses' participants we share new ideas combining ICT and CLIL experiences: the following projects/good practices are an example:

1) Study Visit LLP "CLIL Skills to support teacher and trainer mobility"

Link to:

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4110_en.pdf;

<http://www.liceocopernico.it/docenti/rigo/filessharing/>;

<http://www.marilenabeltramini.it/read.php?what=cont&id=368>;

http://www.unive.it/ngcontent.cfm?a_id=120361.





2) eTwinningIT-GB-PL"Olympics 2012:European Quality Label etwinning 2012"

Links: etwinning platform and web 2.0

[http://new-twinspace.etwinning.net/web/p78244;](http://new-twinspace.etwinning.net/web/p78244)

[http://new-twinspace.etwinning.net/c/portal/layout?p_l_id=17358673;](http://new-twinspace.etwinning.net/c/portal/layout?p_l_id=17358673)

The second speech was given by **Matteo La Grassa**, who is an expert in teaching Italian as a foreign language. This experience was developed at the University for Foreigners of Siena, which was awarded the European Language Label in 2009 for the project entitled "Lingua italiana e comunicazione bancaria".

La Grassa's speech focused on the multiple opportunities offered by ICT in language teaching and learning. According to Matteo La Grassa, the introduction and the widespread use of information and communication technologies, also supported by European and national programs, has opened new frontiers in language training. In addition, those innovative tools have definitively overcome the self-educated approach previously offered by the use of the first technologies. This leads to the observation that e-learning is not only a new way of delivering distance learning, it is also an area with considerable potentialities within the field of education. Besides online language courses students have to take autonomously, the reality is today characterized by a-learning (assisted learning) initiatives in which the training is also supported by the presence of supplementary teaching sessions, during which students work as a community of practice in the network. Starting from these premises, Matteo La Grassa has presented a brief summary of the main new technologies-based proposals realized by the University for Foreigners of Siena in the field of teaching Italian L2. In particular, the use of modern technologies fully allows the training differentiation of Italian language as L2 regarding these topics and, simultaneously, its dissemination to different target groups according to their linguistic, motivational and socio-cultural background. The proposals realized by the University of Siena were awarded the European Language Label.

Thematic area 4: 2012, European Survey on Language Competences, Analysis of its results and plans for future actions in the framework of the European Language Label

The last session of the Round Table, entitled "European Survey on Language Competences, Analysis of its results and plans for future actions in the framework of the European Language" has been characterized by a joint discussion by two Romanian experts, **Liliana Dellevoet** and **Anca Colibaba**. Liliana Dellevoet is Business English lecturer at the Bucharest Academy of Business and Economics and Deputy Director of PROSPER-ASE Language Centre. Anca Colibaba is the President of the EuroEd Foundation and head of the foreign languages department at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Gr.T.Popa" in Iasi, Romania.

PROSPER-ASE was involved in the Romanian project EuroIntegrELP that was awarded the "European Language Label of the Labels Awards". Both PROSPER-ASE and EuroEd Foundation are partners of the NELLIP project.





The joint presentation was based on the European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC), gathering, from the results of this research, the data regarding strategies and future possible directions for language learning at the level of the European Union. In particular, Liliana Dellevoet and Anca Colibaba focused on how the European Language Label can influence the language learning environment across Europe in order to contribute to an improvement of proficiency, to a higher quality of language learning materials and to a more efficient spending of the funds allocated to the important priority of the European Union, which is better proficiency in foreign language learning at all levels. Liliana Dellevoet and Anca Colibaba presented the ESCL research (in terms of goal, methodology, sample size, target groups, and levels of proficiency); identified the key findings of the research at the level of the policy areas in language learning ; point out which indicators of those analyzed have either positive or negative effects on language learning. The experts have also prepared an analysis at European level of how the policies indicated by the ESLC and the findings regarding the positive and negative impact of indicators are reflected at grass-roots level, namely in the educational initiatives implemented with the target group. For this purpose, the European Language Label and its best practices may act as qualitative benchmark. Those best practices belonged to the “Label of Label”-awarded projects selected in 2012. Each one was chosen as it illustrates the successful implementation of an indicator (or several) with positive impact on foreign language proficiency.

