STEPS UP
Support for Teaching English in Primary Schools
University of Porto
European Label Award Winner 2008

Maria Ellison (Pedagogic coordinator)
Fátima Vieira (Administrative coordinator)

Department of Anglo-American Studies
Faculdade de Letras,
Universidade do Porto
Pre-project context in Portugal

• **February 2005**: English language lessons to be offered in first cycle of basic education for 3rd and 4th year children (8-10 year olds)

• **September 2005**: English language lessons began as ‘optional extra-curricular’ subject

• **Major concern**: Lack of appropriately qualified teachers
National priority → local needs

Municipal Council of the city of Porto

Department of Anglo-American Studies, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Porto

Department of Anglo-American Studies to recruit primary English language teachers and provide pedagogic support.
THE PROJECT: S.T.E.P.S – UP Support for Teaching English in Primary Schools – University of Porto

Beneficiaries:

• Primary English language **teachers** in primary schools in and around city of Porto

• Primary school **children** aged 8 – 10 in primary schools in Porto
Aims of Project

To ensure coherence and quality in the teaching of English in schools across the city of Porto

• To develop positive attitudes to the learning of foreign languages and in doing so promote pluri-lingualism and pluri-culturalism

• To establish horizontal and vertical cohesion within and between the first and second cycles of basic education

• To encourage and support teacher development through collaboration

• To promote and develop Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

• To develop a shared understanding within the school community that the English language can enrich other curricular areas
Project outcomes

• Primary English language teachers: appropriate pedagogic and attitudinal preparation

• Extension of a spirit of collaboration within school communities
Scale of Project
2005 - 2009

56 Primary schools
Children attending English language classes in Porto:

• 2005/2006 - 4336
• 2006/2007 - 5054
• 2007/2008 - 5331
• 2008/2009 - 5577 children and 87 teachers

There was no initial time limit for the project. It came to an end abruptly in 2009.
Global Project Management

Porto City Council: project financing, school needs
- number of children and classes per school; timetables; coursebooks for children

University of Porto
1 administrative coordinator
1 pedagogic coordinator (recruitment of teachers, pedagogic programme and teacher development)
1 financial coordinator (monitoring teacher numbers, payment of teachers)
Action plan – Pedagogic programme

To provide constant and varied support through the following:

STEPS ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS including:
• Guidelines for collaborating with school teachers within and between the cycles of compulsory education
• Coherent four-year content and language syllabus
• Assessment criteria

In-service teacher development sessions (on general aspects of pedagogy and according to teacher needs)

Monthly face-to-face meetings (general reflection on practice; planning in school cluster groups; focus groups for key areas of concern e.g., assessment; vertical cohesion)

Virtual platform for teachers to share ideas and materials; submission of monthly planning; weekly summaries; termly evaluation of children by teachers; termly teacher reflections

School support visits
Personal tuition when required
Resources service
'The loneliness of the innovator can be overcome by mutual support.'

Budd & Wright in Nunan (ed) 1992

'Spirit of Collaboration'

Self-supporting community of teachers
Nurturing a sense of responsibility

- To educate the whole child
- To be aware that primary education is integrationist: subjects feed and nourish each other
- To forge links with the rest of the primary curriculum
- To make the content of lessons more relevant
- To plan for content, language and developmental skills
Extending collaboration
S.T.E.P.S teachers encouraged to engage in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) projects

Main goals:
• To make learning more relevant and meaningful
• To improve collaboration within schools so school community becomes aware of positive contribution English language lessons can make
• To raise profile and status of English language teachers
Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

‘CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language.’


Benefits: linguistic; affective; cognitive; social; cultural (e.g., increased motivation to learn L2; Internationalisation; mobility – study/work opportunities; life-long learning skills)
Constructing CLIL

- Consult the content syllabus of primary curriculum
- Planning: Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture goals
- Reconstruct methodology
CLIL - Content and Language Integrated Learning
The Water Cycle – Water is All Around Us

THE WATER CYCLE
WATER IS ALL AROUND US

Science
The different stages of the water cycle: evaporation/ transpiration; condensation; precipitation; collection.

Drama
The Water Cycle: Observing, analysing and sequencing the stages of the water cycle.

Movement
The Water Movement
Moving like a droplet throughout the water cycle process.

Games
Water travels in a Cycle
Listening, analysing and singing a song

Music

Stories
The Ryan Raindrop’s Story: Role Playing
Acting out the story

Arts and Crafts
The Water Cycle Bracelet
Creating a bracelet in which several beads with different colours represent the stages of the water cycle.

Maths
Droplets and Clouds
Finding a group of droplets to go on each cloud.

The Water Cycle Puzzle
Creating a poster on the water cycle.

The Water Bingo
Playing bingo on the water cycle.

The stages of the water cycle; states of the water: liquid, solid, gas.
Num

Action Verbs; the water cycle.

The Water Cycle Puzzle
The different stages of the water cycle: evaporation/ transpiration; condensation; precipitation; collection.

Action Verbs, the ordinals: first/second.

Revising different vocabulary; prepositions of place

The stages of the water cycle; materials: cotton, paper, wood; verbs: cutting, colouring, gluing; colours

The Water Bingo
Playing bingo on the water cycle.

Numbers; stages of the water cycle; states of the water: liquid, solid, gas.

The Water Cycle Bracelet
Creating a bracelet in which several beads with different colours represent the stages of the water cycle.

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Creating a poster on the water cycle.

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A. Growing Plants: 
2. Plant Reproduction

**Nature**
Growing Plants: 
2. Plant Reproduction

- Identify plants that reproduce through seeds, bulbs and cuttings

**Content**
- Type of reproduction
- Understand that plants reproduce in different ways
- Explain how a plant reproduces
- Explain how to grow a plant

**Culture**

**Communication**
- Language of Learning
  - Key vocabulary
  - Describing
  - Identifying
- Language for Learning
  - Group work: discussing, arguing, predicting
  - Language to answer questions
- Language through Learning
  - Group work: presenting results
  - New vocabulary to carry out the activities
  - Language to carry out some worksheet tasks

**Cognition**
- Understand
- Describe
  - How to grow a plant
  - Take notes (before and after the experiment) – what I know/what I learnt
  - Order the steps
- Complete sentences
- Listen and number
- Experiment
  - Predict / discuss: what I need to grow a plant
- Distinguish: seeds, bulbs and cuttings
- Compare notes with other groups
- Understand and explain
  - How plants reproduce

- Group work:
  - discussing, arguing, predicting
  - Language to answer questions

- Complete sentences
- Order the steps
- Take notes (before and after the experiment) – what I know/what I learnt
- Order the steps
- Compare notes with other groups
- Understand and explain
  - How plants reproduce

- Group work:
  - presenting results
  - New vocabulary to carry out the activities
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- Identify plants that reproduce through seeds, bulbs and cuttings

- Type of reproduction
- Understand that plants reproduce in different ways
- Explain how a plant reproduces
- Explain how to grow a plant
Small-scale research

2008 - 2009

• Primary English language teachers’ perspectives on carrying out CLIL projects.
• Data collected from questionnaires and written reflections revealed benefits to teaching and learning and challenges faced by teachers.
Project monitoring (yearly)

- **Partner Meetings:** City Council and University (initial, mid, end of year) SWOT report (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats); virtual platform (MOBIUS) for summaries accessible to all stakeholders

- **University:** within STEPS project: monthly f2f meetings with teachers; online written reflections; monthly planning; weekly summaries; termly evaluation of children by teachers; teacher evaluation

- **In schools:** horizontal and vertical meetings encouraged; termly evaluation of children and presence of English language teachers at end of term parents’ meetings
Improving quality with the project

• 2007 – 2008: New MA in Teaching English and other foreign languages in basic education
• Students and student-teachers incorporated within STEPS project
• Insights gained from STEPS project inputed into this MA programme
Dissemination

• **Within schools**: end of term parties/performances/exhibitions of work
• **Across schools in the city**: end of year events for all stakeholders – exhibition of children’s work; parties/theatre
• **University**: within teacher meetings; national and international conferences; publications; ‘promotional film’; website https://sites.google.com/site/stepsuporto/
Constraints/areas for improvement

- Teacher mobility into and out of the project
- Human resources at University
- Monitoring within and between schools
- Finances: teacher payment and budget for STEPS pedagogic programme
- Teacher contracts
Impact of the European Language Label

- **Recognition** – confidence to elaborate other projects – Higher STEPS (Supporting the teaching of English in Plurilingual Higher Education Settings)

- **National and international interest**: invitations to events/conferences/new project partnerships/dissemination of ‘expertise’ (cited as model project by Conselho Nacional de Educação de Portugal)

- **Content of pre- and in-service courses for teaching foreign languages benefited from STEPS**
Potential impact beyond STEPS

Project transference:

• As a model within Portugal for the same beneficiaries

• For different educational sectors in national and international contexts
Further recognition: European Language Label of Label Awards 2012

- STEPS Project nominated by National Agency of Portugal as best of the winners of the European Language Label Award in Portugal since 2002.

- Award ceremony in Limassol, Cyprus presided over by European Commissioner for Education, Culture and Youth, Androulla Vassiliou
Further dissemination

• European Commission publication: ‘European Language Label – Empowering People’
Advice

• Project transfer to other contexts
• High visibility and exposure: website; conferences; flyers; good networking; published articles
• Opportunities for research
Thank you and Good luck!

Maria Ellison
mellison@letras.up.pt