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LSP in European Projects: Recent Developments and Challenges in Language Policy and Practice

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between European language policy and funded language learning projects in the field of LSP. We look at why and how the objectives were expressed, how the overall directions have evolved over the past decade, and how the LSP landscape has been redefined through research and implementation. Our discursive and ethnographic analysis is based on the framework texts published by Europe in the *Lifelong Learning Programme* and then in the *Erasmus+ Programme*. These institutional texts are put into perspective with the documents produced in the framework of three European projects in which we have participated: LILAMA (employability), INCLUDE (social inclusion), TRAILS (teacher training). Our analysis seeks to identify and explain the reasons that led to the shift from working on the needs of companies and employees to focusing on the needs necessary for implementation, which implies that interest is now focused on the training needs of the teachers involved in this context (Basturkmen, 2019) and on the challenges that remain to be met.

Keywords: *European Projects, Linguistic Policy, Discourse, Recontextualisations, Teacher Training needs*

Introduction

As a response to societal and economic development, traditional funding patterns for higher education and research are now changing across Europe (Estermann et al., 2013). In this context, an approach based on support from funded projects (cf. Bertin, 2011) tends to become widespread for research funding in higher education. In this regard, we note that funding opportunities exist at the European level through the priorities established by the Council of Europe, expressed in the form of a range of targeted or blank programs. Teacher-researchers are thus solicited to take part in projects under European funding programmes, which provide incentives for research collaboration and partnerships (Defazio, Lockett, & Wright, 2009). In the calls for projects, languages occupy a predominant place, particularly

when it comes to setting up partnerships aimed at fostering collaborative work in relation to the promotion of multilingualism in European policies (Romaine, 2013). In the set of projects funded over the years, it can be observed that languages for specific purposes (LSP) are explicitly included more and more frequently, most often in relation to new technologies. LSP is playing an increasingly important role in research and online and blended learning which are funded through answering calls for projects (Bertin 2011). The interest of researchers in LSP is all the more natural since it is now established that they are gradually taking a predominant place in university teaching (John et al., 2019). This should be seen in conjunction with the growth of the student population (Whyte, 2016) and the massification of programs observed on a European scale and worldwide (Ruggiero, 2014), and with the globalisation process (Cots, Llorca, & Garrett, 2014; Deyrich, Bian & Begin-Caouette, 2016). The offer of LSP training has thus developed significantly in most higher education training programmes (O'Connell & Chaplier, 2015). These trends have raised many questions about the challenging nature of LSP teaching since, as has been noted many times, LSP teachers have a wide range of tasks to perform in addition to their teaching, in particular research and curriculum and materials development tasks (Basturkmen, 2019). Beyond the pragmatic aspects, there are also questions about the language policies that are supposed to motivate and guide these teachings. The language policies at work are defined as a result of institutional decisions and of related texts produced by the various European bodies. The links with European policy are not always direct, but as Barrault-Méthy (2013) points out, languages for specific purposes occupy a special place at the heart of European university language policies. From this perspective, the projects financed by Europe presuppose that they are in line with the political orientations of the European institutions. It seems thus constructive to look at the way in which LSP are treated in the framework of European projects and to investigate the issues that are addressed by linking European political orientations and projects in which LSP are involved at different levels.

This study is aimed at situating some characteristics of the articulation between the field of European projects and that of the LSP. It is based on the hypothesis that these projects reflect the orientations of European educational and linguistic policy in several ways. To explore this question in greater depth, we will rely on institutional texts from the EU and on a corpus of three projects that have been carried out at the University of Bordeaux over the last ten years. All three of these successive projects have received European funding and are linked to issues concerning languages for specific purposes: the *LILAMA Network*, where LILAMA stands for *Linguistic Policy for the Labour Market* (a project that took place between 2009 and 2011), the INCLUDE network (which was held between 2013 and 2016) and *TRAILS LSP Teacher Training Summer School* (which ran from 2018 to 2021). We will relate these projects to the directives and orientations of the European authorities, which have marked the stages of the projects. In addressing these issues, we will attempt to answer the following set of research questions: What do these projects reveal about the European language policy? How do these three projects fit in with the European policy? What is the contribution of these projects to the field of LSP, teaching and research? To address these questions, our study combines the anthropological dimension with discourse analysis to take into account both the researcher's commitment to this situated approach and the need for critical hindsight.

Discursive Perspectives on Language Policy

The methodological framework adopted derives its rationale from the researcher's involvement in each of the projects we study in this chapter. The choice is that of a comprehensive ethnographic approach to put the different elements into perspective, thus joining the research model adopted by Koskinen (2014): the researcher uses all kinds of analytical tools to capture all the relevant connecting lines that form the network around the research object. This way of observing is context-sensitive and situated, allowing for adaptation to the complexity and conflicting evidence.

Discourse in Linguistic Policy

From a critical perspective, discourse analysis is seen as a social construction of reality, and therefore, the study allows us to clarify certain aspects of reality or to conceive of the way this reality is reformulated, the way it is repeated or not in relation to the same subject, a discourse seen as a "recontextualisation" of social practices (Van Leeuwen, 2009). The objective of adopting a critical discursive and ethnographic approach here is to highlight the characteristics of the contexts and recontextualisations in which language policies are created, paying particular attention to the mechanisms with which they are implemented and maintained and the range of effects they may have on the language practices of the different actors. From this perspective, Wodak & Savski (2018) explain that "discourse-ethnographic studies of language policies must take into account the paradox that exists within an institution between the structural constraints that enable its existence and the agency of individuals acting within it" (p. 98). Making sense of the interaction between the explicit or official level and the implicit or unofficial processes that underlie language policies remains a complex task, especially since there is a phenomenon of recontextualisation of policy texts in different contexts, from the transnational to the national and local levels. This phenomenon also changes the way in which they are "read" and implemented (Yanow, 2000; Wagenaar, 2011).

Language policies are also a means of codifying a particular construction of social reality, and therefore of legitimating particular sets of actions (e.g., Levinson et al., as cited by Wodak & Savski, 2018). This aspect is favoured by the fact that Romaine (2013: 117) points out: policies "are always inherent representations of different language ideologies, i.e., beliefs, visions and conceptions of the role of certain language(s) held by different (most commonly institutional) social actors". Deyrich (2021), who examined the recontextualisation process in educational policy discourse dealing with the concept of "quality" found that in order to assert the authority of prescriptive institutional discourse, legitimacy rests not on the author of the text but on an anchoring in arguments and justifications that cannot be contested. Focusing on practices of legitimation that emerge from Europeanized political communication, Kutter (2020) views political discourse as making strategic use of language that uses symbols of representative politics and justifications to suggest that political authority and association are rightly claimed.

The European Strategy for Multilingualism: Discursive Aspects

"Like the EU itself, language policies are political projects" (Romaine, 2013, p.117).

In European institutional texts, the issue of multilingualism is recurrently treated in different aspects. If we take the example of the resolution of the Council of Europe (CoE, 2008: 1) "on a European strategy for multilingualism", we note that multilingualism is seen in a

comprehensive way. It is presented as “a major cross-cutting theme encompassing the social, cultural, economic and therefore educational spheres”.

From Recommendations to Actions in the Field of LSP Teaching and Learning

There is continuity in the policy orientations that can be observed in the references to previous texts, specifically to the Council Resolution of 14 February 2002 (CoE, 2002), whose formulations on the subject represent, in a way, stages on the road to a multilingualism strategy: “[T]he knowledge of languages is one of the basic skills each citizen needs in order to take part effectively in the European knowledge society and therefore facilitates both integrations into society and social cohesion” (CoE, 2002: 2). Actions are therefore called for by the Council (CoE, 2008), which invites the member states and the Commission to commit to offering young people, from the earliest age and beyond the scope of general education, in vocational and higher education, a variety of quality language and cultural courses that will enable them to master at least two foreign languages, a prerequisite for integration into a knowledge-based society (CoE, 2008).

The emphasis is thus put on the quality of the provision of foreign languages but also on an adaptation of these teachings to the specificity of needs in vocational and higher education.

The next point in the series of actions recommended for the promotion of multilingualism also concerns our field of LSP but this time in a stronger way, through recurring themes in all the arguments in favour of language learning: employability and mobility: “Better promote multilingualism as a factor in the European economy’s competitiveness and people’s mobility and employability” (CoE, 2002: 2).

Language Skills as a Valuable Investment

Multilingualism is now intricately linked to potential benefits for the economy, according to the study about EU policy carried out by Gazzola (2016). The author identified two main key points concerning the economic impact of the multilingual context: “economic advantages for individuals” and “a valuable investment for society as a whole” (Gazzola, 2016: 20).

The European Commission published a Communication: *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes* (EC, 2012a; EC, 2012b), which emphasises the importance of education for economic progress. Language learning is a key to employment and requires special attention. In a world of international trade, the ability to speak foreign languages is seen as a factor of competitiveness. Languages are, in this respect, increasingly important for increasing the employability and mobility levels of young people. Hence, poor language skills are a major obstacle to the free movement of workers. Moreover, as this Commission Communication points out, companies also have a great need for the language skills that have become necessary today to operate in the global market.

The economic role of language skills remains significant, as shown by the *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to language education* (EC, 2018), which sets goals and main concern for the upcoming years. Language skills are having a key role to play in the creation of a European educational area. The resulting ambition is, therefore, to achieve the strengthening and improvement of language learning.

EU Strategic Guidelines for Supporting Language Learning Projects

The *Europe 2020 Strategy*, which succeeded the *Lisbon Strategy*, was conceived as the EU's common agenda for the next decade. It is in the context of these two policy documents that the concept of lifelong learning comes into operation. The *Lifelong Learning Programme* (LLP) was established by the European Parliament on November 15, 2006 (EP, 2006), bringing together all the European cooperation initiatives in the field of education and training. All three projects mentioned here were undertaken within the framework of the LLP: LILAMA and INCLUDE under the *Call of the Lifelong Learning Programme, under Key Activity 2 Languages – Networks* and TRAILS LSP Teacher Training Summer School, under the key action KA2 - *Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices of the Erasmus+ programme*, which is a sub-component of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

An Organising Principle in European Educational Policy

Lifelong learning is now a well-established concept in European policy, principally since the European Union initiated its *Lifelong Learning Programme* for the time frame 2007-2013. Bourdon (2014) shows how the concept has gained prominence and weight, particularly since the *Lisbon Treaty* and the initiation of the *Europe of Knowledge* which states that education is no longer attached to a specific period of life but rather seen as a continuous process in a rapidly changing world.

The overall aim of the *Lifelong Learning Programme* referred to in the field of education is to enable lifelong learning to contribute to the development of the Community as an *advanced knowledge society*, with long-term economic planning and development, more and better jobs and more social cohesion.

In addition to the old basic skills (literacy and numeracy), lifelong learning involves so-called new basic skills (IT skills, language skills and social skills). A shift in emphasis from education systems to individual learning has thus taken place: people become masters of their own skills; they need to be able to acquire skills continuously throughout their lives and in all kinds of places.

It is also observed, as Bourdon (2014) explains, that discourses on lifelong learning are linked to other discourses that contribute to the repositioning of the citizen in terms of governance — namely, employability. From this perspective, one now speaks of a lack of employability, and the citizen comes to be described as “employable” or “unemployable”. This perspective is in line with the idea put forward by Lima & Guimaraes (2011) that lifelong learning is still more of a political concept than an educational one.

This approach is also taken up and reformulated in the presentation of LILAMA, which offers a recontextualisation of the new strategy in which the lifelong approach is expected to play a key role at the social and economic level. In this project, it is considered “vital” to ensure that the competencies needed to participate in lifelong learning opportunities are acquired and recognised at all levels of education and training, as well as to develop a common language and operating tool for education, training, and work (LILAMA, 2011b). The wording indicates the importance of adopting lifelong learning, which is presented as an indispensable requirement: “It is considered vital” (LILAMA, 2011b: 5).

“It is therefore clear that knowledge of foreign languages provides a competitive advantage not only to European citizens but also to companies and economic operators, as it is

recognised in recent Communications from the European Commission pointing out the obvious impact of the Multilingualism Policy of the European Union over the renewed Lisbon Strategy and the upcoming EU 2020 strategy” (LILAMA, 2011b: 6).

This excerpt clarifies what can be expected from the implementation of the policy directions: “It is clear”. We can see that there is incongruity between the EU political decisions and their recontextualisation in the project. However, it cannot be said to be a simple replication, as shown by the words “as it is recognised” which denote a lack of commitment on the part of the enunciator to what is presented as “obvious impact”.

European Strategy in the Funding of Projects

Project funding is a key element of the EU strategy for carrying out actions in view of political decisions in the field of education in higher education. General strategic orientations and objectives are given and explained in the Communication on a renewed EU agenda for higher education (EC, 2017): “Strengthen the capacity and outputs of higher education institutions by financing innovative cooperation projects between institutions and their partners and, through European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), investment in infrastructure, facilities, skills and innovation projects” (EC, 2017: 3.).

The decisive role of the financial aspect has been clearly considered setting the discourse for higher education in the EU and proposing concrete actions. This communication takes note of the many challenges that still need to be met, in particular, because of “a mismatch between the skills Europe needs and the skills it has” (EC, 2017: 3). The observation of a gap between the necessary and expected skills and the reality in the field is in line with the observation that was at the origin of each of the three projects, more particularly the TRAILS project, which aims to overcome this gap in the field of teacher training in LSP.

From Linguistic Policy to Project Definition

Funded projects are expected to play a role in the process of policy and theme dissemination. According to Klatt (2014), the influence of European projects on the educational policies of member states is proven and expected. This is consistent with the observation that educational policy-making processes in Europe are no longer situated in the political, historical, and cultural context of a single nation-state. Klatt (2014: 68) holds that “[t]hey are mediated by an emergent EU education policy space. Education policy in Europe is a result of mutual constitutiveness of agents and structures”. Influence at the level of higher education comes through the funding granted, and among these, EU-funded projects seem to play an increasingly obvious role for the academics involved. In the most frequent cases, research funding is obtained by completing grant application forms in response to calls for proposals. Grants available through the European Commission’s Lifelong Learning Programme are distributed through annual calls for proposals (EACA 2007-2013). However, access to the projects presents difficulties and thus seems to be reserved for insiders. Specificities are not only due to the modalities for the requests but which can be observed at the level of language. European projects have a certain number of characteristics that are specific to them, including the language of the projects: a type of specialized language (Barrault-Méthy, 2013) which includes a specific terminology, many acronyms, and refers to expert reports.

Defining the Target Audience for the Language Policy

It is expected that funded projects should be involved in the promotion of EU policy priorities. This is clearly expressed through the documents produced, either upstream of the project as part of the submission of a proposal or as part of the work that forms part of the project specifications. To clarify this point, we refer to the three submitted project proposals:

- The TRAILS project includes a dissemination section, in which the project is seen as having a political role to play. The dissemination approach is aimed at several types of public and it is to be noted that the project intends to be known in particular by public authorities and decision-makers:

“The target groups that the project will address can specifically be divided into:

- Higher education institutions that train (LSP) language teachers [...], Students [...], LSP teachers [...]

- Sectorial associations: [...] These associations will provide an important tool for the dissemination of project information, will be involved in the project before the beginning of the TRAILS Summer School through the publication of project information on the project website and Facebook page. [...]

- Public authorities and decision-makers: these will be involved in order to provide them with project information, including project results, as they are relevant subjects with reference to policy and management at the local, regional, national, and EU level.”

- The clarifications outlined in the LILAMA project also show that it intends to play a major role at the political level. Three main axes are announced - all related to language policy - which are “Policy research and recommendations”, the “Observatory of Good Practices” in linguistic policy and language training and the “Dissemination of the LILAMA Network and best practices” in both policymaking and language training at European level. The political scope of the LILAMA project is mentioned from the outset in the Guide of best practices (LILAMA, 2011a), which specifies the target audience in this way. This guide is intended for policy makers and managers of European, national and regional programmes involved in the design and enactment of policies and programmes to support competitiveness and employment. It considers the training of human resources in language and intercultural skills as a key element in improving performance in these two areas” (LILAMA, 2011a: 10).

The approach is more personalised in the rest of the text, with arguments likely to win the support of actors on the political scene. Members of organisations and associations who are actively involved or interested in the impact of language skills on competitiveness and employability are invited to consult the Guide for an overview of how other countries and regions have addressed this issue. The Guide also provides tips and tricks on how to translate them into a regional context (LILAMA, 2011a: 10).

- As regards the political aim of the INCLUDE project, we note that it is also clearly expressed in the *Roadmap*: actions are “addressed to three different types of stakeholders: policymakers, practitioners, and researchers” (INCLUDE, 2016: 23). Policymakers are targeted because they can and will be able to contribute to the actions required to follow up on the EU’s recommendations. These three groups can play a central role in enhancing the contribution of language learning to the achievement of the key EU 2020 social inclusion targets (including increasing employment, reducing early school leaving and reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion).

The Commission as Organiser of the Methodological Agenda

It would be an overstatement to say that the adoption of the EU discourse and recommendations is a simple phenomenon of normalisation. Influence is much more finely organised, as is shown by the modes of legitimisation that are specific to projects and which are part of the interplay of influence and soft power. The anchoring of projects in European policy also lies in the similarities between the recommendations and the forms adopted for the implementation of projects. The form that the projects take, therefore, plays a decisive role. This is most often achieved indirectly, for example, through strategies of pooling in networking and in the implementation of partnerships.

Networking to Improve the Design of Language Policy: The Case of INCLUDE and LILAMA

The notion of network is considered as “a federating concept supposed to facilitate the organisation and dissemination of work carried out within the framework of the projects” (EACA, 2007-2013). We can refer here to the case of the two Language Policy Networks INCLUDE and LILAMA, which can be considered as sister or companion networks. Both networks have been promoted by a group of EU organisations with various backgrounds, all of them involved in the language policy field. The two networks were created with the aim of improving the design of language policies in Europe from two different and complementary perspectives: employability and regional competitiveness, on the one hand, and social inclusion, on the other.

- The LILAMA network was created with the mission of becoming a “mutual learning platform for the exchange and dissemination of guidelines, best practices and policy recommendations contributing to the design and implementation of language policies oriented to labour market needs” (LILAMA, 2011b: 5). The intended beneficiaries are adult language learners in a globalised market economy, who will ultimately benefit from language training services tailored to their company’s language needs, thus improving their employability.
- The stated benefits of the INCLUDE project are in line with a lifelong learning perspective to enable members to gain from a number of facilities for keeping up to date with developments in the field, for planning new initiatives, raising awareness and incorporating language learning for inclusion of groups at risk in local, regional, or national policies. (INCLUDE, 2012)

Strategic Partnership, the Case of TRAILS

Erasmus+, the EU’s programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sport for the period 2014-2020, promotes transnational strategic partnerships to make a major contribution to help address the socio-economic changes, the main challenges Europe will face until the end of the decade. It is also about supporting the implementation of the European policy agenda for growth, jobs, equity, and social inclusion. These projects are designed to develop and share innovative practices and promote cooperation, peer learning and exchange of experience.

The presentation of the TRAILS project follows the same guidelines, as expressed in the application which specifies that the most expected impact is to develop partnerships aimed at providing and stimulating knowledge and skills for high-quality teaching and learning of LSP in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and in higher education (TRAILS, 2018: 72).

Language Policy Discourses Put to the Test of Recontextualisations

To give an overview of the synergies between the issues addressed and their anchoring in the European recommendations, we focus for each project on a flagship issue that is thematically linked to the recommendations: employability for the LILAMA project, social inclusion for the INCLUDE project and teacher training for the TRAILS project.

Language learning to foster employability

The issue of employability is repeatedly and emphatically documented in EU policy documents, among which are the following:

In 2007, the Commission established a *Business Platform for Multilingualism*. The discussion was on how to enhance awareness of the importance of languages in business and to develop services and tools to help companies and individuals to improve professional performance through language policy. The report was published in 2011. The Platform also published the brochure *Languages Mean Business* which states that real progress will be made if companies, from micro-enterprises to multinationals, develop creative and responsive language strategies tailored to the individual possibilities of each organisation. All such strategies need the support and backing of local and regional networks. Effective solutions can be found through partnerships, both between business and education and between industry and research, to transfer language skills and language technologies to productive use (EC, 2008).

The value of developing language skills for enterprises is again highlighted, this time in terms of employability, in relation to mobility and growth in *Language competencies for employability, mobility and growth*, Commission staff working document (EC, 2012c): the Member States are expected to make foreign language teaching and learning measurably more effective by acting on a number of principles, including directing language learning outcomes to support employability, mobility and growth. It is also emphasised that education systems need to respond better to the learning and vocational needs of students and work more closely with employers, chambers of commerce and other stakeholders, linking language teaching to the creation of EU-wide career paths.

LILAMA, which stands for Linguistic POLICY for the Labour Market, is part of the above-mentioned perspective of action:

- *The Observatory of Best Practices* is one of the key actions carried out by the partners, available to the members of the network. Best practices for employability and competitiveness are expected to be in line with EU policy. Given the European scope of LILAMA, the good practices that were identified in language policy development were intended to be embedded in the overall EU policy development as set since the advent of the Lisbon Strategy (whose objective is to make European education and training systems “a world quality reference by 2010” (LILAMA, 2011a: 13).

EU guidelines and directives provided the basis for the work carried out to define and identify good practices. More than 60 good practices from all over Europe, the USA, Australia, Canada and China were identified at the Observatory of Best Practices.

This body of knowledge, together with the results of a study evaluating the use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for employability purposes, has contributed to the development of a wide-ranging, adaptable, and multi-level European policy model for the design of language policies. (ibid)

- The overall objective of the *research and recommendations on language policy* (LILAMA, 2011b) is to improve the potential of language policy as a support for employability and business competitiveness through the design of a European model of language policy that considers the lessons learned from the good practices in language policy identified and analysed during the project.

Here are some of the recommendations mentioned for the development of a program promoting good practices for employability and competitiveness:

- Promote events to raise awareness of the role of language training.
- Promote or advance the design of evidence-based policy or strategies based upon the results of scientifically sound impact assessment of the ROI of language training on businesses.

These recommendations acted as a kind of fulcrum for further work in the INCLUDE project. The last point we wish to address here is the awareness that the LILAMA project has created of the complexity of the problem. The project is about language policy, not just about language learning. Indeed, this project focuses on language policy for the labour market, but it also gives us the opportunity to see that the issue of language policy is complex and multifaceted: the definition of “language policy” has many aspects that go beyond mere language learning and competitiveness in the labour market (LILAMA, 2011b: 6).

Promoting Social Inclusion through Language Learning

To address the complexity of language policies that promote employability and the difficulties of implementing them with socially excluded groups, the INCLUDE project focuses on the social component. The observation at the outset (INCLUDE, 2014) is that despite the increasing awareness of the importance of language learning in migrants’ social inclusion to enhance employability, there is still a lack of necessary emphasis on the “social” implications of language learning at the European level (Majhanovich & Deyrich, 2017: 439). This involves making language policies, strategies, and initiatives more relevant to the ‘life-worlds’ of citizens (at home; at work; in everyday life).

Bridging Language Learning and Social Inclusion

Actions to promote social inclusion through language learning are identified in the roadmap (INCLUDE, 2016). As languages are important for active social inclusion, the project is informed by the already existing 'legacy' of EU policy recommendations to foster language learning and to strengthen the role of language learning in nurturing social inclusion, but the view taken here is that this legacy needs to be developed, systematised and improved “by integrating what has already been done in the field of language learning and social inclusion in the light of specifically identified existing gaps and needs” (INCLUDE, 2016: 2).

CLIL Can Play a Role in this Context

To find inclusive solutions to the language problems faced by socially excluded groups, innovative solutions have been investigated in the project, and it appears that tailored actions relying on CLIL (Content and Integrated Language Learning) could help overcome some gaps in language learning for the target public (INCLUDE, 2016). The CLIL methodology is therefore presented as having a promising role for social integration and employability.

It is considered that CLIL should be particularly useful in VET, where it has been noted that training is generally monolingual and mono-subject, eventually supported by digital L2 resources (e-learning platforms, etc.). Furthermore, while the main objective of CLIL is to achieve communicative competence in second and foreign languages across the curriculum, it would be valuable to explore extending the adoption of CLIL to the social inclusion of some specific target groups who are in fact socially excluded (INCLUDE, 2016: 19). But action should also be aimed at practitioner support. The section devoted to recommendations (INCLUDE, 2016), is rich in relevant advice that offers points of support for the implementation of a language policy aimed at active integration, whether in the field of education or in society at large. The recommendations can be summarised as follows:

- New methods of language teaching should be adopted to motivate learners to maintain languages in their curricula;
- Collaboration should be incited between educational authorities and organisations as well;
- Quality training should be provided for teachers: teachers and trainers — especially in VET;
- Teachers should be encouraged to acquire high-quality language skills and should have access to high-quality teaching resources;
- The field of LSP needs to evolve and improve. Among the proposed solutions is the idea of having LSP teachers collaborate with their speciality counterparts.

LSP Teacher Education TRAILS

Inclusion issues are becoming increasingly important in European policymaking and go hand in hand, as the recommendations from the INCLUDE project show, with the need for qualified and competent teachers to implement the inclusive practice in relation to language learning. There is a great need for training for LSP teachers in higher education, but this is rarely addressed: it was noted that very few LSP teachers were able to benefit from training (Basturkmen, 2014). With the TRAILS project, the European policy orientation of the Erasmus+ project transmutes from economic needs (employability, mobility) into more qualitative needs, which imply that LSP teachers can benefit from real training that takes into account their real training needs (Basturmen, 2009).

To clarify how the project fits in with European policy, we refer to the Commission's communication on a renewed agenda for higher education (EC, 2017) which shows the Commission's interest in higher education to facilitate progress in the implementation of the European project. This communication states that it is difficult to meet the increasingly important and specific training needs in higher education: the demand for highly skilled and socially engaged people is both growing and changing.

Addressing the Challenge of LSP Teacher Education: The TRAILS Project

Actions are recommended to meet the challenges to tackle skills mismatches and promote excellence in skills development. The expected initiative relates, on the one hand, to the quality of the programs intended for students, which are described as “well-designed” and “centred on students' needs” (EC, 2017: 4). To this end, it is deemed necessary to design, build and deliver good study programmes. To carry out this challenging mission implies that

good teachers are crucial. This poses a real problem since “too many higher education teachers have received little or no pedagogical training and systematic investment in teachers’ continuous professional development remains the exception” (ECE, 2017: 5)

For higher education, this is a statement worthy of consideration because, as Bocanegra-Valle (2008: 228) explains, teachers are key actors in implementing lifelong learning within academic contexts because as they can motivate students in their search for relevant information and thus “provide opportunities for individual decision-making”.

Learning to Teach

In higher education, quality teaching has recently become an important issue but learning to teach in this context remains too often out of the question. For teachers involved in LSP, the lack of training poses a real problem not only in terms of the quality of teaching but also in terms of expected results since LSP is in direct relationship with the world of work. It is thus assumed to play a key role to create multilingual and mobile citizens and should therefore benefit from high-quality teaching.

The TRAILS project originates from the assumption that the quality of language learning in higher education must be ensured through efficient planning and implementation, but also by guaranteeing adequate education and training to LSP teachers. “TRAILS addresses the challenge of teacher education and skills development aimed at promoting high quality and innovative teaching in the field of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP)” (TRAILS, 2018). Set in the highly specific context of LSP, an innovative translational and collaborative approach has been tested and evaluated in the TRAILS project. Based on input from research and good practice, the project relies on ICT innovative potential for communication and preparation. A customised methodology has been defined step by step and adopted during consecutive phases for the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of LSP teacher training summer school.

From Recontextualization to Innovation - A Specific Understanding of the Notion of Learning Needs

Operationally, the objectives of the TRAILS project are not pursued by considering exclusively pre-conceived theories about teacher training, but mainly by focusing on the actual needs expressed by the teachers involved in the project, considering the European as well as the local contexts and the different institutional, legal and societal priorities. The language and the specificity of the disciplinary area are also accounted for.

A systematic investigation of needs is thus considered vital for teacher training design. Much research has been conducted on needs analysis in LSP: “the means of establishing the how and what of a course” (Hyland, 2006: 73). But, as mentioned by Bocanegra-Valle and Basturmen (2019), needs have always been approached from and for the learner, but teacher needs are unvaryingly overlooked in needs analysis. That is why it is imperative that teacher needs should be taken into consideration to inform decisions about topics in teacher education programmes

- A step by step collaborative approach

The project proceeds step by step: the investigation of needs and gaps has served as a basis for a definition of training outcomes and curriculum for an LSP teacher training programme which was tested through the TRAILS pilot Summer School. At this stage, it is envisaged that

the transferability potential of the adopted methodology based on the guidelines will provide the basis for the analysis of the provision of training in any discipline.

- From political concepts to educational concepts

LSP teacher training was addressed by a team of European researchers who collaborated to investigate the actual situation of teacher training in Europe and explored the real needs of teachers.

During their cooperation in the creation of a curriculum and an adapted syllabus, they were able to benefit from the contributions of research in this field. The practical application of the courses was made possible online during the period of the pandemic, which did not allow for face-to-face courses as initially planned.

The favourable reception of the public of students who followed the training and the critical analysis to which the team submitted itself indicates that the recommendations of the Erasmus+ programme are quite relevant for the implementation of this pilot training experience. It should also be noted that the teacher-researchers involved in this project had to step back and adapt their own approaches so that the project could be appropriate in different educational contexts and cultures. Synergies were thus made possible between researchers, practitioners, and students thanks to a large investment in this collaborative work as well as to modest but meaningful financial support.

Conclusion

In this short exploratory study, we have linked EU framework texts with a corpus from three projects funded by the EU in the scope of lifelong learning programmes carried out over the last decade. The discursive analysis provided information on synergies and thus showed that interactions and convergences are numerous, but it also made it possible to note how these projects differ from simple standardization by extending them further. The European language policy studied in this way allowed us to identify some elements of characterization. The anchoring of these projects in the European policy was confirmed, but we also noticed that this anchoring nevertheless required readjustments and recontextualizations for the problems put forward for each of the projects: from linguistic policy to project definition and pedagogical realisation. This is notably the case of the documents produced for the development of recommendations and guides for the implementation of a language policy tailored to a variety of contexts, which have led to proposals for considering the languages of specialization, considering the target audiences and their needs. This contribution of the projects to the field of LSP has been particularly highlighted in the TRAILS project, which focuses on the training of LSP teachers in an innovative approach that should open new directions for research in the field. These projects made it possible to initiate research and develop initiatives that served as a basis for various scientific writings. One could even deduce that there is a form of continuity between the various projects and the research that results from them, and why not a form of circularity that would allow the European institutions to benefit from these advances in research on LSP teacher training in other directions that would allow for a more in-depth examination of the questions raised.

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