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**Virtually Connected Language Workshops at
European Schools – Selected Papers of the accom-
panying research**

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Preface

This conclusive volume contains excerpts from the reports on the academic support and monitoring of the multi-lateral Comenius Project VISEUS – Virtually Connected Language Workshops at European Schools. The target of project focussed on the design of a concept of advanced training in the fields of language acquisition, multilingualism and creative language learning. The concept was developed in cooperation with nine project schools and seven academic institutes of higher education in the field of teacher training from different European countries such as Germany, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria and Hungary.

The pupils who participated in the project produced their own dictionaries and texts in the so-called language workshops by means of the on-line dictionary „My Own Dictionary“ and the virtual language workshop „Vis@Vis“, the results of which were published in a second conclusive volume. The analysis of the results obtained during these processes formed part of the academic support and monitoring.

The project was coordinated and organised to a large extent by the Institute of Educational Science at the University of Osnabrück which also offered academic support and monitoring. Major focus of analysis was put on the following areas:

- Inventory of profiles of schools and classes of language teaching
- Initial survey amongst teachers on their didactical concepts and methods of teaching
- Data analysis: teaching materials in classes of language teaching
- Data analysis: texts produced by pupils
- Final survey amongst teachers on their work within the projects and on the instruments developed during the course of the project

The present volume starts off with an introduction to the general work of the project (Müller-Using/Kunze/Angerer) as well as a presentation of the approach of New Literacy (Bronkhorst, Angerer), which served as a basic conceptual frame for the structural design of this project. Selected results of the concomitant data analysis are presented and discussed in the contributions of Bachmann/Froihofer,

van der Beek and Aubreville/Szilagyi, whilst the contribution of Kunze offers insights into the final survey carried out amongst teachers, and demonstrates the different methodical and didactical approaches of the teachers who participated in the project. Kekäle focuses his contribution on the subject of how the modules of advanced training were tested and evaluated. The volume closes with the contribution of Bachmann/Müller-Using which gives an outlook on the thematic area of creativity in classes of language teaching and points out to possible ways of transferring these principles to seminars of teacher training.

Osnabrück, 25.11.2009

Susanne Müller-Using

Susanne Müller-Using, Ingrid Kunze, Harald Angerer

Introduction into the project VISEUS, its scientific base, goals and methods of the accompanying research

The original idea for the later VISEUS-Project was born in a European work group of teachers and lecturers, who work according to the principles of Progressive Education and cooperated at that time in a project, coordinated by the Pedagogical Institute of the German language group in Bozen/Southern Tirol. All started with the intention „to pass the word on to children“ and to develop an online dictionary for children together with pupils from different European countries. A special feature of this children’s dictionary was the focus on the independent work of pupils who developed in accordance with their teachers their own definitions, illustrations and exemplary sentences and applied them accordingly. During this cross-border work with the European children’s dictionary, children were to be encouraged to know more about the similarities and differences of European languages and cultures, to learn foreign languages, and to acquire multi-linguistic competences.

1. Concept and Subsumption of the project VISEUS

The present VISEUS-Project (Virtually connected Language Workshops at European Schools) was conceived according to these principles and started its work in December 2007. Apart from the aim of developing a European Children’s Dictionary, a major target of the project is the development of a web-based in-service training course for language acquisition, multilingualism and creative learning. This in-service training course bases generally on the practical experience of the teachers of the project and combines these with new scientific insights within the areas of language acquisition, multilingualism and creative learning, always including the aspect of „new literacy“ in form of a meta-theme throughout all subject areas.

The partners that participate in this project include schools at primary- and/or secondary educational level from six European countries (Germany, Finland, Italy, Netherlands, Austria and Hungary) as well as one academic institution from each of these coun-

tries that works in the field of teacher training and/or teacher in-service training. The broadly based expertise of the university partners guarantees a vast scope of relevant expert knowledge for the mutual implementation of the concept. Whilst the Expertisecentrum Nederlands contributes with expert knowledge on the areas language acquisition and multimedia literacy, the Pedagogical Institute of the German Language Group in Bozen ranks amongst the pioneers in the field of ICT (Internet Communication Technique) and its application in school teaching. The West Hungarian University of Győr contributes to the project by including the aspect of multilingualism and integration of minority groups with a particular focus on the situation of the group of Hungarian Romas. The University of Graz and the University of Osnabrück integrate their didactical expertise and experience with creative methods of teaching and learning and, last but not least, a supervision of processes under the aspect of quality management is offered by a scientist of the University Vaasa.

The project ranges within the endeavours to effectively promote the learning of foreign languages as early as at primary school level as well as to develop intercultural competences and to implement these within the context of the project. According to a definition by Darla K. Deardoff (2004), intercultural competences imply competences that enable a person to interact in an effective and adequate manner in situations of intercultural encounters on basis of certain attitudes and positions as well as special capabilities of action and reflection. In particular the programme addresses those pupils who already speak several languages (some of the schools that participate in the project show a high percentage of pupils from migrant families, sometimes up to 80 % and/or a high percentage of pupils with ethnic minority background, such as Romany). The diversity of languages is seen and used as a highly valuable resource. In this manner, we follow the European perspective of language acquisition in the sense of the plurilingual approach that differs from a mere acquisition of several languages as described as follows:

„The plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these lan-

guages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. In different situations, a person can call flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor. (...) From this perspective, the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve ‘mastery’ of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the ‘ideal native speaker’ as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place. This implies, of course, that the languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and students given the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence. Furthermore, once it is recognised that language learning is a lifelong task, the development of a young person’s motivation, skill and confidence in facing new language experience out of school comes to be of central importance.“ [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. p. 17].

In all schools of our project we set up language workshops which are linked by a virtual communication platform. In such a manner, participants are enabled to communicate with each other and share their experiences and materials. Language workshops are open learning environments. They provide students with didactical materials as well as educational offers that encourage them to take up active, independent and cooperative forms of learning in the field of language acquisition. Although a major focus is put on computer- and internet based offers, working with language workshops amounts to much more. An essential part of the work evolves in creating communicative situations which enable the learner to appreciate linguistic competences acquired and reinforce their motivation for learning foreign languages by creating sense of achievement.

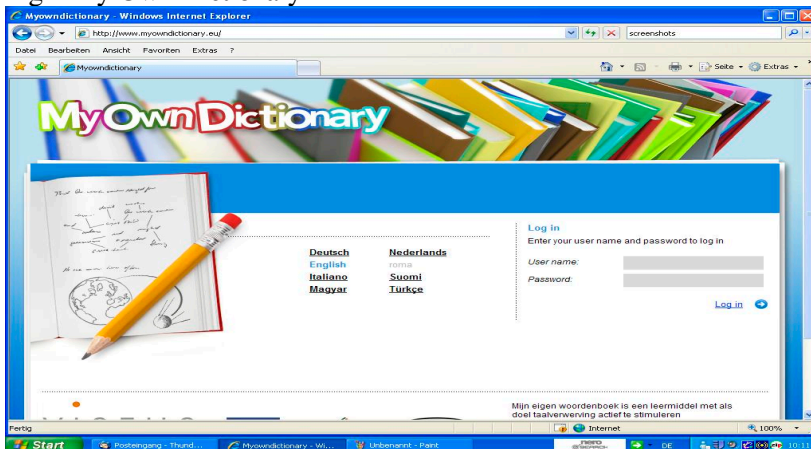
Working with language workshops is not an absolute novelty in Europe and individual schools in several European countries have introduced various types of language workshops in the meantime. Still, there are some major differences in their functions; they are not

linked up in form of a network, do not follow a common concept and are made public at regional level at most.

In contrast to these, the language workshops at our project schools have one common feature, i.e. they all work according to the principles of progressive education which base all educational efforts on the perspective of the child and the respect for the individual, and consequently start off from didactical approaches such as the Didactics on Teaching of Mother Tongue and Foreign Languages according to Freinet [Dietrich 1995], the approach of Dialogical Learning [Ruf/Gallin 1999] as well as from approaches of Creative Writing [Reichen 2004, von Werden 2004, Sousa 2003, Kohl 1994]. Nevertheless, our project also strongly favours the idea that each of the European language workshops should act and work according to its own methodical profile to be developed and determined by the teacher. In such a manner, each language workshop may develop its own identity and contribute to the network by enriching it with its special individual concept.

2. Web-based instruments for working in language workshops

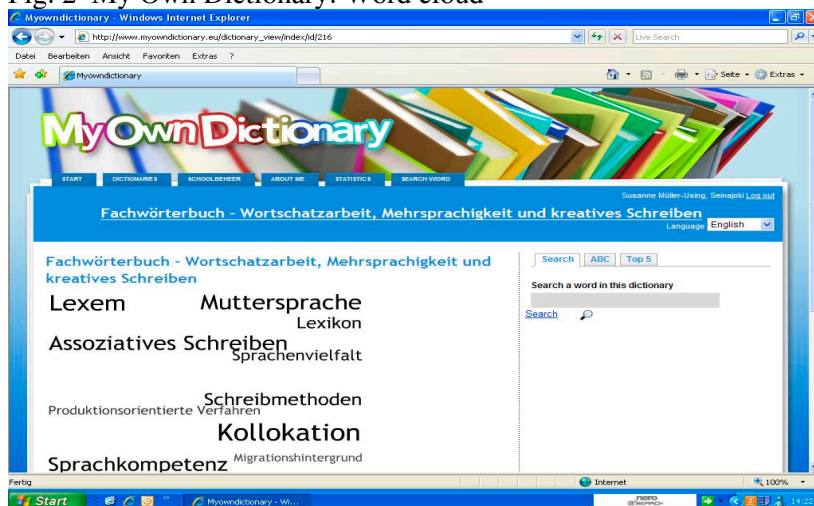
Fig.1 My Own Dictionary



Within the VISEUS project, the main activity in the language workshops consists of working with the interactive European Online-Dictionary „My own Dictionary“. During the course of the project, the software of this dictionary was constantly improved and extended up to eight languages (Dutch, English, Finnish, German, Hungarian, Italian, Romani and Turkish).

The pupils of the project schools contributed either individually or in groups to the vocabulary of the dictionary.

Fig. 2 My Own Dictionary: Word cloud



Within the dictionary, learners may use the following options: they may explain the respective word in their own words and give exemplary sentences; they may tape the pronunciation of the word by saying it out loud, also they may add photos, self-made illustrations or schedules. In addition, it is also possible to enter words with the same meaning from other languages. In such a manner, pupils are enabled to extend and differentiate their individual vocabulary of their mother tongue and of foreign languages. Simultaneously they are given the opportunity to introduce their personal associations into the definition and illustration of the word and put their entries at the disposal of other users, or have these commented on by other users. We expect that both, working with these facilities as well as working

in groups, will result in an increased motivation of learners to reflect on language use and communication in a profound manner. In addition, the inclusion of further languages might inspire the pupils to compare languages in an impressive manner so that relations of words and languages will become evident, internationalisms might be identified and that they might be able to discover, for instance, that one word will be met with various congruous words in another language. Whilst pupils generally start working by introducing entries in their mother tongue or in the language spoken at school, they should be encouraged during the course of the project to write in an increasing manner also entries in foreign languages, first of all in English. Once the teachers will have their entries released, they may be commented on by other users of the dictionary which might result in sharing experience on language and – if necessary – in an improvement of the entries by the authors.

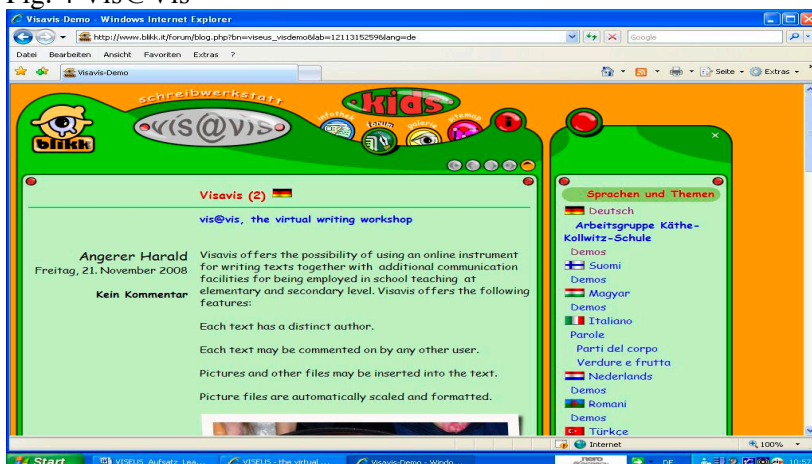
Fig. 3 My Own Dictionary: Entries into the Dictionary



In addition, schools may make use of the virtual Writing workshop Vis@Vis which is offered in various languages and opens access to all participants of the project. Similar to the dictionary, this tool is suitable for both, individual and group work. The Vis@Vis is

organized in form of a web-blog, i.e. once the individually text has been published; it is possible to add comments by fellow pupils and teachers and further develop the text on basis of these comments. Difficult words or key words within these texts may be entered into the Online-Dictionary and marked within the text as entries to the dictionary so that they may be easily identified as such by all users. A volume will be published at the end of the project (November 2009) that contains a collection of the best texts from Vis@Vis composed by pupils.

Fig. 4 Vis@Vis



The organisation of the virtual writing workshop Vis@Vis is combined with a particular didactic concept of written language acquisition that starts off from cooperative dialogical approaches and takes up concepts of on-line based learning. It is therefore intended to develop with Vis@Vis further multi-media based facilities of written language acquisition that – in addition to the encyclopaedia My own Dictionary – enable pupils to train and implement in group work cooperative and associative techniques of writing.

Following the concepts of constructivism [v. Glasersfeld 1998], recent research on didactics of writing or „didactics of literary acquisition“ more or less unanimously starts off from the assumption that writing constitutes an internal process of construction. During the

course of their process of literary acquisition, children develop theories and hypotheses on the utilisation of written language, reject these, and construct new ones [Brügelmann/Brinkmann 1998].

Nevertheless, the didactics of literary acquisition in the mother tongue (L1) basically starts off from a different initial position than the didactics of literary acquisition of foreign languages (Ln). The literary competence in the mother tongue, for instance, always lags far behind the oral one; writers may take recourse to a much broader source of oral vocabulary competence when phrasing the sentence [Ruf/Gallin 1998], and mostly have fewer difficulties in putting their thoughts and intentions into written words. The didactics of literary acquisition in the mother tongue focuses on aspects of the formal (orthographical and grammatical) correctness and the stylistic expression of the written text, and thus shifts the learning process from the act of writing to the process of reading or composing [Ruf/Gallin 1998].

Although it holds true that generally the same mechanisms of formation of theories and hypotheses come into effect during the processes of foreign language acquisition, writing here has also the function of constituting language. There is no oral “source of pre-knowledge” to which one might take recourse. Writing is tedious work which does not develop on its own, but needs to be supported and strengthened.

The virtual writing workshop Vis@Vis is designed for both variations: It may be used as a basis for active and creative processes of writing in both, the mother tongue (L1) as well as for writing in foreign languages (Ln). The workshop is an instrument that intends to support the writers by either developing texts together in collaborative process or by giving editorial feedback that may be used for improvement and re-wording of the texts. On conception of the “virtual language workshops” basic ideas of Freinet’s pedagogical theories were taken into consideration. Freinet stressed the importance of cooperation and collaboration [Kock 2006, p. 69] just as well as the importance of “free expression” and communication [Kock, p. 70].

Writing is not a pure exercise but serves communication and expression. Texts will have to be “free” in order to correspond to the

interests and needs of pupils in an adequate manner [Kock 2006, p. 74].

Apart from these two instruments, both teachers as well as pupils also employed the **project forum** (not open to the public) during their work in the language workshops for getting acquainted with each other and for developing subjects from different cultural perspectives. At present, pupils and teachers work in border-crossing manner in forums on the following subjects: “Recycling of waste“ (Schools with secondary levels) „Where I live“ (Primary Schools) and “Recipes and Cooking” (Primary Schools). In addition, the project teachers use these forums to share teaching materials.

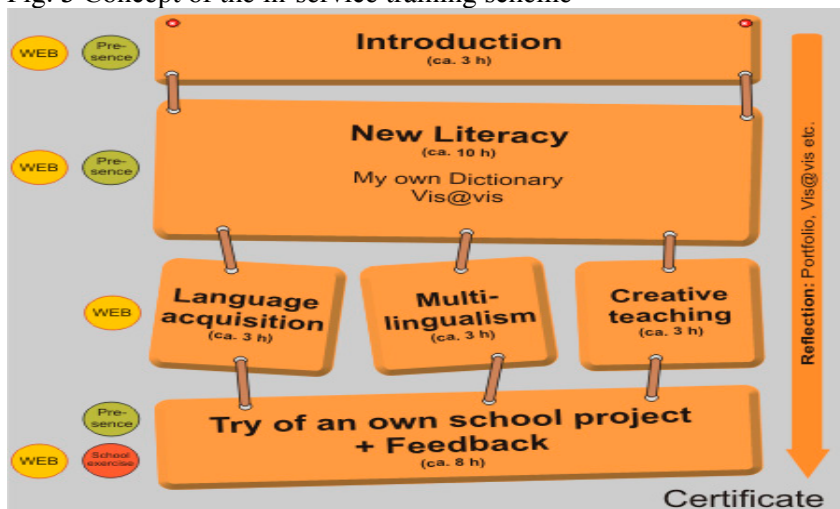
3. Development of a concept of in-service training for usage of the web-based instruments for language acquisition, multilingualism and creative learning

The concept of this in-service training course is developed in joint cooperation of teachers and scientists and bases on the practical experience at school as well as insights gained from the academic process consultancy. These results are also used for a continuous adaptation and refinement of the web-based instruments.

The scheduled **in-service training course** is conceived simultaneously and in close connection with the work in the language workshops. In such a manner, both scientists and teachers may cooperate with each other during the development of the concept, may integrate their experience with the newly designed instruments into the course and teachers may again benefit from the results of research by having these adapted to the practical requirements of the course. After an introduction into the targets and the technical functions, the participants of the course will work on a module on the subject **New Literacy** which deals with the different demands and communication facilities that arise by the new media and their implementation into daily life. In addition, this module gives a presentation of the on-line instruments that were developed and/or applied during this project, i.e. the Online-encyclopaedia “My own Dictionary” and the virtual writing workshop Vis@Vis which may be tested and tried out by the participants. Subsequently, three modules are presented that refer to the subject areas **Language acquisition, Multilingualism and Crea-**

tive teaching. All modules offer a wide range of materials and tasks related to the educational practice and to the work with the web-based instruments, substantiated by references to the academic discourse. By working with these modules, participants will be enabled to develop their own project or curricular unit for the teaching of foreign languages at school that may be tested out in their classes or group of learners. Simultaneously participants are being encouraged to reflect on their learning process. All results of practical work and reflection will be collected on-line in form of a portfolio. After having completed the entire course, carried out the practical project and handed in an on-line portfolio, the participant will be awarded a certificate by one of the participating universities or institutes of teacher training. The course may be either completed by groups of teachers or by individual persons. This in-service training course was tested and evaluated during the period of our project (see e.g. the article of Kekäle in this publication) and is offered in the following languages: Dutch, English, Finnish, German, Hungarian and Italian.

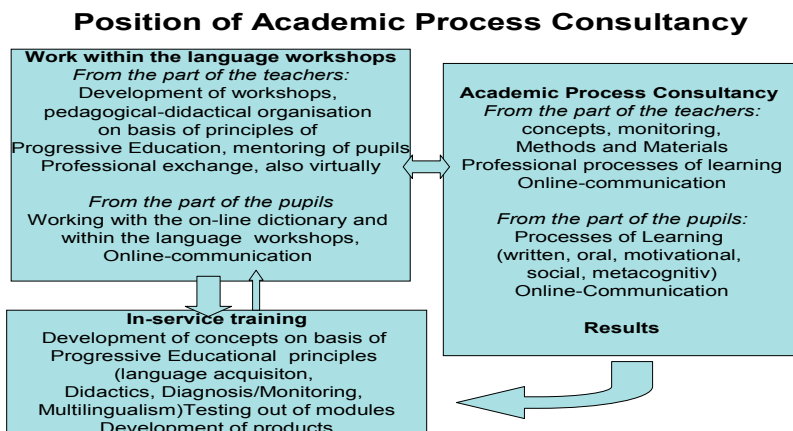
Fig. 5 Concept of the in-service training scheme



4. Academic process consultancy on the work effected during the project

Academic process consultancy forms an integral part of the work in the language workshops.

Fig. 6 Academic process consultancy



In a first step, we focused our attention on determining the actual starting point of the project work. By means of a questionnaire we registered details indicated on the frame conditions at school and the current working methods during the teaching of languages at school. In addition, we carried out interviews with those teachers who participated in the development of language workshops in order to find out about their experience and their individual didactical concepts for the teaching of languages. For a better comprehension of the national contexts, our academic partner institutions established a report on the situation of their respective educational system in their country with a particular focus on school teaching and the teaching of foreign languages.

During the course of the project, the results of the work in the language workshops has been evaluated according to scientific standards, always under the aspect of the general targets and focal questions previously agreed upon by all project partners in cooperative

form, and constantly revised according to the latest results of the project. In such a manner, also the teachers are included as active participants in the process of research even if the major part of these tasks will be accomplished by our academic partners. Within the frame of academic process consultancy, the following aspects has been analysed more profoundly: the teaching materials that were exchanged amongst teachers via their own forum (see e.g. the article of Bachmann/Froihofer in this publication) and the regular reports of teachers on their working processes, the communication shared by pupils in the forums, the texts produced by pupils (see e.g. the article of Aubreville/Szilagyi in this publication), in particular the entries into the dictionary and the work that learners practised with this tool (see e.g. the article of van der Beek in this publication). In addition, the participation of teacher training students (participating observation) has facilitated deeper insights into the work processes in selected groups of learners. As a conclusion of the academic process consultancy, an evaluation has been carried out on the products that resulted from the project (Online-Dictionary, texts from Vis@Vis produced by pupils, communication on the platform) as well as a final survey analogue to the entry survey by interviewing the teachers that participated in the project.

The major objectives of the academic process consultancy focused on gaining insights into the current processes of teaching and learning and on offering support to all participants in their effort to improve their work. The results gained in such a manner contributed to improve the in-service training course according to academic standards and has been published in this omnibus volume.

5. Resume

First results and report of experience show that the language workshops as a particular form of learning environment offer a significant increase in motivation for learning languages in an intensive manner. Pupils showed strong interest in working with the on-line tools, first of all the Online-forums although it soon became evident that this did not automatically implied self-directed work as assumed by some teachers who were inspired by the concepts of constructivism. Naturally learners will feel challenged to enter into contact with

children from other countries and will enter into interesting dialogues – if the right partners happen to meet. Nevertheless, many pupils will need to take recourse to thematic suggestions and ideas as well as assistance in order to understand more clearly what their partners expect from their communication, why they react to mails or information in the forum in a certain manner or even sometimes do not react at all and which is the best way of communicating to others certain aspects or ideas that are personally felt to be of great importance. Support by the teachers is also necessary for solving technical, organisational or linguistic problems. However, it remains unclear in which way such support can be offered without restricting the creativity of the learners or domineering over the communication of children and young adults that should also follow according to their own rules and priorities. Finding solutions for this problem will be one of the most challenging tasks to be dealt with in the project.

The project VISEUS receives financial funding within the frame of the **European Educational Programme for Life-Long Learning**. It ranges amongst the multi-lateral Comenius Projects on Teacher Training and In-service Training and basis its targets partly on the Action Plan for the Promotion of Language Learning and Linguist Variety in Europe. Being directly involved as participants, we are very optimistic that the vast range of cooperation amongst very different partners will produce results that exceed by far the quality of individual outcomes. In such a manner it will be possible to share with all partners the most outstanding experiences that teachers, students and researchers reported of each country and encourage with these models of good practice to undertake more ventures of border-crossing cooperation.

6. Literature

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John Bronkhorst

New Literacy

I. What is (new) literacy?

Teachers have to be aware of the fact that there is a change in what we call “literacy” While what we might call the “traditional” forms of literacy (reading and writing alphabetic characters) are and will continue to be part of everyday life, they are now being enacted within an electronic world rather than a world of paper and pencil. This electronic world is changing the way in which alphabetic literacy is used, and it also places new demands on children as they become literate.

In the Netherlands an outline of language education has been constructed, enabling teachers to see how a normal language development occurs and what goals could be aimed at what age.(Verhoeven, Aarnoutse, 1999; Aarnoutse, Verhoeven, 2003; Verhoeven, Biemond, Litjens, 2007) This facilitates the discussion about new literacies.

Starting at a very young age children are confronted with digital toys, some of them connected to the Internet (see growing up digital). They hear sounds, see pictures, movies and written text as well. Growing older they are working on the Internet with wikis, blogs, video sites, audio sites, e-mail, games and much more. The presence of these different sign systems (text, sound, pictures, movies, simulations and other tools) require an understanding of the underlying symbol systems. Understanding pictures is different from understanding text and sound. It is even more complicated when all these symbol systems act together on one website (Mayer, 2001)

We could, in brief, describe literacy as the ability to read, write, speak and understand words.

Leu and others (2004) define new literacies as:

The new literacies in the Internet and other information and communication

technologies include the skills, strategies, and dispositions necessary to successfully use and adapt to the rapidly changing information

and communication technologies and contexts that continuously emerge in our world and influence all areas of our personal and professional lives. These new literacies allow us to use the Internet and other ICT's to identify important questions, locate information, critically evaluate the usefulness of the information, synthesize information to answer those questions, and then communicate the answers to others.

Internet is the defining context for the present generation regarding literacy and learning. It requires new skills, strategies and dispositions to fully exploit its information and learning potential. And it provides special opportunities for multilingual learners and schools in an increasingly globalized world.

Looking at the definition from Leu (2004) we see that this emphasizes on five important functions of new literacy: identifying questions, locating information, critically evaluating that information, making a synthesis out of the collected information and communicating it to others. This communication is with people in different contexts, cultures and languages. By doing so it offers opportunities for increased multicultural understanding and appreciation of the linguistic diversity that defines a global society (Leu, Leu & Coiro, 2004)

1.1 What are central principles to new literacy?

The perspective of new literacy is still coming up and much has to be outlined before there is a solid grounding. Ten basic principles were identified by Leu and Kinzer (2004)

1. Internet and other ICT's are central technologies for literacy within a global community in an information age.

The change in literacy emphasis is not new. During the past ages dominant technologies caused considerable changes in what literacy is. Cuneiform tablets, papyrus rolls, writings on vellum and printed texts by using the printing press all demanded their own reading and writing skills to fully exploit the information potential of the technology. The rapid spread of the bible, as written by Luther, was

merely enabled by using the new technology of printed texts at that day.

Now the Internet is the fast growing source of reading and information. The domination of printed press is going to an end. Besides the strategies of handling printing matters, the new generation needs to know how to handle the new tools available by ICT and multimedia. The majority of workers, pupils and student nowadays use these media nowadays as their favourite tool to solve problems and to read and write (Pew Internet & American Life project, 2005)

2. In order to fully exploit Internet and other ICT's, new literacies are required.

As an example we turn to reading comprehension. Research shows that proficient offline readers are not always proficient readers online (Coiro, 2007; Coiro & Dobler, 2007) Additional reading comprehension skills are required to be a successful online reader.

Different from traditional reading is the fact that online reading requires a process of self-directed text construction that occurs as readers navigate their own paths through an infinite informational space, to construct their own versions of the online texts they will read. This online reading is framed as a problem based inquiry process involving new skills, strategies and disposition on the Internet to generate important questions, and then locate, critically evaluate, synthesize and finally communicate possible solutions to those problems online.

Most reading on the Internet takes place to solve problems or answer questions. How a problem is framed and how a question is understood is a central aspect than of online reading comprehension. Research shows that reading initiated by a question differs in important ways from reading that did not start from a question (Taboada, Guthrie, 2006)

For didactical tools like a webquest this could have direct practical implications.

Locating information is also different from traditional reading comprehension. To read successful online we need some skills like: using a search engine, reading the results coming from a search engine, quickly reading a webpage to locate the best link to the information that is required. That a search engine can be used in more

than one way, to search more intelligent is not known by the majority of the users. Another majority does not know how to read the results of a search engine. They just click down the list in a kind of “click and look” strategy (Coiro, 2007)

Locating information during the online reading comprehension process may create a bottleneck for the subsequent skills of online reading comprehension (Henry, 2007)

Those who possess the online reading comprehension skills, necessary to locate information can continue to read and they will solve their problems. Those who do not possess these skills cannot.

Locating and evaluating information from the Internet is very difficult for children. The majority of children make their choice starting from the title and they search intuitively. First concern is to find the exact answer on an exact question. They look for literally the same sentences on website to match their search criteria. When this does not work they change their search task. In evaluating the quality of a website children look at the quantity of information instead of the quality. Children believe that a good search engine also produces good results. Sites that are interactive and well designed are seen as more positive than dull and boring sites, with merely text on it (Kafai and Bates, 1997; Large, 2002; Ng & Gunstone, 2002)

Another important set of skills required is around the critical evaluation of the content found on Internet. Although there is no difference between the critical evaluation of reading offline or online, it is online perhaps more important, because the amount of people publishing on Internet is immense. That magnifies the problem of how to know what information is reliable and valid.

Leu(2007) did an experiment in which he introduced a hoax, creating a website where he introduced the Pacific Northwest tree octopus. This was supposed to be an endangered species. From the 53 online readers, 7th grade, 47 believed the site about the tree octopus was reliable. Despite of that the students, in an interview, told that they did not believe everything that was on Internet. Confronted with the fact that the site was a hoax, a number of students insisted it provided accurate and reliable information.

Online reading requires at least five different types of evaluation that occur during online reading comprehension (Coiro, 2007):

- a. *Evaluating understanding: Does it make sense to me?*
- b. *Evaluating relevancy: Does it meet my needs?*
- c. *Evaluating accuracy: Can I verify it with another reliable source?*
- d. *Evaluating reliability: Can I trust it?*
- e. *Evaluating bias: How does the author shape it?*

In evaluating search engine results, attention could be paid to questions like:

- *was the site created by an organization (.org), a company (.com), an academic institution or school (.edu), or by some other group or individual?*
- *After making the choice critical questions can arise: how could I know who the author is? What is his/her background? How does the author shape the information? Do any other sites corroborate this information ?*

It is essential to recognize that new literacies are built mainly on existing foundational literacies. This includes elements like: phonemic awareness, word recognition, decoding knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, comprehension, inferential reasoning, the writing process, spelling, response to literature and others. These foundational literacies will become even more important because reading and writing is accelerated and grows in importance by the tools of Internet and other ICT's.

3. New Literacies are Deictic.

Deixis, a term frequently used by linguists and others, is used for words whose meaning change quickly, depending on the time or space in which they are used. Words associated with deictic situations are: now, today, here, there, go, come. The meaning of these words changes quickly, depending on time or space.

As the technologies for information and communication change rapidly, the meaning of the word literacy also changes. Literacy in the 21st century will change continuously, making it necessary for users and teachers to adapt to new strategies and concepts. One could say that the task of literacy learners is to learn how to learn, and no

longer to master a simple fixed set of skills that remain static (Leu, Kinzer, 2004)

Learning takes more and more place outside school. The famous Czech educationalist Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670) made a distinction between didactics (the art of teaching) and mathetics (the art of learning). Educational systems will have to know more about how learning really takes place and how it is influenced by changes in the learning environment. Large part of this learning environment is outside schools and learning takes place without a teacher. New facts are coming recently from the neuropsychology (Spitzer, 2007), spreading a new light on the process of learning as such and on literacy as well.

4. The relationship between technology and literacy is transactional.

New technologies transform literacy, but literacy also transforms new technologies. Users always define what they need and how to use the available new literacy tools. For instance nobody had foreseen the enormous growth of videoconferencing in communication tools. That put's emphasis on other literacy aspects in another context. Users just adapted it to their needs and find ways to mix video, audio, written text and other elements for a successful and effective process of communication and information.

5. New literacies are multiple in nature.

Multiple literacies are necessary to function in an expanding global context. Depending on culture, age and goal literacies can take different forms. Young people use other forms than older. Some cultures prefer more pictures than others. All of us, underlying the pushing force of economy, have to deal with the literacy involved in that area.

One of the multiple aspects of new literacy is the fact that individuals are confronted with multiple tools, growing with every new technology. The development of the World Wide Web is often characterized in three stages, so far. Web 1.0 was focused on delivering information to the reader. It was more a one way traffic. Web 2.0 focuses on interaction between people. Amongst the features of web 2.0 are: communication tools (such as Hyves, Facebook, MSN,

LinkedIn), gaming worlds, avatars (a computer user's representation of himself/herself or alter ego), sharing of video (Youtube), pictures (Flickr), Music, slideshows and more. Using virtual worlds (like second life) and creating own structures, by using tags are other forms of shared thinking, acting and creating.

Web 3.0 not only connects and interacts with people, but it also connects objects of all kind with each other. Kitchen tools, cars, navigators and many other objects can be connected with each other. Not only people can interact with each other but also objects can do that. And people can interact with objects.

Literate individuals will be able to choose their set of tools they prefer to communicate. In daily practice we see how this happens. A lot of young people are getting disappointed about the traditional learning environments like Blackboard, Moodle and many others. In their eyes these environments are too static, and do not meet their criteria of communication.

They make their own environments composing several tools and gadgets to a meaningful environment, serving their actual purposes. Teachers are often using tools that are already abandoned by their pupils or students. New tools are more appealing, having more possibilities to express themselves in multiple ways. For instance virtual worlds and gaming are offering a growing amount of satisfying communication and information possibilities. Regarding gaming there is recognition that games could serve important learning purposes (Shaffer, 2006). Attempts are made to create games for learning purposes inside schools (serious gaming). However the majority of schools hardly uses it. Neither happens with the fast growing amount of social software.

6. *Critical literacies are central to the new literacies.*

Since Internet, as an open network, enables anyone to publish, it is essential for students to develop critical literacy skills, in order to determine what information is most reliable. In order to achieve these goals, people need to develop Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). The term was adapted from the taxonomy of Bloom/Anderson (2001) they constructed a taxonomy of interpreting information, starting from simple remembering and understanding, to analysing, evaluating and creating.

Some teachers use blogs to practice together with students critical reading. Amongst other tools blogs are offering a context in which participants can read, write and respond in a critical way.

Some educational systems, like the Freinet schools, already coming from the Reform movement around 1920, have a long history in facing critical literacy (Bronkhorst, 2003). Originally with offline forms, like printed newspapers, movies and audio tapes, but trying to integrate and modify their techniques to online forms of Internet and multimedia literacies. One of the central ideas of Freinet was that producing your own information, in an adult way, could make you critical, when learners are assisted by teachers that are able to evoke critical skills. Pupils, seeing how easy it is to produce information for a larger public themselves, became much more critical towards media (like newspapers and nowadays ICT). Because they knew that everybody can produce information and it depends on who is writing and even more important: how do we know that what is written is really true. Not all governments and educationalists are aware of the fact that there are models, like the one from Freinet, available that can be adapted to our information society easily.

7. New forms of strategic knowledge are central to the new literacies.

In order to use new tools and technologies effective new skills are required. Each technology presents a different context, and uses other (symbolic) language and sign systems to construct meaning. It requires different strategies to do this successfully. Not every learner responds to a literacy in the same way. There are preferences and overall trends (Mayer, 2001) As already seen the most important forms of strategic knowledge are the ability to locate, evaluate and effectively use the resources available on Internet and other ICT's. Since this amount of knowledge is increasing and the tools change rapidly new forms of strategic knowledge will develop continuously.

Most important are the abilities to locate, evaluate and effectively use information.

8. *Speed counts in important ways within the new literacies.*

There is an enormous amount of information on the Internet. An important factor is the speed with which one can read, write and communicate with the help of these tools. The rate in which one can acquire, evaluate and use information to solve problems is central to success.

Since speed is a central issue in developing new literacy skills and strategies, we could expect a gap between highly literate and literacy challenged students. One of the future goals will be avoiding and diminishing this possible gap of equity. Students who have difficulties with reading tasks and texts and read haltingly will be left further and further behind. Their peers, able to skim webpages quickly and go through large amounts of webpages fast, will be ahead. Especially children with forms of dyslexia are endangered in this process of acceleration of speed. In some areas attempts are made to look for possible solutions.

9. *Learning is often socially constructed within new literacies.*

In order to interact successfully with new technologies social learning plays an important role. Many students and pupils have already literacy skills that their teachers have not (yet) acquired. It is nearly impossible for one individual to possess all the new literacies needed for successful learning with the Internet and other ICT's. That means a change in thinking about the role of the teacher, as the universal source of all possible information. The idea of sharing knowledge, sometimes called distributed knowledge, is fast growing and practiced in business already. This calls for the need to collaborate in changing groups and contexts in an effective way. The urge for specific capacities of the teacher become clear: analyzing the distributed knowledge, trying to come to a good synthesis, evaluating and communicating it. We pointed already to this as the need for Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS, see point 6) In the United States, several federal and national centres for Education, hold a plea for integrating these HOTS into the exams for future teachers. They also suggest that digital testing could have considerable advantages (Stansbury, 2007)

Social learning also lays emphasis on how information is constructed. Various individuals, sometimes of very diverse cultures and backgrounds, contribute to the construction process. Wikipedia is one of the examples. It offers the opportunity to see the differences in cultures, but also the role of languages. Some languages have no words for a phenomenon, simply because it does not live in their perception. Others have many words, because it is the main factor in their daily existence. Some Eskimos have for instance a lot of words for modalities of snow. In Sweden people make a distinction between a dead tree (trä) and a living one (träd). Wood is important in Swedish culture.

10. *Teachers become more important, though their role changes, within new literacy classrooms*

During the past centuries the role of teachers in relation to literacy changed significantly. (Bronkhorst, 2007) In ancient times (Greek and Roman) the ideal teacher was an old wise person. Having lived and reflected on it, a certain wisdom could be his part. He shared that by talking to pupils, in a discursive way, like Plato did. Literacy was not yet associated with written text. This came about 700 B.C. into the Greek culture. Plato opposed strongly against written language. In his philosophy speaking is an imitation of thinking. Thinking is the real process. You grow into it by seeing the reality behind the things. So writing is for Plato an imitation of speaking, and in fact an imitation of an imitation. The ideal teacher in this time was the old, wise man.

In the Middle ages, when writing was introduced it became of utmost importance to be able to read. Teachers taught this technique and those who could read had a high status in their society. For those who could not read, pictures and music were used, to teach for instance the essential facts of the bible. The stained glass in churches, the music, mainly singing accompanied by an organ, the smell of incense, produced a specific kind of learning experiences, from which we know now, that they were very deep and universal. Neuropsychology shows that our brains work very well by having these impressions. Our multimedia and ICT world is in fact relatively poor in comparison to this medieval multi modal world. This approach for the non literate, was called “biblia pauperum” the bible for the poor

people, who could not read. In the Middle Ages the ideal teacher is the man/woman able to read and teach that reading skills to others.

Later, in the renaissance, book printing was invented. A boost of books could be reproduced and caused a new euphoria. Now reading was still necessary, but an ideal arose to read all books and know everything that was in it. The “uomo universale”, the man who knows everything from everything, came up in Europe. In France the movement of “Encyclopaedists” were followers of this idea. In this époque the ideal teacher not only knows to read and teach that, but he also should operate as a walking encyclopaedia. Knowing everything from everything. In some European countries this ideal is still present in teacher training, where teachers still have to be able to teach all subject areas at a top level. In fact this is a thesis, no longer to be kept in the 21st century.

Now we see that, with the rapid growth of ICT and Internet, new tools, techniques and strategies arise. We pointed already towards the fact that the “uomo universale” is no longer a possible ideal. Knowing everything from the internet is already physically impossible. The neuropsychology shows this very clear to us. To know more we need other people who can bring their part of our missing knowledge. Knowledge is distributed amongst more people and we have to cooperate to get the best out of it. So knowing how to handle distributed knowledge, being able to function on a level using HOTS, are some of the emphasis points for teachers in literacy in the 21st century.

All of this makes the role of a teacher different from other periods, but probably even more important than before. Teachers have to be aware of the emerging technologies for information and communication, they should be capable to identify the most important new literacies and they must have the capacity to support the use of these literacies in their classrooms. Teachers are facing a rather historic change in their profession: they will no longer dispense literacy skills, simply because they are no longer the most literate person in the classroom. In many cases students will be more literate than their teachers. This could reverse the role of teachers. They should be able to rely on their Higher Order Thinking Skills, enabling them to orchestrate the ever changing new literacy environments.

Many countries will have to rethink their teacher training colleges on these grounds. If governments want the best for their children, than they also need to recruit their best people for these jobs. In Europe, at least Finland seems to be on that way. With too many candidates for the teaching jobs, a severe entry exam and lots of young people willing to chose for the teaching profession, they differ significant from many other European countries.(Barber, 2007) There the profession is either neutral perceived, or sometimes even seen as a bad choice.

1.2 Multilingualism as a blessing for literacies?

On the Internet many languages are spoken and some languages get a dominant place, like English. Being confronted with other languages is recently associated with positive effects like: increase in cognitive flexibility, the ability to think more abstractly and the ability to think independently of words (Hakuta, 1986; Peal & Lambert, 1962).

Multilingual speakers demonstrate superiority in concept formation and also have an advantage in metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness, including a positive transfer between languages, and an increased understanding of other cultures and ways of life (Bialystok, 1988; Cenoz & Valencia, 1994; Galambos & Goldin Meadow, 1990)

Metalinguistic awareness can be seen as the ability to think about and reflect upon the nature and functions of languages, including analyses of how languages are similar and different. Such awareness is thought to be a key factor in the development of reading in young children (Bialystok, 1988). Children with a high developed metalinguistic awareness learn to read earlier than monolingual peers.

Multilingual teaching provides access to multiple perspectives that reflect a wide array of ideas. It introduces other cultures and their backgrounds in a natural way. Teachers however have to be able to handle these rich opportunities.

Written and multimedia materials and Internet can be hegemonic, culturally biased and unreliable. When this happens, literacy can serve to maintain the status quo, that is, to ensure that those in power influence what the general population reads and thinks. The other way is also possible: literacy as a liberator, a door to new insights

and cognitions. Studying dual language texts can enhance critical thinking. Studying texts critically and slowly was object of the close reading approach. It returns now in a new form where some bloggers plea for “slow blogging”. Comparing information more in depth instead of throwing lots of information on the digital desks.

By studying and discussing dual language texts critical thinking can be enhanced.

A definition of the multilinguistic perspective was proposed by Gort (2006):

A multilingual perspective is based on a holistic view of the bilingual learner including validation of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds as resources for learning, and understanding of the role of primary language (including literacy) in the acquisition of a new language, and a consideration of sociolinguistic, sociohistorical and sociocultural factors that contribute to the child's development and experience.

Promoting multilingualism also builds a strong self sense and contributes to a better feeling of identity (Baker, 2001) Knowing that a language is seen as worthwhile strengthens the self concept of pupils. A systematic introduction to other languages is introduced in the European Viseus project, where a dictionary is constructed, enabling children to use every language they want and make comparisons between them.

Research showed that children lose their mother tongue at a far higher rate than they learn their second language. Some researchers even claim that “learning a second language means losing the first one” (Wong-Fillmore, 1991)

Immigrants tended to learn the second language as fast as possible. For them losing their first language is a possible threat. However many immigrants did only talk their mother tongue language and for that reason did not integrate fully and also gave their children a problem in literacy education. Using both languages in a proper way is a successful approach.

One of the powerful possibilities of Internet and other ICT's is to involve parents and educators at home in the literacy process of their

children. Communities can be built, in which parents might be seen as possible resources of literacy. Examples of these networks, although scarce, show a good potential for literacy support (Bronkhorst, 2008)

Strong native language and literacy has a positive effect on the learning of a second language, even when the languages have different writing systems (Cummins, 1991). Another interesting conclusion from research is that high levels of native language proficiency strongly correlates with high levels of academic achievement and linguistic proficiency in a second language (Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa, 1976)

In order to have full profit of two languages and their literacy aspects teachers should promote the examination of relationships between languages. Giving space and freedom for students to express their idea in language they feel most comfortable shows respect for individuality, cultural context and promotes literacy transfer.

Working with multilingual literacy classes need a structure. Three aspects are of great importance:

- a. Each child should feel safe in the group. No fear for being laughed of made fun of. This needs commitment with and within the group. Some educational systems, like Freinet, Jenaplan, grounded there pedagogy on values in which respect for the individual and his culture is the basis for daily work. Living in a group implies accepting and respecting each other. An atmosphere like that is created by making commitment. Other schools could learn from the approach in these so called Reform schools
- b. Knowing, using and inquiring all students' languages and cultural backgrounds should be priority through the school.
- c. Incorporating special events that include traditions from a variety of cultures celebrates the heritage and background of the children.
- d. Frequent communication with parents and the extended family is important. Digital tools, like the European dictionary (my own dictionary) can play a role in sharing language experiences and talking about it. Dual language dictionaries can be made and also topic oriented dictionaries, for instance specific words related to a specific country or culture.

1.3 Literacy is an ongoing activity.

The idea that literacy should not be isolated in separate language lessons is not new. The Reform movement from around 1920 left some educational systems to us where this idea is put in practice. Most of all in the Freinet movement and in Jenaplan schools. They tend to see literacy as a component present in all content areas: geography, biology, science etc. It is an underlying capacity, integrated in other areas.

Recently studies are undertaken to see the influence of integrated literacy in some content areas (Elbers, de Haan, 2008). During mathematics hour's children, age 10-12, discussed the meaning of words. Five pattern of behaviour were registered: neglecting a question on word meaning, clarifying the meaning by pointing or making gestures, explaining the meaning, non verbal negotiations on the meaning of a word, discussions.

In almost none of the cases the meaning of the word was clarified by taking in account the standard definition of it for all day use. Attention was focused on the specialized meaning of the word, derived from the emerging context.

As mathematics lessons in the country of research (Netherlands) are often situated in a context, language plays a role in solving the mathematics problems. Recently the approach of situating mathematics in a rich language context is criticized by experts.

Discussion about the meaning of a word is not always successful. It needs guidance and has to end in a good conclusion. Teachers have to play an important role in that (Nation, 2001).

The same phenomenon is also observable in Internet environments, where forms of guidance and mentoring are necessary.

A discussion can lead to many new words. Gifted children benefit more from discussion on word meaning than less talented children (Mondria, 1996).

A rather unexpected effect was the observation that teachers hardly ever explained the meaning of words in the context of mathematics. Some teachers called it even irrelevant to pay attention to it. For children from other cultures it was even much more difficult to understand word in the context of a mathematic lesson. As

there was lack of or insufficient explanation of word meaning, these children could have a double handicap.

Researchers conclude that the presence of a dictionary could be a possible solution. The European dictionary can also play a role in this process. Teachers can eventually make a thematic dictionary, related to the mathematic lessons.

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Harald Angerer

Virtual surroundings and individual language learning

The spreading of texts via online-media opens up new potentials and possibilities of teamwork and cooperative writing. Geographical impediments are lifted and therefore nationwide and also multi-lingual writing pools can be formed. For the learning of languages, providing a suitable organisation of the lessons or the learner's groups, the expertise of native speakers can be used in the work with texts (comp. Donath/Volkmer 1997).

It is beyond dispute that working in an online environment and the thereby gained experiences and reached learning targets help to increase media competence and "New Literacy" (comp. Groeben/Hurrelmann 2002) especially in the task-oriented fields of media competence (comp. Baake 1997).

Alongside the online-dictionary „My Own Dictionary“ also the virtual writing workshop „Vis@vis“ in the VISEUS-Project, which has been made accessible due to recent technological developments of the net, commonly referred to under the key term "Web 2.0" (O'Really 2004), come into operation besides two other main didactical pillars:

On the one-hand there is the reforming pedagogical approach of the Freinet pedagogy that still fulfills the notions of the "free text" in its main aspects and intentions of the virtual writing workshop „Vis@vis“. On the other hand also the didactical approach of "dialogical learning" (Dialogisches Lernen) according to H. Ruf and P. Gallin (cf. 1998) plays a central role in the use of the virtual writing workshop (cf. Angerer 2009).

1. Demystification of virtual information and Freinet-pedagogy

"The free text must be truly free. It seems as if we would give an unnecessary implicitness from us. However, the tradition of school reglementation sits so tight, that it has drastically shaped the majority of teachers - it allows for so little confidence in the child that although we would like to let them write free texts, where the au-

thorities allow this (...) So one produces 'free texts', as we previously ordered to write essays. We encourage children to write a free text at a certain hour. " (cf. Freinet quote according to Koitka 1989, pg. 15ff.)

In today's often unreflective use of the term "free text", which appears in textbooks and in traditional writing material the emphasis on the importance of freedom in the choice of theme and writing outweighs the actual purpose which is only rarely perceived. This is a restriction that Freinet himself has been concerned about (see introductory quote). Therefore it is necessary to concentrate on the real core of "freedom" of the text:

Freinet sees writing as a political act, as an expression of the will and opinion, which accounts for more than the expression of inner feelings and the description of inner states. Resch and Hovel (in: Eichelberger 2003, pg. 69) aptly describe Celestin Freinet's intention as working with free texts: "Free texts are texts for a free life." This reflects the ideological base concerning children's writing activities as described in Celestine Freinet's "Freinet Pedagogy" in the 1920s. (cf. *ibid* pg. 69ff.).

A major "classical" instrument for achieving these goals is the frequent use of the manual printing press in the "Freinet" pedagogy. The expected result from this is a "demystification of the printed word" (Kock 1995, pg. 229). Due to the spontaneous activity of children a critical handling of the printed word is to be encouraged. As children realize how easy it is to create perfect printed texts, the printed works originating from the adult world, such as printed books and newspapers lose much of their dogmatic character. Suddenly one's own opinion has the same status, an experience that fosters political transition into adulthood.

Viewed in this context the virtual writing workshop "Vis@vis" is a "virtual printer", i.e. the medium through which something like a "demystification of virtual information" may take place. The children thus recognize that they themselves are able to create web pages with their own texts. Therefore they also begin to understand the arbitrariness of the information gathered on the Internet thereby challenging its validity.

The Virtual Writing Workshop "Vis@vis" tries to portray the traditional uses and "publication spaces" of free texts produced in this vein within the digital media landscape. The texts that in the past were published in the form of a wall paper, as a class newspaper or in the form of so-called "class correspondence" now become a presence in cyberspace with different degrees of accessibility respectively visibility.

The main objective however, remains a publication that is visible to all the world. This is an essential aspect of its "political" effect. Vis@vis has the possibility to comment on the texts, something that almost equals a built-in "correspondence feature". In addition, the text can be written beyond the limits of the classroom or school, and even across national borders, working jointly in a cooperative process.

The virtual writing workshop is an example for some of the "New Literacy instruments", that will become indispensable and affordable tools for someone wanting to learn how to write in our digital information society. According to Laner (Laner 2003, pg. 136 et seq.), however, we assume that the virtual writing workshop won't replace the manual printing press in the classroom or even writing by hand.

2. Dialogical Learning Model

A further contribution to the educational use of the virtual writing workshop Vis@vis is made by "dialogical learning" according to Ruf / Gallin (cf. Ruf / Gallin 1998).

Both authors assume that successful teaching requires genuine mutual listening on the "same level" for teachers and learners. Furthermore it is important that learners perceive their success not only in the final product, but already during the writing process. Learning does not arise in a vacuum, but always builds on what already exists.

The teaching method of "dialogic learning" can be described as a cyclical sequence of actions and reflections on a higher level of abstraction, until the subject - or rather, the "core idea" ("Kernidee") becomes clear. The core idea is the starting point for the dialogic learning process:

"The core idea opens a preview onto a yet unknown sphere of activity for the beginner, and guides his view on the quintessence of the matter, without engulfing the person with information and unnecessarily burdening his memory." (Ruf / Gallin 2007)

The central idea is the basis for the work tasks given to the learning partners and needs to be interesting and appropriate to their level. With the help of the learning journal (cf. Ruf/Gallin) the work processes and the encountered ideas and procedures will be documented.

The journal is the basis for the subsequent reflection on the work process and is an important rating base. The documents and ideas of the journal are an important source or starting point for further central ideas in the cyclic dialogical learning processes on a new level.

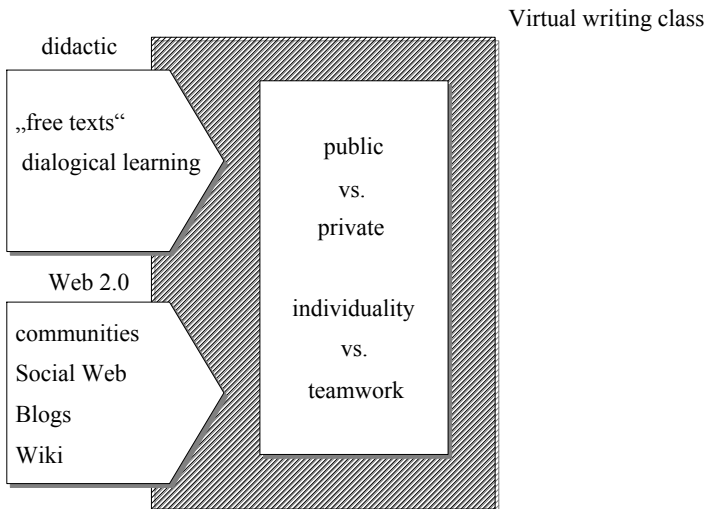
The concept of dialogical learning is productive for the virtual writing workshop Vis@vis in several respects. On the one hand Ruf and Gallin have explicitly developed their model of creative writing (– however only for a high school level) on the working process (see Ruf/Gallin 1998) whereas on the other hand several other functions can be mapped out using the virtual journal: both, writing products and the writing process can be documented by recording reflections on the topic and style in the form of a commentary. Digital texts are easier to process or edit than handwritten ones. By transferring the text on an internet platform, which is also the virtual writing workshop, part of the dialogic process can be virtualized, that means a part of the didactic dialogue can be handled on the platform outside the school context.

When composing a text in the mother tongue the following is true: not the original drafting of the text, but the stylistic changes, language changes and improvements during the editing process form the main basis for further language development and writing competence (cf. Ruf/Gallin 1998). Knowledge about language and writing skills is improved only through reflection. Therefore, with the sole "parking" of a text in the virtual writing workshop little is done if this isn't preceded and followed by a reflective or dialogical process.

3. Summary

„New-Literacy-Skills“ (comp. contribution of John Bronkhorst) or less precisely termed „digital media competence“ have become vital skills for the learning of languages in education and training in an increasingly virtual world.

Online-instruments, like the ones created and used in the VISEUS-Project (“My Own Dictionary“ and “Vis@vis“) can play a vital role. Premise to this is, that the instruments are used with a didactic focus in mind and not without “premeditation”.



picture 1: Factors that influence the concept of the virtual writing class (from H. Angerer 2009)

In this way “old” reform pedagogical approaches can be linked with newer didactical approaches as the examples of Freinet and the interactive teaching model show.

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Scientific Analysis of the Teaching Materials on the Virtual Communication Platform Blikk within the Framework of VISEUS

1. Theoretical background

Teaching materials are considered to be one of the most important controlling factors for learning in foreign language teaching (see Quetz 1999, p. 168). Empirical examination of teaching and learning in language education is, however, still one of the unresolved tasks of research (see Barkowski 1999, p. 13). A scientific analysis of teaching materials in language education is therefore of great importance.

Primary and / or secondary schools from six European countries, Germany, Hungary, Finland, Netherlands, Italy and Austria are participating in the EU project *Virtual networked language workshops in European schools (VISEUS)* (see Kunze 2007, p. 2ff.). In all participating schools in the project language, workshops were set up and were networked via the virtual communication platform Blikk. The platform is used to allow communication between students, teachers and scientific facilitators as well as for the exchange of experiences and materials.

2. Objectives and implementation of an empirical investigation

The materials submitted by the twelve participating VISEUS school teachers of schools in the communication platform Blikk *Language workshop forum* have been analyzed by means of structuring qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2003), using the classical technique of frequency analysis (see Mayring 2003, p. 12f.).

The following questions were investigated in the analysis: (1) Which materials and media are used? (2) What content and topics are covered? (3) Which social forms are used? (4) Which skills will be promoted?

Eight of twelve teachers posted within a nine months period 38 entries in the forum. Four teachers did not contribute. One teacher contributed one post and two contributed twice. In addition, one teacher contributed four posts, one eight and one seventeen.

The analyzed data consisted of worksheets, cards, pre-made profiles, chopped poems, texts and images, as an incentive to write stories. Also included were descriptions and reports of classroom activities, focusing on pedagogical content as well as suggestions and proposals for methodological design of instruction. Immaterial issues along with duplicated post were not analyzed.

The data was categorized qualitatively in relation to certain categories. The categories were initially deductively formed, however, when reviewing the data re-categorized. The categories of education were sufficient to meet Merten’s criteria (1983, p. 148).

Because of the questions asked the system of this study included the following categories (1) *materials and media*, (2) *social forms*, (3) *content*, and (4) *skills*. These categories are divided into subcategories for a more specific analysis. For statistical reasons a fifth *neutral category* was also formed.

As evidence of reliability, in particular of the reproducibility of the category system and thus also on the content analysis carried out, an intercoder coefficient was calculated. In a certain time interval the reliability was tested through ordering the assignment of content in the category system a second time (see Bos 1989, p. 62).

3. System of Categories

Choosing materials and media (see Haller 2004, p. 127ff.)

Subcategories materials and media	Description of Categories	Anchor examples (reference name)
Poetry used	Poems or rhymes serve language learning	1. Compare with the original poem (367) 2. What poetry I like (434)

Realia used	Objects, cards, pictures, posters, visual arts are used in language teaching	1. and they can also use pictures (12) 2. look exactly at all cards (374)
Games used	Games, board games, computer games are used in language teaching	1. Word games can also be played on the black-board as a competition (15) 2. Shopping can also be played (454)
Text materials used	Newspapers, textbooks, overhead transparencies, posters support language teaching	1. Emotive word stories (334) 2. with sample texts (375)
Communications media used	Communication media and new media are used in language teaching, such as telephone, e-mail, Internet, chats, learning platforms, computers, CD-ROMs or learning on the Internet, even if the emphasis lies on this medium	1. write them down in his notebook (28) 2. it's put together through a Power Point (55) 3. on the Computer (70) 4. register in the forum (320)
Poetry produced	poems are written in language teaching	1. Writing a special poem: Write a poem in an open form, the only lines that begin with 'I will ...'(250) 2. Writing a poem according to structural characteristics (370)
Realia produced	Objects, cards, pictures, posters are produced by students in language teaching	1. These worms can be made on papers of different colors and then put on the wall (25) 2. and painting the shopping list (459)
Games produced	games are produced in language teaching	1. in our English lessons we sometimes use word games made by the pupils themselves (1)

		2. Afterwards they can make their own cross-word puzzles using these words (20)
Text materials produced	Teaching materials such as newspapers, worksheets or overhead transparencies are self-made in language teaching	1. Newspaper Project (142) 2. Class 4a worked on their class newspaper (169)
Audio-visual materials produced	Audio and video materials are produced in language teaching	1. the corresponding video recordings were created (93) 2. prior to the current camera (171)
Communication media produced	web pages, tutorials, individual profiles in forums will be designed and essays and articles will be posted	1. create the independent Link http://www.kaethe-tv.de site and keep it up to date (100) 2. will be posted in an Internet dictionary (Euroklex = European Children Lexicon) (105)

Choosing social forms (see Schwerdtfeger 2003, p. 247)

Subcategories social forms	Description of Categories	Anchor examples (reference name)
Individual work	a task is done independently by oneself	1. with the help of a collection of individual ideas (152) 2. Individual work (174)
Partner work	a task will be done with another student	1. and then gives it to a partner who reads it (36) 2. and partner work (194)

Group work	a task is processed in the group	1.The pupils make two teams (18) 2. Everyone in the group writes a sentence, bends over the paper and the text will be continued by the next student. The last of the group writes the final sentence (279)
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Choosing contents and topics (see Ek/Trim 1993, p. 7ff.)

Subcategories content and topics	Description of Category	Anchor examples (reference name)
Leisure and entertainment	all subjects of leisure and entertainment, such as leisure activities, hobbies, sports, games, model making, holiday, vacation, contest	1. about leisure activities for boys (97) 2. Holiday (407) 3. Swimming (429)
Environment	all issues that affect the environment, such as animals, nature, clouds, flowers, summer, autumn	1. Autumn (373) 2. Pets (431)
School	all issues of school, such as homework and grades	1. School (371) 2. Homework (406)
Relationships with other people	all issues that affect people and relationships with individuals, such as family, parents, siblings, friends	1. Family (389) 2. Friends (405)
Celebrations	all subjects that affect celebration of festivals, for example, birthday, Easter time, eating, drinking	1. Birthday (422) 2. Celebrate (398)
Media	all subjects that relates to media, such as cinema, TV hero, comic	1. Media (135) 2. Movies (416)
Conflicts	all issues associated with conflicts, for example controversy, violence	1. Violence (394) 2. Controversy (417)

Styling	all issues that relate to styling, such as fashion, cosmetics, makeup, clothes	1. Clothes (8) 2. Makeup (83)
Fantasy	all phantastic topics like scary hour, magic garden, keys, secret writing, Uto-pian Cities	1. Magic Garden (232) 2. Message from Space (268) 3. Land of dwarfs (288)
Future	all issues of future life e.g. future of the family, future dreams	1. the future life (234) 2. Travel from the year 2100 (273)
Expression of feelings and emotions	Topics, based on feelings and emotional expressions, like happiness and pain, laughter	1. Happiness and pain (236) 2. Fun (430)

Choosing of skills on practice (see **Diehr 2007, p. 171; Doye 2008, p. 57f.; Europarat 2001, p. 14ff.; Eurydice 2005, p. 67ff.; Neuner 2003, p. 18f.; Rampillon 2003, p. 85f.**)

Subcategories skills	Category Description	Anchor examples (reference name)
Receptive language	Listening and / or reading are trained	1. In the correction phase, the teacher reads the previously prepared text for the student (67) 2. The children themselves say the sentences, the others snap after the purchase slips (452)
Language Speak	Speaking is practiced	1. The children of class 2c were asked, to present themselves in complete sentences individually (170) 2. The children will receive a shopping list and tell what they should buy (453)

Language Writing	writing is explicitly trained	1. The pupils are given a beginning of story and they have to finish it (38) 2. they write similar texts (278)
Language Vocabulary	it is stressed that new vocabulary are learned and extended	1. new words and phrases are highlighted (65) 2. words were found (153)
Language Grammar	Grammar is practiced	1. the student detects language and content errors (68) 2. find the companions (article) (440)
Intercultural communicative competence	Knowledge about other cultures acquire, knowledge and experiences of other cultures acquire comparisons reflect different cultures, interact with people from different cultures	1. VISEUS platform enables all pupils and teachers in six schools (from Germany, Hungary, Italy, Austria, Finland and the Netherlands) to know each other and to send texts and private messages (107) 2. and tried to make contact (130)
Independent self-learning skills	Learning processes are independently controlled, it is even decided when materials are processed; tasks are independently elected; and promotion of learning and autonomy is given	1. The pupils decide when they want a text correction or revision phase by a teacher (66) 2. where possible, a solution for selfcontrol is available (182)
Multilingual-competences	other languages are spoken in the classroom next to the target language; knowledge of other foreign languages will be embraced; a previous foreign language will be established; several languages are included	1. to write a warrant in three languages (123) 2. The languages of the profiles are Dutch, English, German, Austrian, Italian, Hungarian, so you all can understand each other (325)

Neutral Category

Category	Description of Category	Anchor examples (reference name)
Neutral Category	to the neutral category belongs everything that is not categorised into the previously mentioned categories	1. At regular intervals, the final text will still be printed and distributed in 100 runs (103) 2. every Wednesday the class will be supported by an editor of the <i>Kleine Zeitung</i> , a daily newspaper (143)

4. Results

The reliability coefficient values for each subcategory are all above $r = .930$. The Intercoeder correlation regarding the understanding of the units of analysis is $r = .996$. Bühner (2006, p. 140) assumes that an equation match of $r > .90$ should be taken as a high level of compliance. In thus way the coding system can be evaluated as reliable.

A total of 464 units of analysis were used, with the 12.71% in the neutral category omitted. 22.20% of the units of analysis can be assigned to the category of *materials and media*, 4.53% to the category of *social forms*, 22.63% to the category *content and topics*, and 37.93% to the category of *skills* (see Table 1).

Categories	Number of units	Percent of units
Materials and media	103	22,20
Social forms	21	4,53
Content and topics	105	22,63
Skills	176	37,93
Neutral category	59	12,71
Summary	464	100,00

Tab.1: Absolute and percentage distribution of units of analysis for each category and overall

Looking at the category of *materials and media* more exactly, it appears that the largest proportion (27.18 %) of analysis of this category are counted to the subcategory *communications media used* (27.18%), followed by subcategory *realia used* (25.24%) and the category *realia produced* (10.68%) (see Table 2).

Subcategories of material and media	Number of units	Percent of units
Poetry used	9	8,75
Realia used	26	25,24
Games used	4	3,88
Text materials used	2	1,94
Communication media used	28	27,18
Poetry produced	10	9,72
Realia produced	11	10,68
Games produced	2	1,94
Text materials produced	2	1,94
Audiovisual materials produced	4	3,88
Communication media produced	5	4,85
Summary	103	100,00

Table 2: Absolute and percentage distribution of units of analysis within the category of *materials and media*

In the category *social forms* are a total of only 21 units of analysis. More than 50% (11 units of analysis) of these units are assigned in the subcategory *group work*. The category *partner work* was col-

lected six times (28.57%) and the category *individual work* four times (19.05%).

The subcategories *content and topics* are distributed as follows: 30.48% is attributed to *fantasy*, 18.10% on *leisure and entertainment*, and 11.43% on the *environment* (see Table 3).

Subcategorie contents and topic	Number of units	Percent of units
Leisure and entertainment	19	18,10
Environment	12	11,43
School	8	7,62
Relationship with other people	6	5,71
Celebration	5	4,76
Media	4	3,81
Conflicts	2	1,90
Styling	5	4,76
Fantasy	32	30,48
Future	7	6,67
Expressions of feelings and emotions	5	4,76
Summary	105	100,00

Table 3: Absolute and percentage distribution of units of analysis within the category of *content and topics*

In comparison to other categories in the category of *skills* are the greatest part of units (n = 176). It shows that almost 55% of these units are established in the subcategory *language writing*. Even *independent self-learning skills* and *language vocabulary* also collect about 10% of the units of analysis. In comparison, in the category *speaking language* are only 1.70% of the units, in the category *multilingual competences* are 4.55%, and in *intercultural communicative competence* are 5.11%. If one adds the percentages of the language, it is clear that in 76.6% of the cases the units of analysis of the *skills* belong to the language competencies (see Table 4).

Subcategorie skills	Number of units	Percent of units
Receptive language	10	5,68
Language Speak	3	1,70
Language Writing	96	54,55
Language Vocabulary	20	11,36
Language Grammar	6	3,41
Intercultural communicative competence	9	5,11
Independent self-learning skills	24	13,64
Multilingual-competences	8	4,55
Summary	176	100,00

Table 4: Absolute and percentage distribution of units of analysis within the category of *skills*

Looking at the distribution of the total number of units of analysis ($n = 464$) in all categories, it is obvious that 20.69% of the total units of analysis fall in the category *language writing*. This category is therefore most frequently mentioned, followed by the *neutral category* with 12.72%. The remaining subcategories accounted for less than 6.1%.

Some statements made by the units of analysis of the neutral category described similar contents. Nine statements relate, for example, on types of exercises (arranging, assembling, repeating), eight relate to the support (from teachers and from outside individuals or organizations) and to the organization (location and time of learning). Six statements describe that produced texts were presented either inside or outside the class and school. More than half of the units of analysis ($n = 31$) of the neutral category, however, don't describe similar contents or are so indiscriminately that no place in the general category was permitted.

5. Discussion

From the data a total of 464 units can be extracted. This shows that very little data was available and that therefore the value of the study is low. One must take into account when interpreting the results that generalization can not be made about them. The analyzed data is only relevant to this study.

Due to the focus of VISEUS it can easily be explained why the language competence of writing, the topic of fantasy and the use of communications media in the classroom were often named. In language workshops also creative writing is practiced. Issues, which seem especially suitable for the creative writing, inspiring fantasy of young people. The work in online forums, virtual writing workshops and the online dictionary also requires the use of communications media. Interesting, however, is that comparatively less attention has been paid to multilingual competences and intercultural communicative competences. The promotion of these skills is also seen as a key objective of VISEUS.

The teachers were more interested in what they taught than how it was taught. The category of teaching in different social forms in the classroom is named less frequently for example than the skills taught in the classroom. If social forms were named, the statements relate often to the group or partner work which leads to the conclusion that these forms should be emphasized in their importance (more than 80% of the statements refer to group and partner work). It is interesting that not a single statement on frontal teaching was given, although the frontal teaching is still considered the dominant social form in the classroom (see Pätzold/Wingels/Klasmeyer 2003, p. 123ff.; Schwerdtfeger 2003, p. 248). The fact that no frontal teaching was reported maybe has to do with the opinion that frontal teaching in the foreign languages is particularly devalued. Therefore no frontal teaching was used or has been reported (see Walter 2003, p. 253). Secondly, the deployment of new media requires other social forms as it is the case in the VISEUS project (see Schwerdtfeger 2003, p. 247f.).

Why so little evidence was made available by teachers, despite repeated requests, can lead to several assumptions. The creation of

working materials can be very labor intensive and time consuming (see Kieweg 1999, p. 35). Therefore, Quetz (1999) makes the assumption that teachers do not have the time and resources to select and adapt material. He assumes that teachers are overwhelmed (see Quetz 1999, p. 169). Other researchers see it in a similar light. Rösler (1999) argues that teachers do not have the ability to produce material themselves or together with their learners. But he points out that the teaching materials used are not necessarily even have been developed by themselves. Already adaptations of materials can be used to help improve teaching. However, teachers should be trained so that they are capable to prepare group-specific working materials (see Rösler 1999, p. 190). In the present study both hypotheses could be true. Time pressure together with a lack of expertise could have contributed to the production of little materials and few descriptions and reports of what happened in the classroom.

Perhaps, however, the scientific analysis of the materials had an influence, firstly, that not all teachers involved in the project posted. Secondly, those who did post something gave a small amount of information. It could be that hierarchical relationships were not overcome and teachers wanted to avoid criticism. That communication among the teachers in the project VISEUS at least in the whole group did not succeed in the first 10 months could also be a lack to experience of systematic interexchange about the teaching (see Legutke 1999, p. 134f.). Communication beyond forum was not documented in this period, but it also happened.

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Annie van der Beek

Vocabulary in My Own Dictionary

My Own Dictionary is one of the gains of the VISEUS project. This digital dictionary, which has to be filled with words by students themselves, is based on the fundamental principles of language acquisition and in particular acquisition of the lexicon. In this section we will give a brief overview of vocabulary acquisition in the human mind. The way teachers can support pupils in increasing their vocabulary will be discussed. Next we will clarify the technique of My Own Dictionary and how students can use it. Finally some results of a study of using My Own Dictionary will be given.

Vocabulary learning and teaching

Vocabulary acquisition

Vocabulary is an important aspect of language and cognition. Through the use of vocabulary the content of a message can be expressed clearly. A small vocabulary size can seriously impede a conversation.

Vocabulary development consists of four stages: consciousness, labeling, categorizing, and creating the mental lexicon. Initial vocabulary is marked by the fact that children are able to use words consciously for the first time. Children are able to label many words at age 1;6. These words are explicitly related to a certain object and children are not able to generalize words to other objects in the same category. For example, they will learn that ‘chair’ means the chair in the kitchen, but they are not yet aware of all possible other chairs. Next, experiences with the word ‘chair’ will enable children to categorize the word. Children will be able to share all chairs in the category ‘chair’, but under- and overextensions often occur. In the last stage children will relate words to each other (Aitchison, 2002). For example, the concept ‘chair’ is connected with the concept ‘to sit’ and the concept ‘table’. The relationships between words are expanded and get more differentiated by the child’s experiences. The quality of these experiences depends on the environment in which

children are raised. When children grow older the word learning will proceed faster, because children already mastered the process of word learning.

Children who grow up bilingual, learn both languages in the same way, approximately at the same time. In fact both languages are their native language. When children learn the second language at a later moment, we speak about first language (L1) and second language (L2). The development of L1 and L2 is quite similar. The order of learning aspects of language is generally the same, but there is a difference in the tempo of learning these aspects.

When children have to learn a second language, there are two ways of vocabulary learning:

- the child acquires a word he already knows in L1. In this case the child already knows the notion, the concept. He just has to acquire the translation.
- the child acquires a word he didn't know yet in L1. It is a new concept he has to acquire.

Obviously, vocabulary development is more effortless in the first way we mentioned.

Increasing vocabulary

Vocabulary of young children is increasing enormously in the first years of their life. About 1 year old, children use their first words. Especially from 3 to 4 years the increase of word knowledge is enormously (Verhoeven, Aarnoutse, & Wagenaar, 2000). At age 3, they have an active vocabulary of about 800 words. At age 4 their active vocabulary has increased until 2000 words. The passive vocabulary at age 4 is about 3500 words. By the second grade (7-8 years old), students may know about 2000 – 5000 words. At the end of elementary education, they know about 25000 words (Nagy & Anderson, 1984; White, Graves, & Slater, 1990; Graves, Juel, & Graves 1998).

Differences in vocabulary are caused particularly in pre school period. This means the cause of the differences are mainly environment factors, due to social economical reasons. The problem is, these differences don't decrease when children get into school, but, on the contrary, the differences increase (Kuiken & Vermeer, 2005).

To catch up the deficit of words, students must learn at least 2000 new words a year, which means 200 words a month, 50 words a week (Kuiken & Vermeer, 2005). Multiple exposures to a word is necessary to learn it well, conceptual, contextual and definitional. Students need to develop the ability to learn new words from the multiple contexts of reading as well (Johnson, 2001).

Conceptual networks

Research shows vocabulary development takes place through conceptual networks. This means words are connected in the brain through networks (Gelman, Romo & Francis, 2002). Words in a network are linked, there is a relationship between the words. Conceptual networks increase continuously. For education this means, children can better remain words when the words are taught thematically, in connection to each other. In this way, children get a better understanding of the concepts. Learning new concepts requires active involvement rather than passive definition memorization.

Thinking processes of children lead to a definition of a word. Words are not isolated in the brain, but are related to other words and concepts; for example, the word football is related to words like goalkeeper, football pitch and football boot.

Making a connection between words is an important aspect of growing vocabulary of children. Words are not isolated parts of information; a connection consists between the words. These so called networks are increasing in the course of years. The amount of words is growing, and also the number of connections. In this way children are improving their notion of words, and the way how to use words. Their lexicon is getting more broad and more profound (Kienstra, 2003). At the same time of language acquisition, children's 'knowledge of the world' increases. They are getting able to think about their environment, and link this knowledge to the words they have learned, or are still learning. This cognitive growth is important for all children, for native speakers of a language, as well as for L2 speakers.

Teacher skills

As argued before, children should be taught new words every day at school. Obtaining full acquisition of a word means for the

teacher: explicit instruction of the meaning of a word (semantic acquisition), exercises for consolidation, and repeating the words seven times. All kinds of situations are proper to teach new words. Of course language lessons, but also mathematics, history, geography, and even drawing lessons or gymnastics can be utilized for teaching new words. These lessons might be prepared, but also can take place unprepared. In each lesson there might show up a situation where children do not understand a part of the lesson, due to unknown words. The teacher can make use of this situation by explaining the words without preparation. Regular lessons are prepared by the teacher of course.

Four steps

A teacher can encourage vocabulary development through four steps: preparation, semantisation, consolidation and control (Kienstra, 2003; Van den Nulft & Verhallen, 2002). These four steps are:

1. Preparation: selection of new words, and drawing the children into the subject and the new words.

The selection of new words asks for some criteria:

- It is a functional word, because it is a frequent word in their daily world

- It is an important word for the students, because it is useful in this text

- This word is unknown to (a number of) the children

- The word fits in the theme the class is working at

2. Semantisation: explaining the words, at different ways:

- representation (visual): showing the subject or pictures of the subject; showing it by doing it (e.g. to jump), using face expressions or gestures, asking the children to do something (falling on the floor)

- explanation (verbal): giving a definition, giving an example in a sentence, using a synonym, using the word in combination with the opposite, giving a translation in the mother tongue

- extend of knowledge: showing other words of the theme, making use of the context. Relating new words to prior knowledge and to other related words (Johnson, 2001)

3. Consolidation: creating the opportunity for the students to repeat, practice and exercise until they know the new words and its meanings.

4. Control: check of the teacher if students understand the meaning of the new words, and if they can use them correctly.

When the teacher determines a student hasn't picked up the meaning of some words after these four steps, the steps should be repeated, by prefer within a small group of children.

My own dictionary

Underlying theories

According to the principles of vocabulary acquisition and the ideas of constructional learning, My Own Dictionary is developed. My Own Dictionary is an IT application, which can be named as a new literacy application. In chapter 2 (Bronkhorst & Angerer) the concept of new literacy is defined as *The new literacies in the Internet and other information and communication technologies include the skills, strategies, and dispositions necessary to successfully use and adapt to the rapidly changing information and communication technologies and contexts that continuously emerge in our world and influence all areas of our personal and professional lives. These new literacies allow us to use the Internet and other ICT's to identify important questions, locate information, critically evaluate the usefulness of the information, synthesize information to answer those questions, and then communicate the answers to others.*

My Own Dictionary connects the advances of new literacy with several learning theories: cognitive load theory, self determination theory and neuropsychology. Cognitive load refers to the load on the working memory during instruction. Cognitive Load Theory, as defined by Sweller (1988), states that optimum learning occurs in humans when the load on working memory is kept to a minimum to best facilitate the changes in long term memory. When a person can build on what he already understands, he can learn better. When information is transferred in smaller portions, the working memory is not overloaded, and information can be passed to long term memory more efficiently. Self-determination theory is a general theory of human motivation and is concerned with the choices people make with their own free will and full sense of choice, without any exter-

nal influence and interference. Neuropsychology involves cognitive functioning of the brain.

My Own Dictionary is developed by the Dutch national centre of language education (Expertisecentrum Nederlands). The didactical model of this centre includes interactive language teaching and learning. Parts of this model are meaningful learning, social learning and strategic learning, and next to it, it includes a balance between constructional and instructional learning.

Learning tasks are *meaningful* when they have meaning for a child. As far as possible, learning should be functional for the daily school practice as experienced by children. Essential is that children get the opportunity to determine their own learning pathway on the basis of their own interests in a rich and realistic context. By providing attractive subject matter, the teacher may reinforce the children's interest. Language acquisition is also considered to be an active process in which children constantly reorganize their language system and knowledge of the world on the basis of the language input provided. By integrating new information and storing it in their memories, children expand their language and knowledge systems. Students may be encouraged to participate actively by creating a powerful learning environment in which they make their own choices and attribute their own meanings to the subject matter.

In the context of *social learning*, much importance is attached to the social interaction between teacher and students, and between the students themselves. Communication with their peers enables children to reinforce their cognitive strategies. In social networks, children gradually learn to use their own sources of knowledge and problem-solving strategies and to test them against those of others. Moreover, through social interaction, children become increasingly better at demarcating meanings within a certain theme, and also learn to take into account divergent views and misconceptions, and to make a distinction between subjective and objective knowledge.

Strategic learning also plays an important part in the process of literacy development. This involves rules of thumb that children learn to use in the planning, application, and evaluation of literacy behavior. The teacher may promote strategic learning by making the students aware of their own rules of behavior in learning. Essential is that instruction is not only geared to knowledge and understanding,

but also to the integration of the newly acquired knowledge into the children's own knowledge system. Strategic learning increases the children's ability to transfer their knowledge and skills from one situation to another. The literacy learning process can also be accelerated by guiding the students in this process in such a way that they ultimately will be able to guide themselves. The teacher may stimulate self-monitoring by helping the students to organize and structure information (planning), by teaching them how to ask themselves questions or correct themselves (evaluation), or by helping them to focus their attention, maintain their motivation, and minimize their fear of failure (social emotion). As children learn to control their own learning processes, they become increasingly less dependent on their environment for their development.

Constructional theories advocates students build their own knowledge, and develop their own strategies to do so. The role of the teacher is a coach. Next to this, instruction is important, especially for students who just started, and special needs students.

About My Own Dictionary

Students can create their own dictionary, by using My Own Dictionary. My Own Dictionary is a digital (protected) application, which can be used after entering a user name and password. The teacher provides these log in dates to the students after the school has registered itself. The teacher can decide whether students have their own dictionary, or they work in couples or groups. The teacher acts as a coach and coordinator. One of his roles is to decide whether children can choose the words they enter in the dictionary by themselves or they have to create a thematic dictionary of the ongoing subjects in daily courses. A mind map could be helpful at the beginning of a thematic course.

A combination is also possible: all students create a dictionary with words of the ongoing topic, for example 'Threats of the environment', and besides, a student enters his personal words: words referring to an important personal event at home, or difficult words he heard somewhere. A very practical way for using the dictionary is to let the students enter new and difficult words of lessons like history, geography or biology.

After they enter a word, students can add definitions, pictures, related words, sample sentences, links and translations, and they can record the words themselves. This is a motivating way of vocabulary acquisition for students. Because of their own chosen words, definitions or pictures, the dictionary becomes very personal. The words show up in a word cloud. The student can choose whether the cloud should show most or least complete words. Because My Own Dictionary is an online application, students can use it at home, and show it to their parents, friends, and so on. Especially for non native speakers of a country, this is an enormous boost for their self-confidence. The possibility to add translations of their own language, or cultural images stimulated them to work in the dictionary.

Using My Own Dictionary supports vocabulary acquisition by students. To formulate a definition is a cognitive process, which is quite difficult. Working in the dictionary together with other students is a social and interactive way of learning: students contemplate and discuss about meanings, related words or using a word in a right way. Students can react at each others dictionary; in this way they can give feedback in a constructive way. Also they will learn how to use strategies to find out a meaning or definition. Besides this, it is also meaningful to work in the dictionary, for example to choose pictures of a word by themselves; in this way their own experience can be expressed in the description of a word.

Another aspect of using My Own Dictionary is the way it can be used for reflection and evaluation. The teacher can frequently discuss the input of a dictionary with each student, or discuss a group dictionary once in a while. Important issues to be discussed could be: Is it a correct and complete definition? Is this the only correct definition, or could you put it another way? Is the word used in the right way in the sample sentence? Is it spelled correctly? Also related words, links and translations could be discussed, or a video could be watched (and discussed) together. Finally various statistics could be helpful to the teacher to administer the students.

Research results My own dictionary

Since My Own Dictionary is rather a new application, research is needed to establish the benefits for education. In this section we will

show the results of a first small exploratory study. Obviously more research is necessary.

Study¹

In the school year 2008-2009 an exploratory study was made to evaluate the way My Own Dictionary is used in several schools.

Six schools were involved, in six different countries: Germany, Finland, The Netherlands, Austria, Hungary and Italy. Six teachers were involved in this study. The age of the students differed between 9 and 13 years old.

It is an exploratory study; the schools just started working with the dictionary, and had no explicit instruction in how to use it.

The study included

- A questionnaire among teachers, to get insight in the class room routines and the role of the teacher, in relation to My Own Dictionary
- Gathering figures in the student's dictionaries, to get insight in the amount of added words and other additions
- A small pre test and post test study, consisting of twenty students who each had to add six words into the dictionary
- Interviews with students to get insight in the way of using the dictionary
- Interpretation/discussion of each section

Results of teacher questionnaire

The teacher questionnaire provided the information below.

Four teachers (The Netherlands, Austria, Hungary, and Italy) allowed the students to choose words by themselves to add in the dictionary².

¹ This study was done by Meike Manschot (2009) and involves the master thesis of *science of teaching*.

² The Austrian teacher said his students could choose the words by themselves, although he noticed that his school did not yet start with the dictionary, due to intern school factors.

Two teachers (Germany, Finland) gave a list of thematic subjects, of which the students could choose the words to add in the dictionary.

The students at most schools had their own personal dictionary. Only at the Italian school they had one dictionary for the whole class.

Most students formulated the definition of a word by themselves, in pairs or in groups. They didn't consult any source of information. Sometimes the definitions of the words were checked by the teacher.

In Finland, the whole class of students formulated a definition with help of the teacher, and only put it in the dictionary when the definition was approved by the teacher. The Finnish students often work in pairs and also often work at home at the dictionary.

The Dutch students work in their personal dictionary; they are allowed to help each other in finding a right definition.

The Italian teacher supports the students in formulating a right definition by adding comments into the dictionary.

In Germany the students work in groups, and definitions are discussed afterwards. Also they have the support of academic students.

Although the dictionary offers the possibility for students to look in each others dictionary and give their comments at others, this opportunity is only used a few times.

Figures of the student's dictionaries

Observing student's dictionaries offered these figures:

In all countries together, 200 dictionaries were started.

In this part of the study, observing dictionaries in a detailed way, four countries were involved: Germany, The Netherlands, Finland and Hungary.

The Austrian school had not yet started working in the dictionary.

The Italian school had one class dictionary, so no personal results could be observed.

In this part of the study, fifteen dictionaries were explored of each of the participating countries Germany, The Netherlands,

Finland. Only three dictionaries of Hungary were explored, because there were no more dictionaries available.

Table 1. Amounts and averages of words, according to total amount of dictionaries

	Amount of dictionaries	Total amount of words in the participating dictionaries	Average amounts of words per dictionary
Germany	15	166	11.1
Netherlands	15	543	36.2
Finland	15	1001	66.7
Hungary	3	31	10.3

These results show that the average German and Hungarian dictionaries contain 10 or 11 words. The average Dutch dictionary contains about 36 words, and the average Finnish dictionary contains about 66 words.

Table 2a. Amounts and percentages of additions to the words in the dictionaries

	Total amount of words	Amount and percentage of definitions		Amount and percentage of images		Amount and percentage of related words		Amount and percentage of links	
Germany	166	26	16%	15	9%	263	160%	0	0%
Netherlands	543	32	6%	13	2%	462	85%	35	6%
Finland	1001	61	6%	5	0%	15	2%	0	0%
Hungary	31	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Table 2b. Amounts and percentages of additions to the words in the dictionaries

	Total amount of words	Amount and percentage of example sentences		Amount and percentage of translations		Amount and percentage of comments	
Germany	166	4	2%	17	10%	20	12%
Netherlands	543	105	19%	61	11%	2	0%
Finland	1001	40	4%	113	11%	17	2%
Hungary	31	0	0%	0	0%	51	165%

Tables 2a and 2b show in most cases there is few additional information added to the words. Exceptions are the amount of the added related words in German and Dutch dictionaries: 160% and 85%. This means that averagely at each word respectively 1.6 and 0.85 related word is added. Another exception is the amount of comments, added to the Hungarian dictionaries, which is 165%, which means that averagely 1.65 times some comment is added to one word.

Interpretation and discussion

We will discuss some remarkable figures.

Overall few definitions were added to the words. Only the German dictionaries show a definition added at 16% of the words. Formulating a definition, by prefer in cooperation with other students, is a process of constructional learning, which asks high order thinking skills. To develop these thinking skills of students, this process should be supported by the teacher. Therefore we advocate a solid teacher training for using My Own Dictionary. The Viseus project offers a broad training, containing a section how to apply My Own Dictionary.

In Germany and the Netherlands there are quite a lot of related words added in the dictionaries. The high percentages of related words in these dictionaries (160% and 85%), support theories of conceptual networks in the mind. According to these results, one might suppose that the adding of one word in the dictionary triggers adding another word, which is related to the first word. Because the Finnish results unfortunately do not support this suggestion, further investigation is needed to learn a satisfying explanation.

The Hungarian dictionaries showed very little additional information added to the words. Nevertheless the percentage of added comments is 165%. This study showed no explanation; further investigation is needed to figure out the way of working with the dictionary. Possibly additional information like a definition was filled in at the wrong place in the dictionary.

Study pre test – post test

A pre test – post test study was made to observe the progress in word knowledge of the words in this case.

14 Dutch students and 14 German students had to add several words in their dictionary, and phrase the definitions of these words.

The researcher selected these words:

- two familiar words: music, sport
- two unknown words: politics, mortgage
- two abstract words: love, freedom

The students had to formulate the definition of three words by themselves (one familiar, one unknown and one abstract word). They had to formulate the definition of the other three words in pairs. This part of the study was the pre test. The ‘lesson’ took place at the schools, and lasted for 45 minutes. The teacher could decide whether to give the students assistance in formulating the definition or not. Both the Dutch and the German teacher decided not to help the students.

After one month they had to formulate the definition of the same words, this time not in My Own Dictionary, but on paper. This part of the study was the post test. There was no control group involved in this study, because of the specific character of the dictionary. At least at this stage of using the dictionary, it was not possible to extend a research with pre test – post test – control group.

The native language of all Dutch students was Dutch. For most German students German was not their native language. The Dutch students were 9 – 10 years old; the German students were 8 – 11 years old.

There were made several categories, to classify the definitions.

Table 3. Categories of definitions in My Own Dictionary of 14 Dutch students³

	Music		Politics		Love		Sport		Mortgage		Freedom (liberty)	
Category	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test
General feature	6	5					10	8				
Practical definition or example	4	6	5	5	11	12	2	7	4	8	14	15
Related word			1									
Definition of experience	4	3				1	2					
Abstract definition					2							
Incorrect association				1					4			
No definition		1	8	8	1	2			6	7		

The figures of table 3 show only a little difference in pre test and post test results of the Dutch students. The unknown word ‘mortgage’ seems to be better known in the post test: in the pre test 10 of 14 students had an *incorrect* association or no definition; in the post test 8 of 15 students had a *correct* definition. There is only a small shift in the kind of definitions.

Table 4. Categories of definitions in My Own Dictionary of 14 German students

	Music		Politics		Love		Sport		Mortgage		Freedom (liberty)	
Category	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test
General feature		2						1				
Practical definition or example	10	12	1	9	8	12	10	13			12	14

³ In the post test 15 Dutch students were involved

Related word							1					
Definition of experience	1				1		1				2	
Abstract definition	1				2	1						
Incorrect association												
No definition	2		13	5	3	1	2		14	14		

The figures of table 4 show quite a difference between the pre test and post test. In adding the figures of the pre test, there was no definition 34 times. The post test showed 20 times 'no definition'. Especially the unknown word 'politics' seemed to be better known at the time of the post test. Also we see an increase of the practical definitions of the German students. For most German students, German was their second language. Possibly they know the concepts of some words, but are not able to give a practical definition or example. After 'working with' the words as in this study, they are able to describe the words. More research is needed to examine this assumption.

Student Interviews

In this study 10 Dutch students and 10 German students were interviewed to get insight in the way they think of using My Own Dictionary. These students were also involved in the pre test and post test. The interviews took place after the pre test, and before the post test. The interviews with the students included two subjects:

- to get an impression of the experience of students working with My Own Dictionary
- having another test moment, between the pre test and the post test.

The interviews with the students provided these results:

The Dutch students as well as the German students like to work at My Own Dictionary. Four Dutch and four German students prefer working alone; five Dutch and five German students prefer working together at My Own Dictionary. For some students it also depends on

the situation. Some Dutch and some German students worked at home at My Own Dictionary. During the pre test and post test, the Dutch as well as the German students either knew the definitions of the words by themselves, or they gave no definition. This means the students were thrown on their own resources; the teachers did not help them.

The researcher asked the definitions of the test words; she registered the answers by herself, and classified the definitions (see table 5).

Table 5. Percentage of categories of definitions in My Own Dictionary: Dutch and German students, pre test – interview – post test

	10 Dutch students: all 6 words			10 German students: all 6 words		
	Pre test	Interview	Post test	Pre test	Interview	Post test
General feature	19	10	14.6	0	1.7	3.6
Practical definition or example	47.6	61.7	59.6	48.8	55.9	71.4
Related word	1.2	0	0	1.2	0	0
Definition of experience	7.1	3.3	4.5	5.9	3.3	0
Abstract definition	2.4	3.3	0	3.6	3.3	1.2
Incorrect association	4.8	3.3	1.1	0	0	0
No definition	17.9	21.7	20.2	40.5	36.7	23.8

Equally to the figures of table 3, table 5 shows only a little difference in pre test and post test results of the Dutch students. There is a slight decrease of unknown words ('no definition' and 'incorrect association') at the time of the interview. An explanation could be the fact that the interview took place just a couple of days after the

pre test. The students learned about the words a short time before, and could possibly remember talking about these words, and remember the meaning.

The German students show most decrease of unknown words at the moment between the interview and the post test. An explanation for the increase of known words, especially of the German students, could be the fact that most German students were non native German speakers. Possibly their vocabulary was smaller during the test period, and, due to this study, increased in the meanwhile because of 'working with' these words.

In conclusion

Cognitive load theory, neuropsychology and self-determined learning theory, together with new developments in the field of new literacy, are at the basis of My Own Dictionary. The mentioned theories have shown their effects in different studies. Learning by means of New literacy includes making use of images or pictures, sound, video.

In this study we explored the effects of using My Own Dictionary to increase vocabulary of students. The study shows a slight increase of word knowledge, which is nevertheless a marginal increase.

As we have seen, there could be improvement in the way the dictionary is used by teachers. As said before, we advocate a solid teacher training for using My Own Dictionary. The Viseus project offers a broad training, containing an extensive didactical manual.

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Magdolna Szilagyi, Stefan Aubreville

Analysis of students' texts and comments on Vis@Vis

Introduction

WISEUS is a project on virtual world in European schools which gives opportunity to get an insight into the world of pupils with the help of text coming from different European countries and having been produced in text manager workshops specially designed for these purposes by the pupils themselves. Words and texts coming from the pupils' own experiences have been compiled for web use supported by teachers, schools and universities and have been given publicity in European schools.

This project is such a network which makes it possible to exchange experiences all over Europe. The texts produced here form the basis for the analysis and give a snapshot of the students' works which have already been done in the text manager workshops and of the participants' works as well. The analysis shows only a given time segment and with the help of the student texts it tries to look back on the processes and to draw conclusions in connection with the work in the workshops. While analysing the texts and the available information we will find similarities and differences which enable us to give feedback to the teachers, pupils and anybody else who takes part in the project and also make it possible to offer guidelines for future successful work in the virtually connected text manager workshops in European schools. The central question of the analysis is the kind of feedback and implications for the text manager workshops and the application of web tools as well as the possible consequences for future work.

1. Analysis and criteria for international text comparison

Within the framework of WISEUS project the participating schools set up text manager workshops and provide the Internet access to the web based tools of the project. It is obvious that the work done by the teachers and the pupils cannot be compared as the text manager workshops themselves have proved to have very different

profiles. Cultural differences in the working style of different countries have to be taken into consideration. The variety of different approaches and the above mentioned intercultural framework within which the pupils' texts arouse give the possibility to analyse only some areas which show a transitional state of the pupils' works in the process of the project. It also involves to some extent the possibility to look into the pupils' web-based works but mainly the comparison of the formal criteria can be carried out as the comparison of the contents is not possible due to the different national languages.

The analysis is based on texts which have been sent electronically, and because the database is still being developed our analysis can only give information about a short period and does not reflect the whole development. Thus our analysis can be seen more as a snapshot which is not able to reflect precisely the progress of the different text manager workshops.

Texts are available in printed form in German, Finnish (translated into English), Dutch and Hungarian.

Texts from the given period can be found online in German, English, Dutch, Finnish, Turkish and Hungarian written by lower primary school pupils and in German, English and Italian by upper primary and secondary school students.

The analysis deals with texts mentioned above from different point of views. On one hand we look at them strictly on the grounds of formal criteria; it applies mainly to those texts which have not been translated yet and they content cannot be interpreted clearly. On the other hand we analyse those texts which are available either in English or in German and can be interpreted from linguistic and content aspects as well.

Text linguistics offers only few works on international text analysis and comparison of web based workshops. It means that we have to exchange the first practical experiences and work out the criteria within the given framework and cultural differences match to this variety as far as possible. It is desirable and needed to carry out different analyses in every country and name their own terms. This work is based on different sources and it must be taken into account when stating its validity and refining its results. The first source to be mentioned is the Common European Framework of Reference which we used as a starting point according to which the variety and auton-

omy of each language must be taken into account, but at the same time the common features must be filtered on the basis of which it is possible to analyse European texts.

„The Common European Framework of Reference gives a common basis for the development of target language curricula, framework curricula, examinations, teaching material packs etc. all over Europe.” (CEFR 2001:14)

Since the application of different procedures found in the Framework of Reference for comparative analysis within this work would be too large-scale, in the beginning we start with the analysis of the functional criteria including context, paratext and text function.

The context of the analysed texts is easy to identify as all of the texts result from the workshops. They were written on computers and that causes typical typing mistakes and transpositions of letters or neglecting capital letters.

At the same time the texts were written by pupils who were well aware of the fact that their texts could be read by their schoolmates or any other Internet users and could be commented as well. Regardless of this public awareness the texts are rooted more in private life activities. Paratext cannot be fully identified in the analysed texts sent in e-mails, but if we look at the texts on the Internet we can state that they represent similar design and layout based on the capabilities of the website.

At the same time there are some differences which are not to do with the colours, size and font of the letters.

The significant difference which can be discovered in the copies sent in e-mails is that some texts are accompanied with pictures while most of them are not. Text function not always can be identified. The main function with few exceptions can be concluded from the layout, structure and context.

On the second place stay the structural criteria. First of all they contain the topic and the semantic and syntactic aspects. A deeper structural analysis can be carried out only in case of those texts which can be analysed from linguistic and content aspects as well.

2. Formal analysis of the text sent in e-mails

The analysis of the paratext is partially based on assumptions as some phenomena of the Finnish, Dutch and Hungarian texts can be explained only by specific cultural, linguistic and literacy experiences. It applies for example to the placement of the title or to the usage of direct speech. In this way teaching material packs and teaching methods are decisive factors in workshop text production and in further processing of the pupils' texts. At this point it seems to be important to be aware of the development closely connected to teaching material packs, and on this basis it is easy to interpret the next literature reference: „Teaching material packs try to refine and concretize the ideas and principles in connection with learning methods in order to formulate a definite teaching policy.” (Neuner/Hunfeld, 2007:16)

Under these conditions we should try to make comparisons and use them as an empirical potential. While an internal analysis seems to be traceable and apparent, the external one is more complicated and dependent on cultural circumstances. Here we have to point at the differences in the layout as lots of approaches and perspectives are possible and their changes do not seem to yield anything new but in the content they can be very different. Concerning working with texts in foreign language teaching we have to refer to Zimmermann phase model which differentiates between three phases: „language acquisition, language use and integration” (Huneke, 1990:74)

2.1. German texts

The texts are between 6-31 lines. As the font size is significantly different only the number of the words can be the basis for calculating the real length.

One of the texts is bilingual and can be read both in German and English, another text has apparently been scanned as it is handwritten with the help of black lines. Eight texts are written in capital letters, five of them are left aligned, there are eight texts with no paragraphs, six texts are organised into paragraphs and out of that six two of them contain blank lines between the paragraphs to emphasise the content change.

Ten texts have a title, and in four of them the title is written in other character and/or font size and/or underlined and/or highlighted with a different colour. Four titles are not different from the texts only their position, the line spacing or a blank line shows their function. Four of the texts come with pictures, three drawings and one photo.

One of the texts is a poem which is obvious because of the arrangement of the lines, and thirteen other texts are narrative and/or descriptive.

Six texts contain inverted commas but only four texts have got real quotations, and in two texts the inverted commas are used to highlight the content and/or express irony in connection with the given concept.

There is a webpage reference in six texts and two texts contain the name of the author.

German texts from Italy

Five texts which can be found here are also significantly different in terms of length and layout (and one of them is written in different colour). Four texts have a title out of which two of them are highlighted with size and the others with colour or underlining. All texts are left aligned and contain paragraphs while in two of them blank lines are inserted, too.

Two texts contain inverted commas which show direct quotations judged by their length in one case and content highlight in the other case.

Three of the texts are supposed to be poems according to their layout and their line endings match to a rhyme pattern.

All of the five texts contain the name and the photograph of the author.

2.2. Finnish texts

All of the five Finnish texts can be read in both Finnish and English. In Finnish – opposed to the English versions - they do not have a title, but in English the titles are underlined.

The texts are between four and seven lines but because of the different font sizes it is impossible to make an objective comparison.

There are no pictures at all. The signatures belonging to the ten texts must be the authors' names.

Four texts are not paragraphed but the remaining six ones are left aligned with paragraphs and blank lines which probably indicate different content parts.

Two texts contain emoticons which might show emotional and/or ironical aspect of the content.

2.3. Dutch texts

On the basis of the available texts it cannot be decided unambiguously whether there are eight or nine texts. That is why we cannot compare their length. Probably the shortest text contains ten lines but the number of the lines is not a definite criterion as the font size differs to a great extent.

Unfortunately we have got only the hard copies printed out by a black and white printer while at least in three texts different colours are used.

Four or five of the texts have got a title which can be recognised because of the different font size and colour as well as the special front position within the text and the inserted blank line which separates the title from the text itself. .

There is no picture or reference for the author in any of the texts.

Two texts are not paragraphed while six or seven texts contain paragraphs out of which two or three of them use blank lines to emphasise the content and/or separate the different parts. Three texts are center aligned and six or seven are left aligned.

We can assume that the center aligned text is not a poem.

Two texts contain loads of exclamation marks while another one uses dots (...), inverted commas are used only once which might show emphasise and/or irony because there is only one word between them.

2.4. Hungarian texts

Here we can find the greatest differences comparing length even though we can only judge by external, formal features. There is one text which must have been written for a longer period (from November 6th till December 19th). It is obvious from the dates at the beginning of the texts and implies that the text is a kind of diary.

The remaining eleven texts contain twelve to twenty-five lines.

Two texts are written with totally different fonts and their font size is also different.

Ten texts have a title or more titles (in case of the diary), seven of them are center aligned (once underlined) the rest are front positioned and separated from the text by line spacing or underlining.

There is one text which contains a photo, the diary comes with matching graphics and three texts refer to the possible author.

Two of the texts are not paragraphed while seven of them contain paragraphs out of which one uses larger spaces to separate the paragraphs and the content parts.

Ten texts are left aligned and two texts are center aligned and the later does not refer to poems as the texts are not well structured.

One of the texts seems to be a conversation as dashes and perhaps inverted commas are used as well.

In three of the texts we can find lots of exclamation marks and in three other texts three dots, in one text there is an emoticon and as it is a Smilie it is obvious that the author wants to convey emotions.

Inserted commas are used in three texts and in two of them they show direct quotations while in the third one only separate words are highlighted by them.

3. Comparison of the texts sent in e-mails with the texts on the Internet

We looked at only the e-mailed text in the Internet offer and compared them according to their layout and design and we will mention only the significant differences. It is also necessary to analyse the context as well which can serve as a guideline to see how the pupils work in the text manager workshops. Certainly these statements about the pupils' works are more or less guesses so we must

pay attention to and analyse them later on. In the same way the criteria set up at a certain time must be checked continuously and examined again. The factors which formulate the conditions of the context analysis are so versatile that the statements about the text manager workshops are only valid for a given period of time. We also have to take into account that the resulting texts of language workshops are formulated by different motivations arising from technical equipment. The basis for that can be the article by Michael Prieteroth „The end of chalk era” (see Frühes Deutsch 17/2009:13)

3.1. German texts

Six texts sent in e-mails can be found on the Internet as well. All of them contain the names of the authors; four of them are commented as well. In three texts the colour, in two texts the title have changed and in one text the layout is different in comparison with the sent text as new paragraphs and blank lines have been added.

Eight texts can not be found at the agreed time.

There are five German texts sent from Italy, and all of them can be found on the Vis@vis sites.

Four texts have comments from one to eleven and the authors have answered two comments.

In three mail copies there are some changes in comparison with the web page: the text process/layout and/or font/size/colour, and one picture belonging to the text has not been sent.

3.2. Finnish texts

Those texts which had been sent from Finland and could be read in English were not found on the webpage at a given time. However the Finnish texts were available and we could notice a change in colouring and layout as paragraphs and blank lines had been introduced. As paragraphing surely leads to better text understanding it is worth adding it as a criterion for the text manager workshops even in case of smaller changes as well. These changes are of greater importance for language learners and help to understand texts better.

3.3. Dutch texts

The texts from the Netherlands are basically identical with the texts offered by Vis@vis pages and do not show any significant features. At different times the formulation of the texts and text types must be based on different criteria and the apparently small changes may be more important to the author but we still do not refer to them when analysing context at a given time.

3.4. Hungarian texts

Four texts can be found and each of them with references to the author and the diary has been developed further. Compared to the hard copy the webpage version contains one more part from December 21st, 2008, but has no graphics or paragraphs. In another text on the webpage the colour has been changed and some comments have been added. Another text probably had more paragraphs in its hard copy format and after comparing the two copies it becomes clear that the webpage version is only one continuous text while the paper format contains two texts. Seven more texts are not available at the given time.

4. Structural analysis of the chosen texts

Since the structural analysis concerns thematic, semantic and syntactic questions, we have to choose the text for this analysis. It is evident that we can only deal with texts which are available in English or German as the linguistic explanation is needed. That is why in international comparison teaching and learning languages can be seen as a challenge which requires constant renewal and amendment of the goals and analytical procedures according to the given procedure. We still have to take into consideration that:” Those theoretical concepts which can be and should be described are developed and outlined by particular academic institutions and educational systems, ...” (Bausch,Christ,Krumm, 1995:14)

The structural analysis of the remaining texts would be based partially or entirely on suppositions like in case of paratext analysis. In this way it is possible to organise and sort out the written texts

while the semantic or syntactic analysis is subordinated to country specific criteria. To experience the cultural diversity the semantic level is often seems to be an appropriate approach as translation gives only the correspondence of words but does not identifies the understanding or the meaning of the situation culturally.

From this point of view we have to consider: „ If we use authentic target language texts in education it is of primary importance to examine the extent to which there are cultural specific items in different text types.” (Huneke/Steinig, 2005:64)

4.1. German texts

It is visible how the topics, the lengths and the language levels of the texts differ. If we search for the texts on the Internet they can be found on the Vis@vis web pages of lower primary and upper primary and secondary schools too, which explains the differences in levels especially in the lexical field.

Out of the fourteen texts there are eight of them which belong to the category of fantasy and/or tale, and one of them is written in first person singular. Six works deal with the topic of Easter/colours/garden, one with dragons and another one with frogs. All of the eight texts have got a happy ending, and in seven of them the initial problem is resolved positively. In these seven texts there are complex linguistic forms (although one text consists of short, simple sentences without clauses), like direct speech (five times), relative clauses (six times) and time clauses (six times). All of the texts are written in simple past but because of the direct speech there is a change for the present as well. The vocabulary of the works is also very different. Five texts are characterised by limited vocabulary, two of them contain quite varied register and one of them is pleasant to read as it is characterised by the unity of vocabulary and text structure.

Out of the fourteen texts four of them are narrative. One of them describes an event which happened in someone's birthplace, three of them are about the everyday life of the family, and out of these three texts one is written about third persons and the rest is about the writers' own experience. In two cases the texts are reports of real events so they are written in simple past. The other two reports are in pre-

sent tense. In one of the texts there are only very simple sentences with no clauses and partly at the beginnings of the sentences there are repetitions. One text is bilingual (German/English), but it is not clear if both versions are written by the students themselves. The not too frequent vocabulary and the cumulative occurrence of the syntactic mistakes which can not be found in the German version are against that. Two reports are characterised by the high number of verbs which makes them easy and fluent to read. Although the texts are reports they reflect deep emotions and sympathy for the situations being described.

Another text is a transition between fantasy and report and about a future vision. It is written in present tense which refers to future. In addition the verbs 'müssen, sein, haben, sollen, werden' are used in first and second conditionals. Apart from these verb forms the text is grammatically simple and the structures reflect the spoken language usage.

Finally the last four texts are poems about nature with no rhymes (blank verse) written in present tense. The vocabulary is suitable for the topic and the repetition of complete sentences emphasises the topic and the structure of the verse.

4.2 German texts from Italy

We have got five texts, two of them are poems, two reports and one is supposedly a fantasy story.

The two poems are blank verses in present tense. One of them is about winter and is distinct because of the repetition of the first word at the beginning of the lines. This repeated word leads the reader to the summit and the fulfilment of the meaning. The second verse (about free time) seems to be a combination of two nursery rhymes. If we include the title as well the verse gives out that form. It is also written in present tense and in first person singular, its vocabulary is simple.

One of the reports is written in present tense and contains simple sentences; there is only one adverbial clause of reason used. The story is about an animal with a happy ending. Despite the simplicity of the structure and the vocabulary it reads well. The second report, which is almost a crime story, is in simple past and written in first

person singular. The ending is also happy. The vocabulary and sentence structure are of higher standard than in the first text. The structure and the vocabulary are suitable to describe the topic and the situation and reflect the possible emotions.

The last work, a supposedly fantasy story about a little girl is written in simple past. The sentence structures are more elaborated there is direct speech, relative clauses and adverbial clauses of time and place. Although the mood of the text is rather sad it has got a happy ending. Altogether the style and the aura of the texts is lyric which is emphasised by the repetition of words and phrases.

4.3 English texts from Finland

All the five texts we have are about winter/winter holidays and they are written in two tenses, the simple present and the simple past. Simple present is usually used to describe the holiday in general while simple past is used to write about the students' own experience. They use some clause and infinitive structures as well. According to the sentence structures all the five texts are narratives even though judging by their layout they more seem to be letters as all of them end with a greeting and a name or only with a name. Here - as in other texts as well - the principle of personal communication is more articulated as: „ Action and communication are inseparable parts of human social existence,...” (Schlemminger 2000:16) In this way mixed forms arise independently from preliminary definition of text types or analysis, and different rules must be applied to them as they are not crystal clear text types. All the texts must be seen as independent works and the difficulties in unified comparison must be accepted.

5. Summary of the structural analysis

While analysing the texts we tried to meet the next compulsory criteria: text structure and topic, vocabulary, sentence form, tense and tense aspect. The process is very difficult because of the different text types and topics. To find and apply unified analytical criteria is also an analytical factor which also has to allow for a lot of requirements. In this situation the preference has been given to ex-

changing experiences about the work in European text manager workshops. It also has gained more importance according to the Common European Framework of Reference to regard „ the rich heritage of diversity experienced in connection with European cultures and languages which is a value to be preserved and developed,..” (CEFR 2001:15) On the basis of these ideas it is even more valid to think that an encounter with a text always requires a subjective interpretation and can never be analysed independently from cultural capabilities.

What is more the texts are always changing so comparison of the hard copy and what can be found on the Internet at a given time is not easy. It applies to the spelling, grammar, structure and style too, but the difficulty in analysing the always changing Internet texts shows the possible development of web work. Further analyses and investigations can be devoted to this development since improvement of text competencies is one of the aims of the project and the individual text manager workshops. The exchange of intercultural experiences is evident in the text production which is distinct according to the different capabilities of different countries and in careful international glossing of „text compositions”. There is no doubt that the freshness of the content is not the same in case of the original composition written on a topic given by the teacher and the later translation and publishing, and it causes problems even for European readers. It must be established that the duration of the learning and publication process is an important factor in web based work.

Independently from these ideas we should encourage the composition of texts in the dominant language and publishing them among the project members or for the European school society promoting the learning process in single schools. Finally let us finish with some ideas taken from the Common European Framework of References: „.... great effort is required not to interpret this diversity as a barrier to understanding but as a source of mutual enrichment and understanding....” (CEFR, 2001:15)

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Ingrid Kunze

The use of learning environments for language teaching and learning: An analysis of teachers' work on the base of surveys, documentary analysis and interviews

1. Introduction

In the project VISEUS teachers from nine schools in six countries were involved. Some of them already participated in the development of the project idea and concept. Some other teachers came into the project in the first month of work. All of them participated voluntarily and were very interested in the main goals and methods of the project as well as in the cooperation with colleagues from other European countries.

The teachers were responsible for doing the following tasks:

- setting up a virtually connected language workshop in their own school
- initiating and continuing the work in this workshop with a constant group of students
- introducing and using the instruments “Vis@vis” and “My own dictionary” in a systematical and reflected way
- helping in the further development of this instruments
- developing material for creative language teaching and to post it in the online-platform “blikk” after testing in the classroom
- initiating and supporting the communication between the students on the online-platform and in “Vis@vis”
- supporting the development and the evaluation of the in-service training modules

Obviously these tasks overstep the frame of regular routine work, the tasks demand creativity, engagement and competences in reflection and innovation. To observe and to analyse this process was one of the reasons to include accompanying research from the start of the project.

2. Research questions, hypothesis and research methods

The central research questions were: How do the teachers support the students in their work with the instruments “My own dictionary”, “Vis@vis” and the online-platform “blikk” and how do they develop their own teaching abilities? How do the teachers learn as professionals in this working process?

With reference to these questions we elaborated three hypotheses:

1. The teachers use the instruments in the frame of their own beliefs and concepts of language teaching and learning.
2. If there is a good fit between these concepts and the instruments the teachers use the instruments intensively.
3. In-service training has to give teachers the possibility to reflect their own beliefs and concepts and to open these concepts for new ways of teaching and learning.

In this part of the accompanying research we used various research methods: At the beginning of the project all teachers had to answer a questionnaire which was developed to analyse their beliefs in teaching and learning languages and their concepts of language instruction as well as the usage of new media in the classroom. Continuously we analysed the project teachers’ activities on the virtual communication platform and their field reports about the work in the language workshops. In the final stage of the project I interviewed some of the teachers. The topics of these problem-based interviews were typical situations in the language workshops, the goals of teachers and students, the ways of learning, highlights and problems in the work and possibilities to continue the work after the end of the project. The collected data were used to develop case studies.

3. Three case studies: Isabel, Anna and Paul

In the following I report about three case studies to check the research hypotheses. The cases are examples for professional learning processes during the practical project work.

3.1 Work with “Vis@vis” in the frame of a teaching concept inspired by Freinet – Case study Isabel

Isabel's⁴ students are between eleven and thirteen years old and learn in an integrative class together with some students with special needs. Isabel's motivation to take part in the project was the interest to realise progressive educational ideas and to use varied teaching and learning methods. She was one of the most active teachers in the communication on the platform “blikk”. In the teacher's forum Isabel posted many self-developed materials especially in the field of free writing. She adapted well known methods of creative writing to the needs of children and collected texts, pictures and paintings with a high impact of motivation for young writers and readers. Isabel asked their project colleagues for feedback and experiences repeatedly.

In the final interview Isabel names as a motto for her work in the language workshops:

Bitte schreib, bitte schreib, was du denkst! (Please write, please write what you are thinking.)

The following quotations show the context and the reasons for this central idea.

The main goal of Isabel's work in the language workshop is to encourage the students to free communication in written and also in oral form. She follows the concept of “free expression”, developed and practised by the French educationist Celestin Freinet. When asked about her main ideas of language teaching and learning Isabel answers:

Nach Freinet arbeiten, und ich denke, diese Idee vom freien Ausdruck. Das ist mir schon wichtig, dass die Schüler lernen, die eigene Meinung auszudrücken, dass die Schüler lernen, das zu schreiben, was sie denken. Auch wenn sie das dann in banalen Geschichten

⁴ The names made anonymous.

verpacken. Aber ich denke, genau darum geht's. Schreibhemmungen verlieren. Freude am Schreiben, Freude an der Kommunikation, auch Freude am Austausch. Ich hab' zum Beispiel auch erlebt, dass meine Schüler zwar ganz banale Bemerkungen zu den Texten schreiben. Aber ich finde es schon schön, dass sie darauf reagieren und dass sie neugierig sind auf die Texte.

Isabel illustrates the student's fun in writing and communication with numerous examples. Proudly she recounts that the art teacher has given her the feedback that her students haven't got any problems to write texts along with their self-created graffitis and to present them in an internet blog. In "Vis@vis" as well as in the dictionary Isabel's students are very active in comparison with other project classes. They also use the possibility to comment the texts of other students although these comments are mostly short and global. The instruments also open special learning ways for students with special needs. For instance they like to hear the texts in "Vis@vis" or use it for reading training.

As an example for student's activities Isabel reports about a communication via skype between their students and a class in another project school in which they created a more or less absurd ping-pong-story. In this story a farmer is drinking goat's milk – an unknown word and an unknown food for the foreign students.

... und dann saß der Bauer beim Frühstück, und der Bauer bekommt beim Frühstück Ziegenmilch, haben meine Schüler geschrieben. Und von den Osnabrückern kam: Was ist denn das – Ziegenmilch? Wir kennen das nicht. Und meine Schüler haben dann versucht, das zu erklären, und die einen haben gesagt: Ja, das schmeckt eher säuerlich. Ja, und die muss aber frisch sein – frisch gemolken, sonst schmeckt die nicht. Und die haben das dann den Schülern geschrieben. Und da ist mir ganz klar geworden – nicht nur mir, ich glaub auch den Schülern, dass diese kulturelle Verschiedenheit greift und dass die wirklich sich auseinandersetzen mit was anderem – und ich denke, das war für mich wirklich so ein Aha-Effekt. Ich hab' mich wahnsinnig gefreut, dass das spontan von den Schülern gekommen ist, Relevanz hatte für die Schüler selbst, auch die Erklärungen abzugeben. Das war für mich ein wirklich schönes Erlebnis.

Isabel interprets the scene as an occasion to reflect and to speak about language and cultural differences – in spite of a story which is trivial from the point of view of an adult writer.

Another central goal is self-regulated learning. Isabel reports about the student's work in the virtual language workshop during her absence regarding a VISEUS meeting.

Jetzt zum Beispiel müssen meine Schüler in dieser Woche, wo ich nicht an der Schule bin, meine Klasse arbeitet da. PC-Raum zubetoniert, reserviert. Die Schüler gehen runter und arbeiten absolut autonom. Das muss ich mir aber auch anschauen. [...] Wie weit ich komme, muss ich sehen. Und ich hab' dann auch nicht mehr die Möglichkeit zu den Schülern zu gehen und zu sagen: Lösch das, bessere das aus, mach das, schreib hier dazu, dass ich das kommentieren kann. Ja, wird spannend, schauen wir mal. Mal sehen, was da passiert in dieser Woche.

The quotation mirrors a professional problem of the teacher: to accept student's autonomy, therefore being very careful and reluctant with comments and corrections. The analysis of Isabel's activities in "Vis@vis" shows that she uses the possibility for comments very reluctantly. She comments on a few texts and she reminds the students of applying the rules of communication. Nevertheless language reflection has a more or less marginal role in the process of free or creative writing.

Dieses Nachdenken über Wörter, Nachdenken über Texte, Nachdenken über Rechtschreibung, auch Grammatik, wobei ich das jetzt wirklich nur am Rande gemacht habe. Ich wäre zeitlich nicht dazu gekommen, alle Texte zu korrigieren und dann noch einmal die Korrektur der Korrektur. Ich denke, das ist auch nicht Sinn der Sache. Wenn sie frei schreiben, dann sollen sie schreiben, nicht überarbeiten. Wobei auch Überarbeitung stattgefunden hat im Sitzkreis, in Schreibkonferenzen und solchen Sachen. Aber ich denke, relevant war das für mich in erster Linie nicht.

This reserve to demand text revisions could be one of the reasons of the student's reserve to give comments to the texts in "Vis@vis".

Obviously there is a close fit between Isabel's concept for language teaching and learning and the opportunities of the instruments developed in VISEUS. Besides there is a close fit between Isabel's concept and the educational concept of her team. This group of teachers decided for free work with individual working plans for each student for one week or one month. This work is part of the regular lessons and in this way the virtually connected language workshop is also integrated in the regular lessons. Free writing is a part of the countries' curriculum – in the professional interpretation of the teachers. Isabel and her colleagues are absolutely determined to continue the work in the language workshop after the end of the project.

3.2 Discovering the possibilities of "Vis@vis" by integration into a project- and result- orientated concept – Case study Anna

Differently from Isabel Anna wasn't a member of the foundation group of VISEUS. She is the class teacher of students who worked in the language workshop in a voluntary working-group outside the regular lessons. At the beginning Anna used the instruments rarely and technical problems with computers and the new software cooled down her engagement. But in the course of time Anna discovered the possibilities of "Vis@vis" for her own lessons with the twelve to fourteen years old students. She recounts in the interview that the students are interested in publishing texts which they had written in the German lessons or in school projects.

Zunächst haben sie dann Märchen gehört und nacherzählt und später dann aus Reizwörtern selber Märchen entwickelt, und die sind ja auch reingestellt worden. Oder zum Thema Rassismus – da haben die Kinder dann ihre Ergebnisse vorgetragen zur Projektwoche. Und dann haben die Kinder auch gesagt: Du, das ist so eine Supergeschichte – das kann man ja auch reinstellen. Und eine von den Geschichten ist ja auch schon mit drin. Und sie sind jetzt auch der Meinung oder so weit, dass sie sagen – nicht nur geschriebene Texte

gehören da rein, sondern wir wollen auch zum Beispiel unsere Lektüre, die wir gelesen haben und toll fanden, den anderen weitervermitteln. So kurz den Inhalt darstellen, aber nicht zu viel verraten, und so den Leseanreiz vielleicht für andere Kinder schaffen.

That means the students discover “Vis@vis” as a communication platform but not as a working platform. They write their texts as a document in the programme “word”, revise it and at the end of the work they publish the final version in “Vis@vis”. In that way they don’t use all opportunities of the instrument. Anna emphasizes the motivational value of publishing in “Vis@vis” and the importance for student’s self-confidence.

Ich denke, die Kinder finden es toll, ihre Ergebnisse präsentieren zu können auf einer Plattform wie „vis@vis“. Zu sagen: kuck mal, was ich leisten kann. Das hebt auch ihr Selbstbewusstsein mehr, aber der Austausch ist eben zu schwerfällig.

The last sentence refers to a problem in Anna’s classroom: The students need a feedback or a reaction by students from other countries immediately. That’s why Anna favours communication instruments like skype or chatrooms to support the exchange about the written texts.

Rarely Anna’s students use “My own dictionary” because it hasn’t got a constant place in the German lessons and Anna doesn’t give the students possibilities to reflect about the work with the dictionary. There is no fit between the work with the dictionary and Anna’s teaching concept. She describes it as a project- and result-orientated one. Clearly that concept has more connections with “Vis@vis” as a room for publishing texts and results of student’s projects.

3.3 Working with „My own dictionary“ in a classroom of freedom – Case study Paul

Paul was the class teacher of a group of students aged nine to eleven. Like Anna he wasn’t a member of the foundation group. His central educational idea is to give the children fun in learning and

freedom in organising their learning. Free or creative writing plays an important role in his language lessons and he uses “Vis@vis” besides writing by hand or with the programme “word”. In the interview Paul speaks in detail about the work with “My own dictionary”. He explains that the children like to work with this instrument, but some of them mainly use it to make a competition: Who is able to write the biggest number of words? Actually, the winner has many word entries in his dictionary, but no definitions, translations or photos.

Die Kinder finden das schön. Vielleicht hängt es teilweise von der Gruppe ab – das ist eine Gruppe, die sich gegenseitig nur in Wettkämpfen sehen: Ich muss mehr haben, ich muss schneller sein und so weiter. Ein paar haben sich einen Streit geliefert: Wer trägt die meisten Wörter ein? Nur Wörter eintragen – da kann man gar nichts damit machen. Dann habe ich gesagt: Jetzt ist mal Schluss, keine Wörter mehr eintragen. [...] Versuch mal, wenn Du’s weißt, in eine anderer Sprache zu übersetzen, oder frag’ andere, die dir helfen können mit anderen Sprachen. Versuch die Definition zu umschreiben: Was bedeutet das Wort und such’ Wörter, die dazugehören. Weil im Anfang, vor allem was haben die Jungs gemacht damit? Namen von Fußballspieler eingetragen. Ich kann dann haufenweise Bilder dazukleben, aber ich kann keine Definitionen geben.

In that way Paul learned that the instrument isn’t able to lead the learning process alone. The teacher has to help with questions, suggestions or even rules. Paul also observes that some of the students are not able to make use of the topical freedom offered by the instruments. Often they lack rich ideas, some boys only stick to their favourite topic football.

Es geht immer über Fußball, Fußball bei den Jungs. Ich lasse sie eigentlich darin frei, aber wenn sie nichts wissen, so sage ich: Denk’ doch mal dran, an den Unterricht, den wir gehabt haben, mit Geschichte oder Geographie – da Sachen mit reinzuschreiben oder andere Hobbys, die man hat, außer Fußball, dass nicht nur das reinkommt.

Although Paul notices students' problems he insists on the values of freedom and voluntariness in working with the instruments. His language teaching concept collides with the instrument "My own dictionary" but he doesn't support the students to overcome this gap. That's why the opportunities of the instruments are used only by chance, depending on the children's individual background. For instance, he reports that an English speaking boy also writes down the English translations. A girl fills in German words with her German Mother at home.

Wir haben angefangen in der Schulsprache, und ich hab' am Anfang auch gesagt: Wenn du Wörter kennst in anderen Sprachen, darfst du die mit eintragen. In der Klasse ist ein Junge, der ist auch zweisprachig aufgewachsen. Er kommt aus Kenia, also spricht Englisch. Er konnte alles, was er eintrug, auch in Englisch mit eintragen. Ein Mädchen hat eine deutsche Mutter, also auch zuhause daran gearbeitet, zusammen mit Mutti die Übersetzung nach Deutsch gemacht. Es waren auch ein paar Kinder, die waren so schlau, die haben in Google gekuckt und haben sich da ein Get-it geholt, womit man Wörter übersetzen kann in jeder Sprache.

Like Anna and Isabel Paul appreciates the motivational value of the instruments developed in VISEUS.

Wir machen dieses Projekt, aber es soll kein Pflichtteil sein, kein Muss. Das ist das Schöne – Sie können selber ran, wann Sie wollen. Sie können auch zuhause zeigen, was sie machen damit und was sie in das Wörterbuch eingetragen haben, können sie zuhause – und selbst wenn sie in Urlaub sind, können sie sogar sehen lassen, was sie machen. Das ist das Schöne daran, und das macht es etwas ungewollter und nicht so zwingend.

A great problem is that Paul's successor as class teacher doesn't continue the work with the instruments. The new concept wasn't involved in the lessons of other teachers as well as in the school programme. Therefore the further use of the instruments and material is unclear.

4 Résumé and conclusion

The three case studies prove that the teachers use the instruments in the frame of their own beliefs and concepts of language teaching and learning (hypothesis 1). That's why every teacher has her or his favourite instruments and reservations about other ones.

We could find that a good fit between teacher's concepts and the instruments is the most important precondition for an intensive and creative use of the instruments (hypothesis 2). All teachers had to struggle with the same technical problems because we improved the instruments while the work in the classrooms was already going on. Nevertheless, criticism of the teachers with the appropriate concepts was on a lower level. They often found their own solutions and gave ideas to handle the technical or educational problem at hand. We could observe a clear professional development of some of the project teachers. For instance, Ilona, who had bad technical conditions at the beginning of the project, worked very creatively. She analysed material from other countries, adapted it to the needs of her school and developed her own material for teaching German as a foreign language. When she got new computers her students continued the work and used the project instruments step by step.

These insights lead to the conclusion that in-service training has to give teachers the possibility to reflect their own beliefs and concepts and to open these concepts for new ways of teaching and learning (hypothesis 3). At the same time, these insights confirm the concept of our in-service training modules.

As a result of our accompanying research it is possible to characterize competences which teachers need to work with "Vis@vis". They

- are able prepare the virtual learning environment and know its characteristics.
- give the students adequate and interesting reasons and stimuli for writing.
- support the students in writing and revising their texts.
- organize and accompany cooperative writing and revising processes.

To the work with „my own dictionary“ teachers need the following competences: They

- prepare the virtual learning environment
- make adequate decisions about goals and topics of teaching and learning, about the communicative context and about forms of student's cooperation and feedback
- accompany the students especially in the field of lexical development
- give adequate and interesting tasks to working and training after using the dictionary
- give good stimuli to use the dictionary actively and creatively.

As a consequence of the project, further effort should be put on organizing effective and innovative settings to give teachers the chance to acquire these competences. If it is possible to include teachers and teachers' trainers from various countries, it should be a European added value and a good opportunity for intercultural exchange and communication.

Results of the evaluation of inservice training modules

1. Introduction: theory of assessment and philosophy of the project

Our project VISEUS explicitly is about to develop methods to teach languages to generations that are used to new, electronic-media-based learning methods, so called "New Literacy" skills. This type of tools have a close connection to what in earlier generation of texts is called "e-learning", and three recent theses in Finland show that most of the e-Learning is just a translation of traditional push-type pedagogy to computer environment (Sampola 2008, Mällinen 2007, Hulkari 2006) and that the "usability" of the computer classroom is typically worse than that of the traditional classroom (Sampola 2008). The way to avoid this, if there is a way, would be to subject the tools to be developed to an early-stage assessment by the target groups.

The theory of assessment includes the idea of assessment-against-goals. In the VISEUS project, the main goals were those of the ideals of New Literacy: to go from contact teaching (knowledge storage), "ABC", to self-study, and further to knowledge structuring in cooperation ("forums", social scripting, Wiki-type activities). Simultaneously, the underlying pedagogic philosophy requires a constructive, rather than absolute, approach: no teaching material, tool or philosophy is "ready", but continuously subject to reflection, and thus also a tool towards continuous development of specialization.

Of the possible learning environment development models;

- Module (ready-made modules that guide the path of the learner)
- Marketplace (learner "walks" around and stops at interesting promotions;)
- Theatre (learner participates in group activity in a way that activates the mind)
- Story (learner walks along a case or event and reflects upon what she encounters with what she knows of reality)

Our approach was, based on the above goals of the project, to combine the modules (to make the training programme “programmatic”, less random) and the “theatre” and “story” formats (because we believe the currently popular informal learning media, especially social scripting tools such as Twitter, facebook, SecondLife and such, combine these, and because our understanding of desirable pedagogic philosophy for teacher training includes reflection in a central position). Thus, the themes that are seen as central for language learning didactics must also be included in the training/teaching method:

- New literacy – global change in the free-time environment of the children (and adults) - media boom - leads to new ways of learning; teachers and learners find a part of the material in internet and evaluate it individually
- Language acquisition – how the language “grows” in the learner e.g. by playing or connecting pictures and words
- Multilinguality – several languages learned can support each other, e.g. through the use of EUOKLEX
- Creative teaching – skip the traditional thinking (“Repeat after me please”)
- Reflection and analysis – understanding of what actions of teacher that best support children’s learning; exchange between theory and own practical experience; for children, exchange between the words in foreign languages and THEIR own experience

The assessment to be conducted should thus be able to take a stand on these points. We should find a way to assess the products that would make it possible to see whether the tools make reflection possible, whether they promoted creativity, whether they enabled social added value to the learner, and to which degree all this was acquired while still making the learner (in this case, the language teacher) at least to some degree follow the planned path of content.

2. Methodology for an evaluation of a construct not yet in real-life use: the focus groups

Theoretically, a training package such as this is planned to be worked with over time, because reflection and especially changing one's teaching philosophy on take time. Thus, a correct assessment on the effectiveness of such a training should take place only after certain time after the training is completed. However, constructive research approaches (Kasanen, Lukka and Siitonen 1991) include the idea that one does not need to wait for all the effects of a construction on its environment before it can be evaluated (in this case, a training programme that should bring certain change of behavior). This delay between the cause and effect might take long, and thus would be practically difficult for projects of the type of VISEUS, for example, or student thesis work that must be conducted within a certain timeframe. Thus, such products, methods and tools can be evaluated through "weak market test": after the first look at the construction, would a real decision-maker be ready to test the product further? This type of evaluation typically assesses whether the construction and its principles make sense for the target group of users, whether they find the usability of the project to be good enough, and whether the themes are interesting for them (Kekäle 2001).

For this purpose, a round of "focus group" sessions (see e.g. McNamara 1997) was arranged in the meeting in Bolzano in June 2009. A "focus group" works as a group interview, where persons to be interviewed have been selected on the basis of their belonging to the group of potential users of the product, the users that the developer team has had in mind. The persons that the training programmes were built for would be language teachers who are interested in the demands that new literacy puts on the teaching and to develop their own teaching accordingly. The idea behind the training programme was to create a full programme of several aspects, but that also every individual module could form an individually studyable entity. Thus, we decided to evaluate each module separately, and put less emphasis on the whole of the programme.

Teachers and research partners invited to the sessions were first commenting and explaining their experiences with the first two modules and answering the questions of the developer of the modules (for the Introduction module, Froukje Bakker; for the New Literacy module, John Bronkhorst/Harald Angerer). Later there was another set of sessions, where the participants were arranged to three groups with their own orientation as a division rule; again the developers of the modules (for Language acquisition, Annie van der Beek; for Multilinguality, Magdolna Szilagyi/Stefan Aubreville and for Creative teaching, Gerhild Bachmann/Ingrid Kunze/Susanne Müller-Using) answered questions and promoted opinions from the focus groups.

The assessment groups discussed a big variety of issues, of which some were detailed content changes and suggestions (e.g. in some modules there were accidentally some German sentences among the English, or in some modules the use of a certain, very special minority language group as an example was by some seen to be unnecessarily narrow). These were directly taken up by the designers of the modules, and improved upon; thus, these details are not discussed here. In the next paragraphs, the central notions on the main philosophy of the VISEUS are discussed briefly.

3. Findings from the focus group assessments

On the drawbacks between the level of guidance from the programme and freedom to study in a New Literacy spirit

It was first noted in the focus group that, while learning alone, reflection is relatively difficult, because a teacher alone by the internet is like a person in the sandy desert, without a fix point. However, the developers of the training programme, while approving of this viewpoint, noted that the planners of the programme have very little authority on how it will be used. If several teachers from the same school take part in the programme, it might be one alternative to arrange organized reflection sessions for them. Currently, there is a possibility through the Scholion web environment, or other similar learning environments, to arrange chat

forums that may similarly be useful for reflection, but the existence of another teacher in the internet cannot be guaranteed. The question also arose on what the teacher wants to do with the different reflection issues. It does not always make so much sense to just write one's experiences down and then send them somewhere. The instructions for the reflection should be clearer, more specific, programmed (e.g. "write down two arguments") even for situations where a teacher is studying alone.

In the evaluation focus groups there was also a general worry about the demand in time that the modules would place on the learners. If everything is perused and the web site addresses visited, and also a proposed presence phases would be counted in, the work load will easily become more than what a typical teacher is ready to invest in learning new things. On the other hand, the planners of the programme were also adamant that in order for the teachers to really start to change their teaching philosophy, the programme must have some duration. Two recent finnish theses (Hulkari 2007 and Mällinen 2008) reported that one of the biggest weak points in new literacy-based teaching methods in practice is the lack of new literacy teaching philosophy. With this they mean that the computer- and media-based courses tend, even more easily than the traditional classroom based courses, to be based on simple question-and-answer structures. Teachers somehow seem to be confused by the added difficulty in the teaching media, and thus diminish their ambition levels in pedagogy instead.

To avoid too heavy programme content but still make it possible to reach some kind of "culture change", it was suggested that the materials can be redivided into "basic content" and "advanced" so that the basic content can be perused in about the 10 hours as originally discussed.

Altogether, it is a difficult-to-solve situation with drawbacks whichever approach is chosen, so the final programme will inevitably become a compromise. With training in modern media and New Literacy, it generally is good not to fix too much the form how the teacher will work, because there's "method in the madness": the teachers learn to use the different areas of media while trying and searching around, precisely as most of the children learn the computer games. On the other hand, there should anyway be some

kind of concept behind the course. It should be evident for the teachers about to participate in the programme that the planners of the course somehow guide the learning. This guidance should also be concrete enough to be real "guidance": just stating "put your reflection for example in the forum" also does not make much sense. Probably the best compromise would anyway be to give some hint of what would be a suitable tool for each kind of action.

On the proportion of reflection and content of the Modules vs. Learner workload

The other discussion topic based on the hours was the concept of an ECTS credit, that is a measure of student work and at least in Finland considered to be about 26,5 hours (Tynjälä, Kekäle and Heikkilä 2004). If there is too much splintered material, and lots of small paragraphs, the work load maybe adds up but there will be no meaningful whole to be learned. Thus, the main material content could be made more compact. On the other hand, for a requirement of certain amount of credits' worth of average student work, also there should be a way of recording the reflection activity and also the acquainting of the student to some extent with the advanced material. The compactness of the main material, furthermore, makes it easier to organize the links to advanced material, from a technical viewpoint.

The ECTS credits and the idea of an University offering the programme as a part of their curriculum was indeed seen as a good thing in that it makes it possible to put some demand on the students who really want to gain the credits, and to balance between expansive content and small amount of free time the teachers have available for learning. The Finnish teacher at least is according to our own experience typically somewhat "unflexible", in that they are open to make the activities and learn a lot but they want to know in advance what will happen, and the current system does not give an idea of how long things take and where they start and where they lead. Two possibilities that both work from an ECTS viewpoint were discussed: either a shorter flow with obligatory activities, or then a bigger amount of more holistic activities of which a part must be chosen. It could be also possible to think if there should be a

standardized introduction to each of the modules, that prepares the student to what comes and where, and what the typical duration of the basic and advanced parts would be.

One aspect that was seen to be good however was the combination of theory, examples and reflection activity. The planners of the programme had indeed thought out the training programme to advance in "cumulus" manner, so that iterations of theory, examples and reflection would also lead in the end to the next chapter and finally into next module. There could also easily be constructed some kind of virtual "premiums" for people who have got through a part of the study, after every entity. The final conclusion of this strand of discussion in the focus groups was that the obligatory "basic" part should be made a bit less extensive, and the flow of the study from topic to topic should be made clearer.

On the real-life effectiveness of the training programme: are we really making an impact?

While already the discussion in the scope of the programme measured in credits took position in the usefulness of the programme in changing the habits and really teaching a philosophy, later in the focus group the question of implications to the teachers' own work rose up to discussion anew. The programmes should, according to the respondents in the focus groups, absolutely be organized so that in every module there is a possibility to do a practical project. This is also beneficial for the learners, despite the additional workload, in case the learners would like to promote their own teaching work.

Along the lines of balance between guidance and freedom, this practical activity should be based on some guidance on how these practical projects could be conducted, but then the material nevertheless could be based on the uploaded stories of the learners themselves, and – according to the pedagogical view shared by the focus groups – as often as possible also include a reflection in a group.

4. Conclusion

The assessment conducted with a focus group method brought forward some discussions central to the development of the training programme, but the actual improvements are very difficult to conduct due to the nature of the programme. Whenever one aspect is emphasised, some other aspect will be weakened; the balance of such a training programme is very delicate.

A very big part of the actual effectiveness of the programme depends on how much the learners are willing to work. Just by skimming through the materials probably no change in teaching philosophies take place. However, we are convinced that with proper commitment the training programme will give the teachers suitable tools to develop their own work for the rest of their lives. The programme works very much like the old saying: "Give the man a fish, and he will be fed for the day. Teach him how to fish, and he will never hunger".

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Creativity and Language instruction – some further considerations on creative teaching, methods in school and teacher education

1 Introduction to creativity

The European Commission proposed 2009 to become Year of Creativity and Innovation in the European Union. In the decision paper of the European Parliament and the Council concerning the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009, the following explanatory statements are given:

“Europe needs to boost its capacity for creativity and innovation for both social and economic reasons. The European Council has repeatedly recognised innovation as crucial to Europe’s ability to respond effectively to the challenges and opportunities of globalisation. In December 2006, for example, it noted that “Europe needs a strategic approach aimed at creating an innovation-friendly environment where knowledge is converted into innovative products and services”. The modern economy, with its emphasis on adding value by means of better use of knowledge and rapid innovation, requires a broadening of the creative skills base involving the whole population. In particular, there is a need for skills and competences that enable people to embrace change as an opportunity and to be open to new ideas that promote innovation and active participation in a culturally diverse, knowledge-based society.

Innovative capacity is closely linked with creativity as a personal attribute based on cultural and interpersonal skills and values. To be harnessed to full advantage, it needs to be widely disseminated throughout the population. The role of education and training as a determining factor in enhancing creativity, innovation performance and competitiveness was again emphasised by the European Council in March 2007 when it put forward the concept of the “knowledge triangle” comprising education, research and innovation.” (Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 28.3.2008, COM (2008) 159 final, 2008/0064 (COD), p.1).

In this context creativity has been defined as a pre-condition for innovation:

“Creativity is a human characteristic that manifests itself in many fields and contexts, from works of art, design and craft to scientific breakthroughs and entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship. The multidimensional character of creativity implies that knowledge in a wide range of different domains – both technological and non-technological – can be the basis for creativity and innovation. Innovation is the successful realisation of new ideas; creativity is the *sine qua non* of innovation.” (Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 28.3.2008, COM (2008) 159 final, 2008/0064 (COD), p.2).

As early as in the 50s and the 60s a comparable international initiative and discussion took place: Triggered off by the launching of the Earth's first artificial satellite „Sputnik“ on 4th October 1957 by the former Soviet Union, the so-called „Sputnik shock“ spread in the USA and Western Europe. The social significance of creative thinking and action was rediscovered, together with a simultaneously increasing interest in possibilities of promoting creativity and future-oriented action and reflection.

Due to the particular influence of J. Paul Guilford (1897-1988), the former president of the American Psychological Association, the phenomenon of creativity also gained increased attention in science and research, which led to a blossoming popularity of this subject, in particular in the pedagogical tendencies of the 70s.

In recent times, the importance of this subject was strongly reinforced by the report of the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) published in Britain on behalf of the British Government in September 2000 in Britain, which in particular focuses on creativity and its significance for future orientation and cultural development.

The NACCCE gives relevant recommendations on how to promote creativity and cultural development in young adults and in addition shows in exemplary manner how creativity and culture may be introduced into schools as an integral part of the national curriculum.

Nowadays, creativity is a topical term applied to many different kinds of spheres of life (art/culture, economics, science, education and training etc.). Precisely for to this reason, it is not very easy to define it in an exact and unambiguous manner.

In this article, we explicitly refer to a democratic form of defining creativity which starts with the assumption that all individuals are able to act and think in a creative manner in all of the different spheres of life and in accordance with their respective individual personality. In our opinion, the definition of Heinelt (see below) describes in a very comprehensive manner what is implied by the phenomenon of creativity, and it comes very close to a realistic paraphrase of the phenomenon. In the following, you will find some examples of the most recent definitions of creativity.

„Creative ability realized in human action and thought that is on one hand characterized by novelty and originality but also has a reasonable relation to the solving of technical, human or social-political problems.“ (Brockhaus Encyclopaedia Online, <http://www.brockhaus-enzyklopaedie.de> (last access 20.11.2009)).

„Creativity is the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e., original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e., useful, adaptive concerning task constraints)” (Sternberg et al. 2007, S. 3).

“Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value“ (NACCCE 2000, p. 30).

„We understand creativity as being abilities, powers and talents that we try to grasp with more complex or partly less exact terms such as intuition, imagination, inspiration, ingenuity, inventiveness, originality or (in a more academic formulation) as productive thinking, problem-solving and creative fantasy“ (Heinelt 1974, p. 7).

In order to meet the complexity of the phenomenon, Heinelt (1974) consciously chose a very broad definition of creativity that essentially reflects a basic statement: Creativity is above all a creative cognitive achievement and implies – according to the etymological derivation of the word - „creativity“= lat. „creare“, create, achieve, produce, or cause. It is also related to the Latin word „crecere“ = „to grow“. Analogously, creativity means to create something „novel“ and/or to come up with an idea for something new in order to pursue further effects i.e. as an aid for solving a task or problem. Creativity is therefore always seen in the context of creating an innovative final product.

It should be observed, however, that the creative process as such has to be regarded in an individual manner, i.e. that the new insight or flash of genius does not have to be essentially „new“, in the sense of „unique“, in order to be classified as a creative one, but that it is rather the creative act that counts and will contribute to finding the solution of a task or of a current problem.

Early creativity research (Preiser 1976) revealed four essential starting points for approaching the topic that are still valid today and are commonly used for analysing and describing the phenomenon of creativity:

- The creative person (analysing the characteristics of creative individuals, amongst others)
- The creative process (analysing the phases of creative processes, amongst others)
- The creative product (as a result of the phases of creative processes)
- Environment conditions that foster creativity (external influences on creativity)

The former president of the „American Psychological Association“, Guilford, who pioneered creativity research in the 50s and 60s, identified several characteristics as being particular descriptive features of creative personalities. Among others, he defined the following eight factors of creativity (Guilford 1950, S. 454):

1. Ability of discovering and identifying problems
2. Outstanding tolerance of frustration
3. Ability to produce a high number of ideas in a playful manner
4. Flexibility of reflection and action
5. Outstanding energy
6. Certainty in judgement and evaluation
7. Broad spectrum of knowledge with profoundness in certain areas
8. Ability to communicate solutions in a creative manner

From the beginning of creativity research when scientists tried to describe and define creativity more precisely by taking recourse to characteristic features of personality, numerous models have been constructed in order to determine the factors that compose creativity as such and/or creative achievements.

A well-known model is the Investment Theory of Creativity by Sternberg und Lubart, according to which each individual is endowed with a certain creative potential. The actual creative abilities however are attributed to this potential in relation to one's own active investment into this potential. According to the concept of Sternberg/Lubart (amongst others 1991, 1995, 1996) creativity is composed by the following six elements:

1. Intelligence
2. Knowledge
3. Mentalities
4. Personality
5. Motivation
6. Environment

Researchers are investigating the influence and significance for creativity of the above mentioned factors in particular. These studies support to an increasing extent theories that stress the importance of elements, such as intuition, associative processes and internal insights for the development of the creative process.

The creative process can be described in terms of phases that may occur more or less intensively, depending on the respective type of process. The description of creative phases of the process dates back to Wallas (1926) and others, and, more recently, also to Guilford (1950). It is still acknowledged today and differentiates the following four phases:

Preparatory Phase

During this phase, attention is focused on the perception of problems and tasks and, directly related to this, the most comprehensive collection of information and material on the subject area that evokes the personal interest.

Incubation Phase

During this phase and in contrast to the first one, the person appears to have withdrawn from the problem, and is internalising it into the unconscious mind together with the information gained, a phase of inner activity, commonly described as "to adjourn to think things over".

Phase of Inspiration and Illumination

It is in this phase that the solution of a problem – most of the time unexpectedly - bursts forth. This can either happen in the form of a bright idea, a flash of genius or merely a vague notion of how to proceed in order to handle a certain problematic situation. Sometimes this phase is accompanied by intensive feelings.

Phase of Verification

During the phase of verification or evaluation, the quality of the idea is consciously verified in view of the specific problem, i.e. benefit/cost/, feasibility etc. If necessary, ideas will be re-modified during this phase and adapted to the realistic demands, or may even be rejected.

Convergent and Divergent Thinking

A further key element in the definition of creativity is the distinction of convergent and divergent processes of thinking which nowadays include a reflexion about (sudden) insights and intuition. A common opinion is that divergent thinking promotes creative achievement more efficiently than convergent thinking, although creativity is not always linked to longer processes of thinking, but may also result from a sudden idea or intuition. Convergent thinking is the logical, consistent way of thinking that guides us safely through our daily lives. Divergent thinking implies open and playful forms of thinking that suddenly bring about new ideas.

Also for use in the classroom (Example mental arithmetic) where you can foster both ways of thinking. We will explain an. You may ask, for instance: “What is the sum of $7 + ?$ ” and expect the right answer, but you may also ask: “What makes up the sum of 9”, and, in this manner, will open up your lesson for the most varied kinds of solutions. Creative thinking and recognition of problems and/or solving of problems: Creative thinking is directly linked to processes of problem solving and always aims at achieving sustainable forms of solutions and new products.

2 Creative lesson planning and challenges for schools today

The general framework of NACCCE is fundamental. This is also demonstrated by the experiences of a workshop "Kreatives Lehren: Selbstreflexion und Anwendungsbeispiele für den Unterricht" ("**Creative teaching: self-reflection and practical examples for lessons**") at the VISEUS final conference in Osnabrueck in November 2009. There was the opportunity here for interested educators to familiarise themselves with integral topics of the VISEUS further education models on creativity theories and creativity techniques. The resulting requirements for teachers were reflected on collectively and should provide stimuli for practical concepts that can be applied in everyday lessons and when dealing with pupils. In the workshop the teachers were first given the task of writing down some thoughts on the topic "creativity is for me".

Several ideas out of many are mentioned here:

- being able to invent things, try things out, break and expand moulds
- flexibility, everything is allowed, imagination, openness, activity, association
- being able to express your own thoughts in different ways
- reaction to a keyword, without prompting or targeting
- being given free rein with a great deal of imagination, spontaneity, but with an objective in sight
- improvisation, creative writing, narration, no pressure, colourful, making and crafting things, writing
- shaping a plot freely
- vitality
- freedom of development
- the use of all available channels
- the path to your own innovation
- change of perspective
- spontaneity, allowing the unusual
- having the courage for innovation
- enthusiasm
- a colourful everything
- playful alteration of reality

Out of the intensive discussions around the question "Which requirements and which general framework should be present in order to encourage creative thinking in schools and to allow creative potential to come to the fore?" it emerged that overfilled curricula often hinder the accomplishment of creative achievements. However, content-oriented lessons can also be structured in such a way as to allow scope for creativity and to provide pupils with stimuli for finding surprising solutions and having their own ideas.

In the VISEUS further education module "Creative Teaching", measures for creative lesson planning are highlighted. The atmosphere in the classroom and the group dynamics, the working methods and social forms, the role and competences of the teaching staff as well as the conception of creative tasks are in the foreground.

3 Creative Teaching Techniques and Creative Methods

There are many possibilities to educate and to teach youngsters. But which working and social forms promote creative processes? Open and flexible teaching and working methods especially stimulate creative processes. These mainly include **open, action-oriented teaching, project work, weekly schedules, free work and learning in class**. These methods allow explorative, self-directed or self-initiated learning and encourage networked learning.

Open and flexible forms of teaching support students in their individual ideas and develop and deepen their personal interests. Central component of these forms are to experiment and to test. Here, various solutions and processing options for a problem or challenge will be played through. In this way, divergent thinking and changing perspectives are promoted, which in turn is an important base for the creative process (Weiss 2008, p. 135). Nevertheless, it is important to note that openness is not a "miracle cure" to promote creative processes. Openness of the teaching situation requires a balanced, educational, and intentional and justified use. Various open teaching forms and their contribution to the promotion of creativity are as follows.

Discovery learning includes finding solutions by the students on their own and a high self-discipline. Learners are given a clearly defined specific problem situation. The debate about the topics is not

receptive, but is a constructive, productive and creative process in which creativity can flourish.

Action-oriented learning as creative teaching includes as many senses. It is necessary to act actively with the topics of learning for the promotion of creative processes.

Project-based teaching with creative activities displays a "top form" in primary schools and also in secondary schools. Between the phases of creative processes and the phases of a project-oriented teaching are analogies. Teaching projects offer animating challenges in terms of project selection, project analysis, hypothesis formation, implementation, verification and realisation of the project and in this way they promote the development of creative thinking and acting products.

A **weekly schedule and free work** that is mandatory and differentiated in optional tasks allows independent work within the framework of a combination of authentic pre-set and free tasks. Open week and free working plans have selectable addressing situations with the utmost frankness. The self-determination of students refers to all dimensions of the learning process and includes the free choice of learning, the solution strategies, pace, work materials, the social form of learning and the type of result presentation. This creative process is particularly encouraged. Of particular importance in the context of free work is the provision of material. It must initiate independent learning and cause curiosity. It has to stimulate active discovery and to produce new opportunities of productive and creative work (see Buchinger 2000, p. 42ff).

Creative thinking is often a matter of forming new associations, new syntheses, or new combinations of elements of existing knowledge, rather than producing something that is new in every respect. There are useful creative strategies that can be employed in every teaching in schools, such as imagination techniques, combinations, confrontations or free association etc.:

- **Brainstorming:** Students try to develop as many different ideas as possible within a few minutes.
- **Brainwriting:** The participants write their ideas on cards which are then passed to seat neighbours. The neighbours try to develop the proposals. This is repeated several times.

- **Mindmapping:** Firstly a central word or phrase is written in the middle of a leaf. Secondly students try to link thematically related concepts around lines that resemble a tree structure.

Imagination techniques as a “Guided fantasy journey” or as a „Try to become the problem“-strategy are useful to enhance the visual imagination and involve unconscious experience in creating solutions.

- **Guided Fantasy Journey:** The teacher encourages participants to think about a fantasy journey and to string together the mental pictures and stories. The method should help to reduce stress and make the pupils more creative.
- **„Try to become the problem“** is a technique whereby participants put themselves in the problem itself. They should ask what they experience in the problem situation. This procedure promotes understanding and will lead to new solutions.

Combinations are used by students in class to analyse a problem and to break it down into its component parts. They look for possible solutions to these components and combine them into a new global approach (e. g. morphological box, morphological matrix, attribute listing).

Typical techniques of **Confrontation** are visual confrontation, stimulus analysis, Triz. Sometimes students are be confronted with images concepts, or places where they stimulate creative ideas and solutions. For example, students view some photographs and describe the phenomena and processes in the pictures before dealing with the actual task. They are so disconnected from their normal ways of thinking that they combine the motives in the painting with the problem and may come up with new ideas (vgl. Mencke 2006).

One last point that should be mentioned in this context is the **time factor**. The handling of problems and tasks will always be based on a certain time frame. This should cover the tasks and be appropriate to the abilities of the students, because time can be a significant factor for the creative process, which inhibits or favours

it. Creative thinking is particularly favoured when it is possible to deal with a situation thoroughly, and without any first-time success and compulsion being addressed. Alternatively, time constraints also consistently inspire innovative solutions, for example, when scarce targets require complex solutions (see Weiss 2008, p. 133).

4 Experimenting with Creativity in Teacher Training

Besides the European challenge to focus stronger on creativity and innovation – primarily in education – we would like to connect two didactical key aspects for teacher education in Germany with the European ideas of creativity and innovation:

1. the development of competences in the area of didactical und methodological studies means the design of teaching and learning environments and

2. the development of competences in media studies, means the handling of media and their meaningful didactical integration into everyday lessons.

At this standard level the knowledge of concepts in media pedagogy is expected as well as knowledge about prospects and limitations of the integrated use of media for instruction. These means that these topics should be an integral part of the education and the training of teachers.

The European project “Virtually connected language workshops in European schools” (VISEUS), awarded with the European Language Label 2009 for innovative projects in language teaching and learning, was an opportunity in teacher training to try out and to discuss the possibilities of creative and innovative ways to use new media tools in language instruction with students. The web based instruments Vis@Vis (digital writing workshop) and My own Dictionary (online-dictionary), developed in this project provided the foundation and starting point for a seminar titled: “Creative teaching in language workshops” (Instructor: Susanne Mueller-Using).

Working with language workshops is not a novelty in Europe. Schools in several European countries have introduced various types of language workshops. Nevertheless, there are some major differences in their functions; they are not linked into networks, they often

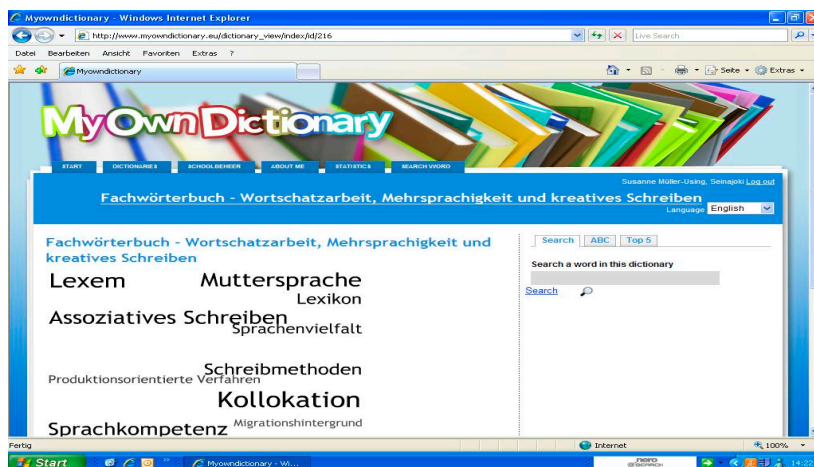
do not follow a common concept and they are published at regional levels .

In contrast to these, the language workshops at our project schools have one common feature, i.e. they all work according to the principles of progressive education, which direct all educational efforts towards the perspective of the child and the respect for the individual, and consequently are based on didactical approaches such as the Didactics on Teaching of Mother tongue and Foreign Languages according to Freinet (Dietrich 1995), the approach of Dialogical Learning (Ruf/Gallin 1998) as well as from approaches of Creative Writing (Reichen 2004, von Werder 2004, Sousa 2003, Kohl 1994). However, our project also strongly favoured the idea that each of the European language workshops should act according its own methodical profile to be developed and determined by the teacher. In this way, each language workshop is able to develop its own identity and contribute to the network by enriching it with its special individual concept.

For this course I use these project experiences were used to present and discuss the idea of establishing language workshops for instruction in schools. The instructor mainly focused on the use of the web based instruments My Own Dictionary and Vis@Vis for language instruction.

Short explanation of the instruments:

Fig. 1 My Own Dictionary: Word cloud



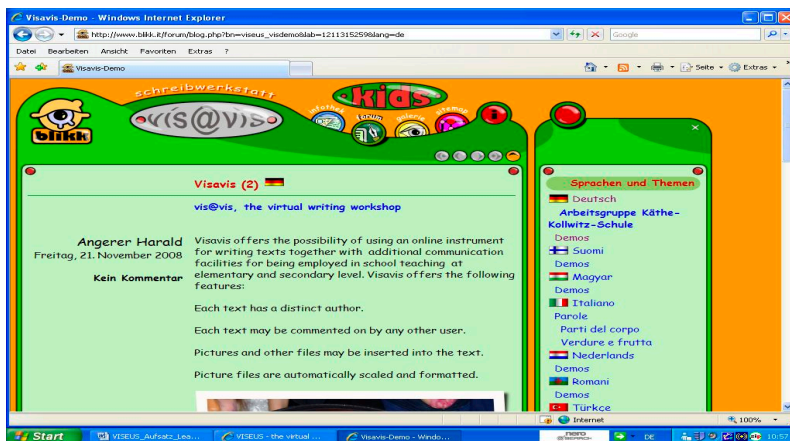
Working with 'My own Dictionary' allows users to develop their own dictionary and to enhance their vocabulary in a motivating way.

In addition in creating their own definitions, they can also feel free to enrich their definitions by adding pictures, exemplary phrases, translations and links. The selection of vocabulary may either be left to the students or be determined by the thematic field suggested by the teacher. This shows the variety of possibilities of using this programme for modern language learning through new media.

Fig. 2 My Own Dictionary: Entries into the Dictionary



Fig. 3 Vis@Vis



Vis@Vis is a web based and multi-lingual writing workshop similar to a weblog. It facilitates writing of texts in various languages, either individually or in cooperation with others. In the writing workshops “free” and creative texts are produced as well as diaries, books of fairy tales or non-fiction books and in addition the workshops may also be used as a picture gallery. Vis@Vis supports the active production of texts in the languages German, English, Finnish, Italian, Dutch, Romani, and Turkish and Hungarian. During the actual process of working with the programme, other editors may add their feedback in order to encourage the author to improve or re-write the text.

For using Vis@Vis all you need is an Internet browser and access to the internet. The organisation of the virtual writing workshop Vis@Vis is combined with a particular didactic concept of written language acquisition that starts off from cooperative dialogical approaches and takes up concepts of Internet-based learning. The aim of Vis@Vis is therefore to further develop multi media-based facilities of written language acquisition that – in addition to the encyclopaedia My own Dictionary - enable pupils to practise and implement cooperative and associative techniques of writing in a group.

Back to experiences of the students:

In this course the students developed parts of the learning content by using the instruments Vis@Vis and My Own Dictionary. For Vis@Vis the students were asked to write a text related to the three topics of the course:

a: creativity and creative writing, b: vocabulary learning, c: multilingualism.

The students had to choose feedback partners to comment on their text.

For My own Dictionary, the online-dictionary, they had to put together a list of key words related to the course topics. They had to form a subgroup and select one of the topics. Then they started to write a group dictionary on the key words of one of the topics. Within the subgroups the students selected the related key words and divided them among themselves. Then each student started to define and illustrate the key words individually.

As result of this seminar work we obtained a well compiled thematic dictionary related to our course issues, as well as specialised and reviewed texts written by the students. The results were available for all students so that they could have a clear overview of the other two topics, put together by the other subgroups.

At the end of the course, after working with the instruments, the students were asked how they would rate the creative potential of the web-based instruments for the seminar work. On a scale of 1 to 10 all students (n = 18) evaluated the creative potential above 6 and they confirmed that working with the instruments helped them to make the learning tasks more interesting as well as increasing their motivation for learning.

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