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Linguistic policies for teaching Spanish L2 in European education systems

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Abstract

This article focuses on the description of linguistic policies carried out by the EU for the study of second languages in Europe, and the way in which the different countries in the union have integrated them into their education systems.

We show how the study of Spanish as a second language in formal education has been promoted in other countries through the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology in the “Spanish Sections” and the collaboration between native teachers financed by the Spanish State, as in France and Italy; or co-financed by the Spanish State and the country in question, as in Poland.

Finally, we analyze these “Spanish Sections” in a comparative study of the model in three different countries. We highlight some faults, and suggest possible solutions.

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Keywords: CLIL; linguistic policies; European Sections; Bilingual Sections.

1. Introduction

Nomenclature

L1	Mother Tongue
L2	Foreign Language

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1.1 Linguistic policies in the European Council

Multilingualism has been part of community policy, legislation and practice since the Rome Treaty. The first law adopted by The Council of the then EEC, (15th April 1958) recognised as official and working languages within European institutions, those of its member states. This has remained this way and can only be modified by unanimous vote by The Council.

1.2 A brief history of EC recommendations regarding language learning

From its beginnings, The Community has made the use of the different languages, not only fundamental, but a priority. However, we should point out that the reasons cited for this have not always been stated, at best they have been defined among either economic or cultural reasons, as will be seen in this brief history of EC linguistic policy, whose development is undertaken by The European Commission, specifically: The Linguistic Policy Division in Strasbourg.

Three institutions responsible for languages co-inhabit the European Council: The Linguistic Policy Division (created in 1957, Strasbourg), The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) (Strasbourg) and the European Centre of Modern Languages (created in 1994, Graz).

On the 28th July 1989 “Lingua” was created to improve, both quantitatively and qualitatively, language teaching in the European Union. This programme came into effect on the 1st January 1990 and continued until 1994.

With the creation of “Socrates” (14th March 1995) – an EC educational initiative and “Leonardo da Vinci” (6th December 1994) – an EC initiative focused on vocational education and training; “Lingua” was consolidated and became an integral part of these programmes.

In phase II of “Socrates” (2000—2006) the promotion of language teaching constituted a key issue. Nevertheless, the phase I initiatives continued and became integrated into a new school programme – “Comenius”. Initiatives involving higher education (“Erasmus”), and adult education and other educational pathways (“Grundtvig”) also included a linguistic focus.

Languages targeted by the above mentioned programmes were the eleven official languages of the European Union, as well as Luxembourgish, Irish, Norwegian and Icelandic, which were the official languages of the countries in the European Economic Area (EEA) that participated in the programmes. The expansion of the EEA to include countries from Central and Western Europe and Cyprus led to the inclusion of the official languages of Romania, Hungary, The Czech Republic, Cyprus, Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria and Slovenia.

Speaking three languages was one of the measures that were intended to be applied in The European Year of Education and Lifelong Learning (1996). The European Commission White Paper states that it is no longer possible to restrict knowledge of foreign languages to an elite or to those who have more opportunities to travel (point 4.5).

2001 was declared by the Council, the European Year of Languages. That year the European Parliament and the Council adopted resolutions that incited the European Commission to take measures to promote languages. The objectives were the following: raise public awareness of the importance of linguistic and cultural wealth in the European Union; encourage multilingualism; inform a wide range of public of the advantages of knowing several languages; promote the lifelong learning of languages, starting at preschool and primary levels; gather and disseminate information about teaching and learning languages, linguistic competencies and the most innovative teaching methods.

Products of this event were; the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the European Language Portfolio.

In 2002 the Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe was published, which was revised for the first time in 2003. A final edition was published in 2007. This complete and extensive edition includes arguments that justify the investment in language learning, which we think are of great interest if we want to know what ideology underlies the application of plurilingualism in the EU. From page 11 onwards of the complete edition it is stated that there are reasons to fear the development of sociolinguistic processes that lead to the use of English as the common language of communication within groups, or as the usual language of communication in certain sectors (economic, scientific, artistic), thus becoming competition for some national

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