A Whole-School Approach to provide Language-Sensitive Subject Teaching: a Means to improve Learning Outcomes of Vulnerable Learners?

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Helping multilingual learners improve their learning outcomes at school cannot be achieved without enabling them to better master the language(s) of schooling. As the Committee of Ministers (Council of Europe, 2014) put it, "'Language of schooling' denotes the language used for teaching the various school subjects and for the functioning of schools […]. Depending on the national or regional context, several languages of schooling are used". Whatever the nature of the language of schooling, such a term encompasses the general 'academic' language and includes subject-specific or 'scientific' language characteristic of all school subjects, which all teachers should be aware of (Beacco et al., 2016).

However, teachers do not always distinguish between conversational language proficiency and academic language proficiency (Cummins, 1981, 2000, 2008). They should also pay explicit attention to linguistic form and function so as to help multilingual learners develop their second language learning (Gass, 1997; Schleppegrell, 2004; Swain, 1995). But setting up efficient language-sensitive subject teaching should not be the sole responsibility of teachers. They need support from the school management so as to develop the skills required to become linguistically-responsive teachers ((Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). Besides, developing a language-sensitive culture of content teaching and learning across disciplinary boundaries can only take place through sharing and cooperation amongst teachers (Beacco et al., 2016), and should be enhanced by involving non-teaching staff. Making students and parents become aware of the language dimension of subject learning should also be beneficial to the learning outcomes of the former. Involving all stakeholders in such a planning is what we define as a whole-school approach.

One is sometimes led to believe that promoting "language(s) of schooling" only aims at helping students from an immigrant background/refugee children better succeed at school. However, the scope of such an educational policy encompasses ALL learners, since it has been shown that a struggling L1 competence is among the first causes for overall learning deficits. For Van Avermaet (2007, p. 18), "allochtonous children do not by definition perform less well than autochtonous children" and the gap between home language and school language is mainly sociocultural rather than ethnically determined, a statement confirmed by several PISA studies. Again Gogolin et al. (2004; 2011) and Schmölzer-Eibinger (2008) show that language competence acquisition is always problematic for students from educationally disadvantaged families, irrespective of the mother tongue. We choose to use the term "vulnerable learners" to include all of these profiles, whenever the students "are dependent on school to help them understand and learn the wide spectre of cultural codes embedded in formal language use" (Fleming, 2009, p. 21); in this, they are different from the group of children who "benefit from backgrounds which automatically offer socializing into academic uses of language" (*ibid.*).

Our European Council of Modern Languages (ECML) project, "A roadmap for schools to support the languages of schooling" targets all schools willing to focus on systematic quality improvement in order to foster the cognitive and linguistic abilities of all learners (and in particular the most vulnerable of learners), by enabling them to benefit from language-aware learning situations. Schools need to identify and address the needs that exist in order to create a better learning environment for their learners.

The "Roadmap" is a whole-school approach which consists of a self-assessment tool set up for each of the school's stakeholders (head teachers, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and students); it targets four main scopes which are relevant to the above-mentioned quality improvement (language-sensitive subject-teaching, language-sensitive school culture, school language strategy, and the necessary organisational framework).

Methodology, Methods, Research Instruments or Sources Used
We will endeavour to explore the following hypothesis: when the school leader(s), teachers, non-teaching staff, learners and parents agree on the measures to set up to develop language-sensitive subject teaching, vulnerable learners improve their learning outcomes.
The first step taken by schools using the Roadmap is to self-assess their language-sensitive teaching (one of the four scopes of the project). The headteacher(s), teachers, non-teaching staff, students and parents will rate individual statements. The qualitative and quantitative analysis of the self-assessment statements will lead to a feedback (provided by the ECML Platform hosting the Roadmap) highlighting the strengths and levers of progress for the school, which should be the first step towards constructive discussions among all stakeholders so as to define the school's tailor-made language strategy plan, together. Then, the Roadmap will offer practical guidelines (such as examples of promising practice) in order to help teams set up a coherent language plan to implement efficient language-sensitive subject teaching.
Our research question will be examined through the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the statements and the feedback. This will enable us to have a general overview of any existing congruencies or discrepancies in the stakeholders' vision and the ensuing implementation. Schools will also be asked to keep track of any kind of proof regarding the initial learning outcomes of their students and will be asked to target the vulnerable ones.
Finally, after several months of using the Roadmap, all the school stakeholders will be asked to self-evaluate the school's

language-sensitive subject teaching by using the Roadmap's self-assessment tool again. Learning outcomes will be assessed (according to the school's own methodology) so as to be able to measure any kind of progress.

Conclusions, Expected Outcomes or Findings
Since the Roadmap will only be fully launched in November 2018 (in a minimum of 12 different European countries), we will not be ready to present any results at ECER Bolzano 2018. Therefore, the presentation will solely focus on the theoretical background and the methodology to be implemented.
Indeed, this longitudinal study will be led over four years, so as to be able to increase the number of schools involved. We do hope that by comparing results nationally and across countries, over a minimum of 4 years, we will be able to measure the effects of a whole-school approach on the learning outcomes of vulnerable learners.

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