



Bottom up :

How an intercultural project in a French primary school inspired teacher educators to create new spaces for learning about linguistic and cultural diversity



Opening questions

- **Quelle reconnaissance l'école réserve-t-elle aux langues d'origine, en particulier dans les pratiques de classe?**
- **Ces langues acceptées importent des cultures d'origine dans le cadre scolaire. L'école est-elle capable de les accepter, tout en veillant à l'égalitarisme républicain?**
- **Va-t-on vers un « multiculturalisme » en Alsace, autre que celui déjà reconnu, le franco-allemand?**
- **La reconnaissance des langues va-t-elle de pair avec une reconnaissance des cultures?**
- **La reconnaissance des langues et des cultures serait-elle garante d'une ouverture culturelle?**
 - **Une ouverture culturelle de ce type garantirait-elle l'ouverture aux valeurs européennes?**



Paradox

- **Increasingly FLT objectives aim for bilingualism through schooling (in dominant languages mostly)**
- **Yet many bi/plurilingual pupils lose their mother tongue (in minority languages mostly) because of schooling through French only**
- **Objectives for FLT insist on the dimensions of**
 - **opening to other cultures and**
 - **education to “otherness”**
- **Yet languages and cultures present in many classrooms**
 - **remain invisible or**
 - **seen as handicap rather than resource**



Language learning objectives

“We have to admit that the fact of teaching FLs is not enough to guarantee either the development of a multilingual identity or other values such as tolerance, understanding of others and the desire for justice as is often proclaimed as a declaration of intent”.

(Byram, 2000)

Learning languages means first and foremost developing a culture of plurilingualism



Putting it into practice

- **How can teaching professionals recognise and legitimise the diversity of speakers' plurilingual repertoires at school?**
- **How can we motivate all the children in the class to learn about languages and cultures and to respect difference?**
- **How can we open a window onto languages and cultures from inside the classroom?**
- **Where can they find authentic, motivating resources which help to foster curiosity, tolerance and empathy amongst ALL learners?**
- **How can we promote common values enriched by diversity in the classroom?**
- **How can we develop a legitimate culture of plurilingualism within a predominantly monolingual institution?**



Plurilingualism in the Primary: The Didenheim Project (Young & Hélot)

• WHY ?

- Lack of motivation to learn German.
- Increase in the number of racist incidents at school.

• HOW ?

- Participants: Pupils in the first 3 years of primary school, teachers, parents, researchers.
- Regular Saturday morning sessions.
- Sessions led by parents and prepared in collaboration with teachers.
- Cross-curricular approach.



The Didenheim Project-Context

- **Didenheim small rural school (84 children) near Mulhouse (industrial town with large migrant population in southern Alsace).**
- **But 37% of children other than of French origin**
 - **Arabic: 10.7% Portuguese: 2.4%**
 - **Turkish: 9.5% Italian: 2.4%**
 - **Polish: 4.7% Other: 4.7%**
 - **NB Plus Alsatian: 4.7%**



Objectives

“To bring the children into contact with other languages and to sensitise them to the use of languages, to familiarise the children with other cultures through the presentation of festivals, traditions, costumes, geography..., and last but not least to promote the acceptance of differences, to learn about others and to attempt to break down stereotypical misconceptions.”

(Minutes from school project meeting, 7/10/00, our translation)

- **According equal status to all languages and cultures at school**
- **Tackling racism at school**
- **Encountering “otherness” (Roberts et al., 2001)**



How does it work?

Welcoming parents and children at school

Welcoming parents and children at school



Welcoming parents and children at school



Welcoming parents and children at school


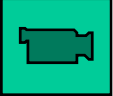


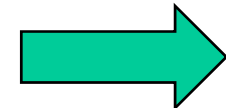


How does it work?

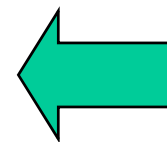
- **Securing home/school collaboration**
- **Communicating with & reassuring parents**
- **Educational partnership (mutual respect & trust)**

An Educational Partnership

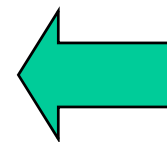
- **Empowering parents & children**
 - Preparation & support (team teaching) 
 - Allowing the parent to take the lead 
- **Admitting that teachers don't know everything “Ma maman sait plus que la maîtresse”**



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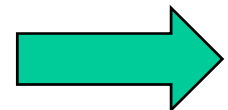
Teachers learning alongside pupils

Russian “my name is...” 

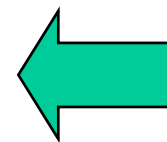
Alsatian -rhyme 

Brazilian -repeating new words 

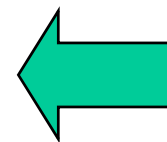
FSL -animals 



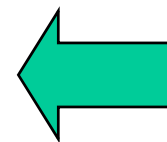
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Activities

- **Tasting specialities from different culinary traditions**
- **Learning to sing short songs with actions**
- **Reading traditional tales from bilingual books**
- **Some geography and history + personal history**
- **Talking about lifestyles and living conditions**
- **Learning in context: to introduce oneself, greet, say please**
- **Listening to different sounds + learning to differentiate**
- **Negotiating meaning from context or pictures**
- **Looking at different scripts**
 - **Highlighting linguistic borrowings**
 - **Drawing parallels between languages**



What do the children learn?

“Children learn to be explorers in the world of language and languages”

(Perregaux, 2003, EOLE project Switzerland)

Language learning is fun!

- **New sounds: Spanish** 
- **Mandarin tones** 
- **New modes of expression: FSL** 



Examples from the movie about the Didenheim project

In a small village in Alsace, two teachers invite the parents of their pupils to come on Saturday mornings to present their languages and cultures.

In the Education Department of the University of Strasbourg (IUFM of Alsace) two researchers challenge the reluctance of schools to open up to the linguistic and cultural diversity of their pupils and in particular those who speak migrant languages.

The film shows one of them relaying the school project to her students, encouraging them to value and support multilingualism in their classroom.

The film shows how children, parents, teachers, students and researchers can contribute to a radical change of attitude. It tells the story of all these people and how they relate to their languages.



Writing and direction : Mariette FELTIN
Production : Véronique PUYBARET and Patrick FLOCH
Image : Mariette FELTIN - Sound : Patrick FLOCH
Editing : Stéphanie SHORIES
Sound mix : Marc RODICQ - Grading : Christophe REYNAUD
Music : Pascal HOLTZER

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Distribution :



76, RUE DES MARTYRS - 75018 PARIS
l.a.curieuse@free.fr
01 42 62 68 85

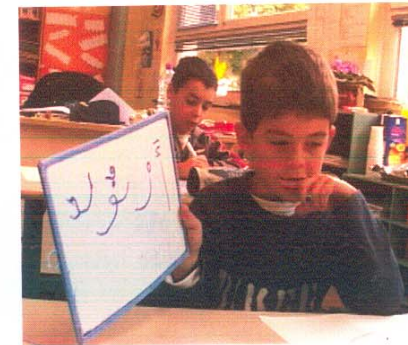
GRAND LARGE
PRODUCTIONS

and



present

TELL ME HOW YOU TALK



A documentary by Mariette FELTIN

53 minutes

A coproduction
Grand Large Productions / Films du Chemin
téléAlsace / Images Plus / Mosaïk

With the participation of
Centre National de la Cinématographie / A.C.S.E.
Région Alsace / Département du Bas-Rhin
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With the support of SolidarCité Foundation



European year of intercultural Dialogue 2008

Language awareness

“Pourquoi est-ce que l’alsacien est un dialecte et pas une langue?”

“Est-ce que tous les noms en alsacien veulent dire quelque chose?”

Working on the meanings of place/surnames 

“Est-ce que la langue des signes est la même partout dans le monde?” 








“Est-ce qu’on écrit le berbère comme l’arabe de droite à gauche?” 

“Est-ce que le français est une langue?”











Identify linguistic regularities (identical ideogram) 

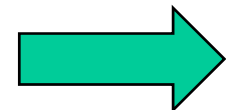


Cultural awareness



- **Traditional dress (Berber)**  **Malay name** 
- **Vietnamese meal** 
- **Moroccan tea** 
- **Objects from Croatia** 
- **Music from Croatia**  

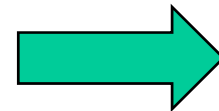
Literacy

- **Bilingual book (Vietnamese)** 
- **Biliteracy (Arabic/French)** 
- **Alphabets (Russian)**  **FSL** 
- **Arabic/Berber, different scripts (transliteration)** 
- **Phonemes/graphemes (Turkish)** 
(Serbo Croat) 
- **Writing first names in Arabic** 
- **Child reading Turkish** 
- **Arabic (child writes)** 



Pride in heritage

- Alsatian girl 
- Writing from right to left on school board “Comme mon père”
- *“Il est très fier que sa maman intervienne dans la classe euh, ça c’est clair euh... à la maison il prenait des livres de poésie arabe, il s’intéressait quoi, plus que...ce qu’il ne faisait pas avant.”* (Berber mother)
- *“... ils n’ont plus la même place dans l’école. Rien qu’à leur niveau à eux quoi, le fait de, qu’on valorise leurs mamans, qu’on valorise leur culture, leur langue... l’année dernière quand on a fait turc ..., ils étaient très fiers.”* (Teacher of 6-7 year olds)
- Turkish girl singing 





Increased Pupil Motivation

- **“J’aimerais bien apprendre le vietnamien”**
- **“Le brésilien parce que j’ai bien aimé cette langue”**
- **“L’espagnol, j’aimerais en savoir plus et au collège le vietnamien”**
- **“La langue des signes au collège”**
- **“Le berbère, j’aime plus que les autres langues”**
- **“J’aime bien apprendre les langues étrangères ... j’aimerais bien apprendre le chinois comme j’étais pas là au CP...à la maison on a deux livres qui sont en français et il y a des signes chinois et derrière il y a les signes et puis il y a les mots que, ce que ça veut dire et comment ça se dit.”**




Learning ABOUT Languages & Cultures

Is NOT learning a multiplicity of languages BUT

- **learning ABOUT language and languages (Language Awareness, Hawkins)**
- **works on pupils' attitudes rather than linguistic abilities**
- **is complementary to FLL = metalinguistic work**
- **is based on all languages irrespective of their status**
- **goes beyond FLL: includes citizenship education respect for others, solidarity...**
- **helps to understand our multilingual/cultural world**

Empathy and a curiosity to learn about others

- *“Est-ce que c’est dur d’apprendre le français quand on est chinois?”*
- Questions to deaf visitor through her FSL interpreter 
- *“Pourquoi est-ce que les Vietnamiens n’ont pas la même couleur de peau?”*





Combating Stereotypes

- **Personal contact with unknown cultures through parents could be more effective to combat stereotypes**

“It is extremely difficult to generalise and give rise to stereotypes when personal contacts are established and friendships are born between individuals”. (Komorowska, 2000)



Outsiders in the classroom

“ J'ai aimé que des gens viennent dans la classe parce que la maîtresse ne connaît presque pas de langues ”

“ C'est bien que ce soit d'autres gens, la maîtresse elle ne vient pas de tous les pays ”

“ Ça m'a plu que les gens viennent présenter leur langue plutôt que la maîtresse, parce qu'ils viennent du pays dont ils parlent ”

“ On comprend mieux quand c'est des personnes de l'extérieur qui viennent présenter les langues ”



Making time & space in the curriculum

- **Educating all children together about the value of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism**
- **Integrating languages and cultures of all pupils across the curriculum**
- **Means breaking down barriers**
 - **between different categories of languages**
 - **between languages and other school subjects**
 - **between different cultures**
 - **between home school and other contexts of learning**



Languages in Didenheim

Taught at school

German
(English)
Moroccan Arabic
Polish
Turkish

Spoken at home

German
English
Arabic
Polish
Turkish
Alsatian
Berber
Brazilian
Italian
Malay
Mandarin
Serbo-Croat
Vietnamese

In the project

German
English
Arabic
Polish
Turkish
Alsatian
Berber
Brazilian
Italian
Malay
Mandarin
Serbo-Croat
Vietnamese
Finnish
Japanese
Russian
Sign Language
Spanish



A Parent's remarks

“What I get out of this project is the satisfaction of knowing that what I had for me all my life, I can share with other children... These children, once they have conscience of another language, it will build up an interest for them to want to know more.... Because children are very curious and they want to go towards the others, but it is always the fact of not knowing that stops people in general to go towards another person...and it removes a lot of prejudices that they have heard themselves from other adults. This way it makes them open up their minds to learn more.”

(Malay parent)



Educationally Inclusive

“Je crois que là on essaie justement de prendre les différences, de les mettre en relief, mais les bons côtés de ces différences, et ce que cela peut avoir d’enrichissant ... il y a la partie culturelle qui est différente de la nôtre, et puis il y a tout ce qu’on vit en commun en fait, on construit l’histoire de la classe en commun et ça les enfants sont riches de leurs expériences, de leur culture personnelle, mais tout est mis en commun pour construire une histoire commune à la classe.”

(Class teacher of 7 year olds)



Project Conclusions

- **A plurilingual approach gives pedagogical means to acknowledge diversity**
- **Language & cultural awareness only model which is inclusive:**
 - **Languages + cultures = collective resource + all on an equal footing**
- **Bilingualism of minority language children can be valued. Some children have found their voices in Didenheim**
- **The teachers in Didenheim have :**
 - **Found their own pedagogical solutions to intolerance**
 - **Reduced the distance between home and school cultures****=> beyond the strict framework of top down curriculum**
- **BUT aims of such approaches not always understood**



Explaining plurilingual education

- **Not the dominant representation of language education in France**
- **Not the direct experience of many European citizens (often monolingual vision)**
- **Need to challenge common misconceptions such as:**
 - **one language hinders acquisition of another**
 - **you have to be gifted to learn languages**
 - **it takes a long time to learn a language (perfection)**
 - **you have to learn language young**



Implications of Didenheim Project for Teacher Education

As a result of the project the teachers have been able to :

- Discover linguistic and cultural diversity with the parents and children**
- Transform this diversity into an object of learning**
- Better understand the bilingual children's errors**
- Implement a trans-disciplinary approach**
- Develop a more global vision of languages and cultures**
- Develop real collaboration with parents through the project**
- Support parents who wish to maintain home languages**
- Recognise the value of bilingualism in ALL languages**



Creating new spaces in teacher education

- **Tightly packed 1 year course (made space in English course 3h)**
- **TESSLA project (Teacher Education for the Support of Second Language Acquisition), “hijacked” English course to run a pilot 24h, PBL**
- **ERASMUS staff mobility**
- **Mémoire professionnel/Ecrit réflexif**
- **European Languages Day, 26th September**
- **In-house staff training day, joined forces with colleagues**
- **Team teaching in French (intercultural, literacy, home-school, nursery education) 4-6h**
- **Working with school based mentors**
- **Placement preparation (bilingualism, language support) 3h**
- **In-service training for primary & nursery teachers 11 days (66h)**
- **In-service training for school psychologists 1 day (6h)**
- **Masterisation?**



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Kiitos

谢谢

Tänan

Aitäh

Köszönöm

Ευχαριστώ

Takk

Merci

Tesekkür ederim

Dank u wel

Thank you...