

SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS IN A BILINGUAL UNIVERSITY: AN EXAMPLE OF TRAINING

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Abstract

In official bilingualism contexts, universities may offer courses in the partner languages at various levels of training, in order to meet the social objectives of linguistic retention or enrichment. Thus, students take part in the courses in a language other than their mother tongue. For the teachers concerned, this means taking a new perspective on their course and teaching approaches like those employed by the English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) pedagogy. At university level, general pedagogical training is not systematically offered to teachers, and as far as teaching in an EMI context is concerned, it is almost non-existent.

This article therefore proposes to address the issue of teacher training for teachers delivering their courses in the students' L2 or L3 (French, German or English), by presenting and evaluating a training module set up in a bilingual (French/German) university in Switzerland. This module is offered to teachers as part of continuing training, organized in two working sessions. The objective is to enable participants, who teach in a bilingual context in higher education, to improve their teaching scenario, which includes content choice, learning objectives, pedagogical approaches and assessment methods.

Analysis of the revisited teaching scenarios highlighted the pedagogical activities proposed by the teachers as well as the adjustments made to their teaching taking into account the language of instruction, which make it possible to support the learning experience of the students while promoting opportunities to develop their plurilingual skills.

Key words: bilingual program, continuing training, EMI, higher education

1. Introduction

Studying in a language other than one's mother tongue (L1) is a real choice, which requires a significant investment of time and energy on the part of the students. Higher education institutions are increasingly offering courses in non-official languages and, prior to the pandemic, student mobility was on the rise (Hugonnier, 2017), contributing to the internationalization of higher education. However, while English is certainly a preferred second language (L2), universities located on the language frontier in

multilingual countries can take advantage of their geographical specificity to offer courses in local languages, which are either the students' native (L1) or second (L2) language.

Teaching in the partner language in a bilingual context serves four main social goals, according to Brohy and Gajo (2008). This may involve, firstly, a transition assistance (teaching starts in L1 and the volume of courses in L2 increases steadily) to prepare students for a full education programme in L2, secondly, to maintain and promote the bilingual potential of a region, thirdly, to revitalise a regional or minority language, or fourthly, to enrich it by developing individual skills in languages of high social and professional status. For the academic context in question, two objectives, namely linguistic retention and enrichment, may justify the teaching of courses in L1 and L2.

In the specific context of the University of Fribourg, it is difficult to propose a label that corresponds exactly to the teaching model. Bilingual education is an umbrella term that incorporates a variety of educational situations. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is certainly one of the most widely studied teaching system in bilingual education. However, in a CLIL approach, the teacher's objective is to develop students' skills in the non-linguistic discipline as well as those related to the language of instruction. However, it is never a question of teaching both content and a language in parallel in this academic context.

Another widely used model in Higher Education is the English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) model, where the "E" would be replaced by an "F" (for French) or a "G" (for German) in the specific context of this study. The language of instruction is seen as a tool of communication, enabling learning content to be transmitted. However, one of the features of EMI is that teachers often teach in a language, which is not their first language (implying a language insecurity parameter and thus a sense of equality with students, who are not L1 either), whereas in our context teachers normally work in their first language, which is also their professional language. The discrepancy between their daily and professional practices and those of the students' for whom both the language as well as the disciplinary content of the course are being learnt, is not necessarily recognised by teachers. Indeed, they are hired for a specialized teaching of their discipline, for which they are experts, to students who are novice in the subject. The focus is naturally on the subject and its content, and considerations relating to the language of instruction can be set aside. Thus, these are teaching and learning situations designed for students studying in their first language, without taking into account the L2 or L3 students' language needs, whereas the transition from a course in L1 to a course in L2 requires a pedagogical reconfiguration (Cosnefroy, 2020).

It would therefore be closer to reality to speak of bilingual education, although the term is more open. However, it has the merit of explicitly indicating the presence of at least two languages in the courses, distributed among teachers and/or students. In this case,

if the student finds him/herself in a clear linguistic minority, it is simply immersion: he or she is immersed (and left to his or her own) during the course in a total immersion in a language that is not his or her L1.

Finally, the fact that it is difficult to choose from among these labels the one most appropriate to the context raises questions about the definition of the teacher's job as the official status of the language of instruction and the place given to each language. Language cannot be regarded as a mere communication tool, but may be the object of a particular interest during the course, as would be the case in a CLIL system. The teacher's relationship to the language can also be questioned, insofar as he or she does not fully master it and does not consider it as an important element for his or her discipline.

As in many situations around the world, teachers involved in this type of education (whether an EMI or CLIL label) do not benefit from any specific training to teach a linguistically heterogeneous audience (Dearden and Macaro, 2016). This observation is surprising in the sense that bilingual education raises important issues directly affecting students' learning experience.

In order to understand and address the challenges of the teaching system in the context of a bilingual university the author designed and delivered a training module to support the lecturers of the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. The structure, implementation and outcomes of the training will be presented and commented on.

2. Methods

2.1. Context of the study

The University of Fribourg is located on a linguistic border, in an officially bilingual region (French/German), in a country that recognises four national languages: German, French, Italian and Romansch. The students usually study in their linguistic area, but it happens that they move to another Swiss university to attend classes in another national language because their region does not offer the specific course of study they need (which often occurs with Italian speakers) or because they want to improve their level in the partner language.

The university itself is officially bilingual. Training courses are offered to students in French or German, and some faculties offer bilingual curricula. In recent years, the wave of internationalization has also reached this university, leading to the delivery of courses in English. From an administrative point of view, the institution's official bilingualism is reflected in the distribution of official documents in French and in German, as well as in the practice of inter-comprehension during work sessions (each speaks his or her own language and is able to understand the other's language).

At the level of teaching, the policy on languages of instruction is relatively straightforward, since teachers generally deliver their courses in their first language or the main working language (French or German, possibly English in some cases). If the students opt for a bilingual or plurilingual course, that means that they must take courses in the partner language. In addition, there is also an offer of courses given in English, depending on the faculties and training paths.

Thus, depending on the training offered by each faculty, several configurations are possible.

If the teacher uses one of the two L1s (French or German) to deliver their course, they may be addressing to a majority of native L1 students with a few L2 students or a majority L2 with a minority of L1 or a balanced distribution of L1 and L2 students. However, these three configurations are schematic and therefore restrictive, and of course other configurations are possible by adding L3 or L4, by considering the linguistic profile of students from another linguistic region or from an immigrant background.

2.2. Students' situation

While it is well known that taking courses in a foreign language involves a considerable investment for students, it is interesting to look at the reasons why they choose to study in a non-L1. One of the first answers is of course personal, and it is of several kinds, as Sagrario Salaberri-Ramiro and del Mar Sánchez-Pérez (2018) point out: following a programme in a non-L1 offers the opportunity to improve the language skills and open doors at the professional level. However, the authors underline that this type of program also attracts students by its pedagogical approaches. Students may, for example, be required to work in smaller groups or benefit from better pedagogical follow-up.

It should also be pointed out that in some university departments, courses are not offered in both languages, which is the case in departments with limited curricula offerings. If students want to continue their studies at university, they must follow the course in the partner language, so it is not necessarily a real choice on the part of the students.

What about the required level of language proficiency? Based on the Council of Europe's recommendations for international exchanges, such as Erasmus, the minimum recommended level for taking a course in the partner language is B2 of the CEFR. This level can be achieved relatively quickly for students who have taken courses in the language in question during their previous studies. However, students tend to underestimate their own skills in the partner language (Macaro and al., 2018), which may act as a brake (in the lack of confidence) in their learning.

Thus, students may encounter several types of difficulties during the class. The first is in the classroom, where students are expected to listen to the lecturer's speeches and interact with other students in group work or debate (Macaro et al., 2018). Simply speaking, asking a question or giving an opinion, may be hampered by linguistic insecurity. Reading teaching materials, articles and other references, as well as writing in the partner language, requires extra time for allophone students, despite a very good mastery of the target language.

These few parameters contribute to an increase in anxiety among students engaged in a bi-plurilingual program, anxiety due to several factors such as access to content or proficiency level required. At the university of Fribourg, a study also highlighted a feeling of injustice felt by students concerning some differences of teaching practices and supports between departments (Banholzer and Charlier, 2019).

2.3. Lecturers' situation

The stance of the teacher, who is engaged to teach a subject in which he or she is an expert, is delicate. He or she finds himself or herself in front of an audience with a heterogeneous linguistic profile, including some students who are linguistically insecure or maybe linguistically highly confident (than the lecturer). The lecturer cannot ignore the situation, however, can the discipline teacher be regarded as a language teacher in this context?

We might be tempted to say that they can. Indeed, from a linguistic point of view, the teacher should use the language accurately to convey its content and develop the skills of students. From this perspective, it is clear that each discipline has its own language, with terms that are specific to it (Gajo, 2011). One of the roles of the teacher is to familiarize the student with this specialized language. On the other hand, teachers in the vast majority of Higher Education institutions do not receive specific training for teaching in a bi-plurilingual context, whether it is an EMI or CLIL system (Macaro et al., 2018). If training is planned, it focuses on aspects of mastery of the language of instruction (i. e. in cases where the lecturer teaches in a language other than his or her L1) (Dafouz, 2018). Finally, it may also be argued that, as a general rule, there are no course objectives that focus on language acquisition (Airey, 2012). Students are expected to develop skills and knowledge related to the discipline, and language remains a communication tool. From an institutional point of view, teachers do not have the responsibility to become involved in developing the language skills of students. This point is also noted by Banholzer and Charlier (2019) at the University of Fribourg, the authors explained that 85% of the teachers think that the linguistic aspect of the classes is the students' responsibility.

2.4. Why adaptations?

Researchers have proposed a number of adaptations that may be implemented by teachers of linguistically heterogeneous student groups, although some teachers may be reluctant or question the appropriateness of tailoring their courses to such an audience.

A first argument is to be attentive to students. It is indeed very difficult to remain indifferent to the signs of difficulties that one may perceive during a course (such as students losing track, showing their incomprehension, etc.). Another argument lies in the field of linguistics, and more particularly that of communicative accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1973), the theory that speakers adapt their speech to be understood by the other person, with the aim of successful interaction. In other words, each interlocutor makes an effort in his or her formulation (choice of words, flow, pronunciation, etc.) so that he or she can understand and be understood. Teachers will tend to implement accommodation strategies, such as repeating a portion of the speech or code-switching (Cogo, 2009) to ensure a better understanding on the part of students. Naturally wanting a better understanding of one's speech, and thus accommodating it, can destabilize the teacher who wonders how far to go with this accommodation. The lecturers can be divided between the desire to support students in their learning and the fear of oversimplifying students' work.

3. The training

Based on these theoretical underpinnings, the pedagogic support centre at the university of Fribourg (Centre de didactique universitaire) has set up a training course of two sessions (of 3 hours each) to raise awareness of the issues involved in bi-plurilingual education, based on the following learning objectives:

- Using bi-plurilingual communicative resources
- Analysing a teaching situation from the point of view of bi-plurilingualism
- Preparing a teaching sequence in a bi-plurilingual context
- Adapting teaching materials for bi-plurilingual teaching
- Assessing skills of students in a bi-plurilingual educational context

The course is organized around theoretical presentations, group discussions and individual reflective tasks.

3.1. Structure of the training

The training has been held twice (Spring 2020 and Spring 2021). Fourteen French and German-speaking teachers from different faculties (Theology, Law, Humanities, Management/ Economics/Social Sciences, Science and Medicine) took part.

Because the course is online (due to the pandemic), planning is adjusted to the situation. It is organized around two sessions in synchronous mode, with work planned in advance to allow participants to be prepared for the first session, then an activity between the two sessions (to test initial adaptations) and a final task to be performed after the second session to validate the training.

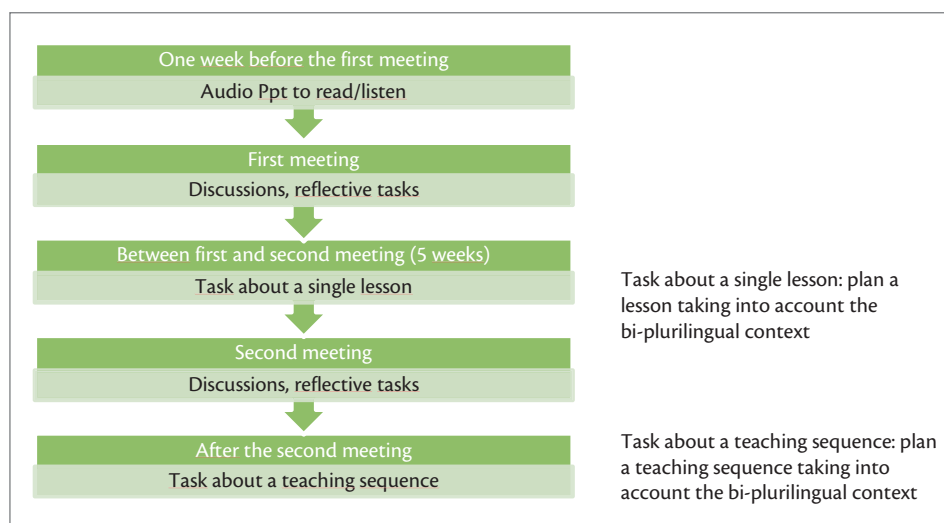


Fig. 1. The training design

3.2. Content of the training

The preparatory work allowed the participants to become familiar with the context and the issues involved in a bi-plurilingual education system. Among other issues, the content drew attention to the learning difficulties students may encounter in this type of learning situations. The first session focused on the planning work, such as adapting material, creating and implementing the project, use of teaching materials and use of new technologies to support the students' experience of learning.

Participants, who are not language teachers, were asked to work on the different language skills (oral/written reception and oral/written production) that are known to language teaching but unfamiliar to them. Their attention was drawn to the difficulty

that a student may experience in various tasks during their studies, such as reading an article (reading skill) or speaking in class (speaking skill) or writing a report (writing skill).

The examples below (Table 1) are the result of the discussions and activities that took place during the first session, from the participants or from the trainer.

Table 1. Selection of examples of material adaptation

Skills	Examples
Listening	- Add a transcription for video document - Give a summary for audio document
Speaking	- Small groups activities - Oral presentation (chapter, part of a subject)
Reading	- Give a keyword for each paragraph - Rearrange the layout of a text
Writing	- Write a summary - Write intermediate parts of an essay

These adjustment proposals are relatively simple to implement. This made it possible to link the two sessions as the participants had the task of adapting at least one of their courses based on the elements that emerged from the work of the first session, according to their teaching situation.

The content of the second session focused on the teachers' communicative resources during their courses as well as on the delicate question of student assessment in a bi-plurilingual context. Improved in-class communication can be achieved by slowing speaking pace and flow, by translating some keywords or by supporting the learning experience with written media (graphics, tables, etc.).

4. Results

the outcome of the training module is visible in the final production of the participants. They had to revise their pedagogical planning to include elements that would support students in their learning experience in a bilingual education context. Participants had at their disposal a pedagogical scenario model (Table 2) that included the course content, the objectives, the pedagogical approaches and the assessment methods (Daele and Berthiaume, 2013). They were free to modify this model by adding parameters they thought useful, such as material, work organisation, etc.

Table 2. Pedagogical scenario model

Content	Learning goals	Teaching strategies	Assessment
Course 1: Introduction to the main notions of...	Be able to define the main notions of...	Teacher's talk Work in pairs	Formative assessment: quiz (Kahoot!) at the end of the course
...

The scenarios reviewed by the participants were used as material for analysing the adjustments made to support students in this bi-plurilingual context. For this reason, scenarios (represented in the form of planning grids) are assimilated to the idea of synopsis (Schneuwly et al., 2006), as support for the analysis of pedagogical practice.

Analysis of the course planning grids revealed that the main changes were in the pedagogical approaches. In fact, the training objectives, as well as the content and assessment methods, are included in the course descriptions and cannot be changed over the years without consultation with the other members of the teaching team.

However, the different elements can be grouped according to their nature. Thus, four categories emerged: the actions of teachers before the course, those that take place during the course, the elements that are present throughout the semester and constitute support for the students, and finally the interventions that relate to the attitude of the teachers. Table 2 - below lists the areas for improvement that appeared on the participants' planning grids.

The actions that teachers planned before the course, such as making course materials (e. g. ppt support) available to students a few days in advance, require little reorganisation and preparation. They are, however, inclusive in the sense that they serve all students, whether they are French or German speakers. Taking an interest in their language profile also has the effect of establishing a pedagogical relationship early (sometimes before meeting the students) and obtaining information that may be useful for further courses (as an aid in group formation).

The actions planned during the courses are important to show in the planning. They mainly consist of making room for bi-plurilingualism by allowing time for questions or further explanations in the partner language and organising group work by setting up mixed groups to encourage exchanges among students.

The "support" category refers to tools available to students throughout the semester, such as a glossary to be completed on the student learning platform or resources in the partner language, such as videos or articles.

Finally, the teacher's encouraging attitude during the course resulted in a clear communication about how the class works and an open and positive attitude towards the students.

Table 3. Main supportive interventions

Categories	Teachers' improvements
Before the class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey on the students' linguistic profile • Translation of important words • Ppt available a few days before (on Moodle)
During the class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time for questions • Translation (keywords) • Code-switching (for explanation, questions, etc.) • Mixed groups • Questions to the class in students' L1 • Slow speech • No hypercorrection • Instructions in L1 and L2
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glossary • Online tools (dictionary, forum on Moodle, etc.) • Multisensory supports (audio, video, etc.) • Language choice for written tasks • Resources in L1 and L2 (books, articles, videos, etc.) • Extra resources in L2 • Extra graphic support
Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication about languages use • Encouraging attitude

5. Discussion and conclusion

The fact that such training has found an audience is a relevant indicator of the interest of teachers in receiving training so that they take the best account of the university bi-plurilingual context and linguistic heterogeneity of their students.

As we can see in the results section, the developments in the scenarios are varied. They concern elements of course structure but also communication aspects. The extent of these adjustments also varies. It is interesting to note that the teachers involved in this module are open to bilingual education. However, the contexts in which they work offer different potentialities. These parameters refer to their working conditions. The importance of the size of the groups can be noted, which has an influence on the way in which the students' profiles are taken into account and also the time available to offer summaries in the partner language or to find appropriate resources in other languages.

Although they are not language teachers, participants in this instruction project were open to the issue of bilingual program raised by allophone students. The training was considered useful by those who were fully engaged in the discussions during the sessions. The revised scenarios all included improvements that took into account the bilingual university context. However, the actual implementation of these improvements and feedback from participants' practice is missing. It would be enlightening to support teachers over a longer period of time so that sustainable teaching improvements can be put in place. Their creativity would also benefit from being valued and results shared among peers.

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UNTERSTÜTZUNG FÜR LEHRKRÄFTE AN EINER ZWEISPRACHIGEN UNIVERSITÄT: EIN WEITERBILDUNGSBEISPIEL

In offiziellen Zweisprachigkeitssituationen können Hochschulen den Studenten Kurse in der Partnersprache auf verschiedenen Ausbildungsstufen anbieten, um die sozialen Ziele des Verbleibs oder der Bereicherung zu erreichen. Die Studierenden nehmen also an den Kursen in einer anderen Sprache als ihrer Muttersprache teil. Für die betroffenen Dozenten bedeutet dies eine neue Perspektive auf ihren Studiengang wie Englisch als Unterrichtsmedium. Auf universitärer Ebene wird den Dozenten keine systematische allgemeine pädagogische Ausbildung angeboten, und was den Unterricht im EMI-Kontext betrifft, so gibt es so gut wie keine solche.

In diesem Artikel wird daher vorgeschlagen, sich mit der Frage der Ausbildung für Dozenten zu befassen, die ihre Kurse L2 oder L3 (Französisch, Deutsch oder Englisch) absolvieren, und insbesondere mit der spezifischen Methodik dieses Unterrichts zu befassen. Eine Ausbildung an einer zweisprachigen Universität (Französisch und Deutsch) wird vorgestellt und diskutiert. Diese Fortbildung wird den Dozenten im Rahmen einer Fortbildung angeboten, die in zwei Arbeitssitzungen organisiert wird. Ziel ist es, Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmer, die im Rahmen einer zweisprachigen Universität unterrichten, in die Lage zu versetzen, ihr Unterrichtsszenario zu verbessern, das die Auswahl von Inhalten, Lernzielen, pädagogischen Ansätzen und Bewertungsmethoden umfasst.

Die Analyse dieser überarbeiteten Szenarien verdeutlicht die pädagogischen Aktivitäten, die von den Dozenten vorgeschlagen werden, sowie die Anpassungen ihres Unterrichts unter Berücksichtigung der Unterrichtssprache, die es ermöglichen, die Lernerfahrung der Studenten zu unterstützen und gleichzeitig Möglichkeiten zur Entwicklung ihrer mehrsprachigen Kompetenzen zu fördern.

Schlüsselwörter: EMI, Fortbildung, Hochschulbildung, zweisprachiges Programm