Language Across the Curriculum (LAC)

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Structure of Presentation

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9. LAC: From Concept to Policy
1. Origins of the LAC concept

- Origins in Great Britain
- 1975: Bullock Report „A Language for Life“
- 1985: Swann Report „Education for All“
- Linking language and learning
- No longer narrowly seen as the domain of L1
- Not confined to the conventional 4 modes of I.
- Including non-verbal ways of expression
- Handling other semiotic systems
2. Eight modes of human activities involving language

- Listening: comprehending oral input/intake
- Speaking: constructing meaningful utterances
- Reading: understanding written texts
- Writing: producing written texts/discourse
- Viewing: attending to visual signs/information
- Shaping: using visual means of expression
- Watching: attending to the movements
- Moving: using the whole body / person
3. Language and Thinking

• Language is more than Communication Skills
• Language is linked to the Thinking Process
• BICS versus CALP (Cummins)
• *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency* = using language as tool, for discourse functions
• Goal: Developing „Conceptual Literacy“
• Solving cognitively demanding tasks in a more and more de-contextualized manner
• Cognitive-Cultural Variables for school success
4. Language and Learning

- LAC focussus more on learning (than teaching)
  - „Language plays a central role in learning. No matter what the subject area, students assimilate new concepts largely through language, that is when they listen to and talk, read and write about what they are learning and relate this to what they already know…. Encouraging all teachers to participate in developing and practising a school language = “learning“ policy."
5. The Basic Tenets of LAC

• 1. Language *develops* mainly through its purposeful use (domains to be broadened)
• 2. Learning often *involves* talking, writing, shaping and moving (in reaction to perceptions)
• 3. Learning often *occurs* through speaking or writing as much as shaping and moving
• 4. Language use *contributes* to (is a pre-requisite for) cognitive development
• 5. Language *is medium* for reflecting learning

- Necessary: Explicit definition of expected outcomes in L1 (competencies and standards)
- Transfer of L1 competences into LAC: extension
- Functions of language in subject-specific learning (comprehension/production/interaction)
- Profits for L1 from subject-specific approaches
- Cross-curricular linkages necessary: development of „internal“ plurilingualism (varieties of L1)
Some Language Competencies in L1

- Understanding/Interpreting utterances/texts
- Linking information from different sources
- Presenting results from studying+analysing
- Embedding, Evaluating, Judging Texts
- Interacting with others: construction of meaning
- Production of own texts in a variety of ways
- Reflecting and evaluating own learning process
Focus: Subject-Specific Communicative Competence

• Developing language for academic purposes (in LS + in all other subjects)
• Cummins: CALP (as opposed to BICS) (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency)
• *Reading Comprehension* as a basis for all other linguistic and cultural „skills“
• Specific demands of discontinuous „texts“, of text-image relations + of social semiotics
Language for specific purposes

- a. Understanding/interpreting different layers of meaning = (re)constructing meaning (based on different sources of information)
- b. Composing meaning through logical structuring and networking of concepts into appropriate utterances and texts
- c. Interacting (online) in the negotiation and joint construction of (subj.-spec.) meaning
Discourse Functions

- Linking of (subj.spec.) concepts/networking
- Linking of information units/sentences
- Linking of arguments + support, discussion
- Demands of precision, explicitness, rationality, concrete and abstraction
- Differences between Definition, Assertion, Description, Illustration, Exemplification etc.
- Overall structure (purpose, audience, genre)
Mediation competence

- Mediation = translation = rephrasing/restructuring
- for different groups of peers
- for the teacher (as a representative of the public and/or scientific community)
- for a lay audience (parents, school, public...)
- for „experts“ from outside, from field/discipline. This leads to increasing degrees of participating in different discourses + disc. communities
Application to educational standards

- Subject-specific communication has been accepted and incorporated into the competence model of many subjects (particularly the sciences, geography, history)
- In Germany, Biology and Chemistry are in the process of spelling out how they understand „Fachkommunikation“, how to teach + test it.
- Cooperation between linguists, language teachers and subject teachers
7. „Bilingual“ Education / Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

- Broad label for many different initiatives/types
- Functions: Transitory, Maintenance, Enrichment
- From Kindergarten to higher education
- Use of another language (than LE/L1) for instruction (L2, for migrants kids L3)
- The focus is on content, topic, subject-matter and language as a tool (instead of form)
- Special forms: Immersion, dual lang. educat.
Features of Bilingual Education/CLIL

- L2/L3...Ln as language of instruction
- L2/L3...Ln as language of thinking/cognition
- Language as a tool, not a goal in itself
- Language support: functional notions, speech acts, rhetorical structures, text+discourse types
- Semantic networking, linking terms/expressions
- Developing subj.-spec. Comm. Comp. in L2/L3
- Insertion of language „islands“ (if necessary)
Goals of Bilingual Education

- In Europe: normally enrichment, maintenance
- Often: socio-cultural integration
- Sometimes connected with or leading to language loss and language shift
- Bilingual schooling: Developing a second system of communication for participation
- Saddest case: „double semilingualism“ (where neither L1 nor L2 is fully developed as a tool)
Some Advantages of CLIL:

• Restructuring the subject matter in basic terms, conceptualising and thus verbalising more consciously, more explicitly, in smaller units, linking it to prior (everyday) knowledge
• Linguistic struggle/revolving helps semantic processing+thus understanding and storage
• More awareness and consciousness-raising as to language + thinking, diversity, pluriling.
• More linguistic and mental „creativity“
Data from LAC/CLIL research

• Example 1: see slide no 22
  Language used in a Think-Aloud Process

• Example 2: see Handout
  Language used for negotiating meaning

• Example 3: see Handout
  Language used for editing one’s own text
Source: DFG project “Subject-specific learning and (second) language education: Cognition, Communication, Cooperation” (Prof. Vollmer, Osnabrück, Germany)

- Comparison of monolingual and bilingual learners in grade 10 (subject: Geography)
- Development of tasks for a competence test
- Fokus: written discourse competence with
- Processes: Think-Aloud-Protocols (individ.)
- Processes: Collaborative task solutions (pairs)
- Processes: First version, Edited version
Learner’s answer to a task on the distribution of the tropical rain forest

• “Tropical rainforest can be found around the equator of our world. A few degree more or less doesn’t matter. Tropical rainforest is about 0°. Within the equator are countries like Brasil, Columbia, part of Mexico (rainforest), central Afrika countries (Kongo ...) and in the east Indonesia or Thailand.”
Example 1: Data taken from a Think-Aloud-Protocol

Transkript 1012 Karen 1.b
1. (1 s) Ähm the precipitation (2s)
2. [(schreibend) the precipitation (3 s) hmmm]
3. (1 s) [(d) schwankt.]
4. (1 s) [(leise) Hm.] . .
5. Precipitation is (1 s) high in April (1 s) August and October
6. (2 s) The pr- there is much precipitation
9. [(schreibend) it´s never . . under (1 s) h- h- . a hundred (1 s)
   millimetres (2 s) millimetres per (1 s) per . . square . metre (1 s)
   ähmm (1 s) but in August and October] [...] [(schreibend) (2 s)
   the precipitation (1 s) climbs up (3 s) to]
10. (1 s) two hundred (1 s) tw- . nn- two hundred thirty.
11. . Yes. (1 s)
12. (schreibt, 1 s)
8. LAC Extended: An Integrated Approach

• 1. Relating L1/LS/LE to FLE or SLE: „Bildung“
• 2. Developing subject-specific language competence in each subject and across all of them
• 3. Relating the learning of the first FL to that of learning other/further FLs
• 4. Relating FLE to Heritage Language Educat.
• 5. Using a FL/L2/L3 as a language of instruction („Bilingual Education/CLIL)
Aspects of „Bildung“

• Unfolding of subjectivity + cultural realisation
• Basis for self-definition and self-regulation
• Bildung = „What I always have with/on me“ - „What nobody can take away from me“
• Potential for leading a happy + successful life
• (Re)Socializing = Giving „things“ back: functioning / participating professionally + socially
• Basis for continuous/life-long learning + inclusion
Language Education as a whole

- Need for a larger framework to describe the relative contributions of different types of formal and informal language education: „Gesamtsprachliche Bildung“
- Comprehensive goal setting for language education
  - organising thinking and learning
  - self-regulation, self-realization, self-reflection
  - socialising with others, constituting meaningful relation
  - living and working together: x discourse communities
  - participating in shaping of domains/society/democracy
  - living happily, successfully, peacefully
„Gesamtsprachliche Bildung“
(quote from Frederking/Hu/Legutke/Oomen-Welke/Vollmer 2004: 95)

• „The overriding goal is to develop an integrated language education which is based on prior knowledge and capacities of the children, unfolding these further, enriching them, linking them together so as to lay the basis for continuous, lifelong learning and for competent participation into societal decision-making processes. In doing so certain competencies become important which can be summarized as abilities of handling language in an understanding, productive and creative as well as in an analytical-reflexive manner“.  

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Some Core Competencies

• „Knowledge base“ (as defined by cognitive scientists)
• „Dispositions“ (for future performance/learning)
• Potentials (acquired level of achievement)
• Set/array of „knowledge, abilities, skills, attitudes, experiences, motivations“ (Weinert) necessary for mastering new challenges
• Threshold theory: „plateau“/spilling over
A Comprehensive Literacy Model

- Listening Comprehension Competence
- Auditory-Visual Competence
- Reading Competence
- Writing Competence
- Speaking Competence
- Symbolic Decoding/Semiotic Competence
- Media Competence
- Literary and Aesthetic Competence
- Functional-Pragmatic Competence
- Intercultural Competence
- Language Learning Competence
- Metalinguistic Competence/Language Awareness
A. Issues for Research Involved

• 1. Developing a larger theoretical framework for linking LS/LE, FLE/SLE, HLE, Ln

• 2. Comparing and integrating different models of language acquisition + lang. use

• 3. Analyzing relations between minority and majority languages and their learning

• 4. Describing modes of lang.prof.: BICS vs. CALP, discourse comp.=ways of participating

• 5. Identify specifics of bilingual/dual l. learning
B. Issues for learning involved

- (1.) *Linking language(s) as subject(s)* (LE with FLE/SLE or FLE + several FLs): Comparing aspects of meaning, form, pragmatics, disc. conventions, types + patterns
- 2. *Extending, diversifying, applying and specialising LS/LE* through subject-specific lang. use (basis for forming multiple identities)
- 3. Developing a second system of communication + participation through CLIL
C. Issues for Teaching Involved

• 1. Identifying ways of linking LS/LE with other areas/subjects of explicit language teaching
• 2. Taking special care of disadvantaged/migrant children (differentiation, heterogeneity)
• 3. Using prior „knowledge“ in FLE (MSK-Did.)
• 4. Identifying components, levels and specific (contextualized) exercises for developing subject-specific communicative competence
• 5. Strengthening the role of language support and language-mediated learning within CLIL.
9. LAC: From Concept to Policy

- Difficulties + Responsibilities in realising concept
- A whole school approach: a school language policy means a school learning policy!
- LAC as an integrated framework for L./L. policy
- Teacher roles + attitudes: Rethinking, retraining
- Leading role of the principal + of administration
- Planning on the Local, Provincial, National level
- Summary and Perspectives (1) and (2)
Perspectives (1)

• 1. Identifying dimensions of subject-specific communication

• 2. Spell out the academic language component(s) in non-linguistic subject-matter learning and teaching

• 3. Explicitly draw on already existing language skills/knowledge/competencies (built up through LE, FLE, or other subjects.)
Perspectives (2)

• 4. Experiment with L2/L3 as the language of thinking and learning
• 5. Experience the unity of conceptualising and verbalising.
• 6. (Re-)Structure a topic /a subject matter in basic terms, linking it to prior knowledge and to non-verbal forms of representation
• 6. Insist on the development of CALP across all subjects within the school curriculum.
THANK YOU!