

BILIUM Project - Final Meeting of the Partners
4 June 2014 - Greifswald, Germany

Those present:

Project Coordinator: Ekaterina Koudrjajtseva (EK), University of Greifswald (Germany)
Partners of the meeting: Thomas Hentschel (TH), IKaRuS e.V. in DJO (Germany); Elena Denisova-Schmidt (EDS), University of St Gallen (Switzerland); Olga Shterenshis (OS), Grigory Pasternak (GP), Covor, Elena Elfrink-Diakonova (The Netherlands); Viktor Anders (VA), Tatjana Meier (T M), Weltsprachen Institute (Austria); Olga Solntseva (OS), Irina Krivova (IK), Union des Russophones de France (France); Olga Bramley (OB), George Bramley (GB), London School of Russian Language and Literature (The United Kingdom); Sergey Prokopkin (SP) & Staff of the Institute of Foreign Languages and Media Technology, University of Greifswald.

Welcome speech by University Lecturer, Dr H. Peters, on behalf of the Institute of Foreign Languages and Media Technology, who thanked the partners for their contributions to this important project. The research makes it clear that the topic of bilingualism must be supported in education systems, in order to integrate migrant communities in countries of the EU. It will also be developed in future projects.

Ekaterina Koudrjajtseva, Project Coordinator, welcomed the partners.

Elena Denisova-Schmidt welcomed the group and gave a brief summary of the contributions made by each of the organisations. On behalf of the project, she expressed acknowledgement and thanks to the partners for these contributions, many of which would not have been possible without the close cooperation between the partners, e.g. The University of St Gallen, the London School of Russian Language and Literature, the Russian-Swedish Cultural Society, the Weltsprachen Institute, and the staff at the participating primary schools. The project involved extensive research work in the respective countries, meetings in the partners' organisations, presentations and discussions.

The findings of the research and discussions were presented in the first part of the BILIUM Project publication. Information has also been included on the partners' websites and on a Facebook page dedicated to the project.

Thomas Hentschel gave a presentation to describe the stages, techniques and methods used for working on the project, and on its origins.

According to recent research, a very high proportion of pupils in Germany and other European countries are from a migrant background (up to 80% in Germany), and schools and teaching institutions, lacking the appropriate structures or systems, often struggle to deal with the issues arising from this. In particular, there are problems of integration of children in kindergartens.

In response, the project was set up with the aim of providing a European framework for examining and comparing research work into multilingualism across Europe. The exchange of ideas and methodologies from different levels of work with bilingual children has been very successful.

The task now is transfer the results (in publications) to stakeholders within the participating countries and also in Russia, which faces similar problems: the lack of skills, experience and a system for dealing with the issues associated with multilingualism.

Actions for the future:

- Other language groups (of migrant communities) should be used in the educational system,
- Parent - teacher programmes should be developed,
- The curriculum for teachers at supplementary education schools should be improved, based on what has been learned,
- Provide training for teaching staff in kindergartens.

Results of the first module, Germany

SP: There is no united policy with respect to multilingualism in Germany, and each Land (Province) determines its own policies and practices.

There are high migrant populations in many German cities that use their own language. This services to enrich the local culture and society. Development in many areas depends to a great extent on the languages spoken. Bilingualism needs to be supported in Germany and negative attitudes to migrant languages need to be combated; the success of bilingual children at school very much depends on the policies and approach of local government.

Media and Science - there were 90 projects (including sub-projects) described in the first module.

EK presented the results of research that had recently been done in Germany, and an analysis of 177 projects relating to multilingualism, carried out by a wide range of organisations in all areas. (*in the appendix*).

Olga Bramley gave a presentation on the “Practical aspects of teaching young bilingual English-Russian children”. Olga expressed her thanks to the Project Coordinator, who had taken on a massive undertaking - with success.

There already exists a lot of information relating to good practice in training teaching staff at supplementary schools teaching bilingual children. The aim now is to ensure this information reaches the right people.

A “Bilingual Education - Bilium Project” Facebook page has been set up to disseminate information about the project to the public. All partners were requested to join the page and post their project materials on it -

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Bilingual-and-Multilingual-Education-Bilium-Project/237268429809357?ref=ts&fref=ts>

The Bilium Part 1 publication has been sent to 20 organisations providing teacher training for staff dealing with young bilingual children in the UK.

Summary of the key points made at the partners’ meeting in London, when, in consultation with teaching staff, proposals were discussed for a concept of teaching bilingual children:

Practical problems in teaching Russian/English bilingual children:

1. Teachers having to teach groups of pupils with different levels of language skills, so the approach to teaching is very individualised and preparations are very time-consuming for the teacher
2. Absence of comprehensive teaching books
3. Pronunciation difficulties
4. Difficulties in teaching Russian grammar, which is very complex, e.g. cases, complex sentences with connecting words
5. Lack of spontaneous learning, as using and practising the language is limited (native Russian children adapt quickly, and their Russian gets “pushed aside”)

TH asked whether the school’s teaching is based on traditional Russian or western methods.

OB's reply: The School (in common with other, similar schools) works formally within the framework of the English educational system (i.e. pupils study to attain GCSE and "A" level qualifications). Most of the teaching staff are of the "old guard", relying on the methodology traditionally used in Russian schools. However, around a third of staff teach in English schools, so English methodology is carried over to some extent. The School is managed along the lines of the English system. Tuition is individually structured, based on the individual child's needs (e.g. pronunciation). Staff are given the freedom of choice of methodology and, as experienced and skilled professionals, they are accorded a great deal of trust - this brings positive results.

Practical recommendations for teaching bilingual children for the future:

1. Teaching a variety of methods and skills, flexibility, full palette
2. Music and songs, by a music teacher
3. The selection of talented literature/teaching texts needs to be emotionally charged (emotion is conducive to developing good memory skills)
4. Memory association techniques
5. Recorded literature/prose and poetry - variety of professional voices (male and female)
6. A unified system of class work and home work, i.e. home work needs to be relevant to the work covered in class
7. Reading aloud, including simultaneous reading
8. All types of skills need to be covered in a lesson - reading, writing, listening, speaking, - which must be interactive
9. Creative group work (creative work draws from all knowledge and skills, and materials are memorised)
10. Teaching history and culture
11. Pronunciation
12. Teaching diverse vocabulary
13. Using speech therapy methods
14. Using visual aids
15. Lessons recorded on DVD - using the library of such DVDs
16. Important identification of the subjects
17. Teaching the language of the country of residence
18. Introducing literary texts by the teacher in class before children's reading, provoking interest
19. Presentation through reading aloud and reciting, dramatisation