

Lesson plan 7 WORKING IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

In this lesson plan the students observe how multilingual communication at work functions and reflect on rules facilitating successful communication in a multilingual setting.

EXPERIENCES

Students

- experience working with people with different mother tongues
- observe how communication among these people functions
- recognise that working in multilingual teams works in different ways
- understand that the status of native and non-native speakers in a conversation is not the same
- learn some conversation strategies for successful intercultural communication

TARGETED COMPETENCES

Students

- are interested in understanding what happens in intercultural/plurilingual interactions (FREPA, attitudes, A-3.4)
- accept the existence of other modes of interpretation of reality (FREPA, attitudes, A-4.4)
- react without an a priori negative slant to the functioning of bilingual talk (FREPA, attitudes, A-4.6)
- can communicate in bi/plurilingual groups taking into account the repertoire of their interlocutors (FREPA, skills, S-6.1)
- can activate bilingual or plurilingual communication in relevant situations (FREPA, skills, S-6.5)

PROCEDURE

BEFORE



The teacher gives the students the tables in example 1 and invites them to describe their language profile i.e. to record which language(s) they use with other people in different situations (see example 1).



To make the students aware of how different language profiles can be, a few students are invited to show their profile to the class.



Afterwards, the teacher asks the students if they use more than one language with the same person and explains that such communication situations are called bilingual or multilingual situations, depending on how many languages are involved.



S/he points out the fact that often, especially in the business environment, English is chosen as a global language when people with different mother tongues are present. An exercise on this aspect can be found at ICOPROMO/Sense-making/I speak English.

http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/Icopromo/results/Files_WEB/pag4.html

In the classroom, the students discuss the advantages and disadvantages of only one language or several languages at the workplace. The teacher invites the students to anticipate what kind of bi/multilingual situations they could encounter during the work placement and how they could cope with them. Then, the students are asked to read the examples of mono-/multilingual situations summarised in example 2a and to describe a similar situation at their actual workplace.



The aspect of power relations between native and non native speakers should be taken into account as well. The teacher asks the students to give examples of situations where someone with a different mother tongue tried to communicate in the students' mother tongue. How did they feel about it? What could a possible reason have been for communicating in a foreign language?

In pairs or small groups, students read the short story about an Australian woman, called Sarah, in France and discuss the questions.

(ICOPROMO/Communicating across cultures/Tu es anglaise.

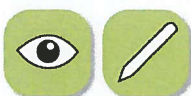
http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/ycopromo/results/Files_WEB/pag2.html)

Students have to understand that being a non-native speaker among native speakers can put them in challenging situations: they might not be able to express their emotions or to react quickly to others's statements etc. Students should understand that their range of expressing themselves as non-native speakers can be limited, but that they should feel self-confident and continue communicating even while it might be frustrating at times.



Before starting their work placement, the students are given sheet no 2. They record their experience in the workplace at the beginning of the lesson so that they know what their tasks are during the work placement (see example 2).

DURING



Students observe examples of mono-/multilingual communication in the workplace, similar to the situations in example 2a and record one or more similar experiences during their work placement (example 2b).

AFTER



In pairs or small groups, students share their experiences. They collect possible rules one can observe in multilingual settings in order to support smooth communication.



The results from the group work are discussed in the class; students complete their list of rules (see more details about such rules in lesson plan 3/Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters where students create the "List of Key Skills of Intercultural Communication").



FINAL PRODUCTS FOR THE PORTFOLIO

- language profiles
- examples of multilingual situations and communication rules

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

ICOPROMO

<http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/icopromo/results/index.html>

Further reading

Find more information about communication in multilingual settings in the booklet from the Dylan project (= Language dynamics and management of diversity, http://www.dylan-project.org/Dylan_en/dissemination/final/booklet/booklet.php).



EXAMPLE 1

My Language Profile

A lot of people use more than one language when communicating with other people. Maybe someone's mother tongue is not the same language as the language of the country s/he is living in. Similarly, a person might work together with a colleague who does not speak the local language. There are many reasons why we use different languages with other people in different situations.

In the tables below, you can indicate, for your private and professional environment, which language(s) you speak, with which person(s), in which situations. You can take several lines for the same language if you use it in different situations (e.g. if you speak English during English lessons at school as well as with your Australian neighbour).

Private environment

Which language(s)?	With whom?	When? How often?

Professional environment

Which language(s)?	With whom?	When? How often?



EXAMPLE 2

Observing Multilingual Situations at the Workplace

Linguists distinguish different strategies that people in multilingual settings can apply. There are either monolingual or multilingual strategies, depending on how many languages are used in a given situation. But even if people start to communicate in one language only, there can be a change of language(s) used during the same situation.

In the boxes below, you will find descriptions of two different communication situations at work³. These examples could have happened in an international company. Please read them carefully and afterwards discuss your hypotheses on why people chose which language.

2a. Activities to be done *before* the work placement

Communication situation 1:

It's the weekly Monday morning meeting that everyone has to attend in a company in the German speaking part of Switzerland. Hugo comes from Canada, is the Head of Department and speaks English and French*. The line manager Kamil is Algerian and speaks Arabic, French, English, Spanish and a little bit of German. Sonja, Lea, Florian and Ali are local employees and speak (Swiss) German, English and French. Ali speaks Turkish as well. The employee Hélène comes from France and speaks French, German and English. The employee Cora is Italian and speaks Italian, French, and English. She speaks very little German. Pavlov is a Hungarian employee and speaks Hungarian, Russian, and German but very little English. Milena is the Polish trainee and speaks Polish, English and a little bit of German. Hugo starts the meeting in English. After one hour, he has to leave. As soon as he has left, Sonja continues the discussion in German.

*The languages are listed in order of the people's competences in these languages. The first language mentioned is always a person's mother tongue.

Communication situation 2:

During the coffee break, the Swiss employee Lea, who speaks (Swiss) German, English and French*, meets the Polish trainee Milena, who speaks Polish, English and a little bit of German, and talks to her in English. She observes that the Italian employee Cora, who speaks Italian, French, English and a little bit of German, and the French employee Hélène, who speaks French, German and English, are talking together in French, while the Algerian colleague Kamil, who speaks Arabic, French, English, Spanish and a little bit of German, is making use of all his German knowledge to speak to Pavlov, who speaks Hungarian, Russian, German and very little English. The Swiss colleagues all talk Swiss German together.

*The languages are listed in the order of the people's competences in these languages. The first language mentioned is always people's mother tongue.

Please record one communication experience at your actual workplace where two or more languages were involved. If you like, you can give the situation a title.

- a) Describe the situation: what, where, when, with whom?
- b) Describe how the communication was happening:
 - Did it work or were there any challenges?
 - What did people do to communicate well (= communication strategies)?
 - What did you do to understand and to be understood?
 - How did you feel in this situation (at ease/not at ease, challenged/relaxed; etc.)?

³ These examples are inspired by findings from the EU-project „Language dynamics and management of diversity (DYLAN), <http://www.dylan-project.org>.