

ABSTRACTS - EPOSTL Conference

“Crossing continents: EPOSTL around the world” 18-19 February 2014

The EPOSTL 10 years on: impact of the EPOSTL and issues in using it

David Newby (Austria), Anne-Brit Fenner (Norway), Barry Jones (UK)

Since its publication, EPOSTL has found broad acceptance among teacher educators in many countries. In this opening session three EPOSTL authors will outline ways in which the EPOSTL is used in different countries, will consider some of the benefits arising from using the EPOSTL that teacher educators, mentors and students have identified and will discuss some of the challenges of introducing and using it in teacher education institutions. We shall further discuss supplementary materials available to EPOSTL users.

Understanding pre-service language teacher learning & how the *EPOSTL* can promote this complex process

Barbara Mehlmauer-Larcher (Austria)

Research in teacher education and teacher learning has shifted from a dominant focus on teacher behaviour to an increased interest in teacher cognition (their thinking, knowing and beliefs) and how the teachers' so-called “mental lives” (Borg 2006) are shaped by teacher education programmes and practice experiences. In pre-service teacher education teacher educators have to meet the challenge of initiating learning processes which have an impact on student teachers' cognition as well as on their actual teaching behaviour.

To help meet this challenge Moon (1999) has developed a map of professional learning providing a conceptual framework for a more profound understanding of the various stages of teacher learning. Based on a constructivist view of learning Moon's stages of learning and their representations of teacher learning can provide useful guidelines for the design of courses and activities within teacher education programmes. As a document to assist language teacher education, the *EPOSTL* is an ideal tool for supporting student teachers at the various stages of their learning process. Data collected in interviews with student teachers who have used this tool will demonstrate how the *EPOSTL* can assist student teachers' learning processes.

Mentoring with the EPOSTL

Sylvia Grangl (Austria)

To encourage students to reflect on the competences a teacher strives to attain and to help prepare students for their future profession the European Language Portfolio has been increasingly used in teacher practice all over the province of Styria in the last few years. At the beginning of the teaching practice mentors and their student teachers agree on a number of descriptors. The students then observe classes and have their first teaching experiences. During the teaching practice discussions between students and their teacher educators and mentors are meant to help students to develop awareness of their strengths and weaknesses related to teaching. In a final report the student teachers are encouraged to strongly focus on self-evaluation and reflexion. The descriptors provide students with necessary input to focus on relevant aspects of teaching. In my short presentation I would like

to show examples of good practice and comment on added value for the students and their development.

Using the EPOSTL in Mentor - Student Teacher Conferences

Elisabeth Pölzleitner (Austria)

The EPOSTL is a valuable tool to facilitate conferences between teachers, mentors and student teachers since its descriptors provide a focused framework for discussing lessons that have been observed or taught by the student teacher. In this presentation, extracts from a video will be shown which illustrates such a conference between an English teacher and a student teacher based on specific EPOSTL descriptors relating to lesson planning, grammar and literature. This video also provides tips on how the EPOSTL may be used in this context. A copy of this video will be made available to conference participants.

Impact of EPOSTL on Teaching Practice and Writing the Final Paper of Pedagogical Studies

Loreta Andziuliene (Lithuania)

EPOSTL has been introduced to students of English Philology at the very first year of their studies during their observatory practice and referred to later on during their teacher assistant practice, teaching practice under supervision of a mentor, independent practice and the course of English Didactics. Students were encouraged to constantly reflect on their experience, their own didactic knowledge and teaching skills as well as and to analyse their development as of an English teacher. Students themselves realized the value and saw EPOSTL as a real aid at the very last stage of their teacher training, i.e. writing the final paper of pedagogical studies, which was introduced into their study programme in 2013.

The intention with this research has been to analyse what impact EPOSTL has on pre-service teachers, how constant reflecting and collecting evidence for their competence portfolio helps students to monitor their development as of a teacher, and how it serves in writing the final paper of pedagogical studies. The data for the research was gathered from questionnaires and interviews with the fourth year students and analyzing their EPOSTL handbooks. Other educational staff have reported that these students are more mature, more interested in didactics and well aware of the specifics of their profession. Having evaluated the benefits of EPOSTL, our faculty authorities encourage other departments to start using it.

Using the EPOSTL in Pre-Service Teacher Training in Croatia

Ivana Cindrić (presenter), Marija Andraka, Milka Bilić Štefan (Croatia)

The author will give a short overview of the ELT methodology courses dealing with different aspects of teaching English to young learners which play an important role almost throughout the five-year syllabus in the *Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate University Programme of Study of Primary Education and the English Language* at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb.

An underlying aim of the ELT methodology courses in general and of the Teaching Practice Course (the last methodology course in year five) in particular, is raising student-teacher self-awareness. The authors will present the results of the research attempting to establish the extent to which the Course fulfils its role in developing student-teacher self-

awareness, and accordingly their teaching competences. The students are encouraged to examine all aspects of their teaching using reflection tools: practice logs used as ‘reflective’ diaries recording their experiences and ideas, which can eventually be analysed and reflected on; self-assessment forms completed after each lesson taught; and (as of 2009/10) self-assessment of their own achievements through the *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* (Newby et al., 2007).

The authors will also present the findings of the analysis of students’ feedback on the use of the *Portfolio (EPOSTL)*. The feedback was obtained both from students who have not yet completed the Teaching Practice Course and from those who had completed the Course, i.e. students who had the opportunity to teach in primary school.

Topic: Promoting Learner Autonomy through Using EPOSTL and Insights from Student-teachers’ Feedback

Vilma Tafani, Merita Hoxha (Albania)

This study will focus on two issues: How can EPOSTL promote learner autonomy and how do student-teachers view the EPOSTL based on their feedback. Through interviews and two questionnaires, one at the beginning of initial teacher education and one after the teaching practice we will try to answer these questions: How beneficial is EPOSTL (illustrated with examples, ideas from student-teachers)? How does it promote learner autonomy? How independent do students feel while working with it? What parts of EPOSTL do they think are more related to learner autonomy? In which ways do student-teachers feel more confident? What is the role of the teachers and mentors regarding EPOSTL? Is there any change in the relation between student teachers and their mentors resulting from the use of EPOSTL? How is EPOSTL helping our students change the way they evaluate and self-evaluate? Questionnaires and interviews will be conducted with probationary teachers, student-teachers and mentors. Student-teachers of “A. Xhuvani” University have been using EPOSTL for a couple of years and they can bring some interesting and useful insights. EPOSTL is the basic source of training for student-teachers and their feedback will help to draw conclusions concerning the benefits and ways of using it in the future.

Prospects and challenges of adapting EPOSTL to pre-service teacher education for primary school teachers in Japan

Presenters: Hisatake Jimbo; Shien Sakai; Akiko Takagi

The aim of this presentation is to discuss how we adapt EPOSTL to pre-service teacher education for primary school teachers in Japan. The first presenter provides an overview of English language education in primary schools in Japan and discusses the challenges of implementing a new proposal recently formulated by the Ministry of Education. The second presenter examines the results of the national survey concerning the current EFL classroom practice and teachers’ reactions to the new policy proposal. The third presenter explains the results of the study done to examine practical ways to implement the adapted EPOSTL in a pre-service methodology course. The results show that the adapted EPOSTL can be appropriate as a tool for evaluating the pre-service teachers’ skills and knowledge and supporting their didactic self-evaluation.

Using EPOSTL in Egyptian Teacher Education Institutions

Haggag Mohamed Haggag, Mahfuz Abol Fadl (Egypt)

This paper sheds light on how EPOSTL has been used as successful assessment tool during the teaching practicum in Egypt. It shows how the EPOSTL has helped the advisors of the teaching practicum to categorize, explain and discuss the different didactic knowledge and skills that are crucial to teach the language. Student-teachers of English and Arabic language teaching departments at Hurghada Faculty of Education (3rd and 4th years- Major and Basic Education programs, N.250) have used the EPOSTL during their weekly teaching practicum in the different schools (N.13) of the Ministry of Education in Red Sea Governorate. Through discussions and debriefing sessions, they reported that EPOSTL could provide them with objective rubrics for assessing their actual performance. They could effectively use the translated Arabic version of the portfolio as a reflective as well as a progress-record tool during their teaching practicum. The different rubrics and performance indicators of the portfolio provided a comprehensive framework for the student-teachers' self and peer assessment. The paper highlights the different ways that the presenters have used to make use of the portfolio during the language teachers' preparation program for the third and fourth years at Hurghada Faculty of Education. It includes the translator's reflection on the difference between translating the EPOSTL into Arabic and applying it in the Arabian schools with their different culture. The paper sums up these findings with recommendations to effectively use the portfolio in language teachers' institutions and preparation programs.

Presentation of the results of the ACTOSTL project

*David Newby (Europe - presenter), Eva-Lisa Hasan (Finland, ECML- presenter),
Anne-Brit Fenner (Norway)*

From August to December 2013, a collaborative project (acronym ACTOSTL) was carried out on behalf of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (ECML). The central aim of the project was to determine what student and initial teachers consider to be good practices in foreign language teaching. To do this, student teachers and initial teachers of languages in the USA and Europe were asked to observe foreign language classes and to document 'indicators' of good practices in specific areas relating to the American ACTFL/CAEP standards and the EPOSTL. The survey examined good practice with regard to 22 specific competences identified in these two documents. 140 student teachers took part in the project; in this session, the results will be summarised.

Raising Academic Awareness through E-EPOSTL

İsmail Hakkı Mirici, Sinem Demirbaş (Turkey)

For the last decade not only international but also intercultural communication mostly takes place virtually on the Internet since the new generation comprises digital natives or digital immigrants who are volunteer and good at using the technological products. Also, there is an inclination towards autonomy and reflection in the field of FLT and ELT in terms of both

teaching and assessment. When it comes to the education and assessment of the teachers of languages especially English, the EPOSTL is a good example of autonomy and reflection for self-assessment. That's why it was aimed to use the EPOSTL, a self-assessment tool, online and electronic as E-EPOSTL for the digital natives who like to multi-task. The E-EPOSTL was developed as follows. Firstly, a domain name was adopted. Then, a hosting, which has a Php, mysql support, was rented. Limesurvey is an open source survey application system which is written in PHP language. It works on the Linux, an operating system. LimeSurvey enables users to form and generate powerful, online question-and-answer surveys that can be applicable for numerous participants without much effort quickly and for free. The survey software itself is self-guiding for the respondents who are participating. Next, the importation of the content of the EPOSTL into www.limesurvey.org came. Creating the sub categories (personal statement- self assessment- dossier) and the items (different sorts of questions-Short free text/Long free text/File upload/Numerical input/array (5 point choice) was the following step. Also a glossary, which isn't available on the limesurvey.org was separately created by the developer. Finally, the website for the E-EPOSTL is ready at the web address; www.myepostl.com.

EPOSTL as an Administrator's Guide to Internal Quality Assurance in Language Instruction

Kristine Soghikyan (Armenia)

During the seven years of intensive use in different countries and languages, the EPOSTL has undoubtedly brought new insights into the training of language teachers at all stages of their careers. In Armenia, it has been used to revise and improve teacher training, teaching methods, internships, and the role played by the mentor.

In addition to these various uses, the EPOSTL has an inherent potential for other applications, too, for example – as a guide to an administrator, responsible not only for the course of action in an educational institution, but also designing the curriculum, developing courses, overseeing instruction, monitoring quality, and at the same time ensuring the professional growth of initial or experienced in-service teachers at a higher linguistic educational institution.

The present presentation will focus on those aspects of the EPOSTL that are useful to an administrator who fulfils the above-described functions. In particular, the presentation will consider the specificities of the Portfolio as a baseline document to assess and address needs for better quality language instruction in higher education.

The Innovative Use of the EPOSTL Descriptors Related to the Language Portfolio for Master Course Student-Teachers of Yerevan State Linguistic University after V. Brusov

Susanna Asatryan (Armenia)

The author will introduce the *Language Portfolio* for master course student-teachers of Yerevan State Linguistic University after V. Brusov. The overall aim of the *Portfolio* is to serve as a visual didactic tool for the pedagogical internship of master students in specialization “A Foreign Language Teacher of High Schools And Professional Educational Institutions”, based on the principles and fundamentals of the EPOSTL.

The author will present the parts of the *Portfolio*, including the programme, goal and objectives of student-teacher's internship, content and organization, expected outputs and the principles of the student's self-assessment, based on the **can-do** philosophy suggested by the EPOSTL.

The *Language Portfolio* for master course student-teachers outlines the distinctive stages of their scientific-pedagogical internship. In the *Lesson Observation* and *Teaching* section student teachers present thematic planning of the syllabus course, including individual lesson plan-description and analysis of the lesson.

In the *Realization of the Scientific-Pedagogical Research* section student-teachers introduce the plan of their research work, its goal, objectives, steps of procedure and outcomes. In the *Educational Activity* section student-teachers analyze the educational sides of the lesson, they introduce the plan of the extracurricular activity, provide psycho-pedagogical description of the group or the whole class, and outline extracurricular entertainments. In the *Dossier* the student-teachers store up the entire instructional "product" during their pedagogical internship: e.g. samples of surveys, tests, recordings, videos, posters, postcards, pupils' poems, photos, pictures, etc.

The author's presentation will also cover the *Self-Assessment Checklist*, which highlights the main didactic competences of student-teachers, extracted from the EPOSTL. The *Self-Assessment Checklist* is introduced with some innovations, taking into consideration the local educational objectives that Armenian students come across. The students' feedback on the use of the *Portfolio* will also be presented.

EPOSTL, an Instrument of Dynamic Self-Assessment for Initial Teacher Education and Practicing Teachers

Anca-Mariana Pegulescu (Romania)

The training of language teachers is a very important part of their overall professional development. Together with the *Common European Framework of Reference* and *The European Profile for Language Teachers Education*, EPOSTL can help student teachers as well as practicing teachers to identify the necessary teaching competences, irrespective of the learning context. EPOSTL presents a challenging set of didactic competences, as an opportunity for student teachers and practicing teachers to reflect on their didactic knowledge and teaching skills. The triangle formed by the pre-service reflection phase, the self-assessment descriptors and the dossier provides for a permanent exchange of ideas and examples of good practice.

Having worked on the EPOSTL Romanian version, I have understood better the role that teacher training can play in improving the mutual respect and flow of linguistic diversity and cultural values.

I personally appreciated the self-assessment descriptors which can be interpreted as an on-going process. The glossary is equally important because it ensures the understanding of the concepts and makes it possible to link the EPOSTL to didactic theory within the teaching education course. This is the most efficient approach towards acquiring solid teaching skills.

In Romania there is an obvious need for a common European evaluation framework regarding teaching competences for student language teachers. Language knowledge should be regarded as an integrative ability. Universities, school inspectorates and schools selected for the teaching practice process form a triangle that can work together if the legal framework provides for this.

Interactive Use of EPOSTL with the ePortfolio System EPOS

Jürgen Friedrich, Bärbel Kühn (Germany)

Michael Langner (Luxembourg/Switzerland)

The contribution will discuss the concept of how EPOSTL can be used in an innovative sociotechnical learning environment. The EPOSTL *self-assessment descriptors* have been integrated in the electronic portfolio system EPOS, which has been developed at the University of Bremen and is in use at a number of language centres in German and European universities. By using EPOS-E (EPOS for EPOSTL) student teachers of languages can interactively assess, reflect and communicate their language teaching proficiency in a very flexible way, according to the seven categories of EPOSTL descriptors. Students can monitor their own learning progress by comparing their competences at different stages of their education, motivating students to enhance their learning process. Because EPOSTL is not regarded as a final fixed checklist, further (personal) learning goals can be added by learners to personalise the system.

EPOS-E is linking terms in the descriptor sets directly to the EPOSTL *index of terms*. The index can be extended by teachers, considering their specific curriculum approach. The EPOSTL *glossary* is interactively available to be used by students in their artefacts. The glossary can be expanded by the members of peer groups according to their language teaching specialties over a longer period of time, thus functioning as an “organisational memory” of the group.

EPOS-E offers a section where the four EPOSTL *reflection* guidelines can be individually filled in and later discussed in peer groups by using the presentation, feedback and communication functions of EPOS-E.

In extending the mentioned assessment and reflection processes and turning it into an active learning process, EPOS-E offers a *scenario/curriculum development tool* where language teacher students can generate and discuss their own concrete classroom teaching plans. The contribution will present the dynamic and interactive extension of EPOSTL in a conceptual framework, as well as its practical implementation.

Describing language teacher competences with FREPA-descriptors? – Preliminary thoughts

Anna Schröder-Sura (Germany)

In a context of growing linguistic and cultural diversity in classrooms, ensuring equal opportunities for all learners requires that teachers - and particularly language teachers – build up plurilingual and intercultural competences enabling them not only to value this diversity, but also to support learners in developing their ability to reflect on languages and cultures. More generally, language teachers need to develop professional competences to help students establishing links between languages they know and learn as well as between cultural phenomena, according to didactic principles based on the concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence seen as a comprehensive and complex one(cf. CEFR).

These principles have first been developed within pluralistic approaches such as awakening to languages, integrated language approaches, various intercultural approaches and intercomprehension between related languages. Based on these approaches a *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (FREPA-Competences and Resources)* has been developed. It consists of a comprehensive list of descriptors operationalizing plurilingual and intercultural competences in terms of knowledge, attitudes and skills.

The aim of this presentation is to illustrate if and to what extent the FREPA descriptors that were originally developed for the description of students' resources and competences can contribute to the formulation of the above mentioned teacher competences.