

Minutes of the CertiLingua Annual Conference 2016

Venue: Private Pädagogische Hochschule der Diözese Linz

DAY 1

Welcoming Words

Mag. Belinda Steinhuber, CEBS, National CertiLingua Coordinator in Austria

Ms Steinhuber welcomes the participants of the CertiLingua Annual International Conference 2016 and expresses her gratitude to host the Annual Conference 2016 in Linz, Austria. A short outline of the conference's agenda is given and organisational matters are addressed.

MR Mag. Ingrid Weger, Austrian Ministry of Education

Ms Weger stresses the exceptional character of CertiLingua with 20 European member countries and more than 200 participating schools that are all working towards the common goal of connecting people and cultures.

Multilingualism and intercultural competences are vital for students in a globalized world and the aims the label stands for cannot be valued high enough. They are crucial for mutual understanding and peaceful international collaboration.

Thanks are given to Belinda Steinhuber and her team for their efforts in hosting the conference.

Elisabeth Steiniger, Head of Department for Teacher Training at Linz University

The CEBS and the University of Linz have been working together successfully for a long time and Ms Steiniger stresses the importance of foreign language and intercultural learning at schools in a world where people seem to be increasingly afraid of everyone who speaks foreign languages. She wishes the conference fruitful discussions and good success.

Dr. Beatrice Schmitz, Chairwoman of the International Steering Group

Ms Schmitz welcomes the participants on behalf of the International Steering Group and emphasizes the outstanding working spirit the International Steering Group has displayed in preparing this year's Annual Conference that will discuss what is "at the heart of CertiLingua", the CertiLingua Project Documentation. Further details on the conference's design and on the working groups will be provided on day 2.

Message from Wolf-Dieter Hohl, Head of Strategic Market Development *voestalpine* Steel Division

Mr Hohl provides an overview of his company's branches and products and explains the company's underlying principles and values. Languages and intercultural competences are vital for *voestalpine* as a company operating worldwide. This is why such skills and competences play an important role in recruiting and on-the-job training. They enable international cooperation and are a prerequisite for staff mobility. He encourages students not to finish university as quickly as possible, but to take some time for the acquisition of such competences, for example by studying abroad, and stresses that this sort of experience is something the company is actually looking for when recruiting.

Mr Hohl points out that his own language skills played a major role for himself at the company and form a real added value.

The goals CertiLingua stands for, high language skills and intercultural competences, are therefore perfectly in line with the actual demands students face in the world of work.

Presentations by Certificate Holders

Anna Bongartz, Certificate Holder from the International Business College, Vienna

Ms Bongartz presents her experiences with the CertiLingua project and its documentation. Not only has she improved her language skills and appreciates to have acquired a certificate that may look good on her CV, but in particular she values to have had the chance of learning about and reflecting upon other cultures and thus learning something about herself as well.

Maximilian Osana, Bundehandelakademie Linz

Mr Osana talks about his project, focusing on Morocco, and also stresses the great benefit he sees in the CertiLingua projects. For him the projects provide an opportunity to find out what is hidden beneath the surface of a culture. Face-to-face projects are a chance to reconsider possible preconceptions and stereotypes one may have about a certain culture and their importance therefore cannot be stressed enough.

CertiLingua Report on School Year 2014/15, Dr. Beatrice Schmitz, Chairwoman of the International Steering Group

Ms Schmitz introduces the members of the International Steering Group, Belinda Steinhuber from Austria, Hartmut Ebke from Germany, Gisella Langé from Italy and Carine Chancelade from France, Stephanie Palm from the German speaking community in Belgium, and welcomes the present representatives of the Member States from

- Austria
- the Czech Republic
- Estonia
- France
- Hamburg

- Hesse
- Italy
- Lower Saxony
- Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania
- North Rhine-Westphalia
- Perm
- Rhineland Palatinate
- Saxony
- Thuringia

The representatives of Berlin, Bremen and Brandenburg are unable to attend this year's conference due to other obligations and have transferred their voting rights to the chairwoman of the international steering group.

CertiLingua has been growing for 12 years now. The German schools abroad in Shanghai, San José, Nairobi, Valinhos, Den Haag and Helsinki have joined the label so that CertiLingua is a world-wide label by now.

The fact that CertiLingua is a growing programme is mirrored in the number of 853 certificates awarded in 2015 and the 307 accredited participating schools throughout Europe and the world. English and French remain the primary languages entered for CertiLingua, yet the proportions of Spanish and German have slightly increased in 2015, too.

While History, Geography and Social Sciences remain the predominant CLIL subjects, some bilingual courses are offered in Mathematics and Natural Sciences as well.

A very positive development is seen in the face-to-face projects where the percentage of school exchange activities has been continually growing in the last years.

The evaluation data therefore clearly supports the effects of CertiLingua observed before: language learning is enhanced, CLIL learning opportunities are created and maintained, international collaboration of schools is fostered.

The fact that 20 Member States support the idea of CertiLingua shows that language learning and teaching and the acquisition of intercultural competences are important agenda throughout Europe and the CertiLingua Network is an outstanding example of a joint European approach in this domain.

Within the last years the network has mainly worked on the formulation and definition of common goals in the field of language learning and intercultural competences. This year's conference aims at a consolidation of common understanding of these definitions as one major goal, with particular focus on the third pillar of CertiLingua, the projects and their documentation. The face-to-face projects and the acquisition of intercultural competences are a unique feature of CertiLingua.

CertiLingua is a label that operates without a budget. It makes use of what is already there and gains its strength from the people active in the network.

The CertiLingua Supporters share the idea of the label and appreciate the afore-mentioned efforts of the network, yet mainly support the label in an ideational, not a material fashion. This support helps enhancing the label's public recognition, yet it will remain another central task for the network to further improve the label's acceptance.

Reports from Member States

North Rhine-Westphalia (Tanja Rennecke)

Tanja Rennecke expresses her gratitude to finally meet the people she has been in contact with in the recent months, before she presents the data from North Rhine-Westphalia, where 103 schools participate and 196 certificates were awarded in 2015.

The fact that the mean percentage of award holders per school is only 3.3 % stresses the high standards of CertiLingua as a label of excellence. This is also supported by the fact that by far not every participating school awards labels on a yearly basis. While the percentage of awarding schools was 51% in 2015 it will be about 68% in 2016.

As in most other Member States the percentage of female certificate holders is about twice as high as the number of male ones. English and French are the predominant languages entered for the label, and History and Geography are the predominant CLIL subjects, taught in English and – to a small amount – in French. A need is seen to develop more bilingual classes in natural sciences. A positive development is observed with the face-to-face encounters where the amount of individual projects has de- and the percentage of school exchanges increased.

Positive effects of CertiLingua on schools and school development have been observed: a European focus is developed at schools, foreign language learning is promoted, bilingual learning opportunities are created and exchange activities are strengthened. In this respect CertiLingua can be called a catalyst for school development in North Rhine-Westphalia.

Austria (Belinda Steinhuber)

In Austria, the main objectives of the label remain the same, as Belinda Steinhuber explains.

They are

<u>evaluation:</u>	assessing of what candidates do and learn, of what CL offers to schools and learners
<u>consolidation:</u>	improving networking and PR
<u>recognition:</u>	enhancing in-house recognition and recognition beyond
<u>growth:</u>	winning in profile and size

8 schools are participating in the label and in 13 certificates could be awarded in 2016 so far, some data is still missing, so that this number might be still increased.

A snowball-effect was observed at one school, where the reports from older students sparked interest in the label with younger students.

As positive effects could be observed on the learners' side that

- multilingual competences are perceived worthwhile
- CertiLingua dovetails perfectly with European issues
- candidates enjoy recognition and appreciation

Nevertheless, the measurable added value of CertiLingua is not always so very clear, so students are not always willing to “go the extra mile” for CertiLingua.

An additional research paper has been made compulsory for all students in Austria entailing an additional workload that makes students refrain from the burden of yet another project and paper, as required for CertiLingua. Combining both papers seems difficult, since the compulsory research paper has a totally different, scientific focus.

While there are positive effects of CertiLingua for school development, like enhanced prestige of a school’s language department and the establishment of more bilingual classes, some curricular developments cause problems for the label, as, for example, the fact that the number of lessons necessary for the acquisition of a second foreign language has been decreased making it more difficult to reach level B2 in that language.

It is felt that networking among schools and students is a major field of development in Austria and internationally.

Belgium, German-speaking community (Stephanie Palm)

In the German-speaking community of Belgium there are 2 CertiLingua Schools, which are 25 % percent of all schools. 2 students applied for the label in 2016 and one could be certified. The ministry is trying to encourage additional schools to participate

Czech Republic (Dagmar Švermová)

1 school is participating in the Czech Republic that awarded 3 certificates in 2016.

It is pointed out that the requirements of CertiLingua are rather high for students in the Czech Republic, since they are only required to attain level B1 of the CEFR in their second foreign language by the national curricula.

Estonia (Pille Põiklik)

In Estonia the label is still being piloted at 3 schools. While 16 certificates could be awarded in 2015, it was 5 awards in 2016. Students can opt for a variety of languages and bilingual subjects and make use of existing cooperations with Denmark, Finland, Germany, Georgia, Latvia, Russia, Sweden, and the UK for their projects.

It is planned to invite new schools to the network in Estonia, to increase public recognition from universities on the basis of evaluation results from the pilot phase, and to continue promoting the network in general.

Estonia has offered to host the next Annual International Conference in Tallin.

France (Carine Chancelade & Isabelle Jeuffroy)

Carine Chancelade introduces herself as successor of Chantal Junot.

CertiLingua is growing in France, particularly in Lille, where 6 new schools could be won, making it 24 schools in Lille, comprising vocational schools as well.

8 awards were given to students this year.

So far, only English and German could be taken for CertiLingua, but Italian and Spanish will be added to the list of CertiLingua languages soon.

Hamburg (Martin Eckeberg)

5 schools are participating in the label, and two more schools have applied for accreditation in Hamburg, that started with 2 schools in the year 2012.

In 2016, however, no certificates could be awarded, since no papers were handed in.

In Hamburg, as in other countries, students are not easy to motivate to take the extra effort CertiLingua entails. Counseling students early and competently seems to be a decisive factor here, since the number of certificates dropped significantly in Hamburg, once the CertiLingua coordinators shifted responsibility to the language teachers alone.

DAY 2

Reports from Member Countries (cont.)

Hesse (Alexandra Brodowy)

28 schools participate in Hesse and 53 candidates received a certificate in 2016. In addition to English, documents were handed in French and Spanish. The documentations were of a very high quality.

Students and teacher alike put a lot of work into the label. Nevertheless, universities and employers do not yet universally accept the label which causes motivational problems for students and teachers.

Hesse is looking into the questions of how to better promote the label and thus motivate teachers and students to continue their efforts for the label. Of the 60 bilingual schools in Hesse only 28 participate in the label and promotion is a key issue here as well.

Hesse is also working on the question of how best to counsel students at an early stage.

Italy (Gisella Langé)

In Italy, a major school reform - *La buona scuola* – is currently requiring a lot of resources, but also helping CertiLingua. For example, in Italy, every student is required by *buona scuola law* to give proof of their participation in bilingual classes within the last year of school which has led to an increase in bilingual learning opportunities that enable more schools to participate in CertiLingua.

The development of CertiLingua in Italy has been quite remarkable, taking its origin in Lombardy. In order to support the schools with CertiLingua, a booklet has been designed containing all necessary documents and support materials.

In that way, the number of schools could be increased tremendously and more regions have joined and still want to join the label.

The number of candidates has thus been increasing throughout the recent years, reaching 325 in 2015. In order to safeguard the high quality standards, Italy has made additional language certificates from a certified provider a standard requirement.

Lower Saxony (Jens Bollhöfer)

22 accredited schools participate in Lower Saxony and 50 graduates were awarded the label in 2016.

As in all other countries, the number of female candidates is much higher than the number of male ones.

Lower Saxony has put an extra effort into marketing the label by placing an article in a state school bulletin and by handing over a letter by the minister of education to all new certificate holders.

On the level of school development a survey has been conducted among the 158 bilingual schools in Lower Saxony. Bilingual teacher training is strengthened and the CertiLingua Schools convene for the exchange of good practice on a regular basis.

Mecklenburg Western Pomerania (Uta Freund)

The 3 CertiLingua schools in Mecklenburg Western Pomerania certified 7 students in 2016.

A network of CertiLingua schools has been established which provides a chance to exchange examples of good practice and to acknowledge the efforts made by schools. This is stressed as an important motivational factor. Since the coordinators put a lot of energy into the label, yet can neither be given a promotion or reduction of lessons due to budget restrictions, inviting them to a meeting at the ministry in order to discuss the label's development or to report to them from the Annual International Conference is felt to be a form of recognition the colleagues value a lot. This regional network also serves as a place to develop a common understanding of what CertiLingua stands for.

Perm (Vera Zakharova)

A fourth school, school no. 77, could be won in Perm and 6 certificates were awarded in Perm in 2016 where an international language certificate is also an additional requirement.

A large range of languages and bilingual courses is offered at the CertiLingua Schools that do have individual profiles.

Very positive effects can be observed like the integration of multilingualism, or the identification of students with international issues. Students are particularly motivated.

Despite the huge distance, a joint project was very successfully performed with Lower Saxony.

Rhineland Palatinate (Ute Ritzenhofen)

There are 13 schools in RLP which awarded 21 certificates in 2016, where the range of foreign languages applicable for CertiLingua consists of English, French and Spanish as defined by national curricular demands.

Schools report that their profile is enhanced by CertiLingua and students put a lot of effort into the label. Although the lack of official recognition is bemoaned a lot, some students say that CL has actually helped them in their later careers, especially if they got a chance to personally present CertiLingua in application interviews.

Saxony (Rüdiger Möller)

In Saxony one more school has been accredited.

Russian, Polish and Czech are part of the language canon.

Promotion is regarded as a key aspect of the label's further development. Meeting the quality standards is another important aspect. It has turned out to be quite helpful to have CL coordinators meet and discuss project documentations in order to arrive at a common understanding of the label and its central goals.

Thuringia, (Dr. Helga Hämmerling)

As a small country Thuringia has a small number of bilingual schools which is not likely to rise, so that the number of CertiLingua Schools is not likely to change in the near future, either.

Thuringia has focussed in depth on the quality standards.

In Thuringia, as in many other countries, a research paper is compulsory for students making the project documentation a second paper to be written for CertiLingua which causes motivational problems.

Documentations are swapped between schools in Thuringia and France and assessed by „critical friends“ abroad, while the French school sends its papers to Erfurt.

At some schools international projects are obligatory. This makes it easier for students of these schools to organize their projects, while the organization of projects still remains difficult in general.

It is remarked that CertiLingua cannot be made visible with online applications and suggested that CertiLingua could be made a criterion for official EU programmes such as Erasmus.

Introduction to Working Groups

Mr Boppré introduces the general idea of this year's conference to take a closer look at what is at the heart of CertiLingua: the projects and their documentation. It is a chance to discuss and exchange ideas, questions and concerns with workshop 1 focusing on the project idea, workshop 2 on the projects' realization and workshop 3 on the reflection of the projects. Workshop 4 is questions and answers.

Presentation of Working Groups' Results

The presentation of the workshop results starts with video messages from two Italian students, explaining what CertiLingua means for them.

Workshop 1: Project Idea

Stephanie Palm presents the results from workshop 1 and stresses that the existing documents (Guidelines and Checklist) are considered very helpful not only for the assessment of project documentations but also the process of counseling the students prior to their projects. They highlight crucial aspects of interculturality that need to be considered in the project design. Nevertheless, it is suggested to put additional emphasis on the evolution of a project idea in order to further accentuate its intercultural focus. Projects centered on humanitarian issues or voluntary social work should be added to the list of exemplary project types, since they seem particularly well-suited for the label's aim of fostering mutual understanding and connecting people and

cultures. Another suggestion from workshop 1 is made with regard to the mode of the project documentation and the question is raised whether the written documentation could, at least partly, be replaced by a student video.

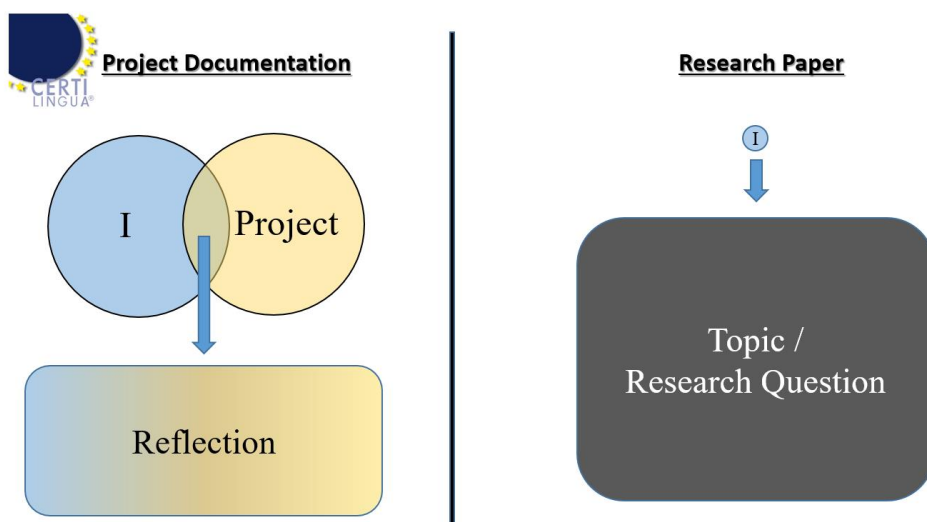
Workshop 2: Project Realization

Hartmut Ebke and Clemens Boppré welcome the workshop participants. In a general exchange on the challenges faced when realizing a CertiLingua face-to-face project it is pointed out that project idea/research question must be planned carefully well in advance of the face-to-face encounter. It should be developed by the CertiLingua candidate her- or himself. As this is viewed as being quite challenging for an upper secondary student, appropriate support and counseling for this process must be provided by the school and the CertiLingua coordinator. It is agreed that referring to numerous face-to-face encounters after they have taken place and developing a project idea in retrospect will lead to a project documentation that will not be able to meet CertiLingua standards.

It is agreed on that while the student is in the process of writing the documentation counselling by the school is permitted, however correcting and handing it back to the student for revision should be strictly limited. After the student has handed in the Project Documentation for assessment it must be avoided at all cost.

In a discussion on the Project Documentation at hand “Genetically modified plants and animals” it is pointed out, that this was classified as borderline by the country handing it in. The aim of the workshop is not full assessment of the document, rather discussing strengths and weaknesses in order to develop suggestions for the plenary on how to deal with Project Documentations in general.

It is agreed that dealing with cultural differences in attitudes to GMO is a suitable project idea for CertiLingua. It is culturally loaded and could provide a suitable basis for developing European and International Competences as required by the CertiLingua Standards of Excellence in Intercultural Competences. The realization of the project in this paper falls short. While it may be a good example for a propaedeutic research paper, preparing the student for a science course at university, it lacks the intercultural focus and reflection required for a CertiLingua Project Documentation. In order to illustrate the difference between these two text types the following visualization is developed:



In a research paper the “I”, i.e. the author only has a very small part in the actual paper, her/his focus is on the topic, passive voice is mainly used. In a CertiLingua project documentation the focus is on the personal development of intercultural competences. Thus, there is a strong “I”, active voice is used, “I” develops the project idea and reflects her/his own development.

In order to further clarify the aim and focus of the CertiLingua Project Documentation the following suggestions are made to the plenary:

Suggestions

- **Introductory passage for**
 - Guidelines for Project Documentations -> students
 - Checklist for Project Documentations -> teachers
 - What is the CL Project Documentation (in a nutshell)
 - Outlining differences between a CL-Documentation and Research Paper
 - Name the trap!
- **Best Practise -> 3 examples with assessment comments (in CL-speak)**
 - Workshop idea for Annual Conference 2017?

Workshop 3: The Reflection

It is pointed out that the project documentation must contain an in-depth reflection of one’s own intercultural experiences. It therefore does not focus on an analysis of scientific matters, but is centered around a student’s personal perspective, it contains a certain degree of self-revelation and the contemplation of how one’s own understanding of a foreign culture has changed.

It is important to establish this perspective before students actually start their projects and ideas are presented of how this could be achieved, e. g. by

- counseling students early and competently
- providing annotated examples of good practice
- formulating the corresponding standards in a less abstract way

It is suggested to investigate

- a.) how the research papers compulsory in many countries could possibly be combined with CertiLingua
- b.) if different forms of presentation, such as videos, could be accepted, in particular for a project’s reflection

Workshop 4: Questions & Answers

- Teachers as well as students should receive a letter by the minister of education as a form of recognition of their efforts.
- Language assistants could be assigned to CertiLingua Schools first.
- PR is a constant challenge and a standardized Power Point Presentation could be provided to support teachers with the presentation of the label.
- B2 is the minimum requirement; higher levels can as well be documented on the certificate if this level is reached.
- Motivation: students should not only be made aware of the workload CertiLingua implies, but the advantages and the unique character of CertiLingua as a label that also displays a student's bilingual and, in particular, intercultural competences should be made clear.

Annual International Conference

Carine Chancelade has followed Chantal Junot for France as a member of the International Steering Group.

- Agreement on wordings

Mr. Teuber and Mr. Wegner present a suggestion to standardize the wording in the CertiLingua documents in order to make the difference between participating Member Countries and other CertiLingua Supporters clearer and better understandable.

Capitalization of certain expressions is suggested as well.

It is agreed that the trademark sign is contained in the logo and can be left out elsewhere in all documents.

The ideas are unanimously accepted.

- The new CertiLingua website

On behalf of the International Network Mr. Teuber and Mr. Wegner thank Austria for their continuous support of the label by hosting the CertiLingua website.

A new design and structure for the website are presented. The intention is to make the website more attractive and the label more transparent and better understandable.

All representatives of the Member States are asked to check the current contact data published on the old or new website (certilingua.michael-rogge.de).

In order to make the new website more appealing, all Member States are asked to provide pictures of CertiLingua events that can be used for it.

Date and Place of the Annual Conference 2017

The next Annual Conference is going to convene in **Tallinn, Estonia, from 21 September to 22 September 2017.**