

Minutes of the Annual International CertiLingua Conference

10.09. – 11.09.2015

*Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung
Völklinger Str. 49
40221 Düsseldorf*

10th September 2015

Conference Opening - Welcoming Words

Dr. Beatrice Schmitz (Ministry of Education) welcomes the participants of the 9th CertiLingua International Annual Conference at the Ministry of Education North Rhine-Westphalia and conveys the greetings of the minister of education, Sylvia Löhrmann.

Henny Rönneper, the chairwoman of the international CertiLingua steering group, also welcomes the representatives of the CertiLingua partner countries on behalf of the steering group and outlines the central idea of CertiLingua to connect nations and their cultures seizing the opportunities of the globalized world. She points out that the label was initiated in Düsseldorf in 2003 where the first Annual Conference took place in 2007. The 9th Annual Conference at the city of the label's origin underlines its continuing success having become an established and recognized programme in Europe and beyond.

Messages from CertiLingua Graduates

Two video messages from Italian CertiLingua graduates and a presentation by a CertiLingua graduate from North-Rhine-Westphalia exemplify that the label and the competences it fosters and documents are truly cherished by award holders.

Open-mindedness, foreign language skills, the opportunity to meet other people, insights into other cultures and a change of perspective are mentioned as positive effects and all students have already started international courses of study or are considering them for their future.

CertiLingua Partner: L'Oréal

Thomas Riegel, Human Resources Director of L'Oréal Luxe, Germany, a *CertiLingua Partner* company, points out which standards and qualifications L'Oréal expects from school graduates and underlines why foreign language and intercultural competences are key qualifications for future employees. He makes clear that working in and between different cultures is day-to-day business at L'Oréal. Therefore, international experience is crucial for career development at L'Oréal. L'Oréal expects applicants to be fluent in German, English and a third language. Furthermore, international experiences (academic studies, internships / work experience) are considered essential. Mr. Riegel thus does not only share the label's

key values, but also advises students to „really“ study and take their time to gain experiences. [Addendum 1]

CertiLingua report on School Year 2013 / 2014

Henny Rönneper gives an overview of the current state of development of CertiLingua and presents some key facts. [Addendum 02]

The CertiLingua Network currently consists of 9 international partner countries: Austria, Belgium (German-speaking community), Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, France, Italy, Perm and Sweden and 11 German Länder: Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Rhineland-Palatinate, Mecklenburg-Western Pommerania, Hesse, Hamburg, North-Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony, Lower Saxony, and Thuringia.

The number of CertiLingua schools has risen to more than 300 and 656 CertiLingua certificates were awarded in 2014, adding up to more than 3,500 labels in total.

The awarding criteria have been continuously refined over the years and CertiLingua successfully defines true international excellence in its domain.

The basic philosophy of CertiLingua is:

- to apply existing and established European criteria and standards while honoring national curricula and national upper secondary school leaving certificates,
- to honor excellence achieved in the domain of public schools,
- to document students' achievements and competences in an internationally transparent way.

Adding the ministries' logos on the certificate has added prestige to the label and helped its public recognition. It underlines that excellence in education is an attribute of public schools.

CertiLingua does not only motivate students to excel, it has also proven to be a catalyst for school development, since it

- leads to continued language learning,
- fosters diversification of CLIL classes (more subjects and more languages),
- focuses on international competences acquired at school,
- offers added value compared to mere language certificates due to the required CLIL-classes, lessons in European and international competences and the face-to-face project and its documentation.

Reports from Partner Countries

Austria

Belinda Steinhuber identifies three main objectives for CertiLingua in Austria: evaluation, consolidation and recognition. Currently 8 schools are participating and 15 certificates were awarded this year. Schools and students all see advantages in the label. The added prestige for language departments and the added value students see in the international projects are stressed. Due to new school regulations in Austria that make CLIL a compulsory part of final examinations in future, the number of CertiLingua schools is likely to rise in Austria in the next years.

Belgium

Stephanie Palm reports for the German-speaking community in Belgium, where currently 2 schools are accredited as CertiLingua-Schools. The German-speaking community in Belgium is currently undergoing a major school reform. Once this has been completed in 2016 an effort is planned to win all nine schools of the German-speaking community as CertiLingua schools.

Berlin

Corinna Wesche reports about the current status of CertiLingua in Berlin where 6 CertiLingua schools continue their participation. There is a slight decline in students resulting in less projects which, however, have been of a higher quality. Although a tendency of students to try to negotiate the standards has been observed, no compromises have been made and the high criteria have been maintained.

Brandenburg

Doreen Kind sends her regards to the conference participants, as she is not able to attend in person. A short country report is conveyed by *Clemens Boppré*. An additional school was accredited and there are two schools in Brandenburg now where two labels were awarded this year. The positive effects of CertiLingua on students' self-confidence are observed as an advantage in Brandenburg.

Bremen

Cornelia Becker reports from Bremen where she has just started work with CertiLingua. Although responsibility for foreign languages is scattered across the ministry she will look for ways to further promote this "brilliant programme" and win more schools in Bremen that has just started with one accredited CertiLingua school.

Czech Republic

The country representative of the Czech Republic cannot come the conference, but the Czech Republic is continuing its participation and cooperates closely with schools in Saxony.

Estonia

Dr. Pille Põiklik summarizes the efforts made to set up CertiLingua in Estonia last year and emphasizes that the label can be combined very smoothly with curricular requirements in Estonia, e.g. the need to learn two foreign languages or existing bilingual classes. In Estonia it has been observed as an advantage that CertiLingua increases the reputation of schools, that it can give students the edge when applying for international courses of study. After just one year of participation 16 labels could be awarded already.

France

Isabelle Jeuffroy explains that there are 5 participating regions in France (Aix-Marseille, Clermont-Ferrand, Lille, Nancy-Metz and Poitiers) in which 7 new schools could be won making it a total of 24 CertLingua schools in France. The languages are English and German and in addition to History and Geography also Mathematics and Biology can be taught bilingually. The participation in the network, the cooperation between schools and the motivation for candidates are seen as key advantages of the label.

Hamburg

Martin Eckeberg sends his regards to the conference participants, as he is not able to attend in person. There are currently 4 participating schools, 5 labels were awarded this year.

Hesse

Matthias Wolf reports for Hesse where 27 schools are accredited, and 62 of 73 candidates were awarded the label. As in most other countries, more female students obtain the label in Hesse as well. It is moreover pointed out that peer-evaluating the project documentations as part of the awarding process has turned out to be very beneficial not only as a tool of quality control but also as a way of establishing a shared notion of good practice.

Italy

Gisella Langé proudly presents the number of 324 candidates in Italy where the label has spread from Lombardy to the whole nation. The national re-organization of the school system – the Buona Scuola reform – has sparked an enormous interest in the label and currently regions are not actively encouraged to join until regional validation committees have been founded in order to safeguard quality standards. The high standards for foreign languages are guaranteed in Italy by required language certificates from internationally acknowledged bodies such as *Cambridge English Assessment* or *Goethe Institut*.

Lower Saxony

Jens Bolhöfer reports for Lower Saxony and the German schools abroad in The Hague, Netherlands; San Jose, Costa Rica; Valinhos, Brazil; Shanghai, PR China; Nairobi, Kenia and Helsinki, Finland. In Lower Saxony the label could maintain its status and its 22 schools, although major school reforms demanded a lot of attention and administration. That 40

labels were awarded underlines the schools' commitment and the label's prestige. Award holders report about facilitated access to universities or the world of work.

Mecklenburg Western-Pommerania

Uta Freund reports that in spite of structural challenges in education in Mecklenburg Western-Pommerania the number of CertiLingua schools could be increased to 3. With drama classes becoming a part of the curriculum new options for CLIL have opened up that might have an impact on the number of CertiLingua schools in the future..

North-Rhine Westphalia

Clemens Boppré presents the status of CertiLingua in North-Rhine Westphalia where the label is still growing. 196 students were awarded in now 103 accredited schools. Only an average of 3,3 % of the total number of graduates at the awarding schools received the label. 30 % of all award holders are male, which is a slight increase to last year.

Perm (Russia)

Vera Zakharova reports from the easternmost participating member Perm where 3 schools have been accredited. There is a broad range of languages and CLIL subjects available that are taught in English, but also in French and German. One of the CertiLingua schools, School No. 12, has established a very successful exchange programme with Lower Saxony.

Rhineland – Palatinate

Michael Emrich explains the current status of CertiLingua in Rhineland-Palatinate where 12 schools participate and 23 students have been awarded the label. Quality control has always played an important role in Rhineland-Palatinate where bilingual requirements are regulated by law and only schools with a bilingual branch participate in the label. Moreover, like in many other countries, regular meetings with teachers and coordinators to evaluate the project documentations have helped to develop a better notion of what the label is aiming at and have helped to keep quality standards up.

Saxony

Rüdiger Möller reports for Saxony that there has been a slight increase in the number of schools accredited as well as in the number of students who were awarded the label. In 2015 the number of CertiLingua® schools rose from 9 to 10, the number of students from 37 to 54 award holders (i.e. 9.3 % of the graduates). Language competences on level B2 were demonstrated in a variety of languages, including Polish and Czech. An additional school is showing interest in the CertiLingua® project. Annual meetings of CertiLingua® coordinators are held to view project documentations and discuss quality standards. The further promotion of the CertiLingua® label in Saxony still remains a task in the years to come.

Sweden

Sweden has just begun its participation, but already two schools have been accredited, which have sent their coordinators to the Annual Conference.

Thuringia

The situation of the label in Thuringia is stable as Christina Uhmann reports. The state's five schools continue their successful participation.

3. Prof. Abendroth-Timmer (University of Siegen): *Why is CLIL competence important for the CertiLingua Label of Excellence?*

Prof. Dr. Dagmar Abendroth-Timmer gives a very inspiring lecture about the connection of CLIL competences and the CertiLingua label of excellence that supports the label's aims and ideas. [Addendum 3] .

Friday, September 11th

Henny Rönneper welcomes the participants to the second day. The workshops are introduced:

Group 1:

International and European Conferences: The face-to-face project and its documents (Room 46)

Beatrice Schmitz / Clemens Boppré

Group 2:

CertiLingua Standards and Requirements : Questions and Answers (Room 47)

Henny Rönneper / Martin Teuber

Group 3: CLIL in focus: exchange of good practice (Room 48)

Franz Mittendorfer / Hartmut Ebke

Group 4:

Public relations and cooperation with the Erasmus Programme (Room 49)

Gisella Langé / Isabelle Jeuffroy

Presentation of the Working Group's results

1. International and European Competences: the face-to-face project and its documentation

Beatrice Schmitz and Clemens Boppré welcome the participants of the workshop and in particular the CertiLingua graduate *Zeynep Özdemir* from the Gymnasium an der Stenner in Iserlohn. Zeynep Özdemir reports to the working group on her face-to-face project, which was part of a Comenius Project in Madrid, Spain with youths from many different countries taking part. She offers an insight into her project documentation with the title: "Future perspectives, moral values and career prospects of European adolescents in the face of current social and economic development in the EU - A troubled youth or a youth ready to succeed?", which is based on interviews she conducted with students from other countries in the project. Her analysis and reflection of the different perspectives of the students on their future prospects was both personal, reflecting the face-to-face encounters against the backdrop of her own experiences, and theoretical, applying "Grounded Theory" in her analysis of the interviews. *Beatrice Schmitz* thanks *Zeynep Özdemir* for giving the Annual Conference and the workshop participants a very concrete idea of her project and commends her on her excellent command of English.

The workshop participants then take a close look at the project documentation and apply the criteria of the relevant official documents:

- Awarding Criteria and Measures of Quality Control - 2014-01
- CertiLingua Standards of Excellence in Intercultural Competences - 2013-12
- Guidelines for project documentations - 2012-18
- Checklist for Project Documentations - 2013-20

All agree that the project documentation fulfils and surpasses the set criteria. The theoretical approach to the analysis of the interviews is seen as an approach that goes beyond what can and should be expected from CertiLingua candidates and may even prove to be counterproductive for less gifted students.

2. CertiLingua Standards and Requirements: Questions and Answers

The workshop aimed at supporting new members of the international CertiLingua Network and offered a platform to exchange examples of good practice ideas regarding CertiLingua standards and requirements

The main topics dealt with:

- Assessing project documentations

The members of the international CertiLingua network have worked on improving the assessment of project documentations since the beginning of the CertiLingua program. The international CertiLingua conference has published three obligatory

documents which help CertiLingua coordinators in all countries to assess project documentations in a transparent and comparable way.

These documents are:

- Awarding Criteria and Measures of Quality Control - 2014-01
 - CertiLingua Standards of Excellence in Intercultural Competences - 2013-12
 - Guidelines for project documentations - 2012-18
 - Checklist for Project Documentations - 2013-20
- Documenting language competences

CEFR level B2 must at least be acquired by CertiLingua students in two foreign languages studied at school. CEFR levels above B2 can be documented, according to national curricula or other national standards. Students do not need to acquire any external language certificate as long as the national curricula prove the CEFR level achieved. In general language competences attained are documented according to the guaranteed national curricula.

Language learning at school goes far beyond mere communicative competences. It includes the broad field of intercultural competences, thus referring to (inter)cultural knowledge, knowledge of literature, changing cultural perspectives, etc. Thus, language learning at school is language use in all its dimensions. Therefore the CertiLingua framework refers to the standards set for school languages.

- Assessing international / intercultural competences

Apart from the face-to-face project, the educational offers for students at CertiLingua schools provide numerous opportunities to foster international and intercultural competences. The CertiLingua Standards of Excellence in Intercultural Competences document within the three dimensions “knowledge of cultural and social diversity”, “awareness and attitudes” and “skills how to interact in intercultural contexts” the minimum standards CertiLingua graduates have to have acquired.

3. CLIL in focus: exchange of good practice

The workshop started with a range of questions / expectations issued by the group:

- perception of language teaching
- focus on the definition of CLIL
- How to support teachers / students with language difficulties?
- CLIL – CertiLingua
- CLIL and teacher training
- CLIL / bilingual teaching
- How to improve the attractiveness of CLIL for students

Franz Mittendorfer links the three pillars of CertiLingua (language competences, CLIL and intercultural competences) to the three “Cs” of CLIL : Communication, Content and

Community and made clear that teambuilding and supporting students in developing language skills is as important as covering curriculum-related content. [Addendum 4]

Very often, teachers find themselves in a dilemma: They either feel as language teachers or as content teachers.

But: You cannot teach CLIL if you just focus on language, nor if you are merely an expert in content. So, in order to leave the role of the lone fighter, teachers have to get organized in teams, sharing their experiences and expertise.

As a consequence, ways to improve teacher training and raise a general awareness that CLIL is not only an additional element of the school's profile, but an essential element of teaching languages across the curriculum were discussed.

In order to shift from teaching CLIL to learning in CLIL environments, we have to think about new ways to teach less and open up new opportunities for learning by both providing both the time and the space for learning.

A model CLIL lesson about the EU was discussed. It documented some of the basic principles of CLIL, including how to prioritize information, to activate previous knowledge, provide appropriate scaffolds, visualize the information and provide an appropriate way to arrange and document the information students have worked on. [Addendum 5]

4. Public Relations and Cooperation with Erasmus

The workshop develops ideas of how to promote CertiLingua better

- organize CertiLingua events with others (with other branches of administration or with CertiLingua partners)
- take CertiLingua to the national education authorities
- stress key ideas: its free of charge, it gives recognition to schools
- acknowledge what has been achieved
"We are proud."

CertiLingua is growing unimpeded by many challenges that many countries face in their educational systems

- mention examples of good practice with universities (Lille)
- be realistic about what it takes to build up a cooperation with a university
- encourage CertiLingua schools to find own partners
- use the potential of certificate holders as „ambassadors“
- tell the award holder to advertise the label and how to do that
- do not give students the impression that there is an automatism
- focus on the added value (face-to-face project)

Challenges for the CertiLingua Network

- university acknowledgement
- exemption of entrance exams
- acknowledgement of intercultural competences

- staying in touch with alumni that could report about the label's usefulness

Erasmus+

Changes in the European education programme Erasmus make it easier for schools to participate, as smaller projects can be supported. Nevertheless, a certain degree of Erasmus-experience is regarded as very helpful in the application process.

Therefore it is suggested to create an online list of schools that are involved in Erasmus+.

CertiLingua online

An online forum is suggested to enable schools and teachers to communicate quickly within the CertiLingua network.

The CertiLingua-Website

A new website is under construction with the intention to make the label and its ideas more easily understandable to the public and to people who are not yet familiar with it.

The documents are taken as an example and a new document structure is presented in which the documents are ordered according to purpose and to potential users.

Annual Conference (11:45 – 12:00)

No contributions have been made to add or change official documents.

1. Proposal for the new CertiLingua International Steering Group

As International Steering Group 2015-2018 are proposed:

- Prof. Hartmut Ebke
- Chantal Junot
- Gisella Langé
- Belinda Steinhuber
- Dr. Beatrice Schmitz
- Ruth de Sy

This proposal is accepted unanimously.

2. Date and Place for the Annual Conference

Belinda Steinhuber invites the participants to Linz for the Annual International Conference 2016. Detailed arrangements have to be made, but most likely the conference will take place at the Pädagogische Hochschule in Linz on the 8th – 9th of September 2016.

Dr. Pille Pöiklik announces that Estonia will host the Annual International Conference 2017 in Tallin.

Closing the Annual Conference

Michael Emrich is going to retire soon and the Annual Conference thanks him for his ongoing support and commitment and for establishing the label in Rhineland-Palatinate.

Henny Rönneper and Franz Mittendorfer have retired. They conclude their active participation and leave the international steering group. They have both helped found the label and their tremendous effort over the years has played a major role in the label's success throughout Europe. The Annual Conference acknowledges their outstanding commitment and work and stresses its deeply felt gratitude for the founding and establishment of CertiLingua as a programme aiming at mutual understanding between nations and cultures. Their work will be continued by the international CertiLingua Network.