“How we’re going about it”
“How we’re going about it”:
Teachers’ Voices on Innovative Approaches
to Teaching and Learning Languages

Edited by

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Melinda Dooly
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INTRODUCTION

MELINDA DOOLY

Why do we need this book?

Diverse demands for language teaching, the incorporation of new technologies into education, an augment of political and social interest in language learning, ever-expanding research and a growing market for theories, methods, materials and research publications have contributed to the general feeling that language teaching is in a state of continuous flux. Inevitably, there are many reasons for the rapid change in policies, training, expectations and information about language teaching, not least of which is the fact that language teaching embraces a wide spectrum of activities, approaches, practices and even beliefs. Moreover, the language learning process must be contextualised in order to truly understand what shapes the way languages are taught. It is quite beyond the scope of this book to cover all these areas and reasons for change, instead it is felt that it is more useful for teachers who are living in this ever-changing context to have access to some descriptive examples of innovative focuses that help face the challenges of all these changes. In particular, we try to look at the way these perspectives are integrated into student-centred learning environments.

Following the year 2001, which was declared the European Year of Languages (CoE, 2001), foreign language teaching has taken on a predominant role in the scholastic curriculum in many countries, especially in Europe. This has put a focus on the need for innovative language teaching approaches. Nonetheless, it has been argued that change and innovation in language teaching really began as early as the 1970s (Richards, 2002) during which period the communicative approach became popular, along with several other novel approaches (e.g. Total Physical Response or the Silent Way). While some approaches, such as the communicative approach or task-based learning are still very much part of language teaching today, many of the other approaches which were considered to be cutting edge in the 70s have almost disappeared. As Richards has put it, we are in the “post methods era” (idem, 4).
Arguably, the “post methods era” is a vibrant, but uncertain time for language teachers. Changes can produce a sense of challenge and opportunity for exploration while provoking ambiguous feelings towards those same changes. The “post methods era” can be confusing — there seem to be no clear-cut methods to follow. Different language teaching and learning approaches often overlap, exacerbated by the fact that there seem to be so many diverse notions and definitions of what it means to “know a language”. There are some common strands emerging, however. It is increasingly common to hear voices clamouring for the need to understand the language learning process within its social and psychological context. The fact that most modern language lessons today incorporate, in some way or another, the idea of communication (Grenfell, 2000:4) implies that there is now more emphasis on exposure and use of the target language through situational dialogues and practice and a shift away from a focus on discreet grammar. At the same time there is also a growing interest in moving away from language learning alone toward learning to learn languages just as there is a growing interest in moving beyond “language learning” towards “languaging” (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004) wherein the purpose of learning and using a language is not an objective in itself – language(s) is/are seen as a material part of the student’s life.

This book seeks to address this context of changes constructively and positively by providing an overview of language learning environments which can be considered as having “sprouted” from the “seeds” of the “post method era” and which attempt to put the people involved at the centre of our focus. The book looks at issues and practices related to the classroom — exemplifying situated language learning processes that are largely based on learner-centred, socio-constructivist approaches and which are being implemented in different countries throughout the world. While most of the cases presented are from European countries, there are also examples from Canada, the United States of America and Japan. The contributions included here represent some of the recent (and some not-so recent but influential) perspectives and issues that are currently quite relevant for language teaching. With the backdrop of the aforementioned Year of Languages 2001 behind us, and the declared goals of a plurilinguistic society before us (CoE), we have seized this newfound interest in teaching and learning languages (note the plural suffix, at least two languages apart from the mother tongue are being touted as the ideal goal) as an exemplar moment to highlight some of the practices and experiences of language teaching and learning which are being implemented around the globe.
Who should read this book?

This book is principally aimed at language teachers, teacher trainers and trainees interested in finding out about innovative teaching practices, perspectives and approaches which are being implemented in countries around the world. Of course, language teaching approaches must adapt to local environments and will take on characteristics of that environment, however this can sometimes restrict how the approach is actually understood (in a nutshell—one may be unable to see the wood because of the tree). By providing insight into how a variety of approaches are interpreted and put into action in different environments, this book will be of interest to foreign language teachers who are looking for ways to innovate approaches they are already using. It will also have appeal for teachers who are not specialized in foreign language teaching but are interested in cross-disciplinary approaches that encompass language learning. Of course, this book is not limited to teachers and trainers. Anyone who is a stakeholder in educational curricula, such as heads of schools and administrators, even parents, might find this material of interest—especially considering the importance multilingualism has in today’s education environment.

While the book is not written as a textbook, it can easily become part of recommended reading for courses specializing in language arts and foreign language teaching. In Europe, it is common practice to have university degrees in this area and teacher trainees are expected to be up-to-date on all current approaches across the European Union. The book can be used as reading for initial teacher training, especially foreign language teacher training, but it reaches beyond that. The growing interest in project-based approaches and content-based language learning, which require cooperation between specialized language teachers and teachers of other disciplines, means that there is a need for accessible reading materials for teachers and teacher trainees across all fields of education.

What is in this book?

This book is divided into two main sections which are, in turn, grouped into sub-sections of descriptive cases. The first section is entitled Tuning into languages: Multiple languages as a resource. This section looks at different ways in which multiple language learning is integrated into learning activities programmed into the school curriculum. The three subsections are:
• Multiple language integration
• Task-based language learning
• Content and Language Integrated Learning.

The second section, entitled Emerging Technologies and New Paradigms for the 21st Century, examines new technologies in language learning, the use of the European Language Portfolio and language teaching to young learners. The axis to these sections is the understanding of emerging technology, research, and education paradigms as resources which can be integrated into the language learning process. Moreover, the notion of the learners as a teaching resource brings us full circle – the learner-centred environment which is absolutely essential for integrative teaching strategies. The three subsections of section II are:

• Technology Integrated into Language Learning
• European Language Portfolio
• Exploring New Horizons: Young Learners and Multiple Intelligences

A brief introduction of each section provides the reader with some background information about each descriptive case and the common denominators which underlie them. While the book does not intend to delve too deeply into the theoretical issues at play, some key debates inevitably emerge and these are highlighted in the introduction in hopes of sparking interest in further research and exploration in the areas described here. At the end of each section a list of recommended reading is given for readers interested in finding out more about the topics.

What are the key issues addressed?

This book is about approaches in language learning, with a special focus on how resources are employed – especially *human resources*. However, the reader should bear in mind that the notion of “human resource” as it is understood in this book may differ from the more conventional idea of “human resource”. The position taken here is that the true stakeholder of any learning process are principally the learners and that this “human factor” must be integrated into any approach taken within education. In an era which is dominated by the “business mentality” and at a time in which education has already assimilated many of the business terms and creeds about how to educate learners (e.g. efficient time
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management, focus on impact, quality control, accountability, etc.), this human factor often seems to be pushed aside.

Businesses have long recognized the need for setting up “human resources management”, “human resources strategies”, “human resources development” and most businesses have a human resources department, with its own director and staff. And yet, human resources (or better said, the human factor) is not always taken into consideration in teacher development, curriculum development or lesson planning, despite the fact that the human resources (teachers, administrators, parents, community and especially students) are the very backbone of education.

This book will look at the different ways in which available resources are being used in language education – thus resource in this book is understood as anything used positively by the teacher to promote the learning process. This implies that resource can be understood as computer and Internet connection, policy guidelines, innovative teaching material and of course, the teacher and the student as sources of vital information and interaction which can be channelled into the learning experience. There are many books about how materials are being used, about how to develop classes through different approaches (which may or may not provide materials for the language classes), but there is a need for a book which describes how the persons involved in the language classes are pivotal to the way in which the language lessons take place, because they are the agents who incorporate the available resources into their students’ learning process.

The term resource, defined by Webster’s New World Dictionary 2nd College Edition, refers to “available means” and “a source of information or expertise”. Starting from there, resources are understood as the means or sources from which learning takes place – a wide definition which allows us to look at the different ways in which language teaching strategies emerge from a learner-centred environment. This theme runs throughout the book. So, when discussing network-based language learning for instance, we are not focusing on the Internet as the main element for learning – the Internet is a tool which provides support for learners to work together to construct knowledge – thus the emphasis is on the human factor – the participants involved in each particular environment of distanced classes – all working together via the Internet. Likewise, task-based learning emphasizes the learner as the resource for the language use which emerges from the task design. The different types of “immersion” discussed herein, whether through CLIL or plurilingual environments, draw on the students’ and teacher’s knowledge of the content and languages being studied as the strategy for further language
learning. And as the name implies, Young Learners are the human resource for teaching strategies which deal with early language learners.

Of course, another important human resource for education is the teacher. Inevitably, effective language education will depend greatly upon the skills, knowledge and commitment of the teacher. However, for the teacher who would like to stay informed about the different achievements, research, application of new approaches and theories and so forth, he or she may find himself or herself adrift in a vast array of theories, policies and ideas concerning the field of language teaching and learning. Foreign language teaching is a constantly changing field of education; in many places throughout the world language education is perhaps one of the areas of the curriculum which has changed the most in the past two decades. This is largely due to the influences of new research, dissemination of innovative practices, increasing numbers of students and greater interest in educational policy promoting a multilingual society.

The selection of case descriptions to include in this book has not been easy – there are numerous examples of “good practice” being carried out in primary, middle and secondary schools as well as at university faculties and in further education which could deservedly be included. The selection was based on what can be called a “convergence of agenda” for language learning and the way in which knowledge and understanding about this process was transformed into classroom practice. Relevance for the reader was considered – it is the aim of this book that readers will find the information and descriptions transferable to other contexts. So, while it is inevitable that each case described herein is specific to its social, cultural and institutional situation, this fact should not be overly-emphasized either, as it could result in missed opportunities for learning from other practitioners.

Another problem encountered upon starting this book project was how to group the practitioners’ experiences into sections in the book. Inevitably, the act of naming is encumbered with many pitfalls, not least of which is the fact that naming (or labelling) immediately evokes particular and often generalized characteristics or features which may or may not be germane to the contextualised circumstances being described. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that we did not want to group the sections according to “approaches” or “methods” and yet we still needed a common axis to distribute the contributions in a framework that made it more accessible for the reader. As we’ve already mentioned, the idea of the use of resources was important for the outline of the book, so it was decided to focus on the way in which resources were put to use in the cases described here. This is the common denominator which delineates
each section. Inevitably, this was easier for some sections than others, for instance, an approach which employs new technology has the commonality of using technology as a key tool for language learning. However, the argument remains that there are many different ways to employ technology in teaching and learning so even the supposedly more clear-cut categories were (and still are) open to discussion.

Differences were even more patent when it came to discussing the sections dealing with multiple languages as a resource. For instance, there is a lot of debate about the division between linguistic immersion and Content Language and Integrated Learning (CLIL); we didn’t pick the fight – it is already set out for us. On the one hand, CLIL can be considered one particular type of bilingual program, set apart from other bilingual programmes by its institutional and didactical set-up. This argument, in turn, must be contextualised – are we talking about immersion of foreign languages, second languages, or immigrant students learning the vehicular language? Are we discussing educational environments in which bilingualism and plurilingualism are already the norm or is it predominantly a monolingual educational environment? How many hours of exposure to the language can be considered “immersion”? Again, each situation and each experience is a world in itself.

Thus, when trying to pinpoint the most appropriate phenomena to focus upon, it was necessary to ask what is the element that clearly crosscuts the different sets of examples? One such factor is the way in which multilingual resources are employed as a learning resource. As one of the contributors rightly pointed out at the beginning of the writing project, the grouping stems from the outcome rather than the "frame" in which bilingual learning takes place, highlighting the need to group the sections according to both the resources employed and the approach which emerges from that focus. Some may feel that the inclusion or exclusion of a particular practice from a section is an error. However, in the view of the editors, the way in which the cases were grouped prioritized making it reader-friendly rather than focusing on theoretical differences. Arguably, focusing on theoretical variations in the frameworks rather than the outcomes would have made for an entirely different book.

Likewise, some of the cases described in the book could have been defined differently within their socio-cultural contexts. For instance, the question of “Young Learner” was difficult to pinpoint to one age group. Foreign language instruction begins around age six in Austria while in Germany, the average age is eight. In Spain, the compulsory age for beginning foreign language classes has been lowered to six but it is also quite common to find “experimental” schools starting foreign language
courses in kindergarten with children as young as two or three. As ambivalent as it may seem, the term “Young Learner” is commonly applied in language learning contexts, as witnessed by associations and conferences which include the title in their names. Therefore our decision was to return to our initial starting point and consider young learners as the (human) resource upon which this approach revolves, rather than limiting the section to a certain age group (although, admittedly, we did keep the age range to below ten) and to include two articles about young learners in the section which describes the expansion of new horizons in learning.

The chapters that follow are made up of contributions from different practitioners with a wide range of experience and expertise in the vast field of language teaching. The transversality of the contributions is not so much the application of specific practices as the transformation of knowledge about language learning. This transformation stems from advances in research and through the devising of practices which can be included in a comprehensive teaching programme. This also helps give the book an international scope because the content of the book seeks to provide insight into innovative and inspirational language teaching practices being carried out in different countries. Inevitably, there are many different models, interpretations and definitions of each of the focuses which are the basis of the examples described herein. In many cases the experiences overlap – it is not unusual to hear of a teacher who employs a digitalized language portfolio with students and who includes chats and forums as part of the learning experience –thus combining language portfolios with new technologies. We were interested in providing an overview of language teaching and learning processes which can contribute to further innovation in the field rather than focusing on providing academic debate on where the delineations should be drawn.

It was not an easy task to combine the objective of having as wide a geographic distribution as possible and having relevant representations of experiences in each section. Of course, it is impossible to offer an example from each country or region in the world –impossible for the editors, untenable for the publishers and too daunting for anyone but the most avid reader! We have tried to provide a “sampling” of language teaching which can be considered as efficient, innovative and motivating means to engage students in language learning. It is not our aim to compare or endorse one learning process over another, nor does the exclusion of any area in this book imply that we feel it is not worthwhile. We have chosen these areas for their growing acceptance in language education but which, at the same time, may not enjoy the dissemination as examples of practice which they arguably deserve.
The cases described here are intended only as examples of how teachers and theorists have made use of the resources they had at hand (learners, technological tools, community, school projects, activities and/or new research). Literature written for teachers often provides ample theoretical description of how it “should” be done. While this is doubtlessly important as a basis for sound teaching practice, it needs to be accompanied by sufficient examples of how it has been put into practice inside the classroom. This book is written for all those who are stakeholders in language education and are interested in exploring some of the current practices around the globe. It is our hope that these experiences will serve as inspiration for other teachers and administrators as they see how their colleagues in other parts of the world have adapted these ideas into their teaching.

A final note: in order to avoid sexist language, we have opted for alternating between feminine and masculine referencing instead of using the rather unwieldy s/he, her/his wording. Thus, if ‘student’ is referred to as ‘her’ in one chapter, the masculine pronouns will be used in the next.

Works Cited


PART I

TUNING INTO LANGUAGES:
MULTIPLE LANGUAGES
AS A RESOURCE
INTRODUCTION TO PART I

MELINDA DOOLY

Those who know nothing of foreign languages know nothing of their own.
—Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

This Section has nine contributions, the first three discuss different ways that multiple languages have been integrated into the classroom, followed by three descriptions of task-based language learning (TBLL), and ends with four descriptions of foreign language learning through Content Language and Integrated Learning (CLIL). All of these examples are especially relevant to the current education environment. During the last decade or so, there has been a shift away from decontextualised language teaching towards integration of language learning with other learning activities programmed in the school. This may be in the form of content instruction of a subject matter (e.g. Science, Mathematics, History, etc.) or the target language may be used as the vehicular language to carry out a project, or, as is described here, the target language may be used intensively during an established period of time. One of the most frequently cited reasons for this integrated focus is the theory that incorporating meaningful input and communication leads to improved language learning and teaching.

Nonetheless it can be argued that there is not a clear-cut definition of what is meant by the term integration of target languages. Indeed, there are several approaches for integrating second language teaching into other areas – such approaches are often broadly referred to as “Immersion”. The variety of ways in which the concept of immersion is understood is evidenced by the numerous ways in which it is put into practice across the globe. In some cases the term “linguistic immersion” might be replaced by “intensity of instruction”, as both immersion and intensive programs are necessarily intensive, although some may argue that intensive is not necessarily immersion!

For the purpose of this book, we are going to focus on exposure to and use of the target language as an integrated part of instruction – although the reader should bear in mind that the area of instruction and the amount
of exposure to the target language can have many variants. In short, the focus is on contextualizing the language use as a means of facilitating its learning. Still, this broad definition becomes problematic when one begins to examine the different ways in which the concept has been and is being applied. Ironically, the definition is rendered almost obtuse when it is contextualized! For instance, according to many experts, one of the most widely spread practices in Canada over the past 3 decades is “immersion education” which is principally aimed at the English-speaking majority learning French (see Genesee, 1987; Lapkin, 1998; Lapkin & Turnbull, 1999; Swain & Johnson, 1997). Yet, this “immersion education” must be understood within the context of Canada, which is officially bilingual, with French and English as the two co-official languages. This is a quite different context of language use (e.g. exposure to the language in the school and ample opportunities for its use outside the school) than is the case for the Netherlands, which also has programmes called “bilingual education” which combine the school’s vehicular language and English as the second language. In this case, English, albeit frequently used in films and other aspects of everyday life of Dutch youth, is not an official language of the Netherlands.

Likewise, in Germany, some schools employ programmes known as "learning through a foreign language" which often begins in the first year of schooling. In such programmes, half the school day students and teachers use German and the other half a foreign language is used. However, in many cases the so-called foreign language may be the native language of many of the students, since the programmes often focus on languages which are spoken by large populations in Germany (e.g. Italian, Turkish). Inevitably, the different contexts in which this contextualized focus of language learning is employed will influence the way in which the target language is taught and the results stemming from such experiences.

Still, the theory of linguistic integration as part of the curriculum (with all its variants such as content subject, different target languages, level of intensity of exposure, etc.)—based on the concept of purposeful learning appears to be a wide-spread practice that clearly justifies an examination of such practices. We have chosen the cases here because they exemplify the idea of integrating the language into overall school learning.

The first group of writings is entitled “Multiple language integration”. Inevitably, this heading is also applicable for other sections, but in this subsection the focus is not so much on any particular institutional setting, rather the focus is on the output of multilingual settings. The next group of writings consists of examples of Task-based Language Learning that
illustrate how language learning can be integrated into classroom teaching or across school projects. The last four contributions provide descriptive examples of Content Language and Integrated Learning. In this framework, CLIL is understood as “dual-focused educational context” (Marsh, 2002:1) wherein a language different from the learners’ first language is used as a means for teaching and learning in a non-language context. According to Marsh, “CLIL has emerged as a pragmatic European solution to a European need” (2002: 4) and in this book, CLIL is understood as standing apart from other immersion programmes principally based on its institutional setting. This has been the definition used here to separate the different areas of immersion.

Inevitably, as more research goes into understanding the role of bilingualism and multilingualism in life-long language learning, educators will probably be obliged to rephrase and reconfigure many definitions. As Germain and Netten point out in this book, most of the buzzwords seem to refer to the need to integrate the use (and reuse) of the language into all learning processes. This section provides some enlightening examples of researchers and practitioners who are leading the way.

Works Cited


This section delves into learning that takes place within bilingual and multilingual contexts. Inevitably, this implies an understanding of linguistic competence which goes beyond the traditional sense of monolingual linguistic competence. As we’ve stated previously, it is our belief that multilingualism should be understood as a resource—the origins and use of that resource may have many variants—but multiple linguistic competences stand as a constant. This moves the focus from language and language learning for their own sake towards the outcomes of different types of programmes cross-cut by the use of intensive exposure and integration of multiple languages.

As societies are constantly transforming and new communities and identities emerge, teachers will be required to adjust their instructional practices to the reality of multilingualism in their classrooms. Teachers must be seen as central stakeholders in the education process and this implies viewing their “practical knowledge and notions” as a broad pool of resources they will employ in the classroom. Therefore it becomes imperative to disseminate examples of situated learning experiences which incorporate multilingual opportunities into the learning process—especially those that embark from the students’ own multilingual practices.

Inevitably, there are many different agendas for the promotion of language teaching in society. In many cases there exists an implicit goal of “assimilation” language teaching wherein minority speakers are encouraged to learn the majority language. This is often accompanied by transitional language teaching aimed at enabling minority speakers to be able to “function” in the majority language. Often, these “assimilation” language teaching policies run parallel to education programmes which foster the teaching of a second (foreign) language that is rarely used in the local context—as is often seen in careers or higher education that require
a second language (frequently referred to as an “elite” foreign language agenda).

Of course, the above agendas are largely hinged upon a common dichotomy of monolingual versus bi/multilingual teaching, especially when considered within the context of monolingual societies. The notion of monolingual societies is principally based on the ideology that one nation-state is equal to one culture is equal to one language while, in actual fact multilingualism is the norm in most parts of the world. Indeed, just as there are multilingual nations, societies and communities, a large part of the world’s population is made up of multilingual individuals. Tapping into that resource is an important challenge for today’s educator. Fortunately, many teachers recognise the role of multiple language learning for its cognitive benefits and the contribution language learning can make to advancement in general education.

Multiple language integration is also becoming more predominant in a student-centred approach — students who are multilingual can be the point of departure for other students’ language-learning, while validating the multilingual students’ language. This perspective challenges the previously mentioned “assimilation” model. In this chapter, the first authors (Melanie Kunkel and Gabriele Budach) present the concept of two-way immersion —including its historical, political and pedagogical implications— within the German context. They focus in particular on the benefits of bilingual literacy; however, they go outside the sphere of foreign language teaching to discuss mother tongue maintenance, and intercultural and social learning. In their article, the authors highlight the nature of multilingualism as a resource, rather than as the sole outcome of institutionally based foreign language learning.

In the second article, Joan Netten and Claude Germaine consider an intensive programme within a literacy-based approach to second language teaching (in this case French in Canada). Seen as an enrichment of an already existent Core Language Programme, it provides intensive exposure to the target language (70% of the school day) for a set period of time (five months) at the end of the students’ elementary schooling (between the ages of 11 to 12). The emphasis is on literacy skills (reading, writing and speaking) and is promoted through various activities integrated into the school programme. Different from CLIL, the target language is not used as part of the teaching and learning of another subject, the focus is on transferable literacy skills.

Crossing the Atlantic once again, the last section of this chapter discusses a case study in France. Andrea Young is interested in teaching processes that acknowledge and capitalise on the infinitely diverse sets of
cultural and linguistic knowledge and skills pupils bring with them when they come to school. Within this premise, she outlines the “Didenheim project”—a project set up in a French primary school whose aims were “to invent a new teaching and learning model and to make space in the curriculum for dealing with diversity” (Young, this volume). Similar to the Italo-German project described by Kunkel and Budach, this project counted on intensive parental participation, indeed, parents became the “teachers” within the programme. Young outlines the way the project was set up, the importance of teacher-parent cooperation, and the co-construction of knowledge by all the social actors involved.

This section points out how multilingual interaction can lead to exploration of each pupil’s knowledge and skills and how this knowledges can, in turn, complement other individuals’ knowledge and skills, consequently helping to build trust and mutual respect between parents, teachers and students.
In the past 14 years, a number of bilingual school sections have been created across Germany, all of them following the model of two-way immersion (Christian, 1996; Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Torres-Guzmán, 2002). Although the ways in which these programs are set up vary across different contexts, they still share a number of common features. One of these is that the two languages are given equal status as target languages and languages of instruction. This means that pupils from the majority language background are not at an advantage compared to the other language speaking students. (In this particular case, the two languages were German and Italian.) Secondly, half of the class is made up of children with a migrant background with knowledge of the project partner language (again, in this case Italian) and the other half of class is composed of children from a German-speaking background who have no knowledge of the other language prior to schooling. (Some of the children speak other languages apart from these two languages.) A third feature is team-teaching consisting of one German teacher and a teacher with the project partner language and cultural background. Both teachers are in the classroom together most of the time, although at times the children may be separated into different language groups.

This contribution will focus specifically on the model of two-way immersion in a German-Italian bilingual program implemented in three schools in the inner city of Frankfurt. We will be discussing the benefits and challenges of two-way immersion as an innovative model of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural education. In doing so, we will highlight some of the methods and forms of bilingual teaching and learning, such as team teaching and student centred, collaborative project work.
Two-way immersion

Two-way immersion in Germany has a number of goals (Lindholm-Leary, 2001), however, it generally seeks to create benefits for children from a migrant background as well as for children from a monolingual German background. This is extremely important for school success considering that—as happens in other Western societies—children from a German background do comparatively better in schools than children from migrant backgrounds. Two-way immersion is aimed at addressing the needs of both children from migrant and German background.

On the one hand, this approach helps children from migrant background to maintain their linguistic and cultural heritage and to become confident and proficient speakers of German, and on the other this program offers an opportunity for German speaking children to learn a second language and to become bilingual and bi-literate at an early age. At the same time the students can discover and experience another culture. The underlying condition for the project’s success is to create a collaborative and cooperative learning culture that values both Italian and German (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Alvarez, & Chiu, 1999; Manyak, 2001). It thereby serves as a basis for developing bilingual identity models as well as meta-linguistic knowledge that will help children learn other languages more easily (Hufeisen & Neuner, 2003).

Some aspects of two-way immersion are shared with another approach known as Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) that is relatively widespread in the German school system (see Chapter Three). Although both models make use of another language apart from German as the language of instruction, there is an important difference between the two language teaching approaches. While CLIL-teaching focuses on a comparison of trans-national contents and culture (e.g. Environmental politics in England given in lessons of Geography and taught through English) two-way immersion is concerned with and primarily addresses linguistic and cultural diversity inside the classroom itself.

Two-way immersion in Germany: a case study in Frankfurt

The Italo-German school project in Frankfurt was started in 1997/98. Being one of the most important migrant communities in the Frankfurt
area, many of the Italians and their descendents are relatively well integrated, socially and economically. However, the second and third generations of Italian migrants still count among the least academically successful in the province’s schools compared to other ethnic groups. Significantly, the project has grown out of an initiative of Italian and German parents—many of them living in mixed marriages—who founded a parents’ association in 1995. Its goal was to help the design and implementation of a bilingual German-Italian school project in Frankfurt (Fillia, 2003) thus ensuring an opportunity for migrant children to maintain their linguistic and cultural heritage, and for Italian and German children to develop competent bilingualism and bi-literacy. Initial difficulties had to be overcome at different levels, not least of which finding a primary school in the predominantly German-speaking community that was interested in establishing a bilingual class. Arguments against Italian were largely based on prejudices against Italian children who were considered “too lively and exhausting”. Moreover, according to language hierarchies that dominate the German linguistic market, it was argued that English would have been a more valuable and therefore preferred choice for some schools.

However, thanks to the strenuous efforts and support by the parents’ association, local migrant institutions and the Italian consulate in Frankfurt, a bilateral treaty between the Republic of Italy and the Land of Hesse was established that created a legal basis for the bilingual program. According to this agreement, Italian teachers are sent to Germany to work with the German teacher as a team partner (paid by the Italian government). In 1997/98 the first bilingual program started at primary school level (Haller & Pagliuca Romano, 2002), which was continued at secondary level in 2003/04 in a gymnasium. (This opportunity is more widely used by children from an Italian background, whose interest in maintaining their Italian heritage is a priority for them, than by children

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1 In 2004, Frankfurt had 165,600 inhabitants with a foreign passport (26.5 %), among which 14,494 were inhabitants with an Italian passport. Of course this number does not take into account the inhabitants with Italian background holding a German passport.

2 The Italian minority is the third largest migrant community in the Frankfurt area, following the Turkish and migrant communities from former Yugoslavia. This is reflected in a school population of migrant origin (2005) consisting of 41,239 students of Turkish origin, 10,475 of Yugoslavian, and 7,528 of Italian origin. The percentage of Italian students sent to special education is higher compared to other migrant groups (in 2005 8.02 % of the Italian group, compared to 7.14 % out of the Turkish school population and 6.25 % of the Ex-Yugoslav student body. www.statistik-hessen.de/themenauswahl/bildung-kultur-rechtsstufe/index.html.