PETALL
PAN EUROPEAN TASKS FOR
LANGUAGE LEARNING

PETALL

Pan European Task Activities for Language Learning
Format for national courses

Course Title
A Task-based Language Teaching Approach for Modern Foreign Languages
Rationale and justification for the course

In contemporary Scotland, languages education is rapidly expanding at the primary level of schooling under what is known as the 1+2 policy (i.e. all children will learn two additional languages). Conversely, uptake for languages at the highest levels of secondary schooling have been steadily declining (Scott 2015). Lesser-used languages, like Gaelic, Urdu, and (in the Scottish context) German are particularly susceptible to low enrolment and teachers can struggle to find adequate materials for the teaching of these subject (Dombrowski et al. 2015). Thus, there is increasingly a need to support the work of languages teachers in order to increase and sustain participation in languages learning, and to equip languages teachers of lesser-used languages to adapt and create teaching materials for their own classrooms.

This national course helps to educate languages teachers to support their students learning in a Task-Based Languages Teaching (TBLT, Ellis 2003) approach, but also affords Scottish teachers the benefit of the experience of nine other European tandems of initial teacher education providers and secondary school teachers in the delivery of languages education. It focuses on the use of information communication technology (ICT) in the learning and teaching process of languages education, but aims to do so in a way that will both empower teachers to adopt preexisting tasks for languages teaching into their classrooms, and to innovate their own ICT-based tasks.

Investigation of the field (state of the art) and innovative character

With the advent of a new Scottish curriculum (Curriculum for Excellence) schools have the opportunity to develop greater flexibility in the delivery of the curriculum (e.g with enhanced interdisciplinary learning). Languages are at the forefront of contemporary national Scottish educational policy initiatives, with a 1+2 policy having recently been introduced by Scottish Government. This policy aims to engage learners in a wider variety of languages at the primary level, and to ensure that a greater number of students persist in languages learning at the secondary level. In addition to this, 'added value' units in a variety of languages can now be accessed by learners at the secondary level (as well as by lifelong adult learners), which allows for even more flexibility in the learning and teaching of languages in Scotland.

While Scotland is a multilingual context, the dominance of English and comparatively low prestige afforded to other *autochthonic* languages (i.e. Gaelic and Scots, see McLeod 2014 & Millar 2006) in the nation mean that languages uptake and attainment have traditionally been poor (Scott 2015). Policy initiatives in Scotland are currently emphasizing the value of and need for additional languages in education, and increasing attention is being placed on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches (Richards and Rodgers 2001) as the means by which to foster language competencies (e.g. Content Language Integrated Learning, see Coyle 2013). Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a form of CLT that offers good flexibility for Scottish languages teachers, whose students may not have the confidence and

capacity to sustain CLIL, but who (with the right support) may be able to use their target additional language creatively in 'real' and 'meaningful' ways for defined periods of time (Klapper 2007). TBLT also has the benefit of including focused language instruction (usually as a plenary), which may help teachers to align the approach with the national curriculum's Experiences and Outcomes and, at the higher levels of secondary, with Scottish Qualifications Authority standards for assessment. Finally, TBLT lends itself easily to an interdisciplinary approach, which is coherent with the national curriculum in Scotland, in which curricular areas are increasingly being creatively merged to help inspire, inform and equip young learners with a variety of skills and qualities that will benefit their lifelong learning journey.

Target groups
Teachers of modern foreign languages in primary and secondary schools in Scotland.

Outcomes: changes in practices, procedures or didactic materials

Participants will be able to:
- Understand the main principles governing Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT)
- Create TBLT tasks incorporating ICT.
- Use applications and software to design tasks such as making a documentary using
- Windows moviemaker or iMovie; researching on the internet to plan a visit to a town abroad; webquests; creating a wiki; creating animation; creating a Blog; using on-line dictionaries; uploading short videos to YouTube, etc.
- Evaluate tasks created by teachers from different educational contexts and different countries.

Contents

Presentation of course content is presented both in text form and with supporting narrated videos. Independent formative tasks are provided for downloading, which aim to help participating teachers monitor their progress through the course content and to ensure their professional development is achieve at a level that is commensurate with their existing knowledge and skill sets. In addition to this, asynchronous talk-back opportunities are embedded within the online course to allow for further discussion by participating teachers.

In addition to a welcome and introduction to the PETALL project, the online course contains four thematic areas which align with the course's intended learning outcomes. These themes are:
1. Task-based language teaching
2. Technology and languages teaching
3. Creating a 'task' to teach languages
4. PETALL tasks to download

Methodologies

Online delivery of the national course has been adopted using Scotland's nationally available digital environment for learning, GLOW. GLOW allows for the course to either be accessible only to other GLOW members (primarily: initial stage, probationary, and/or qualified teachers in Scotland), or publicly – a full access approach has been taken to make accessibility as easy as possible for the target population (and any other interested parties) to view and engage with learning and teaching materials. Originally, a blended learning approach was taken, but poor uptake for face-to-face inputs required innovation for the delivery content. Thus, online delivery has proved to be the most acceptable medium for the target population of languages teachers. Online delivery has the two added benefits of: a) reinforcing the value of ICT as a

conduit for learning and teaching; and b) helping to ensure the longevity of impact for the national course.

Evaluation procedures
This course now functions as an opportunity for formative continuous professional development and, therefore, there are no formal evaluation procedures for participating teachers.   To help direct and ensure the rigor of self-evaluation procedures, the following structured activities are embedded within the online course: 1. Guided reflection 2. Independent research 3. Action research

Follow up strategy
An evaluation of the course, which will allow its creators to respond to the changing pressures of languages education in Scotland has been embedded within the site and is hosted securely by Question Pro. Evaluation data that is provided by participating teachers to course providers will be collected and reviewed approximately every 3 months and this will be used to inform changes to the curriculum content and mode of delivery of the online national course. There is no end-date to this follow-up strategy, as the course creators are committed to disseminating and exploiting the benefits afforded by the PETALL Project for as long as there is demand.

Schedule	
Timeframe	To be completed by teachers in their own time. Online course can he hosted and freely accessed by interested participants indefinitely.
Number of sessions	5 online sessions
Total number of hours for each session	2

Approval by the national body
Name of national body: University of the West of Scotland. School of Education. Date of approval 23/03/2016 Ref. No. not applicable

Scientific advisor
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