

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE MISSIONS OF SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF FRANCOPHONE INTERUNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

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Abstract

Our paper analyzes the missions of scientific cooperation carried out by the members of the project “Strengthening of French Language and of Research in French for the non-specialist students in a multicultural and French-speaking environment”, and it takes into account the following aspects: the objectives, the participants, the program of the mobility and the results obtained. On the fourteen teachers of French language for specific purposes concerned by the project financed by the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie and coordinated by the « Ion Ionescu de la Brad » University of Iași, six have benefited from missions of scientific cooperation. The objectives pursued have been complex, starting with the identification of the training need for each partner and of those common to the whole partnership, the exchange of experiences and good practices, the major goal being the formulation of problems and solutions, for sharing and durability of French for specific purposes teaching. The activities carried out by the participants to the missions of scientific cooperation have been diverse, and our presentation is intended to underline the importance of the direct exchange in identifying strategies meant to consolidate the position of French language as a scientific communication language and to create a teachers’ and researchers’ network in the applied life sciences universities.

Key words: missions of scientific cooperation, sharing, interuniversity francophone partnership

The main objective of the inter-university partnership created in November 2012 is, as indicated by the title of the project: “Strengthening of French Language and of Research in French for the non-specialist students in a multicultural and French-speaking environment”.

Financed by the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie and taking place over the period 2012-2014, the partnership involves five universities: three from Romania: the “Ion Ionescu de la Brad” University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iași (coordinating university), the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca, the “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați; one from the Republic of Moldova: the “Alecu Russo” State University of Bălți, and one from Croatia: the University of Zagreb. The target group is made of teachers of French as a foreign language (FLE), by teachers of French for specific purposes (FOS), by teachers of specialized disciplines and also by science students who learn French as an optional discipline. The current composition of the consortium guarantees a balance between FLE/FOS teachers already having some experience

and young teachers of French language; the team also includes teachers of non-linguistic disciplines (DNL) who bring their major contribution to the fulfillment of the project objectives. (Petrea: 17-18) There are currently fourteen teachers of FLE/FOS and two teachers of specialized disciplines. The activities planned and implemented until now in this project included the protocol of collaboration and the distribution of the tasks by the partners, the on-line communication between students, the missions of scientific cooperation, the organization of a symposium, a workshop and a training (Velescu: 169-176).

If French remains a language of communication in the international context, it is largely because it is a language of inter-university communication, of scientific and professional exchanges (see Presentation document, Project “Support for the teaching of and in French, 2011, AUF).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The specific aims of the project are: to increase the participation of the students non-specialist of the language in research activities in French in the applied life sciences disciplines; to

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encourage the production and the dissemination of knowledge in fields connected to French teaching and to the teaching in French; to strengthen the attractiveness of the French courses for non-specialist students, in line with the latest developments of the research on the didactics of French for specific purposes in a multilingual international context; to ensure the networking of students, researchers and teachers, leading to the harmonization of methods and contents by sharing common tools and reference materials (Petrea : 17-18).

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The objectives pursued have been complex, starting with the identification of the training need for each partner and of those common to the whole partnership, the exchange of experiences and good practices, the major goal being the formulation of problems and solutions, for sharing and durability of French for specific purposes teaching.

The activities carried out by the participants to the missions of scientific cooperation have been diverse, and our presentation is intended to underline the importance of the direct exchange in identifying strategies meant to consolidate the position of French language as a scientific communication language and to create a teachers' and researchers' network in the applied life sciences universities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The missions took place at the University of Zagreb (two members of the project), the "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați (one member of the project) and at the "Ion Ionescu de la Brad" University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iași (three members of the project).

The first mission of scientific cooperation was organised at the "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galați, from 11 to 12 November, 2012. The main objectives of the mission were:

- to identify the common need and the specific needs to each partner of the project;
- to realize exchanges between teachers on the contents of curricula and on the didactic resources presently used in French classes for specific purposes;
- to formulate examples of problems and to find solutions, to share knowledge and to ensure durability of French teaching;

The mission of scientific cooperation included the following activities:

- the visit of French Studies Department and meeting with teachers;
- the visit of the Library of the Applied Modern Languages Department;
- the presentation of the project financed by the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie for the teachers of the "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați (presentation of the objectives, the project schedule, the activities to be done and the participants involved, the expected results);
- the sharing and the analysis of the classroom contents in French for specific purposes courses taught by every partner in the project: discussion on contents, comparison and identification of the positive aspects and of the negative aspects for every case;
- the evaluation in French classes for specific purposes: methodology applied by every partner, sharing, analysis and identification of the positive aspects and of the negative aspects for every case;
- the exchange of methods and didactic supports used by the teachers members of the project;
- the analysis of key aspects of the training system in French for specific purposes classrooms: the knowledge to be acquired, the learner, the social dimension of the training.

The presentation and the comparative analysis of the contents taught in French for specific purposes courses in each establishment of the partnership highlighted a significant number of common elements at the lever of the aimed skills and the contents taught. This similarity is a solid basis for the realization of one of the main objective of our project, namely the harmonization of curricula for similar specializations.

If there are differences compared with the evaluation system applied in both establishments, it is partially due to the regulations in force in every university. The participants at this scientific mission underlined the necessity of harmonization of the evaluation system, considering the aimed common skills.

As a second step towards realizing the objectives of the scientific mission, there came naturally to take its place in the schedule of the visit the exchange of didactic supports and good practice in class of French for specific purposes. The teachers of French as a foreign language who participated in this mission of scientific cooperation underlined the importance of the project for the francophone universities networking and they reaffirmed their support to ensure linguistic and cultural opening of their students by the asset of French language.

The second mission took place at the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iași, from 18 to 21 November, 2012. During this mission, the teachers participated at the didactic activities and at discussions on the project and its activities. The participants shared their experiences on didactic aspects of French language for specific purposes, in order to advance the efforts on curriculum harmonization, on the preparation of the courses supports and on the elaboration of educational activities planned in the project. They discussed about the techniques to be used in French classes for specific purposes, according to students' knowledge level and about the theoretical supports already published in different French publishing houses, which could be helpful in their activity.

The third mission took place from 26 to 29 November, 2012, at the "Ion Ionescu de la Brad" University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iași, Romania. This mission had as specificity the discussions about the aspects concerning the scientific conference of March 2013, hosted by the "Alecu Russo" State University of Bălți, Republic of Moldova. This conference was organised within the framework of the project and the participants at the scientific mission established the objectives, the workshops, the thematic axes and the call for papers, the draft program, the accommodation and the activities involving the students from the five universities of the partnership.

The last mission of scientific cooperation took place at the University of Zagreb, Croatia, from 10 to 14 April 2013 and it included the following activities:

- visit of the French studies and Roman languages department and meeting with the department director;

- participation at the scientific conference *Francontraste 2013, Le Français en contraste: l'affectivité et la subjectivité dans le langage*, 2nd international francophone scientific conference of the University of Zagreb, 11-13 April, with two papers: «Le concept de la ruine au XVIII^e siècle dans l'espace littéraire franco-allemand entre fascination du regard et affectivité dans sa représentation» and «L'expression de l'affectivité et de la subjectivité dans le langage par le biais de la référence déictique, anaphorique et cataphorique»;

- meeting with the Coordinator of International Relations Office of the University of Zagreb and discussions on exchange of both students and teaching staff between Romania and Croatia;

- visit of the National Library of Zagreb and of the Department of Applied Modern Languages;

- presentation of the project objectives, results and activities and discussions about sharing didactic tools and bibliographical references;

- discussions about the importance of sharing teaching methodology, experience, and didactic supports; the participants underlined the specificities of every university of the partnership, they compared both educational systems, with their positive and negative aspects;

- exchange of books and didactic supports used by every partner;

The participants agreed with the importance of strengthening French for specific purposes teaching within the framework of students and teaching staff exchange programs: Erasmus, Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie, summer schools etc.

The participants in the scientific mission of cooperation wished to know specific needs and teaching methods of every partner, to share good practice, learning resources, pedagogical skill and teaching experiences in an interdisciplinary approach, aiming at important results for the French for specific purposes teaching in Central and Eastern Europe. The presentation of French for specific purposes training course concerning the development of learning materials awakened the interest of those Croatian teachers involved in French as a foreign language teaching who expressed their wish to take part in this activity.

The presentation and the comparative analysis of the French taught training in each partnership establishment highlighted a significant number of common elements at the level of aimed skills and learning contents.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the missions of scientific cooperation that took place within the framework of the francophone project "Strengthening of French Language and of Research in French for the non-specialist students in a multicultural and French-speaking environment" between November 2012 and April 2013, managed not only to make an enriching contribution to the practices, skills and knowledge exchanges, but they also allowed to strengthen the cooperation between the teachers and their universities that are partners in the project and to highlight the important role which the Francophonie plays in the linguistic and cultural exchange between students and teachers in Central and Eastern Europe, in the francophone network

created by the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie.

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