



Nieuwbrief November 2023

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Foto genomen tijdens het symposium in april 2023

Audrey on the last few weeks

Since my last post, we finished the first block of teaching and we started the second one. I talked earlier about our final assignment: a multilingual language teacher guide. Now it is time to reflect on the added value of this assignment and on how it could be improved. First of all, because it is not a standard assignment in academia, students needed to have clear instructions about what was expected. I couldn't provide them with a model as they are the first students to try out this type of assignment in my courses. However, I have been able to find existing teacher guides online and I have shown them the evaluation rubric. All in all, more time should have been spent on discussing this assignment in class. Next year, I am thinking of a different approach. I would like to show students a better model (I will be able to use this year's assignments) and I would like to have them hand in a first version earlier in the block so that they can get feedback. Second of all, I would like to rethink the multilingual component of the assignment. This year, I have asked them to write the assignment in English and to add a summary of the main points in their target languages. I would like to find a way in which it makes sense to write this language teacher guide in several languages.... If someone has an idea, let me know!



Despite these points of reflection for me, I have to say that they performed quite well on the assignment! They described effectively the context in which the teaching was taking place and who the learners were. Also, they reused the knowledge acquired in class to write advice on how these learners could be best taught. They supported their claims with sources (sometimes sources seen in class, sometimes new sources) and wrote ideas of activities that could be performed in class. The summaries in the target languages were quite complete! As an applied linguist, I like these assignments, in which you can apply science on something societally relevant. It's a keeper.



We are now in November, at the beginning of the second block in which we dive further into different learner profiles: young learners, teenage learners, older learners, heritage speakers and newcomers. We welcomed dr. Charlotte Gooskens and prof. Merel Keijzer as guest lecturers and we have more guests to come: dr. Josh Prada and prof. Marije Michel. It's great to hear researchers talk about their research. For the students, it is a great opportunity to meet the authors of the articles they read. My task in this block has been to think of activities that we can do multilingually and for which students need to apply the multilingual approaches seen in block 1: translanguaging, receptive multilingualism and mediation. That is how we ended up having group discussions in French and Spanish about policy making around issues on healthy aging. More about that in the next newsletter!



Interview with Aurélie Joubert

For this newsletter we asked Aurélie Joubert a few questions. Aurélie has worked for the university of Groningen since 2019 and is an assistant professor in language and society and French. She focuses among other things on language prestige, minority languages and French linguistics.

A part of her work is dedicated to the project [Baqonde](#), which aims to promote South-African minority and indigenous languages into higher education. Baqonde is an ongoing project which began in 2020 and is a collaboration between the university of Groningen, Trinity College Dublin, the university of Salamanca, North-West University, the university of the Western Cape, Rhodes University and the university of Kwazulu-Natal. To reach their goal the project focusses on two things: (1) training lecturers on how to integrate multilingualism in their teaching with for example the concept of translanguaging and (2) developing resources and materials for teacher in the minority and indigenous languages, see for example the [polokelo](#) platform.

While working on this project Aurélie gained various further insights into multilingualism. She realised that implementing minority and indigenous languages into higher education adds to the decolonisation process of academia as well as providing a way to reflect on multilingualism within Europe. Baqonde ensures that students in South-Africa have the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue and develop expert knowledge on the university level in that same language. In Europe we have a very different viewpoint on multilingualism. The project has helped Aurélie realise that while in Europe it is mostly a personal choice to be multilingual, while in South-African society it is a normal occurrence to speak in multiple languages in a day. In Europe it is common to think of languages as separate entities and categories, this results in the dividing of communities and their hierarchisation. In South-Africa this is more holistic and they are more fluid in their approach towards multilingualism.

LLT1 and LLT2 are the first courses at the RUG which implement multilingual approaches. One of the exercises students are doing is giving a presentation in their major language while simultaneously trying to get their point across by using gestures, imagery and other tools. This in particular is interesting to Aurélie and in the past she has taught a French class by incorporating movement. Moreover, implementing multilingual approaches gives students the chance to apply the rules explained in a book and theory to real life.



Aurélie also plans to do this in her own course, Language and Power, in the next semester. The plan is to start working with a student who took the course in the past to gain her input about how multilingualism would work for prospective students for this course, For now, it is likely that the reading portion of the class will be multilingual. Students are allowed to read materials in their major language as well as their native tongues. Aurélie hopes that this will widen the scope of the course and broaden the students' perspectives as well as have a decolonising effect. In class the reading will be discussed mostly in English, however, if there are enough speakers of a language, discussions can be held in the respective language. Aurélie hopes this will help students from different backgrounds merge together and connect in different languages and learn from a variety of language contexts.

In her opinion students can greatly benefit from a multilingual approach in higher education in general. Not only students in the language departments of the Faculty of Arts should be the beneficiary of multilingual approaches. Multilingual approaches can help break down barriers and help people realise that the barriers are not fixed in place. Multilingualism also ensures that students gain the possibility of learning in their native tongue, which has been proven to benefit students greatly. It also results in a common ground of shared experiences among people since language is not longer a dividing factor. By implementing a multilingual approach in education we can move forward from a mainly monolingual English context to a context in which we can evaluate sources from different languages as equal as sources in English. This in turn has the result that students who do not know English also get the chance to gain knowledge expertise in field that are traditionally only taught in English. Multilingual approaches also allow people the opportunity to look at their own language with a critical lens and be aware of the diversity around them.

In all this it is important to not only reflect on the position of the teacher but also take into account what the students have to say about it. A multilingual approach is all about breaking barriers and social hierarchies so we should aim to not let this be a top-down approach. To realise this teachers and other staff need to be in a conversation with students. We should not forget that the multilingual experience should be based on a practical approach instead of an ideological one. This helps students to develop their skills as well as broaden their horizon.



Activiteitentip:

Mini taalles in eigen taal:

Om elkaars talen te leren kennen is het fijn om een basis te hebben! We hebben onze studenten gevraagd om een mini taalles voor beginners voor te bereiden. We hebben dus in één sessie aandacht gehad voor 3 talen: Zweeds, Frans en Spaans. De studenten hebben goed moeten nadenken over wat ze wilden onderwijzen en op welke manier. Het heeft mooie minilessen opgeleverd met veel herhaling, liedjes en spelletjes. We hebben verbanden kunnen leggen tussen die talen en we hebben woorden herkend die op elkaar lijken of juist niet!

Meer weten?

Audrey Rouse-Malpat is te vinden op zowel [LinkedIn](#) als [Instagram](#) en natuurlijk de RUG-medewerkers [pagina](#).

Mocht u de vorige twee nieuwsbrieven willen lezen kunt u die onder deze [link](#) vinden.