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***Babylonia* as a resource for teacher trainers and students**

Experiences at the Department of Teaching and Learning (DFA) of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI)

The training of student teachers in the canton Ticino takes place at the Department of Teaching and Learning (DFA) of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI). The institute is rather small and the number of students of modern foreign languages is limited. Therefore, multilingual groups are formed, both for the training of teachers at the level of the scuola media and for groups at the liceo level. The students all have a university degree (master) and usually study to become teachers for two subjects, mostly two modern languages or Italian and another modern language. The promotion of plurilingualism is an important aspect of the institute's teaching philosophy. By teaching students in multilingual groups (French, German and English) we hope to create a better understanding and spirit of collaboration rather than of rivalry and competition once they start teaching.

Babylonia has been an important resource in our seminars. The school being quite small and resources rather limited (small library and few subscriptions to international journals) *Babylonia* articles are frequently used. All students receive a one-year free subscription and can now access the *Babylonia* password-protected website and archive of *Babylonia* articles, formerly provided by the trainers.

The multilingual perspective is one of the most positive aspects of our approach. We introduce the topic and give students relevant articles in different languages to study at home. During the seminars students exchange information from the various articles and present their findings before

receiving feedback from the trainers. This gives an interesting perspective. Just to mention the issue on the lexical approach with articles highlighting the implications of this approach not only for English but also for German and French. Also articles on the Common European Framework of Reference and the European Language Portfolio can easily be found in various issues of *Babylonia* and present different perspectives. Theories of language learning and teaching can be found as well as issues such as the use of the target language in the classroom with experiences from various countries in various languages. The special issues dedicated to such topics as reading, speaking, language teaching games etc. are also valuable resources for our courses.

We also encourage students to publish the results of their master thesis in *Babylonia*. However, this is not always easy since students are often no longer motivated to write for *Babylonia* once they have completed their studies and are fully taken by their new duties. However, over the past few years several students have contributed to *Babylonia*. Some examples include practical work on the lexical approach for French and English in *Babylonia* 3/2005; experiences with target language use in the classroom in 1/2009; use of lexical databases and electronic dictionaries in *Babylonia* 3/2005, the use of cribs in *Babylonia* 2/2002 or the didactic pages on task-based learning in *Babylonia* 3/2002.

It is not always possible – and not even desirable – to take everything from *Babylonia*, so articles from other journals such as *le Français dans le*

Monde, *Fremdsprache Deutsch* or *ELT Journal* or the resources of the ECML (www.ecml.at) in Graz are also used in our courses.

For our purposes the multilingual aspects are important. Occasionally the contents of articles in various languages in a special issue of *Babylonia* tend to overlap. This is, however, rather an advantage if the issues are used in the context of multilingual teacher education. In addition, it is important to find a “language balance” and provide the students of various languages regularly with articles written in the language for which they wish to become a teacher.

Finally I'd like to point out the *Babylonia* WebQuest site. An important element of our courses is the creation of a WebQuest, as an example of task-based learning in a digital environment (see the article on this topic in *Babylonia* 1/2002) or, more recently, literary WebQuests for students who prepare for the “liceo”. These WebQuest are all being published on the *Babylonia* WebQuest site. We used to work with the templates provided on the website, but more recently we have started to use the QuestGarden website in the US. However, we continue to publish the WebQuests by providing links on the *Babylonia* WebQuest site.

In conclusion, for our courses at the DFA/SUPSI, *Babylonia* provides a valuable resource of materials, easily accessible and generally appreciated by our students.

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