



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Language Policy Division
Division des Politiques linguistiques

Curriculum Framework for Romani

Seminar for practitioners and decision makers

REPORT

Strasbourg, 31 May and 1 June 2007

The Curriculum Framework for Romani

The Curriculum Framework for Romani (CFR) was developed for the Council of Europe by David Little and Barbara Lazenby Simpson in co-operation with the European Roma and Travellers Forum and with advice from a group of Roma experts¹. The CFR is available online, in Romani and English versions, on the website of the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division (www.coe.int/lang; section on "Minorities and Migrants").

The purpose of the seminar

The seminar was organised by the Language Policy Division in Strasbourg. Its purpose was to introduce the CFR to practitioners and decision makers concerned with the teaching and learning of Romani in a variety of educational contexts; to engage them in discussion of its possible applications; and to invite them to undertake small-scale pilot projects.

Participants

The seminar was animated by David Little and Barbara Lazenby Simpson, and attended by twenty practitioners and decision makers from ten countries. A list of participants is appended to this report.

Seminar programme

David Little opened the seminar by relating the CFR to the work of the Language Policy Division, especially the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. He outlined the CEFR's action-oriented approach to the description of language use and introduced the common reference levels of second/foreign language proficiency, which the participants explored in workshop activities.

Barbara Lazenby Simpson then introduced the CFR, emphasizing both its close relation to and its difference from the CEFR and illustrating some of the many interconnections between

¹ Miranda Vuolasranta (Finland), Mihaela Zatreanu (Romania), Angelina Dimiter-Taikon (Sweden), Liliana Kovatcheva (Bulgaria), Ulli Pawlata (Austria) and Helena Sadilkova (Czech Republic).

proficiency levels, themes and communicative situations. In a second presentation she argued that a Romani curriculum based on the CFR should

- develop learners' awareness of the broader Romani-speaking community (in other countries, areas etc.);
- promote respect for the historical and cultural aspects of the Roma way of life (*Romanipe* in particular);
- engage parents, other family members and the larger community as much as possible;
- use and strengthen the strong oral tradition of the Roma people;
- build strong connections between past and present and inspire interest and pride in the Roma heritage;
- encourage learners to use technology in the course of their learning (audio and video recording, IT, internet, e-mail etc.);
- use interesting and authentic learning activities to support engagement with the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing;
- show clearly the relationship between learning the language and using it in daily life.

David Little opened the second day of the seminar by outlining five possible ways of using the CFR in pilot projects:

- to develop a Romani curriculum for a particular group of learners;
- to develop learning materials for Romani;
- to design and teach a Romani course in school;
- to design an out-of-school Romani course, perhaps for parents;
- to design and organise seminars to familiarize teachers of Romani with the CFR.

The participants then worked in groups to discuss these and other possibilities. In the final session of the seminar participants from each country represented at the seminar declared their intention of undertaking a CFR-related pilot project.

Proposed actions at national level

Sweden

Plans

Promoting the project will begin with presentations to Roma teachers. A one-day seminar will present the action-oriented approach and the Curriculum Framework for Romani. Participants may volunteer to carry out pilot projects and these volunteers will attend a second seminar focusing on actions for the pilots.

It is hoped to have five pilot projects.

Suitable teaching materials already exist and can be used. The pilot projects will examine both the materials and teaching methods in relation to:

- Use in the classroom
- Use on a teaching website
- Use in distance learning (3 groups)

A book produced by Roma materials writers will be introduced into the pilots.

In a pre-school teaching context in Malmo, the focus will be on the identification of themes appropriate to this age group.

Support needs

It will be necessary to have a small booklet, which explains this perspective on teaching and learning, for presentation to parents.

Finland

Plans

It is intended to continue with publishing activities.

Teacher guides to the Roma language now exist for the lower grades. These will be sent to colleagues in Sweden for feedback and, if appropriate, may be shared more widely.

It is hoped that further pilot projects will be organised. While the National Board of Education is more involved with curriculum and teaching in Finland, the Ministry of Education will be contacted and informed about the framework.

Teachers – Miranda had already arranged to meet teachers and intended presenting the approach and the framework to them.

Finnish colleagues would like to exchange experiences with others, for example through setting up a group initially to organise cooperation. This would also allow for materials to be exchanged and, possibly, produced jointly.

Challenges

Organisation of these activities may be difficult as the Roma population in Finland is small and there will be a lack of people available to work on the project.

“The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

It will be necessary to have a letter of recommendation from the Council of Europe in order to introduce this framework.

However, the timing of the activity is good as a new curriculum is currently being prepared and this includes the Romani language.

The Curriculum Framework for Romani will be promoted in the Ministry of Education and the ideas contained in it will be brought into the work of the Ministry.

If the framework curriculum and the action-oriented approach are accepted by the Ministry, then it will be necessary to train teachers in its use.

It will also be necessary to make a presentation for parents of Roma pupils in order to gain their interest and support. Therefore, some information and publicity will be necessary to accompany the curriculum in order to attract positive interest and to emphasise that it is part of a transnational project.

Teachers will be encouraged to use the curriculum to develop materials and, at a later point, there will be an evaluation of its effectiveness both for teachers and pupils.

Support needs

In order to promote the framework in the Ministry, it will be necessary to provide training for staff there.

It will also be necessary to translate the CFR so that it can be presented effectively.

Czech Republic

The timing of the framework is perfect as the Ministry of Education has plans to introduce Romani into the schools.

Preliminary steps have been taken already.

The Ministry's plan is as follows:

The goal is to introduce Romani at the end of pre-primary and beginning of primary schooling as a tool for teaching and as a subject at primary school level, where desired.

There are three phases to this plan:

1. Research – the identification of localities, teachers and materials
2. Teaching in 8 – 10 schools and adjusting materials in the light of experience
3. Evaluation of the plan, possibilities of further development

The cooperation of this group would be welcomed.

A pilot project could follow a similar path to that proposed by colleagues in Sweden:

- Introduce the Curriculum Framework for Romani as a new tool to those teachers already working with Romani in schools
- Gather feedback from the teachers
- Ask teachers to prepare a lesson or two on a theme, at a particular level
- Follow this activity with seminars to disseminate and further develop materials

An introduction to Romani for teachers with Roma pupils is also planned. This is a type of “survival Romani course”, oriented at specific topics and “school language”.

Support needs

Colleagues from the Czech Republic invited an exchange of available teaching materials as well as exchange of experiences with the introduction of Romani into schools and its teaching regarding problems that others have experienced in their respective countries. They would like to receive feedback on how courses and materials are developing in other countries.

International exchanges between teachers of Romani are desirable as a tool for motivating the teachers and helping them gather experience and inspiration.

In order to support the idea of teaching Romani at schools, support from the CoE and its CFR experts will be needed:

- To support the plan for the introduction of Romani at the ministerial level, indicating that the plan is a part of a wider European scheme
- To stir a public debate on the issue (support material - summarized information of the CEFRL, CFR, CoE policy on language teaching, press statements, interviews, etc)
- To disseminate information on the teaching methodology that is introduced in the CFR (with reference to available material to demonstrate how to work with the framework, possible teacher training seminars with international participation, or presence of people with practical experience with the CEFRL at local teacher training seminar
- Consultation with relevant experts on the development of the pilot project and the development of the teaching materials in the course of the project

Slovenia

A curriculum has already been developed for Romani language, culture and history.

Parts of this may be extracted to fit into the Curriculum Framework for Romani.

The Framework will be forwarded to the Ministry of Education where there is an active policy related to the education of Roma children. Roma children are obliged to learn the Romani language.

Seminars will be organised for both Roma and non-Roma teachers. Later, information will be provided to the media.

Serbia

The concentration of Roma population is high.

There is informal educational plan and programme for subject entitled “Roma Language with Elements of the National Culture”.

Romani is taught in grades 1 to 8:

The different pilot projects employ mediators to help teachers to understand culture and the language used by Roma children.

It will be important to have seminars with teachers to prepare them to teach Romani and this should include the teaching of Romani as a foreign language.

All issues raised at this meeting in Strasbourg will be taken to the Ministry.

Support needs

Transnational support and assistance would be beneficial, particularly between Serbia and other countries in neighbouring.

There are, however, no official books, materials or didactic material.

The challenge is how to organise seminars for teachers and to make the teaching programmes a reality.

There is a need for a team of experts at European level to work with a group of qualified teachers of Roma to establish criteria for teaching.

Romania

It will be possible to deal with many issues in Romania.

Eight seminars will be held with teachers of Romani and, at these, the Curriculum Framework for Romani will be presented and the link between this and teaching materials will be studied.

The document will also be analysed at summer schools.

In September, students taking distance learning courses will discuss the document.

It will be taken to the National Institute for Curriculum to see if there is a need to develop the existing national programme in relation to the curriculum framework.

Work on new materials may be done to help to improve the programmes.

At present the courses are as follows:

1st year - focus on new vocabulary

2nd year - start to write

3rd year → improve vocabulary and grammar

It is also envisaged to identify the common basis in the Curriculum Framework for Romani and introduce this as a common language so that, by working together, it will give the Romani language a stronger basis as a European language, which will also give it a more serious position at national level.

It will be necessary to prepare everybody who is using the Common Framework for Romani so that it is implemented in the best possible way.

Germany

The Ministries in Germany will be informed about the Curriculum Framework for Romani, where the Charter will also be taken very seriously.

Contacts will be made in Bremen and Hamburg regarding establishing and developing the learning of the Romani language. Skilled Roma adults will be sought in these cities as prospective teachers for Roma and Sinti children.

Support from the European Roma and Traveller Forum would be appreciated in order to get Roma and Sinti people involved in this.

Bulgaria

The following stages will be implemented:

1. The existing curriculum will be examined and adapted
2. Books will be produced to reflect the adaptations
3. Training and qualifications for teachers who will teach Romani as a Mother Tongue will reflect the Curriculum Framework.

Support will be sought from Roma NGOs and Roma politicians in the parliament.

There is an obstacle in relation to kindergarten pupils as the teaching of Romani is forbidden there. It will be necessary to influence policy makers.

A curriculum for Romani for grades 5 – 8 will be developed. The Curriculum Framework for Romani will be introduced to the team who are responsible for this new curriculum.

The Curriculum Framework for Romani will be introduced to university level students.

The action-oriented approach will be introduced to students and to Romani teachers.

All the above actions will be tested in practice in the school system.

Poland

It will be necessary to create a task force for the Romani language curriculum

It must become an official issue.

A municipality will have to be identified for a small pilot.

Study visiting would be effective and it will be necessary to recommend this in an official letter.

Discussions will begin with Roma teaching assistants – the annual workshop provides a possible opportunity for this.

As many examples of material as possible will be gathered together.

Roma assistants will be sent on teaching courses in two years time.

It will be important to show Roma people who serious the language is so that it becomes part of all school agendas.

Schedule for pilot projects

A reporting template, shaped in part by the action plans, will be sent to participants in September 2007. The first phase of piloting will run from September to December 2007 and reports will be sent to the Language Policy Division in January 2008. The second phase of piloting will run from January to March 2008 and reports will be presented at a follow-up seminar, probably in the second half of April 2008.

David Little

Appendix

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