

Global Communication: Practices and Policy in Higher Education
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STUDENTS'
EXPERIENCE WITH
THE TRILINGUAL
PROGRAM

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Structure of the talk

- Introduction: The TLP Program
- The Survey
- Obstacles for TLP students
- Curriculum and Targets
- Considerations

Introduction: The Trilingual Program (TLP)

- TLP is a program in the Junior Division of the College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Tokyo.
- TLP started in 2013.
- Objectives: to meet the requirements of globalization and promote plurilingual education.
- Students study English and a 3rd language (for at least 3 semesters).
- Only top 10% of students (score in the English entrance exam) can participate in the TLP.

Introduction: The Trilingual Program (TLP)

The 3rd languages offered currently are:

- Chinese (since 2013)
- French, German and Russian (since 2016)
- Korean (since 2018)
- Spanish (from 2019)

Introduction: The Trilingual Program (TLP)

Curriculum:

- 3rd languages: 5 classes/week during the 1st semester, 4 classes/week during the 2nd semester, and 3 classes/week during the 3rd semester
- English: 2 classes/week during the 1st and 2nd semesters (including the academic writing classes ALESA/ALESS and the speaking class FLOW)

Introduction: The Trilingual Program (TLP)

Successful TLP completion requires students:

- to maintain an at least 80% score in the required 3rd language classes
- to stay among the top 10% of students of English or obtain 7.0 IELTS

Introduction: Number of Students

Ratio of Humanities/Science students at the beginning and at the end of the program

French, German, Russian	1st cohort						2nd cohort					
	2016 1 st sem.		2016 2 nd sem.		2017 3 rd sem.		2017 1 st sem.		2017 2 nd sem.		2018 3 rd sem.	
	Hum	Sc	Hum	Sc	Hum	Sc	Hum	Sc	Hum	Sc	Hum	Sc
Enrolled	37	46	8	2	4	3	37	44	5	5	2	3
Dropped out	9	9	3	16	1	4	11	12	7	2	n/a	n/a
Finished 3 rd language successfully					35	21					n/a	n/a
Obtained TLP certificate					31	18					22	28

The Survey: Reasons Behind

Humanities vs. Science students

	2016	2017		2017	2018	
	Participants	Program completed (certificate)	Program not completed	Participants	Program completed (certificate)	Program not completed
Humanities	49	31	18 (37%)	44	22	22 (50%)
Science	51	18	33 (65%)	52	28	24 (46%)

The Survey: Content

Developed in collaboration with Qian Wang from Chinese TLP and Julien Agaesse from French TLP

- General data (which 3rd language, year at university, current status related to TLP)
- Reasons for entering TLP
- Reasons for choosing the particular language
- Motivating and demotivating experiences
 - *Experiences with the overseas trip*
 - *Obstacles the students faced*
- Free comments and suggestions

The Survey: Format

- 22 questions: multiple-choice, multiple-answer, and open-ended questions
- Survey Monkey platform
- 10 minutes of a respondent's time
- Between October 15 and 27, 2017
- 160 responses
- Completion rate at 93%

The Survey: Demographics

Year		Language	
1 st year	81 (50.5%)	Chinese	21 (26%)
		French	26 (32%)
		German	19 (23%)
		Russian	15 (19%)
2 nd year	67 (42%)	Chinese	15 (22%)
		French	16 (24%)
		German	24 (36%)
		Russian	12 (18%)
3 rd year	8 (5%)	Chinese	8 (100%)
4 th year	4 (2.5%)	Chinese	4 (100%)

All TLP Students/Survey Respondents Ratio (S-Semester 2016 through A-semester 2017)

TLP students at the time of the survey	Total # of 1 st & 2 nd year TLP students ≈ 310		# of respondents 148 (48%)
1 st year students	all	≈ 150	81 (54%)
	Chinese	≈ 60	21 (35%)
	French	42	26 (62%)
	German	32	19 (60%)
	Russian	17	15 (88%)
2 nd year students	all	162	67 (41%)
	Chinese	63	15 (24%)
	French	45	16 (36%)
	German	36	24 (67%)
	Russian	18	12 (67%)

The Survey: Reasons for Language Choice

- Future possibilities and career
- Interest in the country (culture and cultural image, academic interest)
- Interest in the language (linguistic interest, previous knowledge of the language, similarity to 1st or 2nd language)
- Social influence
- Classes' features and overseas trip

The Survey: Major Reasons for Language Choice

- Chinese → Future possibilities and career
 - French → Future possibilities and career
 - German → Academic interest
 - Russian → Culture
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- We think that this reflects the general image of the countries and languages in the society.

The Survey: Overseas Trip

- Experienced as a highlight of the program
- Provides opportunity to communicate with native speakers outside the classroom
- Develop a personalized image of the countries and their people and overcome preconceptions
- Some students suggested introducing additional opportunities to study abroad into the program

The Survey: Motivating Factors

Top three choices:

- The overseas trip offered by the TLP program
- Students' realization of their improved skills (both in tests and communication)
- Being surrounded by engaged classmates

The Survey: Demotivating Factors

- Inability to participate in the overseas trip
- Demotivating behaviour of classmates/classmates having to leave the program
- Positioning of the TLP program (→Science students cannot use their credits effectively or have to prioritize experiments etc. over TLP)
- Difficulties to cope with the content of the program due to both internal and external obstacles

The Survey: Obstacles

Are/Were there any obstacles for you to learn efficiently under the TLP program?

Are/were there any obstacles?	Total 154 (100%)	Chinese 44 (100%)	French 41 (100%)	German 42 (100%)	Russian 27 (100%)
No obstacles	33 (21%)	13 (30%)	7 (17 %)	10 (24%)	3 (11%)
Obstacles	121 (79%)	31 (70%)	34 (83%)	32 (76%)	24 (89%)

The Survey: Obstacles related to ...

■ Program external factors:

- High workload/tight schedule because of other academic obligations (35%) and/or club activities (bukatsu) (28%)
- Schedule (high number of classes and early/late classes) (55%)

■ Program internal factors:

- Maintaining a high score in English or passing the IELTS exam (31%)
- Too many TLP classes (12%)

External factors: How to overcome the time-related problems of the science students?

- We cannot change the schedule or the academic/non-academic duties of the TLP students.
- It is difficult to introduce different targets for Humanities/Science students because they take joint classes.
- Do we have to accept that some TLP students have to give up?
or
- Should we lower the pressure by adapting our learning targets/educational objectives?

TLP Targets

English:

- IELTS score 7 or higher (= C1 of CEFR)

3rd language:

- A2 of CEFR or higher for all students
- B1 of CEFR for the best students

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

“The CEFR

- adopts an **action-oriented approach**, describing language learning outcomes in terms of language use, [...]
- divides language activities into four kinds: **reception** (listening and reading), **production** (spoken and written), **interaction** (spoken and written), and **mediation** (translating and interpreting), [...]
- For **reception, production, interaction**, and some competences the CEFR defines six common reference levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2), using “can do” descriptors to define the learner/user’s proficiency at each level.”

(European Language Portfolio on the Website of the Council of Europe)

The CEFR Levels

Three groups of language users:

- Basic Users (levels A1 and A2)
- Independent Users (B1 and B2)
- Proficient Users (C1 and C2)



“Can do” descriptors for A2 and B1

(<https://tracktest.eu/english-levels-cefr/>)

A2

- ✓ Can understand sentences in areas of most immediate relevance:

Very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment.

- ✓ Can communicate in simple and routine tasks on familiar and routine matters.
- ✓ Describe in simple terms matters in areas of immediate need.

B1

- ✓ Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in the area.
- ✓ Produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest.
- ✓ Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and give reasons/ explanations for opinions /plans.

Number of lessons needed to reach A2/B1

Teaching units (TU = 45 minutes) suggested for the CEFR levels		Teaching units in the TLP program (105 minutes each)	
A2	B1	grammar: 52	intensive/practice: 117
200-350 TU	350-600 TU	≈ 121 TU	≈ 273 TU
		≈ 394 TU	

What is the best solution?

Current situation:

- For students who have enough time beside their other subjects, B1 is challenging but possible.
- For other students it might be frustrating to aim at B1 without reaching it.
- Is this satisfying, or should the TLP program have its own individual target for all its students?
- If so, what could this target be?

What is the best solution?

- Is it possible to define a TLP specific target level A2+, in which the “+” contains material that is chosen independently of the CEFR descriptors, tailored to the particular interests of the Japanese students instead?
- Besides the action-oriented approach of the CEFR, additional focus could be on cultural aspects.
- Situations that are part of the B1 descriptors but not likely to be experienced by Japanese students (e.g., administration, work) could be neglected.

Internal factors: English in the TLP Program

Requirement: to maintain a high score in the English classes or obtain C1.

Two types of comments:

- **Group 1:** Excited to dedicate all their energy to the learning of their 3rd language (think of English requirements as a burden)
- **Group 2:** Want more English as part of the program, namely classes designed specifically for TLP students (as they are the top 10%)

Considerations

- An English class targeted for TLP students that helps them prepare for the C1 exam which is a requirement of the TLP program.
- Otherwise the goal may be lowered to B2.



Concluding Remarks

- Adopting an integrative approach to alleviate obstacles and promote motivation
- Reevaluating the positioning of the TLP requirements within the CEFR framework
- Supporting the students' learning (towards C1) of English

References and Links

- Golovina, Ksenia, Ingrid Kaufmann, Julien Agaesse, and Qian Wang. Students' Experience with the Trilingual Program: A Survey Report. *Eruditi: The CGCS Journal of Language Research and Education* 2, 1-24, 2018.
- CEFR, Council of Europe:
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio/the-common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching-assessment-cefr>
- CEFR language levels: <https://tracktest.eu/english-levels-cefr/>

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Thank you for your attention.