The ENROPE Project for Junior Researchers in the Field of Plurilingualism and Education – An Introduction

The ENROPE Group[1]

What the ENROPE project is about

European societies of today are characterised by a growing diversity of languages, cultural preferences and backgrounds, as well as by dynamic shifts regarding socioeconomic opportunities and participation. Education towards plurilingualism, therefore, is at the very heart of European integration, and it is closely linked with the strife for socioeconomic well-being and political and cultural equity. However, foreign language education has largely remained a field characterised by the contexts of national cultures, national research traditions and national educational systems. The notion of teaching different languages as single and separate systems is largely unquestioned as are local language teaching policies and practices. Newcomers to the field and especially researchers who enter the field at the early stages of their careers find it in a paradoxically monolingual state. The ENROPE project (European Network for Junior Researchers in the Field of Plurilingualism and Education)[2] that is presented in this article operates at the interface of language education research, language teaching, and professional development. Its key objective is to encourage educational researchers and, vice-versa, language teachers and other educators with an interest in research to engage in a more plurilingual mindset and to develop a professional habitus that reflects language education research and teaching in the light of societal multilingualism and individual plurilingualism. ENROPE promotes inquiry-based and research-related classroom development that is sensitive to the linguistic ecology of classrooms and their environments as a means of promoting high-quality and innovative language teaching. As an overall result, ENROPE aims to establish a sustainable network for junior researchers in foreign and further language education and promotes the development of strong professional identities. This article provides an overview of the ENROPE project, its aims and its networking and professional development tools.

ENROPE is an international, cooperative project aiming to provide high-quality qualification and networking structures for researchers in the field of plurilingualism, language education and related issues such as translingual practices and multilingual affordances in different (educational) contexts.[3] To keep such research alive and give it a new, critical impetus, it is crucially important to create focused and sustainable structures for international exchange and collaboration. Especially for early-career researchers who are interested in issues such as plurilingualism and identity in foreign and further language education, opportunities to collaborate are vital.

The project was developed from within the international LANGSCAPE research network, which has been engaging in plurilingualism, language education and language learning since 1998, for instance through international plurilingual conferences and publications, blended learning activities, doctoral workshops and bilateral PhD opportunities.[4] ENROPE operates at the interface of language education research, language teaching, and professional development in order to advance more plurilingual mindsets and practices in education and research. In aiming to foster reflective professional and researcher identities, ENROPE offers an Intensive Study Programme (ISP) which provides researchers with opportunities for transborder collaboration, networking, and professional qualification. The ISP consists of three annual Intensive Study Weeks (ISW) from 2019 to 2021, linked and enhanced through regular Online Study Phases (OSP); i.e. ENROPE also provides digital resources such as a website and an integrated e-portfolio designed to enhance reflection and dialogue among researchers, thus keeping ENROPE networking activities, linked, dynamic, and sustainable.

All activities and products are based to two strands of language policies, one to guide language choices related to the ENROPE platform and products, and the other related to communication during interactive project events. The latter is reflected in the 'linguistic housekeeping' document, which is a dynamic document created and further developed by the participants of the Intensive Study.[5]

The nine ENROPE partner institutions work on different Intellectual Outputs (IOs). IO 1 is an Online Platform serving as the central hub of the wide and diverse network that ENROPE is building up. The platform offers online spaces and tools for international field-specific collaboration. One of these tools is the e-Portfolio (IO 2), designed as a means to engage in meaningful professional self-reflection. An accompanying Qualification Handbook (IO 3) is being created, which includes a comprehensive description of the holistic model of competencies and notions underlying the portfolio. These IOs will be detailed in the following sections.

IO 1: Online Platform

The platform serves as the central hub of the project for junior researchers participating in the programme. It provides tools for e-learning activities, communication, and cross-border collaboration in the field of plurilingualism and education. By offering spaces for communication, eventually in various European languages, the platform fosters experiences of trans-lingual/-cultural learning. The platform further functions as a network organizer for all current and future participants – also beyond their initial participation in the project – by allowing them to maintain an individual academic profile and to present themselves to the professional community, establish new links, work together, and share resources. It also serves as an interface for stakeholders beyond the academic realm, e.g. teachers,

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[3] See https://enrope.eu

[4] See https://langscape.hu-berlin.de/en/about

[5] See https://enrope.eu/language-policy

teacher trainers, school administrators as well as policy-makers who engage with research or researchers that deal with more than one language.

The platform features components such as general project information, reports about project meetings, training activities, multiplier events and a multilingual annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography[6] serves to make publications in different languages more visible and thus helping researchers to broaden their knowledge base beyond English as the most commonly used language in international academia. This is intended to grow with the help of the wider multilingual research community beyond the duration of the project. The bibliography allows users to contact the annotator of each entry for further information. Besides, IO 1 contains e-learning modules to interact through various content types like pages, articles, files, resources, discussion boards and tasks. Some are publicly available, whilst for others readers need to register to view content.

IO 2: e-Portfolio

Portfolios have long been implemented as learning and assessment tools for language learners and for pre-service and practising language teachers (cf. Bellingrodt 2011; Gödecke 2020). Drawing on this knowledge and experience, the innovation of the project lies in the creation of a developmental e-portfolio for junior researchers in the field of plurilingualism and education who wish to

a) monitor and actively reflect on their progress during the training activities and also engage in portfolio work on a regular basis to interact with a community of language researchers/ teachers across diverse cultural and academic backgrounds;

b) make reflection integral to their professional identities as language researchers;

c) use this online space to build a collection of their achievements throughout their professional development.

The ENROPE e-Portfolio enables users to engage in synchronous and asynchronous work with partners and research groups from the ENROPE Network. The e-Portfolio serves as a tool that encourages ongoing reflection on multifaceted phases of the research process in an attempt to help researchers gain a holistic view of the research enterprise and empower them to develop their own research philosophy. As a rationale, the e-Portfolio provides a modus operandi for self-exploration on the multiple layers of professional identity and supports professional development through engagement in continuous reflection, monitoring of progress, strategic planning, and self-evaluation. The e-Portfolio provides a hub and an experiential domain for the junior researchers to build on their professional identities confidently relying on evidence-based and self-gathered data. Towards this end, it adopts a collaborative approach that emphasizes authentic networking, i.e. it serves as an agora rather than a repository.

The e-Portfolio consists of three parts:

a) Autobiography: Personalized digital space for reflecting upon one's own language learning biography, transcultural experiences, professional trajectories, linguistic awareness, etc.;

b) Competencies: Personalized digital space for (joint) reflection and growth of competencies across the major key notions of IO 3; a tool for mapping one's individual can-do's and for self-assessment of individual competency achievement;

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[6] See https://enrope.eu/annotated-bibliography

    c) Showcase: Personalized digital space for building a collection of academic products (i.e. presentations, posters, abstracts, publications, CVs) to be shared with a wider community of researchers and other interested parties.

In all three parts of the e-Portfolio, registered users are provided with tasks that stimulate a reflective response across a variety of competencies and areas of professional development. At the same time, users are encouraged to engage in feedback processes. Hence, tasks are designed as collaborative activities for collecting and reflecting, demonstrating and sharing illustrations of the users' professional identity development.

The e-Portfolio is integrated into IO 1 (Online Platform). Its content draws on the competency model developed as part of IO 3 (Qualification Handbook).

IO 3: Qualification Handbook

The Qualification Handbook is envisaged as a tool for research supervisors, strategic staff at Higher Education (Post-)Graduate Schools, and academic staff involved in this area. It will be available form autumn 2021 and will offer various pathways towards self-reflection (e.g. plurilingual awareness). Topics for reflection are multidimensional as they concern plurilingualism in connection with research topics and methods, but also epistemology and ideology such as attitudes and practices within the researchers' particular field, and as citizens in the multilingual Europe of today. By promoting this kind of reflection, IO 3 strengthens the key innovative potential of ENROPE and contributes to its overall aim to foster the personal growth of emerging (and established) researchers within a European as well as global perspective and with a strong focus on citizenship and social equity. The Qualification Handbook can be considered as the conceptual essence of ENROPE's training activities and of its other IOs. The Handbook will contain seven chapters (subject to change):

1. Preface: The preface explains the central aims and objectives of ENROPE.
2. Competency Model: The ENROPE Competency Model presents a competency profile for plurilingually aware and self-reflective researchers in the field of foreign language education, and other fields. The model aims at professional agency (cf. van Jimenez Raya 2017, Lier 2018, Yashima 2013) so that language teachers and junior researchers are able to make choices regarding their career, to act in accordance with their own professional vision, professional identity and values, and to become agents of change in their professional contexts. The ENROPE Competency Model defines the competences that are considered instrumental to meet the demands and challenges of increasingly plurilingual and multicultural research and educational contexts. It builds on a model by Legutke/Schart (2016) that defines the professional competence of language teachers based on four categories: language and culture, teaching and learning, cooperation and development, identity and role. These categories are specified by suitable components of the *Researcher Development Framework* (Vitae Group 2010), such as professional and career development, communication and dissemination, networking, knowledge and beliefs, personal qualities, or engagement.
3. Key notions: The target competences have been systematised in 15 key notions which the ENROPE Group consider essential for the scientific debate on plurilingualism and for which we wanted to develop a common understanding: agency; autonomy; collaboration; culture; diversity; education; educational culture(s); identity; language(s) (home-, school-, own-languages immersion); mediation; pluri-, multi-, translingualism, translanguaging, translingual teaching; reflective practice; role(s); self-reflection and meta-reflection; social and individual representations.

4. Model curriculum: The activities and tools of the ISWs and the OSPs are documented in a chart and related to the target competences.

5. Activities and tools: A detailed and systematic description of activities, we tried out during ISWs and OSPs. These including rationales and examples and will be made available for colleagues to use. Evaluation: All participants of the different activities of the ENROPE programme are invited to express their feedback via questionnaires. The results are used continuously for all further project planning. This chapter aims to summarise the overall evaluation results.

6. Transferability to other educational fields: The chapter provides an analysis of the transferability potential of the training and qualification programme developed by ENROPE as well as recommendations and tools for its adaptation to other educational fields.

Perspectives

This introduction to the ENROPE project for Junior Researchers in the Field of Plurilingualism and Education offers a first insight into the cornerstones of the programme.

By the end of its EU-funded lifetime in summer 2021, all results and products will be shared with the wider public. During its lifetime, ENROPE continues to welcome participants to our on-going activities and to collaboratively shape the dialogue. Up-to-date information is provided at https://enrope.eu. All researchers interested in the work of ENROPE are welcome to contact us.[7]

Acknowledgements and a personal afterword

As a group of researchers collaborating in ENROPE, we can say that many of us have been able to experience a renewed sense of belonging through reflecting on language repertoires, researcher identities, the multilingual nature of the research process and respective challenges. This emerging research community is likely to last beyond the project and shape international collaboration by "being connected with others to discuss relevant and inspiring questions. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic." (Participant in the Online Study Phase, spring 2020).

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7   See: https://enrope.eu/contact

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