

*Enhancing language learning in multilingual higher education:
subject classes, language classes and student life
at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano*

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Multilingual universities where different subjects are taught in different languages, as is the case at the trilingual Free University of Bozen/Bolzano (FUB), face the challenge of supporting students' language learning and use before and during their studies.

To reach this goal, a wide variety of foreign language classes (general language, LSP, academic writing etc.) has therefore to be offered by the Language Centre; furthermore, subject matter classes have to be designed in such a way that they enhance and reinforce students' language proficiency without language being an obstacle to content comprehension, especially for first year students.

Language learning, however, goes way beyond classroom instruction: autonomous learning and social interaction outside the institution are vital elements for L2 progress and should therefore be integrated with the uppermost consideration into a multilingual university's language planning.

Taking such issues as a starting point, the paper sketches the development of the FUB since its creation in 1997; it then focusses on the activities of an interfaculty Language Workgroup which was set up in 2004 to analyse the multilingual orientation of the university at the three levels of a) language classes offer, b) content and language integration and c) autonomous learning.

Specific measures to enhance language learning and communication taken so far, as well as initiatives to be implemented over the next academic years, will be presented and discussed; among them, a vademecum for students, semi-structured and self-organized free time activities, all of which were discussed and worked out together with students.

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