

Languages in Education
Languages for Education



Language Policy Division

LANGUAGES OF SCHOOLING AND THE RIGHT TO PLURILINGUAL AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

Intergovernmental Conference

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REPORT

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PART ONE: CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

This event followed two conferences held in 2006 (Strasbourg) and 2007 (Prague) which launched the project on 'languages in education – languages for education' and reported on its progress, including the intention to develop a web-based 'Platform' of resources and references. This 2009 conference presented the culmination of the first phase of the project and addressed key issues related to the language(s) of schooling. It had four key aims:

- i) to develop further understanding of plurilingual and intercultural education as a right, particularly in relation to the use of descriptors in the context of the languages of schooling and the needs of disadvantaged learners
- ii) to launch the Platform in its first phase to support the development of plurilingual and intercultural education
- iii) to determine how participants will be able to contribute to the development of the project after the conference
- iv) to formulate concrete resolutions related to the realisation and future development of the project.

The conference benefited from the large number of presentations providing case studies and examples from a wide range of countries and regions. This inevitably limited the amount of time available for general discussion and input but the diversity was very enriching. Some key themes emerged from the conference:

- reaffirmation of the centrality of values with particular emphasis on the right to a quality education and the role descriptors can play in furthering that goal
- further recognition of the importance of addressing the needs of disadvantaged learners and of the importance of descriptors in helping to identify those needs and in making systems more transparent
- commitment to the importance of developing further work on the relationship between language as subject and language in other subjects
- acknowledgement of the importance of the Platform as a focus for dialogue and sharing, and as a means to provide practical support for curriculum development
- sharing of ideas for future developments both in relation to the Platform itself and associated activities.

I. Education as a right: the role of descriptors

The centrality of values has always been an important element of the work on languages of schooling. The promotion of human rights and democracy is central to the mission of the Council of Europe, and the development of competence in the language of schooling is essential to ensuring the right to education for all through equal access to the curriculum. This conference however developed these ideas further by addressing ways in which general values can be translated into concrete practice through the use of descriptors. In the course of the different presentations, case studies and group work a number of issues associated with descriptors were addressed related to their purposes, uses, advantages, pitfalls and formulation.

Traditionally descriptors have been associated with assessment often in the form of performance 'standards'. This is a legitimate aspect of their use but it was recognised by several contributions and in the course of the group work discussion that this is not their only function nor is it necessarily the most important one. It is necessary also to consider the relationship between descriptors and educational *provision*, including specifically classroom teaching. This link is not always made when the emphasis is exclusively on assessment. Outcome statements for assessment purposes may carry *implications* for teaching but it helps to make these explicit. This is evident in the following example provided during the presentation based on the questionnaire. The descriptor relates to oral competence and states what the learner should be able to do, i.e.

"present results of in-depth studies on three selected topics: an author, a literary theme and a language topic".

This descriptor may be taken to *imply* that the learner needs to be taught presentation skills in order to satisfy this requirement but the implication alone may not be sufficient to guarantee the right of learners to certain types of content, learning experiences and teaching. This example is particularly pertinent because oral ability is often a function of the learners' social experiences outside the context of formal school; if pupils are assessed on what they have not been taught, this may provide advantages to some pupils and disadvantage others. Descriptors have an important role to play therefore in making more transparent what the learners' rights are in the context of the language of schooling.

It was also recognised that descriptors may be used by different groups and for different purposes, for example by policy makers, teachers, parents, pupils and writers of text books. They can be used in curriculum and syllabus design because they focus attention on competences and skills, not just content and knowledge. They may be useful in day-to-day teaching to ensure breadth and balance in the curriculum provision and to help sequence learning activities. They can provide a focus for summative and formative assessment. Pupils may also use them for the purposes of self-assessment and to track their own progress.

Descriptors therefore have a number of uses and advantages but several speakers drew attention to the potential pitfalls and complexities in developing and using descriptors. There are inevitably tensions involved in analysing a complex whole into constituent parts but such analysis is necessary, despite the risks, in order to translate broad values and principles into concrete operations. The move from a broad to a more detailed and specific description of learning goals may result in important elements being lost. Aspects implicit in the broad concept (for example, taking genuine enjoyment in reading) may be ignored such that teaching, as a result, may become episodic and mechanistic. One way to avoid this is to involve teachers in the course of training sessions in the interpretation of descriptors and in discussion of how they should be used in practice. Laila Aase illustrated the challenge of fully representing the complexity of reading competence in brief descriptors. Even very young readers need to cope with complex demands related for example not just to combining sounds into words but also applying strategies to understand what is being read by drawing on personal experience. This is one of the key challenges: descriptors need to be short enough to be useable but may be in danger of oversimplifying the learning outcomes and processes if expressed too succinctly.

A strong theme which emerged from the group discussion was that some important aspects in language as subject and other subjects (such as creativity, pleasure in reading, aesthetic awareness) may be less easily formulated as descriptors, but nevertheless teachers need to keep them in mind in the process of teaching and learning. The presentation by Gisella Langé reminded the conference that this is the European year of Creativity and Innovation and the question arises whether aspects such as creativity and innovation might also be included in the formulation of descriptors.

Whether some aspects of teaching and learning can or cannot be formulated in descriptors therefore needs to be considered. Brian North's presentation pointed out that descriptors can be written in different *styles* and a conscious decision needs to be taken in the process of formulating descriptors about how they should be presented. Often descriptors take the form of action oriented 'can do' statements as with the CEFR but they might also take a form which states, for example, that 'pupils should be given opportunities to...'. Differences in styles were reflected in the different examples provided during the conference. In the presentation by Pilar Perez Esteve an example of a descriptor at the end of primary education specifies that pupils should:

“compose texts related to academic life to obtain, organise and communicate information (questionnaires, polls, summaries, plans, reports, descriptions, explanations, etc.)”

This statement provides a valuable indication of the range of text types a pupil should have the opportunity to work on; it is likely however that for practical reasons the assessment focus might well be more restricted.

In using descriptors particularly for the purpose of identifying standards of achievement it is important to provide examples to help the interpretation of meaning. Language is inevitably subject to different interpretations and possible misunderstandings. The presentation by Oliver Maradan based on the HarmoS project in Switzerland showed how examples of pupils' work were provided for that purpose.

With regard to the formation of descriptors, technical issues related to validation were addressed but there was also consideration of the question who should be involved in the formation of descriptors. Ideally this would involve different experts but also teacher trainers and teachers who would be involved in their use. The presentation by Ljudmila Ivšek described how in Slovenia for example practising teachers from primary and secondary schools (about eight of each) and higher education teachers (about five) joined the group of experts to develop descriptors. The whole issue of teacher training was emphasized as a key element in turning a set of descriptors into a dynamic and useful tool.

Two broad, contrasting approaches to descriptors can be illustrated on the following table. In one approach the emphasis is exclusively for purposes of assessment, and users are less likely to be involved in their formation and interpretation. In the other approach assessment may be one focus but it is not the only one. There is here much more emphasis on process and dialogue.

Hierarchical	Negotiated
Imposed	Interpreted
Top-down	Inclusive
Static	Dynamic
Exclusively for assessment	Guarantee learners' rights

II. The needs of disadvantaged learners

Recognising and addressing the needs of disadvantaged learners has also been a central theme of the work on languages of schooling since the project began. The positive uses of descriptors related to ensuring progression, transparency and clear learning goals become even more clear in the context of supporting disadvantaged learners because there is a need to make explicit what type of language competence is required for success. With regard to the language of schooling, there are two main sources of disadvantage that need to be considered. As Jean-Claude Beacco pointed out in his presentation, access to schooling is

not equitable if the learners' first language is not taught in schools as a subject and as a language of instruction for teaching other subjects. In addition, learners may struggle with different subjects if their competence in using the academic language of the school is limited. Their own language repertoire may be adequate in the social contexts in which they operate but may not allow them to have full access to the curriculum. For some pupils these two types of disadvantage may be combined, each reinforcing the other and furthering the disadvantage.

The difficulties learners have in mastering the language of schooling also depend on the demands imposed by social norms ("speaking properly") which vary from one education system to another but are always present. Some learners may suffer from a form of linguistic insecurity whereby they feel alienated from the school context and use tactics to avoid engaging fully with the learning. As already discussed, all too often in schools the level of language competence that helps some pupils to success and causes others to fail is actually acquired not within the school itself but in the social contexts outside the school. Learners who start from a point of disadvantage may become even more disadvantaged if they are denied access to the curriculum for language reasons. This is where descriptors may have a positive use because they can help diagnose specific needs and identify the type of progression that is required and, importantly, the type of provision that is needed.

The way descriptors are actually used may have a strong influence on the way disadvantaged learners are viewed and supported within a school context. If descriptors are used only to highlight weaknesses, this may lead towards a deficit model whereby the emphasis is predominantly on what a learner *cannot* do rather than starting from a recognition of what they *can* do. When descriptors are used for assessment purposes with disadvantaged learners, as with all learners, they should embrace formative as well as summative purposes; the first concern must be celebration of achievement and then a focus on areas for development and improvement. A pupil may be at a low level of competence in the predominant language of schooling but may be fluent in one or more other languages. These achievements need to be recognised. The implication here is to focus attention once again on how descriptors are used, not merely on how they are constructed.

It is also important to recognise that when descriptors take the form of performance standards, there may be unintended and unforeseen negative consequences for disadvantaged learners. This was highlighted by Daniel Coste. There may be an assumption that once standards of achievement have been identified this is enough to ensure progression. However to specify the expected level of achievement at specific ages in the form of benchmark statements is not the same as providing the necessary resources and support to ensure that pupils make progress. In some contexts schools may be penalised for not ensuring that pupils reach the required levels thus exacerbating the problem and the disadvantage.

It is important not to see disadvantaged learners as having needs which are different in kind from all other learners. This was emphasised by Machteld Verhelst in her account of a framework for early second language learning. It is important that the term 'L2 acquisition' does not give the impression that different or lower objectives should be set for immigrant children than for others. It is very important however to recognise that there is an urgency about addressing the needs of early learners because it is very hard to make up ground once it has been lost. For example, pre-school children who do not sufficiently understand the language of schooling may experience problems at a very early stage of their development. They may have to drop out of some key lessons in certain subjects; this is likely to have negative consequences for their later progression.

Similarly, the presentation by Else Ryen in her account of the provision for linguistic minorities who may need special instruction in Norwegian pointed out that the teaching must

be seen in relation to the instruction provided in other subjects and in relation to the curriculum for Norwegian. The aim is that pupils shall be helped, through the development of good learning strategies and insight into their own language learning, to develop their Norwegian language skills as quickly as possible.

The account of the curriculum for Romani provided by David Little also highlighted the way in which a framework can be adapted for specific contexts and for specific learners. The Common European Framework of Reference was used as the basis for the curriculum but the content in particular was designed to engage the learners' interest. The presentation illustrated the way in which when devising curricula for specific learners a framework may operate as a support without constituting a straitjacket. This has implications for the use of the Platform, with a recognition of the need to adapt examples and frameworks for local contexts and for specific needs.

III. The relationship between language as subject and language in other subjects

The importance of the relationship between language as subject and language in other subjects has been an important emerging theme in successive conferences. The recognition that all teachers have an important role to play in the development of language has been well established. The complementary view that teachers of subjects need to take account of the fact that language has a key role to play in teaching and learning a subject has also been fully accepted. This conference however went further in identifying the way which descriptors may be used as a way of focusing more specifically on the language demands that are inherent in learning a subject. Previously the term 'language across the curriculum' was used for this purpose but this has now been replaced by the more appropriate concept of 'language in other subjects'. This term better signals that the current work is a step beyond the 'language across the curriculum' movement that developed in some countries in the 1970s, and better represents the embedded nature of language when learning other subjects.

Recognition of the importance of language in other subjects derives, in part, from a value commitment to equal access to the curriculum for all and is thus clearly linked to the needs of disadvantaged learners. Pupils in a school only spend a relatively small proportion of their time in language as subject lessons. It is not enough for their language needs to be recognised and catered for in that context if in other subjects pupils struggle to gain access to the curriculum for language reasons. A whole school policy approach to language and the languages of schooling is needed.

There are useful parallels that can be made between the way the language/discourse of 'other subjects' and the learning of foreign languages both provide different perspectives on the world. This helps to highlight the links between languages of schooling and intercultural education. Mike Byram employed the term 'multiperspectivity' to refer to this phenomenon. The teacher can be seen as a mediator of the subject specific discourse, with the learner becoming an interpreter of the subject discourses (within the limitations of schooling). The subject discourse might be scientific, historical, artistic etc. There are parallels between being initiated into and gaining perspectives from another 'language' e.g. 'French' and another language/discourse e.g. 'geography'. Schools teach the language of all subjects ('language as subject'/ geography/ biology etc) and facilitate identifications with subjects/ social groups (e.g. 'physics' or 'the nation'). They develop a capacity to understand other people's languages and perspectives using the skills and knowledge of intercultural competence.

The examples of subject specific descriptors from Spain provided by Pilar Perez Esteve highlighted the language elements that inevitably are included. In mathematics for example

as one element of the descriptor pupils are expected to “evaluate different strategies and persevere in the search for data and accurate solutions, both in the formula and in the solution to the problem” and significantly are expected to “express the process followed, both orally and using written methods, in a clear and organised way”. Similarly, in music, pupils are expected to “critically present a personal opinion about a range of music and musical events taking support from information obtained from different sources: books, advertisements, concert programmes, criticism, etc.” A key question is whether teachers take these language demands for granted or not.

The presentation by Helmut Vollmer and Irene Pieper highlighted the way in which language as subject and language in other subjects both employ the language modes of reading, speaking, listening, writing. They do so however with different types of emphasis and focussing on different sub-components. Reflection on language tends to be more specific to language as subject (although not exclusively) and the specific relevance of content more pertinent in language in other subjects. These ‘communicative activity areas’ (speaking, listening, reading and writing) relate to different discourse genres to be understood and produced and in which learners must participate. Underlying the discourse genres is a set of cognitive and linguistic operations, embedded in social contexts (thus also in school), which could be called *discourse functions*; they mix differently in different genres.

The concept of ‘discourse functions’ is central to the current and future work in this area. They describe and specify fundamental cognitive actions/activities and their linguistic realisation/expression (e.g. naming, describing, narrating, explaining, arguing, evaluating, negotiating). Recognition of these elements provides a focus for looking at descriptors not just in vertical way (to map pupils’ progression) but transversally to map the similarities and differences in language demands across subjects. It was generally felt at the conference that the work in analysing the language demands in this way has much potential in providing a concrete instrument for curriculum development in this area. The term ‘language-sensitive subject learning and teaching’ was coined to highlight in general terms what is needed within subjects. The project has potential to expand and explicate this term in concrete ways.

IV. The role of the Platform

The sessions on the role of the Platform highlighted both its general purpose and more specific technical aspects related to its use. One of the key purposes is the inclusive vision of languages of education symbolised by the Platform diagram with its various links. The intention is that the different dimensions represented by the different boxes (i.e. the learner and the languages present in the school; regional, minority and migration languages; foreign languages, modern and classical; languages of schooling, including language as subject and language in other subjects) and sub-sections are better understood in an integrated way, in relation to each other rather than as disparate elements. It is in that way that the unifying goals of plurilingual and intercultural education can be advanced.

The differences between the current Platform and the CEFR was highlighted by Daniel Coste symbolised by the terms ‘framework’ and ‘Platform’. The focus is in each case different. The CEFR was concerned with foreign language learning and one of its goals was to provide a framework that would allow comparison between various forms of certification. The purpose was to have an element of international harmonisation in the context of foreign languages in order to help mobility. With the focus on the language of schooling the intention needs to be different and a common framework is not the central outcome.

The Platform has been deliberately conceived as an electronic resource rather than a paper product in order to exist as a dynamic focus for dialogue and sharing. In many of the presentations and in the plenary discussion there was recognition of the importance of

context; there are dangers involved in trying to impose universal solutions that are not sensitive to context. That does not mean however that practices and ideas cannot be adapted and used. The presentation by Irena Mašková which provided examples of language descriptors from the Czech Republic described how the national level of the curricular documents which comprises the Framework Education Programmes (FEPs) is complemented by the requirement that individual schools in the local context develop their own School Education Programmes (SEPs) based on the principles and requirements declared in the relevant FEP.

It is hoped that the diagram representing the Platform will come to have something of a symbolic, iconic force representing not just the functional aspects of the work but the key values that are at its core. There is a certain symbolism in having languages of schooling in a central location but all the other dimensions are clearly connected. This is reflected visually in the use of links in the diagram. The intention is that any one individual section of the Platform will itself be better understood when seen in relation to the other elements. The plural form 'languages' has been used to acknowledge that in most contexts there is likely to be more than one language of schooling.

The presentations by Mike Byram and Philia Thalgott provided practical details on ways in which the Platform can be accessed and negotiated. Within each section of the Platform or 'box' there is a summary of the content and of the documents within that section. It is possible to navigate through the various levels and documents in different ways. As well as containing new documents, the Platform contains other documents that have been produced in the past, particularly in the section related to foreign languages.

The evaluation questionnaire provided useful feedback on the use of the Platform. Conference delegates were asked 'How do you think you and those you represent could use the Platform?' It was seen as potentially a valuable source of information to prompt users to reflect on their own curricula with a view to updating them. In the same way the Platform could be used specifically to shape language policy to make sure that different language needs of children coming from different backgrounds are catered for. It could serve both at the policy level and at the level of practice and could be a powerful tool for dissemination of information and good practice for many stakeholders (in particular teachers and teacher trainers). The information on language policies in other countries could be valuable source of inspiration. It was also acknowledged that the Platform might provide a useful networking function as a place to find partners for research and working groups. It was pointed out that many teachers and trainers feel very isolated and the Platform of resources and references could help to 'legitimate' their practice. Some respondents pointed out the Platform might be useful to other interest groups such as postgraduate researchers, test developers, and to those interested in bilingual education programmes.

V. Future developments

The possibilities for future development included thinking about the way the Platform itself would function and suggestions for other related activities. Once again, the feedback from delegates provided valuable information in answer to the question, 'How do you think you and those you represent could contribute to the Platform in the future?' It was thought that it might be helpful to assign specific tasks to the member states, then clarify which contributions would be useful. The other types of contributions which were suggested included the following:

- taking part in discussions through the Platform (such as better educational rights for all children, specially for those who do not succeed at school)
- sending feedback on material available
- producing and piloting descriptors in different contexts

- sending sets of descriptors (at national and school level) for publication on the Platform
- translating (major points) of documents
- sending different kinds of material for publication on the Platform
- providing reports on seminars (several participants mentioned national seminars to be organised with the help of CoE experts)
- describing national developments, with a careful description of contextual factors
- providing (abstracts of) data, studies, research documents (including results of work organised in the frame of this CoE project),
- listing key words or contact data concerning papers and books that deal with topics relevant to the Platform;
- disseminating examples of good practice: (both in the field of language as subject and in language(s) in other subjects; in working with minorities and migrant children; in working with disadvantaged learners; in implementing plurilingualism
- providing examples of national / regional curricula (translated into English)

One of the possible areas of activity to be developed in relation to the Platform is to extend the work of the Language Education Policy Profiles. Gisella Langé emphasised the value of the language profile in providing impetus for curriculum development in Lombardy. Edmée Besch provided similar testimony of the value of the process for Luxembourg.

The current Language Education Policy Profiles provide member States with an opportunity to analyse their current (and past) policy and practice and to formulate possible future developments. The Profile process is not an external evaluation and the experts are not assessors; they act more as a catalyst to stimulate reflection and analysis. The whole process takes into account the specific needs and circumstances of the country/region/city while also attending to the broader European context and contemporary political and social change.

A discussion paper circulated in advance of the conference identified the potential for intensifying the focus on the Languages of Schooling in the Language Education Policy Profile and presented other possible related activities that were also addressed by Joe Sheils. In his presentation. The Languages of Schooling represents one specific element among a range of issues which could be addressed in the general Language Education Policy Profile. It is not therefore proposed to apply the very detailed and comprehensive Profile approach to this particular area alone, but possibly to make it the central theme, according to the priorities set by the national, regional/local educational authorities. The Division, with the approval of the Steering Committee for Education (March 2009), now proposes to intensify the focus on the Languages of Schooling, and to develop the approach to include a range of possible processes and outcomes, ranging from simply including issues relating to the Languages of Schooling in future general Profiles to more focused activities such as specific exchanges and regional seminars on the Languages of Schooling

Three possible working methods were envisaged:

1. Adapting the Language Education Policy Profile. (While maintaining the current starting point of foreign languages within a global approach embracing all languages, the focus on languages of schooling could be increased within the concept of Languages in Education/Languages for Education. Alternatively the languages of schooling could be the starting point for a profile within the broader concept of Languages in Education/Languages for Education.)

2. Targeted expert visits. (The concept of Languages in Education/Languages for Education would provide a backdrop for a more sharply focused profile-type approach which would offer

expert assistance with national or regional self-analysis and planning on one or more specifically determined priority area.)

3. Thematic seminars. (Specific target groups and selected themes could be addressed in thematic, perhaps European regional, seminars, and these might be linked to themes and issues related to the Platform. Joe Sheils provided a list of possibilities that could be considered.)

Several participants asked for clarification about the way the Platform might function interactively and had questions about the languages in which material could be uploaded. There was also discussion in plenary about the management of the Platform and the need for some selection of content.

The conference was an undoubted success. Although the considerable amount of input limited time for discussion, the positive effect was that a very large number of examples of approaches from different regions and countries was represented. In addition conference delegates wholeheartedly endorsed the project and the value of the Platform, and provided valuable suggestions for its future development.

PART TWO: CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

This section presents a selection of some of the presentations given at the conference, with summaries of the group work and plenary discussions. Copies of the substantial pre-conference publications on the major themes are available from the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe and from the website (www.coe.int/lang¹). Many of the speakers provided specific examples of descriptors that are not all included in this report but they can be accessed from the Council of Europe web site from the related power points.

Opening

Official opening G. Battaini-Dragoni – Director General, DG IV

I am very pleased to see so many participants at this conference. I know this is a very busy time of year for ministries of education and educational institutions, and of course the economic climate is difficult. In view of these potential obstacles your presence here is proof of your strong commitment to European co-operation in promoting quality education for all.

Education is of crucial importance in developing the kind of society in which we wish to live, and is a central element in developing a society based on, and imbued with, the shared values of the Council of Europe. This society can only be built on the right of every citizen to quality education.

The forthcoming programme of the Education Directorate - entitled "Education for Intercultural Understanding, Human Rights and Democratic Culture" for the period 2010 to 2014 - aims to promote this right for all because access to quality education is a pre-condition for the enjoyment of other human rights.

We are acutely conscious of the powerful role of education in ensuring social inclusion and cohesion, and its unique contribution in the key areas of personal development, culture and values, identity building, appreciating diversity, and critical thinking, as well as its fundamental role in establishing a solid basis for lifelong learning.

We wish to support our member states in helping all young people acquire the values and competences needed for living together as active, responsible citizens in our modern, complex and diverse societies.

The Declaration of the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of Education held in Istanbul in May 2007 requested us to pay special attention to

“analysing and developing key competences for democratic culture and social cohesion, such as citizenship competence, intercultural competence, plurilingual competence, social commitment, a solidarity-based outlook and multiperspectivity”.

In that perspective our work in language education aims to provide member states with agreed policy guidelines and common reference tools for plurilingual and intercultural education, based on a broad vision of quality education that encompasses both values and competences.

¹ See [Appendix 2](#) or Section '[Events 2009](#)' on the website

We know that access to quality education is not possible without the necessary kinds of linguistic competence in the language of schooling. The work of the Language Policy Division is, therefore, particularly concerned with the entitlement of learners to acquire the language competences and benefit from the kinds of learning experiences that are essential for them to exercise their right to education.

In our work to promote the right to quality education we are building on the “acquis” of the Council of Europe with regard to the right to education in a transversal and multidisciplinary perspective. The work of the Language Policy Division is supported and complemented in particular by that of

- the *European Centre for Modern Languages* (ECML) in Graz, which implements Council of Europe policy in the Enlarged Partial Agreement’s 34 member states through the development and dissemination of best practice and innovation in language education;
- the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, which is a unique Council of Europe convention for protecting and promoting linguistic diversity;
- the recently established *European Wergeland Centre* in Oslo, which develops education for intercultural understanding, human rights, awareness of democratic culture and the need for intercultural dialogue among professionals in all areas of education.

Turning now to the subject matter of this important conference, the descriptions of educational goals and competences for the Languages of Schooling that you will share and discuss at this conference will contribute to the development of a unique reference source for all our member states. This will be very helpful for those who develop curricula and examination standards as no European reference instrument of this kind exists, and I look forward very much to the further development of this project.

I understand that a lot of progress has been made since the last conference which was generously hosted by the Czech education authorities in Prague. I take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to the preparatory work for this event, in particular the members of the working group and the authors of texts for the new web Platform.

It is very heartening that so many experts give so generously of their time, and I acknowledge in particular the dedicated work to ensure the quality of the final products by Professors Beacco, Byram, Coste, Fleming and Cavalli. Thank you also to those of you who took the time to analyse your curricula and complete the questionnaires which will be very helpful for all participants.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to acknowledge the professionalism of my hard-working colleagues in the Secretariat of the Language Policy Division - Johanna Panthier and Philia Thalgott who have spared no effort to ensure that you will have a fruitful conference, and I leave you in their capable hands.

Session I. Presentation of the philosophy and purpose of the Platform including supporting the needs of disadvantaged learners

Three presentations described (i) the plurilingual and intercultural perspective underlying the Platform, (ii) the mechanisms that have been used to present and structure the content of the Platform, and (iii) the significance of the Platform in relation to the needs of disadvantaged learners.

Philosophy and educational purposes of the Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education.

Daniel Coste

A brief comparison will be made below between the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* and the *Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education (PRREPI)*. Such a comparison is justified in "historical" terms, because, early in the project which became the "Languages in Education, Languages for Education" project, the question arose of a possible *common European framework of reference for languages of school education*.

1. Significant differences between the titles

- "platform", rather than "framework": a change not only of medium, but also of positioning;
- "common" has disappeared, perhaps to take account of a diversity not always perceived by users of the CEFR?
- "European" goes without saying, but would it be better to say it? Or is a wider scope envisaged?
- "resources" is new in the title of the PRREPI, but the CEFR does include a number of resources (apart from the descriptors), which have not always been actively used;
- "references" is now in the plural, another significant change;
- the platform is digital and will evolve, thanks to plentiful input from various sources to mutual benefit; the CEFR, being a paper document, is also more rigid, less open to outside contributions and updates.

2. An extension and a focal point

- extension from just modern foreign languages to include minorities' languages, regional languages, migrants' languages and official/national languages of schooling.
- distinction between these different categories, but comprehensive - or even integrating - approach emphasising interrelationships, and even interdependence, between these languages, in context (importance of the "Language Education Policy Profiles" and the *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*).
- focus on the language(s) of schooling as the centre of gravity, the pivotal point of this integrated (to varying degrees) system, with the dual role of language as subject/language of instruction in other subjects.

3. An explicit educational project

- not just "teaching, learning and assessment" of languages, as in the case of the CEFR, but "educating". Along two main lines:
 - an education which is plurilingual (and it is posited that all the languages of and in the school - whether taught or not - are languages of education; thus foreign languages are not "marginal" supplementary subjects, instrumental disciplines as they frequently were in the past, but actual component parts of a major educational project. Similarly, the language of schooling plays a full part in the

plurilingual and intercultural education project and is no longer sidelined and detached;

- an education which is also intercultural: because in and between societies which are
 - ✓ essentially multicultural,
 - ✓ comprised of individuals of varying degrees of pluriculturalism
 - ✓ and hallmarked by transcultural flows which are often unequal and asymmetrical

there is a need for the educational project to have an intercultural dimension, so that young people become well-informed and responsible players in the multicultural societies to which they belong and between which they move.

4. A future player in society

- At the entrance and exit (so to speak) to the platform stands a learner, a pupil, a young person who will become a player in society, already with a developing linguistic repertoire which the school will enrich and help to shape and diversify.
- This young person is entitled to a quality education, also encompassing linguistic rights, relating particularly to increasingly proficient use of the varying forms of the language of schooling, as a subject in its own right and as the language used for other subjects, because any process of building knowledge requires the use of language and develops language skills, and because all education also takes the form of language education.

Mechanisms and content of the Platform

Mike Byram

This presentation provided practical information on ways in which the Platform can be accessed and negotiated². It is hoped that the Platform diagram is an image that will become very familiar to people. The diagram can be seen as a model that represents the project and like all models it necessarily simplifies the complex reality. There is a clear hierarchy in the model with matters related to principles and general structure at the top.

Within each section of the Platform or 'box' there is a summary of the content and of the documents within that section. It is possible to navigate through the various levels and documents in different ways. As well as containing new documents, the Platform contains other documents that have been produced in the past, particularly in the section related to foreign languages.

There is a certain symbolism in having languages of school in a central location – but everything else is clearly connected. This is an important aspect of the underlying philosophy of the Platform and is reflected visually in the use of links. The plural form 'languages' has been used to acknowledge that in most contexts there is likely to be more than one language of schooling. Also the term 'languages in other subjects' has been used to represent what has previously been referred to as 'language across the curriculum'.

The Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education in relation to "vulnerable" groups.

Jean-Claude Beacco

As indicated from its introductory presentation, this *Platform* is a new instrument of the Language Policy Division which, subsuming the CEFR, is designed to enable member states to prepare their syllabi concerning languages of schooling and all other language instruction, according to aims such as their contribution to social cohesion and the development of

² Access is from the homepage of the Language Policy Division website www.coe.int/lang

democratic intercultural citizenship. This instrument is technical as much as political, exactly like the CEFR itself, being harnessed to a quality educational scheme for Europe which has already been defined: plurilingual and intercultural education.

The perspective that gives this education its structure concerns the rights held by all to receive a language education. In it, the curriculum is defined as a pathway of learning experience offered to the learners. Its main aspiration is to ensure that learners recognise and valorise the repertoire of languages and speech forms which they possess, and extend this to a broader command of genres of spoken and textual expression in languages they already know or are to acquire: languages of schooling, other languages taught as school subjects, languages and speech forms used for subject-specific skills, other social uses of languages and of their linguistic varieties than those they already use. The purpose is to ensure their self-development and full social participation.

Vulnerable groups

The whole of society is involved with the role and the results of education, since personal education, access to knowledge and school achievement depend substantially on language competences. Yet the elements of this *Platform* that relate to languages of schooling have a more specific bearing on young learners because the Platform is focused on compulsory schooling and forms of secondary education. Children are deemed to be one of the potentially “vulnerable” groups in Council of Europe terminology. The Council of Europe texts refer to *vulnerable* persons, citizens or groups who are designated as such in many Recommendations; for example, R (90) 22 of the Committee of Ministers on the protection of mental health explicitly concerns *certain vulnerable groups in society*, such as children, ethnic minorities, disaster victims and the elderly. More broadly, the book *Concerted development of social cohesion indicators - Methodological guide*³ views as vulnerable groups minorities, migrants, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and women. Their vulnerability is defined in terms of their poor integration into society, social cohesion being the ability of society sustainably to ensure the well-being of all its members. Social cohesion is identifiable according to four criteria (op. cit. p. 23):

- equitable access to available resources (non-discrimination);
- the respect and dignity that stem from recognition by others⁴;
- personal and collective autonomy, the foundation for each person’s development (*Bildung*);
- responsible participation and in particular the ability to organise in defence of one’s interests.

Marginalisation of groups or persons in a position of vulnerability can be done through any form of violence, intimidation or ill-treatment⁵ or through *de facto* mechanisms of exclusion which are diffuse and only minimally resort to coercion or force. Moreover, this occurs in many realms of life such as health, housing, employment and education.

Linguistic vulnerability

We need at this juncture to characterise the nature of what might be vulnerability in certain children’s linguistic competences (or in their communication through language). This vulnerability may take different forms. Access to schooling is not equitable if the learners’ first language is not taught in schools as a subject and as a language of instruction for teaching

³ Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2005.

⁴ See A. Caillé (ed.) (2007): *La quête de la reconnaissance. Nouveau phénomène social total*, Editions de la Découverte, Paris.

⁵ H. Brown (2004): *Violence against vulnerable groups*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

other subjects. This is the case with recently arrived migrant children or children from indigenous minorities in polities where their regional language is not recognised. Lack of recognition is possible for all languages lacking official or dominant status, whether regional /minority or foreign. This exclusion of the other person's languages may be realised as linguistic intolerance founded on negative social representations (which are widespread where languages other than one's own are concerned), rejection, prohibition (in the school setting, in social life) or negation of existence. These ethnocentric phenomena, potentially akin to racism or forming a manifestation thereof, are very widespread and thus constitute one of the essential attitudes to cope with in plurilingual and intercultural education.

These forms of discrimination, possibly attended by a certain real or symbolic violence, for example where identities are being negotiated, do not just concern visibly alien languages, those of foreigners, but also operate with varieties of the official/national languages. Two socio-linguistic concepts are then relevant, that of linguistic insecurity and the one too readily termed *linguistic deficit*, wrongfully attributed to Bernstein and assimilated to the antithesis of *restricted code /elaborated code*. These are a subject of extensive debate that cannot be reiterated here; we shall simply recall a few analytical elements of these central concepts.

Among the many definitions of linguistic insecurity put forward, let us single out Francard's: *manifestation of an unsuccessful quest for legitimacy [the outcome of] a conflict between the legitimate language and a non-legitimate or devalued form of the same language*⁶. In an earlier inquiry (conducted in southern Wallonia), he demonstrated that the most insecure individuals were not speakers of the dialect and the less proficient speakers of French, but those with the most schooling: [...] *their schooling has enabled them to realise the extent of the gulf between the legitimacy of the linguistic usages documented in their community – which they apply without acknowledging the fact – and the legitimacy of “proper usage” conveyed by school as an institution. Through school, they have become spokesmen for their own self-ostracism*⁷. To specify a distinction between statutory insecurity and formal insecurity drawn by Calvet, Coste⁸ points out that linguistic insecurity has implications for identity and is not confined to speakers' ability to use another language and to their conceptualisation of these proficiencies. Thus “insecurity arises because of a perceived, conceptualised, internalised and embodied inferiority that has taken hold”⁹. This insecurity, built on a self-appraisal but generated within and by means of social interactions, can eventually cease to be seen as linked to material situations but rather as intrinsic to the speaker, the more so with adaptation to the social norms of verbal communication being complicated by the multiplication of the agencies of socialisation (family, school, peer groups, media, etc.) which may have distinctive and divergent norms of language. It is easy to appreciate how alienating this sense of insecurity is in that it impairs each person's capabilities for development and self-respect.

The foregoing remarks have allowed us to bring up the strategic role of school as an institution in learners' exposure to norms and in the internalisation of some learners' inability to appropriate them. This relationship with linguistic norms which are considered to have

⁶ M. Francard (ed.) (1993 and 1994) : *L'insécurité linguistique dans les communautés francophones périphériques* Cahiers de l'Institut de linguistique de Louvain-la-Neuve, vol. 1 and vol. 2.

⁷ M. Francard (1989): *Insécurité linguistique de diglossie, le cas de l'Ardenne belge*, *Revue québécoise de linguistique théorique et appliquée* 1989 8/éé 133-63

⁸Coste, D., *Compétence bi/plurilingue et (in)sécurité linguistique*, *Atti del Convegno Valle d'Aosta regione d'Europa : l'Educazione bi/plurilingue, ponte verso la cittadinanza europea*, 4 September 2001, Centro Congressi, Saint-Vincent, edited by Viviana Duc, Ufficio Ispettivo Tecnico, in collaboration with the journal *L'École Valdôtaine*, (supplement to issue no. 54) <http://www.scuole.vda.it/Ecole/Atti/05.htm>.

⁹ D. Coste, *op. cit.*

been appropriated, is also formed in families, as evidenced by the work of Bernstein¹⁰. His research revealed systematic differences in the language behaviour of children from well-off families and from the working class, this behaviour being marked by differing degrees of complexity of the linguistic code (elaborated/restricted code) in social communication. The term *code* has no doubt greatly detracted from comprehension of Bernstein in so far as, being founded on lexical and morphological-syntactic data, it seems to rigidify expressive capacities which are not susceptible of evolution, thus giving credence to a construction placed on these differences as a transmitted and acquired deficiency/handicap. But it is not so much a matter of unavailable linguistic resources with the restricted code, acquired only in certain job contexts, whereas the elaborated code cuts across more numerous situations of communication. The restricted code should probably be interpreted not as missing linguistic resources but as absence of the use of such resources which in some cases become unreachable precisely because they are seldom or never drawn upon. It is not so much the linguistic code which typifies differences of language complexity in communication activities, as the experience of diversity in communication situations (and their peculiar rules/norms/conventions) and the awareness of their variability, even where the restricted code may appear to be universally acquired. Bernstein says precisely this: “the types of families offer choices of different roles” (1975: 31) and “an open system of roles tends to encourage expression of new meanings and exploration of a complex conceptual field whereas a closed system of roles discourages invention and limits the conceptual field explored” (1976: 199).

Plurilingual and intercultural education: open/closed discursive repertoires

Within the terms of this *Platform*, it might be said that the differences in children’s (and adults’) language performance stem from the differences in opportunities to handle varied communication situations (= open repertoire): this experience, limited by comparison with those of other speakers, leads to the formation of repertoires of speech patterns (and of languages) limited to what is current in the agencies of immediate socialisation (family, neighbourhood, peers). One of the clearly stated goals of plurilingual and intercultural education is

- to do justice to learners in their need to broaden their experience of verbal communication and their language repertoire /discourse genres;
- to make them aware of the situational/social variability of these discursive forms, by moving from a perspective based on absolute norms (*proper/poor speech*), underpinning the rampant social discrimination, to a perspective of contextual and cultural social suitability, varying from one community of communication to the next.

This right to experience diversity of discursive modes, not equated to experiencing negation of a language’s intrinsic norm, is of particular relevance for certain school populations (especially migrant children and young people, and pupils with underprivileged backgrounds) who may be deemed to command “restricted” repertoires in that these do not ready them to grasp the fine points and use the discursive forms of the language of schooling correctly (in the light of the intrinsic norms) and suitably.

Without engaging with these linguistic debates, however crucial, more extensive analyses may be mentioned by way of example, such as the one by Jariene and Razmantienė (2006): *The influence of pupils’ socio-economic background on achievements in reading and writing skills*. This national survey on assessment of school attainments was launched in Lithuania from 2002 onwards. It is chiefly aimed at discovering the principal factors which influence learners’ results and attainments, particularly as regards the main language of schooling (Lithuanian), its written acquisition and written production. The hypothesis concerns the

¹⁰ B. Bernstein 1977: *Language and social classes*, French translation published by Editions de Minuit, Paris.

influence of the pupils' family socio-economic status, expressed as a model with indicators such as number of books available at home, how many of them belong personally to the pupil, educational resources (encyclopaedias, dictionaries, computers, Internet access), how much pocket money per week is allowed by parents; eligibility for the free school breakfast (prescribed for pupils from poor and socially disadvantaged families); parents' employment situation and educational standard, etc. The overall conclusion is that a fairly strong correlation exists between a pupil's socio-economic background and the standard reached in reading and writing: those coming from privileged surroundings have better results. Linear regression analysis of the variables in the model demonstrates that the socio-economic factor may account for about 12 % of the results obtained by a pupil in reading and writing.

This concern for disadvantaged and vulnerable children is central to the present *Platform*. For example it can be read in *Writing*:

There have been different opinions on how children can best develop their writing abilities. Advocates of an intuitive, natural-development approach claim that a sense of form and genre in writing will develop automatically through reading as long as the students are provided with opportunities to develop their own ideas. Others argue that an intuitive approach favours learners from privileged backgrounds who already have implicit knowledge of text forms.

[...]

While some children benefit from backgrounds which automatically offer socializing into academic uses of language, children in vulnerable groups are dependent on school to help them understand and learn the wide spectre of cultural codes embedded in formal language use. Especially for these children curriculum aims like participation and access remain empty phrases if not directly connected to acquisition of a broad notion of language for many purposes.

[...]

Teaching writing in homogeneous groups is often based on implicitly expected knowledge of text and cultural codes. However, when teaching writing in different genres to minority groups, the need for making the implicit explicit becomes evident and urgent. Learners from minority backgrounds and possibly different traditions for writing genres, purposes and styles will have to get acquainted with the cultural conventions of writing in and outside school. This means special attention to specific writing for this group of learners as well as for other vulnerable groups who need special attention. One may however emphasise that coming from another cultural background does not necessarily represent a problem for the individual learner or for the classroom situation. Comparative perspectives on different traditions for genres and texts in different societies may indeed enhance plurilingual competences for the minority learner as well as for the majority group.

[...]

Any endeavour to clarify teaching goals by spelling out the results implicitly expected, which are central to equitable assessment of attainment, is bound to further the democratisation of school, because school could then no longer be accused of assessing knowledge and proficiencies which it does not really teach and which are transmitted socially in other settings. Even more importantly than being indispensable reference points for credible formative assessments, descriptors that allow plurilingual and intercultural education to be organised as an itinerary of discursive and linguistic experiences and as the aggregation of reflexive acquisitions of adaptable competences should make it possible to cater more adequately for vulnerable groups as well as all other learners.

Session II. Case studies concerning the place of Languages of schooling in some Language Education Policy Profiles

One of the activities of the language policy division is to assist countries, regions or cities evaluate their language policies through the language profile.

Two countries were asked to present their experience of the profile addressing specifically the place of language of schooling in the process. In each case the presentation was given by a representative of the country supported by one of the Council of Europe experts who was involved in the profile. In addition Daniel Coste who has been involved in a number of profiles provided further reflection on the value of the process

Lombardy – Gisella Langé with additional comments by Mike Byram

This presentation provided information on the experience of the language profile in a specific region. The process was undertaken at a time of change and a reflection on policy was particularly important at the time. The process was supported by the Italian national authorities. One of the suggested actions which came from the profile was that attention should be paid to policies and curriculum linked to specific contexts at national, regional and school level. The profile provided a strong impetus towards a new way of considering language education in the region. Plurilingualism became a key word and coherence as well. Quality and qualitative improvement were also key issues that led to curriculum and syllabi development, working with a group of teachers and university representatives. A new department within the Lombardy region educational authority was opened.

With regard to foreign language learning, common templates for language curricula were developed. There was an effort to attend more to the languages of origin. Arabic is now being offered in primary schools and Romanian in primary and secondary schools. There has been a concerted effort to improve language learning starting at an early age. English language is compulsory from the age of six in primary schools but a second foreign language within some primary schools is also taught. There has also been an emphasis on improving the process of foreign language learning, focusing on improving meaningful content and promoting CLIL or bilingual courses. There has also been development of understanding of curriculum links. Tandem teaching is favoured and teachers of language and teachers of other subjects working together try to understand what language is and what teaching a language means

Making use of the language portfolio has also been a major interest. There were just five foreign languages in curricular courses up to 2006 English, French, German, Spanish and Russian but then Arabic, Chinese and Japanese were added. Descriptors of competencies for Italian as a subject and Italian as a foreign language have been developed.

Since the profile there has been ongoing public debate with conferences, round tables, articles. There is now more attention to linguistic integration of young and adult migrants. Many projects have been developed by the administrative regional authority and there has been impact on curriculum development, on assessment of vulnerable groups (children of migrants) and on institutions. The next project in Lombardy is likely to be a special project on the languages of schooling. 2009 is the European Year of Creativity and Innovations and the motto/log for this year is imagine/create/innovate. The Platform could have a key role to inspire future work on language development keeping these aspects in mind.

Luxembourg – Edmée Besch with additional comments by Francis Goullier

This presentation emphasised the complexity of the language situation in Luxembourg due to its geographical and political context. France, Belgium and Germany and English are all

important. The language profile has served as a source of inspiration for change. Until five years ago there was no university so students had to move to France, Belgium, Germany or UK – thus it was important to have a very good knowledge of other languages. There is also the national language Lëtzebuergesch. For foreigners in the education system early learning of the national language helps people with their schooling later on. There are very mixed classes with up to 40% foreign pupils.

When pupils turn six they learn the alphabet and they learn the alphabet in German so that is the language of schooling proper. And that remains the language of education for all subjects up to the technical baccalaureate. French becomes the language of education in secondary schooling for many subjects. There are about 100 pupils each year joining the secondary schooling system as immigrants. They start off with immersion courses in French.

Of the school population 61% are Luxembourg pupils speaking Luxembourg language and German quite easily – they fit in very well with the system. 14% are foreign pupils and very often these are pupils from Romance language countries – Portugal in particular – these are pupils who adapt better to the use of French. The intention was to retain the domestic multilingualism but to enrich the language competence of our pupils. In March 2004 the language education policy profile was produced and in March 2007 an action plan. The emphasis was on readjustment of language teaching not reform. This included the setting out educational standards in language to be achieved by all students at varying stages.

The profile has generated a real dynamic. Luxembourg is a very good illustration of how the concept of languages of schooling operates within the policy profile because in Luxembourg languages of schooling clearly means foreign languages as well.

General comments about the relationship between profiles and languages of schooling

Daniel Coste

Referring in particular to the profiles drawn up for Estonia, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway and the Slovak Republic

- In virtually every case, other than that of Estonia (still in progress), the initial request and main perspective relate to the foreign languages taught, with questions concerning diversification of the languages offered by the school system, continuity/lack of continuity between cycles of study, implementation of the CEFR reference levels, organisation of the curriculum, etc. Only Ireland refers to the need for an overall strategy.
- In every case, there are in fact particular circumstances relating to the language(s) of schooling:
 - there are two forms of the Norwegian language (*bokmål* and *nynorsk*) and different forms of *sámi* in various parts of the country;
 - other languages of schooling are used for certain minorities in Lithuania (Polish and Russian), Estonia (mainly Russian) and the Slovak Republic (mainly, but not solely, Hungarian);
 - the official national language (Gaelic) of Ireland is distinct from the main language of schooling (English).
 -
- In every case, there is a connection, if only in historical terms, between the status of the language of schooling and other languages present in the country:
 - a clear connection in Ireland in the case of the relationship between Irish and English;

- an obvious connection in the case of the relationship with Russian and/or Polish or Hungarian in Estonia, Lithuania and the Slovak Republic: all these other languages were the languages of dominance and, in varying degrees, reduced the importance of the language which is now the national one and the main language of schooling; where Slovakia is concerned, account also needs to be taken of its language's proximity to Czech and of the concern, on both sides, to emphasise specific features which there had been less tendency to highlight in the days of the hybrid Czech/Slovak entity;
- a clear, but different, connection in the case of the coexistence in Norway of *bokmål* and *nynorsk*, which is the outcome of a long process culminating in a sort of historical compromise, also encompassing the distancing of the Danish language.

These situations might all appear to be particular ones, but they should rather be regarded, methodologically, as being shown up by a "magnifying effect" revealing functioning and relationships on a far greater scale, i.e. showing that there is always interdependence, in any given context, between all the languages which are, in one way or another, in contact with each other.

We can thus posit:

- that, whatever the context, the language of schooling should not be considered in and for itself, independently of those which coexist with it; drawing an ecological parallel, it is connected with its multilingual environment and the developments thereof. To quote just a single example, we should note that, in a good many European countries today, the schooling provided to the children of immigrants for whom the language of schooling is a second language has a profound effect on - or at the very least challenges - the way in which the language of schooling is taught;
- that, consequently, when language education policies are adopted, the situation of the language of schooling cannot be regarded as completely distinct nor as being, to a certain extent, settled;
- that proximity effects may be observed which go in both directions: in Lithuania, for instance, the wish to restore, consolidate, develop and normalise Lithuanian has given rise, at high levels of responsibility, to resistance to the teaching of a foreign language to primary pupils, and to a suspicious attitude to forms of bilingual education, CLIL and EMILE; conversely, we might say that it is not rare for the active and sometimes "fun" methods used for foreign languages (and particularly English) to be compared by pupils to the more prescriptive practices, perceived as formal or purist, used to teach the language of schooling as a subject, and which bring with them decreased motivation, or even disaffection with the learning of that language;
- that a single language is not the same in different contexts: the position of Russian is not the same in Estonia as in Lithuania, and this is not just because of population proportions and demographic change, but also because the issues relating to the Polish-speaking minority in Lithuania are more acute, and are given a higher profile, than those relating to the Russian-speaking minority. Even more astonishingly, perhaps, even English, which is everywhere given a distinct status as first foreign language, "overriding" all the others, is not the subject of the same kind of attraction or anxieties in Norway as in Lithuania;
- that the question of relations between the language of schooling as subject and the same language in the other subjects is not only ever-present, but also very often little thought about or conceptualised, or even ignored, and when it is considered, it is thought of in terms of language policy options more than in those of education or learning management.

This last point deserves to, and will at this conference, be looked at in greater detail. Paradoxically or not, most of the work done on this question has related to "conventional" CLIL/EMILE-type bilingual education. Clearly, however, it arises in every schooling context. Particularly to be noted, directly relating to some of the profiles mentioned, are the cases where partial or complete schooling in the majority national/official language takes over from schooling in a minority language: the transition from the teaching of a language as subject to the use of that same language to continue building up the knowledge of which the first foundations were laid in another language.

Most of these situations are awkward to manage and have not been the subject of much research. It is clear that the existence of descriptors (partly independent of any specific natural language) is capable of smoothing these transitions, or at least casting light on them.

In conclusion, looking at the possible evolutions of the future profiles, one can imagine two types of orientation:

- retain an overall perspective, but take explicit and full account of the role and importance of the language of schooling from the very start of "conventional" work on each Language Education Policy Profile;
- always take an overview unimpeded by dividing lines, but with a less broad and more specific focus on, for instance, only one particular aspect of the language as subject or of the languages used for other subjects, or to the relationships between the language of schooling and foreign languages, or to cross-cutting aspects of the training of teachers in forms of plurilingual and intercultural education, etc.

Session III. Report on the questionnaire and country examples

A report was provided on the results of a detailed questionnaire (focused mainly on descriptors) distributed to a small number of countries before the conference. Representatives from two of the countries who responded to the questionnaire presented examples of specific descriptors from their different contexts. This led to a plenary discussion on the links between language as subject and languages in other subjects.

Analysis of data gathered through a questionnaire designed for the *collection of competence descriptors through self-analysis of school curricula* **Marisa Cavalli**

The development of the questionnaire went through a process of review by experts and then piloting. For the present exercise, six countries and one region were asked to complete the questionnaire. The areas analysed were language as subject, language in other subject and the relationship between the two. The intention was to determine: to what degree the model used in the CEFR is present in the curricula of the language of schooling taking into account the language of other subjects; the presence of an overall, holistic language education policy particularly inter-and transdisciplinary and the type of descriptors used and their characteristics

In considering the examples of descriptors collected through the questionnaire it was that they have been decontextualised and this needed to be borne in mind when interpreting them. The questionnaire asked for examples of three descriptors in the various areas.

All language activities provided by the CEFR for foreign languages are more or less present in the curricula with different frequencies. Mediation is the aspect of language least often addressed; oral interaction is more present in primary curricula while speaking continuously is more evident towards the end of compulsory schooling. In the examples of descriptors new technologies were strongly integrated. Arguably in the context of a multilingual and intercultural education, mediation deserves much more attention because it is a language activity which is at the intersection of language and other activities and can help to better articulate them; it is also at the crossroads of languages and other subjects. The descriptors for writing activity tend to outnumber those for speaking. The dimensions of the language taken into account vary from one curriculum to another. The discursive genres produced are many and varied: e.g. stories, poems, letters, questionnaires, surveys, abstracts, reports, plans, descriptions and explanations.

Sometimes the autonomy of the learner was emphasised in descriptors related to writing. The descriptors analyzed show some similarity to those identified in the CEFR in terms of discursive genres and conditions specified.

Examples of descriptors retrieved from the questionnaire will be provided on the Platform.

Presentation of some competence descriptors: Norway - Laila Aase

This presentation provided examples of reading and writing competences in the Norwegian curriculum. It addressed two main problems: how can we maintain the complexity of reading competences in brief descriptors? how can we ensure progression of reading competences throughout the years of schooling? These two problems are interlinked because the complexity of reading is there from the beginning until the end of the 13 years.

What do we mean by complexity? We have to take account of a variety of aspects when we consider what is involved in reading: it is a skill (decoding of signs); it involves recognition of words; it also must include understanding and the construction of meaning; it involves interpretation of text; it is a process which involves combining various cultural competences and it is a social practice.

This complexity is shown in beginners' reading competences: level 2 (age 7)

- Show awareness of the connection between language sound and letter and spoken and written language
- Combine sounds into words
- Read simple texts coherently and with understanding
- Apply simple strategies to understand what he or she is reading
- Apply knowledge and personal experiences to understanding and commenting upon content in texts he or she is reading

The following competences show progression: level 4 (age 9)

- Read children's literature and factual prose fluently and with a coherent understanding of the content
- Draw conclusions based on the understanding of connections between parts of texts and the whole
- Apply reading strategies specifically for learning purposes
- Find information in multimodal texts by combining words and illustration
- Recognize and use literary terms like repetition, contrast and metaphor

Another problem is determining which challenges are appropriate at specific levels? Take an example from writing, “structure texts chronologically and according to themes and create cohesion and coherence between sentences and paragraphs”. This means being able to master two different ways of structuring texts: narrative (stories) and thematic structure (argumentation texts and most factual prose).

Determining descriptors for reading and writing competences confront us with a number of challenges:

- The way we understand what these competences are
- The way we understand how progression functions
- Our knowledge of what children are able to master at a certain level.

Presentation of some competence descriptors: Spain - Pilar Pérez Esteve.

This presentation provided examples of competence descriptors from the Spanish context in linguistic and non-linguistic subjects in the context of a general overview of the primary and secondary curriculum provision. The basic competences addressed are: linguistic competence; mathematical competence; knowledge and interaction with the physical world; data processing and digital competence; interpersonal and civic competence; cultural expression; learning-to-learn; autonomy and entrepreneurship.

A comparison of the way the competences are structured in Spanish language and literature and in foreign languages was provided highlighting the parallels and differences. Spanish language and literature address 1. listening, speaking and interacting 2. reading and writing (including comprehension and composition of writing texts) 3. literature and 4. knowledge of the language. Foreign language includes 1. Listening, speaking and interacting 2. reading and writing 3. knowledge of the language (including linguistic knowledge and reflection on learning and 4. Socio-cultural aspects and intercultural awareness.

Examples of competences were provided in relation to the composition of written texts. For example, at the end of primary education:

“compose texts related to academic life to obtain, organise and communicate information (questionnaires, polls, summaries, plans, reports, descriptions, explanations, etc.)”.

At the end of secondary compulsory education

“compose, on paper or in a digital format, academic texts, especially essays, texts which explain and argue based on information from different sources and produced using mind maps and summaries, and the preparation of plans and reports on tasks and learning”.

Other examples of descriptors were provided related to literature and related to language in other subjects drawn from the end of primary education. These examples show the language demands embedded in the subject-specific descriptors.

Arts: “Search, select and organize information on artistic expressions from the students’ own cultural heritage and from other cultures, on events, creators and professionals related to the plastic arts and music”.

Mathematics: “Anticipate a reasonable solution in a context of simple problem solving and look for the most suitable mathematical procedure to approach the solution process. Evaluate different strategies and persevere in the search for data and accurate solutions, both in the formula and in the solution to the problem. Express the process followed, both orally and using written methods, in a clear and organised way”.

Environmental, social and cultural studies: “present reports (on paper or in digital format) about problems or simple situations. Collect information from different sources (directly, books, the Internet). Establish a work plan and express conclusions.”

Social Sciences: Geography and History: “Use diverse sources (graphs, sketches, thematic maps, data bases, images, written sources) to obtain, link and process information about social facts and communicate the conclusions in an organised and intelligible way using ICT as a resource.”

Mathematics: “Plan and use reasoning processes and problem-solving strategies such as the emission and justification of hypothesis or generalisation, and express verbally, in a precise and rigorous manner, reasoning, quantitative relationships and information which incorporates mathematical elements, evaluating the usefulness and simplicity of the mathematical language for this process.”

Music: “Critically present a personal opinion about a range of music and musical events taking support from information obtained from different sources: books, advertisements, concert programmes, criticism, etc.”

The importance of teacher training as a means of responding to the challenges represented by these various competences was emphasised.

Session IV. Languages of schooling, intercultural education and the role of descriptors

This session had several stages. After opening presentations on languages of schooling and intercultural education, and on the relationship between descriptors in curricula for language as subject and for language(s) in other subjects, the group work focused on a range of issues related to descriptors in order to further understanding of their use, formulation, and inter-relationship. After reports on the group work, a presentation provided an overview of a range of conceptual and practical issues related to the use of descriptors. This was followed by concrete examples of different approaches to producing descriptors.

Languages of schooling and Intercultural education Mike Byram

We can use the example of a picture of a rainbow as a starting point to understand the links between languages of schooling and intercultural education. This phenomenon is something natural and familiar but it can be approached and understood in different ways. A physics perspective might use words like ‘refraction’ and ‘waves of light’ and might stress the importance of the speed of light for theories of relativity. But the same phenomenon might also be considered using the language of art, or sociology. Similarly a photograph of a river in Strasbourg might use the language of geography to discuss the significance of rivers, of history to discuss the role of Strasbourg in French/German history, of art to discuss perspective focus. The concept of ‘multiperspectivity’ can be used to refer to the way which the language/discourse of ‘other subjects’ provides different perspectives. The teacher can be seen as a mediator of scientific/ geographic/ aesthetic etc language and the learner becomes an interpreter of scientific discourses (within the limitations of schooling).

A familiar drawing exercise in foreign language teaching asks the learner to use the foreign language to describe for example a picture from instructions. But the simple instruction to draw a tree may be interpreted differently within different cultural contexts (Neuner). The connotation of tree might be a palm tree or conifer depending on the cultural context. Connotations therefore may be different in different contexts and are related to people’s

national and local identifications; they are likely to be shared when they are part of the same group with a shared culture. A parallel may be drawn between the way people of other language identifications interact ('French' speaking to 'German') and subjects interact (physicists talking to artists). There are parallels between another 'language' e.g. 'French' and another language/discourse e.g. 'geography'. Schools teach the language of all subjects ('language as subject'/ geography/ biology etc) and facilitate identifications with subjects/ social groups (e.g. 'physics' or 'the nation'). They develop a capacity to understand other people's languages and perspectives using the skills and knowledge of intercultural competence. The linguist 'tolerates/respects' the physicist; the French 'tolerates/respects' the German.

A function of the Platform is that it explains/clarifies 'languages' and discourses and identities related to languages of schooling (among others) – a reference function. It also provides descriptions of languages/ discourses – for languages of schooling and others (e.g. reference levels descriptions and/or descriptors) - a resource function.

Relationship between descriptors in curricula for language as subject and for language(s) in other subjects

Irene Pieper and Helmut Vollmer

This presentation considered the relationship between descriptors in curricula for language as subject and for language(s) in other subjects.

There are a variety of approaches towards the formulation of descriptors in both language as subject and language in other subjects, for example they may be comprehensive or more specific. When developing descriptors consideration needs to be given to what degree of precision in describing the desired competences or outcomes is necessary and adequate for the particular purpose.

Based on some curriculum analysis in different subjects and in different member states the presentation reflected upon the relationship between linguistic goals/requirements in language as subject and for language(s) in other subjects. Both areas build on the same communicative activity modes: reading, speaking, listening, writing (though with different weights and focussing on different sub-components). Reflection on language (in language as subject) and/or on methods and relevance of content (in language in other subjects) are often considered as domains of their own. The communicative activity areas relate to different discourse genres to be understood and produced and in which learners must participate. They are the major strategic level of reference for planning teaching and learning in school, in language as subject as much as in language in other subjects.

Underlying the discourse genres is a set of cognitive and linguistic operations, embedded in social contexts (thus also in school), which could be called *discourse functions*; they mix differently in different genres.

The presentation provided a series of detailed examples of descriptors, raised several points of discussion with regard to transversal linguistic requirements and led to the following summary conclusions.

1. The areas of linguistic and communicative activities are the same in language as subjects and in language in other subjects, namely reading (comprehension), listening (comprehension), speaking (connected speech), speaking/Listening (interactive participation + negotiation), writing, and possibly mediating ("translating" from everyday life/language to the level of school subjects/language and vice versa). All realise in discourse genres.

2. Language as subject introduces to and reflects upon a large variety of genres. In comparison, in language in other subjects the discourse genres are more specific and limited than in language as subjects. Language in other subjects normally takes those discourse types needed “for granted” and does not want to experiment with them (except maybe from the point of view of topic-based clarity and communicative effect, e.g. in argumentations).

3. Language as subject is less structured in terms of a system of mental and/or related linguistic operations (discourse functions), but in language in other subjects the choice of verbal operators is also somewhat unsystematic and not clearly related to any system of cognition and/or language functions.

4. In language in other subjects the *content is central*, realised through mental and linguistic action, in language as subject it is the language form or language itself. However, language as subject has its own area of domain-specific discourse when it comes to dealing with language and literature, reflection on language and literature and literary analysis.

5. Language in other subjects is less interested in varieties of discourse/linguistic form, as long as the genres used (and offered by language as subjects) are valid, practical and based on accepted conventions. A reflection on these varieties is even more unlikely within language in other subjects. BUT: language in other subjects should contribute to the development of language sensitivity by reflecting the language used in relation to the content/meaning expressed and improve it (e.g. through processes of editing).

6. Language in other subjects is dependent on the definition, modelling and basic practices of specific genres within language as subjects. But language in other subjects has to check them as modules, develop them further and/or specify them for its own purposes and establish horizontal links by interacting with other subjects (including language as subjects) over these genres and underlying discourse.

7. Both language as subject and language in other subjects know a broad repertoire of descriptors of language competencies needed, more general and also more specific ones; sometimes they are too narrowly broken down (danger of technicality). We have to discuss which is useful for what and why. All of these approaches for describing competencies (from global via sub-components to concrete performance indicators) have their own right.

8. There seems to be a definite lack in using writing/written discourse within language in other subjects, especially in its epistemological function (“writing for thinking and learning”). The written mode cannot be overestimated: it helps clarify thoughts and ways of expressing them appropriately.

9. Language as subject introduces to and reflects upon the use of strategies for text comprehension/ reception and text production. Critical reflection within language in other subjects normally limits itself to issues of content, methods or social relevance: This is not enough, language-sensitive subject learning and teaching has to include looking at what the language contributes to MEANING production, how it supports or veils clarity or fuzziness.

10. Subject teachers are not language teachers nor do they have to strive for it, but they have to become language-sensitive in their teaching.

Perspectives

- Focus so far: How are language as subjects and language in other subjects actually linked? One possibility offered: by common genres and discourse functions.
- We partly reflected on: How could or should they be linked? Based on values like the right of every student to make use of and profit sustainably from the curriculum? This

will require co-operation among teachers across subjects and a holistic, whole-school language learning and teaching policy.

- What we did NOT address here is the issue: How can these links indeed be established and materialised in practical terms, in the curricula and the institutional realities of school? What are the obstacles and how can we remove them in the interest of the learners, and not only the disadvantaged ones?

Further work on descriptions or descriptors of language rights and of language competences would benefit from a more clearly defined relationship between language as subject and language(s) in other subjects within the languages-of-education-approach. It is therefore advisable to continue this comparative work.

Group Work Reports

The group work discussion focused on types of descriptors, their horizontal and vertical links (between subjects and from one educational sector to the following), their adequacy and limits, levels.

Report Group 1

The discussions in Group 1 pointed out the need to have a broad perspective on descriptors, that help us to link them to the aims of education, so that students can benefit from them for their personal development and for becoming responsible participants in society.

The most important points of the discussions:

1. Why do we need descriptors? Key-word: orientation. Since different countries have different needs and different priorities, descriptors can have a function of orientation: to build a common language and understanding of descriptors, and to grasp their possible contribution to *Bildung*. They can help better decision-making for educational policies or for the process of teaching-learning-assessing in different subjects and for different groups of learners.

2. How to tackle the problem of descriptors when working with different groups? There are different types of learners: native or non-native speakers, minorities, migrants, socially disadvantaged, children with special needs, students attending CLIL courses. They may need different approaches to language, but they are all entitled to have the same rights in developing their linguistic, communicative or cultural competences.

3. How to emphasize the link between language as subject and language in other subjects in terms of language competence? We need a double perspective: a horizontal link, having in view genres and discourse functions, trying to see how descriptors function in a certain subject and how they can be related to descriptors in others subjects (there was no consensus on how to formulate descriptors: whether to do so in a more general or in a more specific way); a vertical link, having in view progression that follows the cognitive and linguistic development of students; this is also a problematic point, especially for the second language, that is introduced at different levels/ ages.

4. What should be taken into account when formulating language descriptors for teachers of other subjects? Participants emphasized that there are more aspects that may be relevant: linguistic competences and language awareness, psychological knowledge, intercultural knowledge and attitudes of subject teachers.

5. What is the role of different types of descriptors? We need to combine in a certain way different types of descriptors on different levels of schooling: descriptors for knowledge, descriptors for procedures, descriptors for critical judgment, descriptors for reflection and descriptors for understanding. The last one cannot be put in “can do” statements, but it is important to find observable criteria for formulating both qualitative and quantitative descriptors. It is obvious that in any subject some important aspects (such as creativity, the pleasure for reading, the aesthetic awareness, in language as subject) will be left out from being formulated as descriptors, but nevertheless teachers will have them in view in the process of teaching and learning.

6. What aspects did the questionnaire reveal? It was a good exercise for those involved in filling in the questionnaire, because they could discover some shortcomings of their curricula, making them aware of new perspectives and of the need to find the equilibrium between skill-based and knowledge-based descriptors, for example, or to analyze the relation between descriptors concerning language in language as subject and in language in other subjects.

7. Suggestions for the Platform. Having in view the function of orientation of the materials on the Platform, participants suggested that they need a set of descriptors for those who develop subject curricula and language as subject curricula, a bank of descriptors for teachers, guiding them in the process of teaching-learning-assessing, and also suggestions about how descriptors can be used for different subjects, for different groups. Other possible interested groups are: policy makers, inspectors, test developers, textbook authors, teacher trainers, and learners. The contribution of each country would be important for the Platform, as it can bring examples of using descriptors in different contexts and for different purposes. Descriptors can be put on the Platform after each country has validated them.

Conclusions: There are still questions or doubts about specific aspects of understanding and using descriptors, but the Platform could also leave space for debates and sharing opinions. The most important idea the group agreed on was that descriptors are necessary, but they are not to be used in a narrow mechanical way. So it is worthwhile trying to link descriptors to the rights of the learners and to the idea of quality in education; this was the central ‘motto’ of this group.

Report Group 2

In this group unanimous agreement was not reached on all points – different views and opinions were expressed. The report focused on three themes: descriptors, functions, universality.

It was agreed that an instrument would be useful in supporting understanding of the responsibilities of everyone with regard to success and failure in the context of languages where the language of schooling is a key factor. It was pointed out that the demands on achievement are very high. Descriptors may have a function in raising awareness particularly of the teachers of other subjects but also the learners themselves

It is important to distinguish between descriptors as standards and norms and when used for curriculum development purposes. There is a very fragile borderline when the concept of measurement may overtake the idea of curricula description. It must not be forgotten that values need to be specified: descriptors are at the very bottom of the Platform while the values are right at the top. That order should not be reversed.

National descriptors, when they exist, should be devised in cooperation with those who are responsible for teacher training. It is no use having something devised by experts alone if this is not applied at the level of training. Without such involvement there is unlikely to be a feeling of shared responsibility. The second theme was descriptors linked to context. It was

agreed that descriptors correspond to very different realities and need to be interpreted in context. The search for 'perfect' descriptors is in vain; descriptors are part of a process to improve an education system but should not be seen as something static to be simply inserted in the system as such.

One question considered relates to the margin for maneuver for those using descriptors - what level of interpretation should be left to the teachers to interpret the framework. When applying any framework it is important to take into account what pupils you are dealing, for example their age and whether the group is heterogeneous or not. Consideration also needs to be given to the help that will be provided by the teacher.

There was also some discussion of the concept of transversality, that is the use of language as an instrument in other subjects. We need to have a transversal approach with regard to forms of languages that are used in schools. Descriptors provide a possible focus for the issue of transferability or universality. It is important to have a research framework which is quite general based on process rather than descriptors simply in terms of standards.

When talking about descriptors it is important to ask whether we are all talking about the same thing. We need to be aware of how to develop quality by using descriptors. It is also important to recognise the importance of teacher training. The construction of descriptors might itself be a useful training exercise. If you are involved in their construction it may be easier to understand their use.

Report Group 3

This group addressed the question of who might make use of descriptors. The list includes teachers / learners / text book authors / curriculum designers / examination boards / policy makers / teacher educators. There are then a lot of potential users involved. Learners can use descriptors to reflect on their learning, to become more aware of their own progression as a form of meta-cognition. Teachers can use them to frame their teaching for summative evaluation, for formative evaluation and also for identifying progression by the learners. They can use them for transparency and as a frame of reference. Descriptors can also be mis-used if they are just used for judging teachers or schools and if they employ narrow conceptions of language and literature learning.

What kind of descriptors are desirable? Should the starting point be subject specific descriptors? Should the emphasis be on general European standards? When you start from subject specific descriptors which subjects should be developed into learning domains integrating different subjects? When you use or define descriptors you can use them as prescriptions from a normative perspective or you can use them as a frame of reference in order to get teachers to collaborate.

A frame of reference can be adapted to local contexts in different subjects. Formulating descriptors can be done in a way that is too general- then they have no use. If they are too specific, they also have no use. The question of progression is challenging - it is very difficult to decide when a competence is mastered at a higher level. If we formulate subject specific descriptors these may not be relevant to countries where separate subjects may no longer exist or have been integrated into cross curricular learning domains.

Different approaches to competence descriptors – Mike Fleming

The purpose of the presentation is provide a broad overview of some the issues related to the use of descriptors. It is based on the more detailed paper that was written for the Platform.

It is wrong to conceive language as a simple, transparent device to communicate meaning. Language has different meanings, connotations and nuances in different contexts. It may be interpreted differently from the intended meaning, depending on the context or prior experience and expectations of the listener or reader. The utility of curriculum descriptors depends in part on them being clear, easily understood statements of learning expectations or outcomes. However, because of the nature of language, the practical need for simplicity and brevity may make them prone to different interpretations thus reducing their practical value.

There are always problems that are encountered when attempting to reduce complex, integrated wholes to constituent parts but it is necessary to do so.

There are different uses of the word 'competence' and inadvertent switching from one category to another can be misleading, particularly in a teaching context. The same is true of 'descriptors' which may take a specific form that is relevant to one assessment task: e.g. "the writer identifies the problem accurately and argues for at least one solution". The term 'level descriptors' is sometimes used, not to refer to specific itemised achievements, but to provide a broad indication of learning appropriate to attainment at a particular level. Thus the term 'descriptors', while most commonly referring to atomised statements of achievement either as outcomes or as aspirations, is also sometimes used to refer to broader, more inclusive statements.

There is therefore general agreement that there is a need to break down very broad concepts into constituent components both for assessment and teaching purposes. However it is the degree of precision required that is often the subject of dispute. The move from a broad to a more analytic description of precise learning goals brings dangers: important aspects implicit in the broad concept may be lost; teaching may, as a consequence of the atomised approach, become episodic and mechanistic. In practice the teaching of language needs to take place in an integrated way.

The claim that a learner can 'write a letter' does not say whether the intended language use is formal or informal, whether the subject matter is familiar or unfamiliar, whether the key focus is pragmatic communication or accuracy. A partial solution is to make the statements of learning outcomes more complex and nuanced (e.g. 'can write an informal letter to a friend on a familiar topic at a level of accuracy that does not inhibit communication') but this process, when extended to whole range of statements, can detract from their practical utility because they become too complex. There is a compromise to be found between brevity and simplicity on the one hand and expansion and complexity on the other.

Take for example the statement 'can write a simple postcard' that might be used as one element in a set of writing descriptors. The activity itself, stated this baldly, could in fact be turned into a fairly demanding writing task ('write a postcard home that inadvertently betrays homesickness'). At first sight this seems to question the level of transparency in the short descriptor. However most people know what 'write a postcard' means, particularly if identified as a low level writing achievement. There are cultural assumptions, contextual clues and a level of implicit understanding that help the underlying interpretation of the descriptor and the difficulty of interpretation should not be unduly emphasised.

An underlying principle of the 'languages in education – languages for education' project is that language as subject should be conceptualised as a component of the broader notion of languages of schooling. The development of descriptors for language as subject ideally needs to be considered in relation to descriptors for language in other subjects. This compounds the challenge.

For testing purposes it is important to have detailed descriptions of levels of achievement in order to ensure sufficient reliability in the judgments being made. National and international testing procedures need to follow fairly sophisticated procedures, since the stakes are high. There is likely to be need for a definition of the construct of what is tested (e.g. reading literacy) and a recognition of the limits of what is being attempted, since it is generally recognised that some subject aims do not lend themselves to being formulated as assessment targets. Response items corresponding to a construct need to be devised.

As a support for teaching and learning, the identification of descriptors in languages of schooling has the potential to make the activities more focused and purposeful. They provide a valuable reminder of the need for the acquisition of skills and competences beyond mere surface knowledge. They can make the process of learning more transparent for pupils and can thus aid in the setting of targets and expectations. With subjects that are not seen as primarily language based, descriptors can identify the significant language elements that might otherwise be ignored. They can also, if described in a vertical sequence, help identify the progression that pupils need to make in a subject over time. There is however no simple formula, once descriptors have been identified and agreed, for translating these into effective classroom practice. Sensitive, contextual judgment by teachers is necessary to determine when it is appropriate to make explicit particular goals and outcomes.

The nature of language is such that a list of descriptors needs to be seen not as an end point but as the beginning of a process of interpretation, application and shared understanding. It is the *process* (i.e. how descriptors are used in practice either for assessment or to support learning in the classroom) that is as important as the list of descriptors themselves. The challenge involved in reducing complex, integrated wholes to constituent parts is evident as soon as an attempt is made to formulate descriptors, yet they have an important role both in assessment and in supporting the notion of education as a right. To say that young people have a right to 'language education' does not provide sufficient detail of what that right involves. Thus more detailed descriptors are needed, as long as their impact on assessment and teaching is positive and not negative.

Presentation of some concrete examples of production procedures:

a. Framework for early second language learning Machteld Verhelst

Within the framework of its social language policy, in 2001 The Nederlandse Taalunie launched a project that was intended to lead to a common framework of reference of goals for the early acquisition of a second language by immigrant pre-school children. That setting objectives is a necessary first step in raising the quality of L2 teaching is explained in the following terms: "Unless what one seeks to achieve is clear, it is virtually impossible to take decisions about teaching methods. Once the objectives are clear, once one knows what is to be learnt, one has to decide how that learning is to be stimulated".

The poor performance of immigrant children in our education system, and the role played by language acquisition in it, were the immediate motivation for this project. The objectives that will be set out in the framework of reference are consequently aimed primarily at immigrant

pre-school children. The objectives must serve as clear guidelines to be followed as a matter of priority, where the acquisition of language is concerned, by everyone involved in teaching in, and of, the language of schooling to immigrant pre-school children.

However, that does not mean that the framework of reference is not relevant or useful in thinking about the objectives of language teaching to native pre-school children. On the contrary: the objectives set out in the framework of reference are applicable to all children. After all, we are talking about the things which children should be able to do with language in order to secure their chances of full development and avoid getting into a situation of social disadvantage, and those things are valid for all pre-school children regardless of their skin colour or their origin.

In the process of communication with people in the field which operated throughout this project, a very strong consensus emerged among the experts questioned on this point. According to the experts, the term "L2 acquisition" employed in the title of the framework of reference must definitely not give the impression that different, or lower, objectives should be set for immigrant children than for others. So the fact that the term was kept in the title refers only to the social reality which gave rise to this framework of reference, and which at the same time highlights the necessity of the framework and its usefulness. Immigrant children are actually children who, in proportion to their numbers, find themselves lagging behind the others at a very early stage; for very many children, and certainly for immigrants, this framework of reference, and everything which may possibly flow from it in terms of better teaching practice, is of crucial importance.

1) The first phase of the construction of this framework of reference involved an analysis of relevant documents. For this purpose, all local documents enjoying a certain status in relation to objectives for early L2 acquisition were screened and compared. In addition, the material available to organise L2 teaching for immigrant pre-school children was analysed.

2) Drawing on these sources of inspiration, a broad communication exercise with practitioners in the Netherlands and Flanders was then begun: the intention is of course that the ultimate framework of reference should be used by those directly involved as much as possible, so as to increase its potential impact.

3) At the same time, communication with those in the field served to bring together the great expertise that exists on this subject. The communication exercise involved written surveys and meetings of experts with educationalists, materials' developers, teacher trainers, school advisors, inspectors, policy-makers, teachers and managers.

A number of choices have to be made when determining the minimum objectives for early L2 acquisition. How concrete? How general?

One of the difficulties in formulating objectives is the degree of concreteness/generalness one seeks to achieve. Concrete objectives have the advantage of being very tangible and verifiable. They offer a high degree of adaptability in practice. But concreteness can also have drawbacks: the risk with concrete objectives is that education may focus on details and lose sight of the broad lines. Concrete objectives also have the disadvantage that their number climbs rapidly and that teachers come to see the list as unattainable.

General objectives, on the other hand, have the advantage of tracing broad lines which must run through concrete activities. They can serve as a better guide to teachers in setting the main priorities. However, they suffer from the drawback that they require of teachers an effort of transference to actual practice, and thus risk losing relevance.

This framework of reference has tried to strike a happy medium: a sufficient degree of concreteness such that transference (and adaptability) to practice remains guaranteed, but at the same time a sufficient degree of generality such that the number of objectives does not get out of hand and the main lines remain visible. In this document, concreteness is also ensured by giving an example from classroom practice alongside each objective formulated.

The objectives are described at three levels – macro (fields), meso (language acts/tasks) and micro (elements). The three levels describe the same reality, but each looks at that reality from a different standpoint.

1. Linguistic skill at the macro level: this level stands for the main fields in which the immigrant pre-school child must understand and produce the language of schooling during the period in question. In theory, three relevant fields may be distinguished in relation to our target group:

- the field of school; “school” here means any situation occurring within the educational sphere and intended to stimulate the child’s development;
- the out-of-school field: social relationships with friends, family members and acquaintances;
- the media contact field (for example, looking at TV, playing computer games in the language of schooling).

These three fields are not on the same footing where problems of achievement gaps are concerned. For example, in the case of five-year-olds the field of paramount importance is the school and development of the language skill they need in order to function within it. Pre-school children who do not sufficiently understand the school language, and who fail to express themselves adequately within the school, risk running into problems at a very early stage of their development. In the worst-case scenario they will have to drop out of initial reading and arithmetic classes, and this can have damaging consequences for their school career in the long term. For these children, school may risk losing its emancipatory function at a very early stage. It is increasingly stressed in the scientific literature that if ground lost at school is not tackled very quickly - or, better still, prevented - it becomes more and more difficult to break the downward spiral. So the development of “school language skill” at a very early stage is of crucial importance to the child’s overall development.

Attention must of course also be given to the other two fields of language use mentioned above (the out-of-school field and contact with media), but these are less paramount because they are less strongly linked to the problems of lost ground at the pre-school age. Language problems which threaten to cause pre-school children to lose ground early do not arise primarily in the playground, during football practice or in understanding the dialogue of a children’s TV programme. So the first, primary concern of pre-primary education has no need to focus on them.

2. Linguistic skill at the meso level: At this level the description shows which specific language use situations within the fields described above are relevant to pre-school children and which language tasks must be carried out in this connection. Unlike fields at the macro level which are described in fairly general terms, a number of parameters must be sought here which afford a clear picture of the language tasks that are really central. The starting-point for selecting these parameters is a functional paradigm, namely that pre-school children are willing to understand and produce linguistic messages with a view to achieving a purpose that is relevant and of interest to them.

3. Linguistic skill at the micro level: This third description level indicates which linguistic elements are necessary (as a minimum) in order to perform the language skill tasks listed above in the stated fields. Inspiration for a description of the linguistic elements at micro level may be found in the traditional “disciplines” of linguistics:

- phonology: at this level the extent to which pre-school children must recognise or produce particular sounds is indicated;
- lexis: at this level reference is made to the vocabulary which pre-school children must acquire in order to be able to perform the tasks at meso level;
- morphology/syntax: statements are made about the morphological and syntactic rules which must be assimilated;
- pragmatics and socio-linguistics: here, statements are made about the conversational conventions and skills, in conjunction with register, which pre-school children may have to acquire.

Relationship between the three levels

It is important to emphasise that the three levels – micro, meso and macro – are very closely interrelated. They must not be regarded as three separate “programmes” or separate “sets of objectives” which have to be worked on. Rather, they resemble three different camera angles from which to view the same, viz. what children must be able to do with language in relevant communication contexts.

It is not advisable, for example, to consider the micro level (let alone implement it) in isolation: the link with the meso and macro levels is always essential. After all, children do not learn words for the sake of the words, but in order to communicate something through them (meso) in a given field. Ultimately, only the link between the micro level and the other two levels will make it possible to assess whether the child has responded adequately in communication terms in a given situation, and has thus proved linguistically proficient. For example, a child who is required to ask or tell his/her teacher something will often manage just with half-sentences or a few words. However, in order to convey that same message to the headteacher or a new teacher, that child will have to express him/herself more explicitly: he/she will have to use more words, express clearer syntactical relationships or produce more complete sentences, certainly if the headteacher or new teacher is unable to interpret the child’s first utterance.

In other words, when determining, describing and evaluating objectives, all three levels are always needed together, precisely because they are always present together in the communication situation and influence each other; for the pre-school child, taking all three levels into account in an integrated way is necessary in order to perform adequately in communication terms in the relevant situations. “Adequately in communication terms” here means the extent to which the child is capable, on the one hand, of interpreting and understanding the messages intended for him/her, in accordance with the intentions of the sender, and on the other hand of sending messages to a recipient such that his own communication intentions reach the recipient.

This text has a particularly large number of potential applications. It can serve as a guideline for the teachers of pre-school children and their hierarchy in scrutinising their language teaching and establishing a language policy, for materials developers as a framework for developing L2 reading material, for inspectors as a framework for evaluating schools in respect of their L2 teaching, for teaching assistants, teacher trainers, educationalists and those providing out-of-school courses as a basis for thinking about and designing L2 teaching, for policy in the light of measures to promote and evaluate L2 teaching, and for test developers in developing tools for language skills.

b. Czech Republic - Irena Mašková

Language Descriptors - Examples of Production Procedures

The national level of the curricular documents comprises the Framework Education Programmes (FEPs). It is also obligatory for individual schools to develop their own School Education Programmes (SEPs) based on the principles and requirements declared in the relevant FEP.

The FEP defines everything that is common and the educational content, the expected outputs are described in terms of procedural outputs (both knowledge-based and skills-based). The descriptors used are not assessment standards. Assessment of pupils' performance and their achievements is based on fulfilment of specific and practicable tasks, on the evaluation of the pupil's individual development.

The main difference between FEP and SEP is the fact that SEP can and should consider the unique situation of each individual school, its size, its pedagogical staff, its learners, its location, its international contacts, its contacts with local community etc., i.e. SEP is a chance for each school to constitute its own profile. Content-wise SEP has to distribute and allocate anticipated outcomes from FEP into individual grade levels or other time segments and SEP should specify the contents and organisation of the subject of instruction, the strategies through which the school shapes and develops pupils' key competences.

Language descriptors in FEP - Competences

Although not explicitly mentioned as language related descriptors, there is obviously direct linkage to language competences in the objectives listed as priorities of basic education. This linkage is quite clear in the definition of the expected outcomes of basic education specified as the (6) key competences:

1 learning competences:

- the outcome is described as the ability to search for and sort out pieces of information.....(reading and listening skills are referred to);
- similarly, language descriptors are implicitly covered in the expected outcomes defined as the ability to work with commonly used terms, signs and symbols;

2. problem-solving competences:

- the definition .."seeks for information suitable for solving problems; identifies identical, similar and different features of pieces of information; makes use of acquired knowledge to discover/identify various ways to solve problems..." is linked to language descriptors;

3. communication competences (language related descriptors are quite widely represented): the definitions of desired objectives directly refer to certain language skills, e.g.

- formulates and expresses his or her ideas and opinions in a logical sequence;
- his or her oral or written expression is apt, coherent and cultivated;
- listens to what other people are saying;
- understands and responds adequately;
- takes an efficient part in debates;
- defends his or her opinion and uses appropriate arguments;
- comprehends various types of text, record, visual material, commonly used gestures, sounds and other information and means of communication, considers them, responds

to them and makes creative use of them for his or her own development and engagement in social contacts;

4. social and personal competences:

- contributes to discussions within a small group as well as to debate in the classroom;

5. civil competences (no direct linkage to language descriptors);

6. working competences (no direct linkage to language descriptors);

The educational area Language and Communication through Language holds a pivotal position in the educational process. The content of the educational area Language and Communication through Language is implemented in the educational fields of Czech language and Literature and Foreign Language/s.

It is worth noting that SEP may further specify the educational areas and break them into topics, but it does not necessarily represent a more detailed version of FEP as far as language descriptors are concerned. Therefore, the descriptors formulated in SEP have very often similar or the same wording as those used in FEP, although sometimes SEP further develops the language descriptors of FEP.

A range of example of descriptors was given which can be viewed on the related power point.

Some general observations:

- 1) All linguistic competences - lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonological, orthographic and orthoepic competence + sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences - are explicitly mentioned in the curricula of the subject Czech Language for ISCED 1 and 2
- 2) For non-linguistic subjects at ISCED 1 level – Linguistic descriptors mostly refer to lexical sets relevant to the topics, to reading skills, orthographic competence and pragmatic competence
- 3) For non-linguistic subjects at ISCED 2 level - Linguistic descriptors mostly refer to pragmatic competence descriptors, especially to Discourse and Functional competence:

a) Language related descriptors in the education fields and subjects referring to “exact sciences” (such as mathematics, chemistry, physics, ICT...) are predominantly defined using terms: describe, explain, compare, identify, (using examples) demonstrate, justify, apply, assess, distinguish, observe, perform, name, give examples, determine, measure, predict, evaluate, identify, study, use a diagram, connect, differentiate, recognise, observe, locate...

b) Language related descriptors in the educational fields referring to “humanities” (history, geography and to cross-curricular areas, such as citizenship, multicultural education) are mostly defined using terms: critically assess, demonstrate, describe, explain, be able to read and apply, distinguish react, associate...

c. Slovenia - Ljudmila Ivšek

The first question for this presentation was to provide the criteria by which descriptors are chosen and formulated. The following domains are found: 1.Listening, 2.Reading, 3.Spoken interaction (in a dialogue situation), 4.Oral reproduction (description, presentation, narrative,

etc.), 5. Writing expression (report, article, etc), 6. Mediation (summary, report, translation etc.) (although mediation as such is not explicitly addressed in the curriculum for Slovene in language as subjects).

The structure of the curriculum is composed according to the general aims, the competences, context, expected outcomes, links across subjects and performance assessment.

The curriculum has recently been renewed. Descriptors for the expected outcomes for the renewed curriculum were prepared by a group of experts and practising teachers from primary and secondary schools (about eight of each) and higher education teachers (about five). The draft curriculum was discussed in study groups with all teachers in school and their comments were taken into account in designing the draft curriculum. In this way teachers had a strong influence on shaping the descriptors. The curriculum was designed simultaneously for Slovene language as a subject and Slovene as a second language. The descriptors were shaped as a combination of aims and expected outcomes. The expected outcomes are set for each education cycle as well as for each grade. A research development project from 2005 – 2006 'new culture of knowledge' involved teachers from schools in preparing descriptors for different subjects and evaluating them in the practice.

One criticism that could be made is that students themselves were not involved enough in the process of formulating the descriptors. What particular extra consideration went into the formulation? First, special attention was paid to understanding the target audience who are primarily teachers. They tend to want descriptors presented analytically. Secondly the guidelines for formulating the curriculum are mostly derived from curriculum goals and expected achievements Thirdly, the students' abilities (age, grade and medium level of the required knowledge, and not minimum or maximum) are taken into account at all times.

To address some shortcomings – it has been found that descriptors are not oriented enough to development and they could be modified with the help of empirical research. Another disadvantage is the lack of a holistic approach to a special topic in a particular subject (activities as reading, listening, speaking and writing).

Other examples of descriptors for ISCED 1 and ISCED 2 were provided in the presentation and are available on the CoE website.

d. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) - Developing Descriptors Brian North

This presentation provided a detailed explanation of the process of developing descriptors focused on the following stages:

Conceptualisation (including clarifying the construct to determine what is being described, collecting relevant examples and systems, deciding categories in the descriptive scheme, clarifying key questions). Clarifying key questions might involve working out the relationship to content standards, the European qualifications.

Construction (creating the descriptor pool; editing, drafting – filling gaps in the description);

Validation (qualitative: through iterative workshops with teachers
quantitative: through IRT scaling of use in assessment);

Interpretation (setting thresholds between levels; summarise developing proficiency).

The CEFR descriptors are observable, functional outcomes - “competence” descriptors also mainly observable. Language as subject is arguably more complex than modern languages for a variety of reasons: the presence of language aspects and non-language aspects, the discourse emphasis; genres; cognitive skills and the developmental link to cognitive growth. Far less is known about language as subject than modern languages with regard to the development and use of descriptors. It needs to be recognised that the CEFR involved a considerable amount of preparatory and development work over a number of years.

It needs to be recognised that descriptors can be formulated in different styles and this is a decision that needs to be consciously taken in the developmental process. They also need discussion and interpretation. For example, the simple descriptor ‘can make a complaint’ can be assigned to a lower or higher level of achievement taking into account whether it is intended that the complaint is likely to have some success or not. Descriptors can be broad and holistic or atomised and specific.

The process of validation involved both a qualitative and quantitative approach. The qualitative validation included: analysis of teachers discussing proficiency (show a video of two learners - who is better? why? justify your choice; ‘repertory grid’ analysis of categories teachers use to compare quality; sorting a pile of maximum sixty descriptors into categories; set of maximum of four envelopes labelled with the relevant categories, tick ones that are clear, relevant and useful; sorting a pile of maximum fifteen descriptors into levels for same category; set of envelopes labelled with six CEFR levels, tick ones that are clear, relevant and useful).

The purpose of the quantitative validation was to construct a scale from the descriptors for the “core construct”; to bolt onto / link to this scale sets of descriptors for categories that prove to be less core areas; to find out/confirm what level specific descriptors are; to discover which descriptors do not work; to confirm communality of the interpretation of the descriptors across languages, regions / countries / systems and educational sectors. It involved the following steps:

1. Identify good/best descriptors from the pool after the qualitative validation
2. Confirm the supposed “level” of these descriptors
3. Create a set of overlapping checklists of c50 descriptors (like ELP checklists); each checklist targeted at a “level”
4. Define a rating scale: Yes/No; 0-4 for the descriptors
5. Identify classes at approximately the right level for each checklist
6. Arrange teacher assessment and/or self-assessment with the checklists
7. Collect minimum 150 examples of each checklist
8. IRT Rasch Model “Rating Scale Analysis” to build scale
9. Eliminate descriptors with 80%+ or 20%- (Rasch problem)

e. HarmoS Olivier Maradan

This presentation provided an account of the HarmoS project in Switzerland which aims to harmonize the education systems of the 26 cantons. The presentation addressed the linguistic and political context, the Common European Framework of Reference as a source of inspiration, the development of the competency model, the formulation of basic performance standards and addressed questions with regard to the issue of languages in / for education

The context is one of a multilingual country; of the current population of 7.6 million, 1.6 million are of foreign origin. The percentage of young people under 15 years old is higher than many European countries. There is an imperative to harmonise with the aim of securing

the quality of the educational system. The harmonization includes aspects such as the school structure, duration and objectives of education levels, a common system of grading to aid transition and mobility. The harmonisation process has been through different stages.

The minimum standards (basic standards) are intended to be reached by almost all pupils at a certain school level: at the end of the 4th, 8th and 11th school year for language of schooling, mathematics and sciences, at the 8th and 11th for foreign languages. They will be integrated in the new Swiss cross-cantonal curricula for compulsory school: the French speaking and German speaking cantons. Referring to the basic standards, the curricula will also define higher levels in order to cover all school levels.

A key objective: to gather information on the entire education system in Switzerland (effectiveness, efficiency, participation). This information will be the basis for decisions. There will be an element of control to test whether national training standards are met; this will be an integral part of the monitoring. If the results are not satisfactory, support measures will be put in place.

The CEFR was a source of inspiration for learning objectives and syllabi for levels of demands, instruments for self-evaluation and external evaluation and for the development of the competency models.

A national approach (supra-regional) was taken to the development of the competency model. Four disciplines were the focus at first providing a basis for syllabi and teaching, but also for evaluation. A scientific procedure for the construction and validation was adopted. The model of competence contains competencies, domains and levels. In the context of the language of schooling, the language activities comprise different aspects: situate, plan, realise, repair and evaluate. The different aspects are applied to the specific language activities: oral comprehension, written comprehension, conversation, continuous oral expression, writing, orthography, grammar. The model went through a process of validation using a range of procedures including statistical.

The presentation provided detailed examples and process of validation that are available on the Council of Europe web site including exemplifications of levels draw from pupils' work.

Session V. Curricula for disadvantaged learners

Two presentations provided specific examples of curricula designed for specific purposes to support the needs of disadvantaged learners.

Languages of schooling curricula for disadvantaged learners: A Framework of reference for Romani David Little

The Council of Europe was established to defend human rights, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law. It attaches great importance to language learning as a means of preserving linguistic and cultural identity, improving communication and mutual understanding, and combating intolerance and xenophobia. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was developed to support this policy by providing "a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe" (CEFR, p.1). The Curriculum Framework for Romani was developed in accordance with the same policy and is designed to perform the same function for Romani. The Framework was developed in collaboration with a group of Roma informants and was based on the CEFR.

The CEFR defines language proficiency at six levels arranged in three bands: A1 and A2 (basic user); B1 and B2 (independent user); C1 and C2 (proficient user). We can use these common reference levels as a starting point for elaborating language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines; designing learning materials and activities; and assessing learning outcomes.

It is fundamental to the CEFR's action-oriented approach that we use language to perform social acts, to get things done. Thus the successive proficiency levels are defined in terms of what learners can do in the second/foreign language(s) they know or are learning e.g. A1 Reading: Can understand very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases and rereading as required. The common reference levels comprise more than scales of "can do" descriptors: this behavioural description of second/foreign language proficiency is complemented by scales of linguistic competence/language quality and strategic competence. The Curriculum Framework for Romani limits itself to scaled descriptions of communicative behaviour.

The Curriculum Framework for Romani (CFR) draws on the CEFR's action-oriented approach and common reference levels to develop a resource for: educational planners; curriculum/syllabus designers; textbook writers and materials developers; teachers and teacher trainers; examiners. However the Curriculum Framework for Romani is not a teaching tool.

When first considering the design, it was thought that the Framework should encompass the needs of three categories of learner: those for whom Romani is the medium of education; those who may hear Romani at home but have not developed a productive proficiency; those for whom Romani is not a language of the home. It should cater for learners in three age groups: 3-6 years; 6-10 years; 10-14/15 years.

Taking these requirements into account, it was decided that the CFR should be based on the first four levels of the CEFR:

A1 – The first identifiable level of proficiency: learners can use simple phrases or single words to respond to questions or to give basic information on very familiar topics

A2 – Learners can interact and react in a basic way to familiar everyday situations

B1 – Learners can interact in a range of different contexts and can cope with more challenging though still routine situations

B2 – Learners are much more aware of language and have the confidence and ability to control communicative situations.

A number of considerations were taken into account when designing the Framework.

- The Framework should be user-friendly: not too long, not too complex, and largely self-explanatory
- It should be of immediate practical use to educational planners, syllabus designers, textbook writers, teachers and examiners
- It should be graded so that it reflects progression in learning
- It should include the skills of Listening, Reading, Spoken Interaction, Spoken Production and Writing
- It should be organized around themes/contexts/situations of particular relevance to Roma culture (determined in consultation with a group of Roma experts).

The following themes/contexts/situations were the ones chosen in consultation with Roma experts:

Personal identity (Myself and My Family; The House/Caravan and Its Activities)

Relevance to daily life (My Community; At School; Food and Clothes)

Reflecting experiences (Festivals and Celebrations; Travel and Transport etc.)
General/educational relevance (Time, Seasons, Weather; Nature and Animals)
Heritage and culture (Roma Crafts and Professions, Hobbies and the Arts).

For each theme/context/situation a grid of “can do” descriptors defines proficiency at four levels in relation to five activities: listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, writing (general and Roma-specific).

These grids are followed by “I can” checklists that are organized by level and skill.

They describe possible classroom activities and are not divided into general and Roma-specific descriptors. They can be used by teachers and learners to identify learning targets, monitor learning progress, and record learning outcomes.

The checklists are central to two generic European Language Portfolios that have been developed to support implementation of the Curriculum Framework for Romani.

Curriculum for Norwegian as a second language

Else Ryen

The focus of this presentation was on the curriculum for pupils for whom Norwegian is a second language – that is the curriculum for Basic Norwegian for language minorities.

The Education Act has a section which ensures a right of entitlement for pupils whose mother tongue is other than Norwegian or Sámi to special training in Norwegian until they are proficient enough in Norwegian to follow the regular school teaching. If necessary, such pupils are also entitled to mother tongue teaching, bilingual technical training, or both. The rights are exactly the same for pupils in compulsory school and in upper secondary school. The only difference is with regard to the authority in charge: the local municipality and the county municipality respectively. In the national curriculum there are two curricula designed to attend to these rights: curriculum for Basic Norwegian for language minorities and the curriculum for mother tongue teaching for language minorities. (Both curricula are now available on the Platform).

The teaching based on the curriculum for Basic Norwegian is meant to safeguard linguistic minorities' need for special instruction in Norwegian. It is also stated that the teaching must be seen in relation to the instruction provided in other subjects and in relation to the curriculum for Norwegian. Pupils shall be helped, through the development of good learning strategies and insight into their own language learning, to develop their Norwegian language skills as quickly as possible.

The main goal of the teaching based on the curriculum for mother tongue is to strengthen pupils' qualifications for gaining a command of the Norwegian language and thus enhance their learning options through the development of fundamental reading and writing skills, vocabulary and comprehension of terms and concepts in their mother tongue.

The curriculum for Basic Norwegian is part of the Knowledge promotion and has the same structure as the other curricula but differs from the others by being level-oriented, not related to age and by having no grade assessment. It is a transitional plan.

The teaching shall help the pupils to develop

- linguistic confidence and self-assurance
- good learning strategies and insight into their own language learning
- their vocabulary and grasp of concepts in a variety of subjects

The teaching shall also promote intercultural understanding and the pupils' various experiences from previous language learning should be taken as a point of departure.

The curriculum is largely based on the Common European Framework of Reference for languages. The competence aims are described for three levels and are largely based on A1 to B2 in the CEFR.

The competence aims connected with the main subject in the curriculum do not correspond to those in the curriculum framework.

In Basic Norwegian the main subject areas are:

Listening and speaking
Reading and writing
Language learning
Language and culture

The competence aims express what the pupil will be able to do in the target language while the aims connected to the other areas are concerned with knowledge and consciousness about the language learning process and about the cultural significance of language.

Five Basic skills are integrated
Being able to express oneself orally
Being able to express oneself in writing
Being able to read
Numeracy
Being able to use digital tools

In the curriculum there are Competence aims for three levels and four main subject areas in the form: *the aims of the studies are to enable pupils to ...*

There are many similarities between the curriculum for Norwegian as a second language and Basic Norwegian. But Basic Norwegian has aims that are not present in Norwegian as second language and there are aims that are not expressed as explicitly.

The curriculum for Norwegian as a second language aims to enable pupils to

- understand simple messages
- participate in simple conversations, ask what various things are called and what various words mean, and state that they don't understand and ask for help
- understand and make use of key words and expressions to cover basic needs at school and during their leisure time
- understand and make use of standard conventions for showing politeness
- express Norwegian speech sounds: vowels, consonants, consonant combinations and diphthongs.

Many of these aims are taken for granted when you have Norwegian as your first language.

Importance is also given to the pupils' first language both in Basic Norwegian and mother tongue, e.g.

In Basic Norwegian:

- use their own experiences to talk about similarities and differences between Norwegian and their mother tongue
- describe and assess their progress in learning Norwegian

identify similarities and differences between Norwegian and their mother tongue reflect on their own command of several languages and its significance for their own learning of subjects and language In mother tongue curriculum:

- use their own experiences to talk about differences and similarities between their mother tongue and Norwegian
- describe and assess their progress in learning their mother tongue
- give examples of linguistic structures from their mother tongue and compare these with Norwegian
- reflect on the connection between mother tongue teaching and the teaching of Norwegian.

In the current strategic plan (Equal Education in Practice; Strategy for better teaching and greater participation of linguistic minorities in kindergartens, schools and education 2007-2009) the measures are intended to increase knowledge about linguistic minorities in nurseries, schools and training and to improve cooperation between kindergartens, public health centres, schools, adult education institutions, higher education and working life. One of the main goals is to improve the school performance of linguistic minority students in primary and secondary education and training.

Measures connected to the teaching in Basic Norwegian:

Assessing and studying pupils' skills and needs

Develop guideline materials for teachers who teach Basic Norwegian

Develop and offer further and continuing learning/second language didactics for level-based curriculum in Basic Norwegian

Session VI. Future developments

A presentation on the role of standards in curriculum development, teaching, learning and assessment was followed by the final presentations which will provide an overview of the conference, a re-assertion of key Council of Europe values underpinning the project, and a discussion on the future direction of the project and ways in which the Platform might be developed.

The role of descriptors in curriculum development, teaching, learning and assessment Daniel Coste

At the conference held in 2007 there was a question raised about descriptors. It is much clearer now that descriptors provide one useful resource amongst others. Two years ago things were not that clear. At that time the question was raised whether it would be important to have an instrument for languages of schooling that is comparable to the CEFR. However the Common European Framework of Reference was suggesting something that would allow us to compare certification. The purpose was to have international harmonisation in the context of foreign languages which is something that helps international mobility and requires harmonisation. The language of schooling is different. It is neither the task nor the intent to propose comparable work that was undertaken for foreign languages. With regard to the CEFR there were not only the reference levels but other resources were also disseminated which went beyond the descriptors themselves.

One of the purposes of the Platform is to suggest procedures, methods, approaches to devise and produce descriptors with the understanding that these are not to be taken as being something necessarily permanent. They should be included in a process of dialogue and negotiation with the different partners concerned.

The Platform should not become a site where descriptors are simply unloaded as if from lorries from all parts of Europe. We want to avoid that situation even though there is a real need for examples of descriptors to be shared. As has been said many people need descriptors for different reasons: teachers, authors of text books, etc. Standards have not been mentioned so frequently at this conference. We need to recognise that their nature is somewhat different from other descriptors. Standards are associated with benchmarks, indicators and quantified objectives. Descriptors and standards emerge from social and political contexts, for example seeking to meet the needs of the knowledge society where technological and scientific competition is strong and innovation is valued. This is the case for example with the dynamic standards and descriptors used in Illinois.

There is a danger if standards and descriptors are merely produced without going further that the assumption will be made that these alone meet the needs of disadvantaged learners. Evaluations of the US programme 'No Child Left Behind' (devised for disadvantaged children) showed some adverse effects because people did not see the need for anything beyond standards and descriptors. In other cases, some schools had their extra resources withdrawn because they did not meet the expected results on the basis of descriptors.

Content standards have greatly evolved in the last few years. It is not only scientific content or classical academic content and knowledge but skills that are addressed. It is important not to confine descriptors to that which can be clearly measured. For example how does one have a clear measurement instrument for 'democratic citizenship'? If the focus is confined to what can be situated precisely in a scale of measurement then important elements may be lost. Different approaches to assessment have been addressed in some of the previous documents.

The right to quality education is a concept of course enshrined in official texts but for many of us it is a concept that needs to be explained further when it comes to the language dimension. The right to quality education is something that can be defined in different ways depending on the context. It is important that whatever we mean by 'quality education' should not aggravate the existing inequalities and should not deepen the exclusion that exists outside school. That is perhaps a very 'bottom line' definition of quality education but it is something that is very relevant in many school contexts. We can of course provide more positive definitions of quality education and I am sure we would agree on the main features of quality education but we need to think hard about what quality education means.

It is possible to have strict and narrow definitions of descriptors to claim that they are necessarily something you can measure, something graduated that you can place on a scale. Or do we want to use the concept of descriptor in the broader sense to describe any statement that can be used to characterise something be it an objective or a type of activity? There is an argument for operating with a broader concept of descriptor and extend the notion so that it can convey the full range of educational interests not purely in terms of assessment or evaluation.

Looking forward

Joe Sheils

The Steering Committee for Education of the Council of Europe has approved a new medium-term programme for the period 2010-2014 entitled Education for Intercultural Understanding, Human Rights and Democratic Culture. The programme has five main dimensions:

1. Promoting social inclusion and combating discrimination in and through education
2. Education for the core values of the Council of Europe

3. Education for intercultural understanding and sustainable democracies
4. Higher Education for a Europe of values
5. Training of education professionals (Pestalozzi).

The languages project will be carried out within the broader activity aimed at 'Promoting social inclusion and combating discrimination in and through education' and which has two main elements:

(i) Protecting and promoting the right to quality education in European education systems which will focus on

- Building on Council of Europe 'acquis' concerning the right to education
- Defining public responsibility (indicators for the right to education)

(ii) Language policies and the right to education and social inclusion which will

- support member states in developing and implementing language education policies that focus on
 - the right to quality education
 - the right to plurilingual and intercultural education
 - a coherent, holistic approach to ALL languages in education and for education
 - the needs and rights of vulnerable groups
- develop shared reference tools to support policy development and implementation for plurilingual and intercultural education
- carry out a range of multilateral and bilateral co-operation activities outlined below.

These could include:

- expert assistance with policy renewal (Language Education Policy Profiles)
- expert visits with an agreed specific focus with the aim of providing peer support
- thematic seminars or conferences.

1. Language Education Policy Profiles

- A. The current global approach will continue to be offered but with an increased focus on languages of schooling.
- B. A new more focused and briefer Profile activity will also be offered where languages of schooling are a key focus, within a Council of Europe holistic vision of languages in and for education, and the promotion of plurilingual and intercultural education.

2. Targeted expert visits

At the invitation of the education authorities, a Council of Europe expert group (3-4 persons, with a member of the Secretariat of the Language Policy Division) would spend 3 days meeting with the relevant authorities and partners with a view to sharing expertise and providing mutual support on a specific theme or themes. The host country would prepare a short description of the context and issue(s) to be addressed in advance. The Council of Europe expert group would submit its proposals immediately after the visit.

Themes might include e.g.

- language as subject
- languages in other subjects
- links between languages of schooling & foreign languages
- bilingual (and trilingual) education

- transversal dimension of plurilingual and intercultural education
- teacher education
- curriculum design
- assessment/evaluation
- pedagogy
- materials
- others to be identified by partners.....
- migrant students
- low SES students
- minorities (incl. Roma)
- sign language users
- others to be identified by partners
- ...

3. Thematic Seminars / Conferences

Member states wishing to organise a national, regional (e.g. neighbouring countries) or European event are invited to contact the Language Policy Division to discuss possible forms of co-operation. The Division could send a representative, nominate experts to participate or be a partner in the organisation of the event.

Closing

Before the final closing Philia Thalgott who has had a central role in the technical design and construction of the Platform provided information on access to the French and English versions of the texts and information on ways of negotiating the different levels.

The conference closed with a brief summary by the rapporteur. Olivier Maradan provided details and an invitation to the next conference in Geneva in November 2010. There will be particular emphasis on teaching training at that conference. Johanna Panthier concluded by thanking delegates for their attendance and contributions.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Conference programme

Appendix 2: List of preliminary studies



Appendix 3: List of participants

Appendix 1: Conference Programme

8 June/juin 2009	
Chair / Présidente J. Panthier 14.00 – 14.30	Plenary / Plénière Official opening <i>Ouverture officielle</i> : Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni – Director General / Directrice Générale, DG IV
14.30 – 16.00	Overview of the Conference / Vue d'ensemble de la Conférence – Mike Fleming (General Rapporteur) Philosophy and educational purposes of the <i>Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education</i> / Philosophie et objectifs éducatifs de la Plateforme de ressources et références pour une éducation plurilingue et interculturelle - Daniel Coste Mechanisms and content of the <i>Platform</i> / Mécanismes et contenu de la <i>Plateforme</i> – Mike Byram Approach to specific needs of disadvantaged learners Approches concernant les besoins spécifiques d'apprenants défavorisés – Jean-Claude Beacco Case studies concerning the place of <i>Languages of schooling</i> in some <i>Language Education Policy Profiles</i> / Etudes de cas concernant la place des <i>Langues de scolarisation</i> dans quelques <i>Profil de Politiques linguistiques éducatives</i> - Lombardy / Lombardie – Gisella Langé & Mike Byram - Luxembourg / – Edmée Besch & Francis Goullier - Some general comments / Quelques remarques transversales – Daniel Coste
	<i>Break</i>
Chair/Présidente: I. Pieper 16.30 – 17.00	Plenary / Plénière Analysis of data gathered through the Questionnaire for the Collection of competence descriptors through self-analysis of school curricula / Analyse de données rassemblées grâce au Questionnaire pour le Recueil de descripteurs de compétences par l'auto-analyse des curricula scolaires – Marisa Cavalli
17.00 – 17.30	<i>Case studies</i> : Presentation of some competence descriptors / <i>Etudes de cas</i> : Présentation de quelques descripteurs de compétences - Norway / Norvège - Laila Aase - Spain / Espagne - Pilar Pérez Esteve
17.30 – 18.00 Chairs/Présidents: M. Byram & J-C Beacco	Plenary discussion – “ <i>How are Language(s) as subjects and Language(s) in other subjects linked? How does the awareness of these links contribute to intercultural education?</i> ” / Discussion en séance plénière – “ <i>Quel est le lien entre Langue comme matière et Langue(s) des autres matières? Comment la conscience de ce lien contribue-t-elle à l'éducation interculturelle ?</i> ”
9 June/juin 2009	
Chair/ Président: J-C Beacco 9.00 – 9.20	Plenary / Plénière Languages of schooling and Intercultural education / Langues de scolarisation et éducation interculturelle - Mike Byram
9.20 – 9.45	Relationship between descriptors in curricula for language as subject and for language(s) in other subjects / Relations entre descripteurs dans des curricula pour langues comme matière et pour langue(s) des autres matières - Irene Pieper & Helmut Vollmer
9.45 – 10.00	Introduction to group work / Introduction à la séance de travail en groupes - Mike Fleming

	Break
10.30 -12.30	Group work on types of descriptors, their horizontal and vertical links (between subjects and from one educational sector to the following), their adequacy and limits, levels, etc. (discussion based on analysis of national / regional/ local curricula prepared in advance by the participants) / Séance de travail en groupes sur les types de descripteurs, leurs liens horizontaux et verticaux (entre disciplines scolaires et d'un secteur éducatif au suivant), leur adéquation et limites, niveaux, etc. (discussions basées sur l'analyse de programmes nationaux / régionaux / locaux préparée à l'avance par les participants)
12.30 – 14.30	Lunch
Chair/ Président: J-C Beacco 14.30 – 15.00	Plenary / Plénière Group work reports / Rapports des groupes
15.00 – 15.30 Chair/ Présidente: H. Vollmer	Different approaches to competence descriptors / Différentes approches concernant les descripteurs de compétences – Mike Fleming
15.30 – 16.15	Presentation of some concrete examples of production procedures / Présentation de quelques exemples concrets de procédures de production :: - Framework for early second language learning / Cadre pour l'apprentissage précoce d'une langue seconde – Machteld Verhelst - Czech Republic / République tchèque - Irena Mašková - Slovenia / Slovénie - Ljudmila Ivšek
	Break
16.45 – 18.00	Other examples of production procedures for descriptors / D'autres exemples de procédures pour la production de descripteurs - CEFR / CECR – Brian North - HarmoS – Olivier Maradan
10 June/juin 2009	
Chair/Présidente: J. Panthier 9.00 – 9.45	Plenary <i>Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education: Possible contributions from member states / Plateforme de ressources et références pour une éducation plurilingue et interculturelle : Quelles contributions des Etats membres ?</i> – Philia Thalgot
9.45 – 10.15	Languages of schooling curricula for disadvantaged learners / Curricula des langues de scolarisation pour enfants défavorisés: - A Framework of reference for Romani / Un Cadre de référence pour le romani – David Little - Curriculum for Norwegian as a second language / Curriculum pour le norvégien langue seconde – Else Ryen
10.15 – 10.45	The role of descriptors in curriculum development, teaching, learning and assessment / Le rôle de descripteurs dans l'élaboration de curricula, l'enseignement, l'apprentissage et l'évaluation – Daniel Coste Break
Chair/Président: J. Sheils 11.15 – 12.00	Plenary / Plénière - Summing up / Synthèse – Mike Fleming - Follow-up / Suivi: Joe Sheils - Towards the next event (Switzerland 2010) / Vers la prochaine conférence (Suisse, 2010) - Olivier Maradan - Official closing / Clôture officielle – Johanna Panthier

Appendix 2: List of preliminary studies

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education 2. Plurilingual and intercultural education as a project 3. Plurilingual and intercultural education as a right 4. Multicultural Societies, Pluricultural People and the Project of Intercultural Education 5. Language(s) of Schooling 6. Languages as subject 7. Reading 8. Writing 9. Language in other subjects 10. An approach with reference points - <i>Items for a description of linguistic competence in the language of schooling necessary for teaching/learning history(end of obligatory education)</i> <p>11. Language Education Policy Profiles</p>  <p>Discussion paper on 'Profiles'...</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plateforme de ressources et de références pour l'éducation plurilingue et interculturelle 2. L'éducation plurilingue et interculturelle comme projet 3. L'éducation plurilingue et interculturelle comme droit 4. Sociétés multiculturelles et individus pluriculturels : le projet de l'éducation interculturelle 5. Langue(s) de scolarisation 6. La langue comme matière 7. La lecture 8. L'écriture 9. Langue(s) des autres disciplines 10. Une démarche et des points de référence - <i>Eléments pour une description des compétences linguistiques en langue de scolarisation nécessaires à l'enseignement/apprentissage de l'histoire (fin de la scolarité obligatoire)</i> <p>11. Profils de Politiques linguistiques éducatives</p>  <p>Texte pour discussion sur les ...</p>
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