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# PLURILINGUAL AND PLURICULTURAL COMPETENCE

*With a Foreword and Complementary Bibliography*  
*French version originally published in 1997*

**Studies towards a Common European Framework of Reference for  
language learning and teaching**

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# CONTENTS

Foreword .....	v
Introduction.....	vii
<b>1. Preliminary considerations .....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1. Purpose of the study .....	9
1.2. Some paradoxes .....	9
1.2.1 <i>Communicative competence and the native-speaker model</i> .....	9
1.2.2 <i>Communicative competence and cultural dimensions</i> .....	9
1.2.3 <i>"Pluri", "Bi" and "Inter"</i> .....	10
<b>2. First approach and general options .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1. Plurilingual and pluricultural competence: a tentative description .....	11
2.1.1 <i>Ordinary imbalance</i> .....	11
2.1.2 <i>Plurilingual competence for a linguistic and cultural identity</i> .....	11
2.1.3 <i>Partial competence and plurilingual competence</i> .....	12
2.1.4 <i>An evolving, malleable competence</i> .....	13
2.2. Major guidelines .....	13
2.2.1 <i>Positions and assertions</i> .....	13
2.2.2 <i>General organisation</i> .....	13
<b>3. Ordinary plurilingual and pluricultural experience and schooling .....</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1. Ordinary experience of linguistic and cultural pluralism .....	14
3.2. The historical and institutional weight of initial schooling .....	15
<b>4. Plurilingual competence.....</b>	<b>16</b>
4.1. The concept of plurilingual competence .....	16
4.2. Plurilingualism and semilingualism.....	17
4.3. Plurilingual competence: handling imbalance .....	18
4.4. Plurilingual competence and bilingual speech .....	19
4.5. Plurilingual competence: principles for a description .....	19
<b>5. Pluricultural competence: descriptive principles .....</b>	<b>20</b>
5.1. The concept of pluricultural competence.....	20
5.2. Principles for a description of pluricultural competence .....	21
5.2.1 <i>Family paths and pluricultural capital</i> .....	21
5.2.2 <i>Pluricultural capital, market and identity strategies</i> .....	22
5.2.3 <i>The identity strategies of the plurilingual individual in the school context</i> .....	23

<b>6. A school open to pluriculturalism and plurilingualism?</b> .....	<b>23</b>
6.1. Resistance to pluralism .....	23
6.1.1 <i>Educational acquisition and pluriculturalism</i> .....	23
6.1.2 <i>Plurilingualism and educational compartmentalisation of languages</i> .....	24
6.2. The desirability of a school contribution to the construction of plurilingual and pluricultural competences .....	24
6.2.1 <i>Setting up an initial "portfolio"</i> .....	25
6.2.2 <i>Learning to exploit existing resources</i> .....	26
6.3. Language curriculum and curriculum scenarios .....	26
6.3.1 <i>Languages elsewhere than in foreign-language courses</i> .....	26
6.3.2 <i>Languages among themselves</i> .....	27
6.3.3 <i>Plurality of languages and cultures, non-linguistic subjects school project</i> .....	27
6.3.4 <i>Return to the concept of partial competence</i> .....	28
6.3.5 <i>Towards curriculum scenarios</i> .....	30
6.4. Out of school or post-school learning and assessment.....	32
<b>7. Summing up .....</b>	<b>33</b>

**APPENDICES ..... 35**

Mathias, Wolfgang, Maria, Albert, Martine and the others ( <i>Interviews conducted and presented by Geneviève Zarate</i> ).....	35
Mathias .....	35
<i>Comment</i> .....	35
Wolfgang .....	36
<i>Comment</i> .....	37
Maria.....	38
<i>Comment</i> .....	39
Albert .....	40
<i>Comment</i> .....	42
Martine.....	42
<i>Comment</i> .....	44

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

ORIGINAL BIBLIOGRAPHY (1997) .....	45
COMPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHY (2009).....	48

## FOREWORD

This study was first published in French in 1997. At the time, the concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence was new, and somewhat subversive. It defended the (sociolinguistic) notion that because plurilingual individuals used two or more languages – separately or together – for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people, and because their needs and uses of several languages in everyday life could be very different, plurilingual speakers were rarely equally or entirely fluent in their languages. Within these orientations, the focus on the individual as the *locus* and *actor* of contact encouraged a shift of terminology, from multilingualism (the study of societal contact) to *plurilingualism*.

In the 1997 study, a tentative effort to conceptualize the nature of a *plurilingual and pluricultural competence*, described it as a life-long capital and a complex and unique reservoir of co-ordinate experiences, developing differently in relation to individual biographies, social trajectories and life paths:

*On désignera par compétence plurilingue et pluriculturelle, la compétence à communiquer langagièrement et à interagir culturellement possédée par un locuteur qui maîtrise, à des degrés divers, plusieurs langues et a, à des degrés divers, l'expérience de plusieurs cultures, tout en étant à même de gérer l'ensemble de ce capital langagier et culturel. L'option majeure est de considérer qu'il n'y a pas là superposition ou juxtaposition de compétences toujours distinctes, mais bien existence d'une compétence plurielle, complexe, voire composite et hétérogène, qui inclut des compétences singulières, voire partielles, mais qui est une en tant que répertoire disponible pour l'acteur social concerné (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 1997, p. 12)<sup>1</sup>*

[Plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social actor has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the social actor may draw] (see *infra*).

The definition acknowledged that while linguistic and cultural competence is partly the historical product of social forces, the competence in several languages and cultures of one given speaker is *single* and *unique*<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the concept of “*plurilingual social actor*” emphasized the relationship between action taken within a specific context, and strategic recourse by the social actors involved to different languages and linguistic plurality, as well as strategic efforts to dissimulate part of their linguistic and cultural repertoire.

The concept of a plurilingual and pluricultural competence involved important paradigmatic shifts (Coste, 2001, Moore, 2006, see also Blanchet, 2007):

- It developed a wholistic and multiple, rather than segmented vision, of language skills and of language, identity and culture;
- It insisted on disequilibrium and partial competence, rather than on balance of skills;
- It insisted on potential linkages, rather than on separateness of its various components;
- It developed a dynamic vision of competence, situated, contextualized, and changing over time and circumstances;
- It included circulations, mediations and passages *between languages* and *between cultures*;
- It considered competence as highly individualized, and dependent on life paths and personal biographies, and as such, subject to evolution and change, whether in or out of school.

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<sup>1</sup> The French version of the Common European Framework of Reference reads: On désignera par **compétence plurilingue et pluriculturelle**, la compétence à communiquer langagièrement et à interagir culturellement d'un acteur social qui possède, à des degrés divers, la maîtrise de plusieurs langues et l'expérience de plusieurs cultures, tout en étant à même de gérer l'ensemble de ce capital langagier et culturel. On considérera qu'il n'y a pas là superposition ou juxtaposition de compétences distinctes, mais bien existence d'une compétence complexe, voire composite, dans laquelle l'acteur peut puiser. (*Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues*, 2001, p. 129)

<sup>2</sup> As such, the English version of the *Common European Framework of Reference* unfortunately introduces a conceptual slip when it proposes two different translations for the French concept: it (correctly) reads “plurilingual and pluricultural competence” (2001, page 168) and, (incorrectly), “plurilingual competence **and** pluricultural competence” (our emphasis, page 133) (see Zarate, 2009).

The numerous changes in the composition and functioning of complex geopolitical spheres are both an invitation and a challenge to social actors in terms of exercising citizenship. On a more personal level, identity building has become a considerably more complex process for the individual. These phenomena, with regard to the European context, are deeply rooted in profound changes that have occurred over several decades, including the recognition and affirmation of regional and ethnic minorities and the attendant challenges encountered by Nation-states in a globalised world (Coste & Simon, 2009).

Current approaches perceive languages and speakers' plurilingual and pluricultural competence as fluid, dynamic and changing over situations and time. In Europe today, plurilingualism defines the language policy of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2001 and 2006), and is a fundamental principle of language education policies in Europe and elsewhere in the world (Beacco & Byram, 2007; Candelier, 2008; Meissner, 2007; Vandergrift, 2006). It exemplifies for that reason powerful symbolic, social and political stakes, while providing, at the same time, a more rational and modernist notion of change and empowerment.

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## Introduction

This study is one of a number commissioned by the Council of Europe in connection with the development of a Common European Framework for language learning, teaching and assessment. The aim of the Framework is to set out in some detail the parameters and categories required to describe the act of human communication through language, as well as the many kinds of knowledge, skill and attitude which underlie the ability and willingness of language users to participate in acts of communication. The Framework is descriptive, not prescriptive. We hope that practitioners of all kinds in the language field will be encouraged to reflect on their current practice and to inform clients and colleagues of their objectives and methods in a coherent and transparent way.

Daniel Coste and his Saint-Cloud colleagues take an in-depth look in this study at an issue closely related to all the Council of Europe's activities promoting the teaching and learning of modern languages. Like other international institutions, the Council has been resisting an alluring but simplistic solution to the problem of international communication, namely the learning of one and the same language of communication by all Europeans, who would focus solely on developing skills in that single language. It takes the view that, as stated in Recommendation R(82)18 of the Committee of Ministers, "the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed, and that a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding". Since the time when those words were written, the number of states which are members of the Council for Cultural Co-operation has almost doubled, and the number of national and regional languages concerned has increased proportionately, or even far more steeply if account is taken of the very large number of mother tongues brought in by immigrant populations from other continents and used on a daily basis by the communities that they have created, mainly in Europe's major urban centres. Even the greatest polyglot could not hope to be able to communicate in all these languages. So how can the apparently contradictory aims of universal mutual understanding and diversification be reconciled?

Clearly, the "major educational effort" needed has to be a flexible one taking many forms. Growing pressure to acquire a shared means of communication - *Einsprachigkeit ist heilbar* - must not result in our overlooking our constant need to understand our neighbours when they use their own language in the context of their own culture. This makes it vital for each country's education system to cultivate an open attitude to the experience of otherness and to give young people the knowledge and know-how they need in order to continue developing their understanding of other peoples' languages and cultures.

It is important to grasp as well that, for the sake of intercommunication and interaction between the peoples of Europe, the problems arising must be dealt with in a context of lifelong learning. Everyone in every field must - and will want to - spend some of his or her adult life finding out about the plurilingual and pluricultural reality of Europe. The process of learning a language is not over when a proficiency for communication purposes has been acquired and the relevant school course comes to an end. Schooldays are also - and in particular - opportunities for learning how to learn and how to use a language, and should leave pupils with an independent capacity to do both. Acquisition of this learning independence cannot be reduced to a mere effect of the study of languages as part of the school curriculum: it implies deliberate development of a certain linguistic awareness and of an "ability to learn". Pupils should therefore be encouraged to understand texts written in languages other than those that they are officially studying and in which they will obtain qualifications. The European Framework of Reference can help to facilitate this personal awareness and to develop independent learning, while the European Language Portfolio makes it possible to record the wide range of skills acquired by learners in a number of languages and their numerous intercultural experiences.

The writers of this study make an in-depth examination of all the interdependent factors which need to be taken into account in the devising and implementation of a language policy encouraging every learner to achieve an integrating communication competency spanning a large number of languages and cultures and encompassing not only general competences at different levels, but also balanced partial competences fostering receptive skills.

We hope that this major study will receive all the attention that it merits from those who devise language syllabuses, and will provide ways of meeting some of the challenges thrown up by rapid change on our continent.

J.L.M. Trim, Project Director  
*Language Learning for European Citizenship*  
Cambridge, March 1997



## **1. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1.1. Purpose of the study**

This study represented a stage in the process of developing a common European reference framework for the teaching and learning of languages. Its purpose was to establish a relationship between the concept of communicative competence, which has had something of a chequered life but is still fruitful, and the prospects of maintaining and promoting linguistic and cultural pluralism, which is both a recognised fact and a political issue in today's Europe and elsewhere. The concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence fitted into this relationship.

The concept of communicative competence involves attaching, from the outset, special importance to the social actor who possesses and develops it. Such competence can be seen as a complex body of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which, by controlling and using the resources of language, makes it possible to enquire, to create, to learn, to find entertainment, to do and to cause to be done: in brief, to act and interact with others in a specific cultural environment.

Respect for linguistic and cultural pluralism and recognition of its progress mean not only acknowledging the multiplicity of languages and cultures which constitute and shape Europe but also postulating that this multilingualism and multiculturalism cannot consist in simply placing different communities side by side. The two phenomena are a product of exchange and mediation processes carried out in multiple forms and combinations, through the medium of actors who themselves have a foot in several languages and cultures.

Talking about plurilingual and pluricultural competence therefore means taking an interest in the communicative competence of social actors capable of functioning in different languages and cultures, of acting as linguistic and cultural intermediaries and mediators, and of managing and reshaping this multiple competence as they proceed along their personal paths.

### **1.2. Some paradoxes**

This field of study is marked by a number of paradoxes, particularly in its relations with teaching and learning. Although well known, they nonetheless exert a strong influence on thinking and action.

#### ***1.2.1 Communicative competence and the native-speaker model***

Whatever the original characteristics of the concept of communicative competence (Hymes emphasised the heterogeneousness of linguistic communities and individual competences), it has developed, as far as language teaching is concerned, within a model of an ideal native communicator: the characteristics of communicative competence (seen as distinct from a strictly linguistic competence) are the sociolinguistic and pragmatic abilities, knowledge and aptitudes of speakers who are implicitly assumed to be monolingual native speakers, or who are at least regarded as functioning in endolingual communicative situations (i.e. communication involving persons deemed to have a mastered, homogenous knowledge of the entire resources of the medium used, namely their first language). The goals of learning a foreign language, including the various threshold levels, fall short of this native-speaker competence; furthermore, the learner is not explicitly taken into account as a plurilingual subject (able, for example, to call on the resources of his mother tongue(s) or of another foreign language of which he already has some knowledge).

#### ***1.2.2 Communicative competence and cultural dimensions***

From an epistemic point of view, the concept of communicative competence has been related to cultural anthropology (as far as Hymes is concerned) and, under the influence in particular of a certain view of linguistic pragmatics, the dominant tendency in language education has been to interpret communicative competence in linguistic rather than cultural terms. Attention has thus been focused on the multiplicity of means of expressing language acts or functions, taken as largely common and transversal, at the expense of the variety of cultural circumstances in which these acts and functions take place and assume specific meanings. Intra and inter-linguistic variation has been regarded as of greater importance than intra- and inter-cultural differentiation.

This observation appears to be a perfectly normal one if the initial aim is to learn a particular foreign language, and if it is considered that no major cultural obstacle lies in the way of such learning; or again if it is believed that the necessary cultural discovery will in some way come "with" the language or in addition to it (provided learning conditions and materials are sufficiently "authentic"). This is not the case, however, if cultural resistance weighs more heavily or if the existence of a strong relationship between language and culture is not taken as a principle. This relationship is too often used as a pretext for suggesting that learning a language for communication purposes will enable the culture necessary for those purposes to be gleaned along the way.

In any event, with the probable exception of cases of what has been called "intercultural pedagogy" and awareness experiences, a realisation of the multiplicity of cultures (including those present in a given group of learners) and the capacity to perceive, observe, objectivise and experience this multiplicity are only exceptionally considered in the teaching and learning project as far as the development of communicative competence is concerned.

### 1.2.3 "Pluri", "Bi" and "Inter"

From the point of view of language planning and policy, the multiplicity of languages and cultures, with its ethnological and sociological dimensions, constitutes a basic datum which has long been incorporated in analysis. This is not the case, however, with work on the acquisition and teaching/learning of languages and the psychological approaches thereto, in which binary models (as regards the modes of contact between two languages or two cultures) are clearly dominant. This distinction between *pluri* on the one side and *bi* on the other admittedly corresponds to methodological considerations, and to the difference in study angles and subjects; but it has also helped to bring about non-neutral individual and collective perceptions.

*Bi* (duo, dual or couple) summons up images of balance or imbalance, community or difference, dialogue or opposition. The very terms *bilingual* and *bilingualism* lend themselves in current usage, but also sometimes among specialists, to ambiguities which will be discussed later. Expressions like "dialogue between cultures" seem to transfer the metaphor of a binary relationship to the cultural domain. It is clear too that pairs such as "mother tongue/foreign language" and "source language/target language" not only maintain this form of dichotomy, but often convey the notion of an unattainable ideal of "perfect" bilingualism.

*Pluri*, understood as "more than two", has quickly revealed itself in many analyses as a concept of unmanageable and uncontrollable complexity. It has thus necessitated recourse to a unifying or dominant authority chosen from inside or outside the framework of multiplicity. Just as in formerly colonised countries where large numbers of languages co-exist, the language of the former coloniser may long remain the language of schooling. In the same way, in a foreign-language class where pupils are of many different linguistic origins, this multiplicity justifies exclusive use of the target language. Similarly, in many countries the establishment of national unity has historically involved a reduction in the number of "regional" languages and in specific cultural features. *Multi/pluri* (*many*) sometimes entails an appeal or return to *uni* (*one*). Questions are already being widely asked about the possible or supposed (dis)advantages of early bilingualism; one can imagine what suspicions, in terms of the cognitive health of individuals or the good governance of a country, might therefore surround the promotion of plurilingualism (which would cease to be the exclusive preserve of those exceptional individuals whom common usage describes not as *pluri-lingual* but as *polyglot*).

*Inter*, an indicator of relationship and not of simple juxtaposition, oscillates between the *bi* and */pluri* modes: while the concept of *interlanguage* is governed by duality, the *intercultural* concept operates sometimes in the mode of "two" (relations between two cultures or existence of a mixed culture, or appearance of a stage in-between), and sometimes in the "more than two" mode (interception, interpenetration, interference or inter-construction and inter-definition of several cultures). It is stressed, however, that most usages of *inter* in the field of teaching and learning languages and cultures seem to refer to actors, learners and communicators and to the competence they possess or must acquire.

## 2. FIRST APPROACH AND GENERAL OPTIONS

While a review of various paradoxes is necessary, it is important to stress that the concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, important as it is for the purpose mentioned at the beginning of this study,

has had hardly any recognised status in didactic thinking at the time the study was released in its French version (1996), any more than in pedagogical applications. It still calls for further work of which the options and analyses presented here are only a beginning.

## 2.1. Plurilingual and pluricultural competence: a tentative description

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social actor has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the social actor may draw<sup>3</sup>.

### 2.1.1 Ordinary imbalance

As thus initially defined, plurilingual and pluricultural competence generally presents itself as unbalanced or uneven in one or more ways:

- general proficiency may vary according to the language
- the profile of language ability may be different from one language to another (eg excellent speaking ability in two languages, but good writing ability in only one of them, and partly mastered written comprehension and limited oral ability in a third one);
- the pluricultural profile may differ from the plurilingual profile (eg good knowledge of the culture of a community but a poor knowledge of its language, or poor knowledge of the culture of a community whose dominant language is nevertheless well mastered).

Because of this imbalance, a characteristic of plurilingual and pluricultural competence is that the *strategies* used in carrying out tasks may vary according to the language or language combinations employed. Thus, attitudes and values (*savoir-être*) stressing openness, conviviality and goodwill (as in the use of gestures, mime, proxemics) may, in the case of a language in which the individual has limited linguistic competence, make up for relative limitations in the course of interaction with a native speaker, whereas in a language he knows better this same individual may adopt a more distant or reserved attitude. The *task* involving a language activity may thus be redefined, the linguistic message reshaped or redistributed according to the resources actually available to the actor and his perception of these resources or his perception of his interlocutor's resources (like the possible use of forms of code-switching and bilingual speech, i.e. passing from one language to another in the same conversational exchange).

### 2.1.2 Plurilingual competence for a linguistic and cultural identity

Another key feature of what defines a plurilingual and pluricultural competence is that it does not result of a simple addition of two (or more) monolingual competences in several languages. It permits combinations and alternations of different kinds. It is possible to switch codes during a message, and to resort to bilingual forms of speech. A single, richer repertoire of language varieties and available options thus allows choices based on this interlinguistic variation when circumstances permit.

This also means that the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competence promotes the emergence of linguistic awareness, and even of metacognitive strategies, which enable the social actor to become aware of and to control his own "spontaneous" ways of handling tasks and, in particular, their linguistic dimension.

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<sup>3</sup> Note: The English version in The [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#) reads: "Plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a **social agent** has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the **user** may draw" (Council of Europe, English version, 2001 p. 168) [our emphasis, 2009]. For a discussion regarding this shift in terminology, see Moore & Gajo (2009).

In addition, this experience of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism:

- exploits pre-existing sociolinguistic and pragmatic components in communicative competence, but makes them more complex in return,
- leads to a better perception of what is general and what is specific in the linguistic organisation of different languages,
- by its nature, refines knowledge of how to learn, and the capacity to form relations with others and to deal with new situations.

It may therefore to some degree speed up subsequent learning in the linguistic and cultural areas. This is so even if plurilingual and pluricultural competence is "unbalanced", and if proficiency in a particular language remains "partial".

It can be claimed, moreover, that while the knowledge of one foreign language and culture does not always lead to going beyond what may be ethnocentric in relation to the "native" language and culture, and may even have the opposite effect, a knowledge of several languages is more likely to achieve this, while at the same time enriching the potential for learning.

In this type of analysis, respect for the diversity of languages and the recommendation that more than one foreign language be learnt at school are significant. The issue here is not, for example, one of simply making a linguistic policy choice at a certain moment in the history of Europe, nor even - however important this aim may be - of increasing future opportunities for young people competent in more than two languages. The task is also to help learners:

- to construct their linguistic and cultural identity by incorporating in it a diversified experience of otherness;
- to develop their ability to learn through this same diversified experience as a result of relating to several languages and cultures.

### **2.1.3 Partial competence and plurilingual competence**

It is in this perspective also that the concept of *partial competence* in a particular language is significant: it does not mean being satisfied, for reasons of principle or pragmatism, with a very limited mastery of a foreign language but, rather, of seeing this mastery, imperfect at a given moment, as part of a *multiple* plurilingual competence which it enriches. It should also be pointed out that this "partial" competence is at the same time a *functional* competence with respect to specific limited objectives. The partial competence may concern *language activities* (e.g. receptive activities: development of oral or written comprehension ability); it may concern a particular *domain* and specific *tasks* (eg allowing a post-office clerk to give information on the most usual post-office operations to foreign customers speaking a particular language). But it may also involve *individual general competences* (e.g. non-linguistic knowledge about the characteristics of other languages and cultures and their communities), so long as there is a complementary functional development of one or other dimension of the specified competences. In other words, the concept of partial competence must be resituated positively with respect to the concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence. A competence acquired in a language is partial where it is part of a plurilingual competence which encompasses it, and where, as regards that language, it "qualifies" the actor concerned for certain language activities and situated use in certain contexts.

### **2.1.4 An evolving, malleable competence**

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence is not considered here to be stabilised and (un)balanced in a particular way once and for all. Depending on the path followed by the social actor, his competence evolves, becomes enriched with new components, supplements or transforms certain others, and leaves others to wither away. This is a normal effect of occupational, geographical and family movements and of changing personal interests.

## **2.2. Major guidelines**

### **2.2.1 Positions and assertions**

Following these preliminaries, the study can be said to fall within a set of assertions coming under the heading, depending on the options adopted, of observation, strong hypothesis or postulate:

- every socialised actor is a subject who has been exposed in some degree to linguistic and cultural pluralism;
- since it plays a decisive role in socialisation, the school helps to introduce this experience of multilingualism and multiculturalism, albeit unknowingly and with counter-productive effects;
- the main purpose of language training, particularly for the school, is to contribute to the development of a competence which unifies, functionalises, increases and enhances this capital of plurilingual and pluricultural experience;
- such a contribution implies, for the school, a decompartmentalisation, both internal (between disciplines) and external (between places and times of learning on the one hand, and their environment on the other);
- as a result, the overall design of the language curriculum is exceedingly important;
- the function of the school, however fundamental and formative it may be and however assertive it must become in the construction of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, is only one element in life paths and individual and family histories, which play a much more decisive and restructuring role in the relationship with linguistic and cultural pluralism.

### **2.2.2 General organisation**

After formulation of its major options, the overall organisation of the study follows the following order:

- In the first stage, a reminder is given that initial socialisation generally includes an experience of linguistic and cultural pluralism, which is often ignored by the school.
- A second, more developed stage clarifies certain aspects of plurilingual competence, by extending the scope of work on bilingualism.
- A third stage, symmetrical and complementary, clarifies the concept of cultural competence by partly, and deliberately, separating it from the linguistic dimensions.
- The fourth stage returns to the position of the school, discussing its curricular aspects and resituating it in the light of life paths followed by the social actors.
- Using case histories, examples of and comments on some of these life paths are given in an appendix.

### **3. ORDINARY PLURILINGUAL AND PLURICULTURAL EXPERIENCE AND SCHOOLING**

#### **3.1. Ordinary experience of linguistic and cultural pluralism**

It is paradoxical that the construction of plurilingual and pluricultural competence is in danger of being considered an ambitious, and even unrealistic or dangerous, objective, when in practically all contemporary communities experience of the pluralism of languages and cultures occurs very early and very widely.

While isolated, monolingual and homogenous communities have existed in the past (with respect to their ways of life, standards, traditions and practices, even if, in known reality and in myths, there were inevitably frontiers, an "elsewhere" populated by others with different manners and speech), it would be rather difficult to find human groups today in which variation in languages and cultures is not incorporated into quasi-daily empirical experience, for reasons both of external openness and exposure, and of internal differentiation.

On the one hand, all social actors in a given community have, from their earliest age, have had contact with other cultures and languages, either directly (because of tourism, migration, etc) or through media (information and entertainment). Regardless of how this experience is perceived and appreciated (valued, ignored, belittled), and how it is structured (depending on the languages and cultures in contact), particularly under the influence of the family environment or peer group, it exists for each child and is accompanied from then on by perceptions of and attitudes to those languages and cultures.

On the other hand, varieties and sub-varieties of various orders (linked, inter alia, to socio-economic, generational and occupational origins, and to types and levels of education) abound, even within a community deemed to share the same language and culture. There too, initial socialisation inevitably encounters this form of linguistic and cultural pluralism, admittedly distinct from multilingualism and multiculturalism in the normal sense (i.e. contact of languages and cultures in a specific context), but productive nonetheless of social perceptions relating to this disparity in linguistic and cultural practices.

Moreover, in the case both of external exposure and of internal differentiation, the initial experience, however general it may be, shows characteristics that differ according to the original context and the children's initial paths: leaving aside for our present purposes the case of young people from immigrant backgrounds or that of families consisting of "mixed" couples (parents of different linguistic origins), "early" experience of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism differs markedly depending on whether it concerns, say, a young villager living in an environment which is relatively homogenous from a socio-economic and socio-cultural point of view but exposed to television and to the seasonal comings and goings of tourists and holidaymakers from the town and other places, or a young city dweller from a town with a varied population, where the presence of strangers and forms of cultural and linguistic otherness are everyday realities. In other words, plurilingual and pluricultural experience is very soon diversified, and it inevitably shows imbalances with regard to modes and degrees of exposure to such other languages or varieties and to such other communities and cultural practices.

What has just been said about the initial relationship with pluralism has only concerned - with regard to "ordinary" cases - experience or exposure. It does not concern the creation of communicative competence, which would already incorporate such pluralism. This does not mean that such forms of experience and exposure do not lead to knowledge and skills, even very limited ones, which permit exchange with the "other". At this stage in the analysis, however, the development of pluricultural or plurilingual competence in the limited sense of this study is not pre-judged. Nor is it assumed that this initial relationship is always favourable to the subsequent construction of competence: the perceptions brought about by these first contacts may just as easily become obstacles to linguistic learning and/or cultural discovery.

#### **3.2. The historical and institutional weight of initial schooling**

It is a commonplace to point out that, in most school systems, initial schooling is directed more at standardisation than at education for difference. Many factors, on which there is no need to dwell at length, contribute to this. Some, however, may be mentioned briefly.

a. In most European countries (including officially multilingual countries like Switzerland or Belgium), one major function of the school has been to contribute to the education of citizens sharing common values, notably those that make them into one people and one nation. Ideological constructs of nation and people are carried through the use and transmission of one (or several) national language(s), irrespective of the pupils' original languages and family practices. In many cases too, the language(s) of schooling (or even, more restrictively, the variety or standard of the language(s) preferred by the school) is/are chosen to the exclusion not only of other languages also used in the country concerned and by the pupils, but also of regional or sociolectal varieties of the same language.

b. The ideological - but also pedagogically constructed - justification for this option lies in the aim of individual advancement, and not only that of national cohesion. Schooling in a single linguistic medium tends, at least in the medium term, towards equality or equalisation of opportunity, with an eye to a future in which language proficiency will be a potent factor in academic achievement, social integration and professional success.

c. Learning to read and write, a major component and objective of initial schooling, is often also viewed as needing to be rooted at first in a single language, to avoid risks of harmful confusion or delay.

d. As regards cultural references, the history and geography of the country concerned and the memorisation of facts, dates and the names of places and persons have long had, and often still have, unifying and civilising objectives (in the active sense). Internal differentiation and external pluralism have almost no place in this process, except as regards sharing the same values (the diversity of a country's landscapes seen in terms of balanced wealth, of a form of completeness) or serving as a foil (colonised territories long "exoticised" or even "primitivised" in order to highlight the achievement of the civiliser).

This process involves a certain view of frontiers and of the neighbours beyond. Consolidation and assertion of identity are assumed to depend on this focusing on a language, history, country or literature, flanked and surrounded by boundaries, margins or places elsewhere. Certainly, pluralism is not denied, especially as it has its own place in the construction of identity, but it is not taken fully into account nor, *a fortiori*, incorporated.

It is clear that the stock of plurilingual and pluricultural experience possessed by each child (and, even more so, each class bringing together children's individual paths) is not only difficult to situate within this conventional thrust of initial schooling, but even seems to run counter to the aim of education.

It would, of course, be possible to dwell here on other, more complex cases occurring in Europe: methods of educating children from immigrant families, as well as the choices made in countries or regions where, in the public education system taken overall, the aim is:

- either to maintain or promote as from primary school a language other than the country's dominant national language (Catalan rather than Castilian Spanish in Catalonia, French rather than Italian in the Valle d'Aosta),
- or to introduce very early a language of international ideological scope (Russian in the majority of eastern-bloc countries before 1989),
- or to pave the way for the construction of plurilingualism involving national languages (Letzeburgisch, German and French in Luxembourg).

Each of these situations presents or has presented special features which are often subject to doubts, practical difficulties and discussions about methods and short, medium and long-term results. Likewise, an increasing number of experiments (most of them not yet completely stabilised or generally applied) on the introduction of a foreign language into primary education have been carried out over the years in various European countries.

However, apart from the fact that there still are few overall studies of these situations (which, as stressed by Baetens Beardsmore in 1994, have never given rise to as many research projects or assessments as the immersion programmes in Canada), it will be preferable to come back more particularly to some of these cases later in this study. It can already be noted that, in their principle if not always in their methods, none of these experiments can be seen as running counter to the weighty historical and

institutional tendencies mentioned above regarding initial schooling. The complex nature of the situations referred to is due rather to the fact that issues of identity (and the connection between these issues and the presence of languages in school) arise on several levels, and that the relationship with otherness is thus structured differently. So while the potential for constructing plurilingual and pluricultural competences certainly becomes greater, this does not mean that this potential is actually exploited or that the introduction of such competence is actually pursued.

At this point in the analysis, it is methodologically useful to single out briefly the linguistic dimension and the cultural dimension of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, even if the basic approach of this study assumes that such competence is a *single entity*, albeit complex and heterogeneous. We shall therefore first return to the relationship between the concept of plurilingual competence and studies on bilingualism, after which we shall examine the concept of pluricultural competence. In both cases, emphasis will be laid on the perceptions, functions and certain workings of the plurilingualism and pluriculturalism deployed by "ordinary" social actors, more than on the role of the school in maintaining or developing this pluralism. As mentioned above, we shall return in a final section to the educational aspects of constructing plurilingual and pluricultural competence and also to the concept of partial competence.

## 4. PLURILINGUAL COMPETENCE

### 4.1. The concept of plurilingual competence

Research on ordinary bilingualism and its construction has long afforded key insights for all those who are working to introduce competence in more than one language in the school domain. Ordinary bilingualism should be understood as the bilingualism of any individual who, as a result of various circumstances (mixed marriage, travels, migration, language policies of the region of residence), develops an ability to communicate in more than one language in order to meet his daily communication needs. We have chosen to keep the term "bilingualism" initially in this section of the study because it has been the term widely used to describe work on language contact. However, we consider that it does not (only) imply the dual practice of languages but of two languages *at least*. It includes (and is included in) plurilingual competence, although the latter concept adds other dimensions to it.

The term "bilingualism" has encompassed many definitions. It has been used to describe the individual as a speaker of at least two languages, as well as institutions and societies in a wider geo-political space. Depending on the point of view adopted, a preference for dichotomic categorisations has resulted in unclear divisions and a focus on only certain aspects of language contact phenomena.<sup>4</sup> We shall not return in detail to these categorisations; their abundance is a sufficient indication of the complexity of language contact. Put simply, definitions of individual bilingualism range from the description of individuals possessing native-speaker fluency in two linguistic codes ("the native-like control of two languages", Bloomfield, 1935) to those describing a bilingual person to possess a minimum competence in at least one of the four language competences (comprehension and expression, writing and speaking) (Macnamara, 1967). Grosjean (1982) has proposed that bilingualism should be defined wholistically, and take into account dual language usage in daily communication: "The person who regularly uses two languages in daily life is bilingual, not he who possesses a similar (and perfect) mastery of both languages". Bilingual competence is thus an ordinary competence<sup>5</sup> in that it is a quality possessed by a large number of speakers; it operates in very ordinary situations of day-to-day life. Bilingual competence should not be confused with the addition of two languages, equally mastered at advanced levels.

It is therefore necessary to resort to a more flexible definition of plurilingualism, capable of conveying the diversity of individual situations spread out over a multi-dimensional, dynamic and evolving set of

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<sup>4</sup> For example, in his glossary of the terminology of bilingualism, Mackay (1978) lists nineteen types of bilingualism: complementary, bilateral, transitional, functional, horizontal, institutional, minimal, natural, non-reciprocal, occasional, productive, progressive, receptive, reciprocal, regressive, residual, supplementary, unilateral and vertical.

<sup>5</sup> Lüdi and Py began their work *Être bilingue* (1986) with these words: "Over half of humanity is plurilingual. Plurilingualism is not an exception, there is nothing exotic or enigmatic about it, it simply represents a possibility of normality...." [our translation]



continuous variations.<sup>6</sup> Plurilingualism does not describe fixed competences. Individuals develop competences in a number of languages from desire or necessity, in order to meet the need to communicate with others. Plurilingualism is constructed as individuals pursue their lives, it is a reflection of their social paths: "(Plurilingualism) changes form: there is a shift of languages, dominances and modes of transmission" (Deprez 1994: 92). In short, bilingualism appears to be only a particular case of competence in multiple languages. In reality, few individuals need master one language only during their lives. It is also uncommon to need to use two languages only to cover the whole of one's ordinary communication requirements. Hence the need to take a long-term view, in order to define plurilingualism as a concept.

#### 4.2. Plurilingualism and semilingualism

In efforts to better define multiple competence (bilingual or plurilingual), the reference has often remained a comparison with the monolingual norm for each of the languages concerned. The school, the public and sometimes scholars have assessed linguistic competence on the basis of scales of greater or lesser complexity in which (with some variations) we find "strong" or "almost fully competent" speakers, "imperfect" speakers who use their languages fairly fluently, "weak semi-speakers" with an even more limited competence in one or more of their languages and "rememberers" with a poor memory, who can recall a few words or phrases (see Clairis, 1991:7-8). Under the influence of contact with other languages, speakers have been thought to "unlearn" their first languages<sup>7</sup> and to "lose" the rules governing them. The influences of one language on another, of one language in another, of interference and mixed speech have been feared. The concept of semilingualism, which has tended to crop up here and there in a certain specialised literature is a direct result of efforts to compare the linguistic performance of subjects. Semilingualism has served to denote a restricted development of linguistic competences among some bilinguals, a state of language development which has not reached native-speaker level in any of the languages in the repertoire (Hamers & Blanc, 1983; Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa, 1976).

Perceived inadequacy in the linguistic performance of certain expatriate children with respect to the school standards for their two (or more) languages is a phenomenon observed in many contexts. For example, Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa, (1976) have employed the concept of semilingualism to describe the linguistic performance of children of Finnish workers attending primary school in Sweden who, when subjected to linguistic skill tests in Finnish and Swedish, performed less well in both their two languages compared to their monolingual peers. Cummins (1981), who reported similar findings with other groups of children, explained this phenomenon by postulating the existence of an inter-dependence in levels of development between the first and second languages. It led to the idea that it was necessary to reach a minimum threshold of competence in the first language to ensure more favourable conditions for bilingualism<sup>8</sup>. Even when the concept of bilingualism tries to account for a functional dimension of language and considers a subject's capacity to communicate through the languages in his repertoire, reference models have tended to remain restrictive, boiling down, again, to the simple addition of two (or more) monolingualisms. To take only one example (cited in Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981: 252): "Apparently, the teaching in Sweden leads, at best, only to semilingualism ... they learn to talk about subjects connected with schools in Swedish, subjects to do with home they talk about in Finnish. After a time, neither language will be usable in all contexts" (von Sydow, 1970: 1799). It is particularly astonishing to see how the description given of domain-related competences, a trait reflecting bilingual practices as observed in sociolinguistic research, is assessed as a glaring failure on the part of the school.

Very serious objections have been raised concerning these "half" - interpretations of bilingualism. Romaine (1989:234), in a chapter devoted to a discussion of semilingualism, challenged the ideological limitations of a concept constructed only in terms of language deficits, based on: (i) the active or passive vocabulary of words and expressions available; (ii) linguistic correctness; (iii) degree of automatism; (iv) capacity to create words and neologisms; (v) mastery of language functions; (vi) the wealth or poverty of individual meanings evoked during reading or aural exposure to a particular linguistic system. A subject

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<sup>6</sup> See Lüdi & Py, 1986 (1<sup>st</sup> edition), page 16.

<sup>7</sup> However, the limited nature of fields of use and the only partial transmission of languages, in particular amongst young children, is not attested in all situations, on the contrary (see for example Hewitt, 1982; Edwards, 1986; Billiez, 1991; Moore, 1992). In any case, these situations do not represent an indicator of competences in a process of "degeneration", but simply of changed needs in language exchanges.

<sup>8</sup> See also Cummins (2000).

will be doubly semilingual when he possesses the following linguistic profile: "The individual shows quantitative deficiencies, eg smaller vocabulary, compared with monolinguals who are of the same social group and educational background. In addition, the semilingual can be expected to deviate from the norm in the two languages and has a lower degree of automatism. Such an individual also finds it difficult to express emotional meaning". (Hansegard, 1975, quoted by Romaine: 234). In other words, it will be sufficient to be able to compare, in quantitative terms, the volume of vocabulary available to the bilingual speaker compared with a monolingual one; but what happens to the fields of language use? And what criteria are to be used to measure emotion? The question of normativity remains a very weighty one in the view presented and leaves no room for variability nor for creation and restructuring phenomena typical of contact situations: "If only one of the speaker's two languages is inadequate by monoglot norms, there is no case for semilingualism. If both languages are marked as different from monoglot norms, there is still no case for semilingualism, since such norms might be irrelevant in a society where everyone shares the bilingually-marked speech patterns". (Baetens Beardsmore, 1986: 14).

### 4.3. Plurilingual competence: handling imbalance

The analyses offered in support of the concept of semilingualism, which lead quite naturally to the interpretation that certain bilinguals suffer a deficit in competence, ignored several important aspects of communication in contact situations. The extensive research carried out on conversational analysis, when the speakers' competences in each other's languages are very uneven, show that a rudimentary knowledge of a language does not prevent valid communication. The plurilingual individual employs a range of strategies to handle imbalance between him and his interlocutor, and to negotiate the meaning and form of their exchange. This language effort induced by the imbalance, and the systematic handling of this imbalance by the plurilingual individual, potentially favour the activation of a "moment of acquisition". In other words, the concept of plurilingual competence is closely linked to the construction of interlanguage<sup>9</sup> (Py, 1991: 150) in a dynamic, and not in a static, way. It marks a particular moment in language history and cannot be assessed as being fixed once and for all.

Again, the competence of a plurilingual individual in one of his language cannot be studied in isolation from his other languages. The contact situation inherently brings with it linguistic restructurings which prevent comparisons with situations where contact is not involved: "Where knowledge in the original language and in the host language is incorporated into a single repertoire, the question will arise whether the internal modifications of interlanguage - inherent in acquiring the host language - are not accompanied by systemic modifications of competence in the original language" (Py, 1991: 150). Contact variants are also stamped with a powerful identity charge for speakers by enabling them to mark their membership of a specific group, just as the demonstration of competence, even partial, may play this emblematic role for the bilingual or plurilingual speaker<sup>10</sup>: "The question then arises of the social conditions likely to promote or hold back the constitution of specific cultural values which are strong enough to support on the social level "deviant" bilingual usages (deviant with respect to the unilingual norms specific to the language of origin and the host language)" (Py, 1991: 151; see also the work of Louise Dabène).

### 4.4. Plurilingual competence and bilingual speech

The possession of skills in more than one linguistic code means that one can switch from one language to another according to the situation. Plurilinguals among themselves may also switch from one language to another in the same conversation, sometimes within the same utterance. This is a common phenomenon in bilingual and plurilingual families, and is considered a noticeable feature, sometimes emblematic, of particular linguistic communities. Recourse to alternate forms in school situations is also often observed, and switching to another language in the classroom can indicate appeals for help, indications of a learning difficulty, or strategic use of language resources to maintain communication at all costs.<sup>11</sup> Plurilinguals resort to code-switching - or bilingual speech<sup>12</sup> - in a **strategic manner** for

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<sup>9</sup> Interlanguage denotes a dynamic and transitional state in language learning, which results from successively putting into practice and comparing the assumptions of the learner about the nature and functioning of the target language in accordance with the data he encounters.

<sup>10</sup> See Grosjean & Py (1991); Dabène & Moore (1995).

<sup>11</sup> For studies on the place and role of alternate speech in school language learning situations (see for example

negotiating meaning, carrying content messages, giving information about the speaker, his social and cultural identity, the place he occupies in the conversation, or the nature of the exchange.

In ordinary conversation, bilingual speech occurs in interactions between members of the same community when participants to the exchange estimate that the situation permits (or requires) multiple language use. The transition from one language to another in the same discourse is not an indication of the speakers' inability to distinguish them clearly. In fact, the ability to switch from one language to another implies a mastery of all the systems in contact: within an alternate sequence, each language follows certain rules. Above all, however, code-switching fits into a social functionality, which regulates how and when it appears and the strategic and symbolic values associated with it. The use of code-switches and/or bilingual speech in peers' conversations adds a dual focus to messages, by reminding the participants that they subscribe to a system of cultural and linguistic norms specific to their group.

Bilingual speech thus presupposes both the potential maintenance of separate systems, and a strategic use of the effects of meanings linked to code alternation. Plurilingual speakers do not change language without reason during conversation. Change gives a polyphonic dimension to discourse and fulfils many discursive functions. For example, code-switching can make it possible to:

- solve a problem of access to vocabulary,
- select one person within a group of listeners, or exclude a participant,
- comment on what has just been said, distance oneself from what is being said,
- quote another party in the language used (or quote oneself),
- change topic, etc.,
- exploit the connotative potential of certain words,
- mark emblematic membership to a bilingual peer-group of community (see Grosjean, 1982; Dabène & Billiez, 1986; Lüdi & Py, 1986; see also Dabène & Moore, 1995).

#### 4.5. Plurilingual competence: principles for a description

Most plurilingual individuals use their languages for specific and differentiated communication needs. It is infrequent, and seldom necessary, for a person to develop equivalent competences for each language in her/his repertoire. Plurilingual individuals therefore develop **different competences** in each language, and these competences are neither necessarily equal nor totally similar to those of monolinguals. They fulfil a range of different **functions**, depending on what is necessary to meet specific and different communication needs. Partial knowledge in one language should not be confused with lack of or reduced competence. A distinction should also be made between linguistic knowledge, and language knowledge (associated with knowledge about language in general), which can be acquired through the medium of one or the other language, and can be transferred from one to the other. Learning a new language does not imply starting all over again, like a small child learning to speak; it implies a reorganisation of linguistic and language knowledge, with fresh linguistic tools<sup>13</sup>. Bridges and passages between the different linguistic systems may assume greater importance at certain moments. The competences of a plurilingual individual are necessarily complementary, as they do not quite overlap from one language to another; and the use of one component of the repertoire or another (or their alternate use) is a matter of strategic development of communicative competence. The commonest trait of plurilingual competence is **a state of imbalance**; it is simultaneously complex and dynamic, and leaves room for original phenomena, such as bilingual speech.

The plurilingual individual can thus be considered to possess a linguistic capital (seen as a set of linguistic assets), which he operates according to the situation and the interlocutor. In some situations, he may choose to conceal a part of his language repertoire: this is often the case, for example, with children who try to conceal one of their languages in the school context, to avoid being perceived as different.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, he may choose to mobilise all his languages, move from one to another,

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Bourguignon, Py & Ragot, 1994; Martin-Jones, 1992; Moore, 1992 and 1994).

<sup>12</sup> "Bilingual speech" implies alternate recourse to two languages or more.

<sup>13</sup> See Coste (1994).

<sup>14</sup> See Perregaux (1991).

in order to select his interlocutors, include or exclude them from the conversation, change the level of discourse, speak more forcefully, quote other participants, or mark a distance from his own words.

Imbalance is part of a plurilingual competence. The issue at stake in the construction of school or out-of-school plurilingualism, is the **strategic management** of imbalance.

## **5. PLURICULTURAL COMPETENCE: DESCRIPTIVE PRINCIPLES**

### **5.1. The concept of pluricultural competence**

The concept of "pluricultural competence" is a neologism. It derives from the concept of plurilingualism, which itself derives from the concept of bilingualism. These conceptual transfers from the linguistic to the cultural level are not new: the concepts of cultural screen, of intercultural, etc, are other evidence of them. The idea of bicultural competence has never enjoyed any specific theoretical visibility, although it is a dimension indirectly present in studies on bilingualism. Pluriculturalism is to be distinguished from "multiculturalism", which is the subject in North America of a debate on linguistic and identity aspects concerning ethnic minorities but remains comparable to the debate in the European context, by its nature if not by its goals.

Problems identified by various research teams have helped feeding the idea of pluriculturalism. The relation with otherness and its educational fallout have received special attention in studies on the role of the school in the construction of national identity (Collot, Didier, Loueslati, 1993; Abdallah-Pretceille, 1992), on the identification of resistances peculiar to cultural learning (Camilleri, 1993; Valdes, 1986), on language class objectives and approaches stressing the inclusion of otherness (Widdowson 1988; Zarate 1988; Kramersch, McConnel-Ginet 1992; Kramersch, 1993). Taking account of linguistic and cultural diversity involves the use of teaching models which introduce either a generic dimension into language learning (Hawkins, 1985; Coste 1994), or a diversification of learning methods (Duda, Riley, 1990). It also plays a part in teacher training (Ouellet, 1991a; Ouellet, Pagé 1991b) and in the assessment of skills according to the different geographical contexts and the diversity of their educational systems (Cain, 1991; van Els, 1988; Byram, 1989).

The study of attitudes involved in the relationship between two cultures has received wide disciplinary coverage: the role of the media in socialisation is queried (Mariet, 1989; de Margerie, Porcher, 1981; Porcher, 1994), as is that of teaching materials in the international circulation of stereotypes (Murphy, 1988; Kramersch, 1988, Zarate, 1993 a). The initial weight of individual and family perceptions with respect to the foreign language or country determines the educational choice of the language studied (Hermann-Brennecke, Candelier, 1994) but is also identified as an obstacle to learning it. The pedagogue must update perceptions concerning a given population (Byram, Esarte-Sarries, Taylor, 1991; Cain et Briane, 1994), the psychological and social conditions needed for a change in perceptions (Demorgon, 1989; Byram, 1988) and the time factor in the relationship between changing attitudes and the planning of stays abroad (Cembalo, Regent, 1981).

The concept of geographical mobility has favoured the emergence of studies identifying the economic and social dimensions of expatriation and adaptation (Baumgratz-Gangl 1989; Brecht, Robinson, Ginsberg, 1993). Immigrant communities, generally studied from the point of view of their integration into the host societies (Dabène et al., 1988; Philipp 1993 and 1994), have been viewed not from the strict viewpoint of socio-cultural handicap as before but as developing original strategies which may lead to atypical success (Charlot, Beautier, Rochex, 1993). Within a professional career, the period of resistance abroad leads to experimentation with forms of social marginality and to questioning of identity (Zarate 1993 b; Zarate 1993 c). The stay abroad has been considered to play a decisive role in the training of language teachers for its influence on cultural perceptions, a dimension incorporated in the very design of such training (Byram, Murphy, Zarate 1995).

### **5.2. Principles for a description of pluricultural competence**

The specific nature of the concept of pluricultural competence is defined here in terms of the following three aspects:

- its inclusion in a particular family and occupational path, which implies a particularly important investment over time;
- a high degree of familiarity with otherness, which implies an ability to make choices, to manage risk optionally and to employ diversified strategies within partly compatible social and cultural logics;
- a relationship with the educational establishment leading to autonomous conduct with respect to school orthodoxy.

The model used for this part of the study will therefore be the plurilingual adult, since in this way it is possible to observe and analyse a path which, if not successfully completed, is at least defined. However, the plurilingual child is not excluded. He is viewed as enjoying potentialities, which either will or will not be exploited if the social opportunities are given to him to become aware of and to realise them. The educational system plays a key role in this model.

### **5.2.1 Family paths and pluricultural capital**

The concept of **social path** acquires meaning in a sociology of duration, no longer seen in units of teaching time (semester, year, course), but incorporating dimensions hitherto excluded from school assessment: socialisation modes in early childhood, kinship relationships, old-boy networks, marriage choices, and life choices offered but rejected, and therefore concealed in conventional curricular descriptions (*curricula vitae*, career record etc). Under this approach, the individual is viewed on the basis of his course through society and no longer of his social integration, as assumed in approaches that see the language learner as just an actor in the economic world. The individual fits into a time frame which corresponds to that of a family history, embracing the clan to which he belongs and the generations which preceded his personal path.

The history of the plurilingual adult's relationship with otherness may assume meaning in a familiar family context, already geared to bi-national contacts (eg life on a frontier) or to multinational experience (other expatriate members of the family), in a parent's actual but unsuccessful project to move abroad, or in such a project dreamed of but never put into practice, in hopes of social advancement involving geographical mobility (e.g. moving from the provinces to the capital). These experiences of previous generation(s) constitute a form of capital, which will be exploited in varying degrees: dream capital, capital formed by rejection of and opposition to family values, usually constructed independently of the plurilingual individual's explicit awareness. This archaeology of family values, which permits the expression of a desire for "elsewhere", or the practice of transgressing the national values instilled by the school, is mainly expressed in unconscious form. Receptiveness to pluricultural experience reveals the links between different forms of mobility: geographical mobility, of course, bringing a sustained and intense relationship with one or more languages, but also social mobility leading the plurilingual individual to social spaces other than those to which dominant socialisation modes predispose him; also cultural mobility, which may be defined as the ability to update, in life choices, perceptions of "elsewhere" expressed in latent form in family history.

Pluriculturalism is thus a phenomenon that cannot be reduced to an individual dimension, but assumes full meaning in a **family path**. While studies have clearly highlighted the impact of national policies and the demographic effects of economic decisions on multiculturalism, stress must also be placed on the family dimension. This methodological choice makes it necessary to give special importance to a generation input: a generation which inherits a bi-national linguistic and cultural capital has more chance of making this capital yield a profit, and of giving it a plurilingual and pluricultural form. This hypothesis raises certain questions: what are the factors that make such profitability uncertain? It is observed, for example, that this capital is sometimes developed in the same clan by one of the brothers or sisters and left untapped by another. The trail blazed by the eldest is not, however, always without influence on the life choices of the second child, as if the first were opening up in the family imagination a new gap in possible worlds to be explored. Unto what generation can this capital be made to exert an influence? Finally, what conditions govern its creation?

The first journey outside the home country is special. It may be completely ordinary within the family environment, which does not mean that another journey may not serve as an initiation test. The choice of a spouse and the place or places where children are socialised are other sensitive stages in the management of this pluricultural capital. Adolescence and young adulthood are particularly fruitful periods from this point of view, when they lead to the exploration of a space constantly expanding,

compared with those spaces already demystified by the previous generation. However, a reading of linguistic biographies suggests that beyond this expansionist phase, a period opens up in which cultural capital is maintained, and that spaces discovered during young adulthood do not result, in any obvious fashion, in the conquest of new ones.

Geographical mobility and social mobility are very much intertwined in the case of plurilinguals. The plurilingual individual has an obligation to make his linguistic and cultural capital produce a returns in terms of social capital. The most successful forms consist in professionalising plurilingualism and the experience of otherness.

### **5.2.2 *Pluricultural capital, market and identity strategies***

While ordinary, spontaneous perceptions of a plurilingual individual's competence tend to see it as the adding together of culturally varied competences or an ability to reveal a common space to two culturally different social groups, the market concept helps to illuminate the pluricultural competence of the plurilingual individual from the point of view of identity strategies, and to plot its complexity. The complex pluricultural competence of the plurilingual individual is thus defined as the ability to mobilise her/his symbolic capital of experience of otherness at the highest price.

The market concept, taken from the economics of symbolic goods (Bourdieu 1992, Bourdieu 1994), becomes meaningful in this context when the plurilingual individual escapes the common social rules which tend to declare him "offside" in the social game, as he possesses properties that are rare, and therefore generally unappreciated in a given community. While a social group tends to impose as legitimate perceptions based on adherence to and recognition of its own values, the plurilingual individual manages to impose his own competence, in relations with other cultural communities, as a legitimate or superior perception. Access is thus opened up to different national communities which function as so many markets, open or closed in varying degrees to foreign assets or values. The plurilingual individual's strategies consist in keeping a statement of assets up to date, and anticipating or controlling their fluctuations.

As an expert in intuitive understanding of the social, political and economic variations of the markets into which he finds himself successively ushered, the plurilingual individual thus constructs for himself a competence in the carriage of economic and cultural goods, and the crossing of cultural frontiers. Through this continually reassessed and redistributed capital of experience, the relationship with otherness gradually comes to be seen as a specific skill, which presents a social interest and may be converted into an asset. These forms of expertise can then be turned to account on a specific professional market open to the export of economic goods (businesses with international interests) or cultural goods (language learning, twinnings, militant movements connected with the European or international dimension, etc).

The plurilingual individual's pluricultural competence never has the opportunity to display itself in all its diversity and completeness; it shows itself only partly, depending on the features of a given market. A description which does not take account of these successive variations in identity, but tries to identify all the competences potentially available, will in fact conceal the strategic dimension in which the plurilingual individual operates.

### **5.2.3 *The identity strategies of the plurilingual individual in the school context***

Defined as a place of national socialisation, the school as it normally operates is a market relatively closed to the recognition of any form of frontier-crossing. The plurilingual individual had better not give a demonstration in school of the cultural competences which he certainly possesses, but might be socially belittled or irrelevant there. As a special market, the school may even be the place where certain linguistic and cultural competences must be concealed.

Pluricultural competence is relatively independent of educational content: the school educational model may be explicitly rejected, and pluricultural competence continues to develop once the school career is over. Actual out of school contact with communities in which the plurilingual individual moves may help modify the hierarchy of languages, and the cultural perceptions which have been established at school. The markets on which the plurilingual individual's pluricultural competence is deployed are generally outside school - business, political and religious circles. Like geographical space, social space is tackled

in conquering mode and a whole phase of the period of young adulthood is characterised by the continual expansion of these spaces. Vocational choices are the end-result of this process, to which they can put an end or which they can help along. The choice of a foreign spouse, prolonged residence abroad, the bilingual education of the children and the exploitation of their early experiences of travelling help make this expansion a factor in the identity choices which will face the next generation in turn.

## **6. A SCHOOL OPEN TO PLURICULTURALISM AND PLURILINGUALISM?**

### **6.1. Resistance to pluralism**

We must first point to certain statements already outlined above according to which, in historical and institutional terms, the school is not a place that is open to plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. Any illusion on this point would be counter-productive. Find-sounding slogans about the plurality of languages and cultures can remain only pious hopes unless if the factors making for resistance are not constantly taken into account and unless realistic proposals based on them are progressively put to the test of innovation.

#### **6.1.1 *Educational acquisition and pluriculturalism***

Plurilingual individuals generally have contact with foreign languages through school, but the education system plays only a small part in their linguistic competence. School and university qualifications usually recognise only certain academic forms (literature, linguistics) of their relationship with the foreign languages and cultures they have acquired.

A reality that is absent from official political discourse must also be restated: the school is not necessarily open to all cultures. It is capable of rejection, denying a linguistic and cultural reality that does not conform to national linguistic policy, and it is also capable of disseminating a culture not based on an existing cultural reality. The existing official categories for the description of an educational system are therefore not systematically pertinent to an account of the whole range of a plurilingual person's pluricultural competence.

The process whereby the practice of one or more languages already learnt through school is succeeded by the discovery of other languages out of school too can be attributed to pluriculturalism. Cultural discovery is not systematically triggered by learning at school but, in general, tends to result from an individual aptitude involving each person's relationship with otherness. The plurilingual individual can thus give social credibility to a culture he has inherited in the denial mode, and draw up fresh identity strategies. On the vocational level, differentiated strategies are worked out which turn pluricultural skills to account on the labour market, either of the native country or of a new country with which special links are established.

In this dynamic process, the school seems to play only a limited role ranging between catalyst (at best) and contrast (at worst). The paths by which pluriculturalism is constructed appear only to cross the school, which provides no driving force. Rather because the school does not provide an opening, social actors possessing a previous or parallel capital seem well placed to exploit a strategy of differentiation. In a project to construct a plurilingual and pluricultural competence not acquired by inheritance or transgression, it is therefore necessary to determine what more positive role can be played in this by the school.

#### **6.1.2 *Plurilingualism and educational compartmentalisation of languages***

This question is all the more worth examining because, even from the linguistic point of view alone, it is clear that in nearly all education systems, even when they assign an important place to language learning, the juxtaposition of separate bodies of knowledge (language by language) prevails over the creation of integrated plurilingual competence. In nearly all cases, when second, third and even fourth languages are added to studies in the mother tongue, each language has its own syllabus and each, at a given moment in time, is presented and studied in accordance mainly with the same methodological options and pedagogical approaches as the others and with similar aims. For example, in many countries at the present time, whatever the language taught, the four skills (oral and written comprehension and expression) are covered and a communicative approach tends to be employed. For each language, the

implicit or explicit reference for this long-term aim has been native-speaker competence for each language. In other words, despite a possible multiplicity of educational opportunities the underlying concept often remains the bilingual ideal.

This is to some extent confirmed by the school's difficulty in recognising not only manifestations of transitional systems of interlanguage and the successive adjustments in learners' grammar, but also mixed systems, forms of code switching and occurrences of bilingual speech. Despite arguments about the legitimacy and function of error in learning, the spontaneous ethics of the classroom tends to run counter to what might easily be seen as excessive tolerance or laxity, notwithstanding the fact that observation and analysis of classroom speech shows the place and the numerous functional roles that are played in it in practice by language alternation and learners' "faulty" productions.

From this point of view too, we may therefore wonder what more definite action can be taken by the school to develop plurilingual competences in the meaning already given to this concept.

## **6.2. The desirability of a school contribution to the construction of plurilingual and pluricultural competences**

The foregoing indicates fairly clearly, if only by describing the shortcomings, direction in which the school can work to help ensure that pupils develop plurilingual and pluricultural competences to a greater extent than at present. The developments that should be expected are in fact part of a now well-known range of problems, which does not affect language learning alone. Two central questions arise: (1) the place of school in a learning process which, far from stopping when schooling ends, should continue throughout life; (2) the relationship of the school, during actual schooling, with the learning resources offered elsewhere, by an environment where these resources are becoming increasingly numerous and accessible.

It should not be forgotten, even today when demand for languages seems to be growing and is being formulated more and more clearly, that languages are also learnt to a great extent outside school (where in the past, as modern foreign languages, they were long absent or occupied only a minor place) and that this fact may, less paradoxically than it might seem at first, regain its full force when demand increases and the questions mentioned above are taken into account. Depending on local circumstances and education systems, different approaches, which are not just text-book hypotheses, may be adopted.

a. If languages are also learnt outside school and learnt well, if learning can be lifelong and if the resources generally available carry on increasing, the school will not have to act as a forcing house or attach high priority to language teaching; it can stick to what it has always done, or even slightly reduce its investment;

b. If roles can be optional between the school, its environment and what comes after, then the school should as it were cater for the most urgent needs, or meet the widest demand, or achieve the best possible results for a particular language, which would be the most widely used international language today, i.e. the language for which the demand is greatest in many countries;

c. In the contemporary world, the school's task is to give learners an active, thoughtful knowledge of several foreign languages and cultures in order to prepare them to live and work in a world increasingly marked by international movement and careers, and by contacts between languages and cultures;

d. In the slow transportation that the school is undergoing, its function will increasingly be, for languages and cultures as in other fields, to equip young people with the means to exploit the learning resources which are proliferating, and to develop in them an ability to manage these resources, to adapt to other environments, and to learn how to learn, with a view particularly to self-education.

Options a) and b) may involve different kinds of combination, as also options c) and d). Education systems will doubtless have to take their stance for the future by choosing between these two sets. However, differentiation can be encouraged within the same national or regional system, with a majority of establishments operating in mode a) or b), while a smaller body of specialised establishments opt for choices c) or d). Although because of its very objective the present study opts resolutely for scenarios c)



and d), it obviously cannot consider them as generally applicable in all cases. But if the intention really is to give strong encouragement to linguistic and cultural pluralism at European level and to ensure that every individual is trained to live in an international plurilingual and pluricultural environment, these aims will have to be taken fully into account in the school project. The question therefore is, What specific roles can be played by the school, and on what conditions, in a process in which (fortunately) it is not the only actor?

### **6.2.1 Setting up an initial "portfolio"**

A prime responsibility of the school is to enable its pupils to create for themselves an initial "portfolio" of linguistic and cultural "assets". Neither the economic and even stock-exchange connotations of the term "portfolio", nor the multiple meanings of "asset", are completely irrelevant to this statement.

The school, a place of investment for various types of social actor, should be seen as an opportunity to contribute (or add to) an individual capital, which individuals must then exploit to the maximum through suitable investments on different markets. The fact that not all start off equal in this game is no reason for limiting or imposing investment choices. In this case, clear self-interest and respect for liberties coincide. Everything suggests that the professional and personal futures of individual pupils will depend more on the degree of openness of their range of competences than on any particular initial specialisation. However, preparation for autonomous, responsible choices cannot be made without learning about plurality. The *portfolio of competences* is valuable not only for the major acquisitions that compose it, but also for the variety of experience to which it attests. This applies particularly to languages and cultures.

Assets represent more than their economic or fiduciary connotations. If, in the relationship with plurality, the school directly or indirectly promotes attitudes of tolerance, of curiosity about things new and different, of intercultural perception and of identity awareness and affirmation in a world where levels and degrees of belonging display multiple and complex aspects, it will play a full role in civic and ethical education which today, in widely differing contexts (not unaccompanied by renewed debate) is at the centre of much reflection about schools.

This is not the place to develop analyses or proposals going the rounds elsewhere. It must be stressed, however, that the initial constitution of a plurilingual and pluricultural portfolio, designed as an investment for the future, is a matter not only of economic calculation but also of educational planning. Risks are run from both points of view, which is why, also from both points of view, the methods of managing the assets must be made the subject of learning in the same way as the methods of acquiring them. In other words, while the - fundamental - share which falls to the school here consists first in creating an initial set of diversified competences, it also implies that the means of gaining access to these competences, of using, developing and renewing them, are also acquired through the school.

The school's first duty regarding languages and cultures is therefore, partly contrary to its formerly established functions, to contribute to:

- the drawing up of a plurilingual and pluricultural learner profile,
- familiarisation with the resources enabling this profile to be further developed,
- progressive mastery of the means permitting dynamic management of this multiple competence,
- recognition and upgrading of the knowledge and skills thus acquired.

### **6.2.2 Learning to exploit existing resources**

One of the features of language and culture learning in the future will be that access to these languages and cultures will become increasingly possible, where it is desired and can be turned to account. Texts and images will circulate internationally, either directly or through the media, alongside persons and products. The digitalisation of information, the multiplicity of channels, the growing, and ultimately less and less expensive, possibilities of interactivity will produce in-depth changes in the conditions of contact with other languages and cultures. However, depending on the languages and cultures, there will be considerable variation in the instruments used to gain access to these resources, in a pedagogical rather than physical way. For certain languages or cultures, market factors will justify the development of tools for exploiting "authentic" resources for learning purposes. For other languages and cultures which will have become just as accessible, these same tools will be lacking, thus strengthening a phenomenon

already noticed today and for a long time past: the most commonly taught languages are those for which teaching resources are the most numerous, the most diversified and often the least expensive; the least-taught languages are also those for which such resources are lacking or are the least sophisticated, and even the most expensive. This commonplace finding will be all the more obvious in that many more languages and cultures will become accessible to some extent.

In that situation and even more so than today, the school's role will be to make learners aware of this greater accessibility of resources and to give them the tools they need to handle this wealth, even when there is little help from elsewhere. A key theme of much thinking about the school will be recognised here: in a world where there is more and more to learn and where established education systems are less and less the sole dispensers of knowledge, it becomes part of the still equally necessary function of these systems to provide individual pupils with methods and instruments enabling them to learn out of school as well. This applies, and will doubtless increasingly apply, to those languages and cultures, which it has long been possible to learn and which have been learned, after a fashion, without recourse to schooling.

### **6.3. Language curriculum and curriculum scenarios**

Languages should obviously not be expected to take up, as a general rule, more space in syllabuses or more time in study courses. "Volumetric" progress may be feasible here and there but, in the main, plurilingual competences must be developed within a fixed allocation of time for "foreign language courses". Any gain therefore involves either taking advantage of other school time and other subjects finding quite different times altogether, improving the duration/effectiveness ratio of in-school learning, or rethinking objectives or syllabuses. These different possibilities may, of course, be combined.

#### **6.3.1 Languages elsewhere than in foreign-language courses**

Here we shall simply note that:

- a. the introduction of a foreign language in primary school, at a stage where the timetable is more fluid than in secondary school, provides an opening for a second foreign language from the beginning of secondary school, if some type of continuity is otherwise ensured for the first language;
- b. the use of a foreign language as a vehicle for teaching other subjects ("bilingual" teaching or various forms of immersion) may also provide scope for other foreign languages;
- c. certain activities of the mother-tongue class (metalinguistic, discursive, textual or even metacognitive) may prove extremely valuable for the economy (in all senses) of foreign-language work: another form of decompartmentalisation which will be returned to later;
- d. where resource centres are developed in establishments and are given a place in the educational timetable or slightly outside it, and where too other out-of-class work methods are also permitted by the new information and communication technologies, linguistic and cultural plurality may benefit.

When all, or the bulk of, these adjustments are made the overall time budget available for languages expands without detriment to other school subjects.

#### **6.3.2 Languages among themselves**

However decisive the developments just mentioned, they also require changes of another sort. The construction of plurilingual and pluricultural competences by the school, if these competences accord with the tentative description offered above, requires something other than timetable adjustments. The issue is more the *pluri* aspect of a competence which has unbalanced components and temporary balance but is nonetheless *one*, than the *bi* aspect of juxtaposed competences which are both similar and distinct. Accordingly, the school language curriculum (not to be confused with the sum total of individual language syllabuses) can usefully be conceived in terms both of differentiation and circulation: differentiation of goals, content and learning approaches according to language; circulation (transferability and transversality) of language knowledge, and skills between the different languages.

All this is aimed at a better overall economy of learning, attempting to avoid the redundancy which occurs when a third language is learnt according to the same principles, objectives, approaches and routines as a second language. Accepting that a third language can be tackled in the school setting, with other aims and methods than those of a second language, means assuming that the learning culture of the pupils will thereby be enriched and that they will possess for the future a more diversified experience of the means and strategies available to them for handling resources with a view to learning. In addition, it also means ensuring that the learning methods used for one language can be reinvested in other languages. In this process, discussion of work concerning "languages among themselves" must definitely also assign a place to teaching of the mother tongue.

In short, the decompartmentalisation and overall coherence sought here for a school project (corresponding to the specific functions mentioned above) are not seen in terms of harmonisation or even standardisation (of approaches, metalanguage, work methods) but of division followed by possible capitalisation. The ultimate goal is that, on leaving the initial school system, the learner should possess a plurilingual and pluricultural competence which is deliberately heterogeneous, although unified, in one repertoire, but that he should also have been able to work using varied materials, have tested various learning routes and have accordingly complexified his own perceptions of languages, cultures and learning pathways.

With this in mind, it is worth returning to the concept of partial competence and introducing that of curriculum scenario before tackling questions of assessment. It must first be restated, however, that the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, as soon as it is included in a school project, is not just a matter of the "linguistic" subjects.

### **6.3.3 *Plurality of languages and cultures, non-linguistic subjects school project***

History, geography and the natural and human sciences, conveniently and wrongly called "non-linguistic subjects", cannot be excluded from a project to develop plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Through the knowledge they supply, but equally through the documents with which they work, the concepts they bring into play and the tools of observation and analysis which they employ, they make a significant contribution to the creation of knowledge, convictions and attitudes which play and will play a role in the approach to and perception of other cultures and in the importance attached to a particular language. History and geography come to mind first here but it would be wrong to think that other school subjects (including the exact sciences) are culturally and linguistically neutral. More generally, as soon as emphasis on the construction of plurilingual and pluricultural competence becomes part of a school project, this aim can result in revaluation and in different forms of action at the level of each establishment and each school community (parents included). Getting the most out of the linguistic and cultural resources of the school and its environment (or using them as *securities*, to pursue the previous analogy) and the treatment of plurilingualism and cultural plurality as an altogether ordinary and desirable phenomenon are also a collective responsibility.

### **6.3.4 *Return to the concept of partial competence***

Curriculum design in language learning implies choices between kinds and levels of objective (probably even more so than in other subject areas and other types of learning).

The Outline of a European Reference Framework for language teaching and learning envisages four main sets of objective:

- a. development of the general individual competences of the learners, i.e. of knowledge in general, skills, attitudes/values, and ability to learn, which are not necessarily specific to the mastery of languages and cultures;
- b. creation of a competence to communicate in language terms, which involves a linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic and discursive component;
- c. carrying out certain types of language activities: reception, production, interaction or perhaps mediation (i.e. reformulation of existing messages, for example interpretation/translation);

d. ability to function in specific social contexts (professional, educational, general public or private individual).

It is unnecessary to come back in detail to these major categorisations, which are assumed to be strongly complementary to one another in any communication or learning activity.<sup>15</sup> It should simply be pointed out that type *a* and *b* objectives stress competences, while type *c* and *d* objectives are more directly connected to ways of applying these competences into practice.

An earlier section of this study (2.1.3.) briefly surveyed the concept of partial competence in relation to one or other of these categories of objectives. By returning to this point, we can clarify this concept as far as the curriculum and role of the school are concerned.

Teaching and learning objectives may be understood:

**a. In terms of the development of the individual learner's general competences**, and thus be a matter of *declarative knowledge (savoir)*, *skills and know-how (savoir-faire)*, *personality traits, attitudes, etc (savoir-être)* or *ability to learn*, or more particularly one or other of these dimensions. In some cases, the learning of a foreign language aims above all at imparting declarative knowledge to the learner (e.g. of the grammar or literature or certain cultural characteristics of the foreign country). In other instances, language learning will be seen as a way for the learner to develop his personality (e.g. greater assurance or self-confidence, greater willingness to speak in a group) or to develop his knowledge of how to learn (greater openness to what is new, awareness of otherness, curiosity about the unknown). On certain occasions and in certain learning situations or in connection with certain languages, these aims may be characterised as objectives relating to partial competences.

**b. In terms of the extension and diversification of communicative language competence**, and are then concerned with the *linguistic component*, or the *pragmatic component* or the *sociolinguistic component*, or all of these. The main aim of learning a foreign language may be mastery of the linguistic component of a language (knowledge of its vocabulary and syntax) without any concern for sociolinguistic finesse or pragmatic effectiveness. In other instances, the objective may be primarily of a pragmatic nature and seek to develop a capacity to act in the foreign language with the limited linguistic resources available and without any particular concern for the sociolinguistic aspect. The options are, of course, never so exclusive as this and harmonious progress in the different components is generally aimed at, but there is no shortage of examples, past and present, of strong shifts in the emphasis of learning aims to the benefit of one or other of the components of *communicative competence*. *In this sense too, one can talk of partial competence.*

**c. In terms of better performance in one or more specific language activities**, and are then a matter of *reception, production, interaction or mediation*. It may be that the main stated objective of learning a foreign language is to have effective results in receptive activities (reading or listening) or mediation (translating or interpreting) or face-to-face interaction. Here again, it goes without saying that such polarisation can never be total or be pursued independently of any other aim. However, in the defining of objectives it is possible to attach significantly greater importance to one aspect above others and this major focus, if it is consistent, will affect the entire process: choice of content and learning tasks, deciding on and structuring progression and possible remedial action, selection of type of text, etc. This is another form of "partial" competence, although here it is viewed from the point of view of its methods of application.

**d. In terms of optimal functional performance in a given domain**, and thus concern the *public domain*, the *occupational domain*, the *educational domain* or the *personal domain*. The main aim of learning a foreign language may be to do a job better or to help with studies or to facilitate everyday life in a foreign country. As with the other major constituents of the model proposed, such aims are reflected in course descriptions, the demand for and supply of training, and learning/teaching materials. And, as with the other components, formulating an objective under this heading and with this focus normally has

<sup>15</sup> The generic model proposed is defined as follows: "The use and learning of a language, which are actions among other actions, are typical of a social actor who possesses and develops **individual general competences**, particularly **communicative competence in language terms**, which he applies through the medium of various types of **language activities** enabling him to handle **texts** (in reception and/or production modes) within particular **domains**, using **strategies** which he believes match the **tasks** to be carried out. This application, in a specific context, of individual competences and particularly of communicative competence helps to modify them in return".

consequences for other aspects and stages of curriculum design and the working out of teaching and learning approaches. Here too, competence is viewed in a particular form. It should be noted, in addition, that this form of specialised competence is rarely put forward explicitly as an objective in learning paths.

Defining language teaching and learning objectives in this manner, in terms of the major components of a general reference model, or of each of the sub-components of these, is not a stylistic exercise but illustrates the possible diversity of learning aims and the variety to be found in the provision of teaching. Obviously, a great many types of provision, in and out of school, cover several of these objectives at the same time and equally obviously, pursuing a specifically designated objective also means that the achievement of the stated objective will lead to other results which were not specifically aimed at or which were not the main concern. In this sense, referring to partial competences does not mean that they are fragmented.

Characterised and diversified in this way, partial competences are not rudimentary, incomplete or approximate. On the contrary, concentration on an apparently specified objective may develop knowledge and skills, cultivate strategies and refine learning methods which would not have been demanded so intensively or keenly if the objective had been more general. To take only one example, stressing competence in the reception and/or comprehension of oral and written texts provides an opportunity to develop strategies for reading and listening or identifying textual characteristics, which would doubtless be less employed if the aim were much broader.

Such partial competences can be assessed, exploited and enhanced as such. They may also incorporate dimensions, which can be transferred to languages other than the one for which those dimensions were initially designed. Here again, the example of competences in oral or written reception is clear: provided transfer is encouraged, reading and listening modes for language *x* can be partly reinvested (even if they invariably have to be adjusted) in language *y*. In the same way, knowledge in general, skills, attitudes/values and ability to learn, enriched with a view especially to a better perception of the specific features of a C1 culture, are not irrelevant for approaching a C2 culture which as such would normally be tackled less directly.

As already stressed, partial competences must be situated with respect to the multiple competence represented by plurilingual and pluricultural competence. They become meaningful, particularly in a school curriculum, where they fit into the construction of such multiple competence as an element contributing to the configuration and potential of the whole. The specific responsibility and role of the school can be to ensure that this initial shape is sufficiently diversified to open the way to a set of possible future developments, depending on the paths taken by learners after school.

### **6.3.5 Towards curriculum scenarios**

The nature and order of the objectives on which language learning is focused can vary greatly with the context, the public and the level. It can also vary, it should be stressed, in the same public, context or level, irrespective of the weight of school traditions and systems.

The discussion surrounding language teaching in primary schools illustrates this in that there is a great deal of variety and controversy - at national or even regional level within a country - concerning the definition of the initial, inevitably "partial" aims to be set for this type of teaching. Should pupils: learn some basic rudiments of the foreign language system (linguistic component)?; develop linguistic awareness (more general linguistic knowledge (*savoir*), skills (*savoir-faire*) and *savoir-être*)?; become more objective with regard to their native language and culture or be made to feel more at home in it? be made to feel confident in their ability to learn another language?; learn how to learn?; acquire a minimum of oral comprehension skills?; play with a foreign language and become familiar with it (in particular, some of its phonetic and rhythmic characteristics) through counting-rhymes and songs?; acquire other knowledge or practise other school activities (music, physical education etc) through the medium of the foreign language? It goes without saying that it is possible to keep several irons in the fire and that many objectives could be combined or accommodated with others. However, it should be emphasised that in drawing up a curriculum the selection and balancing of objectives, content, ordering and means of assessment are closely linked to the analysis made for each of the specified components.

These considerations imply that:

- throughout the language learning period - and this is equally applicable to schools - there may be continuity with regard to objectives or they may be modified and their order of priority adjusted;
- in a language curriculum accommodating several languages, the objectives and syllabuses of the different languages may either be similar or different;
- quite radically different approaches are possible and each can have its own transparency and coherence with regard to options chosen, and each can be explained with reference to an overall project;
- reflection on the curriculum may therefore involve the possibility of possible scenarios for the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competences and the role of the school in this process.

In the following brief illustration of what might be envisaged by scenario options or variations, two types of organisation and curriculum decisions for a particular school system are outlined, to include, as suggested above, two modern languages other than the language of instruction (conventionally but mistakenly referred to below as the native language, since everybody knows that the dominant teaching language, even in Europe, is often not the native language of the pupils): one language starting in primary school (foreign language 1), hereafter (FL1) and the other in lower secondary school (foreign language 2), hereafter (FL2), with a third (FL3) appearing as an optional subject at upper secondary level.

In these examples of scenarios a distinction is made between primary, lower secondary and upper secondary, which clearly does not correspond to all national contexts. However, transpositions and adaptations of these notional programmes are not complicated. The central argument is that for a given context various scenarios can be conceived and there can be local diversification, provided that in each case due attention is paid to the overall coherence and economy of any particular option.

### **First scenario**

*primary school:* FL1 begins in primary school with the aim of developing "language awareness", a general awareness of linguistic phenomena (by establishing a relationship with the native language or other languages present in the environment or the classroom); the focus here is on objectives concerned above all with an individual's general competences and their relationship with linguistic communicative competence;

*beginning of secondary school:* FL1 continues with the emphasis from now on placed on developing communication skills but taking full account of the achievements at primary level in the area of language awareness. FL2 (not taught at primary school) would not start from scratch either: it too would take account of what had been covered at primary school on the basis of and in relation to FL1, whilst at the same time pursuing slightly different objectives from those now pursued in FL1 (for instance, by giving priority to comprehension activities over production activities). This FL2 would represent a form of partial competence with the characteristics mentioned above;

*upper secondary level:* still only by way of example in this scenario, it is possible to consider reducing the formal teaching of FL1 and using it instead on a regular or occasional basis for teaching another subject (a form of domain-related learning, another form of partial competence for this FL1 initially cultivated on a larger scale or, if preferred, a form of limited late immersion), while the emphasis in FL2 would still be on comprehension, concentrating in particular on different text types and relating it to what is being done or has already been done in the mother tongue, whilst also using skills learnt in FL1 and refining the latter in return. Finally, learners who choose to study the optional third language would initially be invited to take part in discussions and activities relating to types of learning and learning strategies which they have already experienced, and would then be encouraged to work more autonomously, using a resource centre and contributing to the drawing up of a work programme (group or individual) designed to achieve the objectives set by the group or the institution.

### **Second scenario**

*primary school:* FL1 would start at primary school, focusing on basic oral communication and based on a clearly predetermined linguistic content (with the aim of establishing the beginnings of a basic linguistic component, notably phonetic and syntactic aspects, while promoting elementary oral interaction in class).

*beginning of secondary school:* For FL1, FL2 and the native language, time would be spent going over the learning methods and activities encountered in primary school for FL1 and, separately, for the native language: the aim at this stage would be to promote discussion and increase awareness of their approach to languages and learning activities. For FL1 a "regular" programme designed to develop the various skills would continue until the end of secondary school, but at particular intervals this would be supplemented with summing up and discussion sessions relating to working and learning methods so as to accommodate an increasing differentiation between the profiles of different pupils and their expectations and interests. For LA2 particular emphasis could be placed on the sociocultural and sociolinguistic elements as perceived through increasing familiarity with the media (the popular press, radio and television (and possibly linked with the native language course and benefiting from what has been covered in FL1. In this curriculum model FL2, which would continue until the end of secondary school, would be the main forum for cultural and intercultural discussion fuelled through links with the other languages in the curriculum and taking media-related texts as its main focus; it could also incorporate the experience of an international exchange with the focus on intercultural relations.

*upper secondary level:* FL1 and FL2 would each continue in the same direction but at a more complex and demanding level. Learners who opt for FL3 would do so primarily for "vocational" purposes and relate their language learning to a more professionally orientated branch of their studies rather than to general purposes (for example, orientation towards the language of commerce, economics or technology: a partial domain-related educational and professional competence for this FL3).

It should be stressed that in this second scenario, as in the first, the final plurilingual and pluricultural profile of the learners may be "uneven" or "unbalanced" to the extent that:

- the level of proficiency in the languages making up plurilingual competence varies;
- the cultural aspects are unequally developed for the different languages;
- it is not necessarily the case that for the languages in which linguistic aspects received most attention the cultural aspect is also the most developed;
- "partial" competences, as described above, are integrated.

To these brief indications it may be added that in all cases time should be allowed at some point or other, for all languages, for considering the approaches and learning paths to which learners, in their respective development, find themselves exposed or for which they opt. This implies building into curriculum design at school scope for proper explanation, the progressive development of learning awareness, the introduction of general language education which facilitates learners in establishing metacognitive control over the relationship between their existing competences and strategies and other competences and strategies, and in relating these to the language activities which they undertake in order to accomplish tasks within specific domains. In other words, one of the aims of curriculum design, whatever the particular curriculum, is to make learners aware of the diversity of ways of constructing a plurilingual and pluricultural repertoire, and of their own capacity to handle this repertoire. Here we see again the concept of portfolio of securities, commented on in 6.2.1.

#### **6.4. Out of school or post-school learning and assessment**

If the curriculum is defined primarily in terms of the path travelled by a learner through a sequence of educational experiences, whether under the control of an institution or not, then a curriculum does not end with leaving school, but continues in some way or another thereafter in a process of lifelong learning.

In this perspective, the curriculum of the school as an institution thus has the aim of developing in the learner a plurilingual and pluricultural competence, which at the end of school studies may take the form of differentiated profiles, depending on individuals and the paths they have followed. It is clear that the form of this competence is not immutable and the subsequent personal and professional experiences of each social actor, the direction of his life, will cause it to evolve and change its balance through further development, reduction and reshaping. It is here that adult education and continuing training, among other things, play a role. Three complementary aspects may be considered in relation to this.

To accept the notion that the educational curriculum is not limited to school and does not end with it is also to accept that plurilingual and pluricultural competence may begin before school, and proceed

parallel with it: through family experience and learning, history and contacts between generations, travel, expatriation, emigration, and more generally belonging to a multilingual and multicultural environment or moving from one environment to another, but also through reading, and through the media.

It is therefore useful to think of the school curriculum as part of a much broader curriculum, but a part which also has the function of giving learners a better awareness of, knowledge of and confidence in their competences and the capacities and resources available to them, inside and outside the school, so that they may extend and refine these competences and use them effectively in particular domains.

This approach would have implications for the way in which methods of assessing and recognising attainments on leaving school might be devised. The assessment of plurilingual and pluricultural competence would in fact involve taking certain implications of the preceding analyses and proposals into account.

a. First of all, contrary to certain habits prevailing in school systems, it would probably be necessary to differentiate more than usual the means employed to recognise the abilities and knowledge acquired by learners; it should be possible, in particular, to recognise differentiated, (provisionally) terminal profiles for paths followed in foreign languages, for example by validating partial competences in one or more languages or more general types of knowledge or skills in one or more others.

b. When language attainments are assessed at the end of secondary school, it would be useful to try and assess plurilingual and pluricultural competence as such and to arrive at an exit profile, possibly resulting in variable combinations, rather than at a predetermined single level in a particular language and, possibly, in others. Mediation tests involving, for example, translations or precis of texts from an FL2 into an FL3 are not inconceivable, nor are assessments of a learner's ability to take part in plurilingual exchanges. Certain tasks subject to assessment might involve work on multilingual dossiers or materials.

c. It would be important for the cultural dimensions of communicative and interactive competences in intercultural and multicultural contexts to be given greater prominence in assessments from school age onwards. Even when they form part of the avowed objectives of the school project, these cultural components result only rarely in an explicit assessment of attainments. It is true that such assessment is not easy and could give rise to questionable inconsistencies (measurement of more or less favourable attitudes, sanctioning of stereotypes etc), but studies exist (e.g. those of Byram and Zarate, 1994) which put forward suggestions which obviate these risks. It should be noted that the recognition of certain elements of pluricultural competence does not solely or necessarily involve assessment in the linguistic disciplines: history and geography, anthropology and philosophy may also play their part.

d. With regard to assessment and certification as also for the design and construction of a curriculum, this study aims to draw attention to the fact that the issues are now shifting or at least becoming more complex. It is obviously important to maintain assessments that have a linguistic and pragmatic base. However, it is equally important to clearly distinguish the components of a *multi-dimensional assessment* (taking account of the various dimensions which make it possible to distinguish both the concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence and the complementary concept of partial competence). It is also important to work towards *modular* certification, arrangements which permit, synchronically (at a given moment in the learning path) or diachronically (through differentiated stages along this path), the recognition of plurilingual and pluricultural competences, which vary in their composition but which can be described as such in terms of their components.

e. Viewed generally from the strictly individual point of view, certification would stand to gain from taking account of what might be called linguistic and cultural environment of the plurilingual over and above what is provided by the school. Environment should be taken to mean the linguistic and cultural capital and the forms assumed by it. Is it an inherited capital accumulated over one or more generations, or is it a capital that is being created? What forms of pluriculturalism is plurilingualism associated with? Is it a pluriculturalism validated by academic recognition (for example, university certificates in history or literature concerning one or more countries whose language one speaks)? or wider forms of pluriculturalism which show that the individual has been personally exposed to contact with one or more cultures he has discovered? Is this contact associated with geographical mobility or not? What is the scope of this mobility and at what ages did it manifest itself? Finally, how is this plurilingualism/pluriculturalism rewarded concretely in the occupational field? Directly, by an occupation



which validates it in terms of cultural capital (teacher, translator, guide, etc)? In terms of geographical mobility occupations associated with exporting, humanitarian assistance, diplomacy, etc)? Or indirectly, in less formal relationships with the international sector-travel, tourism for example? To all these questions, which are linked to an equal number of variables, it appears likely that the project for a European language *portfolio* (the possible practical expression in institutional terms of the idea mentioned above of a portfolio of assets (or values) which every learner would have to create and manage) would provide the beginnings of an answer as far as some of the likely aspects are concerned.

## 7. SUMMING UP

The present study only brings together a number of observations and proposals. It requires additional discussion and further refinement. Its basic aim is to promote, for examination and experiment, the concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, seen as the necessary conceptual complement to linguistic policies which, in aiming at respect for and affirmation of the plurality of languages and cultures, place the issues on the same level as the social actor and the individual subject. Plurilingualism and confrontations or obliterations of cultures observed in juxtapositions, intermixings and conflicts between established groups must be supplemented by a plurilingualism and a pluricultural experience constructed in the projects, strategies and paths of persons pursuing their autonomy.

In this construction, which will be decisive for the future, we cannot argue in terms of "ideal speaker", or of "balanced" or "perfect" bilingual, or of "dialogues between cultures". The multiple competence concerned is always individualised, evolving, heterogeneous and unbalanced. But it is also a body of resources and values (or assets) a capital and a portfolio, which every social actor can learn to manage, develop and balance or unbalance in pursuit of his aims, if he possesses it. From this point of view, a partial competence may prove as valuable as or more distinctive than, a more general one.

In general, the functioning and make-up of plurilingual and pluricultural competences have not been sufficiently described. Individual bilingualism has to some extent obliterated more complex situations, which are not necessarily the rarest. Above all, perceptions which imply that the concept of "multiple" is, in this case, a cause of lasting imperfection and inadequacy, or that imbalance is a mark of crippling insufficiency and instability, continue to have deep roots, even in the background of certain scientific models. As for pluricultural experience, it is strongly evidenced and give rise to even more stereotyped or simplistic conceptions than plurilingual experience. The polyglot, even if perceived as exceptional, is less disquieting than those numerous smugglers over cultural frontiers, cosmopolitans who arouse distrust, agents who are more than double and who play a shrewd game involving contraband of various sorts.

All that has gone before, as also the few individual cases in the appendices examined on the basis of interviews, is designed to show that while plurilingual and pluricultural experiences are not exceptional in their great diversity, they are neither simple nor cut-and-dried. They are a matter of individual choices but also of family histories and community paths.

If it is therefore believed that, in the Europe of tomorrow and in other parts of the world, the future will and should be one of managing the varied and complex and not of standardising the uniform and simplified, the concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence will assume its full meaning within an overall dynamic.

The study has focused particularly on the role of the school, for three closely related reasons:

- In the field of languages and cultures, a great deal happens and will increasingly happen before, alongside and beyond the school.
- By long tradition, the school is not generally a place of heavy investment in the exploitation of a plurality of languages and cultures.
- Nevertheless, its role is and will remain fundamental in acquiring tools for recording and exploiting external resources, and also for the affirming of values not only governed by the market economy or the social inheritance.

The necessary extension of this role in the language and culture sector will involve changes and even questionings which, however realistic or stimulating they may appear, demand careful thought and innovation within and around education systems. Some approaches have been put forward in this study. If they are tried out, they may prove partly viable here and there, but many others will surely be needed.

## **APPENDICES**

### **Mathias, Wolfgang, Maria, Albert, Martine and the others (Interviews conducted and presented by Geneviève Zarate)**

#### **Mathias**

A Slovene teacher of French and German, Mathias introduces himself as having learnt English, French and German and as speaking Italian, while his mother tongue is Slovene, the language he uses with his parents and in which he was educated at primary school. Later at primary school, he learnt Serbo-Croat, an "artificial language", the Serb version of which he tends to use more.

Living 12 kilometres from the capital he visits regularly, he discovered English at the age of 8 (1970) on the initiative of his parents, who brought in a teacher and opened the course to other children. He followed the course for four years and was to put this capital to good use in secondary school, taking English as his first language from 14 to 18 years. He also studied Latin. At 14 he started French, which was the only possible choice in school mainly famous for its English lessons. He started German at 10, studying it for two hours a week in a private school in the capital for three years, then in a private course. To attend this course, he travelled on his own to the capital by bus. He learnt Serbo-Croatian for two years in primary school, an acquisition which he kept up later as a tourist guide and during his military service in Belgrade, but which is currently rather neglected.

As a child, he watched Italian television, and his grandmother sang him Italian songs learnt during the Second World War. At the beginning, all this was on the "emotional" level. During his childhood, he made many day trips to the frontier regions: Trieste, Klagenfurt, Austria, etc. When the exchange rate permitted, the family made frequent visits to Italy for shopping or holidays. Italian was thus learnt in practical situations and was kept up by frequent trips to Italy, where he felt at ease. At 12 he visited Munich with his parents where there was family on his father's side. Thanks to him, contacts were maintained with the family in Munich, which he visited regularly every year until he was 20. German for him will never be a language learnt inside the school system and will always be associated with the family. He made his first big journey, termed "an adventure because we knew nobody", by plane with his mother to Paris after two and a half years learning French in secondary school. He was the only one who was able to manage in the language of the country they visited and he remembers an incident involving a lost umbrella, which he had to go back alone to the restaurant to fetch.

His mother speaks Italian and English and his father can cope in German, while both speak Russian but do not feel at ease in those languages. He has uncles in California and Canada but he has never visited them.

He made his first solo journey to France at 18 on the occasion of an exchange with a French female pen friend, followed by a trip to Britain. During the university vacations he acted as a guide in Yugoslavia for French, British, American, Israeli groups. There he met customers who offered to put him up in their countries. That is how his stays in France and Britain came about. From then on his solo trips were made independently of his family and sentimental ties. He decided to exploit professionally two of the languages in which he was proficient, French and German, a rare choice, which was something of a handicap at the beginning, as there was no available academic post under that heading. He kept in touch with French by giving private lessons or through personal contacts with the French embassy. As an assistant at the university, he believes that he occupies a valued position in Slovene society and will achieve university recognition.

#### *Comment*

Mathias had the benefit in his childhood of an environment very open to the outside world. In this well-off household and with his parents in prominent positions (his mother was a judge, his father was in trade), his linguistic capital is carefully looked after and invested in: a school was chosen according to its language policy, the weaknesses of existing structures being made good by adopting a determined action.

These parental choices are taken over by Mathias himself, who enjoys the short and then longer stays abroad in a different linguistic context, which is always seen as a source of enrichment. There is absolutely nothing dramatic about crossing borders in this frontier area where three countries meet, especially as there is little talk of any eastern Europe/western Europe dichotomy. Mathias has forgotten the date on which he crossed his country's frontier for the first time; the only trip which has left a mark is that on which he took the plane, a means of transport signifying a real break with the family space.

For Mathias, foreign parts are a space which can be defined as being progressively domesticated; it is organised clearly along two lines: on the one hand the family, first the tight circle of parents and then the expanded circle of relatives living abroad; on the other hand, unaccompanied travel which gives him emotional independence. This relationship will be pursued and turned to account in the transfrontier space of tourist contacts and will be brought to adult completion in the mature choice which will be made at university, where this capital of experience will have to be converted into career assets, and where he will knowingly choose a relative marginality which his intuition tells him may bring symbolic benefits in the medium term. The two languages chosen to make up his professional universe attest to the "domesticated" nature of his relationship with foreign parts: German, a language with a family imprint, and French, a language betokening independence of the family.

This relationship with the outside world is available in latent form in the family structure, shown by the number of relatives living abroad. It is, so to speak, triggered by Mathias's choices, although it is a relationship unused by his brother, who prefers to study medicine. Only relationships in the neighbouring country, Germany, will be exploited in this way (financial arguments are put forward to explain this choice). Mathias's young son will have similar opportunities: his maternal grandmother works in an Italian university, his great-grandmother has lived in Austria. This child already made his first trip abroad, to Switzerland, at the age of one month.

Mathias's relations with the different cultures to which he has access are clearly differentiated: German culture comes within the sphere of family influence and is to some extent routine. Is the reason that the present interviewer is French? Nevertheless, Mathias is preparing his doctorate in German literature. In this interview, English being the "language of the masses, I didn't want to devote my life to it", we find a remark that suggests above all a rejected possibility. It is noteworthy that the languages used professionally by Mathias (French, German) are not those he spoke during his schooling (English, Slovene, Serbo-Croatian, Italian at university).

During this period in France, the relationship with French culture is defined in enthusiastic terms. The 14th of July ceremonies are the subject of methodical organisation and varied strategies which utilise both the opportunities provided by the host institution and personal contacts made on the spot: a French female colleague with a car takes him to a local dance in a nearby village; as a teacher from central Europe, he is interviewed, together with two colleagues, by a journalist from the local press. But these strategies for discovering the foreign context are still dependent on models validated in the country of origin: attending 14th of July ceremonies in France means seeing "everything you find in school textbooks"; given the high cost of a variety show, he chooses to go and see "the only singer whom I knew something about", in accordance with advice received before his departure: "every French person in Ljubljana told me 'You just have to see the Francofolies!'" In this case, profiting from this stay abroad means establishing a real personal relationship with the myths and images of that country which are current in his country of origin and, fortified on his return by increased familiarity with this culture of adoption, being able to draw on it in his professional universe.

## **Wolfgang**

Of Austrian origin, Wolfgang is of German mother tongue and speaks French, English and Italian fluently. He understands Hungarian and has started to learn Russian and Arabic. His parents live in the country in central Austria. When he was young his family moved around inside the country, and his father, a farm worker, hoped thereby to better himself. The youngest brother has also lived in the United States and now lives in the Austrian capital.

At boarding school, he took the Latin/Greek option and English as first foreign language at the age of 10. He then learnt French at 16, knowing that his schoolmates had started it a year earlier and that he was therefore a year behind. His (female) teacher, a former Nazi militant, taught French as the language of the enemy. His relationship with French was insignificant until, at the age of 17 and with financial help

from an uncle, he spent a month in France. There he met activists in a left-wing Christian movement who concerned themselves with third-world problems, a meeting which is described as "an explosion outwards". This encounter brought no linguistic benefits in French as his fellow members were for the most part English-speaking. A second stay in France a year later gave him an opportunity to make French-speaking friends. This would be decisive for the choices he was going to have to make in life: he now lives in France and is married to a French woman. At 18 he paid his first visit to Britain. In these militant contacts he made use of his linguistic skills in interpretation and translation, being more interested in the subjects he learned about than in the financial gain he might derive from them.

He made his first journey to Italy at 9 with his mother, but this trip left no linguistic traces. At about 19, he travelled round Yugoslavia, England, France, Italy, Germany and once or twice Czechoslovakia for contacts with the political opposition under Charter 77. When travelling abroad he defines himself as "lounging about without any conscious intention of doing the standard things recommended in the tourist guides". For a long time all he knew about France was the 5th arrondissement of Paris whose smells and distinctive local sounds he recognised: "It was a sort of Heimat, a fatherland of sounds, with people, narrow streets ... (...) But I did not feel I was an expert on France ... I just knew a few streets"(...). "A stroll above the conscious level, which I have encountered in Walter Benjamin". He explained his attitude to the pupils to whom he was teaching French and left it to two adult pupils, who knew Paris well, to organise the visits.

His interest in Russian came about through references to Slav culture, through a voluptuous phonetic attraction: "When I heard Russian spoken for the first time, it was extraordinary! a mixture of French, Italian and German: the rich vowels of Italian, the sweetness and sombreness of German, the soft "j"s and "z"s of French (...) without understanding anything, I bought myself some recordings of speeches by politicians. They were patriotic, almost Stalin-type speeches, but I liked just listening to them".

At the age of 30, a desire for self-experimentation in learning a foreign language started him off in this direction on the basis of a piece of research concerning minimum pedagogical equipment. This initiative took the form of professional experimentation at the Adult Education Centre where he taught. It was followed by an experiment in the learning of Arabic. He realised that his plurilingualism was a professional asset for the training of Austrian teachers: "What struck me about teacher training in Austria was the ignorance of the languages which surrounded us", when teachers had Bosnian, Czech and Hungarian children in their classes and the school could set itself the aim of "speaking at least one of the languages spoken around Austria". The Adult Education Centres allow a good deal of latitude for innovation, which universities in general do not, but this innovation often has a do-it-yourself look. He has therefore opted for academic status in Austria, the equivalent of senior lecturer but without tenure, after relinquishing (because of the weight of the institution) a permanent lecturing post in the Adult Education Centres which offered him the responsibility of a department. Opportunities to work outside Austria have increased and he has been working simultaneously in Austria and France, and in Italy on of a bilingual Italian/Austrian project.

### *Comment*

Wolfgang has chosen deliberate otherness: in the conscious choices which he has had to make in life - France is the country where he has chosen to live - he has wanted "to go towards the Other and bring to it what I am. (Living in France) I have something of both: I have the Other in which I live, and I am less...", which enables him not to have an artificial relationship with the foreign language which he has, in fact, preferred.

His geographical mobility during adolescence has enabled him to succeed where his father's hopes of rising in the world had been frustrated and, after a period of teaching followed by responsibilities as an educationalist in a professional context on the fringes of the university, to achieve recognition in university circles in his country of origin. It is a solitary path with respect to the rest of the family, and he was not followed by the youngest brother until later.

This path was formed not so much by keenness on one or more particular languages as by the contacts made in an international network: these gave access to geographical, social and political diversity together with linguistic and cultural diversity. His time abroad encouraged Wolfgang to crystallise his militant and political choices and led to his "intellectual adoption" by a political circle. This internationalism is repeated in the present make-up of his emotional and professional space: his wife is

of a different nationality and is herself in contact with an international circle, her annual timetable covering three countries.

If his university work concerns the acquisition of languages, it is in order to test how far the share of school learning can be reduced. He does not conform to the conventional criteria that define a language teacher, unhesitatingly admitting that he is not acquainted with the most famous sights in a city he has nevertheless visited at length on several occasions. His approach is based on a personal appropriation of the foreign space, irrespective of the norms and references current in his country concerning the foreign country, a relationship of familiarity that has ceased to have anything to do with the stocklist of specific national characteristics traditionally taught in school. This attitude extends to the options he advocates for teacher training: language teaching must take account of the geopolitical environment in which it occurs, and teacher training should devote more room to the plurilingual dimension. Teacher trainers are generally too dependent on the pedagogical traditions linked to the language they teach. His working assumptions have broken free from the references integral to a specific national system.

The foreign space that makes sense for Wolfgang has been rapidly expanding from the end of his adolescence to young adulthood. It has now stabilised: the relationship with the spaces discovered is maintained and activated through professional contacts but does not bring about a discovery of new spaces. It leads to a change in the language hierarchy established at school, where English was the first language, to the benefit now of French. The move is more towards asserted choices and dominant approaches, which systematically exploit the transnational dimension in both the professional and family universes.

## **Maria**

At the time of the interview, Maria lived in the south of France, in Sète where she was born after living for 23 years in the Paris region and particularly Limousin, in various posts as French as first language teacher. She describes herself as a university teacher of langue d'oc and French.

She is particularly sensitive about the order in which these two subjects are presented. The langue d'oc is "an ideological, personal and cultural choice which involves who I am". At a time when the degree in langue d'oc did not exist, she was recruited to the arts department but she has been teaching langue d'oc for over 20 years and, during the time when it was not classed as a school subject, without pay. She took the first recruitment competition organised for this subject in 1991, aware that this choice excluded her from any prospect of progress in her professional career, since there were no higher-level administrative competitions she might be eligible to sit. Her relationship with langue d'oc arose from a sudden awareness, "a marvellous, miraculous awareness which sent me back to myself", "like an electric shock": "at college at the age of 21 I heard, in a lecture hall which I had entered by accident, a language which I could not identify, which I understood and which caused deep emotions in me which I was also unable to identify".

The language of her childhood was French "between inverted commas, because it was not standard French", while her paternal grandfather spoke Italian and the family on the mother's side, langue d'oc. At school, she discovered academic French and rejected these two languages she understood unconsciously. Being the daughter of a father of Italian origin and of a French mother is an identity she was only able to accept in the recent past, after "winning back the dignity which the school had denied her". Regarding the demands of school, she remembers that she had to "write like the greatest writers and emulate her school teacher". At secondary school, at 10 years of age, she accepted the choice of her parents, who made her choose Spanish "because, according to them, Spanish was easier for her and geographically closer", English being regarded as a language which was not only difficult linguistically but also socially distant for a working-class child who had educational aspirations. She also started studying Latin and then Greek in secondary school. At university, she did a year of Portuguese for her arts degree, and obtained all existing certificates for langue d'oc in her faculty. The encounter with langue d'oc "brought back what my journey through school had hidden, what I had hidden for years ... the langue d'oc is my reason for existence and for living". Over the last two years before the interview, she had taken up Italian again in a private course, which she declared to be following very conscientiously, although there are no longer any members on her father's side whom she could talk to.

From the maternal side comes a deep commitment to left-wing values: her grandfather, a cooper, was a member of the Second International and then of the Communist Party from their inception. Her mother

adopted these paternal convictions which, according to Maria, were reflected in "a feeling of opposition to everything that came from above, both socially and geographically", and in the linguistic experience of the class struggle, being confronted at school with bourgeois expressions and the handicap represented by her Italian and langue d'oc turns of phrase. While she was at school, she enjoyed the educational support of militant communist teachers. Her father, the thirteenth child of a Calabrian family emigrated to France, was given the opportunity of studying for a mechanic's proficiency certificate (CAP). Although her own father occupied the place of patriarch in the family line, he kept aloof from the emigrant community of Italian fishermen in Sète, being anxious to preserve the symbolic gains of his career and marked by his marriage with what his family called "the Frenchwoman". The Italian tradition was however maintained at home despite the tacit opposition of her mother and her rejection of an Italian culture which was openly despised in the context of the Second World War: it manifested itself in family and religious festivals, the rules of giving and in the culinary practices her mother had learned from her father-in-law. Maria has only adopted a few of these culinary practices herself but regards them as more Mediterranean than Italian.

There are short cultural trips abroad not exceeding one month in Spain, Italy, Morocco and Egypt and contacts with Catalan colleagues are only intermittent. Spanish is primarily the language of expression of a Mediterranean culture. Her efforts to reconstitute a langue d'oc culture were made in a community setting (setting up courses, cultural structures, organising theatre festivals, concerts) and in the course of personal work (literary criticism of langue d'oc texts, poems, researches on the role of langue d'oc women in recovering the langue d'oc language by contrast with currently dominant American or Parisian models).

Having married a teacher who happened to be a langue d'oc militant more by political choice than for reasons of identity, from whom she is now separated, she accepts that langue d'oc has helped her to affirm her identity as a woman. She is now the mother of two young women (22 and 19 at the time of interview) who in their early childhood spoke langue d'oc but became bilingual French/langue d'oc when they started school. The elder has a dual university training in French and langue d'oc, although she does not altogether share her mother's militant options. The second refuses to speak langue d'oc, which however she continues to understand, and displays a critical attitude to her mother's militancy: "You speak langue d'oc to me to convince me that it is not a lost cause", she says. The first names given to the two girls were the subject of elaborate strategies to get them accepted by the French administration at a time when it was rather intolerant on this matter. However, the younger sister has only recently been reconciled to a first name, which, up to that time, functioned as a sign of marginalisation. Maria willingly recognises that "it is difficult for children to accept the choices made by their parents" but has set herself the task of "rooting them in a culture so that they can live life to the full".

Her elder daughter shows a strong appetite for contacts with non-francophone circles. When she was a child, her school friendships tended to be with companions of the same age who had emigrated to France. It was a Chilean friend - an illegal immigrant - who started her off learning Spanish, which she chose the same year as a subject in the baccalauréat and in which she achieved a first-class result after three months practical learning. At college, she passed the Spanish examinations for Spanish-speakers. However, when her mother encouraged her to follow her own example and learn Italian by correspondence, this attempt came to nothing, being judged too boring. Meeting her Moroccan boyfriend set her off learning Arabic. She has already said that she wants to live abroad.

### *Comment*

As she herself stated, using the terms several times during the interview, Maria's pluriculturalism is explicitly bound up with recapturing her identity and going beyond a biculturalism rejected in childhood. The period which she herself calls the "dead-end" is the one in which the paternal and maternal identity is devalued. This attitude, a cause of violence in the family unit, leads her to adopt the role of linguistic censor with respect to her parents, when she presses them to keep to the school norm. In retrospect, she analyses as follows the emotional damage caused to her relationship with her father by her unconditional support at the time for the school model: "On the way I lost my father. My father committed suicide, partly for these reasons, not only because of his relationship with my mother. My father felt rejected because I had gone over to a different culture. That played some part in his decision. Somewhere too he had also lost his daughter. I no longer spoke like him, I had distanced myself from him. The cultural dimension was an important factor in this situation."

This identity struggle is waged on the symbolic front. While her patronym betrayed too obviously her Italian origins from the point of view of the child that she was - she would have liked to bear her mother's name, which sounded "French" (she has since discovered that it was typically langue d'oc) - she is now ready, with the same energy that she showed in naming her two daughters, to approach the French administration so as to be allowed to use the patronym of her father, now that French law gives this possibility to married women.

The school is at the centre of Maria's process of identity denial and recapture. She has tried to forget her origins by following an elaborate policy of mimicry with respect to the school culture (for example, getting a certificate in phonetics led to her losing her accent). But she has found them again in the education system: the Arts Faculty lecture hall remains a highly symbolic place in this respect. This recapture of her identity has structured the whole of her relationship with her professional universe: relinquishing her position as French teacher and a conventional career, she has chosen the status of langue d'oc teacher, which allowed her to question the functioning of the education system to which she belongs, at the cost of some institutional marginality, but to the benefit of the struggle against social exclusion. She deplors the attitude of her colleagues who, when correcting the work of their pupils, condemn barbarisms without bothering to explain the mechanism by which one language borrows from another. In her relationship with pupils who have difficulties at school, she ensures that those who cannot obtain them in the family setting "find their keys". She has no hesitation in giving lodging throughout a school year to a female pupil who might not have been able to take her baccalauréat again without such help.

The cultural and linguistic space that makes sense for Maria is limited to France. Periods spent outside France have no significance in her life choices. Langue d'oc is the backbone of the process of asserting her identity, because it has produced a sort of personal rebirth. For this reason she cannot accept the views expressed by her French colleagues about the archaic nature of langue d'oc. The other languages she knows - Spanish, Italian, and a little Portuguese - take their place around this langue d'oc linguistic axis. She identifies herself more with a generally Mediterranean cultural universe than with a variety of cultural horizons. The space in which she recaptures her identity is geographically restricted in as much as it concerns only part of the national territory (on a journey, for example, she will show her pupils the contrast between the langue d'oc of the north and that of the south). For her eldest daughter, this space is potentially much more open in as much as learning a foreign language is justified only within a relationship personally forged with the indigenous inhabitants: Italian does not make sense if it is only learnt from the strict viewpoint of linguistic competence. For Maria's eldest daughter, cultural discovery seems to be associated with geographical movement but so far no lengthy stay had been undertaken.

In Maria's view, recognition of identity should not be a synonym for confinement. She wanted to be European but feared a Europe constructed at the expense of minority identities. The recapture of identity which she has undertaken was not yet complete in as much as the work of reinterpreting her relationship with the languages spoken by her parents has only begun only two years before in the case of Italian (it started when she ceased to live with her husband) whereas she had been working on her relationship with langue d'oc for the past twenty years. She again relied on the school for this project, but this time she applied to the Dante Alighieri institute and thus entrusted herself to a structure independent of the French educational system. Modifying her relationship with Italian culture seemed to be a more complex process than the former since she had to transform a relationship which had been built up in the triple hostility of the maternal environment, social denial and international conflict.

## **Albert**

Albert speaks German, Italian and English but identifies the Bourbon dialect as "his first foreign language" during the interview. He occupies a responsible post in teacher training in France. His father left Italy in 1922 during the fascist period, when he felt threatened by being a registered member of the socialist or communist party, and went to France, a country whose language he would never speak at all well but which he never left. His mother, who was born in the bilingual Franco-Italian region of Piedmont, died shortly after the birth of Albert, who never really knew her. He defines his sensitivity to living languages "by reaction to the way in which French was spoken around me".

Albert spent most of his childhood at a boarding school in the Paris region, which, at that time, was occupied by the Germans. He found that some of his French teachers spoke German well with the soldiers. He saw them clearly as enemies but, on two occasions, he was saved by a German officer from a beating (frequent happening in orphanages at that time). He gives the following account of the



event, which is fixed in his memory: "The officer addressed the supervisor in excellent French: 'Have you any children, Monsieur? No? If you had any you would not hit them as you have just done!'", which led to the supervisor's dismissal. The orphanage was then evacuated to the Allier. For two years he lived on a farm. There he discovered dialect, asking on his arrival: "What country am I in?" After three months he enjoyed speaking the Bourbon dialect. He discovered the countryside and peasant life, in which he would always retain a great interest.

When the orphanage returned to the Paris region at the end of the war, he had the opportunity to go to a holiday camp for a month in the Black Forest at the age of 12, in a village that reminded him of his experiences in the Bourbon region. One of his close friends, of Alsatian origin, who had done his schooling in German before going back to the orphanage, acted as interpreter. Unable to continue his studies at the lycée for financial reasons, he continued them from the orphanage on a vocational course but lost interest and dropped out two years later. He resumed his studies by taking evening courses at the Association Philotechnique and prepared on his own for the baccalauréat, for which his chosen languages were German, Italian and Latin. His German teachers were Austria who had themselves emigrated to France to get away from Nazism, which united pupil and teachers in a relationship of complicity. In this way he escaped the prevailing hostility towards German, and struck up a positive relationship with the German language and literature.

Because of his difficult relations with his father he had to rely on his own resources and was successively employed by the railways, then in a bank and afterwards as a teacher when he had passed his baccalauréat. Afterwards he studied for a degree in German at the same time as a degree in Italian, and then took the competition to become a secondary teacher in German.

Italian is for him "a subsidiary language", although he considers that he had an equally strong relationship with the German and Italian cultures. However, German is seen "as an intellectual language, as a language of intellectual pleasure, (...)" as "the nourishing earth by which he establishes contact with music and philosophy". He runs a holiday camp in Germany on behalf of the municipality where he lives and for which he often acts as a translator in connection with a Franco-German twinning scheme. But he gives Italian the place of contact language. He is thus much more sensitive to an insult in Italian than in German. Italy is a country to which he returned during his studies to prepare a certificate in Italian philology. There he felt "immediately at home, because of the beauty of the country, the warmth, the kindness of the people, the cordial and spontaneous welcome" given at that time to French people. It was an opportunity to return to his parents' region of origin. In Piedmont he met his future wife, whom he married in 1959. She came to live in the Paris region. Italian thus occupies the position of language of the heart by reason of his wife, but he says that he is not regarded as Italian by the Italians because of his rather chilly nature.

His periods abroad do not exceed a month in German-speaking Switzerland, Austria and Italy but he has never visited a non-European country. He stresses how much more he is attracted by southern Germany. He discovered England in connection with a certificate in German philology. He considers English to be close to Latin in its vocabulary and to German in its structures and regards it as a synthesis of the Germanic and the Latin without being viewed as a foreign language. He taught himself English at the age of 20 through books and chance meetings with English-speakers. In the establishments he directed in turn, he introduced a policy of exchanges, twinings or pairings with Italy, England and Germany. His wife showed some hostility towards Germany and kept in continuous touch with Italy.

The children's holidays have always consisted of trips to and in different European countries. His son, who as a child was bilingual in French and Italian, has had a mental block with respect to Italian and showed little interest in languages during his schooling. He then used English for professional reasons but, as he was due to marry a Brazilian, was rediscovering a taste for the practice of Italian. His daughter, who is bilingual in French and Italian, has studied German and English. She obtained an Erasmus scholarship for her master's degree, and was finishing a doctorate in the United States and seemed to want to stay there for sentimental reasons.

### *Comment*

Albert's plurilingualism is an extension of a family bilingualism, which he has never disowned, even if relations with his father were strained. He imitated his father by marrying a girl from Piedmont, and his children are themselves bilingual in French and Italian. In fact, his relationship with Italian appears to be

a constant, which was never called into question but rather was the subject of an effort to exploit it intellectually.

However, he constructs a path of social advancement on the basis of a third language by choosing to use German professionally. He owes his appetite for languages more to the school model than to the school itself, having followed a route that often borders on self-teaching: studies simultaneous with professional work, the first stays abroad linked to requirements in respect of school results, and finally, teaching himself his third modern language. This appetite, which he describes as initially intellectual, had not faded when his future daughter-in-law suggested that he start studying Portuguese.

He has pursued his professional career mainly in situations of authority and responsibility and his interest in transnational contacts is reflected in the creation of bi-national structures: his relationship with other countries tends to take place through administrative structures, when not by way of personal contacts on the affective level. This way of turning his personal experience to practical account could be termed pluriculturalism with a professional slant. All these choices were clearly rooted in French society, whether professional circles - he was a French civil servant - or the family setting - his wife had come to France.

For the discovery of foreign parts, his strategies are dictated more by the fact that he no longer had any economic constraints than by dependence on such constraints. He crossed national frontiers for the first time at the relatively early age of 12, if the time - post-war - and his social handicap are taken into account. For him foreign horizons have continued to expand steadily during his professional life and this development benefited both his professional and family universe. The choices made by his children seemed to prolong this expansion, with this time some development outside Europe.

## **Martine**

With a German grandmother and an Alsatian grandfather on her mother's side, a German great-grandfather on her father's side and parents who spoke Alsatian, Martine discovered French in the infants' school when she lived in a village close to Strasbourg. Her parents were farmers less from choice, since her father had done commercial studies, than from necessity, owing to the need to take over the farm left by the grandfather. Martine speaks German, English and Japanese. She was living in Japan at the time of the interview.

The relationship with German and Germans is negative in her family, although contacts with the maternal side have been regular at holiday time and German culture is described as being very close. Visiting members of her mother's family on the other side of the Rhine is not seen as crossing a frontier. Martine exploited this linguistic capital from her first year at the lycée, taking German as her first modern language. She also chose Latin because of her interest in botany, which she already knew would be the basis for her career. English, which was studied at school as a second language from age 15, seems very difficult to her because it entails an effort of memory, something which was unnecessary for learning German. Her relationship with English has changed since then: from being a language learnt at school, English became the language that enabled her to keep in touch with the West through the American TV channels to which she had access in Japan.

At university, she chose to read science. It was at this time - she was 22 - that she met her future husband, who was more or less a beginner in French and who had come to study history and theology in Strasbourg, in a group of young Protestant Christians in which she had responsibilities. Their honeymoon was spent in England because "I decided it would. All pleasure must be educational: no gratuitous pleasure". They attended an English course there. She ended her science studies to obtain a teaching certificate. The pair decided to settle in Japan at Martine's suggestion, "which was a wrench because I was very fond of my parents, my farm and my friends. It was a leap in the dark". She left, convinced that she would not be back for ten years, given the cost of the air ticket, and before her departure recorded bird songs and house noises and took photographs. "I wept a lot behind the scenes, but I would never show my parents what a wrench it was because it was I who had taken the decision." The importance attached by her family to the land was one factor in her decision: "I was tired of hearing all these stories (about the history of the family). I was tempted by the thought of adventure. I did not want wish to be like them. I did not want to attach myself, to be tied to something which would stop me being happy."

She obtained a promise of a post in the Franco-Japanese lycée and went off alone, her husband staying behind in Strasbourg to finish his doctoral thesis. She took the plane for the first time, with a high fever, and with many stopovers. By herself she established contact with her husband's family, who together with their priest and a delegation of parishioners gave her a warm welcome. It was her first contact with Japan and its capital; she had had only three Japanese lessons, using a primer. She saw Japan as being "tight and ugly", quite different from what she had understood from the books she had read before departure, and she soon regretted the absence of body contacts in Japanese family tradition.

She found it difficult not to remove her slippers when walking on the tatamis in her own apartment and to abandon her aesthetic standards in choosing crockery for her household; she had to adapt the futon to her own size. She lived mainly with her in-laws, her apartment being situated about 50 kilometres from the French Lycée, and got on very well with her mother-in-law. When her husband returned, she had the experience of two different patterns of life, with each spouse concentrating at first on professional contacts. Her English was of no use in her husband's family except for professional communication. She sometimes used German in her relationship with Japanese doctors who had been trained in the German tradition and with persons who had studied Protestant theology.

Contacts with "this spiritual family" were essential for her adaptation, in view of the independence of Japanese Christians with respect to the traditions of their country, their great openness to western values and their egalitarian ideas regarding relationships between men and women. Her faith and that of her husband were a decisive factor for the couple, "which made them look in the same direction". She accepted her husband's proposal of marriage, to which she had been initially opposed, after consulting the two parish priests of their two communities and receiving their encouragement.

Her daughter, who was born in Japan, was 16 at the time of the interview. She was sometimes a stranger to her mother, who worked in the evening, and could rarely have private discussions with her daughter who left for school in the early morning. Such discussions frequently revolved around cultural differences and her daughter often concluded from them that Japan was a country of which her mother was ignorant. Her daughter speaks Japanese and French and at the lycée studied English and German, the latter with a view to the family returning to Alsace when retirement comes. After a year in France to coincide with a sabbatical year taken by her father, her daughter gave up the lycée français after five and a half years, and instead went to the Japanese school, where she recalls she found calm, "because (at the lycée français) she felt a foreigner in her own country". Martine took over her daughter's French education during her primary schooling, reading her children's stories and by means of a course she started for children of her age. The family travelled to France every year but these trips back to the family also opened up contacts with Alsace.

Martine learnt basic cooking before she left for Japan but, unable to find the right ingredients in Japan, she learned Japanese cooking with her mother-in-law. Although her cooking is now mixed, she concentrates more on Japanese cooking which suits her better. Her interior decoration, which was originally Japanese, tends later to be in the French style, which Japanese guests found more interesting. The bedroom, however, was decorated in Japanese style despite the views of her husband who tended to prefer French style. The contacts made by her husband, who was an historian of Europe specialising in the Reformation at Strasbourg, were no longer "typically nationals of their country, they have a much wider cultural dimension (...). They were real Japanese, cultivated and international". She had by then given up the idea of "becoming Japanese", which she said was one decision behind her: "It can't be helped, I'm French, and I'm going to stay French, I try to make as few mistakes as possible (...). It's difficult for my daughter, who accuses me of always making the same mistakes. I always blamed my mother for not being perfect in French, for not learning about the subjunctive (she laughs), but now I understand how she felt."

### *Comment*

Martine's pluriculturalism has changed. The experience she accumulated during her childhood was based on geographical and family proximity. As a woman, her life has expanded to encompass non-European horizons and a society characterised by a great cultural distance compared with her original socialisation. Her first essays in love came about through a cultural misunderstanding which has since been cleared up: a branch of flowering cherry deposited by Martine in her boyfriend's absence was taken as an avowal of love, although as far as she was concerned, it was just a demonstration of botanical

interest. Martine was experiencing what might be termed culture shock, a challenge she had thrown down to herself.

These choices - since she has clearly always taken the decisions that have marked her route knowing what upheavals they would involve - indicate a renunciation of the values around which her family expressed its identity (love of the land, attachment to the family inheritance). Martine also abandons her network of friendships and a part of her professional hopes, since she will not follow the scientific career for which she was destined. (These choices will also be partly copied by her young sister, who married an Egyptian and continued to live with her parents.) On her arrival in Japan, Martine seems even to have had a deliberate plan to adopt unconditionally Japanese culture. She does so with great courage but at the cost of much suffering. Her expatriation has led to a path of social advancement - Martine's husband was the rector of his university at the time of the interview - but one that is entirely dependent on the development of her husband's career.

Religious commitment is mentioned as being essential in explaining the couple's success - the Protestant community is present at the key moments in its history (first meeting, welcome to Japan) - and in describing the tolerant setting, open to cultural difference, in which the couple moves, illustrated by the fact that the husband's studies focus on the history of the Reformation.

Although Japanese forms the basic structure of Martine's day-to-day life, French, English and German remain active languages both for contacts in Japan and for plans to return to France. Martine's daughter, then in the middle of her adolescence, seemed however to lean markedly towards a different balance of language and identity: through her successive choices as her mother recounts them, she seemed to have opted unequivocally for a Japanese identity, maintaining a more ambiguous relationship with the other languages with which she was nonetheless in contact. If the daughter fulfils her mother's initial plans for her identity, it is at the cost of a certain lack of communication between the two women.

Martine's pluriculturalism is the choice more of a couple than of an individual. The couple has built for itself in Japan a space that functions as a frontier area: both have incorporated the dual Franco-Japanese dimension into their professional choices; their networks of relationships give priority to contacts with a world which is rather marginally situated in their respective societies. The space represented by the home, which for Martine is an important frame of reference, bears witness to a twofold aesthetic allegiance. The space covered by her journeys is built around regular trips between the two countries. The space in which roots have been put down is likewise dual and still open: husband and wife are ready to consider a second graft, once their professional venture comes to term.

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