EUROPE, FRONTIERS AND LANGUAGES

Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe
From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education

Reference Study

Albert RAASCH
Universität des Saarlandes

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Preface

This text, part of a series published by the *Language Policy Division*, is clearly significant in its own right because it deals with certain influential factors in the organisation and sociolinguistic foundations of language teaching and in the linguistic ideologies at work in problems related to the languages of Europe. It is however part of a larger project since it is one element of a collection of publications focused on the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe: From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education*.

This *Guide* is both a descriptive and programmatic document whose purpose is to demonstrate the complexity of the questions involved in language teaching, often dealt with in a simplistic manner. It aims to describe the processes and conceptual tools needed for the analysis of educational contexts with respect to languages and for the organisation of language learning and teaching according to the principles of the Council of Europe.

There are several versions of this *Guide* for different audiences, but the full version deals with a number of complex questions, albeit in a limited framework. It seemed necessary to illustrate these questions with case studies, syntheses and studies of specific sectors of language teaching, dealing in monographic form with questions only touched upon in the *Guide*. These *Reference Studies* provide a context for the *Guide*, showing its theoretical bases, sources of further information, areas of research and the themes which underlie it.

The *Modern Languages Division*, now the *Language Policy Division*, demonstrates through this collection of publications its new phase of activity, which is a continuation of previous activities. The *Division* disseminated through the *Threshold Levels* of the 1970s, a language teaching methodology more focused upon communication and mobility within Europe. It then developed on the basis of a shared educational culture, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (published in its final version in 2001). This is a document which is not concerned with the nature of the contents of language teaching but rather with the form of curricula and syllabi for language teaching. The *Framework* proposes explicit referential levels for identifying degrees of language competence, and thus provides the basis for differentiated management of courses so that opportunities for the teaching of more languages in schools and in lifelong learning are created. This recognition of the intrinsic value of plurilingualism has simultaneously led to the development of an instrument which allows each learner to become aware of and to describe their language repertoire, namely the *European Language Portfolio*. Versions of this developed in member States are manifold and were at the heart of the European Year of Languages (2001).

Plurilingualism has been identified in numerous *Recommendations* of the Council of Europe as the principle and the aim of language education policies, and must be valued at the individual level as well as being accepted collectively by educational

institutions. The *Guide* and the *Reference Studies* provide the link between teaching

methods and educational issues on the one hand and policy on the other, and have the function of making explicit this political principle and of describing concrete measures for implementation.

In this study Albert Raasch discusses the ways in which the frontiers which characterise Europe with its multiplicity of countries are a potential location for new approaches to language learning. Whereas in the past frontiers were peripheral and served the function of dividing one country from another, they are today locations which can symbolise the process of European integration. Border regions thus offer opportunities of a special kind in which the value of plurilingualism can be made more evident more quickly. In this situation it is therefore important to find ways of profiting from the particular linguistic combinations present in a border region and Raasch gives practical examples of how this is being done.

This specific aspect of the problems of language education policies in Europe gives a perspective on the general view taken in the *Guide* but nonetheless this text is a part of the fundamental project of the *Language Policy Division*: to create through reflection and exchange of experience and expertise, the consensus necessary for European societies, characterised by their differences and the transcultural currents which create "globalised nations", not to become lost in the search for the "perfect" language or languages valued at the expense of others. They should rather recognise the plurality of the languages of Europe and the plurilingualism, actual or potential, of all those who live in this space, as a condition for collective creativity and for development, a component of democratic citizenship through linguistic tolerance, and therefore as a fundamental value of their actions in languages and language teaching.

Jean-Claude Beacco and Michael Byram

1. By way of introduction

Frontiers are not called "frontiers" everywhere. The English word "borders" suggests the edges of a country comparable to the sea coasts. One of the terms used by the Romans was "limes", a word that appears to be distantly derived from "obliquus", meaning "oblique", which suggests that the "limes" is the "oblique" transversal road marking the end of a territory. In classical Latin the word "fines" denoted the frontier or the territory along it. The German word "Grenze", which is obviously of Slav origin (compare Russian, Polish, Czech etc), has replaced the word "frontier" which was still in use up to the 18th century. It conjures up images such as "to present a united front", like the parallel words in English or French, which originate in "frons", "front" and so on. All these words convey the idea of "finis" or the end of something, of natural or artificial phenomena (e.g. "the Wall"); none of them suggests contact, opening, door, window, entry/exit etc. Is it any wonder that we find these same notions of "finis" and "front" in people's minds (and hearts)?

Participants in a seminar held at the Council of Europe Centre for Modern Languages in Graz have expressed themselves as follows: "On a closer look the term "frontier" shows remarkable diversity, both in denotation (what are the semantic contents of this word?) and in connotation (what are the emotional and affective contents accompanying denotation?)."

Frontiers reflect the body of the rules that determine the political, juridical, social, economic, cultural and linguistic landscape in a state or between two countries. "Frontiers" also exist as linguistic, ethnic and cultural boundaries within national borders.

In accordance with different experiences and objectives, frontiers mark the boundary between "here" and "over there", between "this side" and "the other side"; between the "familiar" and the "strange"; between "mine" and "yours"; frontiers separate in-groups from out-groups; they are synonymous with "protection" against the "outside"; they demarcate the individual, they draw a line of common points, of contact with the "other", and conjure up the possibility of "something in common".

The word "frontier" thus denotes representations which are both cognitive and emotional/affective. "Frontiers" therefore exist in the minds and hearts of individuals, and not solely as implicit or explicit rules of concrete games. Accordingly, the concept of "frontier" is necessarily dependent on change, is dynamic and can be influenced.

2. The new that is simply renewal

The notion and reality of frontiers have changed over the centuries. The vagueness of frontiers as they existed in the Middle Ages has given way to well-defined lines of demarcation. The juridical functions of frontiers have been adapted to new concepts,

and the rise of "national" viewpoints in the 18th and 19th centuries has led to a semi-sacrosanct idea of frontiers that henceforth replaces the fuzziness of mediaeval realities with this spirit of "possession". Frontiers are thus made into zones of attack and defence, and national sensitivities, a source of disputes and ultimately of wars, are awakened. Since frontier areas have been, to a particularly serious extent, the first to suffer in such wars and since too, in order to create a feeling of security, frontiers have often been heavily fortified with the object of sparing the population any form of risk, the current European policy of making frontiers into areas of contact allowing trade, mobility and cross-frontier openness is seen as a liberation. While this new policy applies to entire nations and countries, it is especially necessary, and has particularly meaningful consequences, in frontier areas.

In certain parts of Europe, this European policy has succeeded in creating transfrontier zones which would have been inconceivable in the era of nationalism. These form new cross-frontier co-operation entities in which the partners cede certain powers and transfer them to co-operation models corresponding to new transfrontier identities. Examples are the five Euro-regions along the frontier between the Netherlands and Germany and the "Neisse/Nisa/Nisa" area in the Poland/Czech Republic/Germany triangle.

Referring to the situation described above, the slogan for the European Year of Languages, "Languages Open Doors", lays special stress on the part to be played by language skills in the Europe of tomorrow. The children who at our request drew pictures of what they understood by this slogan very rightly added, "Languages open doors...and hearts", acknowledging in this way the gamut of painful experiences suffered by the peoples of Europe, particularly along the frontiers, and recognising that mental and emotional frontiers are perhaps the hardest and most enduring.

3.   A conclusion...and a beginning: CICERO

CICERO is short for a Dutch expression denoting a centre situated at the Maastricht Talenacademie (Languages Academy), namely the Coördinatie - en Informatiecentrum voor Euregional Onderwijs (Co-ordination and Information Centre for Euro-regional Education). Set up in February 2001, this centre is the end result of a project entitled "Teaching Foreign Languages in Border Areas" and coming under the joint responsibility of four organisations: the Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (Graz, Austria), the Goethe Institut Inter Nationes (Munich, Germany), Kulturkontakt Austria (Vienna, Austria) and the Talenacademie (Maastricht, Netherlands).

The aims of the project are to collect experience in the area denoted by its title and, in addition, to carry out field research, to discuss and analyse experts' reports and to organise workshops in frontier regions so that the results of activities can be publicised and specific aspects of foreign-language teaching made a part of the initial and in-service training of teachers. A particular concern is to make institutions

and authorities dealing with these matters aware of the subject's importance in order that the feasibility of proposals, or of the possibility of transferring existing results to new contexts, may be discussed. CICERO meets the general need to assemble the information available on current projects, to initiate others and to advise and bring into contact interested persons and institutions. It is strongly hoped that CICERO, which began its operations in 2001, will be able to continue this work not only throughout the project (which ends in 2002 or 2003) but also afterwards, bearing in mind that it is institutionally independent.

Under the auspices of the project, which arose out of a lecture given by the author during a colloquium at the University of Kassel (Germany), representatives of the institutions mentioned were able, in co-operation with experts, to discuss the theoretical and practical aspects of the whole topic in seminars and colloquia. Workshops on the subject have been organised at places including Brno (Czech Republic), Saarbrücken (Germany), Maastricht (Netherlands), Tallinn/Tartu (Estonia) and Borken (Germany).

As the results of these activities have been published regularly, this survey will be limited to a number of fundamental aspects considered to typify the major principles of the transfrontier situation, since these principles form the background to all activities under this head.

The above principles can be summarised as follows:
- There is a particularly marked awareness in frontier regions of the role of languages.
- The transfrontier situation is rich in commitment and activities by the inhabitants aimed at promoting multilingualis m/plurilingualism.
- The regions/Euro-regions are in an especially good position to promote transfrontier integration directed at what the Council of Europe and the European Union call the European dimension and citizenship.

4.   The frontiers: European texture

A characteristic of European geography is the existence of a multitude of countries. The number of countries is very large given the continent's relatively small size. Frontiers are thus very numerous. One country to which this remark particularly applies is Germany, whose situation differs profoundly from that of countries like England or Portugal.

National frontiers often do not coincide with linguistic frontiers; such is the case, for example, in the French-speaking area (France, Belgium, Switzerland and Luxembourg), the German-speaking area (Germany, the German-speaking region of Belgium, Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein) and the Basque area (France and Spain) and so on.

Linguistic and ethnic frontiers also exist inside countries, for example, the Breton and Basque minorities in France, the Sorbs and Frisians in Germany; these minorities have a widely varying juridical and political status. The extremely large number of migrants and immigrants in the majority of European countries allows contacts between cultures, languages, religions and ethnic groups far transcending the number of national frontiers.

The multilingualism and multiculturality of Europe are therefore much more impressive than maps of national frontiers suggest.

5. Frontiers and cohesion

Frontiers are the fruit of history and represent, so to speak, the coded history of Europe. To understand the present situation in Europe, one has to be able to "read" frontiers: origins, movements, changes and transfers that determine the way people interpret them; frontiers as guarantees of security, frontiers as a challenge, as a provocation, as a painful memory, as a barrier and obstacle; all these memories and personal and common experiences create a backdrop, a source of common cultural memory and mental and emotional frontiers which determine and explain the attitudes and behaviour of nations, peoples, ethnic groups and individuals.

An Austrian colleague has summed up this situation with the words, "Frontiers are the scars of history," while a Slovenian professor has added, "... and the wounds and injuries of the present".

Frontiers are (or are becoming) lines of demarcation (voluntary or involuntary) of a cultural, political, economic and therefore social nature. Differences in standards of living are enormous in Europe; North-South contrasts are no less obvious than those found in crossing Europe from West to East. Frontiers thus have multiple functions: preserving these differences, equalising them, providing opportunities to establish/re-establish balance and so on. One of the major objectives of all European policy should be to bring about social cohesion in Europe. It is one in which languages have a crucial role to play because they are of fundamental importance for international and therefore transfrontier dialogue and discourse.

6. Frontiers and frontier regions

Neighbours are not chosen, they are just there. On both the political and private level, it is advantageous to get along with them and establish relations which will permit peaceful "cohabitation".

What can the role of language knowledge be in this process? A whole range of achievements could be cited to prove that language learning and teaching can help to promote relations between neighbouring countries in Europe. The following are

some of the conditions in which what we have become accustomed to call "Teaching Partner Languages in Border Areas" can be developed.

- 20th century linguistics has come a long way. It has undergone a process of awareness such that its approach is now based on the function of language in the context of society. Early in the century, the discovery of language as a "system" which can be "abstracted" from concrete achievements, and therefore from words, led to particular interest being taken by linguists in the present synchronic state of language, with a view to bringing out the "systemic" links between the elements, which until then had appeared isolated. This weight of interest in the "abstract" side of language had an immense impact on language teaching right up to the 1960s and 1970s but generated a parallel movement which placed research into the "function" of language at the forefront, thus expanding the linguistic horizon beyond form and systemic and formal relationships. The acceptance of linguistic entities greater than the proposition or the phrase, of disciplines like semantics and semasiology, of the use of language in concrete situations, of the behavioural function of language, of the paraverbal and extraverbal and thus of language as an instrument of communication all contributed to the development of a linguistics of dialogue and discourse in a social context.

- Applied linguistics has placed particular stress on the socio-linguistic phenomena which characterise contacts between languages and between people of different languages. The use of language to mark distances between human beings or to create contacts between different cultures through the medium of language; the role of language in national and international politics, in businesses, in political or economic negotiations, at school, in society in general; the impact of these discoveries on instructing and enlightening people: all these aspects have generated increasing interest in analysing transfrontier relations and in drawing practical lessons from them.

- After the painful experiences of the world wars, attention was directed both in Europe and in other continents to the possible contribution of language knowledge to peaceful neighbourly relations. Ideas ranging from a "discourse on eternal peace" to the devising of concepts for language teaching and the creation of teaching materials were - and still are - features of projects like LINGUAPAX, a UNESCO project conceived in 1986. This project created a framework for numerous activities such as the Kiev, Sitges and Saarbrücken seminars and the workshops in Melbourne, Hiroshima, Barcelona, South America and Africa. Such activities have helped greatly to awaken the conscience, responsibility and creativity of numerous individuals and institutions by exploiting the results of a linguistics open to world problems and applicable to the different contexts of human relations. Knowing the "other", knowing the "others", coming to terms with multicultural life, understanding its opportunities without forgetting its risks, reaching agreement with "others": this is what is asked of young people more than in the past.

- The problems of modern life are multiplying daily and their magnitude is increasing steadily. The internationalisation of relationships does not show itself solely in tourism, in industrial-production structures and in international trade but also in the problems that arise day by day in frontier areas; examples of these include settling questions of cross-frontier traffic, security and the environment. Taking adequate measures to resolve these questions can no longer be confined to the national dimension but requires cross-frontier co-operation. Policymakers, technicians and experts need to display both a knowledge of the subject and a sensitivity to other viewpoints, other ways of acting and reacting, other values and priorities. Knowledge of the neighbour's language, with at its centre a proper conception of "discourse" as understood in current linguistics, in combination with a "philosophy" or, better still, an "ethic" of language behaviour and a commitment to a life of peace in the context of neighbourly relations, together with a feeling for mutual co-operation, are all part of the attitude needed to solve the problems that arise, some examples of which, taken from actual experience in Sar-Lor-Lux, have been cited.

- Sar-Lor-Lux is the term adopted to describe a region comprising the Saar, the Lorraine region and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. In other contexts, one speaks, for example, of Euro-regions, which have already become "institutions" marking out the road to Europe. The policy of regions as adopted by the European Commission, the various European Parliament motions and the Council of Europe's activities are signs that there is now much greater interest in the regions. Regional policy is viewed as a "bottom-up" movement which complements the "top-down" initiatives taken by the European institutions themselves. These regional initiatives are a response to the important principle which is supposed to govern all the Commission's activities, namely subsidiarity, whereby decisions should be taken at the lowest possible level. The frontier regions will have to put this principle into practice if they are to meet a need that is increasingly regarded by Europeans as a pre-requisite for the birth of a feeling of European identity.

- The needs of modern life take two forms. There is an individual form which requires young people to meet the challenges of initial and continuous training adapted to competition from other countries and other economic entities worldwide; to make contact with other countries in order to understand other structures and other value systems; and to internationalise the lives of individuals so that they will become part of a now international world. The second form requires people living along frontiers, and therefore in areas which are often somewhat marginalised with respect to a country's major centres, to help develop that region and to exploit the neighbour's proximity, combining intellectual and material resources in the interests of frontier-region development. In the vicinity of frontiers, therefore, a policy is needed that takes account of individual and social needs, taps common resources and attempts to combine the two forms.

The regions along frontiers have begun to create specific identities for themselves. Their aim is to meet specific needs and to exploit proximity and the fact of being neighbours, so as to provide a better chance of resolving problems, which are more acute in those regions.

7.   The frontier regions and languages

All this shows that in frontier regions there must be language knowledge enabling people to help create these new identities. There must therefore be learning (and teaching) geared to the needs of society and thus justified by a political interpretation and perspective. An identity may be defined by a system of specific values reflecting the hopes, expectations and interpretations of the world, by a special encoding of ideas and feelings and by symbols and their systematisation.

This may be illustrated by an example. "Cattenom" is the name of a small village in Lorraine very near the German frontier in the Trier region. Some 20 years ago the French built an enormous nuclear plant there whose emissions soon started to affect the frontier area. The temperature of the Moselle rose, the air over German territory was polluted by the westerly winds. The result was rows, demonstrations and political reactions on the part of the neighbouring German population because of the obvious and indeed visible consequences. It is in critical situations of this nature that language experts employing current linguistic concepts as described above are needed: experts who are first and foremost language teachers.

In such situations, as already said, a language teacher is needed, a communication expert who knows that "language" does not mean the subjunctive in all its facets but that "language" is linked to "culture" in a dual sense: language is part of culture like architecture, music, literature etc; but the converse is also true: language contains culture, language is the memory of culture. Language cannot be separated from culture. A language teacher knows nowadays that he is not there to teach the "system" of a language but its application, function and usage and, furthermore, that he must teach it accurately so that it will take account of the problems arising in society, this society being the Europe now under construction in miniature in the frontier regions, which are, in a manner of speaking, the laboratories of Europe.

Teachers are needed who are aware of their "political" role, universities are needed which offer training in which the "political" aspect is firmly embedded in courses and curricula. All teaching and methodological measures must be geared to socio-political relationships. Teaching and methodology are ultimately political reflexions and activities, and this is particularly true for frontier regions. That is why "Teaching Partner Languages in Border Areas" is a deeply future-oriented project.

Learners are also needed who are aware of their role in the region and for the region, who do not adopt conventional assumptions regarding language learning but who understand the interdependence between learning, the individual professional career, social duty and the opportunities afforded by the fact of having or being a neighbour.

Institutions and administrative networks are needed which can create the framework and supply the basis for specific learning and teaching adapted to the frontier situation and conditions.

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8.   Frontier situation: a (typical?) example

Before describing concrete activities and measures which might be proposed for frontier regions, I shall illustrate this specific situation by referring to my presentation (to the University of Kassel) which marked the beginning of the project "Teaching Partner Languages in Border Areas". My example will be the Saarland/Lorraine region.

(1)   The frontier context in these two neighbouring zones is in no way identical, as a number of examples indicate:

* The Saar possesses some large towns near the frontier. the situation not being identical in Lorraine.
* Tourist potential is exploited differently.
* The feeling of living at a frontier and the consciousness of having a neighbour are also different, the Saar tending to regard itself as a homogeneous frontier entity with respect to France, while a difference is noted between the Metz and Nancy regions.
* Migrants in the two regions are of different origins (a large proportion of Portuguese and North African minorities in Lorraine, predominance of Turks, Italians and Spaniards in the Saar).
* The administrative structures could not be more different.

(2)   The linguistic situation and language policy in the two regions are almost completely dissimilar. The language breakdown shows the role of the Francic (Germanic) dialect spoken in Lorraine by elderly or middle-aged persons at different levels. It also has to take account of the language frontier which, from the point of view of dialects, does not correspond to national frontiers. The result is an immediate, albeit differing, link with the motivation to learn the neighbour's language.

(3)   The economic difficulties on both sides of the frontier show important similarities (disappearance of the coal and iron and steel industries, effort to create new industries); unemployment is a serious problem generally. This situation is giving rise to an enhanced co-operation which should bring about improvement. The acquisition of specific knowledge about this region may improve opportunities on the employment market.

(4)   In the past, the frontier has been the scene of numerous comings and goings; historical trends have brought about integration with the neighbour's political and economic system. These territorial changes have had, in combination, an influence both at the psychological level and at the social, political and economic level.

(5)   The past reappears as soon as acute problems arise.

(6)   Even when the frontier was closed it was always possible, one way or another, to visit the neighbour. There seemed to be a tacit understanding between the populations on the two sides of the frontier to use side forest roads, i.e. the well-known "green frontier".

(7)   Frontier areas are generally peripheral areas. The creation of a cross-frontier region enables them, at least theoretically, to be made into a central point and a platform transcending the frontier. Two frontier contexts, or three in the case of Sar-Lor-Lux, are becoming a central context. An interesting alternation is then observed between identification with the frontier situation as a periphery and identification with the frontier region as a bi-national or tri-national centre.

(8)   Very often frontier areas are not regarded as the "true" other country. They often constitute an area of transit (e.g. during holiday periods) and not a destination. In this sense, interest in the neighbouring region is limited.

(9)   Proximity to the frontier allows what the neighbour has to offer in the way of cultural events, interesting purchases and so on to be fully exploited. Through this, one obviously acquires the language in everyday situations. Saar education does not only devote special attention to the language (French), it also takes a more thorough look at the neighbour's daily culture than do the other German regions.

(10)   Opportunities for out-of-school learning are considerable, thanks, for example, to local radio and personal contacts. These become obvious on certain days of the week and at certain hours, for example during each country's public holidays.

(11)   Proximity to the frontier gives rise to "cross-frontier expressions" which often change their pronunciation or meaning once the frontier is crossed. This linguistic intimacy is also illustrated by the advertising hoardings put up in the streets of Saar towns, with their slogans more often in French than in the other Länder.

(12)   The frontier does not automatically encourage bilingualism. On the contrary, the frontier situation was long the reason for the French administration's attempt to reduce local bilingualism.

(13)   Individual bilingualism is found on the French side but not (or very little) on the German side. It represents nonetheless a decisive advantage which can facilitate access to the world of work.

(14)   Co-operation between Lorraine and the Saar is undoubtedly flourishing but remains a field to be cultivated with patience and understanding.

(15)   The feeling of belonging beyond the frontier has developed satisfactorily; the growing identification with the Sar-Lor-Lux Region is easy to understand. This new entity with which the inhabitants have begun to identify virtually ignores the frontier. Sar-Lor-Lux undoubtedly conveys a positive connotation.

(16)   The frontier situation encourages an awareness of language issues. It is perhaps no accident that the first "Language Council" took place in the Saar.

(17)   For a long time frontiers have often affected whole families; one part of the family resides on one side of the frontier, another on the other side; in many cases this *de facto* situation generates a feeling of belonging that transcends all the political and economic changes of the past, whilst encouraging a knowledge of the partner's language and culture.

(18)   Proximity to the frontier promotes co-operation, particularly in fields relating to language learning and teaching; teacher exchanges and the use of offers of language learning in the neighbouring country have been developed and in this way help to strengthen the authenticity of knowledge. Such a frontier region represents to some extent a foretaste of (or training for) the free movement of the active population in Europe.

(19)   The structural differences in socio-cultural and economic systems stand out even more strongly in frontier areas.

Frontier regions have a natural "need" for TWO foreign languages. It appears necessary, in fact, to teach two foreign languages side by side: in the case of the Saar, French (which goes without saying) and English (equally self-evident). The need and necessity are clear.

The above is an example of the measures and activities typical of the situation in a frontier region: projects and realities, hopes and visions, divergences and convergences are often very close to one another. Translating these lofty aims into reality will demand constant patience and unshakable optimism; this is true everywhere and is what constitutes the identity of frontier regions as a whole, even if the situations of which I have quoted only one example as an illustration differ widely.

9.   The frontier regions: the main prospects

Despite these differences, it is clear that the main prospects for the frontier regions as they relate to the construction of Europe are all based on the need for co-operation among these regions. The hope is that the growing multitude of these regions is developing in a European direction. This hope is reflected in various recommendations made by a group of national representatives meeting in Graz. Participants in a seminar at the Council of Europe Centre for Modern Languages, representing some 20 European countries, agreed on the principles below, which are capable of serving as guiding threads or even leitmotifs for future work on "Teaching Partner Languages in Border Areas".

The growing internationalisation of life, the increasing globalisation of issues and the need for the development of a common Europe require the traditional representations of a human community to be re-thought in a way that takes account of past experience. New political and economic concepts, particularly those concerning the promotion of peace, and new paths must be developed.

One of the key concepts affecting the common view in Europe is that of "frontier". The importance of frontier regions in the European integration process is appearing increasingly on the agenda. This trend is reflected in the expression "The Europe of Frontier Regions".

Languages - as already mentioned - represent culturally marked opportunities for expression. They are therefore an integral part of "frontier policy" and can become both an instrument for the demarcation or exclusion of countries, cultures and individuals and an occasion for encounter, contact and co-operation. Training authorities must ensure that the teaching and learning of languages - both in general and in the frontier regions particularly - are directed at encounter, understanding and agreement between different cultures, and thus with neighbouring cultures.

The political tasks resulting from the internationalisation of life, the globalisation of issues and the joint development of a democratic Europe living in peace affect in a very particular manner all the bodies and individuals involved in the training process, that is, in the acquisition and teaching of languages, and also include those who dedicate themselves to the acquisition of languages or who will be required to contribute to that process.

Like politics in general, training policy - particularly at European-region level - shows encouraging examples of training concepts and evaluated realities that bear on the learning and teaching of the languages of neighbouring countries.

The results of teaching and learning neighbouring languages can be a spur to the reproduction of similar or differing experiences in other regions. Likewise, discussion around the diversity of data concerning the other sites can influence, in its turn, existing achievements and realities. This "discourse on language", directed at the teaching and learning of neighbouring languages under the specific circumstances

of frontier regions, underlies the Graz project "Teaching Partner Languages in Border Areas" and constitutes the aim of the work of CICERO, the institution resulting from the project.

10.   This means in practice:...

Here too, an agreement was reached with experts from many European countries on the formulation of an aim. This is as follows.

Encouragement of the learning of foreign languages in frontier regions must exploit the opportunities offered by daily life to make languages a means of exchanging interests, viewpoints and specific and often differing patterns of behaviour. The teaching and learning of foreign languages for frontier regions must allot a special place to the neighbouring language and to the out-of-school learning and use of that language in the daily round of frontier life. Such teaching and learning must therefore take place in all areas of life, including the media sector.

Despite their great diversity in cultural, economic, political, social and historical matters, frontier regions show points of similarity on which close and fruitful co-operation can be based. The objective here is to encourage such co-operation intensively through regional, national and supranational bodies, the organisation, for example, of twinnings and sponsorships and a continuous flow of meetings so that experience can be exchanged and joint critical evaluations performed: a central task for CICERO.

These concepts are set out in the following list whose purpose is simply to indicate a few starting points and not to be systematic or exhaustive:
- bilingual/bicultural/multicultural learning
- use of the neighbour's media for language learning
- early teaching of the neighbour's language
- the neighbour's language as a teaching vehicle
- school exchanges and meetings in primary and secondary
- teaching material with a regional bias
- teaching and learning about the neighbour according to specific themes
- joint transfrontier development of teaching/learning material
- promotion of specific profiles through school autonomy
- continuous training of teachers from the cross-frontier viewpoint.

The foregoing are the aims of the co-operation inaugurated under the auspices of the Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe in Graz. The process will continue under the leadership of the institution named CICERO, whose task will be to assemble the resources, ideas, suggestions, experts, leaders, initiatives and project results.

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