AN ROINN DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS EDUCATION
AGUS EOLAÍOCHTA AND SCIENCE

COUNCIL CONSEIL
OF EUROPE DE L'EUROPE

# Language Education Policy Profile

## IRELAND

Language Policy Division
Strasbourg

Department of Education and Science
Ireland

2005 - 2007

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The origins, context and purpose of the Profile

The Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe offers to Member states assistance in carrying out analyses of their language education policies. According to the *Guidelines and Procedures[1]*, "the aim is to offer member States the opportunity to undertake a 'self-evaluation' of their policy in a spirit of dialogue with Council of Europe experts, and with a view to focusing on possible future policy developments within the country. […]This does not mean 'external evaluation'. It is a process of reflection by the authorities and members of civil society, and the Council of Europe experts have the function of acting as catalysts in this process".

This activity is known as the Language Education Policy Profile, and the process leads to an agreed report, the Profile, on the current position and possible future developments in language education of all kinds.

The position of the Council of Europe is that analysis and evaluation of language education cannot be compartmentalised, and that language teaching and learning in a country needs to be understood holistically, to include teaching of the national language/mother tongue, of regional and minority languages, of the languages of recent immigrant groups, of foreign and second languages.

The process of the Profile consists of three principal phases:

- the production of a 'Country Report', describing the current position and raising issues which are under discussion or review; this report is presented by the authorities of the country in question
- the production of an 'Experts' Report' which takes into account the 'Country Report' and discussions and observations during a week's visit to the country by a small number of experts nominated by the Council of Europe from other Member states
- the production of a 'Language Education Policy Profile' developed from the Experts' Report and taking account of comments and feedback from those invited to a 'round table' discussion of the Experts' Report; this Profile is a report which is agreed in its final form by the experts and the country authorities, and published by the Council of Europe and the country in question.

Thus the experts act as catalysts in the process of self-analysis and provide an external view to stimulate reflection on problems and solutions.

In providing comments, the Council of Europe Expert Group bears in mind both the priorities of the country in question and the policies and views of desirable practice presented in documents of the Council of Europe in particular in terms of plurilingualism.

This Experts' Report is the second phase and the outcome of the following:

- a preparatory meeting in November 2004 and a complementary visit in June 2005
- a Country Report, the first version of which was available in June 2005[2]

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[1] Document DGIV/EDU/LANG (2002) 1 Rev. 3

[2] *Language Education Policy Profile: Country Report, Ireland,* Department of Education and Science, 2006.
 The authoring group consisted of Claire Cunningham, Barbara Lazenby Simpson, John Harris, Muiris Ó Laoire, Hilary Roche, Elke Hughes, Paul Caffrey

- discussions and visits to institutions by four Council of Europe Experts, one expert appointed by the Irish authorities and one member of the Council of Europe Secretariat (Language Policy Division) for one week in October 2005[3]

- documentation provided before and during the week visit by the Irish authorities and others.

[Membership of the Expert Group: Hugo Baetens-Beardsmore, Belgium; Daniel Coste, France (rapporteur); Dagmar Heindler, Austria; Richard Johnstone, Scotland; Muiris Ó Laoire, Ireland; Joseph Sheils, Council of Europe.]

The contents and structure of the report, after this introduction, are in four main parts:

- a summary of issues for discussion raised by the internal Country Report, together with a brief analysis of the situation in comparison with some of the recommendations of the Council of Europe

- an analysis of the contemporary situation

- elements for future approaches to language education

- a conclusion consisting of guiding principles and action priorities for the Department of Education and Science.

## 1.2. Council of Europe policies

The language education policy of the Council of Europe is founded on the key concept of the plurilingualism of the individual. This needs to be distinguished from the multilingualism of geographical regions.

According to Council of Europe principles

- 'multilingualism' refers to the presence in a geographical area, large or small, of more than one 'variety of language' i.e. the mode of speaking of a social group whether it is formally recognised as a language or not; in such an area individuals may be monolingual, speaking only their own variety.

- 'plurilingualism' refers to the repertoire of varieties of language which many individuals use, and is therefore the opposite of monolingualism; it includes the language variety referred to as 'mother tongue' or 'first language' and any number of other languages or varieties. Thus, in some multilingual areas some individuals are monolingual and some are plurilingual.

Europe as a geographic area is multilingual, as are most member States. The Council of Europe has developed an international consensus on principles to guide the development of language education policies which promotes plurilingualism for the individual as a principal aim of all language education policy. This position is formulated in a number of documents listed in Appendix 1.

This perspective places not languages but those who speak them at the centre of language policies. The emphasis is upon valuing and developing the ability of all individuals to learn and use several languages, to broaden this competence through appropriate teaching and through plurilingual education, the purpose of which is the creation of respect and understanding of the languages and language varieties of others as a basis for democratic citizenship and social cohesion.

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[3] The programme of the visit is in Appendix 4

Plurilingualism is defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)[4] in the following way:

> [Plurilingualism is] 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, 2001: 168).

Thus plurilingualism refers to the full linguistic repertoire of the individual, including their 'mother tongue' or 'first language', and in this document we are concerned with all language education in Ireland.

This Profile is informed by the Council of Europe position, contained in the Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and in normative instruments such as the Common European Framework, and presented in detail in the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe[5]*. In this latter document it is made clear that plurilingualism is also a fundamental aspect of policies of social inclusion and education for democratic citizenship:

> The development of plurilingualism is not simply a functional necessity: it is also an essential component of democratic behaviour. Recognition of the diversity of speakers' plurilingual repertoires should lead to acceptance of linguistic differences: respect for the linguistic rights of individuals and groups in their relations with the state and linguistic majorities, respect for freedom of expression, respect for linguistic minorities, respect for the least commonly spoken and taught national languages, respect for language diversity in inter-regional and international communication. Language education policies are intimately connected with education in the values of democratic citizenship because their purposes are complementary: language teaching, the ideal *locus* for intercultural contact, is a sector in which education for democratic life in its intercultural dimensions can be included in education systems. (Main Version, 2.2.3)

It should be noted that while the development of plurilingualism in education systems is a generally accepted aim of language education, its implementation is only just beginning in most education contexts. Implementation of policies for the development of plurilingualism can be approached in different ways, and it is not necessarily a matter of "all or nothing". Measures may be more or less demanding, e.g. ministerial regulations concerning curriculum, or new forms of organisation, which may require special financial arrangements, or political decisions, implying extensive discussion at all levels.

The responses to the Country Profile in any particular country can thus be expected to vary according to their circumstances, history and priorities.

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[4] *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment,* Cambridge University Press, 2001. Also online on  www.coe.int/lang
[5] Revised edition,  *From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education: Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies, Main Version.* Language Policy Division, Council of Europe, 2007. Available online www.coe.int/lang

# 1.3. Irish priorities and key issues in the review of language teaching

At the preparatory meeting—and this was confirmed by the Country Report—the Irish authorities suggested that a certain number of key issues be focused upon. Prior to the visit which took place in October 2005, these key issues were formulated as follows by the Department of Education and Science to the Expert Group:

### 1.3.1. National Language Policy and Societal Attitudes

A languages-in-education policy can only operate and be implemented within the wider context of national policy and societal attitudes. The Official Languages Act 2003 is an example of a national language policy which is being actively implemented.

➢ *Given the growing dominance of English as a lingua franca, what measures should be taken to increase public awareness of the importance of languages other than English?*

### 1.3.2. The Irish Language in Society and in Education

The fact that Ireland is a bilingual State is a critical consideration in the construction of a languages-in-education policy. It is clear that the role of the Irish language as an L1 and as an L2 needs to be maintained, supported and extended.

➢ *How can current concerns regarding the teaching and learning of Irish be actively addressed?*
➢ *What role can education—including immersion and Gaeltacht education—play in the maintenance and regeneration of Irish and in extending effective bilingualism?*

### 1.3.3. Language as a Resource

Attested competence in foreign languages is an essential resource for the State. A languages-in-education policy, therefore, must pay due regard to the cultural, social and economic needs of individual learners and of the State, and should be cognizant of the future requirements of the economy and society.

➢ *How can the concept of building 'national capacity' in respect of various foreign languages complement the aim of fostering personal plurilingualism?*

### 1.3.4. National Policy and European Policy

The European Council (Barcelona March 2002) called on member States "to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age". Ireland has yet to formulate a response to this aspiration of "Mother tongue plus two". At present, most of our school-going students study one foreign language in addition to English and Irish. However, in the absence of a definite languages-in-education policy this situation is unlikely to continue: there are already signs of a falloff in the percentages taking foreign languages in the Leaving Certificate.

➢ *In the above context, what principles should underpin a languages-in-education policy and what specific objectives as regards Irish, English and other languages should that policy incorporate?*
➢ *How might that policy foster the notion of developing plurilingual competences?*
➢ *How could the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the European Language Portfolio be used in setting goals and measuring progress towards those goals?*

### 1.3.5. The Changing Sociolinguistic Map of Ireland

The presence in the education system of large numbers of students whose mother tongue is neither English nor Irish is a new phenomenon, but one which is likely to be with us for the

foreseeable future. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) discussion paper on languages in the post-primary curriculum[6] identifies three main issues, equally relevant at primary level, which arise from the fact that Ireland's school-going population is likely to become increasingly multinational, multilingual and multi-ethnic: firstly, the need to integrate newcomers into the education system; secondly, the need to provide the necessary language skills for children whose mother tongue is neither Irish nor English; thirdly, the question of appropriate mother tongue support for the children of newcomers. The Language Education Policy Profile process provides an opportunity to address these issues.

> *How should we be meeting the linguistic needs of newcomers in our schools?*
> *What long-term objectives should we be setting regarding the linguistic needs of newcomers in our schools?*

### 1.3.6. An Integrated Approach to Language Teaching

At present, languages tend to be taught in isolation from one another. The potential for making connections between English, Irish and other languages is rarely exploited to any significant extent. There is also a certain discontinuity between primary and post-primary levels, not least in situations where pupils learn a foreign language in primary school.

> *How can we develop an integrated approach to the teaching of languages at both primary and post-primary levels, so that language awareness is fostered and curriculum time is used to the best advantage?*
> *In the context of competing demands for time in an ever more crowded curriculum, how helpful is the idea, proposed in the NCCA discussion paper, of an agreed amount of "curriculum space" for languages?*

### 1.3.7. The Future of Modern Foreign Languages in Primary School

It is expected that the revised primary curriculum will have been fully implemented by 2007. Only then can a decision be taken on the future place of modern foreign languages in primary school. In the meantime, the Language Education Policy Profile process provides an ideal opportunity to reflect on the future of foreign languages in primary school in the broader policy context and to consider the implications of various long-term options, especially as regards teacher education and supply, and continuity between primary and post-primary levels. The Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (ITÉ) evaluation of the pilot project[7] and the NCCA's Feasibility Report[8] provide ample data on which to base reflection and decision-making.

> *What are the key factors that should inform the decision-making process regarding the future of modern languages in primary schools?*

### 1.3.8. Assessment for Certification

At post-primary level, languages-in-education policy cannot be considered without reference to assessment and the State examinations. This is especially the case given the high-stakes nature of the Leaving Certificate examination and its dominant role in the system. At present, there are real concerns at the mismatch between syllabus objectives and assessment objectives and methods. The backwash effect of examinations on classroom practice and therefore on language acquisition is incontestable.

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[6] David Little, *Languages in the Post-Primary Curriculum: a discussion paper.* National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2003.

[7] J. Harris and M. Conway, *Modern Languages in Irish Primary Schools: an Evaluation of the National Pilot Project,* Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann, 2002.

[8] *Report on the Feasibility of Modern Languages in the Primary School Curriculum,* National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2005.

> ➢ *How can a closer match between syllabus objectives, pedagogical practice and student assessment be achieved?*
> ➢ *In this regard, what use can be made of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR, and the European Language Portfolio?*

### 1.3.9. Support for Languages at Post-primary Level

December 2006 will see the end of the Post-Primary Languages Initiative, established under the National Development Plan in 2000 to support the implementation of the policy of the Department of Education and Science of diversifying, enhancing and expanding the teaching of languages in second level schools. Similar support will be needed in the future if other 'new' languages are to be introduced. However, it has become increasingly clear that *all* languages, even those which are well established, are going to need support on an ongoing basis. Without definite intervention, especially in the areas of awareness-raising and teacher in-career development, it is almost inevitable that the situation of languages at second level will continue to decline.

> ➢ *What form should that intervention take?*
> ➢ *Should there be a new phase of the Post-Primary Languages Initiative with a broader remit, or should support be provided through some combination of other structures and actions?*

### 1.3.10. Exploring the Potential of Immersion Education and CLIL

Ireland has a tradition of immersion education to teach the Irish language. However, *partial* bilingual programmes or CLIL-type models or options—where parts of the curriculum are taught through the L2 (Irish) or a foreign language—have not been adopted to any significant extent.

> ➢ *What can be done to explore the potential of such programmes?*
> ➢ *How might our tradition in Irish immersion programmes be used to the advantage of learning other languages?*

### 1.3.11. Languages at Third Level

Since language learning at third level impacts on language learning at post-primary level, and vice versa, a cause for concern is the falling numbers of students who opt to study foreign languages at third level. While this area is strictly outside the scope of the Language Education Policy Profile process, the uptake of languages at third level is indicative of a changing perception of the importance of languages for life and careers. One area where third level has direct impact on primary and post-primary levels is the area of teacher education and supply.

> ➢ *Has the time come to consider models of initial teacher education for second-level language teachers other than the traditional one of B.A. plus Higher Diploma in Education?*
> ➢ *What can we learn from models of language teacher education in operation in other countries?*
> ➢ *What role can third level colleges play in the provision of in-career development for teachers?*

### 1.4. Sensitive areas identified

From the very initial stages of the process, the Council of Europe team wondered what exactly it could bring to a scene which is, on one hand, obviously complex and controversial and, on the other hand, already well documented by studies, research reports, pilot projects, position papers and open discussion in the media.

Regarding this general context, the Expert Group formulated two comments.

- It read and heard from most its sources of information and interlocutors that the main question was the lack of "an overarching national language education policy". But everybody must certainly be aware that the answer to that central concern cannot be "imported" nor even suggested by outsiders. It is a matter of political decision, which, given its wide societal dimensions and implications, probably reaches well beyond the scope of the Department of Education and Science itself, important as its leading role and responsibilities may be.

- The group was most impressed by the frank and open statements and the very direct professional comments it heard from the different individuals and members of representative bodies it was fortunate to hear and exchange with. While the Country Report provided a substantial and detailed background description of the actual provision for language education in Ireland, other documents and the meetings held in Dublin clearly pointed out some difficulties, dissatisfactions and dysfunctions concerning this provision and its outcomes.

One can perhaps thus list these sensitive areas by order of apparent importance:

- As the national language, Irish is widely acknowledged as a constitutive dimension of the national identity and an object of strong and consensual social recognition. But there exists also an explicit concern about its teaching. Although compulsory as a subject throughout the entire school curriculum and up to final examinations, in all too many cases it does not lead to a reasonable level of communicative ability in the language. It has been stated that it even presents some counterproductive effects in so far as, after a few years, many if not most students from mainstream schools show a decline of interest in its learning.

- No foreign language is compulsory in the curriculum and, although nearly all students do include a foreign language in their choices, the results, especially in oral competence, are often deemed insufficient. French is still very dominant and the future of the initiatives taken by the Department of Education and Science in favour of introducing a foreign language at primary level or offering more diversification at post-primary level is still undecided. Moreover, many observers and stake-holders consider that the place of foreign languages in the students' choices depends largely on the National University of Ireland (NUI) requiring candidates to have taken both Irish and a third language in the Leaving Certificate examination[9]. According to these converging informants, the sustainability of foreign languages in the school system is thus possibly endangered.

- In a country where in recent years immigration has become more important than the long dominant emigration, schools receive more and more children whose parents' first language is neither English nor Irish. This new trend is the result of Ireland's rapid economic development and its need of an increased labour force, thus introducing elements of multiculturalism, especially, but not exclusively in the urban areas. This fact increases somewhat the language resources on which Ireland can capitalise. At the same

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[9] Which is not the case for the other universities.

time, there is a new demand for English as a second language, transforming many mainstream schools from potentially bilingual to actually multilingual (if not plurilingual) micro-communities.

- As pointed out in the list of key issues, although Ireland has proven to be an active partner within the European Union and now turns toward continental Europe as well as toward the United Kingdom and the United States, it does not seem to be as involved with the European evolution regarding foreign languages: the emphasis noted elsewhere on plurilingualism is not as noticeable in Ireland, nor are the Council of Europe instruments such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) put to use or even known by the teaching profession at large[10]. At the present time, at school level, there is only one project with CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)[11] and the European recommendation regarding the learning of three languages, "Mother tongue plus two foreign languages", has not been adopted as national education policy in so far as neither Irish as a national and official language nor English as an official can be classified as "foreign".

- The teaching of English and its use as a main language of instruction in most schools need to be given special attention, regardless of the home language of the students[12]. Ireland certainly came very high on an international scale in PISA 2000 and 2003 as far as Reading is concerned. But, even if in the Country Report and during the Experts' visit, English as a first language was not directly identified as a problematic area, it should perhaps be examined more closely.

- Transversal issues were very often mentioned during the October 2005 visit : curriculum, examinations, teacher education and development, role of third level institutions (Universities, Institutes of Technology, Colleges of Education). These issues appear to be of a decisive importance in the Irish context in respect to language policy.

- But the main issue deals with the interdependence between the areas already mentioned: for example, the situation of Irish cannot be fully analysed without considering the place of English or the choices of early introduction of a foreign language. And this raises the recurring point: the lack and the necessity of a coherent integrated language policy.

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[10] The three exceptions for the introduction of the ELP are the work of Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT), and the language portfolios developed for use by learners of foreign languages in primary and post-primary schools (Country Report, p. 28, 35, 39).

[11] It concerns the primary level (cf. Country Report, p. 35 & 40).

[12] This is an issue that has recently come afore on a more general level with regard to a holistic approach of language policies. The Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe has integrated this dimension in its programme of activities.

# 2. Analysis of the current situation in language education

## 2.1. Preliminary comments

Compared with other countries where Language Education Policy Profiles have been prepared, Ireland has already produced a significant number of studies and reports, either descriptive or position papers. Moreover, reliable data has been collected and discussed for many sectors of the school system. Consequently, the choice made for the present Profile is not to duplicate or repeat or comment in detail this existing documentation, but rather to stress some main points of analysis, which in turn can lead toward the development of an integrated language policy. In this respect, there are no fundamental differences, as far as the "diagnosis" is concerned, between the present document and what has been stated from various angles of observation and with differing foci by Inspectors, senior officials of the Department of Education and Science, NCCA Reviews, and the discussion paper written by David Little. Even if there may be more than nuances between the stands taken by various stake holders, strong convergences exist in the analysis, which go well beyond differences in style and tone. Variation can appear however in the conclusions or orientations drawn from the analysis.

This is why the following sections tend to concentrate on the discussion of factors which might influence change rather than on the present state of the language scene. The context for languages is unique, given the special role occupied by Irish as national language, linked to the fact that English as the other official language is increasingly the dominant language not only in Ireland but also throughout the world. The power of global English undoubtedly creates special problems for all other languages in Irish education and society, particularly in respect to the limited exposure to other languages which many citizens of Ireland encounter and the consequent lack of motivation for learning those languages.

## 2.2. Strengths and positive factors

During its October 2005 visit, the Expert Group had a number of very positive and encouraging impressions from the exchanges with different colleagues, officials, representatives of the teaching profession and stake holders of the civil society.

- The marked importance attached to Irish and languages in general by the Minister, her willingness to participate in the programme of the visit and to be interviewed, her frankness in responding and her well-informed assessment of the current situation.

- The manifest commitment by all, including the most senior officials, to improving the current situation of languages in Ireland, and their acceptance that improvement can only be achieved if substantial national strategic thinking and practical support are provided, to complement more local initiatives.

- The overall positive picture of Irish in all-Irish schools.

- The generally positive impact of the introduction of a modern (foreign) language at primary school, underpinned by a nationally supported project and a national research-based evaluation.

- The provision for the teaching of English in primary and post-primary schools to children of parents who had migrated into Ireland, many of whom were from ethnic or cultural minorities and some of whom were still unemployed.

- The work of Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT) in providing a range of general, professional and academic English courses to adult refugees and asylum seekers.[13]

- The strongly supportive role of the cultural institutes/bodies representing the key languages interests (additional to Irish) associated with education, in particular French, German, Spanish, Italian and Japanese.

- The commitment shown by many organisations associated with the Irish language.

From a more general point of view, the Expert Group noted as very positive elements:

- The official initiatives taken by the Department of Education and Science in favour of foreign language teaching and diversification at primary and at post-primary levels; these initiatives have clearly demonstrated that given adequate conditions, such innovations will receive support from students, teachers, administrators and parents.

- The important and original role of the NCCA, which touches upon all sectors (except third level instruction) of the school system and aims at reaching consensual propositions regarding curriculum and guidelines for teachers, while undertaking documented reviews of implementation of new programmes or commissioning special studies and discussion papers.

- The interest attached in research and gathering data in the field of education: innovations and initiatives concerning modern languages have been studied through research projects and scientific surveys, especially at primary level. This has been the case as well for the teaching, use and transmission of Irish. A significant amount of data has been thus collected from various sources and might influence political decisions[14].

- The public interest in questions regarding languages. Irish and foreign languages have found a place in the media and have become issues for debate beyond the school and professional circles. This of course, might generate distortions or undue dramatisation, but it is also a sign of a democratic approach to language policy, a domain not reserved for a small number of specialists.

## 2.3. The situation of Irish

### 2.3.1. Maintenance and revitalisation

There was no doubt that the main concern expressed repeatedly to the Council of Europe team was the situation of the Irish language, in Irish society and in the education system. Phrases such as 'gravely serious' and 'approaching melt-down' were used.

This is not surprising, given the symbolic and patrimonial value attached to Irish. Faced with the slow but constant decline of the use and transmission of the national language, including in the Gaeltacht areas, where there is an ever-increasing number of non native speakers of Irish, the political authorities have engaged a maintenance and revitalisation policy which comprises different components:

- A legal and normative measure with the adoption in 2003 of the *Official Languages Act.*

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[13] IILT is a campus company of Trinity College, Dublin, fully funded by the Department of Education and Science.

[14] Of course, one can always ask for more: there is a lack of studies (sociolinguistic, discourse analysis) on what is actually happening in classrooms (codeswitching, types of norms set in practice for different languages, handling of remediation, etc.). On a more general level, it seems that, whereas ITÉ was involved in research having implications on language policy, the university departments of linguistics or of languages have up to now been less involved in this kind of research.

- The support given to non-governmental bodies and associations whose aims are to maintain and spread the language by organising information and promotion campaigns and by sponsoring special programmes to produce teaching and reading materials.

- The assistance brought to the opening and functioning of Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht areas.

### 2.3.2. Limited results?

In spite of the various and converging initiatives and efforts and of a rather favourable attitude from the general population toward Irish, results are somewhat limited and do not seem to reverse the movement which contains the national language in a second language role. Briefly summarised, the following facts are often mentioned to underline the difficulties that the promotion of Irish has to face. They are confirmed by studies and research reports, such as those prepared by John Harris and his colleagues.[15]

- The number of native speakers of Irish is diminishing[16].

- The geography and demography of the language is undergoing a redistribution[17].

- A large proportion of the population claiming some knowledge, mostly passive, of Irish is made up of the students required to study the language in school.

- The dearth of opportunities to use the language continues to pose one of the more serious challenges to the societal revitalisation of the Irish language.

- The actual use of spoken Irish is rather rare among those who have a knowledge of it as a second language.

- The situation regarding standards in Irish is a cause for concern, since the future of the language depends to a considerable extent on the manner in which it is taught and acquired in the schools. The social context in which the Irish language and other languages are placed is ultimately very important and will exert considerable influence on the language in educational contexts. According to a recent report (2005) on the schools in the Gaeltacht, the main issue is the delicate state of Gaeltacht education.[18] A serious decline in the amount of Irish being used in schools has occurred. The number of schools using Irish as a medium of instruction in all subjects has contracted.

- With regard to the teaching of Irish in the English medium schools, there is a growing dissatisfaction with its low cost-effectiveness: results are deemed to be insufficient in spite of the 1500 class hours that a pupil spends being taught Irish.[19]

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[15] Most recently, J. Harris et al, *Irish in Primary Schools: Long-Term National Trends in Achievement,* Department of Education and Science, 2006.

[16] The notions of native/non native speaker need to be nuanced. In many cases, one should mention as well "native listeners", who have been exposed to the language in their family and environment but are not fluent speakers by any means and will not transmit their "native" language to their children.

[17] A large proportion of those claiming to speak Irish have it as a second language. National figures suggest stability but residence patterns are levelling out the traditional distribution of Irish. Broadly, it is declining in the west and increasing in the east but the trend seems to be reversing again. Dublin is a magnet for internal migration so that a large sector of Irish speakers in Dublin originates from the west. A gender difference is emerging today as in younger groups women speakers of Irish outnumber men, where this was formerly not the case. The feminisation of Irish-speaking communities is beginning to emerge.

[18] Mac Donnacha et al, *Staid Reatha na Scoileanna Gaeltachta 2004,* An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta, 2005.

[19] See *Inaugural Report - 2004,* Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga, 2004, p. 7.

- Pupils who are very positive about learning Irish when they enter primary school are reported less enthusiastic and often overtly "bored" as years go by.

- Parents who are generally favourable to the teaching of Irish and to its guaranteed place in the curriculum tend at the same time to give only limited support to their children in their motivation and acquisition of the language.

- Parents with a strong interest for the learning of Irish by their children choose to send them to all Irish schools when possible. On the other hand, a growing number of families apply for an exemption from the Irish requirement[20].

- In primary schools especially, many teachers feel insecure with their own competence in Irish and tend to resort to a traditional and formal approach of the written language rather than to promote active oral practice in class. It is still to be seen if the new curriculum for primary school, which seeks to promote a communicative approach, will be effective in this respect.

So, with regard to Irish in the education system, the main problems seem to be:

- The low level of proficiency in the language attained by many students at the primary and second levels.

- The low level of motivation for learning and using Irish among many pupils in primary and second-level education.

- The lack of linguistic proficiency among some teachers, particularly at the primary school level, resulting in a lack of confidence[21].

- The difficulty which many teachers experience in implementing a convincing pedagogy, and the need for continuing professional development (CPD) support to help them to do so; as well as a lack of suitable modern materials and ICT provision.

- The lack of a nationally coordinated teacher education programme, which would improve the supply of well-trained teachers who were sufficiently at ease in the language and perhaps also ready to teach other subjects even partially through Irish.

Whereas all of the above points seemed to be consensual across a number of groups which the Expert Group met in October 2005, there were two further issues which indicated problems and left room for debate:

- There was the impression of a certain polarisation between, on the one hand, the all-Irish and Gaeltacht schools and, on the other hand, the mainstream schools which are the clear majority. One voice suggested that there was a tendency for the teachers with the strongest proficiency to apply for positions in the all-Irish and Gaeltacht schools, which in turn attracted parents to put their children into these schools rather than into the local neighbourhood English-medium school.

- At the time of the visit of the Expert Group there was an ongoing debate as to whether or not there should be separate curricula and examinations for what might be termed Irish

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[20] This is a major point of concern for senior officials of the Department of Education and Science. Demands for exemption have increased during the last few years and can only very partially be attributed to families of foreign origin.

[21] In at least one of the Colleges of Education, there is a considerable and growing cohort of students who choose professional (Gaeilge ghairmiúil) instead of academic Irish (Gaeilge acadúil) in their Bachelors of Education degree course. There appears to be less teaching hours allocated to this subject than to academic Irish. Remediation and intervention appear to be difficult to implement due to large numbers and lack of resources in sourcing and employing qualified teachers/lecturers to teach the language.

'learners' and for those who might be termed 'fluent speakers'. If two separate systems were introduced, it was argued, then where would students from all-Irish schools fit in, i.e. students who were not native speakers of Irish but who had attended an all-Irish school and who were highly fluent in Irish but not as fluent as those students mainly from Gaeltacht areas who were likely to have Irish as their first language? On the other hand, if there were only one system, then this would have to be highly flexible in order to accommodate the full range of proficiency in Irish within the school population overall, ranging from Gaeltacht to mainstream schools. More recently, the Department has decided against introducing separate curricula and examinations for 'learners' and 'fluent speakers'.

### 2.3.3. Sources of difficulty

Some plausible reasons may explain why the situation of Irish appears as problematic.

- There are first and foremost sociolinguistic factors: the use of Irish is somewhat a victim of the "English is enough" attitude. Even if Irish is largely recognised as an ethnic marker and a national identity symbol, its functional added value is probably seen as limited by a majority of users. And in spite of the highly dedicated action of organisations such as An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), Foras na Gaeilge and Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge, the revitalisation and transmission of standards depend mostly on the education system.

- The responsibility given to the school is thus notably more important than in other sociolinguistic contexts such as Catalonia, the Basque Country or Valle d'Aosta with which it might be compared[22]. Is the burden too great for the school as such?[23]

- The lack of a compulsory oral assessment at Junior Certificate level and the limited weight given to the oral at Leaving Certificate level probably have a backwash effect on the teaching methods for Irish in the years preceding examination. In March 2007, the Minister for Education and Science announced that the marks allocation for the Leaving Certificate oral examination would be increased from 25% to 40%, and from 20% to 40% in the Junior Certificate. On the same occasion, the Minister stated that she would like to see more schools now consider the option of an oral examination at Junior Certificate, in the light of the increased marks available and by way of preparing students for increased use at Leaving Certificate level.

- As mentioned in many testimonies from the groups met by the experts, aspects of teacher education and of graduate teachers' competence in the Irish language might be significant contributory factors in problems of standards, but they remain largely intractable because of the inbuilt structures, i.e. autonomy of the teacher education institutions and a certain lack of coordination and fruitful dialogue between the colleges of education, universities and the Department of Education and Science (see 2.8.4 and section 3).

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[22] The sociolinguistic situations are different and so are the language policy choices and the organisational and pedagogical options.

[23] A distinction has been established (cf. 1.2.) between "plurilingualism" (a person's varied knowledge and use of several languages and linguistic varieties) and "multilingualism" (the presence of different languages generally officially recognised within a given territory). One of the paradoxes of Ireland is that, while most inhabitants can be considered plurilingual in so far as they have an imbalanced knowledge of English, of Irish and of a foreign or other native language, the official policy is to promote a form of "bilingualism" on a multilingual base of preservation and extension of the community of native speakers or neo-speakers of Irish. This ambivalent situation raises the question of how to reconcile these two different perspectives, if it can be done. School cannot face this challenge alone. The issue would then be to constitute and to develop new types of communities of speakers (or listeners, readers) of Irish.

- The debates regarding the curricula for Irish, with the partial shift of emphasis between primary and post-primary schools, and the fact that very different types of schools are supposed to implement the same curriculum are probably a source of insecurity for the teachers and the students concerned. The curriculum can be perceived, in some cases, as overestimating the capacities of learners, given the environment and the time allotted, and, in other cases, as underestimating the language level of students, given a different environment and exposure to the language.

- The commitment of the Irish language organisations to engage in an innovative approach to language planning is apparent. The organisations are certainly aware of the challenges confronting Irish language revitalisation and of the serious deficit in Irish language teaching. This deficit has implications for language planning since societal language shift in the Irish context seems to be contingent to a large degree upon instructed language acquisition. Irish language organisations have definite and interesting ideas on language planning, but there is no overall coordinating language planning structure to link their activities with the educational structures.

- The implications of the Official Languages Act need to be teased out. In many respects, the Act represents a first stage of new centralised language planning, aimed at ensuring the inclusion of appropriate provision for the needs of Irish speakers and of Gaeltacht communities in all legislation, but this happens at a time when language planning as a whole has become more decentralised.

"In a report produced for the European Commission, (Grin, François & Moring, Tom, 2000, *Support for Minority Language in Europe*, European Commission Contract No 2000-1288/001-001 EDU-MLCV) the authors pointed out that there are three fundamental criteria necessary for preserving linguistic vitality and linguistic diversity. These are the capacity to use a given language, the opportunity to use it and the desire to use it. These three together are not only necessary for the management of minority languages but also for the outcomes of any school project on language education, whatever form it may take and whatever language is involved. They are the cornerstones of any attempt to promote bilingual proficiency that takes into account the links between home, school and the wider world."[24]

## 2.4. Situation of foreign languages

### 2.4.1. General trends and observations for post-primary education

Ireland is the only country in Europe—other than Scotland—where a foreign language is not compulsory at any stage (except in the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied). A foreign language is offered among possible choices to learners in Junior Cycle for three years. Opportunity to study foreign languages also exists in Senior Cycle (two years possibly preceded by a Transition Year[25]). .

Most students do indeed choose a foreign language, and some tendencies are worth noting:

- French is by far the dominant language, followed by German; Spanish and Italian are far less frequently selected.

- The issue of languages diversification requires attention, given the dominance of French at post-primary level, the decline in the uptake in German and the low levels of uptake of other modern foreign languages.

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[24] Extract from an address to the European Parliament by Hugo Baetens-Beardsmore.
[25] The situation regarding this optional Transition Year (which is not present in all post-primary schools) needs to be examined as far as its potential for language learning is concerned. This is, for instance, where many of the schools placed Japanese *ab initio* within the Post-Primary Languages Initiative.

- The situation is exacerbated by the significant reduction in the numbers of students taking more than one foreign language at second school. While ten years ago there were many pupils taking two languages, especially girls, figures have recently declined dramatically. [26]

- In addition, the Expert Group realized that other languages, particularly German, had been introduced successfully at primary school, but that the dominance of French at second level meant that some pupils had to switch to French upon entering post-primary school.

- Nevertheless, in the last five years, there has been a slight increase for Spanish and Italian and a slight decrease for French and German. This may be due to the Post-Primary Languages Initiative (cf. 2.4.2.)[27].

- But the main change is the diminishing number of students taking a foreign language as a subject for the examination. In 2001, for the Junior Certificate, approximately 94% of the students who sat the examinations chose a language as one of the subjects for assessment. In 2005, for the same Certificate, they were less than 88.5%[28]. At Leaving Certificate, the figures are respectively 79% (2001) and 75.3% (2005). Fewer students were taking a foreign language at both examination levels than 4 years previously and the proportion of students taking a language in examinations was lower at Leaving Certificate than at Junior Certificate[29]. In one or two schools recently visited by Inspectors, it was noted with concern that up to 50% of students in first year were not studying any foreign language at all.

- Up to now, there has been no real attempt to use the scales provided by the CEFR to situate the levels of examinations and assess the competencies of students in a foreign language (or in Irish).

- There is no significant data available on achievement in languages other than examination statistics. But a number of the interlocutors of the Expert Group felt that insufficient attention is given to the oral capacities, which in some cases tend to be reduced to rote learning for the examination. However, representatives of the State Examinations Commission who met the Expert Group denied that the existing examination format was responsible for rote learning in whatever skills being tested, and insisted that interviews in the oral examinations were open-ended and realistic.

- There might be a very crucial problem in the standards of language teaching, language acquisition and teacher preparation in the universities underlying many of the concerns expressed during the Expert Group visit. It would seem that language degrees at University level are being taught ever more through the medium of English, thereby not contributing to high levels of proficiency of graduates in the foreign language (cf. 2.8.5). The language teaching component of undergraduate programmes tends to be taught by postgraduate students who do not necessarily have a qualification or experience in teaching. Often the language teaching in undertaken by teachers who are part-time, on temporary contracts and who do not have parity of status or esteem with lecturers who teach courses in literature. So, while there is a demand for the development of oral skills

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[26] This may be due to a number of factors, not least the perceived difficulty of languages by students in a points-driven Senior Cycle.

[27] It is also a general trend in other countries.

[28] This statement may be nuanced by the consideration that students do not generally make this choice in Junior Cycle. It is made by the school. Languages tend to be assigned rather than included in the range of choices. But there is still a drop in percentage between 2001 and 2005.

[29] Even if this is still a relatively high level of take-up compared to some other English-speaking countries.

and recognition that the situation merits immediate attention, there are inadequate resources allocated.

- The NUI third language matriculation requirement is perceived as of great importance. The removal of this requirement, which has already occurred in a number of faculties, is generally presented in current language teaching circles as heralding catastrophe and atrophying motivation to study foreign languages.[30]

- Special attention has been given recently to languages (including Irish and English) at post-primary level. As mentioned earlier, a very stimulating *Discussion paper* commissioned by the NCCA has been written by David Little and discussed within the Council. This publication launched a process of review of languages in post-primary education and a report, *Review of Languages in Post-Primary Education. A Report of the First Phase of the Review,* was submitted in April 2005. These documents present discussion points and recommendations which will be taken into consideration in section 4.

### 2.4.2. The Post-Primary Languages Initiative

The Department of Education and Science launched an Initiative in 2000 in order to diversify, enhance and expand the teaching of languages in post-primary schools. The emphasis was initially on the promotion of Spanish and Italian; Japanese and Russian were added later to the project. The Initiative produced some promotion material, including videos, aimed at schools and parents. The schools taking part could apply for extra funding and teacher education was enhanced by the setting-up of a two year Postgraduate Diploma course in language and teaching methodology offered in different third level institutions[31]. Teaching materials were produced which introduced an active methodology. It is interesting to note the following points:

- A fair number of schools took part in the project and the increase in the number of schools offering at least one of the chosen languages and of students learning those languages, as compared with the year before the launching of the Initiative, was impressive (about 40% increase, according to the interim Report of 2003).[32]

- The demand was especially high for Japanese, as an *ab initio* language and extracurricular subject in the senior cycle. At the same time it became clear that continuing to offer the language in some schools would imply support from different bodies and need a peripatetic teaching corps.

- The PPLI has been extended under the new National Development Plan, but no new actions have been identified as yet. Teaching materials produced under the Initiative are still in use and the lessons in terms of means and criteria for diversification can be kept in mind for future developments (if, for instance, Polish or Chinese are to be considered)[33].

- However, the implications for mainstreaming diversity, sustaining the impetus and providing a curriculum are still to be fully examined.

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[30] This point about languages being falsely bolstered by the NUI matriculation requirement was recurrent in the comments heard by the Expert Group. While it may be true, it constitutes reactive thinking. This would mean that the value of studying language is not generally understood, whereas it needs to be apparent to all partners in education, especially to parents.

[31] This course was free of charge under the Initiative. Since the funding has stopped, fees are now required from teachers who wish to register.

[32] C. Cunningham, *Post-Primary Languages Initiative: Interim Report,* PPLI, 2003.

[33] The question is also mentioned in the NCCA's *Review of Languages in Post-Primary Education: Report of the First Phase of the Review,* NCCA, 2005.

### 2.4.3.  Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative

Launched in 1998 for an initial period of two years, the Pilot Project for Modern Languages in Primary Schools was later extended and renamed as the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI). As for the Post-Primary Languages Initiative, the Country Report gives a detailed account of the project and of its aims, actions and results. There is no need at this point to return to this information, since MLPSI has been analysed and assessed from various points of view by the very substantial research report which John Harris and Mary Conway produced in 2002.[34] As already stated in the Country Report, the Project met a definite interest and has been well managed.

Results appeared very positive as for pupils learning the language (progress in developing listening comprehension skills and initial competence in spoken communication) and developing positive attitudes toward learning the language as such as well as toward its speakers. Teachers felt they personally benefited from participation in the project and they perceived parents as being favourable about their children learning the language.

A few somewhat less positive points were listed in John Harris's summary, regarding, for example, the extent of use of target language, the use of ICT, and the development of cultural awareness. Since the publication of the Harris report, the MLPSI support team has concentrated on addressing these issues.

The question is now "what is going to become of the initiative?" Is there a possibility of extension or even generalisation of foreign language teaching at primary level? The Department of Education and Science is committed to making a decision on the future place of modern foreign languages in the primary school when the Primary School Curriculum has been fully introduced. Advice from the NCCA is expected early in 2008.[35]

On one hand, it is hoped by many that the project will continue in its present guise and be offered to more schools. The feedback from schools has been very positive; there is a growing demand from parents to extend the initiative; there has been good evidence of support for teachers; induction and in-service training is available and popular, particularly for the majority of teachers who are not trained in language teaching; the Project Leaders have worked on how to develop and extend the project to include other schools. An innovative European Language Portfolio has also been prepared and accredited in direct relation to the Initiative[36].

On the other hand, the Expert Group and the DES are fully aware of the complexity of the issue.

- The curriculum overload is a permanent worry, together with teacher perceptions of a surfeit of new initiatives.

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[34] This report is based on research conducted in 1999-2001.  Further research was carried out by the same team, and the results are as yet unpublished.

[35] In the meantime, the Department has moved to allow schools on the waiting list to join the Initiative, provided there is a member of staff who is qualified to teach the language which the school wishes to offer.

[36] It needs to be noted that, in the conclusion of a study published in 2005 by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and entitled *Languages and Enterprise. The Demand & Supply of Foreign Language Skills in the Enterprise Sector*, strong support is given to the Initiatives regarding foreign languages:

- "The Modern Languages in Primary Schools pilot programme should be integrated into the mainstream curriculum and made available to all schools;
- "The Post-Primary Languages Initiative should likewise be expanded and the existing language provision at post-primary level should be reviewed in the light of the lessons learned, to increase the quality and value of the language learning experience for students."

- Links between primary and post-primary education are tenuous at best. There is a problem of continuity and of diversity with languages.[37]

- A significant number (close to 75%) of the teachers involved are not members of the school staff.

- The Expert Group also wondered whether there might be room for the further development of MLPSI pupils' productive skills (speaking and writing)[38], and agreed with the implication that further research and development were required in order to identify a more integrated pedagogy in which all four language skills and pupils' intercultural learning supported each other.

Following several conferences on the issue, the Irish National Teachers' Organization (INTO) published *Language in the Primary School*: *An INTO Discussion Document.[39]* This very rich and well informed report discusses at length the question of the introduction of modern languages in the primary school curriculum; its conclusions on that point are nuanced and cautious:

> "Children, parents and teachers appear to be positively disposed toward modern language learning generally at the primary level. Yet the research indicates very little advantage in an early start […] The *Pilot Project Evaluation Report* (ITÉ 2002) appears to indicate a preference for the competence model at primary level. However, many teachers are of the view that a sensitisation model would be most workable, in that it would take account of the time and integration factors, the preference of second language teachers, and relevant research. It is clear that further debate and discussion involving all partners is required before decisions are made in relation to generalising the teaching of any form of modern languages at primary level." (p. 89)

And the final mention is:

> "In the meantime, there remains an urgent need to develop an overall languages policy in relation to languages in schools, to provide a context for the purpose of, and approach to, introducing modern languages in primary schools." (idem)

There is a need to clarify whether, and if so how, modern languages in primary schools might be further generalised. Policy planning regarding the place and role of modern languages in primary school would require:

- a firm statement about the aims and intended outcomes;

- consideration of the relationship to English, Irish and other first languages;

- the identification and development of common strategies across all languages which are appropriate for young learners;

- consideration of how multilingual literacy can be developed;

- the provision of an adequate supply of teachers and their continuing professional development;

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[37] It might be worth noting that the French Ministry of Education authorities are producing geographical mapping of which languages are offered in primary and post-primary schools across the country. This is aimed at enabling a harmonious link between primary school initiatives in languages and their capacity to act as feeders for more appropriate post-primary school take-up of the same languages.

[38] This is in fact a common finding which applies across many countries in Europe (c.f. Blondin, C., et al., *Foreign Languages in Primary and Pre-School Education: A Review of Recent Research within the European Union.* CILT, 1985).

[39] *Language in the Primary School: An INTO Discussion Document,* INTO, 2004.

- addressing the issue of continuity from primary to post-primary (same language or switch to a different language?)[40];

- training for teachers and school management at post-primary level designed to enable post-primary schools to build strongly on such languages gains as pupils have made, either from their prior experience at primary school, at home, or elsewhere.

This issue is a test for the capacity of the system to sustain long-term and expanded provision of modern languages, but currently there seems to be a fragmentation and disconnection. While the demand and feedback are encouraging signs of a growing awareness of the importance of language in society, any teaching of foreign languages in primary school would need to be inserted fully into the curriculum. If it remains outside the curriculum, the present good will and motivation could well eventually dissipate. Whatever the eventual decision, it is essential to avoid a policy vacuum, which would inevitably undermine the achievements of the MLPSI and the dynamic which it has created.

The main challenge for the primary sector will be to develop a more integrated approach to the teaching of all languages on the curriculum, whether English, Irish or other languages (cf. section 3). At present, teachers and parents do not always see commonalities in methodologies and approaches.

## 2.5. English as first and additional language

If Irish is the most "visible" language in the debates regarding language education and policy, English is certainly the most discrete, the one least discussed. Indeed, there has never been an official policy in the Irish State as regards the English language. English began to replace Irish as the language of business, trade, administration, education and daily communication in Ireland from the eighteenth century onwards, but particularly in the nineteenth. Today, Ireland is almost universally English-speaking, with no recorded remaining monolingual speakers of Irish. While the Irish language mainly gives access to cultural identities, the powerful certainty of the English language as a gateway to all forms of social and economic access is known to all the residents of Ireland, to both citizens and to immigrants. One may argue that this duality is a consequence of colonization or unequal power relations, but it is more often the consequence of economic and business trends since the time of the Industrial Revolution, including contemporary economic forces. The reality is that ideas, perceptions and tensions around the competing English-Irish power struggle have influenced perceptions about language status and informed and continue to inform decision and policy making about the Irish language in particular.

During the visit of the Expert Group, the topic of English was hardly dealt with, except as far as immigrants were concerned. English as a second language has come up recently as a subject of interest, given the growing numbers, in schools and in society at large, of children and adults of foreign origin who are speakers of other languages. However, a few comments on English as L1 are necessary before coming to questions regarding English as an additional language.

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[40] The Council of Europe team considered that this issue of continuity of particular language from primary to post-primary requires particular attention. Some voices indicated that having to make the switch did not matter, since it was the aim of MLPSI to sensitise pupils to language, to create positive attitudes and to help them develop general language-learning strategies. On the other hand, the overall amount of time for pupils to learn a foreign language at primary and post-primary is not substantial, and given the very limited amount of exposure to any foreign language outside school, then it could be argued that the only hope for pupils to gain a reasonable degree of proficiency in any foreign language is to stay with their primary language during post-primary schooling and where appropriate to add a further language at that level (cf. also 3.4.2.).

### 2.5.1. English as L1: the secret sharer?

English as L1 might appear not to be an issue if one just takes into consideration international comparative assessment projects such as PISA[41], where, in 2003 as in 2000, Ireland scores above average for reading competence of 15 year old pupils, without major differences from school to school.

The issue of English as L1 was mentioned a few times during the visit but became obliterated by discussions about Irish or foreign languages. The mentions were mostly about the level of oracy, considered as insufficiently practised in the classroom and insufficiently assessed at examinations.

The L1 question finds a larger place in recent documents about language policy, such as David Little's *Discussion paper* and the Report of the first phase of the NCCA Review of Languages in Post-Primary Education. The main points mentioned are, on one hand, the correction of written productions and their textual appropriateness and, on the other hand, language awareness in relation to grammar and to the other languages. In the NCCA Review, based on a wide consultation of stakeholders, the stress is placed on norm and form more than on sociolinguistic awareness. The thrust seems to be toward the full consideration of English as language, to be taught and studied as such, and not just as a vehicle for content; a mean of expression for ideas or a way of access to literature. The fact that teachers of other subjects, when asked if languages are the sole responsibility of the language teachers, respond massively that it is so indeed, is underlined as an issue in the *Report of the First Phase of the Review*. On the contrary, in a different context such as the network of plurilingual European Schools, all teachers consider themselves as language teachers, regardless of their subject, level or focus of instruction, precisely because they are working in an environment where all children are in the process of becoming multilingual.

Both David Little's discussion paper and the *Report of the First Phase of the Review* limit themselves to the situation at post-primary level. The Expert Group did not have access to similar documents for primary level, but one would tend to believe that, on the one hand, English as L1 has been less discussed recently than English as an additional language for foreign children, and that on the other hand, given the implementation of a new curriculum, it might be the case that the debate concentrates on time available and on support to the teachers more than on the relations that English can entertain, within the curriculum, with Irish or with a foreign language. We will, however tentatively, come back to the issue in the last section.[42]

### 2.5.2. English as an additional language in and outside of schools

The attention given to new immigrants in Ireland and the presence of a growing number of children of foreign origin in Irish schools is a rather new experience for a country more familiar with the departure of its population than with the arrival of newcomers from abroad.

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[41] Programme for International Student Assessment, of the OECD.

[42] For recent research regarding English as L1 in primary schools see, *An Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation in Primary Schools: English, Mathematics and Visual Arts,* Department of Education and Science, 2005.
*Literacy and Numeracy in Disadvantaged Schools: Challenges for Teachers and Learners,* Department of Education and Science, 2005.
*Primary Curriculum Review, Phase 1: English, visual arts and mathematics*, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2005.
E. Eivers, G. Shiel, R. Perkins and J. Cosgrove, *Succeeding in reading? Reading standards in Irish primary schools*. Dublin: Stationery Office, 2005.
E. Eivers, G. Shiel, R. Perkins, and J. Cosgrove, *The 2004 National Assessment of English Reading*. Dublin: Educational Research Centre, 2005.

Both movements are indeed somewhat historically linked today in so far as a few of the recent immigrants come from families which left Ireland in the past decades or even before and are attracted back by the economic development of their once homeland.

There is a growing concern about the handling of language issues for this increasing number of immigrants. On a smaller scale, Ireland is faced with questions of integration which other European countries have had to try to solve over the last 40 years. With noticeable differences between the contexts and the historical circumstances, some of the experience accumulated in these other countries might be of some use to Ireland.

There is a real need to adapt to the linguistic demands of these new populations. Inner city schools in particular, and many other schools have been endeavouring to cope over recent years with the challenge of teaching students whose L1 is neither English nor Irish.

A language support teacher is appointed if a minimum of 14 non-English speaking children are present. Additional support teachers may be appointed, depending on the number of such children present in a school, up to a maximum of six teachers, for over 121 pupils. These are qualified teachers but with no specific training for the job at hand, other than the in-service courses provided by IILT. The language support system is structured for English-medium education only. Children are seen daily for a maximum of two years. The European Language Portfolio allows for follow-up when these children move on, as they are highly mobile.

The Expert Group took great interest in the work done by IILT with adult asylum seekers and programme refugees who require English language courses. The entire programme is based on the European Language Portfolio. It is aimed at long-term or permanent immigrants. There is positive feedback from the teachers who work with the Portfolio, as well as a small element of integration and recognition of the child's first language.

This is an impressive illustration of good practice, combining the latest European developments with the specific needs of a segment of the population in Ireland: the Portfolio is the guiding pedagogical principle and framework for all classroom activities and staff development. The support service and back up in terms of an established overarching theoretical framework and ongoing reflection is very impressive. Some evidence is emerging here that newcomers are also learning Irish very well. This needs to be researched and investigated. It would be very worthwhile to examine if this model, created within the context of the new multicultural and multilingual Ireland, could indeed be somehow replicated for learners at the primary and post-primary levels[43].

Two other issues are linked with the situation of children whose first language is neither English nor Irish:

- Should there be a specific curriculum for English as an additional language? This question is similar to that regarding the pertinence of distinguishing, through different curricula, Irish as L1 and Irish for second language learners. In the case of English as an additional language, no final decision has been taken, but there are voices in favour of clarifying the situation.

- How can other languages be included in the curriculum, in order to cater for the needs of new communities and their linguistic heritages, but as well as to benefit from the "imported" languages as a national resource for Ireland? A small number of languages from the immigrant population can be taken as a subject at Leaving Certificate level, even

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[43] [43]The Expert Group noted as well with interest that the NCCA has produced guidelines for classroom teachers (as opposed to language support teachers) on supporting language for students for whom English is not the first language. These are available on the NCCA website. The intercultural guidelines are also significant in this regard.

if they are not part of the curriculum[44]. The State Examinations Commission provides examinations in a range of subjects in the language area referred to as the non-curricular EU languages. These are languages which students may opt to be examined in if they meet certain criteria. If this provision could be extended, it would be a positive sign[45].

## 2.6. Languages of immigrants

The number of immigrants has increased regularly in Ireland in the last few years[46], due to different factors: demands from a fast developing economy, adhesion of new countries to the European Union, and the installation in Ireland of companies, such as international call centres, which employ native speakers.

This new situation present several aspects of interest for a language policy:

- The diversity of foreign modern languages thus "imported" is a resource and an asset for the country.

- It raises the question of English as a second language for a certain number of these immigrants and their families (cf. above 2.5.2.). It also bears on the issue of the teaching of Irish to children of foreign origin: there is some evidence that these children may prove to be good learners of Irish.

- Preservation of their language of origin is an issue for immigrants planning to stay in Ireland. Its maintenance and transmission may be perceived as a right or a duty by members of the population concerned and as an advantage for the country in its international contacts. But it can be seen as well by both the immigrants and a part of the Irish population as an obstacle to integration or as a sign of non integration.

- It is well known from the experience of other countries that attitudes toward (certain) immigrants and their languages may vary considerably and very quickly, depending on many factors (country of origin, fluctuations of the employment market, political circumstances, cultural and religious dimensions, etc.). Such changes of attitudes can develop in forms of intolerance, racism and refusal of the "otherness" of foreign communities.

- Media, various organizations (cultural, religious), professional unions and political forces have an important role to play in helping to prevent or at least to lessen tensions mentioned. And school is in a key position to smooth the way for the linguistic and cultural recognition and the social inclusion of children of foreign origin. It depends not only on what it offers these children but also on how pupils belonging to the majority are made aware of linguistic and cultural plurality.

- Encouraging the maintenance of the languages and cultures of immigrants may be accomplished through various means which do not necessarily imply a heavy load for schools as such. Accepting these foreign languages as subjects for examinations (even though they are not a part of the curriculum), helping bottom-up initiatives of associations, community organizations and local authorities are some of the many ways for a multicultural society to accept itself as such and function harmoniously. In this respect, it is worth noting that the Department of Education and Science currently funds mother-

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[44] Only because they are languages of countries belonging to the European Union, or because they were the subject of a particular initiative (Russian for example).

[45] At present, the Department of Education and Science does not gather data regarding the mother tongue of pupils entitled to English language support.

[46] This trend is expected to go on: needs are officially estimated at 50,000 immigrants per year in the next five years

tongue classes organised by immigrant communities for the children of those communities. This support is provided through IILT, which also monitors the delivery of these classes. To date, this support has been availed of only by the Chinese and Vietnamese communities. The classes are held outside of school time, but sometimes on school premises (cf. Country Report, 4.2.5).

A number of recent events, the world over, have provoked nationalistic and violent ethnocentric reactions. But this reality stresses the need for an active awareness of what is at stake as far as values are concerned in an open and democratic society.

## 2.7. Irish Sign Language

Sign language is a domain of growing interest for educators and linguists at a time when the previous insistence on oralism for the development of deaf children has been very much tempered.

This is reflected in developments in the wider European context. For example, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in a Recommendation on the protection of sign languages in the member states (2003), encourages member states 'to give education in sign languages to deaf people'; 'to include sign languages as a valid academic qualification in mainstream post-primary schools with equal status to other taught languages'; to grant deaf people the right to choose freely between oral and bilingual school systems.'

Ireland's Deaf community using Irish Sign Language as their first language is estimated at approximately 5,000 people, with a further 50,000 non-Deaf people using Irish Sign Language (ISL) which differs from signed English[47].

While a number of practical measures exist to promote ISL in the education system, the Expert Group was told that there exists a shortage of qualified teachers. It is reported that some 90% of Deaf children attend their local schools where they receive additional support from the visiting teacher service. The normal provision is that resource teachers and/or visiting teachers can work with children who are accepted in ordinary schools.

The situation is Ireland is quite common in Europe, as can be seen in the Council of Europe report *The Status of Sign Languages in Europe* (Council of Europe Publishing 2005). The Recommendation mentioned above includes a recognition of the need to undertake a wider European analysis with a view to clarifying outstanding issues in regard to the protection of the use of sign languages.

## 2.8. Transversal issues

Though there is no need to develop at length the aspects of the language scene that are recurrent in various documents, reports and debates, some dimensions of a language policy are very important in any context, and they appear to be of extreme relevance in Ireland:

- continuity

- curriculum development

- assessment and examinations

- teacher education

- responsibilities of third level institutions

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[47] Figures from L. Leeson, *The Irish Language and the Irish Deaf Community. Brief Overview of the Current Situation*, Centre for Deaf Studies, University of Dublin, Trinity College, 2005.

### 2.8.1. Continuity

Learners can meet with problems of continuity in different cases:

- a language which the student has started in one level or cycle is no longer offered in the following one;

- the following cycle does not fully take into consideration previous acquisitions and in some cases even (re)starts "from scratch";

- or the following cycle expects newcomers to have achieved a level of proficiency much higher than what would have been attained in the preceding grades.

- within one same cycle, the syllabus does not offer enough new or stimulating material and learners become "bored" with what appears to them as mere repetition of what they have done before ("more of the same stuff");

- within a particular cycle, even if the curriculum offers more possibilities, all the work is geared toward the preparing of examination material.

In all of the above instances, not only is the cost-effectiveness of the system low, but there is also the risk of a sharp drop in the learners' motivation. A review of languages in Irish education might pay special attention to these points, not only for foreign languages, but also for Irish and for English.

### 2.8.2. Curriculum development

Curriculum development is an issue for several of the areas previously examined:

- the Primary School Curriculum and its relation to the MLPSI;

- the management of diversification of foreign languages within a given level of the curriculum;

- continuity between primary and post-primary as well as between junior and senior cycles within post-primary.

On a wider scale, some aspects of the school curriculum may or will have an effect on language policy :

- the place and role of Transition Year in the general curriculum c.f. footnote 26, p. 19);

- the ongoing development of Senior Cycle with its growing emphasis on key skills and competencies and the proposed introduction of a more flexible range of curriculum components including subjects, short courses and transition units at this level.

All these different points may also be seen as mere components of global interrogation regarding an integrated language curriculum.

### 2.8.3. Assessment and examinations

Assessment and examinations are fundamental dimensions of a language policy with regard to the education system. This has been stressed in discussions and papers in relation to:

- the conformity of assessment and examinations with the curriculum;

- the assessment of oral competence for Irish, foreign languages and English;

- the format of examinations and its possibly negative backwash effect on teaching;

- the validity of the format of examinations with regard to measuring the communicative capacities of the students;

- the assessment of language awareness and of cultural awareness;

- the possibility of making use of the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference to define and describe levels of attainment;

- the assessment of partial competences in foreign languages.

With regard to the different bodies involved with assessment, examinations and certification, the Expert Group wondered whether the coordination among NCCA, the Department of Education and Science and the State Examinations Commission was optimal.

### 2.8.4. Teacher education

Many of the informants expressed dissatisfaction with the adequacy of initial and continuing education of language teachers. On the other hand, satisfaction was expressed with the provision in three areas of teacher CPD: the Post-Primary Languages Initiative, the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative and the in-service courses provided by IILT for teachers of English as an additional language. In these three cases, different as they are, the common denominator is the existence of a special provision to help teachers engaged in an innovative project. And, as far as the two Initiatives are concerned, this provision is both linguistic and pedagogic and can result in a third level diploma.

This obviously does not mean that in other areas teachers would not be qualified and competent. But a number of converging estimates and testimonies show clearly that, with regard to language teaching, insecurity or dissatisfaction is expressed by teachers.

- Over 20% of primary school teachers declare themselves insufficiently competent to teach Irish well.

- Many foreign language teachers, including recent graduates, do not feel adequately prepared to implement the curriculum.

- Subject teacher associations (which are voluntary organisations) see their membership decline, especially the number of young teachers.

- Many language teachers are not aware of the latest developments in language teaching e.g., the Common European Framework of Reference or the European Language Portfolio.

- According to the representatives of the associations, there is a lack of vision among teachers. *"Teachers are gardening in a gale"* with little sense of why languages are on the curriculum.

- Given this situation, at the time of the Expert Group's visit, teacher associations reported that many teachers of languages were demoralised and felt that their goodwill was not supported. However, since then the DES has introduced a pilot scheme to provide supplementary funding to support the work of teacher professional networks (TPNs) generally, including language teacher associations.

- Notwithstanding the welcome funding now available for voluntary TPNs, there is as yet no plan for formalised CPD for post-primary teachers of foreign languages, although the Minister for Education and Science recently made a decision to provide support for the CPD of teachers of Irish at second level. A National Coordinator and a team of Regional Development Officers have been recruited and will work as part of the Second Level Support Service.

- There is clear evidence of the support given by the foreign Cultural Institutes to language teachers; this interest and good will could be exploited more in strengthening co-operation between the teachers' associations and the Department of Education and Science.

Even if responsibilities for the inadequacies described are certainly not one-sided, it seems that teacher preparation and teacher development need to be closely examined, both at initial and at in-service levels, in order to plan for the future. The Department of Education and Science is at present working on the development of a new continuum for teacher education—initial, induction and in-service. In this context, much work has already been effected towards the development of a new model of CPD for teachers.[48]

### 2.8.5. Responsibilities of third level institutions

The Expert Group did not interview or consult with many representatives from the university language departments during the October 2005 visit. It heard however from other testimonies that there appeared to be some deficits in the system.

The general feeling is that the role of universities, colleges of education and institutes of technology could be enhanced, regarding various aspects of a language policy.

- It is noted that there has been a decline in the number of students specialising in language at university.

- The framework within which languages are studied has changed in recent years. Languages are studied more and more as part of a joint framework with another discipline e.g., law, business. While these courses attract and recruit students with higher points, they do not necessarily produce highly competent language teachers since graduates from these courses usually opt for a business, law, engineering career rather than a language teaching profession.

- At present, foreign languages do not seem to benefit from a very positive image among third level students. As in many other European countries, departments of languages do not always attract the best students nor those who have already acquired a high level of proficiency in the foreign language concerned.

- Students entering university and choosing to specialise in a foreign language might therefore not be very fluent, especially for aural/oral communication[49]. According to comments heard by the Expert Group, many undergraduate courses are therefore (?) given in English rather than in the foreign language.

- There might be, consequently, a lowering of standards of competence in language students at university level. BA training for language specialists is not producing enough competent language teachers.

- According to some university voices, this situation is partly due to the fact that there are fewer students taking languages at post-primary school.

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[48] In this context it would be hoped to re-organise provision for the CPD of teachers at second level in such away that the Second Level Support Service will contain a number of 'pillars' such as a Science and Technology pillar and a language pillar. This would allow for on-going support for all language teachers at second level.

[49] The required entry grade for some undergraduate programmes in Irish and foreign languages is currently a C3 in Higher Level Leaving Certificate (55-59%). This grade does not represent a very high level of language competence, and thus it does not necessarily hold that candidates awarded this grade have sufficient competence in the target language to progress in a third level programme. Students with higher grades on entry generally perform better.

- University specialists of languages agree with other stakeholders in considering that "Abandoning the NUI third language matriculation requirement would be catastrophic."

- As far as third level preparation for teachers of Irish, be it at primary or at post-primary levels, competence in the language is often low, even from graduates in Irish.

- The course of studies in the colleges of education preparing teachers for primary schools perhaps attaches too much face value to the results in Irish obtained by students in the Leaving Certificate.

- There is no adequate training for post-primary teachers of other subjects through the medium of Irish.

- Some colleges, institutes and universities have in relation to the Initiatives launched by the Department of Education and Science for modern languages created diploma programmes for the teachers engaged in those pilot projects. This shows, on one hand, that such support third level programmes were not available before, though needed, and, on the other hand, that coordination between third level institutions and the Department may be developed, while fully respecting academic autonomy.

- As in some other countries, the relation between university language departments and, more recently created university language centres—which generally cater for non language specialists students and can diversify the offer in languages—is insufficiently defined and sometimes conflictual. Innovative forms of effective collaboration are certainly to be closely examined, given the demands which higher education institutions might wish to consider in the field of languages.

- According to some third level educators, the emphasis on the fourth level-post graduate programme, the development of new research institutes will put further pressure on the teaching of language at the third level. Less emphasis may be placed on teaching as more resources are given to postgraduate research.

# 3. Elements for an overarching language policy

## 3.1. Language policy in context

A recurring comment found in various documents as well as during the Expert Group visit focuses on the need for an overarching language policy. Therein rests the central issue. Under this heading of an overarching policy, "integration" often appears as a recurring notion which has to be developed and clarified.

A certain number of obvious principles should be restated:

- **A national language education policy is not just a matter for the education system**. It depends largely on the societal context in which it is located, its past, its values, its forms of cohesion and its modes of organisation. In Ireland's case, history, geography, economic and demographic evolution weigh heavily on the current language scene and the changes which affect it. Language policy has to do with political choices, regarding not only business, jobs and international communication, but also citizenship, democracy, relationship to minorities, social inclusion and access to and participation in the culture. Language policy contributes to a nation's building and a nation's changing and touches upon identity, at both individual and collective levels. Among the myriad implications, this means that **defining and implementing a new language policy, or just trying to explicate whatever implicit language policy is at work, requires more than the initiative and action of one particular ministry or of any specialised body**. If a national languages strategy were restricted mainly to the educational sector, its chances of achieving real success would be limited, because many of the key issues/challenges which need to be addressed in respect of both Irish and modern foreign languages, are societal as well as educational in nature.

- By no means does this diminish the extremely important role that the education system must exercise in any language policy, along with the families, the media, various organisations and bodies belonging to different sectors of civil society. **The manner in which the school handles languages contributes to prepare generations for the future and to shape the future of a society**.

- Nearly all education systems in the world of today, and perhaps even more so in Europe, need to **find a balance between, on the one hand, transmission and evolution of a collective identity, with its traditions, norms and values, and on the other hand the dynamic adaptation to a fast changing world where individual identities have to develop through several stages and become more multi-faceted within multicultural societies**. The tensions which affect language policy have to be firmly placed within these more general trends: because Ireland is among the countries which have recently engaged at a rapid pace, economically and culturally, in this multipolar, differentiated and global network that the world tends to be, it is no wonder that languages are also "in the balance".

**One of the strengths of Irish society at this decisive moment is that issues regarding languages are in no way hidden but publicly presented, acknowledged and discussed**. A number of difficulties and dysfunctions have been pointed out in the preceding pages of this Profile. Given the challenge at hand, one needs to be as direct as possible, not claiming to offer definitive answers, but pointing out possible orientations for discussion.

## 3.2. Decompartmentalisation

**Languages are currently considered and treated separately**. Compulsory Irish is in the forefront and elicits considerable attention and concern. Modern foreign languages try to

attract attention on their behalf but suffer from a limitation of space in the "crowded" curriculum, as well as from a certain lack of recognition and diversification. English is everywhere and nowhere, omnipresent and unnoticed. The languages of immigration are heard more often outside than inside the school. This situation could be caricatured as follows: a country officially bilingual, effectively more and more multilingual, with a majority of the population which might easily resign itself to being English-speaking monolingual.

Given this situation:

-   **a first important step would be to decompartmentalise the reflection on languages**, that is to consider the language scene as a whole, where there is, to a degree, a relation of interdependence among the diverse components, different as they may be;[50]

-   this means bringing all languages into the one sphere of policy planning, on the grounds that all human beings have one underlying capacity for language and that a major aim of the policy should be to develop in each individual citizen **a single plurilingual competence** (cf. 1.2.), rather than what is evident at present, namely an unrelated set of fragmentary competences in particular languages;

-   this implies that the explicit centralised language policy which, at a general political level, currently limits itself to regulations regarding Irish as a national language be revised to include other languages;

-   **this also implies that within the education system, all languages be fully taken into consideration**:

    o   as means of communication, expression, information, construction and transmission of knowledge, aesthetic creation and appreciation;

    o   **and** as all contributing to the development and growth of diverse individual identities and to the affirmation of collective loyalties within a society;

-   but this obviously does not imply that languages can be on an equal footing in a given society nor in any education system, nor for that matter in one single person, be it a so-called "perfect" bilingual.

**"Decompartmentalisation" refers rather to an approach towards languages in context, aiming at respecting and managing their plurality and diversity with a set of coherent principles and with a view to progress and benefit to all concerned**—a formulation which could be read as a definition for (a certain conception of) language policy, as part of wider political choices.

Many of these political choices, of course, deal with improving the current national capacity in languages by embracing languages not only in education, but in business and in society in general. Also, a number of these choices are linked to social inclusion and citizen involvement in a multicultural democracy attached to its history and to its values, as well as to its active participation in a larger European and worldwide environment.

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[50] As rather forcefully expressed by an Irish researcher and educator, "Language planning in Ireland is still largely about the protection and regeneration of Irish, rather than about the implementation of a given articulated and well-labelled language policy that incorporates English, Irish and the other languages of Ireland. Language policy tends therefore to be ad-hoc and haphazard rather than being subject to any 'new' socio-political laden ideology. If such a policy existed in the past, recent attempts to apply a more instrumental perspective to cope with language education diversification in the New Ireland of immigration and increasing multiculturalism have shown its shortcomings".

In the case of an evolving Ireland, **the main challenge, in terms of vision for the future, is perhaps to shift progressively from an official but lame bilingualism (English/Irish) to the full recognition of differentiated plurilingual profiles (with varying languages and types of competences at different levels), where Irish would have a special place and English a central role, and where other languages would be acknowledged as part of the country's cultural and economic resources and assets as well as linked to individual identities and collective loyalties**. With due allowance for differences of context, some of which are not unimportant, it might be possible to apply the term and notion of *éducation bi-/plurilingue*, which, in a transitional phase, tends to be used in Valle d'Aosta, where Italian is obviously the dominant language and French a historical identity marker legally compulsory in school from infancy on. But the local variety of Francoprovençal and Walser (a German dialect) are also acknowledged and English is being progressively and systematically introduced at primary school level as a compulsory component of the curriculum.

## 3.3. Integration

If the key advice to the national authorities could be summed up in one recommendation, it would be to **examine the feasibility of an integrated, coherent, language in education policy**.

But what exactly is meant by "Integration"? Different levels or dimensions to an integrated language in education policy might be identified as:

- integrated education

- integrated with social action

- integrated between and across languages

- integrated with CLIL.(Content and Language Integrated Learning)

### 3.3.1. Integrated education

**First and foremost, languages can be fully integrated as an explicit component of the educational process**. For instance, stating that the school is a place where students receive a plurilingual education and/or an education for plurilingualism[51] is a form a integration. At present, as a compulsory subject, Irish is part of the educational project and integrated as such[52]. This is not the case for the modern foreign languages, though they are an optional element of the curriculum[53]. Therefore the question to be addressed is to what extent and how languages can be integrated in the educational project.

This integration cannot be achieved through a rationale that would, for instance, differentiate between languages in terms of sheer usage: "You cannot do without English and you may need foreign languages to travel abroad or to have access to some types of jobs". It is indeed within this kind of logic that the learning of Irish, beyond a certain stage or age, may well be seen as a useless activity.

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[51] The distinction is made in the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*

[52] Even if the exact aim of this integration is not completely clear to the different partners of the education community, including parents and students.

[53] One foreign language at least is indeed chosen by most students in their school programme (and obligatory for Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and for Leaving Certificate Applied). This raises the question of which subjects are or should be compulsory. It is interesting to note that, since the study of a foreign language is only required for the LCVP and for the LCA, integration in the educational project seems to be limited to courses of study which have a practical and professional dimension and perhaps a less prestigious social status in the eyes of parents and students. This image of modern languages is in a way reinforced by the fact that some universities do not require a modern foreign language for enrolment.

Increasing public awareness of the importance of languages in education cannot be just a matter of stressing the role of "communication" in today's world. The notion of languages as "life skills" opens a wider approach (academic, aesthetic, social, professional skills) and reminds one of the well-known title of an official report about English: *A language for life*.[54] Except, of course, that a plural is nowadays needed: *Languages for life*, and that, important and diversified as they may be, skills are not the whole of life.

School as a social institution is more and more expected to contribute to the ethical and civic education of generations which will have to live and grow, to adapt and change in a globalized but still fragmented environment. Languages are not just a part of the equipment needed (survival kit) or possibly useful (extra gadget) to face new challenges. They have become a constitutive dimension of human development, action and interrelation in contexts characterized by a plurality of languages and cultures.

An education integrating languages in its project does not have to try to turn pupils into polyglots, nor supposedly "perfect bilinguals"[55]. Its aim and its responsibility are to enable young people with a successful plurilingual education, which includes both education for plurilingualism and education for plurilingual awareness.

As stated in the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*, which strongly advocates an integration of plurilingualism in the educational project:

> Plurilingualism needs to be actively promoted to counter-balance the market forces which tend to lead to linguistic homogenisation, and which limit the potential of the individual. Plurilingualism provides the necessary conditions for mobility within Europe for leisure and work purposes, but is above all crucial for social and political inclusion of all Europeans whatever their linguistic competences, and for the creation of a sense of European identity. Language education policies in Europe should therefore enable individuals to be plurilingual either by maintaining and developing their existing plurilingualism or by helping them to develop from quasi monolingualism (or bilingualism) into plurilingualism.[56]

The justifications and principles for this position are summarised in the *Guide* as follows :

-   *language rights are part of human rights:* education policies should facilitate the use of all varieties of languages spoken by the citizens of Europe, and the recognition of other people's language rights by all; the resolution of social conflicts is in part dependent on recognition of language rights;

-   *the exercise of democracy and social inclusion depends on language education policy:* the

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[54] A UK Government report, published in 1975, also known as the Bullock Report. Its main recommendation was that every secondary school should develop a policy for language across the curriculum.

[55] Cf. 1.2. for a definition of plurilingualism. To illustrate this meaning of plurilingualism, there follows a description of the linguistic repertoire which an adult European with secondary education might be expected to have at a given point in time:

- a 'national/official' language spoken and written according to the standard norms of the country acquired in the education system;
- a variety of the first language spoken according to the norms of the region and/or generation to which he/she belongs;
- a regional or minority language he/she speaks and/or writes where appropriate as well as the national/official language;
- one or more foreign languages understood, but not necessarily spoken, to a basic level, as a consequence of education and/or experience of media and/or tourism;
- another foreign language mastered to a higher level with ability to speak and write.

At a later point in time the languages and varieties spoken and/or written might be different, as a consequence of further education or experience in the pursuit of leisure or work.

[56] Executive Version, 2003, p. 9.

capacity and opportunity to use one's full linguistic repertoire is crucial to participation in democratic and social processes and therefore to policies of social inclusion;

- *economic or employment opportunities for the individual and the development of human capital in a society depend in part on language education policy:* individual mobility for economic purposes is facilitated by plurilingualism; the plurilingualism of a workforce is a crucial part of human capital in a multilingual marketplace, and a condition for the free circulation of goods, information and knowledge;

- *individual plurilingualism is a significant influence on the evolution of a European identity:* since Europe is a multilingual area in its entirety and in any given part, the sense of belonging to Europe and the acceptance of a European identity is dependent on the ability to interact and communicate with other Europeans using the full range of one's linguistic repertoire;

- *plurilingualism is plural:* because of the variation of multilingualism in different parts of Europe, the plurilingualism of individuals has to be appropriate to the area where they live; there is no preferred or recommended model of plurilingualism and the plurilingualism of the individual may change with mobility and throughout lifelong learning; plurilingualism is not only a matter of competence but also an attitude of interest in and openness towards languages and language varieties of all kinds;

- *plurilingualism is possible:* the potential for all individuals to become actually plurilingual is proven; the technical capacity for developing plurilingualism is available in language teaching methodology, and already realised in practice even though it is still not widespread [...];

- *plurilingual education is practical:* education policies, curriculum patterns, teaching methods exist which permit the re-consideration of existing concepts of first, second, third etc. language, and the development of a plurilingual competence which enables individuals to acquire whatever language they need or are interested in at a given point in time.

### 3.3.2. Integrated with social action

**Integrating a new approach to languages in the education system of a democracy requires further initiatives to be taken within the societal environment**. As of now, the call for a language policy is based on an extensive analysis of Ireland's present and future language needs. Such a call is coming mainly from educational and curriculum policy sectors, where an implicit 'acquisition' policy already exists (e.g., Irish and English are taught in schools for *x* number of hours per week, are taught from the beginning of primary education to the end of post-primary education, etc.) and hardly from other sectors such as the private sector[57]. Language policy and planning are intrinsically linked with other dimensions of the social sphere. These dynamic forces at work in everyday activities of language communities are often more powerful than conscious ideologically motivated policies[58].

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[57] The very interesting study published in 2005 by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs and entitled *Languages and Enterprise. The Demand & Supply of Foreign Language Skills in the Enterprise Sector* sheds light upon these aspects of the language scene.

[58] The *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe* (Executive version) lists some type of actions at societal level for the promotion of (foreign) languages:

"- advertising campaigns for the general public to change the social demand for languages and misconceptions about the significance, usefulness and level of difficulty of specific languages; public information about contemporary methods and approaches to learning languages which lead to rapid pay-off in language use and removal of the misconception that language learning is only for an academic elite;

- the development of public policy for languages and language learning in a country supported by high-profile politicians, by trades unionists, by sportspeople and entertainment figures and other public figures;

- encouragement to mass media to provide information in other languages, to use sub-titles rather than dubbing and to support public policy for diversity and plurilingualism;

- encouraging representation of a variety of languages in public institutions, in street signs, advertising and public information;

**It is therefore significant and important that the media and the world of enterprise show concern today about languages, be it Irish or foreign languages** (and sometimes English?).They could be more involved and associated with initiatives and campaigns regarding languages (cf. 3.1.). But once again, to the degree that is possible, fragmentation should be avoided. Objectives, agenda and coordination would need to exist. For other areas of the language scene, lessons might be drawn from what the numerous organisations already working for the defence, promotion and regeneration of Irish have succeeded—or not succeeded—in accomplishing over the last few years, with which means and at what cost (cf. 2.3.).

With regard to languages in business, a national strategy would be based on evidence which would:

- show the extent to which Irish businesses profit from the plurilingualism of their employees or suffer financial loss because of institutional monolingualism;

- show how Irish businesses might increase their profitability through the use of ICT. Some Irish businesses for example already have excellent experience of plurilingual e-Content localisation, i.e. not only presenting their websites in a number of different languages but also adapting the cultural content of their website in particular languages to suit the cultures in those countries which they are targeting;

- illustrate ways in which good plurilingual practice in languages for business feed productively into the education system, thereby helping to make languages relevant and motivating[59].

### 3.3.3. Integrated between and across languages

School, teaching traditions and the historical development of curricula where different languages become different "subjects" have in most countries had the consequence of introducing separations between languages. This occurs in two ways:

- a strict division between the "mother" tongue or main language of instruction (generally the national language) and foreign languages as well as classical languages[60];

- similar objectives, syllabi and methods for different foreign languages in parallel and without reference or movement from one to the other in the teaching process.

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- the involvement of employers' and employees' associations, and associations of parents and students in policy development and in practical activities such as the European Day of Languages;
- the involvement of politicians and other public and media figures in the positive evaluation of plurilingualism and partial competences to remove the misconception that languages must be learnt to perfection and require major investments of time." (*Guide*, page 43).

[59] The Expert Group noted with interest the conclusions and recommendations of the above mentioned study (footnote 57). All of these could be quoted here, but the main thrust is clearly seen in the first general conclusions:
- "Proficiency in foreign languages can be an important enabler in efforts to translate the aspiration to a knowledge economy into reality;
- Foreign language skills are life skills, not merely an employment qualification;
- The life-skill case should underpin the rationale for learning foreign languages." (p. 39)
The relation to "knowledge economy" and the notion of "life skill" are certainly worth noting in connection to a rationale for a language policy.

[60] This has not always been true: it is well known that, in the nineteenth century, classical languages, mother tongue and foreign languages were more interwoven in the curriculum than what later became the case.

The situation is somewhat more complicated in Ireland, since Irish and English, as two official languages, are strictly separated not only from foreign languages, but also from each other[61].

However, for the learner, the experience of language learning is more global and thus he can suffer from that sort of compartmentalization and fragmentation generally found in the curriculum and in the training of the language specialist teacher.

**Rather than emphasizing individual subjects with parallel syllabuses, there might be a notion of a 'global language education policy and practice' based on a vision of education for plurilingualism**. This might involve a total of hours allocated to all language learning within which pupils would develop their plurilingualism from primary level on. This is the orientation suggested, for instance, in the Common European Framework of Reference in terms of promoting one diversified curriculum for languages, with inner differentiation, rather than juxtaposed curricula for different languages, and also proposed in David Little's discussion paper.

**The ways in which transversal and vertical coherence and flexibility may be applied include the concept of the modular curriculum, where different languages can be offered for different objectives and levels, in different competences and at different stages of the learners' advancement through the curriculum of compulsory and upper second-level education—and beyond**. From this point of view, language learning is understood to be an integrated process, where the entire time allocated to language learning of all kinds can be used in different ways at different stages in schooling. At times, more emphasis on the first language/mother tongue can be given, and at other times to second/foreign languages and so on. **A modular approach to curriculum design allows flexibility but also ensures that each module is completed, assessed and achieves defined and valid objectives**. The granting of recognition/valorisation of achievement in limited/restricted objectives is important, so that a profile of competence in a number of languages for different purposes and at different levels is acknowledged as valuable by parents, employers and other members of civil society.[62]

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[61] Somewhat paradoxically, this remains true even in the cases, apparently not infrequent, where English is used as a vehicle for teaching Irish or a foreign language.

[62] An interesting example of official recognition of all languages that children may bring to their schools is given by G. Extra, who illustrates the approach taken by the state of Victoria in Australia, where an official multicultural policy is being applied. Extra makes the distinction between top-down and bottom-up policy interventions, where top-down decisions are those taken by instances like, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, national and regional governments, ministries of education, etc. Bottom-up decisions are those influenced by minority organisations, including parent associations, minority groups, etc., i.e. those directly involved as consumers and clients of language education.

Next to compulsory English everyone must have at least one other language, which can be selected from any language available in mainstream schools, the Victorian School of Languages, or after-hours ethnic schools. These together provide up to 41 different languages from which programmes can be designed depending on demand. Statistics for 2000 reveal that 96% of lower schools offer languages other than English, as do all but 6 of upper schools in the state, and that the most popular choices are, in decreasing order, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, German, French and Chinese, some of which are major immigrant languages spoken by many of the pupils in their home environment.

This illustration shows a coming-together of the three parameters alluded to earlier (cf. 2.3.3.), where the authorities provide the *capacity* to learn different languages, but where the *opportunity* and *desire* to use the languages offered are also reinforced by the bottom-up support from parents and communities. And by placing the burden of proof of knowledge on a flexible system that reconciles supply and demand, there is further stimulus for support of linguistic diversity. Extra, G. "De omgang met taaldiversiteit in multicultureel Europa" in Aarts, R., Broeder, P. & Maljers, A. (Ed.), Jong geleerd is oud gedaan. Talen leren in het basisonderwijs. (pp. 17-29). Alkmaar: Europees Platform voor het Nederlands Onderwijs.

The Common European Framework of Reference offers a basis for such thinking and the *European Language Portfolio* is a tool for ensuring that progression and coherence are recorded and visible, as well as providing learners with a means of reviewing past and planning future language learning. **The Council of Europe's *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* (Chaps 5 and 6) and accompanying publications also suggest an analysis of the ways in which curricula can be organised to promote plurilingualism, where a modular approach is set alongside other general principles**.

Such models and methods, though not without links to the current curriculum, are a matter for medium term planning and subject to local conditions. They are also contingent on the emergence of language teachers with the qualifications and qualities which such flexibility demands. But, **given an explicit project, progressive steps may be taken.** Small changes can have big effects, provided they are not just cosmetic but part of a long term policy.

Insofar as positive and fruitful learning contact between languages is concerned, **the fundamental level to be considered is most likely the primary school**: this is where basic skills and attitudes toward language as such, toward language learning and toward specific languages are first built or worked upon in the educational project; moreover, this is where teacher education can be both global and differentiated, teaching methodology both diversified and integrated. This would imply that the main priority remains therein and that, in this perspective, **the decisions taken on the follow-up to be given to the NCCA's current review of the Primary School Curriculum will be crucial**.

### 3.3.4. Integrated with CLIL

One of the areas where the educational scene differs from other European countries is the scarcity of pilot experiments with CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). [63]

The approved definition of this form of bilingual education is taken from the report produced for the European Commission, *CLIL/EMILE—The European Dimension*: "CLIL and EMILE refer to any dual focussed educational context in which an additional language, thus not usually the first language of the learners involved, is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of non-language content."[64]

CLIL might be an important option to consider as it expands contact with the target foreign language without overloading the curriculum, and as it is a clear sign of the transversal integration of languages with other subjects of the general curriculum.

As far as Irish and English are concerned however, informal or institutional forms of immersion do exist: Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht areas admit mostly (but not exclusively) children from families whose first language is not Irish. Moreover, nearer to situations of "submersion", children from Irish speaking families or from immigrant families whose home language is not English are to be found in English-medium schools. This, of course, cannot be described as forms of CLIL. Nevertheless, this kind of subject learning in a second language might receive closer attention with respect to language and content integration.

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[63] An exception is the NCCA's Pilot Project on CLIL at primary level, developed as part of the Final Feasibility Report on modern languages in the primary school curriculum.

[64] D. Marsh, *CLIL/EMILE—the European Dimension: Actions, Trends and Foresight Potential,* European Communities, 2002, p. 15. This study provides concrete examples in different countries of Europe and covering a wide range of school populations, ranging through pre-school, primary, secondary, vocational and technical education, and where the amount of CLIL-EMILE type instruction is classified as low (between 5-15% of teaching time), medium (between 15-50% of teaching time) and high (over 50% of teaching time). A recent overview of the provision of these programmes in Europe is given in, *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at School in Europe*, 2006, European Commission, Eurydice. EMILE is the acronym for Enseignement d'une Matière par l'Intégration d'une Langue Étrangère, French near equivalent of CLIL.

Attitudes toward immersion seem to be ambiguous. There is some support (25%) for more partial or total immersion in Irish and, at the same time, there appears to be a lack of general understanding in society of the potential of immersion-type education in achieving integrated language planning.

In this respect, it is to be noted that the Department of Education and Science does not recognise total Irish immersion, but insists on the teaching of English at every stage of education.[65] This has sometimes been felt by certain interest groups to be negative for Irish immersion. Reservations of this kind show that the term "immersion" is used ambiguously in most discussions. Assuming it refers to Irish immersion for native-speakers of English (something which is not always clear), there is no reason from the research literature why immersion has always, by definition, to be of the early total type[66].

One should in any case be aware that:

- **CLIL does not imply necessary immersion** (if immersion is defined as using only the L2 for access to the subject content); alternating languages (L1 and L2) is also a possible mode of *enseignement bilingue* (bilingual teaching);

- teacher education and availability is an important dimension of CLIL, especially regarding subject teachers and their proficiency in the second or foreign language;

- but **CLIL is never a matter of all or nothing; different degrees and numerous forms do exist**[67];

- the choices regarding types of bilingual teaching should be made within the general framework of a language in education policy and not used as a fashionable and marginal gadget; the form of integration that CLIL presents only finds its full meaning as part of an integrated global project of education.

## 3.4. Continuity, transversality, variation and differentiation

### 3.4.1. Integration between languages and transversality

In the documents calling for an overarching language policy in Ireland, **the notion of integration at school level is generally interpreted in terms of integration between and across languages** (cf. 3.3.3). For instance, at primary school level, it can be an issue of contact, cross reference and transversality; the teaching of Irish can explicitly refer to English

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[65] See Circular 0044/2007 on 'Language and Literacy in Infant Classes in Irish-medium schools'.

[66] For instance, the Basque authorities provide three models of bilingual education for parents to select from: Model A, where the language of instruction is Spanish and Basque is taught only as a subject; Model B, where Basque and Spanish are used in equal proportions (50-50%) ; Model D where the language of instruction is Basque and Spanish is taught only as a subject. (N.B. there is no letter C in the Basque language.) Model A is destined primarily for monolingual, Spanish speaking families, model B also primarily for Spanish speakers and Model D at Basque speaking families. It is possible that the Basque solution, aimed at producing as many bilinguals as possible competent in the first national language of the Basque Autonomous Region and the language most widely known in that region, Spanish, could inspire future thinking on the role of Irish and English in the education system in Ireland, since certain characteristics are similar. Offering three models to select from was intended to avoid friction and duress for the populations concerned, and to provide ample opportunity for a choice between minimum, partial or maximum bilingualism for all. Over time model A has decreased in popularity, given that the results, both linguistically and scholastically, for models B and D have been extremely positive and well propagated.

[67] In respect to this point and to teacher attitude, it is worth noting that the NCCA report on the first phase of the review of languages in post-primary education mentions the dominant opinion that language is the sole concern of the language teachers. A fully integrated and implemented language in education policy would, on the contrary, see all teachers aware of the language dimension of their subject and of their role—among others—as teachers of language. It might even believe all teachers able to refer—*si peu que ce soit*—to a second or foreign language in their practice.

(which does not mean however using English systematically to teach Irish), the teaching of a foreign language can refer to Irish and English, and the teaching of English can refer as well to other languages so as not to be closed in.

This mode of integration is viewed as having several positive effects. It can:

- avoid compartmentalization which isolates languages from each other and impairs the development of a global plurilingual competence (3.2.);

- contribute to the emergence of an awareness of languages through a keener appraisal of their similarities and differences and of the way they work;

- facilitate and accelerate learning by the transfer of general language knowledge and learning strategies from one language to another;

- thus develop the learner's autonomy by way of accumulation of knowledge, awareness and skills;

- generate positive attitudes toward language learning, toward other languages and toward the people who speak those languages (cf. end of 3.3.3.).

**Such positive effects are not just a matter of faith and conviction. They seem to be verified and confirmed by research, but, since this type of integrative approach is, today, far from being the general trend in any given country, it is advisable to proceed, in a specific context, through experiment and carefully planned pilot projects.**

But what is meant by "referring" to another language? Several meanings are attested:

- mentioning in the classroom instruction characteristics of one language when learning another (from a linguistic and/or sociolinguistic or cultural point of view);

- teaching the grammar of one language using the same categories and metalanguage as for another or several others[68];

- adopting a common general curriculum and approach for all languages and ensuring that teachers and learners are conscious of that form of homogeneity;

- building explicitly on techniques and strategies that have been used for previous learning in order to encourage the learning of a new language, facilitate transfer and avoid mere replication of teaching what is already acquired and available.

As can be noticed, these different directions may be somewhat divergent. Nevertheless, the idea of a common metalanguage and/or of a common general curriculum keeps coming back in discussions and has been in a way reinforced by the success met by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It may be pertinent to formulate two comments regarding this point.

- The metalanguage used by the CEFR can certainly be considered as an overarching set of categories to describe language learning, teaching and assessment. It has been developed for that very purpose. In this respect and at this meta-level, it can serve as an instrument for integration between and across languages. But it certainly does not imply that a common grammatical metalanguage can be derived from this set of categories.

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[68] In so far as possible, given different grammatical traditions and different structures of linguistic systems. This issue of "explicit" grammar is often mentioned in connection to English as L1, with the comment that grammar as such is often neglected in teaching the L1, to the point that a more general question sometimes occurs: "Do teachers of English perceive their role as that of teaching language?"

- Among other functions, the CEFR provides a practical tool for setting standards to be attained at successive stages of learning and for evaluating outcomes in an internationally comparable manner. It is increasingly used in the reform of national curricula. But in no way does it prescribe a certain type of harmonised common curriculum. In other words, the principles set forward by the CEFR allow comparability, distinction and at the same time a form of integration among curricula (or syllabuses) for different languages but also permit differentiation between them; for instance, as far as levels to be attained, or in the balance of capacities—comprehension vs. expression, oral vs. written, etc. (cf. 3.4.4.).

### 3.4.2. Continuity, differentiation and variation

**Continuity, or rather absence of continuity, is a recurring theme in language teaching and learning, and especially regarding foreign language learning in school**. Ireland is no exception, and the Expert Group took note of questions relating to discontinuity between primary and post-primary for the MLPSI (cf. 2.4.3.), but also between Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate or Leaving Certificate Applied. For Irish, the passage from primary to post-primary is also deemed inadequate by certain voices, but this could be due in part to the fact that there is only one curriculum for all types of learners, and also to the fact that students often "scatter" from primary schools to many different second-level schools, so that the levels of language on arrival can be very varied.

Ensuring continuity, however, does not imply that a syllabus or curriculum has to follow the same type of format and balance throughout. It might very well be the case, on the contrary, that a shift of emphasis helps to avoid the kind of "ceiling effect" mentioned in 2.8.1. For instance:

- This may happen in a possible scenario where the first phases of learning the foreign language would consist of a more or less parallel development of the "classic" capacities, comprehension, expression, interaction in the oral and written modes, leading up to a certain level of proficiency and where the following stages would focus more on the written comprehension of print media.

- This is also to be found in a course where a language is first learned "for itself" with, say, a strong emphasis on oral and written comprehension, and then developed in a CLIL type approach to transmit and construct knowledge in another school subject.

- And this would be the case as well in another scenario where the accent is put at first on mastering a phonetic accuracy of the sounds and prosodic features of the foreign language, on familiarisation with some aspects of the writing system and on some metalinguistic and metacultural knowledge, and where only then some conversational skills are introduced[69].

In both these examples, the curriculum modifies somewhat its format and balance over the years of study, but, at every moment, in both cases, what is worked upon and may be assessed is describable with the categories and scales proposed by the CEFR.

In other words, **one can build a general language curriculum that allows,**

- **for each language, for "intralanguage" continuity and variation** (as is the case in each of the three examples above)**,**

- **and, between the different languages, for "interlanguage" complementarity and differentiation** (as is the case if the three examples are seen as referring to three different languages within one single school curriculum)**;**

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[69] This could be the case of a certain type of approach (certainly not the only one possible) to, say, Chinese.

**while maintaining the possibility of a general coherence and integration of the whole curriculum with reference to the levels and scales proposed by the CEFR**[70].

### 3.4.3. Identity building and curriculum construction

However precious the CEFR may be, and even if used to its full potential of diversification and differentiation—which is far from generally being the case—it is not a panacea nor, in itself, an adequate instrument for the totality of the choices to be made within a language in education policy. Diversification and differentiation are not only a matter of level or balance of the communicative proficiency for distinct languages. They also have to be considered with regard to what has been underlined above (3.2.), pointing out the necessity to consider languages not only "as means of communication, expression, information, construction and transmission of knowledge, aesthetic creation and appreciation", but also "as contributing to the development and growth of diverse individual identities and to the affirmation of collective loyalties within a society".

**Within a changing environment, the issues regarding language policy are not limited to questions of national resources and assets nor to individual needs and opportunities. They relate also to identity building at different levels**. And the debates at present in Ireland are a clear sign of tensions in a transitional period, even when seemingly focusing on curriculum reform or examination results.

**The question then might be put: how can one ensure, in the construction of a coherent general curriculum for languages in education, where the development of a plurilingual communicative proficiency is a common objective, that the structure and the dynamic of that curriculum also contribute to whatever aims the education system as a whole is pursuing in terms of citizenship, social inclusion, collective and individual identity building?**

### 3.4.4. Variation and differentiation within coherence

In more concrete and more contextualised terms, what is suggested here, as in 3.3.3. and 3.4.2., is to **distinguish and combine integration across languages as well as differentiation among languages or variation within one language**.

- **Integration and variation/differentiation regarding communicative proficiency** in national languages and foreign languages:

    o Integration with regard to a possible common reference to the CEFR, whether it concerns English, Irish or modern foreign languages, as well as new immigrant languages (in so far as they can be taken into account by the use of a Language Portfolio and assessed in State examinations).

    o Variation and differentiation with regard to intralanguage and interlanguage objectives and programs. In reference to the levels and scales of the CEFR, one can, for instance, decide that the proficiency objective is:

        ▪ for language X: C2 for aural comprehension, C1 for oral expression and written comprehension, A2 for written expression;

        ▪ for language Y: A2 for aural comprehension and oral expression, B1 for written comprehension, A1 for written expression;

        ▪ and so on for other languages.

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[70] Reference to these levels and scales would admittedly need some little adjustment, when it comes to CLIL (part of example 2) or to writing systems (part of example 3), since these aspects are not explicitly addressed in the CEFR.

- o With this rationale in mind and still regarding communicative proficiency, it might be possible to distinguish between Irish L1 and Irish L2, or between English L1 and English as an additional language, with the same set of curricular tools and within the same set of levels; but, of course, with generally higher "starting points" and goals, and possibly with different learning routes, for L1 than for L2. Irish L2 in Irish-medium schools and English as an additional language in English-medium schools are somewhat comparable, since in both cases the L2/additional language is also a vehicle for the teaching of other subjects; Irish L2 in English-medium schools—the case that concerns the largest number of students—being more comparable to the modern foreign language situation.

- **Differentiation** between national languages and among foreign languages **and variation** within each single language **with reference to "other" educational objectives and other dimensions of the curriculum**[71], as for instance,

   - o with regard to cultural and academic content;

   - o as to the importance given to explicit grammatical knowledge;

   - o as to pedagogical approaches, types of materials and types of classroom practice.

- An important choice to be made is to decide on the relative balance between the communicative proficiency part of the curriculum and its other "parts". And the question does not apply only to English and to Irish.

## 3.5. Diversification

### 3.5.1. Languages strategy and diversification

**A long term policy, informed by sociolinguistic data and by a precise assessment of existing resources and possible allocation of means**, should ideally be based on evidence which would:

- identify those complex factors operating subtly in society, e.g. in rural areas or in inner cities, which persuaded different sorts of individuals to maintain or to give up, to learn, to return to and to use particular languages, for which purposes, where, when and why;

- illustrate how languages in society and languages at school are able to support and sustain each other, thereby creating a positive dynamic for re-vitalisation and growth, whether in respect to Irish or other languages.

Specifically within the education system, it would identify:

- **which languages should be taught, from which starting points and to which levels;**

- **how each should be reflected in a national curricular framework;**

- **how each should be provided with an adequate supply of teachers;**

- **how teachers should be trained initially and further supported through continuing professional development;**

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[71] The differentiation in these various respects can exist between different languages and the variation within the particular curriculum of one specific language.

- **how each sector of education should articulate with the other sectors in order to allow for continuity and progression in learning a particular language and also for diversification of languages provision.**

A general strategy of this nature is, certainly, always difficult to implement fully. It is, however, within this type of rationale that the issue of diversification needs to be examined.

### 3.5.2. Diversification and obligation

**Diversification in the uptake of languages in the school system is one of the key questions pointed out by different stakeholders in Ireland**. That the Modern Languages in Primary School Initiative offered French, German, Spanish and Italian, while the Post-Primary Initiative extended the choice to Japanese and Russian is to be noted. In its report on the first phase of the review of languages in post-primary education already referred to, the NCCA raises the question of criteria for the choice of languages in view of diversification and provides an interesting list of possible criteria[72]. While approving this set of criteria, one can add that **the first question to be answered is the exact status of the foreign languages in the system and the stand to be taken regarding the European policy of promoting "Mother Tongue plus two Foreign Languages"**.

The argument often heard is that this orientation is difficult to consider in Ireland, given the status of Irish and English. But is this not a false issue, based on a too literal interpretation of the European Commission recommendation? Other bilingual regions in Europe are confronted with the same dilemma yet do not turn it into a semantic issue. In Catalonia (Catalan and Castilian), the Basque Country (Basque and Castilian), and Brussels (Dutch and French), which of the two languages present is the so-called "mother tongue" varies, the second language is not "foreign" but is often learned in the same way as other countries teach modern languages, and a third language is compulsory at some point in schooling. In many bilingual regions in Europe all pupils are confronted with the so-called "Mother tongue plus two languages" obligation at some stage, but not necessarily with the same number of contact hours for all three languages, depending on their academic orientation.

In the ambiguous situation found in Ireland, the issue of linguistic diversity is not clear, since the question arises as to how many languages can be offered once the two language initiatives come to an end. **The implications for mainstreaming diversity, sustaining the impetus and providing a curriculum, etc. also raise questions**. Most countries limit the range of languages available, purely for pragmatic reasons, or distribute the range available on criteria sustainable within the population and the teaching profession. Diversification of languages on offer is a long-term goal.

This "long term goal" could nevertheless reasonably be aimed at within a language policy which would systematically introduce the teaching of a foreign language at primary-school level and offer options for other foreign languages during post-primary schooling.

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[72] "Some criteria that might be considered in this context include:
- The contribution inclusion of the language makes to social inclusion
- The contribution it makes to a general education, to broader cultural awareness and diversification
- The contribution to economic development
- The obligations and responsibilities that can arise, for example, from Ireland's membership of the European Union or from its status as a signatory to international agreements and conventions
- The demand (number of people/requests) for the inclusion of a language
- The practicalities and logistical factors involved, including costs, availability of teachers, capacity of schools, etc." (p. 11)

With the added mention that "an important question is the order of priority to be placed on such criteria and the weighing to be attached to such criteria in decision making processes."

### 3.5.3. Primary school as a first base for diversification?

Among the points for choice mentioned in 3.5.1., two are of direct interest to the primary school situation:

- o which languages should be taught, from which home language background or starting point, for which purposes and to which levels;

- o how each should be reflected in a national curricular framework.

- **The Expert Group wondered whether the two languages, English and Irish, are best "started" at the same time or whether the teaching of English in Irish-medium schools and/or the teaching of Irish in English-medium schools could be somewhat delayed**. The question applies also to the introduction, simultaneous or not, of the written form of the two national languages[73].

- In English-medium schools, it might be appropriate to explore the possibility of Irish being used, alongside English, as a medium of instruction for other subjects. This could be introduced and piloted in the senior classes of primary, within a sort of limited **"soft CLIL"** or modular approach as practised in the United Kingdom for part of a subject-course, e.g. during one term, provided adequate material and support is given to teachers.

- For a modern foreign language, the starting point on the European scene varies depending on the country. In some cases, the solution chosen is to start and reach a generalization in the last year of primary school and then extend to the last but one, as teacher availability and training permit.

Languages other than the "traditional" modern languages may be included at primary school level:

- The languages of new immigrants, whether or not they are offered to the children of foreign origin in or outside the school, do not have to be formally taught to all children in order to be accepted elsewhere than on the playground. And teachers do not need to know these languages to enhance them in the classroom or in the school at large.

- Language awareness activities include discovery of the diversity of languages and recognition of their speakers.

- Very elementary familiarization with some aspects of Irish Sign Language can also be included, if only to make children conscious of its existence as a language and not be seen as a "funny" or "strange" practice[74].

- And as far as English and Irish are concerned, attracting children's attention to the varieties and to the varying norms of these languages, if only in relation to the United Kingdom, is certainly not an impossible task at primary school level.

**In short, given the specific Irish context, it would be worth considering whether or not diversification could start early and assume several forms within an integrated curriculum where different languages and their users are recognized**. It might be a way to improve the situation regarding attitudes and results related to the teaching of Irish. Moreover, there is no need to stress here the clear connection between this kind of approach and the general aims of identity building and of social inclusion and cohesion.

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[73] One is aware, of course, that, because of the dominance of English, there is no perfect symmetry between the two situations.

[74] There has been no mention up to now of Irish Traveller Cant. David Little has a specific section in his discussion paper (pp. 18-19 ). The question of its formal teaching does not arise, but in a language awareness approach, pupils might be made conscious of the existence of this language variety, unique to the country.

As for the levels to be attained at the end of primary school for the languages taught—English, Irish and, possibly or hopefully, a modern foreign language—and regarding curriculum balance, it is not within the scope of the present Profile to formulate recommendations but the rationale presented in 3.4. could be considered in view of the choices to be made. While orientations described here have implications for teacher preparation and support, the consequences on the curriculum load and on the school timetable would be limited (cf. also end of 3.3.3.).

### 3.5.4. Diversification at post-primary level

Diversification at post-primary level has been examined in documents previously mentioned, linked to points in 3.5.1. and 3.5.2. The following are a few additional comments and proposals, which would allow learners to select a second foreign language of their choice:

- **Introduce short courses which produce differentiated levels of competence per language, on the proviso that at least one language be continued through to the highest level of schooling**. It is worth investigating whether there is always a need to recommend the study of the four language skills to an advanced level for all students, i.e. whether a partial competence in some of the four skills would suffice.

- **Forms of integration between languages can contribute to diversification**: for instance, experiments concerning intercomprehension, written and aural, among romance languages such as Spanish, Italian; French, led to interesting results in other countries.

- **ICT merits further reflection and development**, including the identification of good practice in other countries where English is the dominant language and where ICT is being used in order to create virtual communities of language-learners and users.

- As noted already (cf. 3.3.4.), another area for reflection and development is CLIL, in view of the fact that several other countries in Europe have made real progress in **developing their own forms of CLIL to suit local circumstances.**

## 3.6. Evaluation and assessment

Evaluation and assessment has been mentioned in relation to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This instrument has not yet been used in Ireland to define and calibrate communicative proficiency, but David Little's discussion paper and the NCCA documents insist on its importance and the State Examinations Commission intends to consider its possible use[75].

It was not quite clear to the Expert Group how the examinations for different languages, including Irish and English, stand in relation to one another, for example with regard to the distinction between "ordinary" and "higher", and in some cases, "foundation" levels.

Besides, as gleaned from meetings with different groups during the Expert Group visit, there remain some questions regarding the validity of final examinations for Irish and foreign languages, especially at Leaving Certificate Level, both in their relation to the curriculum and regarding their assessment of actual communicative proficiency, especially for oral expression.

If the issue of the role of examinations in language learning is as central as it appears, then these questions require more in-depth appraisal.

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[75] The Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg has published a pilot edition of a *Manual for relating language examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* in order to assist member states, national and international providers of examinations in relating their certificates and diplomas to the CEFR.

Within the rationale presented in 3.4.4., for example, the examination system needs to allow for differentiation. If, in the near future, examinations in languages are mapped on to and aligned with the Common European Framework, then this point will need to be carefully examined with regard to feasibility.

The European Language Portfolio is not a formal tool for assessment, and its main functions should not be confused with those of institutional evaluation tools. However, its possible role in recording progress in proficiency, development of awareness and cultural experience might be considered.

## 3.7. Implementation and feasibility

No language in education policy can succeed, even partially, if the conditions of its implementation and feasibility are not met. In this respect, some general considerations might be brought to attention.

- Ireland already has a rich set of data, analysis and reviews regarding its language scene; key issues have been clearly identified and most elements which can inform choices and decisions are probably available.

- There is a general awareness that the time has come for the definition and implementation of an overarching language policy that will not limit itself to the case and situation of Irish as national language.

- In spite of the fact that ITÉ, which produced many fundamental surveys and research results in the field of languages, is no longer active[76], **Ireland can count on several most competent bodies and agencies that are in a position to take part in the implementation of a language policy. In addition, the many organisations concerned with the Irish language and the bodies responsible for curriculum, assessment and examinations are operational and active**.

- Against the background of these highly favourable factors, the effect of certain difficulties and inadequacies should not be underestimated. Setting aside the lack of an integrated language policy, these **difficulties concern in particular teacher pre-service, induction and in-service training and education**, for primary and post-primary levels, and with regard to linguistic as well as pedagogical components of teachers' professional activity.

- **This crucial issue raises the question of the relationships between the Department of Education and Science and higher education institutions**, concerning their respective roles in the preparation and support of language teachers. While it is essential to safeguard the autonomy of higher education institutions, it appears just as essential to establish clear goals and contents for the linguistic and professional preparation of language teachers and to find ways of contractualizing this preparation with higher education institutions.

- There also seems to be a lack of co-ordination between the bodies which support languages teachers at school, particularly in respect to teachers' continuing professional development.

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[76] The Expert Group acknowledged in its Report the interest, quality and importance of the studies and surveys published by the Institute on aspects of the language scene related to issues discussed within the present process. Whether it touches upon the actual use and transmission of languages or upon the observation and assessment of initiatives interesting the school, this type of work becomes fundamental for the shaping and monitoring of a language policy which, while it needs not to be data driven, can only benefit from being data informed.

- Reform might then be encouraged within initial teacher education, in-service training and at the induction level. The Kelly et al. Report for the European Commission strongly recommends the introduction of a mentoring system for new teachers in the profession.[77]

- More generally and **perhaps because of the absence of an integrated language policy, there appears to be fragmentation and independence of each of the sectors. There is no overall co-ordination or interdependence, and implementing change within this context is not straightforward**. In some cases, this may result in conflicting timetables[78]. Here again, this state of affairs is not specific to Ireland.

- The various national organisations responsible for languages, e.g. in curriculum and in examinations, would probably benefit from an ongoing dialogue, in order to ensure maximum coherence across the system.

- **Articulation between central organizations and local level would have to be clarified** in view of the actual implementation of a language policy. For instance, there would be a need to involve parents and other partners in the formulation of a language policy for each school or school cluster at a local level with due respect to local indigenous needs within a general national framework. This is one of the ways to the development of **a policy socially integrated thanks to interaction between creative bottom-up formulation and normative top-down policies**.

- Research in education has clearly shown the importance of what happens at school and local community level. **Principals are key figures in the implementation of innovation**. A language in education policy depends partly on their knowledge of what is at stake, their awareness and acceptance of new orientations, and their capacity to relate to the local community.

- Integration of languages in the school is also a matter of visibility and "audibility":

    o Irish, foreign languages or home languages from newcomer children can be seen and heard beyond the classroom, even if they are not frequently used in daily life outside;

    o **the school can be a "growth point", a point in a network or networks, physical or virtual, of learners and neo-speakers of languages; be it Irish and other languages, new communities of usage can be encouraged and developed** [79];

    o local clusters of schools, as well as contacts and exchanges with schools abroad (again, physical or virtual) may be ways for diversification and integration of languages in school activities.

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[77] M. Kelly, M. Grenfell et al., *European Profile for Language Teacher Education: A Frame of Reference.* A Report to the European Commission, Directorate General for Education & Culture, 2004. Available on the Europa website.

[78] For example, was coordination optimal between the introduction of a revised primary school curriculum and the launching of the Modern Languages in Primary School Initiative?

[79] Because of the position of Irish and of the symbolic importance of the Gaeltacht, Ireland is perhaps, more than other countries, conditioned in its reflection on languages by an ideology of territoriality: a language is seen as having a spatial and geographical identity. While this ideology is historically and politically founded, the importance of virtual contacts, of distance communication and learning, of e-communities, of (preparation to) mobility should not be underestimated.

- **The Education Centre network could have a definite function within a general strategy giving a role to local initiative and variation in the implementation of an integrated language policy**.[80]

One of the main difficulties on the path toward an integrated policy is to reach some degree of "integration" among the institutions in charge of defining, implementing, monitoring and revising that policy. And "integration certainly does not mean confusion, but coordination and cooperation between components each operating in its role and capacity, but with a common aim in view. At this moment, to quote the Expert Group, Ireland is better equipped than many to move in that direction.

Language policy is certainly not a matter of sheer injunction. **One cannot impose change from one day to the next. In democratic states, it has become, and rightly so, a matter of public concern. It first requires clear orientation statements and a definition of priorities. Then, as an ongoing development, it needs medium and long term strategies**.

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[80] See Country Report 2.2.4.

# 4. Conclusion: Guiding Principles and Action Priorities for the Department of Education and Science

In 2004 the Department of Education and Science, aware that a number of key issues in the area of language education needed to be addressed, invited the Council of Europe Language Policy Division to carry out a Language Education Policy Profile for Ireland. Those issues are summarised in Section 1.3 of this Profile; taken together they point to the need for an overarching policy for languages in education. The Profile process has allowed the Department to reflect on these issues with a view to articulating such a policy. It was not intended that the Profile process itself would produce a finished language policy, but rather that it would provide an analysis of the current situation (Section 2) and outline some possible elements of an overarching policy (Section 3). This final section of the Profile sets out some guiding principles and action priorities for the Department in response to the analysis and recommendations contained in the preceding sections.

The National Development Plan 2007-2013, *Transforming Ireland*, identifies investment in language learning as an important goal, and establishes as a priority the development and implementation of an integrated language policy in line with the recommendations of this Profile.[81] It also identifies the strengthening and diversifying of language learning as important national objectives. The main challenge for Ireland in this regard is to move away from "an official but lame bilingualism" to become a truly multilingual society, where the ability to learn and use two and more languages is taken for granted and fostered at every stage of the education system and through lifelong education. This commitment is a logical consequence of Ireland's membership of the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Languages are not a special skill for "linguists"; they are for everybody. The aim of language education is to enable every learner to develop his or her own personal repertoire of language skills in formal education and throughout a lifetime of learning according to the individual's needs and interests. This is true for teachers as well as for learners.

Developing and implementing a languages in education policy will require a clear statement of guiding principles, a definition of action priorities and a range of short to medium term actions. The following are proposed as guiding principles:

1. While Irish and English will always maintain their central role in society and education, other languages are part of Ireland's cultural, social and economic resources, and as such should find an appropriate place in the education system.

2. The aim of language education is to support language learners in developing a plurilingual repertoire, as part of their personal, social, cultural and civic education. The DES remains committed to diversifying and strengthening language learning.

3. The DES will aim to give all learners access to a language education programme suited to their motivation, abilities and interests, and will aim to recognise and record diverse profiles of attainment in language learning.

4. An integrated languages in education policy will provide for continuity and coherence in curriculum and assessment across languages at each level of the education system, and also from one level to the next.

5. The DES recognises the importance of initial and continuing professional development of language teachers. In particular, language teachers will be encouraged and facilitated in accessing appropriate continuing professional development throughout their careers.

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[81] *NDP 2007-2013 Transforming Ireland,* pp. 197, 198.

Arising from these guiding principles, the following action priorities have been identified. The DES agrees with the Council of Europe Expert Group that the development of language policy is not a matter for one government department only. Therefore some of these actions will involve cooperation with other government departments and agencies, and also interaction with civil society.

1. **The first action priority is to define a clear policy position, in consultation with other government departments and agencies as appropriate, regarding the place and role of languages in Irish society and in the education system. It is only on the basis of such a policy choice that a coherent languages in education policy can be formulated.**

In December 2006, the Government of Ireland issued a Statement on the Irish Language, in which it committed itself to the development of a twenty-year strategy based on 13 objectives. While the Statement does not make any reference to other languages present in the education system and in society at large, it could serve as a model for a statement which would incorporate similar decisions and commitments regarding languages in general.

As a first step, the DES could set up a working group, charged with the task of drafting and proposing a range of options for political decision. This group could call on experts for advice as appropriate, and individuals and organisations could be invited to make submissions. In the recent past, reports have been published (for example, by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs) which adopted clear positions regarding the present state of affairs and formulated recommendations for action. While their analyses converge on many points and differ on others, they do at any rate provide an informed basis on which to proceed. The working group could consult, as appropriate, various individuals and bodies. It might arrive at a consensus for action in some areas, and define a number of alternatives or variants in others. It could take as a starting point the various documents already in existence, especially this Language Education Policy Profile.

The mandate of the working group, within a given time limit, would be:

   i. To formulate a proposal for Government on the place and role of languages in society and education.

   ii. To elaborate one or more broad but realistic scenarios for the integration of languages in the education system—at both primary and post-primary levels—including English, Irish, foreign languages, Classical languages, and also the languages of immigrants and sign language;

   iii. To assess, for each of these scenarios, the principal implications in terms of curriculum development, teacher education, assessment and certification, and also to determine what actions would be necessary on the part of the various bodies concerned;

   iv. To advise on current and future language provision at second level;

   v. To consider what structures or measures might be necessary to provide ongoing advice on language policy in the light of changing circumstances.

2. **Whatever decisions are taken regarding the place of languages in society and in the education system, the second action priority is the professional development (initial and continuing) of language teachers.**

Without necessarily waiting for the completion of Action Priority 1, it is important to begin a process of reflection in order to:

   i. Define and articulate the relationship between DES, the Teaching Council and the institutions responsible for initial teacher education (universities and colleges of

education) in so far as it concerns the initial professional development of future language teachers. While fully respecting the relative autonomy of the third level institutions, it would be worth examining the feasibility of some form of agreement between the DES, the Teaching Council and these institutions in relation to course content and outcomes—including the required language competence levels of future teachers of languages.

ii. Ensure that, in the context of whatever reforms are proposed, teacher CPD will extend beyond preparing teachers for new programmes or for participation in pilot projects. The support which is currently offered to teacher professional networks could be extended to include systematic CPD for language teachers, within the framework of developing DES policy for teacher CPD. This should be considered in the light of the Teaching Council's remit in relation to CPD and the ongoing registration requirements for teachers into the future.

**3. The third priority, closely linked to the first and the second, concerns the primary level, which should be the keystone of language learning in the education system.**

A number of coinciding factors have resulted in some temporary uncertainty regarding languages in the primary sector: the rollout of a new curriculum, the pilot project for modern foreign languages, the arrival of large numbers of immigrant children, the integration of increasing numbers of children with special educational needs, the different modes of teaching Irish (mainstream, Gaelscoileanna, heterogeneous Gaeltacht schools). Early in 2008, the Primary School Curriculum will have been fully introduced and the DES will have received advice from the NCCA regarding the future of foreign languages in the primary curriculum. At that point, the DES would be in a position to make key policy decisions regarding the future of languages at primary level. Arising from Action Priority 1 above, a detailed planning exercise could be undertaken for language education in the primary school. The curricular work of the NCCA, the research of John Harris and his colleagues in the areas of Irish and foreign languages, and the reflections of the INTO, are all contributions which could be useful in establishing an integrated approach, in drawing up a detailed curricular framework and action plan.

**4. The fourth priority is assessment and certification of attainment in language learning.**

The aims of language learning in a school context are not limited to communicative proficiency: the cultural dimensions matter as well—to a greater or lesser extent depending on the language. But, regardless of what choices are made about which languages are to be taught, it is important that the levels to be attained in the different language skills should be clearly stated in the curriculum documents, so that there is clarity regarding learning targets and outcomes. Certification measures at certain key points should show the student's individual plurilingual profile—which languages have been studied and what levels have been attained in the different skills in each language, including partial plurilingual competences.

The CEFR and the European Language Portfolio are useful instruments for defining and calibrating communicative competence and for recording the attainment of individual learners. The CEFR scales are now a standard part of the Europass CV and will also be the basis for the forthcoming European Indicator of Language Competence. The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) is currently examining the relationship between the CEFR and the National Framework of Qualifications. All future language curriculum documents should be referenced to the CEFR. In the meantime, the DES and the NCCA— along with the NQAI and SEC as appropriate—could carry out a benchmarking exercise to try to relate, where possible and appropriate, existing curricula and examinations to the CEFR.

**5. The fifth priority is to develop in society at large the conviction that "English is not enough". That is to say, to convey the message that the economic, cultural and European future of Ireland depends on the valorisation of plurilingualism.**

This fifth priority might just as easily be listed first. It is intimately linked with the taking of a high-level political decision in Action Priority 1.i, and must of necessity be a part of a long-term and medium-term global strategy and a well-thought out action plan. It presupposes a sort of broad mobilisation in support of a national commitment. The particular role of DES would be to identify and support actions to be taken.

**_Appendix 1_:** Documents formulating the position of the Council of Europe on language education policy

Conventions:

- European Cultural Convention (19 December 1954)

- European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, treaty open for signature on 5 November 1992 [www.coe.int - (Legal Affairs / Local and Regional Democracy - Link: _http://www.coe.int//Regional_or_Minority_languages_]

- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, treaty open for signature on 1 February 1995 www.coe.int/minorities (Texts). Link: http://www.coe.int/Minorities/FRAMEWORK_CONVENTION/FCNM and Explanatory Report]

Policy recommendations:

- Resolution (69) 2 elaborated at the conclusion of the CDCC 'Major Project' established following upon the Conference of European Ministers of Education (Hamburg 1961)

- Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (www.coe.int/cm)

- Recommendation R (82)18 based on the results of the CDCC Project N° 4 ('Modern Languages 1971-1981')

- Recommendation R (98) 6 based on the results of the CDCC Project 'Language Learning for European Citizenship' (1989 – 1996) - _Languages_ [www.coe.int  (Committee of Ministers / Advanced Search / Rec (98)6) - Link: http://cm.coe.int/rec/1998/98r6]

- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (http://assembly.coe.int/ Link: http://assembly.coe.int/AdoptedText/EREC1383]

  o Recommendation 1383 (1998) on Linguistic Diversification and (CM(99)97 )

  o Recommendation 1539 (2001) on the European Year of Languages 2001

  o Recommendation 1598 (2003) on the protection of sign languages in the member states of the Council of Europe

These instruments and recommendations provide the legal and political basis for language education policies at all levels which not only facilitate the acquisition of a repertoire of language varieties - linguistic diversity for the plurilingual individual - but also ensure that attention is paid to diversification of the options for language learning. The latter refers to the need to encourage and enable the learning of a wide range of languages, not only those which have been dominant in language teaching traditions, and not only the contemporary demand for English.

The documents in question focus primarily on languages which are defined as 'minority languages' or 'modern languages' /'langues vivantes'. These terms usually exclude the languages considered to be the national and/or official languages of a state and education policies dealing with the teaching of these. There is however a need to include such languages in language education policies because they are part of the linguistic repertoire of individuals. In the third part of this Guide, options for the implementation of policies will include the teaching and learning of national/official languages, which for many, but not all individuals, are their mother tongue/first language.

***Appendix 2:*** Council of Europe instruments: Presentation

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*1. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages : Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)*
*2. European Language Portfolio (ELP)*
*3. Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*

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### 1. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages : Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) www.coe.int/portfolio [documentation]

Developed through a process of scientific research and wide consultation, this document provides a practical tool for setting clear standards to be attained at successive stages of learning and for evaluating outcomes in an internationally comparable manner. The Framework provides a basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications, thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility. It is increasingly used in the reform of national curricula and by international consortia for the comparison of language certificates. The Framework is a document which describes in a comprehensive manner

- the competences necessary for communication

- the related knowledge and skills

- the situations and domains of communication

The Framework facilitates a clear definition of teaching and learning objectives and methods. It provides the necessary tools for assessment of proficiency.

The CEFR is of particular interest to course designers, textbook writers, testers, teachers and teacher trainers - in fact to all who are directly involved in language teaching and testing.

It is the result of extensive research and ongoing work on communicative objectives, as exemplified by the popular 'Threshold level' concept

The success of this standard-setting document has led to its widespread use at all levels and its translation into eighteen languages: Basque, Catalan, Czech, English, Finnish, French, Galician, Georgian, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Moldovan, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian and Spanish (see website).

Guides and Case Studies are available on the Council of Europe website.

English version: *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment,* 2001 - Cambridge University Press - ISBN: Hardback 0521803136 Paperback: 0521005310.

### 2. European Language Portfolio (ELP) www.coe.int/portfolio

The European Language Portfolio was developed and piloted by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, from 1998 until 2000. It was launched on a pan-European level during the European Year of Languages as a tool to support the development of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism.

**What is a European Language Portfolio?**

It is a document in which those who are learning or have learned a language - whether at school or outside school - can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences.

The Portfolio contains three parts:

- a **Language Passport** which its owner regularly updates. A grid is provided where his/her language competences can be described according to common criteria accepted throughout Europe and which can serve as a complement to customary certificates.

- a detailed **Language Biography** describing the owner's experiences in each language and which is designed to guide the learner in planning and assessing progress.

- a **Dossier** where examples of personal work can be kept to illustrate one's language competences.

**Aims**

The European Language Portfolio seeks to promote the aims of the Council of Europe. These include the development of democratic citizenship in Europe through

1. the deepening of mutual understanding and tolerance among citizens in Europe;

2. the protection and promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity;

3. the promotion of lifelong language and intercultural learning for plurilingualism through the development of learner responsibility and learner autonomy;

4. the clear and transparent description of competences and qualifications to facilitate coherence in language provision and mobility in Europe.

**Principles**

- All competence is valued, regardless whether gained inside or outside of formal education.

- The European Language Portfolio is the property of the learner.

- It is linked to the *Common European Framework of reference for Languages.*

A set of common *Principles and Guidelines* have been agreed for all Portfolios (see web site)

Accreditation of ELP models : see detailed information on the website

**3. From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education: Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe** www.coe.int/lang -

The aim of the *Guide* is to offer an analytical instrument which can serve as a reference document for the formulation or reorganisation of language teaching in member States. Its purpose is to provide a response to the need to formulate language policies to promote plurilingualism and diversification in a planned manner so that decisions are coherently linked. It deals, for example, with the specification of guiding principles and aims, analysis of the particular situation and resources, expectations, needs, implementation and evaluation. Accordingly, the Guide does not promote any particular language education policy but attempts to identify the challenges and possible responses in the light of common principles.

To this end the Guide is organised in three parts:

a) analysis of current language education policies in Europe (common characteristics of member states policies and presentation of Council of Europe principles)

b) information required for the formulation of language education policies (methodologies for policy design, aspects/factors to be taken into account in decision making)

c) implementation of language education policies (guiding principles and policy options for deciders in providing diversification in choice of languages learned and in promoting the development of plurilingual competence; inventory of technical means and description of

each `solution' with indicators of cost, lead in time, means, teacher education implications, administration etc.)

In order for the proposals made here to be accessible to readers with different needs, the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* is available in two versions to suit the needs of specific groups of readers:

- the *Main Version* (reference version), which discusses, argues and exemplifies all the principles, analyses and approaches for organising European language education policies, as they are conceived in the framework of the Council of Europe. This version is designed for readers interested in all aspects of these issues, including their technical dimensions. It provides the means of answering the question: *how can language education policies geared towards plurilingualism actually be introduced?*

This version is itself extended by a series of Reference studies (see web site) which have been produced specifically for the *Guide* by specialists in the relevant fields. They provide a synthesis of or take up in more detail the issues dealt with in this version. They are published separately;

- an *Executive Version* which has been written for those who influence, formulate and implement language education policies at any level, e.g. individual institution, local government, national education system or international public or private institution. It is a document not for language specialists but for policy makers who may have no specific specialist knowledge of technical matters in language education.

The *Guide* has been elaborated in draft form and a consultation process is being undertaken.

The two versions of the Guide as well as the Reference studies are available on the web site

### *Appendix 3:* Council of Europe Expert Group

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## *Appendix 4:* Programme of the October 2005 visit

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY PROFILE, IRELAND

## PROGRAMME FOR VISIT OF EXPERT TEAM 10 – 14 OCTOBER 2005

| Monday 10th October: Department of Education & Science, Marlborough St, Dublin 1. | | |
|---|---|---|
| 10.00-10.30 | Courtesy meeting with members of senior management of the Department | Eamon Stack (Chief Inspector), Pat Burke (Assistant Secretary), Peter Baldwin (Assistant Secretary) |
| 11.00-12.30 | Inspectorate, Primary | Seán Ó Floinn, (Assistant Chief Inspector), Deirdre Lyddy (Divisional Inspector, English and primary curriculum), Eoghan Ó Súilleabháin (Divisional Inspector, Irish and Mod. Lang. in Primary Schools) |
| 14.00 -15.30 | Inspectorate, Post-Primary | Maura Clancy (Assistant Chief Inspector), Maria Lorigan (Inspector, German), Suzanne Dillon (Inspector, English), Lily O'Donovan (Inspector, French), Oilibhéar de Búrca (Inspector, Irish) |
| 16.00-17.30 | Teacher Education Section (TES) and Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Section (QCAP) | Lynda O'Toole (Senior Inspector, TES), Barry Conroy (Assistant Principal, TES), Jimmy Malone (Higher Executive Officer, TES), Margaret Kelly (Principal Officer, QCAP), Doreen McMorris (Assistant Chief Inspector, QCAP) |
| Tuesday 11th October, morning: Department of Education & Science | | |
| 9.00-10.00 | An Chomhairle Um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)[82] | Muireann Ní Mhóráin (Chief Executive), Breandán Mac Cormaic (Chairman of the Comhairle) |
| 10.00– 11.00 | Irish language bodies | Pádraig Ó Ceithearnaigh (Acting Director, Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge),[83] Seosamh Mac Donncha (Foras na Gaeilge),[84] |
| 11.30-13.00 | State Examinations Commission (SEC)[85] | Peadar Ó Máille (Assistant Head of Examinations and Assessment), Joan Sutton, (Examinations and Assessment Manager, Spanish), Dónall Mac Diarmada (EAM, Irish), Anne Clark (EAM, Italian), Sheila Smyth (EAM, German) |
| Tuesday afternoon: Integrate Ireland Language & Training (IILT), Pembroke Road, Ballsbridge | | |
| 14.30- 16.00 | Integrate Ireland Language and Training[86] (IILT) | Barbara Lazenby Simpson (Deputy Director), teachers, students |
| 16.30-17.30 | | David Little |
| Wednesday 12th October, morning: Department of Education & Science | | |
| 9.00-11.00 | National Council for Curriculum & Assessment (NCCA)[87] | Anne Looney (Chief Executive), John Hammond (Deputy Chief Executive), Hilary Roche (Director, Curriculum & Assessment) |
| 11.30-12.15 | Modern Languages in Primary School | Tanya Flanagan (National Coordinator), Pádraig Mac Fhlannchadha (DES Inspector, Chair of Project Management Group), John Harris (Member of Project Management Group and author of evaluation report) |
| 12.15-13.00 | | John Harris |
| Wednesday Afternoon: Dáil Éireann, Leinster House | | |
| 14.30-15.30 | Minister | Mary Hanafin, Minister for Education and Science |
| Department of Education & Science | | |

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[82] An Chomhairle Um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta is a statutory body established under the Education Act 1998 with specific responsibilities regarding Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools and the teaching of Irish in all schools. Website: www.cogg.ie.

[83] Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge is a body with responsibility for promoting the use of Irish as a living language in society. It is an umbrella body, with over twenty member organisations in the voluntary sector. Website: www.gaelport.com.

[84] Foras na Gaeilge, a statutory North/South implementation body established under the Good Friday Agreement to promote the use of Irish in both parts of Ireland. It has a role in advising administrations, North and South, as well as public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors in all matters relating to the Irish language. It also undertakes supportive projects and grant-aids bodies and groups throughout the island of Ireland. Website: www.forasnagaeilge.ie.

[85] The State Examinations Commission is a non-departmental public body under the aegis of the DES, with responsibility for the second-level State examinations. Website: www.examinations.ie.

[86] Integrate Ireland Language and Training was originally established by the DES as the Refugee Language Support Unit. It serves the language education need of newcomers by providing classes for adults and by supporting teachers of English as a second language in primary and post-primary schools. It also supports, through an on-going programme of research and development, the implementation of approaches to language teaching and learning. Website: www.iilt.ie.

[87] The NCCA is a statutory body with responsibility for advising the Minister for Education and Science on all matters relating to curriculum and assessment. Website: www.ncca.ie.

| 16.30-18.00 | Third level language departments and Irish Association of Applied Linguistics (IRAAL) | Anne Gallagher (Director, Language Centre, National University of Ireland, Maynooth), Mary Ruane (Director, Language Centre, University College, Dublin), Miriam Broderick, Dublin Institute of Technology) |
|---|---|---|

**Thursday 13th October, morning: School visits, team divides**

| | |
|---|---|
| 9.00 Larkin Community College, Champions Avenue, Dublin 1.(Post-primary, mixed, under City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee) Principal: Noel O'Brien | 9.00 Scoil Chaitríona – Cailíní, Coolock, Dublin 5. (Girls' primary school). Principal: Moira Bennett |
| 11.30 Belvedere College, Great Denmark Street, Dublin 1.(Voluntary boys' Secondary School under Jesuit management) Principal: Gerard Foley | 10.45 Gaelcholáiste Reachrann, Donaghmede, Dublin 13. Irish-medium post-primary school, under County Dublin Vocational Education Committee. Principal: Fionnuala Ní Chaisil |

**Thursday afternoon: Department of Education & Science**

| 14.30- 16.00 | Irish Business and Employers Federation (IBEC) and Forfás[88] | Siobhan Golden (IBEC), Eamonn Cahill (Forfás) |
|---|---|---|
| | National Parents Councils (NPC) | Fionnuala Kilfeather (Chief Executive Officer, NPC, Primary) |
| 16.30 -18.00 | Modern foreign languages teacher associations | Sean McDermott (French), Kate McCarthy (German), Ursula Zimmerman (Japanese), Silvia Bertoni (Italian) |
| | Teacher educators | Sean Devitt (Education Department, Trinity College Dublin), Jacinta McKeon (Education Department, National University of Ireland, Cork), Gay Barry (French Department, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin), Nóirín Ní Nuadháin (St Patrick's College, Drumcondra – Irish Methodology) |

**Friday 14th October: Department of Education & Science**

| 9.30-11.00 | Teacher Unions | John Mac Gabhann (Education/Research Officer, Teachers' Union of Ireland, TUI), Sheila Parsons (President, Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland, ASTI), Deirbhile Nic Craith (Senior Official for Education and Professional Development, Irish National Teachers' Organisation, INTO) |
|---|---|---|
| | Cultural Institutes | Miguel Miguel (Language Advisor, Consejería de Educación), Georgia Herlt (Head of Language Department, Goethe-Institut), Bruno Busetti (Director, Istituto italiano di cultura), Laure Ecker-Tripier (Service Culturel), Serge François (Attaché de Coopération pour le Français), Josef Rutzel (German Advisor to the DES), Hisami Shimba (Japanese Advisor to the DES) |
| 11.30-13.00 | Teachers of Classical Languages | Denis Murphy (Latin, St Mary's College, Rathmines) |
| | Irish Sign Language | Lorraine Leeson (Director, Centre for Deaf Studies, TCD), Seán Ó Murchú (Divisional Inspector, DES) |
| 14.00 – 15.00 | | Pádraig Ó Riagáin |
| 15.00 - | Expert Group meeting | |

## *Appendix 5:* **Programme of the complementary visit** (Daniel Coste, May 22, 2006)

**Monday 22nd May:  Department of Education & Science**

| 9.30-11.30 | Members of senior management of the Department | Doreen McMorris (Assistant Chief Inspector, QCAP), Emer Egan (Assistant Chief Inspector, Teacher Education Policy), Barry Conroy (Assistant Principal, TES), Paul Caffrey (Senior Inspector) |
|---|---|---|
| 14.00-15.30 with Paul Caffrey and Muiris Ó Laoire | Third level institutions | David Barnwell (Spanish, NUI Maynooth), Patrick O'Donovan (French, NUI, Cork), Eoin Mac Cárthaigh (Irish, TCD) and Ciarán Mac Murchaidh (Irish, St Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra) |

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[88] Forfás is the national policy advisory board for enterprise, trade, science, technology and innovation. It operates under the auspices of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.  Website: www.forfas.ie. IBEC website is www.ibec.ie.