Language Education Policy Profile

Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

CONTENTS

SUMMARY

This *Profile of Language Education Policy* in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is one of the series of measures taken by the Luxembourg authorities to modernise the teaching of modern languages. It results from a self-evaluation process, the principal phases of which have been the drawing up of a *Country Report* under the responsibility of the national authorities and the subsequent drafting of a Council of Europe *Expert Group Report* and its discussion by a Round Table.

The issues raised and proposals made in this *Profile* are based on the language policies followed by the Council of Europe and its member states, as set out in various Council of Europe documents, especially Recommendation R (98) 6 (see Appendix 2).

The basic principles adopted are:

➢ Training in languages should be viewed holistically and thus cover all the languages traditionally spoken in Luxembourg (mother tongues, vehicular languages), the languages of recently arrived or long-established minorities and foreign languages;

➢ The purpose of language training is to develop individual potential within a general context of plurilingualism.

Language skills are already highly developed in Luxembourg, where trilingualism is a fact of life. Trilingualism is a major objective of the education system and constitutes a requirement for obtaining vocational and professional qualifications. However, the present system is displaying limitations and no longer meets the requirements of social cohesion, integration of the population as a whole, individual success and national economic competitiveness.

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in all its constituent parts wishes to instigate a wide-ranging debate on the changes needed to the current system of teaching languages and assessing language skills. Such a debate falls naturally into a European framework. Great importance was attached to language questions by the Luxembourg Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2005. Luxembourg is also closely involved in Council of Europe activities, as is borne out by its desire to prepare the present *Profile*.

The *Profile* draws attention to the necessity or advantage of:

➢ redefining the purpose of trilingualism, in the light of the concept of plurilingualism developed by the Council of Europe;

➢ clearly distinguishing between the definition of the objectives of language proficiency on the part of pupils at the end of their schooling and methods of attaining such plurilingualism;

➢ defining the objectives of language proficiency at the different stages of schooling in relation to the scale of competence levels in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR)*;*

➢ taking account of pupils' individual linguistic situations in the methods and tools used for the teaching of languages and for teaching in languages;

➢ making greater allowance for individual rates of language acquisition to avoid premature selection of pupils on the basis of the level reached in the languages taught;

➢ taking account of pupils' languages of origin in drawing up individual plurilingual profiles and ensuring recognition of those profiles by the school ;

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- ➤ valuing every pupil's plurilingual profile;

- ➤ performing a deliberately positive assessment that gives due weight to all components of language proficiency;

- ➤ developing an integrated practical and theoretical approach to the teaching of languages in order to eliminate the present compartmentalisation between the different types of language teaching and the teaching of non-linguistic subjects in two vehicular languages;

- ➤ calibrating examinations and qualifications in accordance with CEFR levels and participation by Luxembourg in the Council of Europe's work on suitable tools for mother tongues and second languages;

- ➤ specifying linguistic and cultural contents corresponding to the different levels of competence in Letzeburgesch, particularly in oral comprehension;

- ➤ encouraging innovative teaching methods in schools, for example by creating goal-oriented teacher networks ;

- ➤ co-ordinating all bodies and organisations involved in language education, including research and teacher training, and incorporating the lifelong learning aspect;

- ➤ ensuring the close involvement of all parties concerned by education and training so that all decisions are taken by Luxembourg society as a whole.

1.   Introduction

1.1 Purposes and conduct of the Language Education Policy Profile process

The Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe offers member states the benefit of its co-operation and collective experience with the object of providing them with the opportunity to conduct a comprehensive analysis and discussion of their policies on language education. The purpose of the procedure involved, which was developed by the Language Policy Division, is, as stated in *Guidelines and Procedure[1]*, 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. It should be stressed that developing a language education policy profile 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". It is thus a set-up for dialogue between member states, with the Council of Europe as go-between.

The *Profile* differs from other international protocols on languages in two ways:

- It considers languages primarily from the viewpoint of education, both inside and outside national systems ;

- It is based on the principle that language education should be viewed not in a compartmentalised but in a holistic fashion. Language teaching/learning concerns both so-called foreign or second languages (to which it is usually limited) and the national/official language, regional or minority languages, languages of recently established immigrant groups and so on.

This activity, involving the production of what is called the *Language Education Policy Profile*, leads to a joint document (Council of Europe / national authorities), the *Country Profile*, which describes the current situation regarding language education and identifies possible developments. This process consists of three principal phases:

a) Drawing up by the national authorities of a *Country Report*. This describes the current situation, using available data and analyses, and identifies matters under discussion or requiring examination;

b) Preparation of an *Expert Group Report* drawn up jointly by experts appointed by the Council of Europe from other member states (see below and Appendix 4). This document is based on the analyses in the *Country Report*, fleshed out by the exchanges between the Expert Group and a wide range of people, e.g. specialists and other parties active in the field concerned or representatives of civil society chosen by the national authorities from sectors of society regarded as relevant (education officers, teachers' associations, business, representatives of minorities etc). The document is prepared by the Group's Rapporteur on the basis of the Expert Group's discussions and of contributions by its individual members, following finalisation of the intermediate versions of the text in consultation with the Luxembourg liaison officers and the authors of the *Country Report*. It is an intermediate document not intended for publication, whose function is to serve as a basis for the final phase of the process, namely the round-table discussion prior to the drawing up of the final document, the *Language Education Policy Profile: Grand Duchy of Luxembourg*;

c) Production of the final document based on the *Expert Group Report* and incorporating the comments and reactions of the Round Table, which is attended by the persons

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

contacted for the drafting of the Expert Report. This *Country Profile* is finalised in close co-operation between the Council of Europe and the state concerned, whose authorities have formally approved it. It is published by the Council of Europe in its two languages (English and French) and, where appropriate, in any other national language(s) by that country's authorities. It thus provides the other member states with information and food for thought.

This approach, which is centred on complementary joint analyses, is intended as a means of discharging the "catalyst" function of the Council of Europe as part of a national self-evaluation process, aided by analyses by outside observers. Within the area of democratic debate, its purpose is to give these questions greater immediacy, identify "good practices" and devise new approaches according to each state's educational culture.

1.2 Process of preparing the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg Profile

As regards Luxembourg,

- the application for a *Profile* was accepted by the Steering Committee for Education at its third plenary meeting on 11 and 12 October 2004;

- the Council of Europe Expert Group was then constituted as follows: Francis Goullier (Rapporteur), France; Marisa Cavalli, Italy; Olivier Maradan, Switzerland; Carmen Perez, Spain; and the representative of the Language Policy Division, Philia Thalgott (see Appendix 4);

- a preparatory meeting of the member of the Language Policy Division, the Rapporteur of the Expert Group and the national authorities (particularly the group of authors of the *Country Report*) was held in Luxembourg on 6 January 2005;

- the *Country Report* was produced and made available in June 2005 and a revised version was issued in September 2005;

- talks between the Expert Group, the Luxembourg authorities and other parties were held from 20 to 25 June 2005;

- an *Expert Group Report* was prepared in co-operation with the Luxembourg parties concerned and submitted to the Luxembourg authorities in November 2005 ;

- the findings and proposals in the *Expert Report* were discussed by a Round Table on 1 December 2005 ; the interested parties whom the experts had met in June 2005 and language teachers were invited to attend; these discussions were followed by a meeting with the heads of the different departments of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training;

 - the *Language Education Policy Profile: Grand Duchy of Luxembourg* (this document) was then drawn up and finalised between December 2005 and February 2006 in close co-operation with the Luxembourg authorities; it is based on the aforementioned documents and on the discussions, debates and proposals to which they gave rise.

The present *Language Education Policy Profile: Grand Duchy of Luxembourg* is organised as follows:

- it analyses the role of, and developments in, multilingualism and plurilingualism in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg;

- it identifies certain major characteristics of the present language education system and the issues involved in language policy in Luxembourg;

- it outlines possibilities for change in this language education policy in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg as a means of meeting the educational, societal and economic challenges identified in the previous two sections.

The overview of the findings concerning language education policy in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the proposals in this document are based on examination of the *Country Report* (document attached to this *Profile*), on the guidelines adopted by the Council of Europe regarding language policies (mentioned in the body of this document and summarised in Appendix 1) and on the renewal process initiated by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and leading figures in the educational system.

It obviously does not contain a definitive list of potential decisions, responsibility for which falls to the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training alone. This *Profile* is conceived and drafted as an aid to self-evaluation and forward-looking reflection on the future of the Luxembourg educational system with Council of Europe assistance so that subsequent decisions may be taken.

2. Developments in multilingualism on the territory of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the importance of its residents' plurilingualism

2.1 Political dimension of language-policy questions in Luxembourg

The question of language education and proficiency is perceived by all parties in Luxembourg society in its true societal dimension, which transcends its practical and theoretical aspects. This obvious fact in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg must always be borne in mind when considering the issues raised by developments in language education policy.

It is also important to note that the assertion that languages are important for Luxembourg society is not just a matter of principle but is well documented, being supported in the Grand Duchy by a series of extensive socio-linguistic surveys, some of which will be referred to below, for example surveys of language practices in the country or of the relationship between languages and the employment market. Language policy is thus accompanied by a targeted pursuit of relevant data and information.

The *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe: from linguistic diversity to plurilingual education*[2] (page 15) states that the fundamentally political nature of language education issues must be recognised as a preliminary to dealing with them properly. It is clear that the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is in fact conducting a deliberate language policy which does not amount to just a "sum of ad hoc decisions" (*Guide*, page 8). This is extremely positive and forms the most favourable possible context for analysing the Grand Duchy's choices in the light of the educational principles developed by the Council of Europe, for placing them in the context of current European processes and for identifying within this shared educational culture those trends that can help the Luxembourg Government to improve or adapt the current language education systems.

As mentioned in the *Country Report* (pages 39 and 40), this attitude to languages is not new but originated in the very founding instrument of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in 1839. Although the whole of French-speaking territory was lost when the area of the new state was reduced, Luxembourgers decided to maintain "an admittedly complex but still original and positive language system" in which French and German would no longer be confined to specific geographical areas but would be used according to the social and communicative

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[2] *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe: from linguistic diversity to plurilingual education* - Council of Europe, 2003 op.cit - see Appendix 3 (revised version published in 2007).

contexts in Luxembourg. The distribution of language functions initially concerned French (the written language of the upper classes) and German (the language used by the lower classes for writing and reading) but later included Letzeburgesch, which gradually emerged as the language of Luxembourg identity.

This highly original situation gives particular force to the distinction drawn by the Council of Europe between multilingualism and plurilingualism. "Multilingualism" refers to the presence in a given large or small geographical area of several linguistic varieties (forms of verbal communication regardless of status), while "plurilingualism" describes the competence of individuals and refers to the repertoire of languages that may be used by speakers, irrespective of the status of those languages at school and in society. "Official trilingualism" in Luxembourg (knowledge of German, French and Letzeburgesch) is a special form of plurilingualism.

The high degree of involvement and commitment by many key players in, and users of, the education system during the preparation of this *Profile* showed that this awareness of the strategic importance of language-policy trends is still very topical, even if the stakes have profoundly changed over the last few decades. The complex relationship between "plurilingualism" and "Luxembourg trilingualism" is clearly at the centre of the debates.

2.2 Social and economic role of trilingualism

Existing trilingualism (German, French and Letzeburgesch) established itself in the second half of the 20th century. The *Country Report* stresses that its twofold aim is to draw the lessons of the country's environment for obvious economic, cultural and political reasons and simultaneously to distinguish the country from its neighbours. For example, the acquisition of Luxembourg nationality by naturalisation requires a knowledge of Letzeburgesch. To obtain a "secure" post (eg in the public service) a knowledge of the country's three usual languages is required (*Country Report*, page 27).

Use of the three languages is provided for in the Act of 24 February 1984, which stipulates that Letzeburgesch is the "national language of Luxembourgers", that the language of legislation is French (only French legal texts are authentic) and that French, German or Letzeburgesch may be used in contentious or non-contentious administrative matters and in judicial matters. Two things will be noted: Letzeburgesch is declared to be the "national language" of Luxembourgers and not of Luxembourg, and the Grand Duchy's Constitution does not rule on the function of the different languages nor on language questions, doubtless in order not to give them a polemical dimension by what is deemed to be pointless "politicisation".

A striking complementarity is observed in the use of the three languages. The distribution of the different languages seems to depend as much on sectors of activity and types of personal interaction as on geographical factors.

In the world of work we find differentiation according to sector. "French plays a particularly important role in the sectors of construction, commerce, industry and services to business. … Public administration is par excellence the sector where a knowledge of Letzeburgesch is required." (*Country Report*, page 24). The April 2005 *Survey of the Use of Languages at Work* carried out by the Educational and Technological Research and Innovation Co-ordination Department of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training notes that "according to half the businesses and organisations which took part in this survey, the different languages used have, generally speaking, neither gained nor lost importance over the past few years […]. On the basis of the averages attained, the trend is towards increasing use of all the languages". According to a 1999 study, "job vacancies requiring no language knowledge now represent only a third of the sample, compared with about half in 1984" (*Country Report*, page 24).

The importance of language proficiency is particularly evident in the development of language training for adults. The number of participants has increased greatly over the past few years (9,287 enrolments in language courses just for the Adult Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training in 2004-2005).

The chief purpose of adult language training is the learning of Letzeburgesch by foreign residents and frontier workers. The demand for training in Letzeburgesch cannot be fully met because of a shortage of teachers of that language. Reference is often made to an initiative some years ago, the "Moien" project, the purpose of which was to improve facilities for training in Letzeburgesch as a language of professional communication. This project is aimed primarily at people working in the care and retail-trade sectors. There are many activities along these lines, eg in-house training of employees of a supermarket chain, production of a bilingual French-Letzeburgesch handbook by an immigrant-worker support association etc.

Language training for adults, which is not confined to Letzeburgesch, is provided by both private and public bodies. In this connection it is worth mentioning an institution that plays a special role, which will doubtless grow, the *Centre de Langues Luxembourg* (CLL) (Luxembourg Language Centre), an adult training body coming under the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. The Centre receives about 3,000 students a day and provides training in eight languages (in numerical order of importance: French, Letzeburgesch, English, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Dutch).

A highly unusual situation therefore exists, in which the country's citizens all speak, to a greater or lesser extent, at least three languages, which they use in turn according to the social or work context or their interlocutor. The *Country Report* says that "true monolinguals are extremely rare." In a particularly felicitous turn of phrase, it even suggests that "plurilingualism is perhaps the true mother tongue of Luxembourgers" (page 34).

The requirement for trilingualism on the part of all Luxembourg citizens and residents is well understood and accepted, even by representatives of language communities of immigrant origin. It is perceived by all as part of the Luxembourg heritage, a reflection of Luxembourg society's socio-linguistic composition, a necessity born of the country's geographical situation and a genuine national asset. The general consensus on the role and status of languages is sometimes summed up in the expression "the peace of languages".

2.3 The obvious role of Letzeburgesch

Particular attention must be devoted in this connection to Letzeburgesch. Over the decades Letzeburgesch has managed to detach itself from German ans is now recognised as a separate language and no longer a dialect. There is a dictionary, as well as a standardised spelling (OLO), a grammar, a Standing Council of the Luxembourg Language, bilingual dictionaries, a literature (particularly children's literature), a National Literature Centre, literary prizes in various genres and a recently established chair at the fledgling University of Luxembourg. Letzeburgesch is the language in which the Chamber of Deputies holds its debates and makes speeches and even draws up its written report. It is used by the press, even if often mainly for particular types of communication (advertisements etc).

In daily life, Letzeburgesch has two quite separate functions. Knowing it is a necessity in certain contexts, while understanding it is also necessary, particularly for children attending school in Luxembourg. Proficiency in the language for the purposes of oral interaction guarantees integration.

Its presence in day-to-day teaching far exceeds legal requirements. It is by no means rare for teachers to break into Letzeburgesch in order to explain to their charges the content of a lesson

in German or French. Proficiency in Letzeburgesch is also essential in many other situations, for example the care of vulnerable persons such as young children who have not yet been able to acquire other language knowledge, and the elderly, who find it hard to make the effort to express themselves in a language other than their mother tongue. According to the spring 2005 *Survey of the Use of Languages at Work* already mentioned, it also appears that, for the health and welfare sector, "Letzeburgesch is generally preferred to French in work with young people…" (page 42).

The use of Letzeburgesch is also, and perhaps mainly, a factor in the identity and integration of all young people living in Luxembourg. This is confirmed by the debate in the Chamber of Deputies in 2000 on the integration of children of non-Luxembourg origin and language education. The 24 points in the motion adopted by the Deputies (*Country Report*, page 101) include retention of the principle of trilingualism in Luxembourg schools and the promotion, from the earliest stages of schooling, of specific measures for the learning of Letzeburgesch as a language of communication and a factor in social integration.

Letzeburgesch is emerging as a language of interpersonal communication at both the private and the affective levels. Personal contacts are frequently conducted in that language, even among young people from the same non-Letzeburgesch-speaking community. The language is commonly used for quick written communication in the form of e-mails and text messages. According to a study by the Foreign Children's Schooling Department of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training in January 2005, among 729 15-year-old Portuguese pupils, 71.3% said that they also spoke Letzeburgesch with their brothers and sisters and 77.2% "with their mates".[3] This vitality is particularly evident in the wide range of spellings used and in a highly creative vocabulary, something that is causing dismay among certain specialists intent on maintaining a degree of purism in the use of Letzeburgesch. A slang or language register peculiar to young Luxembourgers is developing in the language. It is reasonable to assume that the successful use of Letzeburgesch is due in part to the absence of the formal rules that afflict the other official languages via their teaching.

The strong presence and vitality of Letzeburgesch thus manifest themselves in specific forms and for specific purposes that partly explain certain apparent paradoxes.

Firstly, some observers report difficulties in learning the language. Two reasons, among others, are put forward: "A basic fact of the multilingualism[4] of Luxembourgers is that when they realise that they are dealing with a foreigner they often drop into French in order to communicate and do not use Letzeburgesch" - an attitude which is certainly praiseworthy but which will prevent a beginner from practising Letzeburgesch. Again, "Another feature of the language situation in Luxembourg is that foreigners with some knowledge of Letzeburgesch have problems in practising it and making progress in the language because only too often they meet people who do not speak it"[5]. It would thus be legitimate to encourage all employers to require their employees, particularly in the traditional trade sector, to follow in-service training courses in Letzeburgesch in a way and at a rate commensurate with each person's ability. The oft-mentioned difficulties of following such courses whilst doing one's job must, of course, be taken seriously, possibly by allowing employees to take training leave.

A second paradox arises from the frequent finding that "a knowledge of Letzeburgesch, but also French, is becoming less and less indispensable" (*Country Report*, page 28). However, the

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[3] *Etude sur l'apport des cours de/en langue maternelle à la réussite scolaire des élèves portugais* – Enquête auprès des élèves de nationalité portugaise âgés de 15 ans – Résultats et analyse – Christiane Tonnar-Meyer and Manon Unsen/David Vallado - SCRIPT - October 2005, page 18.
[4] This term is used here in the sense of "plurilingualism".
[5] Beiaro,D, *Les langues au quotidien*, in *Les Portugais du Luxembourg. Des familles racontent leur vie*, page 94.

adoption of Letzeburgesch as a language of identification is accompanied by frequent expressions of a growing unease and even animosity towards certain frontier workers, particularly in the traditional trade sector, who sometimes do not make "the effort" to acquire a minimum knowledge of Letzeburgesch (in order to understand it or express themselves). This is regarded as "arrogant" monolingualism. A survey carried out in 2000 in the traditional trade sector on the satisfaction level of Luxembourg customers showed that the use of Letzeburgesch is a strong requirement (24%). In the health and welfare sectors this linguistic handicap on the part of a large section of staff is likewise a source of dissatisfaction and problems.

The distinctive status thus enjoyed by Letzeburgesch strikingly illustrates the specific place of the different language varieties, quite apart from the geographical area they occupy. Though little spoken outside the Grand Duchy - or perhaps, on the contrary, because of this geographical limitation - Letzeburgesch occupies an important place in the mental universe of pupils and lies at the heart of the way they see their identity. A real risk nevertheless exists of this language - a factor in identity - gradually becoming a protective mantle against non-Letzeburgesch-speaking residents and thus an instrument of exclusion.

2.4 A profoundly changing socio-linguistic situation

As has been seen, the trilingualism option was strongly embraced by Luxembourg society in order to take account of the economic interests of the country and its inhabitants and the realities of the language situation in the Grand Duchy. To remain effective, this approach must not be cast in the mould of past decades but must continue to adapt to the rapid changes occurring in Luxembourg and Europe as a whole.

Needs for language skills for the purposes of personal mobility and economic exchanges have become highly diversified and a knowledge of languages other than the three official ones is undeniably an asset to the country.

In addition, the demographic changes that have occurred over the past few decades in Luxembourg have profoundly altered the situation. The following table showing the demographic composition of Luxembourg makes this clear:

Demographic composition of Luxembourg

	1981	1991	2001	2004
Foreigners as a percentage	26%	29%	37%	39%
Including: Portuguese	31%	35%	36%	37%
Italian	23%	17%	12%	11%
French	13%	11%	12%	12%
Belgian	8%	9%	9%	9%
German	9%	8%	6%	6%
British	2%	3%	3%	3%
Dutch	3%	3%	2%	2%
Other EU countries	11%	6%	6%	5%
Other		8%	14%	15%

Table based on data from the *Country Report* (page 13)

The linguistic richness and diversity of Luxembourg clearly go well beyond the boundaries of "official trilingualism".

The picture is made more complex by the presence in 2004 of 106,900 frontier workers (36.6% of people working in Luxembourg), whose mother tongue is generally one of the usual languages (German or French) but who do not possess the trilingualism that characterises the Luxembourgers. This new linguistic situation is producing a strong impact and sometimes causes genuine problems such as difficulties in finding a common language for all employees in a firm or for workers at a site, with a potential loss in productivity and a failure to understand certain technical documents etc. Above all, it reveals a linguistic richness from which the Grand Duchy can benefit greatly and poses a fresh challenge for a language policy aimed at social cohesion, fairness and general training for all.

Yet, while public debate naturally revolves mainly around the learning of German, French and Letzeburgesch - Luxembourg's three official languages - it is still astonishing that no real thought is being devoted to the other languages spoken in the Grand Duchy by a large section of the population, namely Portuguese and Italian, as well as languages imported by more recent migration. Although a significant proportion of the Luxembourg population (38.6% of which is foreign) is of a language and culture differing from those of the native population, the profile of languages other than the three usual ones is very low in public debate. The maintenance and development of skills in these other languages appear to be viewed as falling within the private domain, as a personal matter for which the education system should at most provide assistance. The consolidation and development of language abilities of this nature are not seen as an important issue for the country. Thanks to the diversity of recent waves of migration, the linguistic richness to be found in the territory of Luxembourg is a potential asset to the Grand Duchy, not least in the economic field. It would be regrettable if trilingualism, which has been a factor in individual and collective success for decades, gradually became an instrument of exclusion, operating in the same way as the monolingualism that long prevailed (and here and there persists) in certain countries.

Other languages have found their place as training objectives, among them English, which has been taught in secondary education since the beginning of the century. Yet, the use of some of them has not yet gained the legitimacy needed if those who speak them are to embark boldly on learning or improving their knowledge of them, as shown, inter alia, by the so far limited demand for the teaching of Portuguese in secondary education. Here the replies by pupils of Portuguese origin consulted during the survey mentioned in section 2.3 are enlightening: when questioned about the possible future usefulness of Portuguese to them, only 10.3% considered that it was useful for school, 20.6% considered that it would be useful for future training and 31% felt it would help them in their future jobs.

In conclusion, Luxembourg society appears to be aware of the country's genuinely advanced state as regards language skills and of the economic and political advantages that these imply for Luxembourg. The advantages are also numerous from the viewpoint of individual success: language skills offer real opportunities of obtaining posts involving responsibility and mobility in Europe and worldwide. Over and above the obvious need for plurilingualism – which the *Country Report* describes as " the true mother tongue of Luxembourgers" – a real "linguistic pride" exists.

The current questioning of language education policy is prompted by the changes that have occurred in the make-up of society, with all their socio-linguistic consequences. These changes necessitate fresh answers meeting the challenges of that policy, namely social integration and cohesion, educational success for all young Luxembourgers and vocational integration. They

also represent a new opportunity to assert the Grand Duchy's place and role in its economic environment.

3. Strengths and weaknesses of language education in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

The richness and complexity of the present language education situation in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg are described in detail in the *Country Report*. The sections below identify certain components of this situation, which are chosen for their importance in the process of language-policy renewal.

3.1 The key place of modern languages in pupils' schooling

The legitimate ambition of the Luxembourg education system is to enable all its nationals to achieve fulfilment and play a full part in the democratic life of a state proud of its trilingualism, to ensure success for each of them in entering a labour market dominated by language requirements and to give all pupils and students the opportunity of personal and occupational mobility in another country. It accordingly attaches considerable importance to modern languages throughout schooling.

3.1.1. Modern language timetables

According to a study[6] by the Eurydice department of the European Commission, the teaching of languages as a compulsory subject represented an average in 2002-2003 of 39.4% of total teaching time in primary school and 34.4% in compulsory secondary education.

The *Country Report* supplies further details, which will be summarised for the sake of readers unfamiliar with conditions in the Luxembourg school system:

- In primary school, pupils receive, according to study year, between five and eight German lessons per week, seven lessons in French from the third year onwards and one lesson in Letzeburgesch. Quoting a study, the *Country Report* notes that "calculations show that (...) pupils attend over 1,000 French lessons in the course of primary school" (Page 65). The deliberate emphasis on language education even goes so far as to reduce the relative share of other subjects (natural science, history, geography), which are not started until the penultimate primary year, and then at the rate of one lesson per week, following an introduction to science from the 1st to the 4th year.

- In general secondary education, language teaching occupies 11 hours out of the 30 hours of teaching per week in the lower division. This figure varies in the upper division, where it may range from six hours a week for science pupils to 20 out of the 30 teaching hours per week for arts pupils.

- In technical secondary education, languages are generally taught according to a weekly timetable of 8 hours to 11 hours. This figure may rise to 15 hours in the 1st-year reception class for pupils newly arrived in the country or be reduced to a minimum of three hours for pupils doing an apprenticeship in certain sections.

From the second year of general or technical secondary education, the study of English, which is officially considered to be the first foreign language outside the trilingual framework, is added to the study of Letzeburgesch, German and French.

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[6] Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe, Eurydice, 2005 edition

3.1.2 Languages as a vehicle for teaching other disciplines

The overall picture would be a distorted one if we failed to mention that languages in Luxembourg are not just a subject to be learned but also a medium for the teaching of other disciplines. German and French are introduced in succession as vehicles for this purpose.

The whole structure of language teaching/learning is designed by the official regulations with the intention of enabling pupils to become trilingual:

- Letzeburgesch is the vehicular language of pre-school education and accordingly gives non-Letzeburgesch-speaking children familiarity with the language before they start their schooling proper.

- The continued learning of Letzeburgesch is organised throughout primary school at the rate of one hour a week. Letzeburgesch may be used in primary school for classes in self-expression, and for musical education, physical and sports education and creative activities. Teachers often also employ Letzeburgesch in the early-learning stages even though the vehicular language is German. In secondary school, its status becomes marginal (one hour of compulsory schooling in the first year, followed by an optional course in Luxembourg culture and literature in the penultimate year).

- German is the language in which children learn to read and write and becomes the vehicular language in primary school for the majority of subjects (mathematics, introductory science, natural science, history, geography, religious instruction and moral and social training). It remains the language in which biology, history and geography are taught in the first three years of secondary schooling.

- French is studied from the second half of the second year of primary at the rate of three lessons a week. It becomes the language of instruction for mathematics upon entry to secondary school and then for the other disciplines from the fourth form.

- In secondary technical education, German is the main language of instruction; however, an increasing number of courses are provided that use French as the vehicular language.

It is clear, then, that the education system deliberately serves the political objective of trilingualism. For this purpose, Luxembourg possesses a teaching profession of very high linguistic competence - an essential asset, particularly for the important task of integrating language learning with the teaching of non-linguistic subjects.

3.2 Influence of modern languages on the success/underachievement of pupils

In several aspects of its language education policy, the Grand Duchy applies principles meeting the needs of a linguistically rich and diverse Europe in which language skills are one of the conditions for its international competitiveness. Examples include the consensus on the highly political dimension of language policy, the objective of plurilingualism (understood as the mastery of several modern languages by all citizens), efforts to promote the integration of all pupils by immersion in Letzeburgesch, the high profile given to languages of neighbouring countries (in this case, German and French), attempts to provide mother-tongue teaching for children of immigrant origin, the deliberate integration of languages with the teaching of non-linguistic subjects and the provision of substantial resources for language teaching.

Without going into detail here, it is also worth stressing the wealth and scale of language teaching and learning opportunities outside the school system itself. Numerous facilities (hostels, crèches etc) promote the integration of children through language. Proficiency can be increased through continuing training after the end of schooling. All these facilities contribute to the societal strategy of ensuring access to languages by the greatest possible number.

3.2.1 Major successes

The consensus on the trilingualism objective in the Grand Duchy is having one very positive effect: the question of learning English is not an issue in the language debate as in many countries. Learning it after studying the other languages manifestly raises no problem. Levels of competence in that language are not really an issue. Learning it is acknowledged to be important and the responses of the Luxembourg education system meet, generally speaking, users' expectations. The debate is not, as it is too often, about the alternative between "lingua franca" and "linguistic diversity". In Luxembourg society the learning of English is addressed as one of the general problems of acquiring plurilingualism, though it is sometimes wondered whether pupils should not start learning English sooner.

Language education in Luxembourg is achieving some outstanding successes. Pupils in certain classes, particularly arts-oriented classes in the conventional secondary-education system, are acquiring a remarkable level of competence and fluency in several modern languages. The success of very many Luxembourg students in foreign universities also proves, should proof be needed, the education system's effectiveness for a not insignificant number of pupils.

3.2.2 Modern languages as a factor in underperformance at school

All these successes by a part of the school population can, however, no longer hide the difficulties experienced by an equally large number of pupils whose school careers are largely determined by modern languages.

Pupils' success at school manifestly depends on their acquiring the successive languages of instruction relating to the different subjects. The vehicular language of examinations on the occasion of assessments is that used for teaching the discipline concerned, and for several subjects this language changes during the pupil's schooling.

In addition to this indirect factor, the level of language proficiency plays a specific and dominant role in decisions as to whether pupils should move up into the next year and the choice of type of schooling. At the end of primary school, the results in French and German, together with those for mathematics, play a decisive role when it comes to pupils' moving up to the class above and determining what type of post-primary education they will follow. The choice is based on the opinion of a board composed of the district inspector, the class teacher, a general-secondary teacher, a technical-secondary teacher and a psychologist, in the light of the parents' wishes, the opinion of the class teacher and the marks obtained during the year and in standardised examinations in mathematics, German (understanding of the written word, spelling and grammar) and French (understanding of the written word, oral comprehension, syntax and conjugation of verbs).

These requirements doubtless explain in part why many children avoid the Luxembourg school system by opting (or having to opt) for schooling in French-speaking or German-speaking Belgium (2,745 pupils in the year 2002-2003), France (198) or Germany (44)[7]. Other pupils attend unsubsidised private schools such as the Lycée Vauban or the European School, which offer suitable linguistic programmes.

All this gives rise to questions, bearing in mind that the Grand Duchy has to cope with a very worrying phenomenon of underachievement at school: 20.4% of pupils in primary school underperform at school (being at least one year behind the level for their age); the figure for children below the proper standard for technical secondary education is 62.6%.

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[7] *Les chiffres clés de l'éducation nationale – statistiques et indicateurs 2002-2003,* page 66.

In 2002-2003, only 38.4% of pupils[8] went on from primary school to general secondary education, which is the chief route to university.

Even more serious, the number of pupils leaving school with no qualifications is fairly high.

Other factors, among them social ones, contribute fundamentally to this underachievement. Certainly, not all difficulties experienced by pupils can be attributed exclusively to language problems; they must also be weighed against their families' cultural background, which in some cases helps the pupils concerned to overcome their language difficulties, with remarkable individual successes. However, such a favourable cultural background is not the fate of all schoolchildren: linguistic difficulties can wreak their full effects on some. It then becomes quite clear that language education contributes, as stated in the *Country Report* (page 93), to "the perpetuation of social circumstances through the school system". A similar, albeit differently worded, observation appears in the Government Plan for the 2004-2009 Parliament: "Whilst reaffirming the trilingualism of our school system, the Government intends to limit the underachievement attributable to this system…"

It is easy to identify several causes of underperformance connected with modern languages.

3.3 Failure to allow for the diversity of individual situations in language curricula

Trilingualism obviously requires a particular sequence in the introduction of the languages taught. The reasons for the particular order of succession used in Luxembourg for language learning are easily understood:

- The use of Letzeburgesch at the beginning of schooling enables every Luxembourg child to extend the social scope of the use of his or her mother tongue and build up cognitive faculties by verbalising in that tongue with the help of the school.

- While literacy in German undoubtedly involves learning a new language, because of its proximity to the mother tongue (Letzeburgesch) this is accepted as the obvious transition from an essentially oral language to a language variety possessing a written form, necessary for all teaching situations.

- Once literacy and basic skills have been mastered, the study of the last language composing Luxembourg trilingualism – French - can start, first as a subject in itself and then as a vehicle for the teaching of other disciplines.

- After these three languages - which are a prerequisite for successful schooling - have been mastered, a start can be made on the teaching of additional languages, eg English and possibly other language varieties such as Portuguese, Italian and Spanish.

Logical as this sequence may be, however, it is not without its difficulties.

3.3.1 A single pathway covering highly diversified individual situations

The urgent need for a critical examination of how this curricular set-up is applied in practice is due mainly to the situation of pupils of foreign extraction, the proportion of whom is too large to be ignored. All the evidence shows, however, that modern languages as such are a factor in the underachievement of a much larger proportion of pupils and in their being channelled towards less desirable forms of schooling, particularly on the occasion of the transition from primary to post-primary schooling. The difficulties encountered do not affect pupils of foreign extraction alone, may be of various kinds and arise at different stages in pupils' schooling, depending on the pupil.

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[8] Ibid., page 73.

The *Country Report* spells out some of these difficulties:

"Mathematics is the subject in which marks are poorest or second-poorest. A very large number of young Portuguese and Italians have poor marks in German, however, while very few have poor marks in French; in the case of Luxembourg pupils, the situation is the other way around." (Page 91)

Again:

"As regards subjects responsible for academic failure in pupils, German is found to lie in first place, and causes Romance-language-speaking pupils to be excluded from the education system, particularly at the time of the transition to post-primary education. Next comes French, the prestige language (Fehlen, 1997), which leads to underachievement in Luxembourg pupils from families with a low level of culture. Success in the Luxembourg system is reserved for a social elite, which it tends to reproduce." (Page 93)

The potential difficulty that use of the different languages represents for most pupils during their schooling is shown, for example, by the OECD PISA 2003 assessment. Pupils had the choice between French and German in answering the questions in the test. 80% of pupils chose the test paper in German (the language closest to Letzeburgesch) and some 20% the French paper[9], although French is the language of instruction in mathematics from the start of general secondary education and then for all other disciplines in upper secondary school.

Even though the three official languages of Luxembourg have an equally important place in the functioning of society, it is clear that their image varies widely among pupils. The status attached to learning them differs greatly from one person to the next. It is strongly determined by linguistic proximity to the mother tongue, the place occupied in the pupil's schooling by acquisition of the language concerned, the social value of the language learned and the individual's attitude to the language and those speaking it. This is shown in an attitude that may even go as far as a complete lack of motivation to learn one of these languages. A big gap seems to exist between pupils' intuitive awareness of the specific status of each language from the viewpoint of their individual school careers and the identical treatment of all in the arrangements for teaching these three languages made by the school. The specific difficulties of learning each of these languages vary greatly; however, it is observed that little account is taken of these difficulties in the teaching methods employed or in assessments of language proficiency.

3.3.2 A series of formidable obstacles for pupils of foreign extraction

These difficulties are not new but are assuming particular importance because the very foundations of the practice of using a sequence of languages at school are being questioned. A large part of the school population falls outside the assumptions underpinning this set-up in that 33% of pupils do not speak Letzeburgesch at home.

Plurilingual training is an ambitious exercise that makes great demands on all pupils. Pupils who speak neither Letzeburgesch nor German at home have an additional problem, which for some is a factor influencing selection or contributing to underachievement. The ease of learning German on the basis of a mastery of Letzeburgesch, the mother tongue, means that methods of teaching that language are not an issue. Pupils without Letzeburgesch as their mother tongue cannot but be adversely affected by the lack of an objective approach because they do not have an intimate knowledge of Letzeburgesch that they can transfer to German. For the purposes of learning German, a *knowledge* of Letzeburgesch as a language of

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[9] PISA 2003, *Country Report*, page 92.

communication cannot be regarded as equivalent to a *mastery* of Letzeburgesch as the mother tongue. Here we have a problem with the educational achievement of immigrant children which is found in many countries but assumes particular importance in Luxembourg because of the number of second languages with which pupils have to cope. Current research shows that a distinction must be drawn between the ability to communicate, which a child of foreign extraction can acquire fairly rapidly in the language of his or her environment, and the linguistic proficiency needed to tackle the subjects on the curriculum.[10]

This can be simply illustrated by three comparisons:

- Over 33% of pupils of Portuguese extraction are behind at primary school, compared with 14.4% of pupils of Luxembourg origin[11].

- While 44.8% of pupils of Luxembourg nationality go on to general secondary education (the chief route to university) after primary school, only 16.3% of children of Portuguese origin are able to do so[12].

- Of this 16.3% of pupils of Portuguese origin, 25.2% have poor marks in German at the end of the first year of secondary education, compared with 3.7% of pupils of Luxembourg origin; the percentages are respectively 13.6 and 12.4 in French and 15.5 and 6.9 in mathematics[13].

The results of the OECD PISA 2000 assessment seem to have made people aware of this aspect, even if the lessons to be drawn from it must be regarded as less compelling than they might otherwise be because of the very specific context. When the Luxembourg *Country Report* refers to this international comparison of pupils' skills, attention is drawn several times to the role of the language spoken at home in the written comprehension results obtained by pupils. "Pupils who do not speak Letzeburgesch at home tend to perform less well."[14] This finding is confirmed and elaborated on three years later in the *Country Report* when it comments on PISA 2003: "Pupils who speak one of the two test languages, French or German, at home obtain higher scores than pupils who use other languages at home, even after allowance is made for variables relating to the social status of their families and the time that has elapsed since they arrived in the Grand Duchy" (page 94).

The *Guide* sheds a very clear light on this point: "It can be expected that in all cases where the linguistic variety of the school is not the mother variety there will be inhibitions or delays in these children's learning processes. They will only appropriate the written forms of their mother tongue later, if at all" (page 22).

The language pathway must obviously be adapted to the increasing complexity of the situation. The moments of, and reasons for, difficulty are clearly identified. The *Country Report* sums the matter up perfectly: "The task, in fact, is to do away with a curricular set-up which no longer coincides with the communicative situation in an open and diverse society like ours and to maintain plurilingualism by a public policy adapted to the new economic and social circumstances, but simultaneously to minimise the negative effects and give the greatest possible number the benefit of the advantages". (Page 108)

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[10] Distinction between *Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills* (BICS) and *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency* (CALP) introduced by J. Cummins: Cummins, J. (1979) Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age question and some other matters. Working Papers on Bilingualism, No 19, 121-129.

[11] *Education préscolaire – Enseignement primaire et spécial – Education différenciée – Statistiques générales – Année scolaire 2002-2003,* page 80.

[12] *Statistiques générales – Année scolaire 2002-2003*, page 96.

[13] *Enseignement secondaire général – Statistiques globales & Analyses des résultats scolaires – Année scolaire 2002-2003*, page 35.

[14] PISA 2000, *Country Report*, page 36.

The *Government Plan* for the 2004-2009 Parliament puts the question of language education in similar terms: "In the face of an increasingly complex and sensitive language situation and because, among other things, of the increasing variety of immigrants, there is an urgent need to readjust language education."

3.3.3 Need for a clearer distinction between the objectives pursued and routes to the expected competence

Political restatement of the objective of trilingualism for all in no way rules out adaptation to a profoundly changing socio-linguistic situation. Any fears on this count are based mainly on a fundamental misunderstanding, since it is clear that trilingualism is currently both one of the aims of the education system and one of the conditions for gaining access to knowledge and training. However, owing to the difficulties encountered by a very large number of pupils and to changes in the composition of Luxembourg society, a clearer distinction must obviously be drawn between the linguistic objectives set by schools and the procedures employed for deciding on pupils' individual language pathways.

The need here is to combat false educational evidence about the processes whereby pupils acquire a knowledge of languages. Some of the weaknesses in the language education set-up lie in the failure to take account of the individual abilities and differing linguistic situations of pupils when designing their individual pathways, and in the assumption that the same linguistic treatment can be applied harmlessly to all pupils according to identical objectives. These are unrealistic for many.

Such an approach will naturally cause thought to be given to the content and use of school textbooks.

This idea of adapting individual pathways must not be allowed to call into question of one of the successes of the Luxembourg education system, namely the fact that it prevents pupils with mother tongues other than Letzeburgesch, German or French from being relegated to ghettos and successfully integrates pupils through pre-school and primary education. We must, however, bear in mind the number of children who bypass the Luxembourg educational system and obtain their schooling in Belgium, France or Germany (see section 3.2.2). This number is too large not to cast a shadow over what may be considered to be a beneficial effect of current choices. Because of this, some say that there is already segregation of pupils of foreign extraction.

3.4 Trilingualism, an ambitious but ill-defined objective

A second reason for academic underachievement at school on account of the use of several languages may be sought in the definition of the objectives pursued in teaching them.

This entails an examination of the very concept of trilingualism, which has underpinned the language policy of the Grand Duchy since its foundation. The importance of trilingualism has been forcefully restated by Parliament. However, as a result of developments in the concept of plurilingualism, set out in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*[15] and in the *Guide*, certain important ambiguities emerge as to what exactly the objective of trilingualism is.

In order to meet its own objectives, language education policy needs to rely on a clear and practical definition of the type of language skills expected of young people educated in

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[15] *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*: Council of Europe/Cambridge University Press, 2001. Both the *Framework* and the *European Language Portfolio* are instruments devised by the Council of Europe (see Appendix 3).

Luxembourg. The fact is that it does not yet possess such a definition for all educational levels and school contexts.

The language curricula are consistent with one another. They list what the teacher must get pupils to learn, the linguistic practice needed and the steps involved. Compliance with these requirements develops competence in pupils. The curricula do not, however, in themselves provide an adequate basis for a clear and practical definition of the requirements of the education system regarding the level of proficiency to be attained by pupils in each language taught.

The curricula mix teaching content, recommended methods and linguistic objectives. The resulting vagueness naturally leads to teaching or assessment practices that do not clearly distinguish between the role of these different components of teaching and the objectives and means of learning. Textbooks accordingly assume a preponderant role rather than simply acting as tools serving identified objectives.

More detailed thought needs to be given to the linguistic skills expected at the different stages of schooling. This general need emerges clearly in the case of modular education in preparatory schooling. The latter is intended for pupils who have not yet attained the standards required in primary education and who need a suitable linguistic programme which will fit them for subsequent vocational training. The focus is on training in one of the two languages of instruction, French or German. Modular teaching here is the source of considerable innovation and is run and carried out by supervisors and teaching teams with a strong personal commitment. One of its principles is division of the curriculum into modules, which can be used as credits, enabling pupils to progress at their own rate. After careful consideration, teaching content has been designed by reference to the acquisition of skills (systematic learning of oral communication, ie the acquisition of linguistic skills enabling the learner to understand the spoken language or speak the language, and/or acquisition of the ability to understand the written word or write the language; learning to concentrate on the content of a text and not simply similarly decode the written word; articulating of ideas orally or in writing). However, some confusion persists even in this favourable framework. For example, the language modules are designed not by defining linguistic objectives but by lifting sections from existing textbooks. Depending on the system of reference used, the content of each module lays down communicative, lexical and grammatical objectives on the basis of a particular subject, but only the grammatical objective is broken down and examined in detail, with a list of references and exercises in the textbook used. As a result, the tests certifying that the content of the model has been learned overlook the most important aspects of the above objectives. Tests consist of the following exercises: dictation, verbs and grammar, which account for at least half the marks (50 or 60 marks out of 100), and proficiency in vocabulary (out of 15 or 20 marks). Language skills involving written comprehension and expression account for less than half the marks and the oral aspect does not appear in the tests as such.

The lack of a clear definition of the competence expected also affects Letzeburgesch. No precise definition of expectations is found in any of the sectors in which this language plays a recognised role. Whether we are talking of "acceptable use of this target language" in early schooling (Framework Plan published in June 2000) or "adequate competence" with a view to the acquisition of Luxembourg nationality by naturalisation, considerable latitude is allowed. The level required is thus left to the subjective appraisal of the persons responsible for assessing or certifying such knowledge. In particular, when the ways in which this language is used are analysed, no reference is found to any distinction between the levels of competence necessary for understanding and expression, even though such a distinction is fundamental.

For want of a clearer definition of the objectives assigned to the school system, trilingualism is instinctively understood as the sum of the complete and perfect mastery of three languages. This naive conception of plurilingualism is based on an "equilingual" perception. The objective therefore automatically and unreflectingly becomes the attainment of mother-tongue standards of proficiency in each of the languages concerned.

This perception ignores the advances made possible by the Council of Europe's concept of plurilingualism. The latter - holistic - concept regards the linguistic and intercultural competence of individuals as forming a single repertoire made up of complementary linguistic and behavioural skills enabling the speaker to react in the most appropriate and effective way possible to the most varied situations of communication and contact. Such plurilingual competence naturally involves a state of imbalance between the competence levels attained in the different languages and the various linguistic activities entailing comprehension and expression. It is also progressive. It possesses the distinctive feature of being based on the individual and not on the different languages concerned.

Conversely, the current perception of trilingualism, which is widely shared in Luxembourg, expects maximum competence from each individual in each language, which it must be possible to use in the way as close as possible to that of a native speaker without there being a distinction between skills in comprehension and expression or in written and oral work. According to this perception, the knowledge of each language is considered independently.

The warning contained in the *Guide*[16] is particularly applicable here and is becoming a major language-policy issue in the Grand Duchy: "Juxtaposing state monolingualism or forms of bilingualism necessitated by the requirements of good community relations is not the same as promoting plurilingualism: the purpose is still the symbolic and legal assimilation of the language to the nation" (page 20).

3.5 Negative effects of the absence of clear perceptions of the expected competences

This "equilingual" perception causes numerous misconceptions, misunderstandings and failures.

It is not realistic. With certain significant exceptions, which are to be welcomed and preserved, proficiency in the different languages is naturally unbalanced. A hint of this can be found in the conclusions of the Baleine study, a survey carried out in 1998 showing that "behind the apparently polyglot nature of Luxembourg lurks a single well-defined and legitimate competence which requires a very subtle combination of proficiency - admittedly at different levels - in different varieties of the country's three usual languages, to which should be added proficiency in English as the first truly foreign language"[17]. A study conducted in October 2005 by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training to measure the competence in French of a sample of 240 school-leavers using the French Knowledge Test (TCF)[18] yields extremely valuable information which shows that pupils' real competence at the end of general or technical secondary education does not match the expected level, is unbalanced in terms of the different language reception and production activities, and does not reflect curricular priorities.

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[16] Op.cit.

[17] Beirao, D, *Les langues au quotidien*, in *LesPportugais du Luxembourg. Des familles racontent leur vie*, page 104.

[18] Placement test regarding knowledge of French developed by the *International Centre for Pedagogical Studies* (CIEP), Sèvres, France.

It does not correspond to a genuine need:

- As shown by an increasing number of examples of student mobility in Europe, a student may follow a course successfully at a foreign university without possessing on entry to it a language proficiency identical with that of native speakers of the language of instruction. The success of Luxembourg students at English-speaking universities (over 9%) despite requirements differing from those for the learning of German and French places a question mark over the relevance of the requirement for complete proficiency in the case of the latter two languages.

- Apart from certain specific posts, maximum proficiency in the three languages is not a necessity. Firms often look for complementarity between their employees' linguistic skills. Different languages are needed according to the sector of activity. Adaptation to particular work needs may lead to the development of very specific skills in a particular linguistic variety. Studies of work needs regarding languages such as the "*Survey on the Use of Languages at Work*" carried out in 2005 by the Pedagogical and Technological Research and Innovation Co-ordination Department of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and/or a "language use monitoring centre" would supply the necessary enlightenment.

- Over time, the needs of modern communication have caused great importance to be attached to oral skills, which are not covered by the "traditional" perception of trilingualism.

- The presence of a large number of frontier workers and employees in Luxembourg firms is profoundly changing the conditions for access to employment by young Luxembourgers.

It elicits a "negative assessment" that does not convey the reality of individuals' attainments in relation to identified and defined objectives. Assessing performance by the standards of a native speaker leads to a search for errors rather than the praise of success. This widespread practice obviously reduces motivation, stifles the desire to express oneself more freely in the language learned and impedes personal commitment, which can survive only on the pleasure of experimenting with different modes of expression. While formal requirements (particularly regarding correct spelling) in French are often cited as a reason for failure, it is also clear that expectations regarding proficiency in German are at least as high as in the case of French and overlook the socio-linguistic situation in the classes concerned.

It frequently leads to an implicit hierarchy of skills, which favours certain aspects of the written language (eg proficiency in spelling). This dominance by the written-language model even seems to affect oral class work in many cases. A natural link exists between oral and written ability, as clearly shown in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*[19] in its remarks about competence, but the *Framework* also shows a clear distinction between the two registers to be very useful and productive in the performance of communicative tasks.

It creates an unavoidable mismatch between what the education system can achieve and the intuitive expectations of society, leading among other things to angst on the part of teachers in the face of changes which they honestly fear will find them wanting with respect to the expectations of the business world. How can teachers of French be expected to downplay the importance of spelling in their assessments as long as recruitment procedures include the practice of French dictation? This aspect highlights the fact that the need for clarification regarding the nature and levels of competence expected concerns not just the education system but society as a whole. Several examples show that "intuitive perceptions" concerning these questions are broadly realistic. We shall choose two examples that we feel are highly complementary. We find in the *Study Plan for Primary Education* published in 1989 the

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[19] Op. cit. – see Appendix 3

following, which has serious implications and is astonishing when we bear in mind the difficulty of French spelling: "[…] in contrast to the case of the written word, a certain tolerance of mistakes in oral language is to be recommended" (page 4 of the section on French). It is probably this particular view of the written word, common in society at large, which is referred to in the warning to parents in a French primary-school textbook: "If you want to do dictation exercises, only use expressions included in the MEMO".

It causes a feeling of "insecurity about languages". This widespread feeling shows itself in many ways, among them the presence of a significant gap between actual performance level and individual modesty concerning the level of proficiency in the different languages. This doubt about their own competence can cause some people to avoid events that form part of community life (eg parents' meetings in schools conducted in Letzeburgesch). An individual feeling of linguistic "inadequacy" may prompt people to withdraw into themselves, be dissatisfied and sometimes blame themselves. Such an attitude is certainly partly due to the general modesty of Luxembourgers, who have always had to cope with the use of several languages. This "malaise" may also be exacerbated by the absence of an objective perception of the exact level of language competence. This is very clear, for example, as regards ability in oral expression. While public opinion deplores inadequate oral practice in lessons and the general weakness of oral expression skills, the 2005 *Survey on the Use of Languages at Work* already mentioned shows us a rather different picture. According to employers, the level of proficiency in the different languages of members of the workforce educated in the Luxembourg school system is only mediocre, but "[…] as regards spoken languages, the assessment of proficiency is slightly more positive. The level of Letzeburgesch, French and German is, on average, at least "good" according to half the businesses and organisations questioned" (page 42).

Requirements that sometimes appear unjustified and inconsistent

This examination of the objectives of language education is all the more urgent because the actual requirements concerning proficiency in German and French at the different stages of schooling (standardised tests at the end of primary schooling and for moving up to the next class and obtaining diplomas and certificates) lead to a feeling of injustice and inconsistency.

- *Injustice*: everyone is aware of the frequent practice on the employment market of giving jobs to frontier workers who generally do not speak the three languages required of young Luxembourgers. The example is mentioned of a firm in which only three of the 40 workers speak Letzeburgesch. This is particularly badly received by young Luxembourgers because they themselves are sometimes unable to obtain jobs because of what are regarded as poor skills in French and/or German.

- *Inconsistency*: while poor results in German are often the chief reason why Romance-language-speaking pupils are frequently guided towards technical secondary education, this is precisely the area in which German is most often the language of instruction.

If trilingualism, based as it is on a broad consensus of the population as a whole, were to continue to cause injustice and inconsistency because of the lack of a more precise definition, Luxembourg society in all its diversity could rapidly experience a major crisis. The general awareness of a need for change is an obvious opportunity for change for the better.

A perception, however, that concerns only the three official languages

The opportunities for collective reflection on the levels of competence to be attained are all the greater because Luxembourg already possesses a rich stock of expertise and experience in this field.

More precise objectives regarding the necessary competence are set for the teaching of English in secondary education: "At the end of the 4th year pupils should have reached UCLES First Certificate level and by the end of secondary school they should have attained the level required to obtain the UCLES Certificate in Advanced English" (*Country Report*, page 77).

Out-of-school education has similarly chosen references allowing the results of teaching and learning to be measured in relation to precise objectives, without the shadow cast by the ideal of native-speaker competence. For example, the 'Centre de Langues Luxembourg' uses the scale of language competence levels in the *Common European Framework of Reference*[20] for the award of certificates in Letzeburgesch; some teachers at the Centre have adopted the approach taken by the *European Language Portfolio* drawn up by the ALTE and EAQUALS Associations. The Centre provides goal-oriented language courses for vocational use. It offers facilities for obtaining language-proficiency certificates from several foreign organisations[21] and preparatory courses for the examinations involved. Other private training organisations also use the *Common European Framework of Reference* of the Council of Europe.

3.6 A teaching profession with strong assets

The Luxembourg education system has the good fortune to possess a teaching profession with very strong language skills.

Every language teacher has had to obtain a university degree in a country where the language concerned is the language of communication and teaching. In the case of primary teachers, candidates who have not trained in Luxembourg are tested for their knowledge of German, French and Letzeburgesch. For post-primary education, every intending teacher must pass preliminary examinations before the recruitment competition to test his or her knowledge of the three languages used in the teaching system, namely Letzeburgesch, German and French. In the case of German and French, this requirement constitutes the condition for the fundamental choice made in Luxembourg to adopt those languages as vehicles for teaching the other subjects.

3.6.1 Special features requiring the development of a specific professional approach

This situation has obvious advantages for an ambitious language policy. However, it has three important characteristics of great importance in the design of the necessary vocational and teacher training.

a) The competence of the language teachers is very close to, if not identical with, that of native speakers. This mastery of the language taught or used for teaching non-linguistic subjects acts as a model for pupils. This is extremely positive in itself. However, in the absence of precise objectives regarding the competence to be acquired, excellence in that language becomes the norm by which the ability of pupils to understand it and, in particular, express themselves in it is assessed. The implicit adoption of such a norm may, among other things, result in a devaluing of pupils' skills in the eyes of the teachers and of the pupils themselves, a factor that inhibits freer and more independent oral expression.

b) The university training received in foreign countries confirms teachers in a perception of the use and learning of the language taught as a mother tongue. This experience in itself fails to prepare them for teaching languages and/or other subjects using a particular language in the

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[20] Op.cit. (see Appendix 3).
[21] Among them the Goethe Institut, Cambridge University, Instituto Cervantes, Alliance française and CIEP, Università per Stranieri - Perugia, De Nederlandse Taalunie, Universidade de Lisboa.

very specific context of Luxembourg. Initial and in-service training is as yet inadequate to equip them all with methodological tools and appropriate perceptions. Research into teaching practices has not yet supplied all the answers to the very particular difficulties encountered by pupils in using foreign languages for learning different subjects. Several important areas of initial and in-service teacher training are still insufficiently developed. One of these areas concerns the practical aspects of integrating the teaching of languages with that of non-linguistic subjects; here, possible lines of action which take into account the wealth of diversity of approaches in Europe and beyond have been opened up by, among other things, the conference held on this topic in Luxembourg in March 2005 during the European Union Presidency. A second area concerns the alternating use of different languages during one and the same course, a plurilingual practice commonly used impromptu in everyday teaching, which teachers tend not to know the best way to handle. A third area concerns mediation between languages, that is, the transmission of an item or items of information from one language to another or the role of intermediary between speakers of two different languages, situations which are obviously frequent in a multilingual context and which do not seem to be receiving attention.

In short, language teaching and subject teaching in a language other than the mother tongue need to become more professional.

c) The teachers of each language are highly individual in their teaching methods. This is easily explained by their personal career paths, which have usually involved their doing their university studies abroad and making exclusive use of their language of specialisation. As seen above, this is not offset by a collective perception of the plurilingual competence to be developed in pupils, as defined by the *Guide* (pages 13 and 14) and the *Common European Framework of Reference*[22] (page 168): the ability to use several languages to varying degrees and for distinct purposes, on the basis of a repertoire a speaker can use.

3.6.2   Poor co-ordination between language teaching and teaching in languages

It is of course possible to co-ordinate language learning by means of the language syllabuses: for example, the same wording can be used to define the principal objectives of studying each language in primary school. However, each linguistic discipline stands alone. We are still a long way from "co-ordinating the teaching of the various languages (mother, affiliation, official, national etc), thus forming the basis of plurilingual education and education for plurilingualism" (*Guide*, page 22). For example, we do not find common language objectives formulated for all languages taught, with an indication of the timetable for the corresponding acquisitions in each language or of the linguistic resources appropriate to each one, nor do we find recommendations on the establishment of crossovers between knowledge in different languages or on the methodological reinforcements desirable between the teaching of one language and the teaching of another. Here the future *Study Plan for Primary Education* should represent a significant development. Another example illustrates the road still to be travelled: the term "Letzeburgesch/German" sometimes appears in regulations; this reflects, without formalising the educational consequences, the closeness between the two linguistic varieties.

There is compartmentalisation between the teaching of one language and the teaching of another and between the teaching of languages and the teaching of disciplines in those languages, although these disciplines play an important part in pupils' linguistic acquisitions. The systems that are supposed to facilitate co-ordination in each discipline and between disciplines do not seem to function as well as it might.

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[22] Op.cit - see Appendix 3.

The recent establishment of the University may help to change this. In what is an exceptional situation, there is a crying need for research in many areas, for example research on the CLIL[22] approach, on the effects of the fact that children do not have a structural basis in their mother tongue, on what exactly is covered by the concepts of second language, foreign language and mother tongue in Luxembourg, on the relationship between Letzeburgesch and German in the building up of competence in the latter language, and so on. Clarification of these concepts and of their methodological implications for teaching would be very useful, particularly if done with reference to the terminology in the *Guide* (page 48 et seq).

Another area where change is needed is the way languages are taught. The teaching of each language is marked by the distinctive nature of its linguistic system, its specific difficulties and pedagogical tradition. This is a constant found in every education system and in all languages. However, it has important consequences in Luxembourg, where two of the languages of schooling, German and French, are, in fact, "demanding" languages and present different but very real difficulties as foreign languages. There is thus an even greater need to transform pedagogical attitudes to the teaching and learning of these two languages. The difficulty experienced by many pupils must be counteracted through teaching methods that place special emphasis on encouraging pupils and in which the concept of pleasure occupies a bigger place. Teachers must be helped to change the way they teach these languages so as to ensure that German and French teaching in general make for success and are a source of motivation and progress.

3.7 Initiatives galore but with no real influence on the education system

All these are well-known facts which have already been studied and followed up by numerous very interesting initiatives designed to rectify certain failings in the current systems. Some of these initiatives are being carried out by the Ministry itself. They include integration classes and special language classes at the Centre's *Lycée technique* which enable pupils who choose to do so to obtain a vocational qualification or a technical baccalaureate without having the proficiency in German required of other pupils; ALLET (Teaching of German as a Foreign Language in Secondary Education) classes; integrated Portuguese and Italian courses at the rate of two lessons a week; team teaching; tutorials; intercultural mediators; use of native speakers in pre-school education; modular education; reception classes (for children recently arrived in the country); introduction of bilingual textbooks for certain disciplines, giving pupils the opportunity to gain access to their content via the language of their choice; and the introduction of common tests in German and French in the 9th year. Other initiatives are more local, though they have usually been supported by Ministry institutions and in certain cases have combined with international projects, eg the Dudelange project "Fighting Underachievement at School Together" (which, among other things, experiments with integrated support for pupils needing to learn German as a foreign language); the Differdange school projects (integrated Portuguese courses; team teaching with trials of a key-stage approach); and exploration of the potential of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* by the Luxembourg Language Centre.

However, measures like these, which try out promising avenues, do not always enjoy sufficient support. Results are still inadequately evaluated and are not systematically investigated. They do not lead to the sort of publicity and dissemination that would win them legitimacy and official recognition. Also, the failure of such experiments to influence the education system as a whole discourages many of the parties involved and tends to inhibit the vigorous practical

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[22] CLIL: Content Language Integrated Learning .

and theoretical efforts of part of the teaching profession, which has embraced these measures with generosity and conviction.

In general, the difficulties encountered by language education are magnified by the effects of some shortcomings in the education system. These include premature selection and channelling of pupils, the fact that inadequate thought is given to teaching practices, with the result that further specific research is needed, the widespread practice of negative assessment in which a number of marks calculated according to the number of mistakes is deducted from the maximum marks possible, the lack of organised teaching teams in primary school, the lack of effective intermediaries between individual teachers and the Ministry's guidelines and inadequate co-ordination of innovative systems and of people with novel ideas.

None of this means, of course, that the education provided is ineffective. On the contrary, the aim is to strengthen even further the return on the substantial investment sunk by the Grand Duchy in language education and the positive effects of its teachers' great language competence. At the same time, all pupils must be enabled to acquire plurilingual abilities and embrace the values of plurilingualism.

The need is also, perhaps even mainly, to combat false pedagogical evidence concerning the processes of language acquisition by pupils. Some of the weaknesses of the language education set-up clearly lie in the failure to take into account the individual abilities and different linguistic circumstances of pupils when mapping out their individual careers, and in the assumption that the same linguistic path can be imposed without precaution on all pupils in accordance with identical objectives, which for many of them happen to be unrealistic.

4. Pointers for change in language education policy

This last part of the *Profile* endeavours to identify, on the basis of the findings and needs listed above, the possible answers that can be provided by the *Guide* and the tools proposed by the Council of Europe.

To be completely effective, these answers require a change in society's perception of the languages spoken in Luxembourg, of the role of the school in this area and of linguistic questions in general. If this is to be achieved, the debate needs an overall, open-ended and pluralist theme which allows all parties concerned to find their place and is one with which they can identify, regardless of their ideological positions or linguistic background.

The approach adopted initiates a process of reflection on the goal of language training before drawing conclusions concerning educational pathways; it addresses the resulting training needs and, finally, attempts to define the most effective ways of managing and supporting the changes.

4.1 Definition of a required language-competence profile

4.1.1 Specifying the necessary levels of competence

The first step towards renewing language education in the Luxembourg context is to arrive at a precise definition, using the most accurate assessment possible, of the level of competence necessary in the different languages which it is essential to know in the particular circumstances of the Grand Duchy.

A definition of language education objectives must take account of individual needs with regard to the training of pupils and the learning of the different disciplines, with an eye open for possible adaptations in the courses concerned. It must also take the greatest possible account of the needs of the vocational branches by including continuing-training opportunities

in the reflection process so that training can be adapted to specific types of employment, as part of a lifelong learning strategy.

The definition must take care to include both written and oral skills in comprehension and expression. It would even be very useful to specify the levels of competence expected for each language activity (reading, speaking etc). The necessity for such a distinction is perfectly illustrated by the example of Letzeburgesch. All observations and evidence demonstrate the need for pupils to *understand* that language. Proficiency in expression in it contributes to integration and subsequent occupational success but does not affect pupils' immediate academic success. The place of the written word is, in the case of Letzeburgesch, much less important in social practices than in the case of other languages. There is an obvious advantage, particularly for primary education, in core skills which incorporate, as far as that language is concerned, a definition of the level of competence specifically needed in oral comprehension in order to create the best conditions for pupils from non-Letzeburgesch-speaking families to do well at school.

The latter example shows that the definition of the necessary skills in Letzeburgesch, German, French and, of course, English would be improved if it were based on the different stages in the pupil's schooling and on the academic course concerned. Spelling out the competence objectives for each stage in the school career would enable all parties concerned to refrain from focusing their attention solely on that segment of the curriculum for which they are responsible and to see that segment and their own part in it in the broader framework of the overall training process.

Finally, it should be stressed that defining the minimum requirements at a precise moment in the pupil's schooling in no way means abandoning all ambition regarding progression but, in fact, helps to eliminate ambiguities that often impede assessment of the levels attained and the setting of objectives.

Such reflection must be performed with the greatest care and transparency, in consultation with all parties concerned in the world of education, the business sector and associations, and in open debate. Many partners have been won over to this idea, although it is sometimes formulated in different terms. We see, for example, in the proceedings of the day of reflection organised by the Association of French Teachers of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on 28 January 2001 the following statement: "Modesty does not rule out rigour: to reconcile the two principles, it is necessary to set clear and reasonable goals and then carry out a strict assessment instead of setting oneself unduly difficult objectives and getting out of a tight corner by over-indulgent marking".[23] The same concern is found in the texts published by the Federation of Associations of Luxembourg Pupils' Parents (FAPEL): "It is clear that, for the different branches of secondary education and depending on the justification for the requirements, minimum competence thresholds must also be defined for languages […]"[24].

4.1.2 Developing true plurilingualism

The definition of the core language skills mentioned above enables us to go further than merely asserting the need for trilingualism and initiate a deliberate policy of promoting plurilingualism as a form of training and a principle.

In Luxembourg, it goes without saying that the plurilingualism sought by schools must incorporate knowledge of Letzeburgesch, German and French. Equally it must encompass

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[23] *Rapport sur les objectifs du français dans le post-primaire*.
[24] *Revendications de la FAPEL au moment de la formation du nouveau gouvernement*, July 2004, page 10.

communicative skills in English and all the linguistic abilities of individuals in linguistic varieties other than the four languages already mentioned.

The need here is to take better account of individual potential and the needs of Luxembourg in a new process mobilising all learners' resources and abilities. Such a process can be brought about by consistent implementation of the concept of plurilingualism on the basis of the diversity and complementarity of all learners' language skills, with the object of forming a single competence replacing the current juxtaposition of different types of language education.

Adoption of this holistic concept of plurilingualism also means drawing the appropriate conclusions from the fact, already discussed above, that all plurilingual competence is necessarily and naturally unbalanced and changing. Recognition of this principle implies that each pupil can legitimately have a different linguistic profile without this being perceived as a sign of individual inadequacy or indeed failure. Such an approach supplies the foundation for a deliberately positive assessment of language skills which can itself be a source of motivation. In short, through this emphasis on plurilingual training, an assumed homogeneity, which, as we have seen, does not represent reality and causes individual and collective frustration, gives way to a conscious, planned and accepted heterogeneity; in other words, a "ready-to-wear" approach is replaced by an approach that is "made to measure".

The very concept of a plurilingual repertoire would, for each individual, allow a distinction to be drawn between languages in which that person possesses very advanced skills and those in which his or her skills are less developed. The objective of individual training could then be to value all skills, even limited, in some languages, to recognise higher levels of proficiency in some linguistic varieties and to require every linguistic profile to have these different components. In pursuing this approach, it would be useful to examine the possibility of taking genuine account of linguistic profiles in pupils' results, in addition to verifying the required competences in the compulsory school languages. This would demonstrate the importance attributed by the country to its linguistic assets, ensure that diversified individual skills are valued and compensate for the additional difficulties that certain pupils have encountered in meeting the requirements of Luxembourg trilingualism. Simply mentioning, even without taking them into account, certificates obtained in languages other than the national languages for the purposes of national examinations would be an important signal to all those involved in the education system.

In addition to its pedagogical advantages, this holistic conception of plurilingual training has a strong political dimension. The *Guide* says in this connection:

> " '*All languages for all*' is certainly a maximalist, unrealistic slogan, but it is also the concise, jubilant expression of a viable educational project (education for plurilingualism as valuing and developing everyone's linguistic repertoire) and the identification of a consensual value (education for plurilingual awareness as education in linguistic tolerance) that are both constituents of democratic citizenship in Europe." (page 29)

Such a linguistic-policy strategy:

- is not limited to functional objectives for each language but includes intercultural-training objectives (an aspect not spelled out in current language syllabuses);

- has among its goals plurilingual training as well as education for plurilingualism with due respect for linguistic and cultural diversity, ie education in values;

- necessitates a broad consensus.

This last point is essential if the values of plurilingualism are to be widely shared, which constitutes one of the conditions for implementing it. The *Guide* spells out this necessity very clearly: "The objective of such concerted action targeting macro-social representations should be to explain the nature of what is at stake, collectively as well as personally, with respect to knowledge of languages and to clarify what learning a language really involves, whatever stereotyped images people may have. This should make education systems better able to react to social demand so that they are no longer asked only to respond to that demand, which is often vague, but also better able to guide it in the name of accepted principles" (page 72).

We may wonder about the influence of the current composition of the Luxembourg teaching profession on the perception of school as an institution and of its users. With some exceptions, the teachers recruited generally show the same linguistic characteristics, which happen to be one of the conditions for entry to the civil service. In keeping with a strategy of setting a value on all languages present in national territory and encouraging people to learn them, two important changes could be made. The first could be to consider introducing greater flexibility into the requirements concerning knowledge of the three official languages, depending on the particular purposes in mind. This flexibility would expand the social base of the teaching profession, give a meaningful signal to speakers of other languages that the education authorities are interested in the matter and facilitate the gradual organisation within the school of a process whereby those languages are taken into account for teaching purposes. The second change could be to enhance teachers' linguistic competences in one way or another by exploiting all opportunities for in-service training.

4.1.3 Taking advantage of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the European Language Portfolio

The proposal that the language objectives forming the core linguistic competences at the different stages in pupils' schooling be defined and the levels constituting each individual's linguistic profile assessed assumes reference to a scale of language levels such as is proposed by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (see Appendix 3).

The *Common European Framework* provides heads of language education, teachers and learners themselves with the tools needed to analyse the methods employed for teaching/learning, improve them and develop the necessary independence on the part of learners. It thus contributes to the objectives of transparency and comparability for teaching systems and language qualifications at European level. The contributions of the *Framework* are to be found in the analytical approach and proposals in this *Profile*.

The scale of competence levels proposed by the *Framework* is common to all languages. It identifies six progressive levels of competence defined mainly according to the communicative tasks of which the speaker is capable in the language concerned. In the interests of assessment and self-assessment, the *Framework* sets out these six competence levels for five language activities (comprehension of the oral and written word, written and oral expression, both continuous and interactive). The *Framework* also gives tables indicating for each competence level the qualitative aspects of the language produced and the degree of mastery of the strategies necessary for discharging tasks undertaken using that language.

It is therefore clear that this scale possesses several features capable of meeting the needs identified above. It enables a positive assessment of language abilities to be made by systematically stressing what the individual is capable of achieving with the language concerned, and not the formal aspects of language proficiency. It provides an opportunity to identify stages in the development of competences and thus breaks with a tradition of assessing skills by reference to an ideal native speaker, the negative effects of which, particularly on

learner motivation, have already been seen. It draws a sharp distinction between the competence levels reached in the various written and oral, receptive and productive, continuous or interactive language activities, thus facilitating the necessary differentiation in the individual development of competences and supplying a more accurate picture of the reality of those competences than the indication of a global level would provide.

Whilst resolutely oriented towards the social realities of language use, the scale of levels in the *Common European Framework* perfectly matches the specific objectives and conditions of the education system. The *Framework* highlights the fact that ability in performing communicative tasks presupposes the development of competences that cannot be reduced simply to operations, whether utilitarian or not, in the language concerned and require pedagogical guidance and programming. The definition of competence levels brings together both linguistic abilities and cognitive skills, which the school is responsible for developing in its pupils.

The *Framework* states that all communication necessarily falls into a social and cultural context and that several fields, including the academic field, may give rise to communicative tasks; this gives full legitimacy to the objective of the discovery of culture and literature in the education provided. Depending on the context and learners' needs, the nature of the tasks and aids used for teaching and learning may vary widely. In a school setting, linguistic training may be carried out, for example, on the basis of documents with a strong cultural dominant, such as literary texts. The definitions of the different competence levels proposed by the *Framework* also incorporate, for comprehension purposes, a reference to literary texts and make room for the unspoken and stylistic aspects of a document. Written and oral exchanges in a language course may obviously relate to subjects of a cultural nature. The essential contribution of the *Framework* to the organisation of education is that it highlights the importance of communicative aspects for the purposes of progression and assessment, that is, the value of putting meaning at the heart of all concerns. The richer the content of the aids used and of exchanges within the group - and it may be very rich in the case of literature and culture - the more this communicative dimension can and must assert itself.

Adoption of the scale of competence levels in order to define learning objectives and calibrate examinations and certification can be effected without difficulty for any foreign languages, for example English. The Luxembourg Language Centre is taking part in the trial piloted by the Council of Europe of a manual for the calibration of examinations according to the levels of the *Common European Framework* and could give the education system the benefit of the expertise acquired.

Problems are more complex in the case of mother tongues, second languages and languages of instruction, as the scale of levels in the *Common European Framework* is designed for calibration of the learning path for a foreign language. Nonetheless, it provides a very useful basis for the reflection needed, provided the necessary adjustments are made for the very special situation of trilingual schools in Luxembourg. Luxembourg could start that reflection process straight away and profit from the work currently being done by the Language Policy Division on developing tools adapted to these languages.

In the context of the above work, the Luxembourg authorities could make a significant contribution on behalf of Letzeburgesch by having specialists in this language develop specifications for linguistic and sociocultural[25] content corresponding to the different levels in

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[25] "Reference level Descriptions for national and regional languages", a project carried out by the Council of Europe that follows on from the series of "threshold levels" developed for over 20 languages from the mid-1970s onwards with the aim of defining learning objectives for communication purposes. With the coming of the *Framework*, these descriptions can now be worked out precisely and extended according to the six-level scale in the *Framework*.

the *Common European Framework of Reference*, as is already the case for German and French as foreign languages and soon will be for other European languages as well. This research could have indirect beneficial effects on the consideration that needs to be given to legitimate requirements in the different languages taught in the Grand Duchy and even on the social and occupational integration of numerous Luxembourg residents and frontier workers. Such a *Reference Level Description* would enable teaching content for adults based on supervised progression to be devised. The task of drawing up this description could be allocated to the new Chair of Letzeburgesch at the University.

The adoption of linguistic objectives by reference to the *Common European Framework* may be accompanied by an examination of the potential contributions of teaching tools such as the *European Language Portfolio* (see Appendix 3).

The *European Language Portfolio* facilitates recognition of the diversity of pupils' linguistic and intercultural competences as well as plurilingual training and education. It enables pupils to demonstrate their levels of competence in all the languages which they learn, know or encounter along their individual pathways. Through this presentation of individual experiences and skills, the *European Language Portfolio* gives tangible form to the wealth and diversity of the individual language profile, which, as we have seen, could become a true linguistic-training project in the Luxembourg education system. It provides a technical response to the need to value and take account of all the languages possessed by the person concerned even if these are not taught in the school system.

Furthermore, by virtue of its pedagogical function, the *European Language Portfolio* would undoubtedly be a highly suitable means of introducing beneficial changes into the practices employed for teaching and learning modern languages. It is designed to help pupils to become independent by learning self-assessment, and to encourage thought about individual ways of acquiring languages. It efficiently prepares pupils for the subsequent need to continue to enrich and develop their skills and knowledge outside and beyond their school careers.

Needless to say, this does not necessarily mean that (self-) assessment must be the universal rule; that would be counter-productive. However, experiments in different countries and educational contexts show that use of this tool at regular but not over-frequent intervals avoids this problem and retains the educational advantages of this approach.

The *European Language Portfolio* is inherently a document rooted in the educational reality of each country or region. Applying it requires careful thought that takes account of the characteristics, constraints and potential of the education system concerned. Developing *European Language Portfolio* models or assessment and self-assessment systems conceived according to its principles could provide an opportunity for a determined attempt to take greater account of linguistic diversity in Luxembourg schools, introduce the practice of positive assessment in languages and bring about decompartmentalisation between languages on the one hand and between languages and the teaching of the different disciplines on the other, for example through the adoption of competence descriptors based on pupils' actual experiences with using languages.

4.2 Implications for the school curriculum

In drawing up a school curriculum it is necessary to allow for a large number of parameters, of which the principles set out above can be only one aspect. Moreover, the avenues for reflection outlined below do not exhaust the numerous possibilities offered by the proposals in Chapter 8 of the *Common European Framework of Reference* ("Linguistic diversification and the curriculum") and referred to in the *Guide*.

First of all, it is important to stress the contradiction that can arise between the stated necessity of greater differentiation in the linguistic system with which pupils have to comply from primary school to the end of secondary and the concern not to jeopardise the principle of accommodating all pupils in the same school set-up, having training objectives common to all and rejecting all segregation of pupils by linguistic background.

Proposals have been made by various persons in responsible educational or political positions and by parties involved in education matters. These include proposals that all pupils should continue to learn to read and write in German and would then be offered the choice between German and French as the language of instruction, with study of the other language remaining compulsory; that children should be taught to read and write in German or French depending on their family linguistic background before all pupils are allowed to come together from the fourth year onwards to pursue their schooling in the same class; that pupils should be asked to choose a first and second language (for the whole of their schooling), with suitable adaptation of curricula, teaching, working methods and assessment.

All these ideas have the disadvantage of making it very difficult to keep all pupils in the same classes or schools, particularly in primary education. They could have negative effects on the integration of all pupils in the same educational strategy and in a school community, which ought certainly not to be undermined by the premature separation of pupils by language(s) of origin.

The *Profile* outlines other methods of differentiation, utilising inter alia the numerous resources already tried out in Luxembourg or proposed at European level.

4.2.1 Respecting individual rates of language learning

A fundamental issue facing Luxembourg schools is to make all pupils literate in German, when this language is the mother tongue of only a tiny minority of the school population. While Letzeburgesch-speaking pupils can profit from the similarity of German and Letzeburgesch, the same does not apply to Romance-language-speaking pupils. The difficulties and delays noticed, particularly among the latter, are due essentially to the fact that the obstacle, learning to read and write and learning a foreign language, is twofold.

Several lessons can be drawn from this, particularly regarding methods. In addition to the necessary responses in terms of teaching, there is an urgent need to perform an accurate diagnosis of the individual difficulties encountered and allow everyone sufficient time to overcome the obstacles, which are not equally great for all pupils and vary with their linguistic origin and family background, assisting them if necessary with special teaching arrangements. Aiming at greater respect for individual learning rates does not mean the fragmentation of approaches but rather identification of the learning profiles to which groups of pupils correspond overall.

This approach obviously means that the curriculum must accurately identify, as seen above, the ends in view. It would probably be more effective if a key-stage approach were introduced, ie if objectives were defined not for one school year but for a learning period of two or three years. One of the requirements is that no assessment should act as a penalty or bring a premature end to the opportunities of the pupils concerned to progress towards the curriculum objectives. An immediate consequence would be an end to the practice of regarding language results as decisive when it comes to moving on to post-primary schooling and, on the contrary, a strengthening of the range of tools available to teachers to diagnose sources of difficulty and supply the necessary remedies. Proposals concerning the transition to post-primary education could, for example, pay greater heed to the abilities of pupils and their results in other subjects.

Guidance towards one form or another of secondary education would certainly be modified as a result and would tend to become positive guidance rather than failure-based selection.

The same approach whereby greater respect is accorded to individual learning rates could usefully be employed at all levels and for all languages, thanks particularly to the *European Language Portfolio*. It is the natural complement to the definition of core competences at the different stages in their schooling. All compulsory language education would benefit from a realistic and exact definition of expectations regarding knowledge and competences.

Depending on the school context (size of school, human resources, number of pupils concerned), the aim of enabling every pupil to attain common objectives at a rate appropriate to the original linguistic situation may even lead to trials with forms of modular education for certain types of language learning. Finally, a diagnosis of the genuineness of pupils' language competences, such as the October 2005 study of school-leavers' knowledge of French[23], could lead to a re-examination of the respective weightings for written and oral performance in certain courses and in their assessment, for example in the case of secondary technical education.

The idea therefore is not to change the status of languages in the school system, which represents the condition for schooling common to all, but to draw all the lessons of this educational and political ambition and, once again, not confuse the objectives, which must be common, with the necessarily diversified methods of gaining access to the competences concerned. This approach means that pedagogical differentiation must gradually become the basic principle in conducting courses. Short-term objectives must be identified for a group of pupils and, starting from a regular diagnosis of attitudes and needs, the most suitable routes for the pupils concerned must be sought by combining phases spent on individualised tasks with periods of more collective work, striking a pedagogical balance between heterogeneity and homogeneity.

The stress placed here on the need to respect individual learning rates, particularly for German and literacy, in no way rules out the pursuit of other, complementary, routes for certain pupils. Let us take one example. Educational psychologists are agreed on recognising the importance of mother-tongue structuring for children's success at school. The *Country Report* refers in this connection to a 2001 study of school dropouts in which the authors find that "such pupils often possess few language skills, even when it comes to oral expression in their mother tongue" (page 93). Experiments are currently in hand on integrated courses in Portuguese, Italian etc for children possessing those mother tongues. An assessment could be carried out at university level on the effects on structuring in the mother tongue of using Portuguese and Italian in the teaching of non-linguistic subjects (early science learning, mathematics, history) and its consequences for academic success, following on from the first findings of the SCRIPT survey quoted in section 2.3. Other trials could also be useful, for example setting aside certain periods outside pupils' normal timetables for the learning or use of other languages, possibly with the participation of pupils' parents.

4.2.2 *Adapting progression in language learning to the natural stages of acquisition*

In addition to breaking down linguistic and cultural contents by key stage, it is important to practise, more so than at present, differentiation in methodological principles according to the age of the pupils and the stage reached in the language path. The first years of education in a language, whichever the latter may be, must be devoted in particular to acquiring linguistic

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[23] See section 3.5.

resources corresponding to functional needs, developing an aptitude for expression and creativity and experiencing the joy of reading and discovery. The concept of *pleasure* must be closely bound up with the first experience of learning and using a language. This fundamental pedagogical concern does not mean abandoning all effort: on the contrary. Its chief consequence is the giving of priority to meaning, communication and success in the tasks required, not to formal mastery of the language system. It is accompanied by rejection of any assessment that takes the form of a penalty or gives pupils a negative idea of their competences in the language. The use of positive self-assessment tools such as the *European Language Portfolio* takes on its full significance here.

Side by side with language learning, education for plurilingualism may take the form from the very earliest years of attaching value to the languages spoken by the pupils. The "early language learning awareness raising" approach seems the most appropriate for this purpose and can easily be made available to teachers.

Little by little, as the cognitive maturity of pupils allows and proficiency in the language system emerges, formal requirements may then be introduced, whilst still remaining within the competence framework and abiding by the weighting of the skills laid down in the core competences and the curricula.

The final years of learning could focus more on intensive study and literature.

This progression in priorities also applies to Letzeburgesch. We have seen that here stress should initially be placed on oral forms, particularly comprehension. Emphasis on oral comprehension concerns, as we have seen, the essential competences to be acquired and the teaching requirements involved, but in no way means abandoning all ambition to instil mastery of the language, which, as we have seen, plays a not insignificant role in access to certain jobs.

4.2.3 Making the language-learning sequence more progressive

Besides taking account of naturally different individual learning rates and restating the importance of structuring in each pupil's mother tongue for an effective start to be made on progress towards plurilingualism, it seems equally desirable to encourage thinking about the possibilities of greater progressiveness in language learning and use for all pupils.

Just as the practice of Letzeburgesch prepares pupils for learning German, so the first years of schooling could include making pupils aware of French, mainly through play, to prepare them to start learning that language.

The introduction of English awareness in the 7th year could be effected as progressively as for the other languages.

In the early stages of learning, all languages could be used in a similarly progressive way in branches of schooling where the emphasis is more on manipulation, play or creative activity; later it would be possible to move on to the more "conceptual" or "intellectual" branches. This does not mean that even the "hardest" non-linguistic disciplines do not, as school disciplines, have moments when the approach is more physical than conceptual (eg drawing a segment, reproducing a map or timeline etc). The language acts as a regulator in such a case and is totally redundant with respect to the action. During such phases, the languages taught may already be used to good advantage, even when learning is only just beginning.

This arrangement would enable one to "slip" from one language to another, depending on the rate at which teaching of the language is introduced. It would make it easier to learn these successive languages through their use in the teaching of different subjects (through an immersive approach in which languages are learned through action) and would avoid an over-

abrupt switching of languages of instruction in the case of disciplines as fundamental as mathematics, which for some pupils are too often synonymous with suffering and failure.

4.2.4 Adapting methodology to the status of each language taught

The acquisition status of each of the languages taught - mother tongue, second language, foreign language - varies for each pupil or learner, particularly in Luxembourg. The status of each language must doubtless be clarified with respect to the different groups of pupils in order to define the expected core competences mentioned above. Taking account of this status would have the merit of allowing the linguistic and cultural content of each course to be differentiated and, in particular, teaching methodology to be adapted and differentiated.

To take the case of Letzeburgesch, the aims is not to increase academic requirements, to introduce normative assessments of its acquisition or, especially, to make that language a further selection factor. On the other hand, it does seem desirable to distinguish between the teaching of Letzeburgesch to children who speak that language at home and the teaching of the language to others. Activities shared by all pupils in Letzeburgesch are possible and desirable, and already exist in pre-school education. The experience of Luxembourg schools is considerable in this area and the widespread adoption of co-operative forms of work among pupils (team teaching or, rather, peer teaching) should be easy to ensure, provided of course that the proportion of Letzeburgesch-speaking pupils is large enough to mitigate the artificiality of the arrangement. Nevertheless, it appears equally essential to allow structuring of this language via specific foreign-language teaching methods for pupils who speak one or more of the other languages at home, bearing in mind that reasonable requirements concerning this language must be confined at this academic level to oral comprehension. It is necessary to direct all pedagogical action at attaining competence objectives rather than at constraints, by setting aside specific slots in the timetable.

While German is taught to Letzeburgesch-speaking children more or less as if it were a mother tongue, the acquisition of French is based, for the same pupils, on methods used for foreign-language teaching. For schools to succeed, the methods used to teach these two linguistic varieties must obviously be adapted, depending on whether the language concerned is or is not close to the mother tongue of the majority of pupils.

In addition to this general approach, the difficulties of learning German are different for children whose mother tongue is Letzeburgesch and for children who speak nothing but French, Italian or Portuguese at home. Similarly, Romance-language-speaking children and German-speaking children cannot learn French in the same way.

It is therefore clear that, besides appropriate methods for each language, teachers urgently need additional tools in order to address the specific difficulties of some of their pupils.

4.2.5 Developing bilingual practices in the teaching of non-linguistic disciplines

Everyday teaching experience shows that pupils' difficulties in tackling the learning of different subjects in a language which they do not always adequately master are taken into account in practice. Switching occurs between languages according to the moment, need or demand. This attitude corresponds to the cognitive and discursive functioning of a bilingual person as revealed by research. It should certainly not be condemned as a principle since it is a response to a genuine difficulty or demand, designed, for example, to alleviate the difficulty experienced by certain pupils when the language of instruction changes. The problem, however, is to help to meet this need better by equipping teachers with educational benchmarks

and recommendations concerning both the strategic use of language switching[24] (macro-switching) and flexible use adapted to the needs of the teaching/learning process (micro-switching[25]). Reasoned use in this way might help to take the heat out of certain current tensions and certain contradictions between the rules and actual practice.

The advantages of a reasoned practice of code switching in these educational contexts emerge clearly in the use of bilingual textbooks, ie textbooks for non-linguistic disciplines with the content given in two languages. This very original form of bilingual education in the Grand Duchy deserves to be explored and extended, and its use by teachers and pupils, as well as its effects, thoroughly studied. It appears to be one of the best ways of meeting the challenges represented by the choice in favour of the generalised teaching of subjects in different languages, with linguistic situations varying widely according to the pupils. It could be supplemented by experimenting with the alternating use of textbooks in two different languages.

Other forms of switching could be tried out, such as dividing the time spent per hour on certain lessons between the two languages of instruction.

These lessons in non-linguistic disciplines have a twofold teaching goal, namely to enable pupils to obtain the knowledge and competences relating to those disciplines and to develop proficiency in the languages of instruction. There is no reason why this teaching methodology also has to be the rule for homework or examinations. It is completely feasible for this twofold objective to be assessed separately: pupils could have the choice between several languages (within an obviously limited range) for tests specific to the discipline concerned and could be required to prove their competences in the languages of instruction on the occasion of language tests.

4.2.6 Giving the school textbook back its proper function

Here stress has to be placed on the role of textbooks in the shortcomings mentioned and in the proposals for change.

Without prejudging the effects of improving teacher training as mentioned below, we have to accept that teachers cannot be left alone to face the challenges posed by teaching situations and to cope with the goals of the education system. They need teaching programmes and recommendations as well as tools that can be used in class. Not all teachers can be expected to devise their own textbooks in order to adapt their approach to the exact needs of the group of pupils in their charge. However, the tools they do have are frequently ill-suited to the sort of teaching that has to take account of a wide range of situations. It is not easy to produce textbooks in a country the size of Luxembourg and teachers may not have available to them a choice of textbooks for all languages and disciplines. However, everything must be done to combat a tenacious and widespread tendency to identify the textbook with the syllabus and to follow a textbook slavishly instead of analysing it in order to find in it the tools suited to the specific objectives that teachers set themselves with a group of pupils. The easiest way of doing this is probably to equip teachers and schools with specific tools which nevertheless complement the textbooks used, in order to enable them to distance themselves from the textbook and encourage questioning of the relevance of its approach in a particular situation.

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[24] ie a use rigidly planned by the teachers and negotiated through the teaching contract with the pupils.

[25] ie unplanned switching which nevertheless responds immediately to the needs and emergencies of the learning process (communicative deadlock - absence of a word, for example - opaqueness of certain words and expressions etc) in the knowledge that these moments of recourse to other languages represent particularly fruitful opportunities for acquisition of the target language in that they correspond to a precise and contextualised learning need.

Action of this nature must naturally be accompanied by initial training of teachers in the analysis of teaching materials so as to inculcate a constructive and critical attitude to every tool.

When they consider it necessary or desirable, teachers should also be encouraged to distance themselves from their textbooks, to diversify their approach and to enrich the teaching documents used in class in accordance with an eclectic approach that in no way rules out the rigour needed for the development of teaching sequences. A school textbook is an irreplaceable self-training document for a teacher and a powerful aid to pedagogical progression. However, it must not become the only legitimate teaching resource and prevent teachers from being creative.

Besides its negative effects on teaching practices, use of a single textbook severely limits the riches to be garnered from situations resulting from bilingual education. The use of foreign school textbooks can, for example, contribute, through comparison, to more intensive questioning of the epistemological emphasis of an academic discipline and to its enrichment and diversification through borrowed methodology. In this connection and with regard to content, the use of textbooks in the different languages can encourage thinking about a discipline in the classroom that can particularly benefit the discipline itself and the learning process: specific comparisons of three history textbooks in French, German and English used in foreign contexts could, for example, lead to the realisation that the same historical event bears a very different interpretation and connotation according to the country.

4.3 Supporting change by renewing language teaching

In a school system where languages and language education account on average for nearly 40% of the school timetable and curriculum, language teaching must clearly be particularly efficient, especially as the languages taught will be used as vehicles for learning other subjects and their use is vital for full and harmonious integration into community life.

Linguists have amply demonstrated that linguistic systems, even those differing the most from one other, have far more common characteristics than differences. This should be reflected in schools on three complementary levels.

Firstly, through uncompartmentalised perceptions of the languages concerned, ie through the holistic concept of plurilingualism advocated by the Council of Europe. On the strength of their initial training, language teachers should be able to put this concept into practice: they will be able to take account of what is represented in cognitive and affective terms by the successive or parallel learning of more than one language and exploit all the advantages of this plurilingual environment for the teaching/learning process. This also means, from an instructional viewpoint, that teaching of the different languages must be based largely on common principles concerning the nature of a language, its acquisition in school, error and how to deal with it, the role and place of metalinguistic reflection, etc.

Secondly, through methodological differentiation. Linguistic education must adapt its practices to the acquisition status of each linguistic variety, which is determined by the learners' initial language repertoire and the particular succession of languages in their school career. As already seen, the teaching of Letzeburgesch uses routes which vary at least partly with the learner, depending on whether it is a language learned in the family or a totally or partly unfamiliar language. German cannot be taught in quite the same way to a child who already speaks Letzeburgesch as to a Romance-language-speaking child. It is advisable to teach English, which comes at the end, very differently from German, which comes at the beginning of the learning process.

Thirdly, through integrated language teaching encouraging synergy between language teaching and learning. This implies consultation and co-operation on the part of language teachers in constructing harmonised and coherent, albeit irregular, linguistic progressions.

In what follows, it will be easy to recognise the role that can be played by the *European Language Portfolio* in connection with all the points mentioned.

4.3.1 Developing a common professional culture for all language teachers

With integrated language teaching, maximum advantage could be taken of, among other things, the linguistic similarity of languages belonging to the same language group - on the one hand, for example, Letzeburgesch, German and English and, on the other hand, French, Portuguese and Italian. Exploiting the similarities between linguistic systems in the same group would make for quicker language learning, though it is necessary at the same time to instil an awareness of deceptive resemblances ("false friends"). Generalisation processes could be encouraged in this way through the development of metalinguistic awareness (of the characteristics common to all languages but also those specific to each code) and of metacognitive awareness (of the cognitive processes employed by learners during the learning process).

On the other hand, the transition from an acquired/learned code belonging to a linguistic group to the learning of a code forming part of another group (eg the transition from Portuguese to Letzeburgesch or from the latter to French) requires particular attention, since the similarities diminish suddenly - at least in the case of surface phenomena - in favour of differences, which it is important to try systematically to identify.

If it is desired in the interests of social cohesion that there should be no separation between learners according to their origins or the languages spoken at home, it might be worth considering the advantages of utilising the experience gained with dual immersion education[26] in the United States, provided it is adapted to Luxembourg conditions, as it would have to be. An attempt could be made, for example, to arrange for German-speaking learners to assist, as far as their schools permitted, their Romance-language-speaking classmates in learning Letzeburgesch and German and, conversely, for Romance-language-speaking learners to do the same for their Luxembourg classmates when they learn French. The two groups of pupils would find their competences valued and have a useful incentive to acquire new skills. According to this socio-constructivist, communicative, active and interactive approach to languages, learning may be regarded as a process taking place in a social setting where competences are actively built up through interaction and communication both between learners and the experienced adult represented by the teacher and between peers.

Such an approach also amounts to relying on the skills, knowledge and strategies of learners in languages already acquired/learned in order to "speed up" the new learning processes, and to making all that experience available to the small "community" represented by the class for the benefit of each member. The initial repertoire of learners should thus constitute the starting point for all language education and be welcomed and valued by the school, for example through early-learning activities involving languages and cultures. This, however, assumes that pupils' initial language repertoire is collectively perceived in all cases as more of an asset than a handicap.

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[26] For further information about this form of bilingual education, see LINDHOLM-LEARY, K.J. (2001): *Dual Language Education*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters and the following sites:
http://www.cal.org/resources/faqs/rgos/2way.html; http://www.cal.org/pubs/twoway_p.html

4.3.2 Drawing the theoretical and practical conclusions for the teaching of each language

Finally, the integrated teaching of languages assumes that transfers of competences, knowledge and strategies, which is known to occur only rarely in a completely spontaneous manner, take place consciously and systematically. In the first phase, such transfers must be stimulated, encouraged, brought to the surface of awareness, guided and backed up so that they can be transformed, in the second phase, into deliberate and independent processes. This is practicable only if learners are trained in risk-taking in a climate of linguistic security. However, linguistic insecurity, which represents a brake on language acquisition (and on self-fulfilment) is, as stressed above, a quite widespread and palpable phenomenon in Luxembourg society. The question is to what extent teaching practices might be at least partly responsible. Whatever the answer, it is certain that schools have an important role to play in countering linguistic insecurity: it is schools which, through error pedagogy, can not only dedramatise mistakes but pinpoint in them the effects of the cognitive processes at work, use them to improve learning and thus create the relaxed and calm situations of linguistic "well-being" essential for acquiring a language. This assumes that, in a language class, the aim is less to achieve "perfect" mastery and native-speaker standards than to motivate pupils to learn the languages concerned and continue to learn them throughout their lives, and ensure personal progress. This quest necessarily involves systematically practising the positive assessment of language competences in accordance with the *Common European Framework of Reference* and the *European Language Portfolio*[27]. Stimulating a taste for languages is the best possible investment when it comes to ensuring that they are learned and mastered.

It is also important for schools to work on the images of the various languages concerned: to give only one example, the image of English is doubtless not the same as that of German or French. Work on pupils' perceptions of languages (and therefore on the images linked to them) is one of the measures that can help to give meaning to the learning of those languages. The desired effects would be magnified by the creation of situations whereby pupils assist one another with language acquisition, in pursuit of the socio-constructivist approach mentioned in the previous section. Such situations, through which the attitudes of pupils to the different languages can be influenced, may even, in certain circumstances, be extended to non-linguistic branches, with even more important educational consequences.

Language education at school, which is aimed primarily at motivating pupils to embrace lifelong learning and therefore at the goal of "learning to learn", also relies on development of the metalinguistic and metacognitive competences of the learners, which are powerful means of making those learners independent in their acquisition process.

In the reflection process that is called for, it would also be possible to rethink the place and role of oral work. Oral skills are particularly difficult to teach and assess because they are both omnipresent and extremely "volatile". Oral communication plays a not insignificant role in learners' school careers, including the non-linguistic branches. It is, however, the situation in which people seem to be the most insecure.

The relationship with written work can also be further improved, in particular by a stimulating and more diversified introduction to literature and the encouragement of independent reading.

We should also note the obvious need for more targeted work on discourse typology, which is bound up with the rational development of communicative competences in oral and written work, in order to encourage effective mastery of syntax and vocabulary. Pupils can be motivated to acquire these components of linguistic competence only through and as a result of

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[27] See Appendix 3

the authenticity and growing complexity of communicative tasks. The still vigorous and tenacious stereotype of the "creation of foundations", of the gradual piling up of "building blocks", which is embodied in the metaphor of constructing a building, runs counter to this approach and is often a cause of demotivation at school. It should be replaced with a "spiral" conception of the process of language acquisition.

Finally, reference must be made to the still excessive importance attributed to spelling in assessments as a result of educational tradition and undoubtedly also of the negative effects of certain recruitment procedures on perceptions of the role oral work plays in pupils' success.

It would be easier to take these changes into account, as already happens in the case of primary education, if the official curricula were accompanied by strong pedagogical recommendations.

4.3.3 Enhancing teaching and learning methods and situations

More generally, the massive use of technology (both new and old) and recourse to the various media should simultaneously represent powerful means of "immersion" in a range of different discourses, "voices", accents and tones and stimulate not only reflective, critical and interdisciplinary work of educational value but also the motivation to learn languages. The various chat rooms, forums, e-mails etc increase the number of possible contacts at little cost.

Similarly, the geographical proximity of Luxembourg to Belgium, France and Germany should be systematically exploited to increase and make use of immersion courses, work placements for pupils in technical secondary education, exchanges and tasks involving co-operation between classes and schools. This type of initiative could cover, as one of its principal goals, the intercultural dimension, through which the purely linguistic aspect could be enriched and given greater educational depth.

A final measure to promote learner motivation is to choose and/or devise teaching aids and equipment suited to pupils' cognitive age and degree of interest and to meaningful learning consistent with the goals of the school education system. Situations such as those of Luxembourg demand particular attention and considerable effort in this area, since equipment "imported" from elsewhere may meet the needs of the educational context only partly, if at all (because it is out of touch with learners' interests or cognitive development or with the academic path).

4.3.4 Viewing language education from the perspective of learning other subjects

The points discussed above have chiefly concerned the teaching of languages and, to a lesser extent, their use as vehicles for teaching other disciplines. The distinctive nature of the language issue, which shapes the whole of the Luxembourg education system, is such that language education cannot take place in the same way in Luxembourg as it would in an ordinary situation. To improve that education's effectiveness further, it would help to look more closely at its contribution to other areas of education and pinpoint its scope. A language teacher must visualise the language he or she teaches from a twofold viewpoint: as an object of learning and a cross-disciplinary tool for learning other subjects. We shall see further on that this also applies to teachers of non-linguistic disciplines.

As an object of learning, a language has its specific fields requiring cultivation, eg personal and creative expression on the part of learners, functional needs connected with their future lives in society and as citizens, literature, culture and the heritage of ideas and values transmitted by the language in question. All this provides scope for interdisciplinary collaboration between language teachers and represents the actual object of the integrated teaching described above.

As a tool for the teaching and learning of other disciplines, language becomes cross-disciplinary in linguistic and cognitive terms. This is a dimension which language teachers must fully master in co-operation with their colleagues in the other branches. Learners must be provided with competences, both linguistic and cognitive, that will help them learn their subjects, such as the ability to describe, narrate, summarise, explain and argue orally. These linguistic and cognitive competences are necessary in all branches, whether linguistic or not, and all teachers must help to instil them. The language dimension as a cross-disciplinary element of the curriculum can thus be fully accepted and assured in a plurilingual teaching context.

To this end, language teachers should at least partly link their linguistic progression to the language needs of learners in the other branches. At the same time, however, as they are not the only providers of language learning, they can (and must) acquire means of giving credit for linguistic attainments in other disciplines. This means that teachers must adopt, both individually and collectively, an expanded, non-normative and non-prescriptive vision of language acquisition, choose a system of *positive* assessment that takes account of everything learned by the pupils and make sure that they involve them in planning the language objectives pursued according to their experience and needs. It likewise presupposes the existence of tools that allow such exchanges between the different teachers of the same class.

In short, in a plurilingual and immersive setting as complex as that of Luxembourg schools, the changes now necessary require, for success, an examination of the need for further study of teaching methods and of the training of language teachers. This is essential if the latter are to be able to go along with and support the process of change.

4.3.5 Further study of methods of teaching non-linguistic disciplines

Luxembourg's educational strategy, whereby the different disciplines are taught and learned in several languages, requires both effective language teaching and a thorough examination of what is specific to this type of academic situation. The consequences, both theoretical and practical, affect, as we have seen, not only language teachers but also teachers of non-linguistic disciplines. Neither languages nor other disciplines can accordingly be taught in the same way as in a monolingual setting.

Teachers of non-linguistic subjects must fully accept the language component of their teaching. Experience in other countries where these subjects are taught in only one language shows that the language component tends to be neglected and that inadequate account is taken both of it and of its teaching implications. Yet it can also cause certain difficulties in the learning process, such as ignorance of the language of specialisation, of certain language registers and of certain types of discourse and interference between ordinary and scientific vocabularies. In plurilingual education, it is particularly important to allow for the language component because of the greater number of languages. A number of aspects that are not exhaustive but illustrate the importance and potential scope of such recognition are mentioned below.

It is necessary, for example, to identify for each branch the types of oral and written discourse that convey concepts in the different subjects, to verify their value and epistemological function within each discipline (narrative text, for example, although using the same syntactical structures, does not play the same role in history, chemistry, natural science and literature), analyse their characteristics and functioning in collaboration with the language teachers and train learners in understanding and producing them in the different linguistic varieties. Special attention should be devoted to the language of specialisation and to the rhetorical procedures specific to each discipline.

Likewise, the use of all forms of support specific to plurilingual-education situations (eg the use of geestures, circumlocution and rewording, including rewording in another language; use of the concepts specific to each discipline) facilitates a gradual transition from highly contextualised and cognitively undemanding situations to increasingly abstract and complex situations.

Other areas of observation, analysis and reflection include class interaction, the interplay between the discourse underlying the conceptual constructs in a given discipline (constitutive discourse) and the discourse used to regulate and guide the activities of learners (regulatory discourse) and, finally, the functions which the various languages could eventually discharge in each of those fields.

In arguing in favour of plurilingual education, it is also important not to overlook the epistemological asset represented by the use of several languages in teaching non-linguistic disciplines. As seen above, for example, contributions by documents taken from foreign school textbooks and by methods drawn from other education systems would help to enrich subject teaching.

In general, all teaching (both of languages and of non-linguistic subjects) should aim to train learners to transfer knowledge, competences and strategies. If care is not taken to create crossovers between languages, between disciplines and between languages and disciplines, plurilingual education - the Luxembourg experience is a typical illustration of this - is liable to become time- and energy-consuming without always achieving the expected results.

4.4 Management of change

This last part of the chapter, on the prospects for change in language education policy, will cover the conditions needed for such change to be successful.

4.4.1 Involving all partners through awareness-raising, information and consultation

The high degree of awareness of the political aspect of language and language education measures in Luxembourg requires, even more than elsewhere, the involvement of all the schools' partners not only in the decisions themselves but also in their implementation. The preceding considerations have shown that the conditions needed for the pursuit of a plurilingual policy do not concern the education system alone but society as a whole. Certain key measures, such as definition of the competence levels expected at the end of initial training, are impracticable without the active participation of employers and trade unions and representatives of the economic sector. The active role of pupils' parents and their obvious concern to help to promote responsible change in the present teaching system acts as a lever for improvement, as does the active involvement of representative pupil bodies. National curriculum committees are responsible for drawing up proposals for changes in the various disciplines. Their contribution will be essential, but if teachers' associations also take part in some way it should be possible to win the endorsement of the teaching profession for the approaches identified.

It is also important to remember that, in the Luxembourg context, language teachers cannot be the only parties to such a debate. Teachers of non-linguistic disciplines play a fundamental role in pupils' language acquisition and must be fully involved in the reflection process.

Nor must it be forgotten in such a debate that language education policy shares the overall goals of the education system, such as access to structuring, basic skills, knowledge, a university education and the labour market.

Expectations of change are great on the part of the users of schools and of numerous parties in the education system, even if what they say suggests that their preferred lines of action are not always identical. However, the present conditions constitute favourable ground for initiating change. The importance of a wide-ranging public debate on all these issues before decisions are taken by policy-makers is obvious. The process of preparing this *Country Profile* may be an important stage in this debate.

It would likewise be very useful if parties who have been involved recently or not so recently in innovative activities could have their contributions recognised in this debate. They should be brought back into the equation, both to help advise on possible measures and to implement them.

4.4.2 Taking the decisions required by the approaches adopted

Imparting new impetus and a new direction to language teaching requires time, and changes must be introduced gradually before the first results become visible.

Nevertheless, at every stage in the process it must be possible to see whether the measures taken hang together. One of the current difficulties in harnessing enthusiasm for innovation and persuading parties sometimes passionately and devotedly involved in certain activities to come out of their isolation is the impression given of a lack of overall consistency between their activities and developments in the system. Whatever decisions are taken and whatever the scope of such decisions may be, they will not have the hoped-for effects unless they are seen by everyone to be logically connected with the other arrangements made. One example will suffice: any use by the education system of the *European Language Portfolio* or its underlying approach will not be fully effective and genuinely promote the development of pupils' plurilingual repertoire unless language syllabuses are defined on the basis of the *Common European Framework of Reference*, if competence descriptors are developed in accordance with the situations in which pupils use languages, particularly in the non-linguistic branches, if valuing of all the language competences of pupils is a recognised rule and if language teachers are trained in plurilingual-teaching principles.

If the desired general approach to language education is to be discerned, rapid action must be taken to adopt measures relating to key stages in pupils' schooling and fundamental aspects of modern-language teaching.

It is not hard to list a number of examples:

- start work on developing core language competences for the different stages of schooling with reference to the *Common European Framework*;

- issue specific guidelines to the *Commission d'instruction de l'enseignement primaire* (Committee on Primary Education) and to the various national committees responsible for drawing up the curricula for general secondary and technical secondary education;

- differentiate pupils' language successes, for example by indicating separate results in school reports for linguistic comprehension and expression activities and for written and oral work. Such a measure would have the immediate consequence of making the separate assessment of language competences the general rule and would reduce the share of formal and written work in pupils' overall assessment;

- redefine the way in which children are channelled into post-primary schooling so as to ensure a better balance between the importance accorded to languages and that afforded to other disciplines;

- develop mock language examinations and assessments, scrupulously respecting the educational principles decided on at national level. The influence of assessment models on the teaching and assessment practices of teachers is well known and such an initiative would undoubtedly represent a very powerful lever for change and training;

- develop a communication strategy aimed both at the pupils' parents and at pupils themselves, concerning the exact meaning of learning a language, the importance of the plurilingual repertoire and the most effective means of enriching it;

- take advantage of *the European Day of Languages* on 26 September to encourage teaching teams to introduce "Language Festivals" that publicly emphasise the pleasure of learning and using languages and the asset that linguistic and cultural diversity represents for a school, village or town. Ideas can be found on the site devoted to be the annual Day concerned (www.coe.int/edl).

4.4.3 Encouraging teachers to endorse the approaches adopted

It is obviously not enough to decide on new language education guidelines and expect teaching practices to adapt spontaneously to the objectives and principles concerned. If they are to be applied in the classroom, explanation, training and support are needed.

It would be too much to expect all teachers to endorse possibly bold theoretical and practical changes in teaching when they cannot understand all the reasons behind them nor what all the consequences may be for their pupils and everyday practice. The earlier paragraphs devoted to language teaching in this part of the *Profile* have shown the magnitude of training needs, to the list of which should be added training in positive assessment in order to meet the demands of plurilingual education and training.

One of the weaknesses of the education system lies in the relative isolation of teachers, who do not have the benefit of an intermediary able to make the approaches called for at national level understandable and practicable. This absence of useful pedagogical contacts in secondary schools is not offset by the current practice of appointing representatives of each language to sit on the national committees, which obviously cannot fulfil this role. Conversely, the Ministry's departments do not appear to have sufficiently accurate information about the actual nature of classroom teaching. Against a background of change, these issues will have to be addressed by reassigning, if only temporarily, the informational, organisational and support functions of the different intermediate bodies, taking into account the priorities adopted.

Pedagogical co-operation between teachers must be encouraged. The situation must be improved in primary schooling, where teamwork between teachers is based only on voluntary personal contact, with no one really in charge of pedagogical co-ordination within the school. It is equally desirable in secondary schools, which still lack the concept of teacher teams.

There are several possible ways of achieving this, for example training. The desire to create a new momentum in teacher teams could lead to the introduction of in-school training courses aimed at teachers of all languages and, for certain subjects, at teachers in other branches.

Another method could be to give teams of teachers from a small number of schools the job of developing, managing and assessing, with the aid of SCRIPT and the University, pilot projects of limited duration covering different subjects and mobilising the energies and skills of all involved. Such projects could cover all topics affected by the national guidelines and concern teaching practices (eg assessment, modular teaching, joint presence of more than one teacher in certain bilingual courses, use of bilingual textbooks in the teaching of non-linguistic subjects, co-ordination of several language-learning courses, interdisciplinary timetabling, language learning awareness raising etc) or documents and equipment of general interest. To be useful,

these projects would have to be subject to genuine assessment, with means of measuring their effects, enabling a reasoned decision to be taken on whether to continue or extend them and helping the teams to correct misguided application or inadequacies. Regular information and publicity about these experiments could persuade all parties concerned to support them and could contribute to the universal introduction of promising systems. The creation of these goal-oriented networks of teachers would naturally lead to the valuing of creativity and initiative in the education system.

4.4.4 Encouraging teaching research

The previous chapters have frequently stressed the need for in-depth research into certain specific aspects of language education in Luxembourg. The University has an important role. Plurilingual teaching and the systematic integration of languages and non-linguistic education require the development of research, particularly "action research", since the level of transferability of good practices from other contexts is lower in this area. Each school system affected by these teaching options has numerous variables whose different configurations mean that no situation is fully comparable with another. Research is therefore more necessary than elsewhere and must constitute a conceptual driving force for innovation. It could cover all the phenomena that characterise any education system, while systematically taking account of the plurilingual dimension which forms part of the system and constitutes a sort of common theme. In this connection, without denying the advantage of the international research that enables education systems to avoid living in isolation and to verify their effectiveness through comparison with other situations, one should beware the potential limitations of such a comparison.

Plurilingual learners are not fully comparable with monolingual learners. Generic and general assessments are very likely to pass over the advantages possessed by such learners and to assess their competences by monolingual standards only. However, the creation of research networks involving other regions or countries in similar situations may be an important asset when it comes to exchanges.

Several possible fields of research have already been mentioned above. The list could be extended to society's perceptions regarding languages and their teaching/learning, discursive plurilingual practices inside and outside the classroom, the effects of languages on the construction of concepts in the various disciplines in the mother tongue, first language, second language etc, collaboration between teachers, the creation at school of a plurilingual climate, the differentiation of teaching according to learners' initial repertoire, and so on.

Of course, not everything is possible. Choices in this area must be made in accordance with the major policy goals set. System research and assessment do, however, represent a priority for an education system aiming at renewal.

4.4.5 Ensuring better co-ordination of existing institutions

Finally, there seems to be scope for improving co-ordination of the different institutions associated with common projects. This statement can be illustrated by an example. Reference has often been made to the Language Centre. It would undoubtedly be a good idea for that institution to be used more often for the subjects discussed here. Three-way institutional co-ordination at university level between the Language Centre, a language research and competence centre at the University and the Educational and Technological Research and Innovation Co-ordination Department (SCRIPT) of the Ministry of Education could make each body more effective in responding to the magnitude of the language training and assessment needs of students and teachers. The Language Centre's expertise in language assessment could

also be better exploited in connection with teachers' initial and in-service training; currently, only student English teachers follow a week's observation course at the Centre. Such expertise should eventually be developed at the University itself. SCRIPT could cover in-service training needs. The University Competence Centre would be responsible for following up the experiments and initiating basic and applied research on the magnificent testing ground represented by Luxembourg, in conjunction with the Council of Europe, the European Union and countries facing particular multicultural and plurilingual situations. A research and development hub of this nature operating in an international network appears to be seriously lacking.

The size of the Grand Duchy makes it particularly necessary for there to be co-ordination and agreement on common principles in the education area and on the distribution of roles in the pursuit of identified objectives. Otherwise, there is a great risk of pointless duplication or overlap or, conversely, of differing approaches leading only to confusion and discouragement.

5. Concluding remarks

In many ways, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg provides an example of an ambitious and successful language education policy. It has long been "Europe's best pupil" in languages. The trilingualism of its citizens has made them into people who "stroll between countries" and switch between languages and cultures. This trilingualism has been and remains an important factor in personal and collective success. Luxembourg has represented a beacon for efforts on behalf of linguistic diversity in Europe through the education system's consistency in establishing structures matching its ambitions.

The country's demographic changes, together with rapid internationalisation and globalisation, have overturned the verities on which the language policy followed for decades has rested. This policy is becoming a cause of failure and exclusion for a large part of the population, jeopardising both the social integration of the population as a whole and the Grand Duchy's economic competitiveness.

This *Language Education Policy Profile* outlines prospects for change, based in particular on the guidelines proposed by the Council of Europe.

The common thread in these different proposals is the endeavour to leave behind the concept of "trilingualism" and embrace the political and educational concept of "plurilingualism". The holistic concept of plurilingualism can simultaneously meet the needs of all Luxembourg residents for a knowledge of German, French, Letzeburgesch and English (at different competence levels), whilst leaving plenty of room for the many other languages spoken in the Grand Duchy, which themselves represent an asset that must be preserved and made to bear fruit. It introduces the concept of competences into the objectives pursued, a key concept in defining, in a wide-ranging debate with all partners, language needs that match personal profiles, the requirements of the various occupational sectors and the country's interests.

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg possesses unequalled advantages: a consensus on the need for strong language competences on the part of all Luxembourg citizens and residents, a manifest political will, widespread agreement about the need for change in certain aspects of the language education system, human resources and long-standing experience of trilingualism.

The approaches set out in these pages in no way signify that Luxembourg has abandoned its linguistic ambitions. On the contrary, they can help it shrug off the burden of certain "obvious truths" which lead to immobilism and prevent the development of a new momentum, carried along society as a whole.

It seems clear that the practical consequences of this new ambition for curricula and the functioning of the education system will necessarily call into question other aspects of the system, whether these concern assessment practices or arrangements for deciding when pupils will move up to the next class or channelling them towards particular types of education.

The changes occurring in the Grand Duchy do not concern Luxembourg alone. They embody a fresh contribution to a European language policy meeting the principles set out in particular in the *Guide for the development of language educationpolicies in Europe*: "Developing and optimising plurilingual competences can become a common linguistic matrix that will give the European political and cultural area a form of plural linguistic identity rooted in the diversity of its communities and compatible with its values of openness to the world."

The *Country Report* summarises the linguistic situation in Luxembourg with the words: "Plurilingualism is perhaps the true mother tongue of Luxembourgers" (page 34). The project set out in this *Profile* is to expand the implicit content of this statement and link plurilingual training (encouraging the acquisition of competences in several languages) to plurilingual education (encouraging support for the values of linguistic and cultural diversity).

"[…] In these circumstances, the plurilingual project has a European valency since, in the final analysis, its goal is not for European citizens to have common linguistic varieties, but a common value which, in a sense, is a goal that could inspire tangible support" (*Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*).

APPENDIX 1: **Council of Europe viewpoint on language education: plurilingualism**

In view of the linguistic diversity of Europe and each of its states, the Council of Europe has taken a stand, which entails valuing and promoting plurilingualism. A consensus has been reached by Council of Europe member states that plurilingualism for every European should be the principal goal of language education policies. This position is set forth in various documents (see Appendix 2) and is spelled out in the *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe* (see Appendix 3).

The concept of plurilingualism can be misunderstood and should be clearly defined. In the first place, this approach puts the chief emphasis of education policies not on languages as such and multilingual diversity[28] but on the persons who use them. Attention is then focused on each individual's ability to learn and use more than one language in social communication.

In the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, plurilingualism is defined as "… the ability to use languages for the purpose of communication and to take part in cultural 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, page 168)

In any political and social entity, languages do not all enjoy the same status or even recognition: they may be official languages, languages of instruction, languages of recognised minorities, languages of unrecognised groups; some are sought after and a source of prestige, while others are devalued or a handicap and thus a factor conducive to exclusion, etc.

It is for the state to ensure by democratic means a balance between the plurilingual repertoires of different groups and between the languages which the national, regional, federal etc community uses for its projects (relations with border regions, integration in the region and in Europe, international trade etc). The major role of language policies is thus to organise the balanced management of plurilingual repertoires, the languages of the territory and collective needs, according to the resources available and cultural and educational traditions, in order to ensure social cohesion, if necessary by the explicit recognition of the linguistic rights and duties of each individual.

The valuing and promotion of plurilingualism thus forms one of the fundamental aspects of social inclusion and education for democratic citizenship.

In its Declaration and Programme on education for democratic citizenship of 7 May 1999, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe stressed that the preservation of European linguistic diversity was not an end in itself, since it was placed on the same footing as the building of a more tolerant and more interdependent society: "*a freer, more tolerant and just society based on solidarity, common values and a cultural heritage enriched by its diversity*" (CM (99) 76). In making, from 1997 onwards, education for democratic citizenship a priority

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[28] "*Multilingualism*" refers to the presence in a given large or small geographical area of several linguistic varieties (forms of verbal communication regardless of their status). "*Plurilingualism*" refers to the repertoire of linguistic varieties that may be used by speakers (including mother tongue/first language and all those acquired subsequently, again regardless of their status at school and in society and the level of mastery).

of the Council of Europe and its member states, Heads of State and of Government defined the central place of languages in the exercise of democratic citizenship in Europe: while the active participation of citizens in political decisions and society is necessary in a democracy, this means that such participation must not be rendered impossible by the absence of appropriate language skills. The possibility of taking part in the political and public life of Europe, not only in that of their own countries, presupposes plurilingual competence, that is, the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with the other citizens of Europe.

The development of plurilingualism is not just a functional necessity, but is also an essential component of democratic behaviour. Recognition of the diversity of speakers' plurilingual repertoires should lead to linguistic tolerance and thus to respect for linguistic differences, ie respect for the linguistic rights of individuals and groups in their relations with the state and with linguistic majorities, respect for freedom of expression, respect for linguistic minorities, respect for the least spoken and taught national languages, and respect for diversity in interregional and international communication. Language education policies are closely bound up with education in democratic-citizenship values because their goals are complementary: language education, which provides a particularly favourable opportunity for intercultural contact, is a sector where education for democratic living in its intercultural dimensions can be given tangible form in education systems.

It should be stressed that this goal, which reflects a consensus among the member states, will have to be reached gradually. The introduction of appropriate measures (syllabuses and curricula, teacher training etc) may involve new forms of organisation requiring additional financial resources or important policy decisions. The formulation of language education policies for the development of plurilingualism can be envisaged in many ways. We can therefore expect the implications of the *Profile* and its potential or actual consequences to vary with the country according to the national political situation or to its history and educational traditions.

Conventions:
- European Cultural Convention (1954)
- European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages [www.coe.int/minlang]
- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, www.coe.int/minorities

Policy recommendations and Resolutions:

- ***Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe***   www.coe.int/T/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)

- ***Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe***   www.assembly.coe.int
  - Recommendation 1383 (1998) on Linguistic Diversification and (CM(99)97)
  - Recommendation 1539 (2001) on the European Year of Languages 2001
  - Recommendation 1598 (2003) on the protection of Sign languages in the member states of the Council of Europe

- ***Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education***
  - Resolution on the *European Language Portfolio* adopted at the 20th Session of the Standing Conference (Krakow, Poland, October 2000)

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 the *Guide for Language Education Policies in Europe*, options for the implementation of policies include the teaching and learning of national/official languages, which for many, but not all individuals, are their mother tongue/first language.

APPENDIX 3: Council of Europe instruments: Presentation

> *1. Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*
>
> *2. European Language Portfolio (ELP)*
>
> *3. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)*
>
> *4. Manual for relating Language Examinations to the CEFR*

1. **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:

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

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

iii.   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 training 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* and the Reference are available on the website.

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

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.

4.   Manual for relating Language Examinations to CEFR
         www.coe.int/lang

A pilot version of this Manual for relating language examinations to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) has been produced by the Language Policy Division in order to assist member states, national and international providers of examinations in relating their certificates and diplomas to the CEFR.

The primary aim of this Manual is to help the providers of examinations to develop, apply and report transparent, practical procedures in a cumulative process of continuing improvement in order to situate their examination(s) in relation to the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR).

The Manual aims to:

- contribute to competence building in the area of linking assessments to the CEFR;
- encourage increased transparency on the part of examination providers;
- encourage the development of both formal and informal national and international networks of institutions and experts.

The Manual is supported by illustrative material (video / DVD and CD-Rom) for the levels in a number of languages.

In addition it is complemented by a Reference Supplement which provides the users of the Pilot Manual with additional information which will help them in their efforts to relate their certificates and diplomas to the CEFR.

APPENDIX 4: National authorities and Council of Europe Expert Group

National Authorities

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APPENDIX 5: Programme of the week's study visit of the Group of Experts

MONDAY, 20 JUNE 2005

8h15-10h30 : entretien avec Madame la ministre Mady Delvaux-Stehres et avec les officiels du Ministère

11h-12h30: entretien avec des représentants de la vie politique

14h15-15h45: apprentissage extrascolaire

16h-17h30: entretiens avec des représentants du monde du travail

TUESAY, 21 JUNE 2005

8h-10h: visite d'une école primaire : deux cours et entretiens avec des enseignants

10h-12h: visite Lycée des Garçons Luxembourg (enseignement secondaire) : deux cours et entretiens avec des enseignants

12h-13h30: déjeuner de travail avec les enseignants

14h15-15h45: médias et vie culturelle

16h-17h30: réunion avec des élèves

WEDNESDAY, 22 JUNE 2005

8h-10h: Lycée technique des Arts et Métiers (enseignement secondaire technique) : deux cours et entretiens avec des enseignants

10h-12h: régime préparatoire : deux cours et entretiens avec des enseignants

12h-13h30: déjeuner de travail avec les enseignants

14h-15h: rencontre avec Monsieur Jeannot Hansen, chef de service des relations internationales et du service de l'enseignement secondaire et secondaire technique du Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Formation professionnelle

15h-17h: associations pour étrangers et médiateurs interculturels

THURSDAY, 23 JUNE 2005

Interview avec Monsieur Pierre Fusenig, instituteur et responsable des cours intégrés de portugais

FRIDAY, 24 JUNE 2005

8h30-9h30: interview avec Madame Brasseur (ancienne ministre de l'éducation nationale)

10h-12h: responsables de programmes scolaires et formateurs d'enseignants

12h–14h : rencontre avec Monsieur Ben Fayot, député

14h30-16h: professeurs et associations de professeurs

16h30 : visite du Centre de langues de Luxembourg

SAMEDI, 25 JUNE 2005

9h-11h: Associations de parents et parents d'élèves

11h-12h: Entrevue avec les responsables luxembourgeois